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**TOWARDS A LANGUAGE OF INQUIRY: THE GESTURE OF ETHO-  
POETIC THINKING**

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**I declare this work to be my own, no part of which has been submitted for another degree or professional qualification.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a *recollection* of the relation of “being” and thinking through an articulation of the gesture of etho-poetic thinking. Part I marks out a path towards such a thinking through an encounter with Martin Heidegger’s “sketch” of the self as *Dasein*, where his description of *being-there* is read as an originary language of inquiry – one which attempts to respond to the *issue of being*, to the *questionability* and *groundlessness* of existence stemming from simply being-in-the-world. Part I follows out a description of this language of inquiry as a pre-conceptual, pre-cognitive, attuned, *bodily* understanding, through chapters which unfold this sketch of *Dasein*. This language of inquiry is construed as a two-fold action of being begun, being sketched, and beginning, sketching-out. The final chapter of part I connects Heidegger’s articulation of “Care” to the ancient practice of “care of the self” and the transformative, *etho-poetic* potentiality of thinking.

As the thesis proffers, it is this pre-conceptual language of inquiry which must be repeated in a *resolute* thinking, as Heidegger articulates it in *Being and Time*, seeking not to objectivise the world, to represent it, but to *resonate* with it. In this sense, the “purpose” of thinking is not so much the obtainment of knowledge as it is an attempt to come back into “Care” for the questionability of one’s existence. As the thesis gestures to in the conclusion, part of the attempt of the thesis is, thus, an implicit critique of the contemporary situation and discourse on thinking with its emphasis on *outcomes* and *outputs*.

The thesis itself follows the two-fold structure of the language of inquiry. Whilst part I depicts Heidegger’s sketch of this originary language of inquiry, part II *sketches-out* this language, seeking to articulate how an etho-poetic language of inquiry can occur in *writing* by bringing the sketch of part one into conversation with other etho-poetic thinkers; Walter Benjamin, Henri Meschonnic, Jan Zwicky, Giorgio Agamben, Lisa Robertson. In this way, through the textual composition of the writing, the thesis presents *itself* as the primary example of such a *language of inquiry*, making it not an investigation which objectifies an etho-poetic thinking, but makes an attempt at its own performance of it.

## LAY SUMMARY

This thesis is an attempt to articulate an etho-poetic thinking, as distinct from an objective, logical or scientific approach to understanding the world. Such a thinking, as the thesis proposes, cannot be divorced from living but is formative of it. As Part I sketches, this thinking is based on the mode of understanding we are always already involved in – the pre-conceptual, pre-cognitive *attuned* understanding, the “language of inquiry” we are always carrying out. Drawing upon the phenomenological theory of the “self” Martin Heidegger proposed, in particular in *Being and Time*, part I describes this pre-conceptual understanding through chapters which unfold this originary language of inquiry we are already involved in.

As the thesis proffers, it is this pre-conceptual language of inquiry which must be repeated in a thinking that seeks not to objectivise the world, to represent it, but to *resonate* with it. In this sense, the “purpose” of thinking is not the obtainment of knowledge so much as it is an attempt to come back into “Care” for the questionability of one’s existence. As the thesis gestures to in the conclusion, part of the attempt of the thesis is, thus, an implicit critique of the contemporary situation and discourse on thinking with its emphasis on *outcomes* and *outputs*.

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*do Cecelia, a thug domsa ar dtús an rud is fiúntach – a bheith ag éisteach leis an cheoil cúin*

*do mo mham agus mo dhadeo, a thug domsa ní amháin brontanas na beatha, ach na  
bronntanais de mo chroí is m'anam*

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**The Gift**

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We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not  
– Heraclitus, *fragment 91*

### **The Gift**

Sometimes the recompense arrives  
so far ahead of what you'll give  
that you will fail to recognise  
the reciprocity, the love

That circles in the universe:  
This life a grace advanced, its knack  
to meet requital with its cause –  
the offering up, the giving back.

Kona Macphee<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kona Macphee, "The Gift", *Perfect Blue* (London: Bloodaxe Books, 2010), 62.

## OPENING

And now to begin as if to begin.  
– Gertrude Stein, “Composition as Explanation”

The gap, I suspect, is not a modern phenomenon, it is perhaps not even a historical datum but is coeval with the existence of man on earth. It may well be the region of the spirit or, rather, the path paved by thinking, this small track of non time which the activity of thought beats within the space time of mortal men and into which the trains of thought, of remembrance and anticipation, save whatever they touch from the ruin of historical and biographical time.

This small non time space in the very heart of time, unlike the world and the culture into which we are born, can only be indicated, but cannot be inherited and handed down from the past; each new generation, indeed every new human being as he inserts himself between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave it anew.

– Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*

Crossing and crossed, the eloquence of the line is interrupted, and ambiguity installed as the mark of communication...The Greeks identified chaos as the yawning, or gaping open of time and space to permit creation...Greek chaos imagines the interpenetration of lines, a crossing that does not cancel out but mutually transforms.

– Paul Carter, "Chi complex"

There is much in being that man cannot master. There is but little that comes to be known. What is known remains inexact, what is mastered insecure. What is, is never of our making or even merely the product of our minds, as it might all too easily seem. When we contemplate this whole as one, then we apprehend, so it appears, all that is though we grasp it crudely enough. And yet beyond what is, not away from it but before it, there is still something else that happens. In the midst of beings as a whole an open place occurs. There is a clearing, a lighting. Thought of in reference to what is, to beings, this clearing is in a greater degree than are beings. This open centre is therefore not surrounded by what is; rather, the lighting centre itself encircles all that is, like the Nothing which we scarcely know.

That which is can only be, as a being, if it stands without and stands out within what is lighted in this clearing. Only this clearing grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to the being that we ourselves are.

– Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art"

A gesture is meaningful to the extent that it addresses a being in its life, from out of the life of the gesturing being. Another way of putting this is to say that meaning lives through, or rides, the recognition of what is common. More strongly: a meaningful gesture recognises that if one context or conceptual situation is laid over another, just so, they will be seen to stand in resonant relation and awareness of this relation makes a difference to our grasp of the individual contexts or concepts. ("You must change your life.") Another way of saying this is to say that to mean is always, in some measure, to carry across: meta pherein.

– Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom and Metaphor*

The question I begin with, is a question of beginning.  
Beginning is governed by a question of where –  
a quest for a place from which to begin.

Yet beginning never begins from thin air, but is begotten  
*here* –  
a burgeoning atmosphere *already begun*.

At the heart of beginning is a place al-ready – an opening.

To begin is to arrive at a readied place.  
It is a welcoming, a bidding to the long abiding.

Yet to begin is also to close,  
to draw the line;  
delimit, determine, differentiate.

Beginning's light reveals through the darkness of its edges;  
a revelation veiled in thick concealment.

A beginning begins in a complicated matrix of possibility,  
a milieu of complexity,  
the sole nexus heart of this  
– bodily being –

The place from which I imperatively,  
continuously,  
begin.

The X that marks the spot.

It is not me who makes me think, no more than it is me who makes my heart beat.  
– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*

When he was still a student, or so the story is told, Giorgio Agamben was invited, in the summer of 1966, to par-take in a seminar series with that strange midwife of thought, the philosopher Martin Heidegger. The call set into motion a swerve in Agamben's life as a student, interrupting the trajectory he had been taking up to that point. Through the configured, contextual event of the encounter with Heidegger, Agamben's thinking changed course from the discipline of Law to the a-disciplinarity of Philosophy – what became *possible* through the event of those philosophical seminars hosted by the poet René Char in Le Thor – one who had himself been inspired by an encounter with Heidegger. The seminars formed, as Leland de la Durantaye depicts it, “a *constellation*: a coming together of elements resulting in something truly unexpected. This unexpected thing was, simply, philosophy”.<sup>2</sup> But it was also *life*, or it was the nexus where the boundary separating these realms from each other was revealed to be porous – opening to a thinking as living and a living as thinking, which Agamben would, in his writing's to come, call a *form-of-life* – otherwise known as an *etho-poesis*.

In Lyn Hejinian's “Some Notes toward a Poetics”, she makes an appeal to the figure of contradiction, the figure of what she names, through the Greek, as *xenos*, for what marks the singularity of aesthetic discovery made through “encounters, at points of contact...points of linkage”.<sup>3</sup> *Xenos* means “stranger”, or “foreigner”, and is that from which two seemingly oppositional words in English are formed – that of “host” and “guest”.

A guest/host relationship comes into existence solely in and as an occurrence, that of their meeting, an encounter, a mutual and reciprocal contextualisation. The host is no host until she has met her guest, the guest is no host until she meets her host. In Russian the word for ‘occurrence’ captures the dynamic character of this encounter. The word for event in Russian is *sobytie*; *so* (with or co-) and *bytie* (being), ‘being with’ or ‘with being’ or ‘co-existence’. Every encounter produces, even if for only the flash of an instant, a *xenia* – the occurrence of co-existence which is also an event of strangeness or foreignness. A strange occurrence that, nonetheless, happens constantly – we have no other use for language than to have them.<sup>4</sup>

Hejinian captures the radical self-estrangement of an encounter, where a taken for granted identity is interrupted, broken open, into the queer coexistence of being both self and other;

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<sup>2</sup> Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Lyn Hejinian, “Some Notes toward a Poetics”, *American Women Poets in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: where lyric meets language*, Edited by Claudia Rankine and Juliana Spahr (Middleton CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 235.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

of being a simultaneity, a co-incident, a synchronised *jointure* of host-guest. The encounter is a crossing indicative of the *necessary contingency* of your own existence – the always happenstantial context of dynamically existing in a congruous incongruity, rather than already enacted in unfailing consistency. To undergo a *xenos* experience is to inhabit, as Hejiniian would have it, the threshold of encounter – the *limit* – the realm of entwined reversibilities – the exchange of host-guest.

The border is not an edge along the fringe of society and experience but rather their very middle – their between; it names the condition of doubt and encounter which being foreign to a situation (which may be life itself) provokes – a condition which is simultaneously an impasse and a passage, limbo and transit zone, with checkpoints and bureaus of exchange, a meeting place and a realm of confusion.<sup>5</sup>

One of Agamben's first pieces of published writing, appearing a year after the initial encounter with Heidegger and dedicated to the philosopher himself, was a poem entitled *Radure* in the Italian – translated as “Clearings”. In a stanza which begins by proffering that “beauty is destiny”, he asks the following question:

How can a man  
stop on the street and ask: *This*  
*is my destiny?*<sup>6</sup>

As Medard Boss recounts, in his introduction to the collected *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger “often spoke about there being a particular blindness to his insights and about how those [people] who were not struck by them could not be helped”.<sup>7</sup> Those who cannot see, who cannot be helped, are not the ones who are *blinded*, but rather, those who have failed to be struck – those who have not let themselves be claimed by something they *cannot see* but are nevertheless summoned, *called to respond* to – a latency, a hiddenness, that allows them to perceive the thinker's thoughts – the quality of strangeness which undoes them – the *xenos* experience of *encounter*.

In his later reflection on the Le Thor seminars with Heidegger, in “The Idea of the Muse”, Agamben recounts how, towards the end of a seminar one day, the students crowded around the thinker, pressing their questions upon him. Heidegger simply responded by saying, “You can see my limit: I can't”.<sup>8</sup> Thinking is here construed as a fidelity to a limit, to a blindness

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<sup>5</sup> Lyn Hejiniian, “Barbarism”, *The Language of Inquiry* (California: University of California Press, 2000), 327.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters*, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001), xx.

<sup>8</sup> Agamben, *The Idea of Prose*, trans. Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 59.

at the core of perception – the invisibility which makes for the capacity to perceive anything at all, and what Agamben attributes to *inspiration* – to the limit of an inappropriable beginning.

That a hiddenness be maintained in order that there be disclosure, a forgetfulness maintained in order that there be memory, this is inspiration, the rapture of the muses which brings man, word, and thought into accord with one another. Thought is close to the thing only if it gets lost in this latency, only if it no longer sees its thing. It is this which is dictated in it: the dialectic hiddenness/disclosure, oblivion/memory, so that the word can come, and not simply be manipulated by the subject (I cannot – obviously – inspire myself).<sup>9</sup>

What Agamben's recollection indirectly pays tribute to is the *xenos* experience of the encounter with Heidegger as teacher – one who returns the young Agamben not to the study of something in particular, but to study as *possibility*, to a study returned to *inspiration*.<sup>10</sup> As Agamben remarks in an interview:

That is the real interest of encounters, in life as in thought: they serve to make life possible (or at times impossible). In any event, that is what happened with my meeting with Heidegger – and at nearly the same time with my coming into contact with Benjamin's thought.<sup>11</sup>

What Agamben underscores is not the inquiry of *this* or *that*, but being *given over to the ability* to inquire – something echoed in another interview where he reflects on his even younger student self's desire to undergo an experience of possibility:

Leaving secondary school, I had just one desire – to write. But what does that mean? To write – what? This was, I believe, a desire for possibility in my life. What I wanted was not to 'write', but to 'be able to' write. It is an unconscious philosophical gesture: the search for possibility in your life, which is a good definition of philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

The poem Agamben writes in dedication to his teacher can be read, in this way, as a thank-you note for his gift not of *something* in particular – what is given in the chancery configuration of the encounter is only an experience of inspiration which makes life *(im)possible* for the young Agamben. The poem is an acknowledgement only of a *xenos* that has opened him up to the *opening* of being in *coexistence* – a gifting of being *given over to*

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>10</sup> I am here echoing Agamben in his conclusion to the "The Idea of Study", where the student "shakes off the sadness that disfigured it and returns to its truest nature: not work, but inspiration, the self-nourishment of the soul", *Idea of Prose*, 65.

<sup>11</sup> de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "Thought is the courage of hopelessness: An interview with philosopher Giorgio Agamben", interview by Jordan Skinner, *Verso Books*, 17 June 2014. <http://www.eutopiainstitute.org/2014/06/thought-is-the-courage-of-hopelessness-an-interview-with-philosopher-giorgio-agamben/>.

himself – the gift of the self *to* itself, where this *to* indicates not a self-coincidental identity, but the *clearing*, as the title suggests, which gathers the self *to* itself by setting it *apart*; where an “I” is in a parting-with itself.

The poem is a *reciprocation* of the gift in itself being a giving marked as a *gesture*, which, as with the binding of paper and string in the presentation of a present, *says nothing*, except the event of the *giving* – its dedication. The poem is an address not simply to Heidegger, or to the event of his re-beginning, but is an affirmation to dedication itself – a *way of saying* that is a way of remaining open to an opening – to a thinking that plays host to the not-saying, the latency, the hiddenness, which is the work of the muse, the dictation of inspiration – the beginning that begins us. Agamben demonstrates, through the poem, his commitment to the calling of *beauty*, to what exists not functionally, but for the *sake of itself*, to a writing-living which is the attempt to construct an “experience of the possible”<sup>13</sup> – as reader-writer, as guest-host, inhabiting the *limit* of language as that schismic between otherwise segregated into poetry and philosophy.

The schism in question is that between poetry and philosophy, between the poetic word and the word of thought. The split is so fundamental to our cultural tradition that Plato could already declare it ‘an ancient enemy’. According to a conception that is only implicitly contained in the Platonic critique of poetry, but that has in modern times acquired a hegemonic character, the scission of the word is construed to mean that poetry possess its object without knowing it while philosophy knows its object without possessing it. In the West, the word is thus divided between a word that is unaware, as if fallen from the sky, and enjoys the object of knowledge by representing it in beautiful form, and a word that has all seriousness and consciousness for itself but does not enjoy its object because it does not know how to represent it...Insofar as philosophy and poetry have passively accepted this division, philosophy has failed to elaborate a proper language, as if there could be a royal road to truth that would avoid the problem of its representation, and poetry has developed neither a method nor self-consciousness. What is thus overlooked is the fact that every authentic poetic project is directed toward knowledge, just as every authentic act of philosophy is always directed toward joy.<sup>14</sup>

The dedication to a way of saying that attempts a correspondence with an opening is re-begun throughout the rest of Agamben’s writing, as he highlights in an interview where he again attempts to undermine the gulf between poetry and thinking: “I indeed began by writing poems, but I don’t believe I ever renounced that. On the contrary, it was as if I didn’t really begin to write poems until philosophy entered my life’... ‘Poetry is something one can

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<sup>13</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Bartleby, or On Contingency”, *Potentialities*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 249.

<sup>14</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. Ronald L. Martinez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xvi – xvii.

do only through philosophy”.<sup>15</sup> A statement which implies the reverse applies too, that philosophy is something that can be done only through poetry. Or to say the same differently with Ludwig Wittgenstein “I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: Philosophy ought really to be written only as *poetic composition*”.<sup>16</sup>

In Heidegger’s “On the Way to Language”, to which Hejinian makes recourse in her “*Notes towards a poetics*”, the following lines from Goethe are quoted: “Only when it owns itself to thanking/ Is life held in esteem”. Owning is here understood by Hejinian as an act of hospitality – to what has *opened up* in an encounter. To own is to “grant, to acknowledge, to own up, to love, to thank, to make a hospitality bond with”, what has already begun.

Every thinking that is on the trail of something is a poetizing, and all poetry a thinking. Each coheres with the other on the basis of the saying that has already pledged itself..., the saying whose thinking is a thanking.<sup>17</sup>

Agamben’s “The Idea of the Muse” is followed by “The Idea of Study”, with only the slightest of ideas inserted in-between – “The Idea of Love” which reads, in its entirety, as follows:

To live in intimacy with a stranger, not in order to draw him closer, or to make him known, but rather to keep him strange, remote: unapparent – so unapparent that his name contains him entirely. And, even in discomfort, to be nothing else, day after day, than the ever open place, the unwaning light in which that one being, that thing, remains forever exposed and sealed off.<sup>18</sup>

To own the *inappropriable* opening is a thinking as thanking, a thinking as compassion – a love fuelled not by the ego’s marred will to appropriate and make the different *same*, but the self-less acceptance of the inexplicability, the impenetrability, the inaccessibility of the closest strangeness; the (co)existence in *xenos*, where guest-host roles oscillate. A language of inquiry is begun by love, by *Eros* – what opens the *gap between* inspiration and study – an idea of the muse and an idea of study.

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<sup>15</sup> de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*, 59.

<sup>16</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. Von Wright (in collaboration with Heikki Nyman), trans. Peter Winch (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1980), 24.

<sup>17</sup> Hejinian, “Some Notes toward a Poetics”, 221.

<sup>18</sup> Agamben, “The Idea of Love”, *The Idea of Prose*, 61.

\*

The hours run down  
The days pass on.  
One achievement remains;  
Mere being alive.

– Hannah Arendt, *Hannah arendt, for love of the world*

Just a few years after Agamben's encounter with Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, in 1971, on the occasion of the philosopher's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday, dedicated an essay to scribing her own encounter with the younger philosopher at a point which she describes as his initiation into philosophy – his *beginning*, which she marks as belonging not to the author of a first book entitled *Duns Scotus*, but to the university teacher sketching-out his thoughts towards what would become all too quickly, incompletely gathered as *Being and Time*:

If it is true, as Plato once remarked, that 'the beginning is also a god; so long as he dwells among men, he saves all things' (*Laws* 775), then the beginning in Heidegger's case is neither the date of his birth (September 26, 1889, at Messkirch) nor the publication of his first book, but the first lecture courses and seminars which he held as a mere *Privatdozent* (instructor) and assistant to Husserl at the University of Freiburg. For Heidegger's 'fame' predates by about eight years the publication of *Sein und Zeit*.<sup>19</sup>

The strangeness of Heidegger's fame, as Arendt attests, lies in the fact that it did not rest on any determinable *basis*. Whilst lecture notes circulated, they did not proffer any consumable content, only readings of certain familiar texts – there was, as Arendt puts it, "hardly more than a name".<sup>20</sup> What the students were drawn to was the stranger whose name contained him, one who was offering, not a discipline of thought, not an object of scholarship, but the *possibility of thinking*. What was experienced, as Arendt recounts, was the *passion* of a thinking-as-living and a living-as-thinking.

I have said that people followed the rumour of Heidegger in order to learn thinking. What was experienced was that thinking as pure activity...can become a passion which not so much rules and oppresses all other capacities and gifts, as orders them and prevails through them. We are so accustomed to the old opposition of reason versus passion, spirit versus life, that the idea of a passionate thinking and aliveness become one, takes us somewhat aback. Heidegger himself once expressed this unification – on the strength of a proven anecdote – in a single sentence, when at the beginning of a course on Aristotle he said, in place of the usual biographical introduction, 'Aristotle was born, worked, and died'. That something like Heidegger's passionate thinking exists is indeed, as we can recognise afterward, a condition of the possibility of there being any philosophy at all. This passionate thinking, which rises out of the simple fact of being-in-the-world and now 'thinks recallingly and responsively the meaning that reigns in everything that is'

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<sup>19</sup> Hannah Arendt, "Martin Heidegger at Eighty", *The New York Review of Books* 17, no. 6 (1971): 50.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

(*Gelassenheit*, 1959, p. 15), can no more have a final goal – cognition or knowledge – than can life itself. The end of life is death, but man does not live for death’s sake, but because he is a living being; and he does not think for the sake of any result whatsoever, but because he is a ‘thinking, that is, a musing being’.<sup>21</sup>

Rather than an anomaly to philosophy, Heidegger’s *passionate thinking*, Arendt recognises retrospectively, is the very *possibility of there being any philosophy at all* – it is the veritable *beginning* or *opening* of any thinking in living, in simply *being-in-the-world*, and as such, cannot have an end, result, or aim, but is characterised by continuously having to *begin again*. “If one wished to measure thinking, in its immediate, passionate liveliness, by its results, then one would fare as with Penelope’s veil – what was spun during the day would inexorably undo itself again at night, so that the next day it could be begun anew”.<sup>22</sup> What was proffered was a thinking not from the “I” of “self of consciousness”,<sup>23</sup> but from the *expropriation* of an *encounter* – an experience of otherness, of being *othered* to one’s self, as life itself in its intimate strangeness. What was proffered was a bearing-out, and under-going an opening, which Arendt ascribed to the beginnings of philosophy in the ancient pathos of *thaumazein*:

The first and, so far as I know, the only one who has ever spoken of thinking as a *pathos*, as something to be borne by enduring it, was Plato, who, in the *Thaetetus*, calls wonder the beginning of philosophy; he certainly does not mean by this the mere surprise or astonishment that arises in us when we encounter something strange. For the wonder that is the beginning of thinking – as surprise and astonishment may well be the beginning of the sciences – applies to the everyday, the matter-of-course, what we are thoroughly acquainted and familiar with; this is also the reason why it cannot be quieted by any knowledge whatever. Heidegger speaks once, wholly in Plato’s sense, of the ‘faculty of wondering at the simple’, but, differently from Plato, he adds, ‘*and of taking up and accepting this wondering as one’s abode*’.<sup>24</sup>

What is proffered in both Agamben and Arendt’s depictions of their encounters with Heidegger, is a thinking that does not so much begin, as is *begun*, not through the will of an “I”, but in the *passion* of the *xenos* of encounter – the expropriative experience of coming face to face with an inappropriable limit. What is experienced is thinking as an abiding, an inquiry set in the thick heart of the everyday – the tumultuous time of a present both giving and taking in the unsteady wavering of an arising and passing – attempting to *correspond* to what has opened-up – making good on what has already been proffered and yet never being able to coincide with its encounter – a language of inquiry arising simply from the *xenos* of

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 53.

being-in-the-world – being a human being who is both guest to the world and its host in bearing-forth its being *as such*.

The figure which stands for this opening of encounter, as Hejinian's word *xenos* gestures to, is the figure of chiasm, the *chi* letter which begins the word she chooses for the ambivalence of this experience – the intercalated X sign – what also begins the Greek word for chaos, with its crossing marking the gap mythologically ruled by Eros. Chiasm stands for the origin, the place-marking, which is neither identical to itself, nor purely different, but an identity-in-difference; not the same, not simply other, but *similar* – an entwinement of *xenos* which is an *enantiomorphic* structure, one which, as Juri Lotman notes "creates the necessary relations between structural diversity and structural similarity, which allow dialogic relations to be built".<sup>25</sup> Chiasm is the figure of reciprocal co-constitution par excellence – a host-guest structure of *xenos*. A language of inquiry is owed, in this way, to the ambiguity of this structure where the human being is both self and other; being and non-being; one who steps and does not step continuously into the same river.

What this thesis proffers, in this way, is simply an attempt to come into this language of inquiry which is always already *begun* – a language already on the way – one which is on-going, and constitutive of our dwelling in the world – an inquiry not divorced from living, but the very possibility for abiding at all – abiding, that is, in the *ambivalence* of a saying that also *does not say*.

Hejinian writes, in the introduction to her collection of essays *The Language of Inquiry*, that poetry is that thinking which stems from not-knowing – a knowing which she attributes to the knowledge of *acknowledgement*. "To know *that* things are is not to know *what* they are, and to know *that* without *what* is to know otherness (i.e., the unknown and perhaps unknowable)".<sup>26</sup> Poetry is proffered not as the "language of a genre", but a "language of inquiry" – "that language in which a writer (or reader) both perceives and is conscious of perception"<sup>27</sup> it is language as "experiencing experience", where this experience is not the narrative of an "I", but the plotlessness of existence – the strange encounter of the everyday in its simple suchness, where we are not outside the world, or cast against it, but in the midst of its strange similarity.

This language we are already in is a poetic saying of this ilk – a poetry not as the expression of an "I", but as the gifting of the self in the acknowledgement of what is; a language that

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<sup>25</sup> Juri Lotman, trans. Wilma Clark, "On the Semiosphere", *Sign Systems Studies* 33, no. 1 (2005): 220.

<sup>26</sup> Hejinian, "Introduction", *The Language of Inquiry*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

does not explain, does not appropriate, but allows us to dwell in nearness to the *daimonic*; in the strange non-coincidence of a *xenos* guest-host relation.

**SKETCH: QUESTIONABILITY**

but the well-known is not necessarily known at all.  
– Lyn Hejinian, *The Language of Inquiry*

The known comes perpetually bearing the unknown, as its elusive other, on its very back.  
– Edward S. Casey, “Keeping Art to its Edges”

Existence can be questionable.  
– Martin Heidegger *Being and Time*

We are strangers to ourselves, the strangeness never leaves us, but we become adept at covering it over, experts in the avoidance of our own uncanniness. The world is unfathomable, ungraspable in all its transitional “thisness”, yet standing out in such openness is hard to bear – we become great constructionalists, scaffolding buttresses and layer upon layer of ground; taking up home in the thick skin of an unquestionable “I”; inhabiting the blanket of comfort Vilém Flusser describes and decries:

Habit is like a cotton blanket. It covers up all the sharp edges, and it dampens all noises. It is unaesthetic (from *aisthesthai* = perception), because it prevents bits of information from being perceived, as edges or noises. Because habit screens perceptions, because it anaesthetizes, it is considered comfortable...Habit makes everything nice and quiet.<sup>28</sup>

And even so, the strangeness still pervades our being, awakening in moments of doubt, wonder, perplexity; the death of a loved one; the shock of the sea; the dark heart of the night and its echoing question, ‘*who am I?*’; the flicker of otherness across a known face; the immensity of a child’s astonishment; moments of unearthed groundlessness where a tear forms in the fabric of the snared weave, through which I glimpse the fleeting phenomenality of the world and the ephemeral haecceity of my own being – this all too brief dash of a passage between birth and death; moments where the thick skin of this “I” is disturbed, unsettled, in the ec-stasis of a here and now; moments of exile from the soft blankets of habit, the comfort of the known, where the “everyday” ordinarily blundered through, is perceived anew in the shock of the aesthetic “eventness” of the strange.

Yet, to speak with Edward S. Casey, it is not so much that this unknown is divorced from the habitual, but that it is its very companion – the “elusive other” riding on its back.<sup>29</sup> What is strangest and uncanniest of all, as Martin Heidegger proffered, is not the sudden “thisness” of the world, but that this suchness has been dialled down through habit. The strange, the unheimlich, is not the weird, or extraordinary, but the very ordinary itself, *awoken to* itself – the habitual in its questionability – the *xenos* of experience:

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<sup>28</sup> Vilém Flusser, “Exile and Creativity”, *Writings*, trans. Erik Eisel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 105.

<sup>29</sup> Edward S. Casey, “Keeping Art to its Edges”, *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 9, no. 2 (2004): 146.

This possibility of the intensification of the character of the there of something which comes down on us like a storm or is already there as an inconvenience lies right within the *inexplicit* self-evidence of the familiarity of the there of the everyday world. The strange is only this inexplicit familiarity insofar as it has been shaken up and awakened and is now being encountered in the character of unfamiliarity. This lack of familiarity is not merely something occasional, but rather belongs to the very temporality of the world's being-encountered. The familiarity is disturbed, and this disturbable familiarity is what gives to the contingent "otherwise than one thought" the recalcitrant sense of its there. Through the disturbability of inexplicit familiarity, what is being encountered is there in its *unpredictability*, its *incalculability*. The there encountered has the peculiar rigidity of something oppressive, contingent. This for-the-most-part-some-how-otherwise pervades the world's being encountered – it is comparative: otherwise than one thought, planned, etc.<sup>30</sup>

As Heidegger would have it, the questionability of the world belongs to the very experience of living which is constantly turning, unfolding, *differently*, otherwise than expected. Questionability, rather than being an anomaly to our existence in the world, *belongs* to the very structure of our experience, where our encounters, however familiar, are always accompanied by the shadow of the unforeseeable and unknown. The uncanny, in this sense, lies not in this *alterity* of the world, this always *otherwise*, but that such strangeness gets covered over – we become benumbed to the very questionability of the everyday and the "world being encountered appears as simply there in a straightforward manner".<sup>31</sup>

What gets covered over, as Heidegger articulates in these lectures in *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, and later in *Being and Time*, is the "Care" through which we inhabit the world, the manner in which this "there" *is* at all: "Care disappears in the habits, customs and publicness of everydayness – and this does not mean it comes to an end, but rather that it does not show itself any longer, it is covered up. Being-concerned-about and going about dealings have the immediate aspect of *carefreeness*".<sup>32</sup> The irruptive moments of the strange are interruptions, then, of such "carefreeness" – what bring us back to the disturbability, the questionability of our existence and the "Care", through which we are *there* – the *xenos* of our experience. The uncanny calls us back to the heightened and awakened sense in which we already exist – the perplexing address of the world, its *appearance as such*, in all its strange singularity from day to day, and the pondering response it elicits from us. The eruption of the uncanny presents the world to us not as it has been taken to be, but in its *questionability*, in the wonder and puzzlement it provokes in us, which is not extraordinary, but the very ordinariness, the very appearance of the ordinary, *as*

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<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. Jon van Buren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 77.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 80.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* 80.

*it is*. To perceive the strange, in this way, is to perceive *explicitly* the *implicit* “Care” through which we are inhabiting the world all the time – the manner in which we are attempting to understand and respond to this ever surprising, ever improbable miracle of existing – of being here at all.

And that is just the point: how the world, moist and beautiful, calls to each of us to make a new and serious response. That’s the big question, the one the world throws at you every morning. ‘Here you are, alive. Would you like to make a comment?’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Mary Oliver, “Foreword”, *Long Life: Essays and Other Writings* (Cambridge MA: Da Capo Books, 2004), xiv.

The real foundation of philosophy is radical existential intervention and the production of questionableness; placing oneself and life and the crucial implementations into questionableness is the basic concept of all, and the most radical, illumination  
 – Martin Heidegger, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*

If, as Heidegger proposes, a thinker only thinks one inexhaustible thought, one question which they pursue, (or are pursued by), throughout their life's work, Heidegger's own thought might be considered as the following out of the *questionability* of "Being",<sup>34</sup> which is to say that his is a thinking ignited not so much by the attempt to *answer* a *question*, as it is an effort to reawaken the necessity of asking it; not the articulation of a question, but a questioning where the very possibility of the question itself is at stake; *that* something is questionable in the first place.<sup>35</sup> In such a way, what stimulates the incomplete(able) quest of *Being and Time*, for example, is not so much the attempt to sketch out a response to the question of the meaning of "Being", as it is a case of showing that "Being" could be questionable in the first place – an effort which corresponds with that inaugural figure of philosophy in the West, Socrates, whose own incitement of questionability is the book's inceptive epigram:

For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression "being". We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed.<sup>36</sup>

Such an opening evocation calls into question whether in Heidegger's own time there is an understanding of the question of "Being"? "Not at all", Heidegger swiftly replies to himself

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<sup>34</sup> This sense of a perduring, unanswerable question is something Samuel Weber speaks to, where what is imperative in such a repetitive asking as he notes, is an awareness and acknowledgement of the *strange*, the *otherness* of the inquiry – the difference of the same, rather than the deadeningly *identical*: "Nietzsche – who, together with Kierkegaard, placed the question of repetition, recurrence, *Wiederkehr* on the agenda – writes somewhere that with passing years one finds oneself returning to certain questions that seem to change very little over time. These questions, which function as a kind of bedrock of identity, are more difficult to 'lose' than to retain. Whether this 'bedrock' becomes a source of strength and discovery or a prison depends on how those questions 'return': whether they primarily only 'determine', in the simply restrictive sense of setting limits, or whether the limits they trace gesture toward a space not simply contained within the area they demarcate. This is one of the reasons why a sense of the 'uncanny' – indeed, an openness to it – is indispensable, if one is to avoid the kind of entropy that a purely obsessive recurrence would entail", *Theatricality as Medium* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 338.

<sup>35</sup> This "being able" to be questioned is something the translator of Heidegger's *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity* highlights: "The term *Fraglichkeit*... has been rendered as 'questionableness'. Retaining overtones of its normal meaning of 'doubtfulness' or 'uncertainty' *Fraglichkeit* means for Heidegger something like 'being able to be questioned', 'open to question', or 'disputable'", *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 114.

<sup>36</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1962), 1.

– no chance for such an understanding in a time that sleeps in slumber, ignorant that such a question would ever need to be posed – when there is a lack not simply of an answer, but of the requisite *perplexity* to ask the question in the first place. “Being” has ceased to be a puzzlement, its questionableness dialled down, and the issue of “Being” forgotten. Thus, the task at hand, what Heidegger demands of himself, is to place “Being” into questionableness again, that is, to “reawaken an understanding for the meaning of this question”.<sup>37</sup>

Doing so involves reawakening to the manner in which an entry lies readied onto this question, a threshold laid open onto the question of “Being”. Such an opening belongs to the one Heidegger comes to call *Dasein* – the human being – the one who has their own “Being” as an *issue*; the one whose own being is *questionable*.

*Dasein* is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of *Dasein*’s Being, and this implies that *Dasein*, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being – a relationship which itself is one of Being...It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein*’s Being.<sup>38</sup>

In this sense, the human being is the one who, rather than posing the question of the meaning of “Being” as an abstract philosophical problem, *is* such an inquiry. Each human’s own being is experienced as *questionable*; constitutes them in a *relationship towards* themselves; an *issue* which is, “in each case mine”.<sup>39</sup> The task at hand for Heidegger in *Being and Time* is, thus, to describe this inquirer, to describe this opening already laid out onto the meaning of “Being” – the prior understanding we are already involved in which prepares the way for all other understanding. In this way, Heidegger’s description of *Dasein* as a project of “Care”, where he depicts a “self” who is *questionable*, might be considered as the beginning of his attempt to sketch-out the questionability of “Being” – a beginning which is only ever later re-begun, returned to differently, taken back up again from another point – for understanding, as Heidegger comes to describe it, is always a re-beginning, constituted as it is in a time that is not a progressive linearity, but a spiral time of a beginner’s *tending towards*. Which is, of course, to say too much too quickly – let’s begin again.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 68.

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To begin with, “Care” is what Heidegger suggests first begins us in the world – something he tenders through an example gleaned not from a philosophical tome, or a scientific treatise, but from the more esoteric realm of the fable – a truth belonging to a time of the “pre-ontological”, which indicates the manner in which an understanding of the inextricability of “Care” and the human being has “been sketched out beforehand in elemental ways”.<sup>40</sup>

Once when ‘Care’ was crossing a river, she saw some clay; she thoughtfully took up a piece and began to shape it. While she was meditating on what she had made, Jupiter came by. ‘Care’ asked him to give it spirit, and this he gladly granted. But when she wanted her name to be bestowed upon it, he forbade this, and demanded that it be given his name instead. While ‘Care’ and Jupiter were disputing, Earth arose and desired that her own name be conferred on the creature, since she had furnished it with part of her body. They asked Saturn to be their arbiter, and he made the following decision, which seemed a just one: ‘Since you, Jupiter, have given its spirit, you shall receive that spirit at its death; and since you, Earth, have given its body, you shall receive its body. But since ‘Care’ first shaped this creature, she *shall possess it as long as it lives*. And because there is now a dispute among you as to its name, let it be called ‘*homo*’, for it is made out of *humus* (earth).<sup>41</sup>

The sketch depicts the happenstantial formation of the human being as a beginning opportunely begun in a *crossing*, in a *passage between*, where the first thoughtful sketch of a human from the humus of the earth is shaped, is opened up *as* an opening, which binds and holds together the tensional poles of both earth and spirit and, as decided by Saturn, who also stands for “time”, is an opening which will continue to *possess* us for as long as we live. Time gives to the human, for the span of their life, their being as a continual project of “Care” – an existence owed to an on-going *inspired making*, shaping a living in the between of earth and spirit; of the human and the *daimonic*. It is an example which Heidegger himself, as he mentions in a footnote, “ran across” in a passage from an article by K. Burdach, who also “calls attention to a double meaning of the term ‘*cura*’ according to which it signifies not only ‘anxious exertion’, but also ‘carefulness’ and ‘devotedness’”.<sup>42</sup> “Care” is, in this sense, the name Heidegger gives to an existential structure of our being as on-going begun beginners<sup>43</sup> – those whose essence lies in the *fictitious* formation of an

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>43</sup> This inceptive and incomplete quality of existence in *thrownness* is one which is often overshadowed by *Dasein*’s *being-towards death*, as Heidegger characterises it. Yet it is, as I will proffer below, this being-towards death which makes for an existing as a constant (re)beginning, for it is only against a limit that something can come into appearance.

existence through an on-going *concern* and *devotion* – a creative making, a “designing” of a “*Dasein*” – Heidegger’s strange word for “the self” as one who is only ever the *passage*, the hyphenated reality of “being-there” – a *tensional opening*. Being begun by “Care” is a beginning from which we are never released, but is what continues to belong to us, that to which *Dasein* “is held fast, dominated by it through and through as long as this entity ‘is in the world’”.<sup>44</sup> The opening of “Care”, as Heidegger comes to proffer, institutes *Dasein* into the world not as a finished product, a given identity, but as a begun project which is to be *carried through* – what he signals in his calling *Dasein* a “*geworfener Entwurf*”, a “thrown-projection”, where the German *Entwurf* signifies a “‘throwing’ something ‘off’ or ‘away’ from one”,<sup>45</sup> but can also, “in ordinary German usage, and often in Heidegger” take on a sense of “‘designing’ or ‘sketching’ some ‘project’ which is to be carried through”.<sup>46</sup> To be human, in Heidegger’s sense of *Dasein*, is to be set in motion to *carry through* an existence in the world, where each person is first and foremost cast not into an identity, but into a project of *responsibility* for their existence, assigned to the task of this “there” into which they have been flung: “we call it the ‘*thrownness*’ of this entity into its ‘there’; indeed, it is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the ‘there’. The expression ‘*thrownness*’ is meant to suggest the *facticity of its being delivered over*”.<sup>47</sup> Rather than a “*facticity*” which would refer to the given “fact” of “some kind of mineral, for example”, where existence could be understood as a certain property or element, an already defined and delineated sense, this “*facticity*” is one which speaks more closely to the “*ficticity*” of this existing in “Care” – the way in which the human being is thrown into a “there” not as a *given sense*, but a “there” *as* the sense which *Dasein* is in its sketching-out – a “there” which cannot be given in advance, but is the suchness of a factitious fashioning. Indeed, as Agamben reads Heidegger’s use of it, the term is an inheritance from St. Augustine, who understands the human soul as that which is *made by hand* rather than simply given. “If one wants to understand the development of the concept of *facticity* in Heidegger’s thought, one should not forget this origin of the word, which ties it to the semantic sphere of non-originary and making”.<sup>48</sup> The “*facticity*” which Heidegger speaks to in this case, is one which indicates our being thrown to a project of *making*, rather than in the “*factum brutum*” of a given “*facticity*” – a “there” which would not need to be sketched-out, a “*Dasein*”

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<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 243.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 174. This “*thrownness*” as William McNeill notes, “encompasses not only one’s embodiment, but one’s having been born and thrown into a tradition of discourse, interpretation, and history, as well as the particular situation of *praxis* or ethical engagement in any given instance”, *Time of Life* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 65.

<sup>48</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “The Passion of *Facticity*”, *Potentialities*, 189.

which would not need to be “designed”. As it is, the human being is cast into an existence comprised of the “fact” “that-it-is-and-has-to-be”<sup>49</sup> – an existence cast not onto the ground of an identity, but into the *project* of being-there.

in being its *Self*, ‘*Dasein*’ is as a Self, the entity that has been thrown. It has been released from its basis, *not through* itself but *to* itself, so as to be *as this basis*. ‘*Dasein*’ is not itself the basis of its Being, inasmuch as this basis first arises from its own projection; rather, as Being-its-Self, it is the *Being* of its basis. This basis is never anything but the basis for an entity whose Being has to take over Being-a-basis.<sup>50</sup>

“Thrownness”, in this sense, is Heidegger’s way of signalling how the human being is not given over to a determinable ground, but only the “ground” of their own *throwing* – their sketching-out, their *factitious* making. This “there” is not a given spot upon which they land, but is the “there” they *are* in their disclosive sketching-out. The human being is begun from an “is not”, cast into the world “*not of its own accord*”,<sup>51</sup> and this *is not*, this “nullity”<sup>52</sup> as Heidegger calls it, is not something we overcome or overthrow, but what we, curiously, *inhabit*. We never get behind our having been already begun: “Thrownness...does not lie behind it as some event which has happened to *Dasein*, which has factually befallen and fallen loose from *Dasein* again; on the contrary, as long as *Dasein* is, *Dasein*, as care, *is* constantly its ‘that-it-is’”.<sup>53</sup>

*Dasein*’s concern includes a concern for its own being. As being out for something, it is out for what it still is not. As care, *Dasein* is essentially underway towards something; in caring it is toward itself as that which it still is not. Its own sense of being is to always have something before itself which it still is not, which is still outstanding. That something is always still outstanding means that the being of *Dasein* as care, insofar as it is, is always incomplete; it still lacks something so long as it is.<sup>54</sup>

Yet this *is not* is not a *lack* that could somehow find a completion, but is the emptiness which is, paradoxically, our *plenitude*, the peculiar *gift* of life, which in its giving, refuses – on the one hand granting us existence, on the other hand withdrawing it, by imparting us to being only through what we *are not*. In this sense, it is not a privation, a being-without, it is not a desire needing to be sated, but is, strangely, an *incompletion* which is the human being’s

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<sup>49</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 330.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 308.

greatest *possibility* for being – *Dasein*'s “who” is still outstanding so long as it is *being-there*.

Possibility, as an *existential*, does not signify a free-floating potentiality-for-Being in the sense of the ‘liberty of indifference’ (*libertas indifferentiae*). In every case *Dasein*...has already got itself into definite possibilities. As the potentiality-for-Being which is *is*, it has let such possibilities pass by; it is constantly waiving the possibilities of its Being, or else it seizes upon them and makes mistakes. But this means that *Dasein* is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself – *thrown possibility* through and through.<sup>55</sup>

What *Dasein* has to be is this *not*, this *nothingness* but the *there*. “Thrownness” is not, in this sense, an event of our birth which we then overcome in our sketching-out, but the taking-up of this nothingness as our “ground”: “In the structure of thrownness, as in that of projection, there lies essentially a nullity”.<sup>56</sup> As such, it cannot be the wilful project of an “I”, an intentional projecting, but is the *factitious* making of *being the there* – this “that-it-is”. The facticity of the “there” is not a spot sketched-out once and for all, but is the *suchness* of our existence as only, each time *being the there*. The human being, in this sense, occupies the strange position of having been begun and being not yet complete; between what has been and not yet; between a birth and death. This existing in *possibility* is oddly made possible through the *impossibility* of getting behind our being begun, or, indeed, our indefinite ending, for death, as much as our thrown birth, is not an event that befalls us at the end of our life, but something which conditions this sketching-out of an existence, is a limit. Between an inappropriable beginning and an inappropriable ending, in the *not*, the absence of no longer and not yet, this project of “Care”, this *language of inquiry*, dwells.

The questionability of *Dasein* is, in this sense, a *formal one*, considering that though any existence begins in a certain sketch, a given outline, a happenstantial circumstance that limits the possibilities of what a life may be – being born into a country town in the middle of Ireland; the second child and first daughter; having red hair; being baptised – they cannot condition a life entirely. In fact, it is only from such an outline that any life can begin – the limit being, as Heidegger would understand it in “Building Dwelling Thinking”, the place from which presencing begins. The “who” is not isolatable from this thrown beginning, but it is not confined to it, for *who* she is is always *in question* – given that there is no ground to her being, other than her on-going *sketching-out* the *facticity* of a “there”. The question of the form of her existence cannot be isolated from a “content” and it cannot be a form that is formed once and for all, but is more of a form-in-formation. Her *language of inquiry* is an

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<sup>55</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 183.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

on-going attempt – she is not presented, upon birth, or the coming to consciousness, with a handbook on how to proceed – a theory divorced from the practice. The question of her existence only unfolds *as* her existence: “The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself”.<sup>57</sup>

By appealing to this preliminary sketch of the human, Heidegger unsettles and places into question the seeming “givenness” and “carefreeness” of our existence as instituted, *complete* “subjects” in the world – those whose position is already given and who can come to determine and know an objectifiable world. In contrast, the “self” Heidegger proffers as a project of “Care”, as an existence which is to be *carried through*, cannot be a fixed or stable subject, a determinable sense, but is the on-going *opening* up to the breach of *being-there*, of being a *begun beginner* – one who must continuously *tend towards* their existence, rather than being already established or set in position – caught, like “Care’s” making in a *crossing* at the river, in a factitious sketching-out between *what has been* sketched, and is *not yet* –

What Heidegger signals in this two-fold structure of our being, this *thrown-projection*, is a structure of *opening* where we are *cast* into a situation, sketched, thrown and throw it open, sketch it out, in a projective understanding. It is an opening that is not a one-off event in anyone’s life, but what is, *in each case mine* – an opening, a beginning, always re-opening, always re-beginning. The *issue* of our being, the *relation* towards our existence, our *questionability*, is this structure of opening, rather than a solipsistic interiority, a conversation with a self already constituted – what William McNeill emphasises when he notes how it is not “the relation *of a self* to the self” which would presuppose an already existing self in relation to a self, but is a relation as “*Dasein’s* openness to the *world*”.<sup>58</sup> The relation is this *hyphen* – indicating an existence still in formation – an existence which each time is the facticity *that-it-is-and-has-to-be*.

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*Being-there* indicates that the “self” and the “world” are not two separate entities – it is not that there is a world and then a subject, but this opening is their *co-constitution* – not as a one-off event, but as the *facticity* of an on-going *thrown-projection* – each day another strange-familiar *that-it-is-and-has-to-be*. This opening up to the hyphenation, to the *facticity* of existence, is made known to us, not, as Heidegger would have it, through a *cognitive* or *rational* grasping, but through *mood*, what he evokes in the German as the *Stimmung* of a

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>58</sup> McNeill, *Time of Life*, 59.

*Befindlichkeit*, where “*Befindlichkeit*”,<sup>59</sup> in colloquial German asks: “*Wie befinden Sie sich?*” – a question as to how someone is, or more literally, how they are *finding* themselves.<sup>60</sup>

A mood makes manifest ‘how one is, and how one is faring’. In this ‘how one is’, having a mood brings Being to its ‘there’.<sup>61</sup>

*Stimmung* has been rendered as a “state-of-mind” and “mood” in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time*, yet, as the scholar Leo Spitzer argues in his extensive research on the concept, what is captured in the German and difficult to translate smoothly into its European language counterparts, is the sense expressed in it of a lack of distinction between “the self” and their environment. It is, as he highlights, “a term that would express the unity of feelings experienced by man face to face with his environment (a landscape, nature, one’s fellow man), and would comprehend and weld together the objective (factual) and the subjective (psychological) into one harmonious unity”.<sup>62</sup> Any rendering of *Stimmung*, as Spitzer would have it, necessitates a splitting of subject and environment, a “dualism prescribed to him by his Romance language”. In this way, the relation of self and situation is perhaps better captured, as Spitzer suggests, in a rendering of *Stimmung* as “attunement” – playing on the musical connotations resonant within *Stimmung* as a “*basso ostinato*”, where *Stimmung* stems from “*gestimmt sein*”, meaning “to be tuned”.<sup>63</sup> Attunement captures the sense, in this way, of the manner in which the human being stands not *apart* from the “there”, not *in front* of the world they are thrown into, but intimately *implicated* in it, caught up in this “there” into which they have been cast – indicating an *opening* which links us with world and simultaneously dis-joins us from it – the *articulation* of a connecting and separating rather than the split of a self against the world. Indeed, in one of the intensely detailed footnotes of Spitzer’s book, he mentions how a certain Professor A. Rustow pointed out to him that the Greek word of harmony originally came from “the tactile and visual spheres: they are terms of the carpenter (the “joiner”) who “fits together”...and

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<sup>59</sup> The traditional translation of “*Befindlichkeit*” rendered it as “state-of-mind”, which has come under critique in recent times, but the limitations of which were already admitted by the translators themselves: “‘*Befindlichkeit*’. More literally: ‘the state in which one may be found’. (The common German expression ‘*Wie befinden Sie sich?*’ means simply ‘How are you?’ or ‘How are you feeling?’) Our translation, ‘state-of-mind’, comes fairly close to what is meant; but it should be made clear that the ‘of-mind’ belongs to the English idiom, has no literal counterpart in the structure of the German word, and fails to bring out the important connotation of finding oneself”, *Being and Time*, 172

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>62</sup> Leo Spitzer, *Classical and Christian ideas of world harmony; prolegomena to an interpretation of the word “Stimmung”* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), 5. It should be noted here the coincidence of Spitzer and Heidegger working at Marburg at the time Spitzer was working on this study of *Stimmung* – indicating a certain attunement perhaps, or tuning in by Heidegger.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

have been secondarily applied to the acoustic sphere”.<sup>64</sup> The human being is, in this sense, an *articulated jointure*, a hyphenated reality, existing as the suture of an in-between – connected to the world and disconnected from it daily in the *suchness* of a facticity. Indeed, Heidegger’s choice to speak of the human being as a “being-in-the-world” *visually* draws attention to this *articulation*, and is something captured too in the English translation of *Dasein* as the *hyphenation of being-there*.

It is in *Stimmung*, thus, where we confront the thrownness of our questionability, or are *confronted* by it, for *Stimmung* is not so much something *we* grasp, as it is what *grasps us*; what *knows* us, rather than what *we* know.

Having a mood brings *Dasein face to face* with its thrownness in such a manner that this thrownness is not known as such but disclosed far more primordially in ‘how one is’. Existentially, ‘*Being-thrown*’ means finding oneself in some state-of-mind or other.<sup>65</sup>

It is in *Stimmung* that the human being is brought to awareness that they have already been opened up into the uncanny *facticity* of not being an autonomous, knowing, self-enclosed “I”, but a being who has been *delivered over* to a *there* – one who *is* a situation, and thus, is, first and foremost, *ecstatic, not* themselves. “*Essentially, a state-of-mind implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us*”.<sup>66</sup> “In having a mood, *Dasein* is always disclosed moodwise as that entity to which it has been delivered over in its Being; and in this way it has been delivered over to the Being which, in existing, it has to be”.<sup>67</sup> In *Stimmung* they confront their own *groundlessness* – their emptiness of being only the *facticity* of *how* they are there, where this “how” does not tell them “how” they got there, or where they are going, but only *that* they are *there* – without a “whence” or “whither”,<sup>68</sup> already *thrown*. What we are confronted with in *Stimmung* is not what the world *is*, not who we *are*, but only the inexplicable *suchness* *that* there is a *there* we have been given over to, which we are. What is experienced is a certain *dispossession*, a certain *not-knowing*, but *being-known*, being *claimed* by the *there, addressed* – the “voice” of Being, *Stimmung* holding within it the *Stimme* of “voice”. In *Stimmung* we are made aware of our *calling* as beings who are *not* – nothing but the emptiness of a *there* resounding. In this way, the opening of *Stimmung* “does not mean ‘to be known as this sort of thing’”, but is what reveals the perplexity, the *questionability* of this having been cast: “the mood

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>65</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 389.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 177.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 174.

brings *Dasein* before the ‘that-it-is’ of its ‘there’, which, as such, stares it in the face with the inexorability of an enigma”.<sup>69</sup> In *Stimmung* we confront the issue of our being as what is not known – “Why that should be, one does not *know*”,<sup>70</sup> nor is it something one could one day know, “because the possibilities of disclosure which belong to cognition reach far too short a way compared with the primordial disclosure belonging to moods, in which *Dasein* is brought before its Being as ‘there’”.<sup>71</sup> The *facticity* cannot be gotten behind – it belongs not to the piecemeal knowing of an “I”, but to the *whole* understanding of the situation. “*The mood has already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole*”,<sup>72</sup> “mood is a primordial kind of Being for *Dasein*, in which *Dasein* is disclosed to itself *prior to* all cognition and volition, and *beyond* their range of disclosure”.<sup>73</sup> Here is the heart of this strange and paradoxical *Stimmung* Heidegger sketches – mood is what simultaneously exposes us to existence, and to this issue of our being, and yet, because it is not something that is *cognitively graspable*, it is also how this questionability of our being is most preserved. This ambiguity and ambivalence is, as Agamben would have it, the “concealment and unconcealment” of facticity – the “condition of what remains concealed in its opening, of what is exposed by its very retreat”.<sup>74</sup>

This nebulous, unknowable, yet perceptible quality of this *voice* of Being, this *Stimmung*, is evoked by Heidegger in his further treatment of *Stimmung* in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* where this in-between *articulation of facticity* is captured as the *medium* of *Dasein*, which he renders in decidedly musical terms. Attunement is, as he puts it,

a way [*Weise*] – in the sense of a melody that does not merely hover over the so-called proper being at hand of man, but that sets the tone for such being, i.e., attunes and determines the manner and way [*Art und Wie*] of his being...Attunements are the ‘*how*’ according to which one is in such and such a way. Certainly we often take this ‘one is in such and such a way’...as something indifferent, in contrast to *what* we intend to do, *what* we are occupied with, or *what* will happen to us. And yet this ‘one is in such and such a way’ is not – is never – simply a consequence or side-effect of our thinking, doing and acting. It is – to put it crudely – the presupposition for such things, the ‘medium’ within which they first happen.<sup>75</sup>

*Stimmung* is the way we become aware that the situation of a “there” has *already* opened up, it has been cleared. We are not in an inert space, but in a particular, subtly implicative

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>74</sup> Agamben, “The Passion of Facticity”, *Potentialities*, 190.

<sup>75</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 67-68.

*atmosphere* – what does not “say” anything, yet nevertheless *announces* the *there* – reveals it in the each time singular articulation of our situated lives – what pervades, ungrasped, yet nevertheless sets the stage for everything. Indeed, Heidegger also speaks of *Stimmung* in such atmospheric terms, playing on the other ambient connotations resonant within *Stimmung* as *climate*, and capturing the nebulous quality of this “medium”:

Attunements are *not side-effects*, but are something which in advance determine our being with one another. It seems as though an attunement is in each case already there, so to speak, like an atmosphere in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and which then attunes us through and through.<sup>76</sup>

What these musical and atmospheric connotations infer is how *Stimmung* is not understandable as a “thing”. As Heidegger puts it, “Attunement is in a certain way there and not there”,<sup>77</sup> it is more of a medium that is an *immediate* midst, in the sense of what is closest to hand, what we are immersed in, and yet, as with music or an atmosphere, is invisible – what goes *unspoken* and yet is palpably there and is, as Heidegger notes, the tacit, implicit way we are in relation to the world and to others, *how* we are always already in relation to them – the sharing of the *there*, this outside as such and thus, the most primordial ethos and the possibility for language as such. “When I am in a mood of sadness, then things address me quite differently or not at all...Feeling...concerns my whole being-in-the-world as my being a Self. Attunement is not something standing for itself but belongs to being-in-the-world as being addressed by things. Attunement and being related are one and the same.”<sup>78</sup>

Heidegger poignantly captures this silent density of *Dasein* when he speaks of what it is like to *be with* someone who has been bereaved, where, though there is no perceptible change in the person, all has changed utterly in the shift of their *attunement*.

A human being we are with is overcome by grief. Is it simply that this person has some state of lived experience that we do not have, while everything else remains as before? If not, what is happening here? The person overcome by grief closes himself off, becomes inaccessible, yet without showing any animosity towards us; it is simply that he becomes inaccessible. And yet we may be with him as before, or perhaps even more frequently, and may be more accommodating toward him. He does not alter anything about his comportment toward things or toward us either. Everything remains as before, and yet everything is different, not only in this or that respect but – irrespective of the sameness of *what* we do and *what* we engage in – the way in which we are together is different. Yet this is not some subsequent effect of the attunement of grief being at hand in him, but belongs rather to his grief as part of it. What does it mean to say that in such an attunement this human being is

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>78</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars: Protocols – Conversations – Letters*, trans. Franz Mayr and Richard Askay (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 203.

inaccessible? The manner and way in which we can be with him, and in which he is with us, has changed. It is the grief that constitutes this way (the way in which we are together). He draws us into the manner in which he is, although we do not necessarily feel any grief ourselves. Our being with one another, the being-there of our Da-sein, is different, its attunement has shifted....Attunement is not some being that appears in the soul as an experience, but the way of our being there with one another.<sup>79</sup>

What Heidegger elucidates here is the manner in which *Stimmung*, our mood, is not an interior experience of an individual, but is the way that a certain human's world is opened in its entirety – their whole *being-in-the-world*, which includes being with things, being with others and being with one's self. Attunement is not a "state" but a *way of being* indicative of a relationality to world, self and others that is not static but how we encounter the *facticity* of the everyday in its strange-familiar singularity – something to which Jean-Luc Nancy also speaks when he notes:

'People' are silhouettes that are both imprecise and singularised, faint outlines of voices, patterns of comportment, sketches of affects, not the anonymous chatter of the 'public domain'. But what is an affect, if not each time a sketch? A comportment, if not each time a pattern? A voice, if not each time a faint outline? What is a singularity, if not each time its 'own' clearing, its 'own' imminence...always touched upon, always lightly touched: revealing itself *beside*, always beside.<sup>80</sup>

This opening of *Stimmung* is the structure of our *questionability* – the unpredictability of our *being-there* being otherwise than expected, and what keeps those who are closest to us in life, those who are most intimate, most familiar, ones who nevertheless always remain strange; always play host to a guest appearance. "It is never the case that I have met Pierre or Marie per se, but I have met him or her in such and such a 'form', in such and such a 'state', in such and such a 'mood', and so on".<sup>81</sup> This is the singularity of a being who is not self-identical but who is always a *being-there*; beside themselves, *with, imparted, exposed* – a being who is first and foremost *not-I*.

In this sense, what Heidegger sketches with his understanding of *Stimmung* is a radical re-inscription of mood from the realm of the psychological, to the realm of the ontological. Rather than a subjective phenomenon, as the individualised and internalised "state-of-mind" suggests, *Stimmung* highlights the *facticity* of being-there not as an encapsulated subject, an "I", but first and foremost, a *not-I* – a being who finds themselves already *delivered over* to

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<sup>79</sup> Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 66.

<sup>80</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Richard D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

the world, ex-tended, non-coincidental, *submitted*. *Stimmung* is a medium that does not communicate “something” as such, but the very *tone* of our being – the subtle *way* of this daily differential *facticity* – the very opening of an *articulability*, a *communicability*. Attunement is not a “feeling” belonging to the subjective realm, but is the *articulation* of a crossing, the accord of “self” and “world” – the X that marks the spot in a mute jointure and separation. It can be understood as the *resonance* of *being-there* – a sense that can be latently read in *Being and Time* and later explicitly gestured to by Heidegger himself when he says:

*Hellen* [to clear], along with *hell* [clear], mean the same as *Hallen* [to resound] in the sense of “resounding”. In the sense of the [primordial] event of the self-manifestation of being, *Hellen* [to clear] occurs originally as *Hallen* [sounding], as tone.<sup>82</sup>

Simply, thus, the *language of inquiry*, the questionability of her very being, does not so much begin, as is always already begun – opened up in the *that-it-is* of a *there* – an inquiry initiated not by an “I”, by an assertive questioning, but by *being-questioned*, finding herself *delivered over* to the suchness of the world, the *thisness* of the world in its opacity – which is not the extraordinary, but the very ordinary everyday in its haecceity. An inquiry not commenced from what is *said*, but by the silent address of the *there*, that on-going question already opened up, the one the world throws at you every morning – *Here you are, alive* –

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<sup>82</sup> Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 181.

**SKETCH: MAKING-ROOM**

life lives out of its own ground and wells forth out of what is its own, thus it lives without why.  
– Meister Eckhart, *The Young Heidegger: Rumour of the Hidden King*

From our birth, we find ourselves, situation, upon situation, never in the same day, though this again is Friday today. There is both continuity and discontinuity to these situations – the same desk, the same computer, the same bookcase, and yet; the notes scattered in a different arrangement from yesterday; the glass daily drank from sits to the right of the computer, shifted from its position to the left; the window opening is still there, but what it opens onto is the most persistent reminder that this scene is shifting – the cherry blossom tree now almost denuded of its leaves is the same cherry blossom tree that bloomed, only ever so briefly, but beautifully, in April; the sky is grey-white today. Philosophy begins with the simple wonder of this daily bread of the everyday, the enigma that, though closest to hand, remains furthest from us, like the hands typing these words.

Days “come and wake us”, Phillip Larkin said, which is to say that we do not so much begin them, as are begun by them – daybreak – cracking open another access, passing over, she is turned into another day, for we wear days, inhabit their singular styles, their ways of saying; days being the vernacular of time. Plotless, they have no reason, but simply are what seems to be so, and being so, they are “to be happy in” – where else do we live but in days?

A language of inquiry begins in days and never gets out of them; each day turning the previous day’s thoughts – it was like *that*, now it is like *this*; each day a wreckage of what was – a language never cohering into a definite *signified*, what the world is *about*, but an *aboutness* that is changing with each given day – an aboutness that is this given change of each day – a transitory, transitional movement – not a thing, but what exists in the going along, in the turning of each day – returning and repeating the same posture, the same keyboard, the same notebook lying open on another page. Scene after scene the same repeated differently. The day and her are one and this closeness is their distance – their simultaneity the complication of existence.

In the macro and the micro, always a *thrown-projection* – the sketch of a life, the sketch of each day – between breaking-open and closing, a language of inquiry always bound to an in-between, to the limit of *this* situation. An inquiry intensely, simply alive in a shifting impermanence, the permeability of each scene, each situation, never the same, though this again is Friday, still.

Quotidian conditions are just around – like sound effects in movies, which one hardly notices except if they are missing. In this sense, the quotidian consists not of

things but of effects playing over the surface of things; it is not beings but a way of being.<sup>83</sup>

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To leave the region of consciousness and attain to that of Da-sein: and thus to see that, understood as Da-sein (that is, from the ek-static), the human only exists in coming from itself to that which is wholly other than itself.  
– Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*

What is revealed in *Stimmung* is the way we are already *passionately* involved in the world, in the sense of being *given over to it*, already opened onto it – what Thomas Carl Wall calls a “radical passivity” – which is not a passivity opposed to an activity, but a passivity which is “passive with regard to *itself*, and thus it submits to itself as though it were an exterior power...it is always outside itself and is its own other. Passive with regard to itself, the essential passivity of the subject must undergo itself, suffer itself, feel itself *as other*”.<sup>84</sup> It is a passivity as the constitution of a human being in the *chiasm* of *being-there*, in the xenos of coexistence; both being and non-being; both “self” and “other”; one who is *and is not*. If the human being has their own being as an issue, their project of “Care” can be considered an assignment carried out not by an “I”, not by an assertive knowing, but by the pre-conceptual, pre-reflective, expropriating understanding of being given over to a situation – sketching-out a *there*. Not what “I” know, but what *she* knows – “this subject beneath me for whom a world exists before I am here, and who marks out my place in it” – the X that marks the spot of the “captive” subject which is, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty has tendered, the “body”.<sup>85</sup> Something which Casey also gestures to in his reflection on Heidegger’s sense of *Dasein*’s thrownness: “To be thrown into the world is to be placed there *in* a body and *by* a body. How else could we experience the adversity and shock of thrownness except in bodily terms – terms that are in turn the basis for the ‘moods’ that arise from the same action”.<sup>86</sup> How else could we be drawn-out from ourselves, given over to a situation, an attuned jointure, if not through the *tension* of a bodily perceptibility? How else could we be *bound* to a *there*, thrown, sketched, if not through this limit of a body, whilst simultaneously *not being bound* to it, but all the while sketching-out, if not through a limit that is the *beginning of presencing*? How else could a language of inquiry already be articulating itself if not through

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<sup>83</sup> Lyn Hejinian, “A Common Sense”, *The Language of Inquiry*, 358.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 1.

<sup>85</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 296.

<sup>86</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (California: University of California Press, 1998), 260.

the very *arthros* of this one beneath – she whose fingers, toes, eyes, ears, skin, are immersed continuously in a questioning; she the expectant one, always anticipating.

‘What will happen next?’ –  
the question hinged in your knees, your ankles,  
in the in-breaths even of weeping.<sup>87</sup>

How else could her inquiry not be reduced to a *thing*, if not for her multifarious *ways of being*? Now like this, now like that; form and content inseparable in the on-going twofold structure of *thrown-projection*. How else could she be placed between, could this language be an articulation of a chiasm of *being-there*, if not for her body as a “*place of passage*...a hyphen connecting link between the things which act upon me and the things upon which I act.”<sup>88</sup>

It is a question, of course, of just how we take this “body” – as a *thing* that we possess, or a *way of being* we never have a proper handle on, and which more often than not, possesses *us*.

We speak of [the body] to others as of a thing that belongs to us; but for us it is not entirely a thing; and it belongs to us a little less than we belong to it...This thing that is so much mine and yet so mysteriously and sometimes always, in the end our most redoubtable antagonist, is the most urgent, the most constant and the most variable thing imaginable: for it carries with it all constancy and all variation.<sup>89</sup>

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It would be fair to say that “the body” of Heidegger’s Dasein has proven to be a quibblesome bone of contention amongst readers, many of whom argue that he fails to attend to “the body” at all, that there is a palpable silence from him concerning the bodied nature of “being-there”. But perhaps it is a question as to just what kind of body is being expected, just what kind of body is indeed missing, for what may be needed is a reading that attends to a tact of attempting to step outside the damaging dichotomising of the inheritance of metaphysics in order to upturn the strangely disembodied creature of René Descartes’ cogito. Perhaps what is needed is a self who is “embodied” in a way that undoes any notion of simply being “in” a body, and proposes in its place the *traction* of a hyphenated “being-there” through “Care”. Indeed, part of the strangeness of Heidegger’s depiction of Dasein stems from his efforts to create a language that will help him to formulate the *questionability* of Being and to speak about being-in-the-world in a way which will avoid re-inscribing the

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<sup>87</sup> Jane Hirshfield, “When Your Life Looks Back”, *Come, Thief* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books, 2012), 91.

<sup>88</sup> Henri Bergson quoted in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 296.

<sup>89</sup> Paul Valéry (1989, pp. 398-9), quoted in Vicki Kirby, *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (London: Routledge, 1997), 65.

oversights, or plain assumptions of philosophical concepts as they have been formulated and have remained *unquestioned*: “In so far as certain domains of being become visible in the course of this history and henceforth chiefly dominated the range of problems (Descartes’ *ego cogito*, subject, the “I”, reason, spirit, person) the beings just cited remain unquestioned with respect to the being and structure of their being, which indicates the thorough neglect of the question of being”.<sup>90</sup> These concepts are constructed upon a view of the world in its dualistic object-subject distinction, a view from *without*, and have congealed into terms upon which metaphysics can construct its world. The ability to disturb and place into question the sense of what it means to be “in” the world through such inherited philosophical terms, cannot be presupposed. Heidegger’s attempt must be read instead as one which, in its seeking to awaken the *questionability* of “Being” anew, is a seeking *as form* – a sketching – with no ground set out in advance to fall back on: “*what is to be found out by asking* – the meaning of Being – also demands that it be conceived in a way of its own, fundamentally contrasting with the concepts in which entities acquire their determinate signification”.<sup>91</sup> It is such an approach which Jeff Malpas’s reading of *Being and Time* also indicates when he argues: “the body cannot be simply assumed – what the body *is* must be acknowledged to be itself in question here. Moreover, this is a point that Heidegger himself seems implicitly to recognise – it may partly contribute to the uncertain treatment of the body in *Being and Time*, and undoubtedly emerges as an element in Heidegger’s later thinking”.<sup>92</sup> What is needed is a reading which, as David Kleinberg-Levin argues in his own argument on the implicitness of Dasein’s bodily being, takes a look not based on the “false impression”<sup>93</sup> which stems from a “peculiarly restricted conception of the body – or, say, of that which constitutes a discourse on the body”, but is a reading which attempts another *way of attending*, which is open to another way of articulating our *bodily being* and which may count, as Kleinberg-Levin argues, the “phenomenology of perception, the phenomenology of lived space, and the phenomenology of practical activities”<sup>94</sup>, of Heidegger’s sketch of Dasein, as constituting such another way – one which is based not on the presentable “body” – an objectifiable, bound entity within a skin, an external form – but a *presenting* body as a

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<sup>90</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 21-22.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>92</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (Cambridge MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012), 116.

<sup>93</sup> David Kleinberg-Levin, “The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger’s Thinking of Being”, revised essay published in Donn Welton, ed., *The Body: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (London and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 3.

[http://www.academia.edu/1146844/The\\_Ontological\\_Dimension\\_of\\_Embodiment\\_Heideggers\\_Thinking\\_of\\_Being](http://www.academia.edu/1146844/The_Ontological_Dimension_of_Embodiment_Heideggers_Thinking_of_Being)

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

lived, existential ecstasis – the means through which this *conversing* of self and world takes place and how we orientate and make sense of this *there* we have been thrown into.

Perhaps “failure” then – a failure to determine once and for all, to set into a “determinant signification”, is part and parcel of Heidegger’s attempt, part of any effort to *dislocate* the philosophical body of discourse on “the body”. As Nancy has put it: “Of course, failure is given at the outset, and intentionally so. And a double failure is given: a failure to produce a discourse on the body, also the failure not to produce discourse on it. A double bind...”<sup>95</sup>

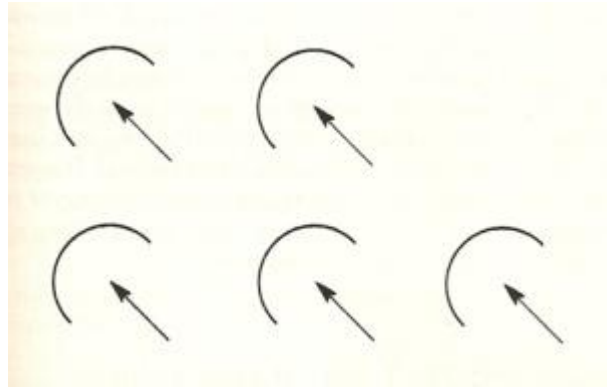
Perhaps this *indeterminacy* as to the presence or absence of a body in Heidegger’s conception of “being-there”, speaks to the *ambivalence* of the kind of body he evokes – a *questionable* body, neither fully present, nor fully absent, but an odd traction of being drawn-out; not decidedly locatable in a “here”, not a sclerotic substance or essence, not an “expression” of sense, but a *presenting*, an ex-tension here-there; a morphing, changing, dynamic *relating*, characterised by *possibility*. If Heidegger’s effort is to bring us to a different understanding of dwelling in the world, if, as he claims in the introduction to *Being and Time*, that a pre-ontological understanding of Being needs to be reclaimed and recognised, then it must be an understanding which is “carried and sustained by way of our embodiment”<sup>96</sup> – this pre-conscious, factual, everyday, manner of standing out in the open, which we have to each time be.

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<sup>95</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence*, trans. Brian Holmes et al (Stanford California: Stanford University press, 1993), 190.

<sup>96</sup> Kleinberg-Levin, “The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment”, 1.

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This drawing should only illustrate that human existing in its essential ground is never just an object which is present-at-hand; it is certainly not a self-contained object. Instead, this way of existing consists of “pure”, invisible, intangible capacities for receiving-perceiving [*Vernehmen*] what it encounters and what addresses it...all conventional, objectifying representations of a capsule-like psyche, subject, person, ego, or consciousness in psychology and psychopathology must be abandoned in favour of an entirely different understanding  
– Martin Heidegger, *Zollkion Seminars*<sup>97</sup>

Whilst Heidegger’s sketch of *Dasein* was, as the title of *Being and Time* suggests, a temporal conception of the human being, it was one which was, nonetheless, also inextricably linked with *space* and, as Peter Sloterdijk highlights, *movement*: “very few commentators on Heidegger have noted the nascent but revolutionary treatise on being and space that underlies...*Being and Time*. Under the spell of Heidegger’s existential analytic of time, it has mostly been overlooked that the former is grounded in a corresponding analytic of space and that both are fundamentally rooted in an analysis of movement...”<sup>98</sup> It is a dynamic, spatial

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<sup>97</sup> This “drawing” is indicative of the chalkboard drawing which Heidegger seemingly sketched during one of the first Zollikon seminars, and opens the published collection itself. Whilst the “sketch” quality of the demonstrated drawing is lost here in the repetition of exactly the same arrows, it nevertheless shows how this tending towards a limit is an on-going effort.

<sup>98</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, “Nearness & Spatiality”, *Theory, Culture & Society* 29, no. 4: 36-37. Whilst Sloterdijk posits that there is a sketched sense of spatial being in Heidegger’s making-room, he argues that it was not fulfilled in the text itself and that Heidegger proffers a weak sense of the human as being isolated in their own existence, paving forth the path for his own project of spheres to compensate for this lack of a being-with. I find Sloterdijk’s reading incongruous with my own and find articulated in *Being and Time* a *Dasein* who is always already caught up with others and inextricably so. My own reading dwells on the significance of the “structure of the as” which is, as I will attempt to sketch-out, crucial to a spatial, or as I’d prefer, “roomy” or “placial” understanding of the structure of *Dasein*, where it exists only in parting-with itself and is always only in *co-existence*, *being-with*. In *Being and Time* Heidegger proffers that it is through the ecstatic structure of time that *Dasein breaks into space*, and yet, in his later lecture *On Time and Being*, this is entirely retracted. “The attempt in *Being and Time*...to derive human spatiality from temporality is untenable”, *On Time and Being*, trans, Joan Stambaugh (London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 23. In this essay he speaks of the *time-space* of the opening: “Time-space now is the name for the openness which opens up in the mutual self-extending of futural approach, past and present. This openness exclusively and primarily provides the space in which space as we usually know it can unfold. The self-extending, the

understanding which would, as he admits in an interview, inspire his own spatial sketching of subjectivity through his sphereological imagining:

I was also fascinated by a chalkboard drawing Martin Heidegger made around 1960, in a seminar in Switzerland, in order to help psychiatrists better understand his ontological theses... In the drawing, one can see five arrows, each of which is rushing toward a singular semicircular horizon – a magnificently abstract symbolisation of the term *Dasein* as the state of being cast in the direction of an always receding world horizon (unfortunately, it's not known how the psychiatrists reacted to it). But I still recall how my antennae began to buzz back then, and during the following years a veritable archaeology of spatial thought emerged from this impulse.<sup>99</sup>

What captures Sloterdijk's attention in Heidegger's sketch, is an ec-static sense of subjectivity, of being a being not encapsulated but caught up with an outside – a sense of being which *is* only through what they *are not*. "If humans are 'there', it is initially in spaces that have opened for them because, by inhabiting them, humans have given them form, content, extension and relative duration".<sup>100</sup>

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When we  
rearrange the rooms we end up living in,  
we are looking for first light, the arrangement  
of light, that time before we knew to call it light.  
– Carol Ann Duffy, "Homesickness"

It is through a sense of *inhabiting* which perhaps another understanding of "embodiment" can be read, one which is a re-configuration of that small preposition from which conceptions of "the self" seem always to come – that is, of what it means to be "in" the world. In proffering the human being as a questionable self, as an *attuned* being, non-coincidental and "in" the *midst* of the world, Heidegger conceives of an "in" which speaks not of enclosure, containment or a static position, but an "in" which is more of an implicatory *inhabiting* – as he sketches when he notes:

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opening up, of future, past and present is itself prespatial; only thus can it make room, that is, provide space", *On Time and Being*, 14. He directs the listener to his essay "Building Dwelling Thinking". Yet, it could be argued that what becomes explicit in the later lecture, was perhaps latently there in *Being and Time*, and crucially in this sense of *making-room* that I will read here as articulating a *time-space*. It must also be added here that both Malpas and Casey have offered readings of the spatiality of Heidegger's thought.

<sup>99</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, "Against Gravity: Bettina Funcke Talks with Peter Sloterdijk", interview by Funcke, B. (2005): *Book-forum* February/March.

[http://www.bookforum.com/archive/feb\\_05/funcke.html](http://www.bookforum.com/archive/feb_05/funcke.html)

<sup>100</sup> Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres, Volume One: Bubbles*, trans. Wieland Hoban (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2011), 46.

‘In’ is derived from “*innan*” – “to reside”, “*habitare*”, “to dwell”. ‘An’ signifies “I am accustomed”, “I am familiar with”, “I look after something”. It has the signification of “*colo*” in the senses of “*habito*” and “*diligo*”. The entity to which Being-in in this signification belongs is one which we have characterised as that entity which in each case I myself am [bin]. The expression ‘*bin*’ is connected with ‘*bei*’, and so ‘*ich bin*’ [‘I am’] means in its turn “I reside” or “dwell alongside” the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way.<sup>101</sup>

As remarked upon in the footnotes to this page in the translation of *Being and Time*, “in”, in this “*innan*” sense, was at first a *verbal* denotation and it is from such a sense that Heidegger seems to be speaking to in his attempt to capture a *dynamic* “in” of *Dasein*’s being-in-the-world as a *living involvement*, constituted through relationships of “Care”, where, as the translators further point out: “the Latin ‘colo’ has the parallel meanings of ‘I take care of something’ or ‘cherish it’ (‘diligo’) and ‘I dwell’ or ‘I inhabit’ (‘habito’)”.<sup>102</sup> *Dasein*’s “in” is not that of an abstractable, homogenised, universal space, but one which is always *familiar*, always a project of “Care”, always something they are *absorbed in*, which is something he further emphasises in the later essay “Building Dwelling Thinking”:

Where the word *bauen* still speaks in its original sense it also says *how far* the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen, buan, bhu, beo* are our word *bin* in the versions: *ich bin*, I am, *du bist*, you are, the imperative form *bis*, be. What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin, du bist*, mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling. To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man is insofar as he *dwells*, this word *bauen* however *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for”.<sup>103</sup>

In lieu of a “self” which can autonomously “be”, selfhood is here ascribed only as the *happening* in and as a *context*, where this project of dwelling is not an indifferent building, but an on-going project of “Care” through an *inhabiting* – an “in” which must be *temporalised*. As such, “the self” cannot be ascribed a nominative denotation, but manifests through a *verbal* modality of dwelling *within* a situation – something Casey articulates as the basic character of an “in” of being “in-between”, which cannot be “the strict ‘in’ of containership”, but is an in which he understands through the *extending hyphenation* to which it is joined, which “exhibits a visual link that is the topographical equivalent of a very different idea of the ‘in’, that which is active in experiences of in-habitation or in-

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<sup>101</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 80.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>103</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 145.

dwelling”.<sup>104</sup> Here is an “in” which expresses the *articulated jointure of being-there*, an “in” of connection *and* separation, rather than the smothering “in” of containment – one which arises, as Casey notes, making reference to Heidegger’s *innan*, in experiences of coming to know somewhere from “within”, that is, through knowing a place *intimately*, through the “concrete acquaintance, by our bodily being there. When we say that we know a place ‘by heart’, we are referring to this special sense of insider’s knowledge”.<sup>105</sup> To be *in* the world through an *inhabiting* necessarily involves a body which lends itself not simply to being *beside* objects or people, but, as Casey notes, in a certain *withness* to them – something he evokes through Heidegger’s sense of *Dasein*’s *Mitdasein*, their always already being-with the world and others, as Heidegger articulates it: “the world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of *Dasein* is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is *Being-with* Others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is *Dasein-with* [*Mit-Dasein*]”.<sup>106</sup> To be *inhabiting* the world is to be bound to a *locality* of a *there*, a specific *with-world*, from which we never step “outside” of but are intimately, caringly *involved* in.

...Being-in is not a ‘property’ which *Dasein* sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that man ‘is’ and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the ‘world’ – a world with which he provides himself occasionally. *Dasein* is never ‘proximally’ an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in”.<sup>107</sup>

To be “in” the world is not to be placed in a uniform space of abstraction, but to be *with* others, to be *with* the world, in a dynamic of coming to *inhabit*, rather than inertly, innocuously already set “in” a there. As a verbal “in”, this is a dwelling which, as Heidegger emphasises in “Building Dwelling Thinking”, is an *on-going* attempt, rather than a one-off, or completable accomplishment – it is a *quest* rather than a fixed abode or settlement, where the real dwelling plight of human beings is that they must “ever search anew for the essence of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*”.<sup>108</sup> There is no secure stopping place for *Dasein*; their being-in-the-world is a dwelling whose “ground” is only the on-going sketching-out of a situated *being-there*, where their being is always *still outstanding*.

In this sense *Dasein* is always *within* the world, not standing outside it, or apart from it, but bound up with *inhabiting* it through a bodily *articulation of being-with*. Rather than the “there” of a site prepared once and for all, the “there” is an on-going conversing of self and

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<sup>104</sup> Edward S. Casey, “Edges and the in-between”, *Phaenex: Journal of Existential and Phenomenological theory and culture* 3, no. 2 (2008): 5.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>106</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 155.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>108</sup> Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, 159.

world; is each time a local happening – something Heidegger gestures to in the following rumination on the special resonance of the German “there” as the “*Da*”, which does not signify a spot unto itself, but the *ambivalence* of a joined “here” and “there” – a play evidently lost in the English rendering of “there” which does not have such a sense of tension.<sup>109</sup>

The entity which is essentially constituted by Being-in-the-world is itself in every case its ‘there’. According to the familiar signification of the word, the ‘there’ points to a ‘here’ and a ‘yonder’... ‘Here’ and ‘yonder’ are possible only in a ‘there’ – that is to say, only if there is an entity which has made a disclosure of spatiality as the Being of the ‘there’. This entity carries in its ownmost Being the character of *not being closed off*. In the expression ‘there’ we have in view this essential disclosedness. By reason of this disclosedness, this entity (*Dasein*), together with the Being-there of the world, is ‘there’ for itself.<sup>110</sup>

How else could *Dasein* “not be closed off” other than through a *bodily disposition*, disclosing this “there” into its differentiation, where it is not separate from it but caught up in it. Such a disclosure of the *there* where the human being is not *in* space, but *inhabits* it, coming to *take space in*, and thus *bound up* with it, is what Heidegger comes to call the localised, temporalised sense of *making-room*:

*Dasein* is never present-at-hand in space, not even proximally. *Dasein* does not fill up a bit of space as a Real Thing or item of equipment would, so that the boundaries dividing it from the surrounding space would themselves just define that space spatially. *Dasein* takes space in; this is to be understood literally. It is by no means just present-at-hand in a bit of space which its body fills up. In existing, it has already made room [einräumen] for its own leeway [*Spielraum*].<sup>111</sup>

In this way, *Dasein*’s “space” [*Raum*], their “room”, is not something they simply enter into, but is that which they *make* through their inhabiting the world in relations of *concern* [*Besörge*], towards the things of the world, and *solicitude* [*Fürsorge*], towards others, and towards their own being that *is an issue*. To be *involved* in inhabiting the world is to be

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<sup>109</sup> Lost too, it would seem, in the French, as Heidegger highlighted in his contention with the French translation of *Dasein*: “In the philosophical tradition, the term “‘being-there’ means presence-at-hand, existence. In this sense, one speaks, for instance, of proofs for God’s existence. However, Da-sein is understood differently in *Being and Time*. To begin with, French existentialists also failed to pay attention to it. That is why they translated Da-sein in *Being and Time* as *etre-la*, which means being here and not there. The *Da* in *Being and Time* does not mean a statement of place [Ortsangabe] for a being, but rather it should designate the openness where beings can be present for the human being, and the human being also for himself. The *Da* of [Da-sein’s] *being* distinguishes the humanness of the human being. The talk about human Da-sein is *accordingly* a pleonasm, avoidable in all contexts, including *Being and Time*. The appropriate French translation of ‘being-there’ should be: *Etre le la*, and the meaningful accentuation should be *Da-sein* in German instead of “being-there””, quoted in Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (Cambridge MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), 48.

<sup>110</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 171, (my italics).

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 419.

caught up in an outside, to be *attuned* to a “there” by being not “in” space, but “spatial”,<sup>112</sup> or as it is rendered in German “*Raumlich*”, “roomy”. In the *traction* of being “here-there”, *Dasein* “makes-room”, creating ‘*Raumlichkeit*’, the “roominess” of their existence; the *articulation* of their being-there.

And even when *Dasein* explicitly addresses itself as “I here”, this locative personal designation must be understood in terms of *Dasein*’s existential spatiality. In interpreting this we have already intimated that this “I-here” does not mean a certain privileged point – that of an I-Thing – but is to be understood as Being-in in terms of the “yonder” of the world that is ready-to-hand – the “yonder” which is the dwelling-place of *Dasein* as *concern*.<sup>113</sup>

*Dasein*’s room, in this sense is the manner in which they receive themselves as the *tension* between a *there* and a *here*, in the dehiscence of what has been and is not yet. *Dasein* exists in the anaphora of this referral, from *there* to *here*. Room is made, in this sense, in the *turning* of a *re*, in a *folding*, in the *crossing* of a passage between. Here *Dasein* exists in the *resonance*, receiving themselves by being cast back to themselves and it is this *tension* which is perceived in *Stimmung* – this *attunement* with the world.

As Steven Connor has noted, what characterises *room*, is the manner in which it is always a singularised compound of body and space, a veritable “*spatiodugal*”<sup>114</sup> making which is spun from the *inside out*, and so comprised of space – an *internally* rather than *externally* manifested form.

You can measure the distance between things precisely in space; but you can only register the quality of closeness or coming-up-against in room. Room is closet space. Space is defined from the outside in; room is formed from the inside out, like a burrow or a nest. In space, there is a distinction between the space and the bodies that occupy it; a room is already a compound body-space. A room, or room in general is conjoined or co-penetrated with the things that inhabit it – hence ‘leg-room’, ‘elbow-room’, ‘wriggle-room’.<sup>115</sup>

*Dasein*’s manner of coming to be placed in the world is akin to this measuring through a felt bodily nearness, where it is not “in” space but *inhabits* it, *desevers* it, as Heidegger calls it, coming into *nearness* with the world by this attuned tension, this shuttling of perception from there to here. *Dasein*’s “there” is, in this sense, a space spun out *from within*, a spatiodugal, always localised idiosyncratic compound of body and space, which is always,

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>114</sup> Steven Connor, “Building Breathing Space”, *StevenConnor*, 3 March 2004, <http://www.stevenconnor.com/bbs/>

<sup>115</sup> Steven Connor, “Ear Room”, *StevenConnor*, 30 November 2008, <http://www.stevenconnor.com/earroom/>

significantly, “chronic or temporalised”. A spatiofugal making is on-going – room always in need of “Care”.

The body is the means, in this sense, of the clearing, of the opening of *being-there*, something implicitly readable here in *Being and Time*, and explicitly so in “Building Dwelling Thinking”, when Heidegger references the manner in which the space in which he is speaking, (this essay originally being a lecture delivered at a colloquium), is *already* opened up through his body.

Spaces open up by the fact that they are let into the dwelling of man. To say that mortals *are* is to say that *in dwelling* they persist through spaces by virtue of their stay among things and locations. And only because mortals pervade, persist through, spaces by their very nature are they able to go through spaces. But in going through spaces we do not give up our standing in them. Rather, we always go through spaces in such a way that we already experience them by staying constantly with near and remote locations and things. When I go toward the door of the lecture hall, I am already there, and I could not go to it at all if I were not such that I am there. I am never here only, as this encapsulated body; rather, I am there, that is, I already pervade the room, and only thus can I go through it.<sup>116</sup>

Here is the movement of an *inhabiting* where the space has already opened up in the tension between, from a *there*, to a *here*, making *room* [*Einräumen*] for the passage through it within, as he would also emphasise in this essay, a *boundary*.

*Raum* means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognised, the boundary is that from which something *begins its presencing*. That is why the concept is that of *horismos*, that is, the horizon, the boundary. Space is in essence that for which room has been made, that which is let into its bounds. That for which room is made is always granted and hence is joined, that is, gathered, by virtue of its location.<sup>117</sup>

What *defines Dasein* is not a bounded body but the *limit* of the *there* into which they are thrown and from which room can be made – a point which Casey has also touched upon when he notes: “Within a limit, room is made – and thus place. To lack limit is to lack place, and conversely: not to be in place is to be unlimited. A limit is a positive power within which place is made”.<sup>118</sup>

In another late essay Heidegger again returns to making-room, highlighting, on this occasion, the *two-fold* manner of *Dasein*'s inhabiting:

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<sup>116</sup> Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking”, 154-155.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>118</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 262.

How does clearing-away happen? Is it not making-room (*Einräumen*), and this again in a twofold manner as granting and arranging? First, making-room admits something. It lets openness hold sway which, among other things, grants the appearance of things present to which human dwelling sees itself consigned. On the other hand, making-room prepares for things the possibility to belong to their relevant whither and, out of this, to each other. In this two-fold making-room, the yielding of places happens.<sup>119</sup>

Heidegger is here attuned to the resonance within the German *Raum* of *Räumen*, meaning to clear-out, *roden*, to free-up. Making-room is contingent upon the two-fold *thrown-projection*, where an initial openness *grants the appearance of things*, a certain field, from which the *arrangement* of things is found. As noted in *Being and Time*: “Both ‘Raum-geben’ (our ‘giving space’) and ‘Einräumen’ (our ‘making room’) are often used in the metaphorical sense of ‘yielding’, ‘granting’, or ‘making concessions’. ‘Einräumen’ may also be used for ‘arranging furniture’, ‘moving it in’, or ‘stowing it away’”.<sup>120</sup> As emphasised here, this action is not an intentional project of *Dasein*, but more of an *allowance*, a *yielding* – a letting one’s self be cast – not a subject’s *projection* onto the world, a throwing of significance, but how *she* is thrown – not bound within the limit of the skin, but extending beyond it. Rather than a subjective disclosure of being, she is caught in a situation, thrown to the *there* as a horizon of meaning from which something can show itself. The *horizon* of the *there*, in this sense, is her limit, each time. The distinction as such is that between a *lived body* and a *corporeal body*, a body as a *way of being*, an *attunement* with a *there*, and a body as a present-at-hand *thing*. A distinction Heidegger demonstrates in his *Zollikon Seminars* when he says:

One could understand the living body as a corporeal thing. I am seated here at the table, and fill this space enclosed by my epidermis. But then we are not speaking about my being-here, but only about the presence of a corporeal thing in this place. Perhaps one comes closer to the phenomenon of the body by distinguishing between the different limits of a corporeal thing [*Körper*] and those of the body [*Leib*].<sup>121</sup>

When pointing with my finger toward the crossbar of the window over there, I [as body] do not end at my fingertips. Where then is the limit of the body?...each body, that is, the body as body, is in each case my body. The *bodying forth* [*Leiben*] of the *body* is determined by the way of my being. The *bodying forth* of the body, therefore, is a way of *Da-sein*’s being...*bodying forth* is co-determined by my being human in the sense of the ecstatic sojourn amidst the beings in the clearing. The limit of *bodying forth*...is the horizon of being within which I sojourn. Therefore,

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<sup>119</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Art and Space”, trans. Charles Sietart, *Man and World* 6 (1973): 4.

<sup>120</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 146, translator’s note.

<sup>121</sup> Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 86.

the limit of my bodying forth changes constantly through the change in the reach of my sojourn.<sup>122</sup>

In lieu of a bounded “body” Heidegger shifts to speaking of the lived body as a *bodying-forth*, marking out what Judith Butler would later call for as an ontology of *present participles*, in an attempt to undercut the sense of a body as a self-coincident “thing”, making it seem determinable as an enclosed interior of an “I” who does something, rather than the complication of one who *is, in and as* the *doing* – one which is on-going and historicised.

The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant *materialising* possibilities. One is not simply of a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one’s body and, indeed, one does one’s body differently from one’s contemporaries and from one’s own embodied predecessors and successors as well. It is, however, clearly unfortunate grammar to claim that there is a ‘we’ or an ‘I’ that does its body, as if a disembodied agency preceded and directed an embodied exterior. More appropriate, I suggest, would be a vocabulary that resists the substance metaphysics of subject-verb formations and relies instead on an ontology of present participles. The ‘I’ that is its body is, of necessity, a mode of embodying, and the ‘what’ that it embodies is possibilities. But here again the grammar of the formulation misleads, for the possibilities that are embodied are not fundamentally exterior or antecedent to the process of embodying itself.<sup>123</sup>

What defines *Dasein* in their *bodying* is an *outside* that they share and make with others who are *there* with them in the world; an outside which is never a tabula rasa to be projected upon by a self, but an inherited, social and cultural realm. The projective understanding of *Dasein* is never an innocuous or innocent perceiving, but is an understanding informed and inflected by a particular historically situated *bodying*. To be a bodily being as a *thrown-projection*, is to inherit a *way of being* out of which and against which one *does* one’s way of being, as Butler would put it – now wearing the heavy workman’s boots her gait changes, and she feels the difference of a seemingly innocuous choice – how the shape of the shoe makes for a different expectancy of encounter, portage, rapport with the world, with others, with herself.

*Projecting* or *sketching-out* in this sense is more of an *opening toward the world*, a “standing-open”, where the “significant features of what is encountered address the human being”.<sup>124</sup> Here is a being called into question prior to any questioning; a *responsibility* of *response* before any “I” enters the scene. Something which Kleinberg-Levin has picked up

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>123</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, *Theatre Journal* 4, no. 4 (1998): 521.

<sup>124</sup> Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 231.

on in his reading of the latent “body” articulable in Heidegger’s sketch of *Dasein*: “It is a bodily felt responsiveness that is called forth, solicited, in an immemorial time of origin prior to all reflective awareness, all forms of intentionality that express the ego-logical will. It is...the existential coordinates of our ontological disposition as beings bodily related to, and called into question by, the pressing (unconcealment) of being”.<sup>125</sup> This *projective* understanding is a sketching carried out not through a present-at-hand body, a body defined by being limited or bound by the skin, a body that is *contained* “in” a position, but is a body which is an *open stance towards* the world, a *responsive capacity*; an *availability*; a *way of being* attuned to the world; a tensional in-between.

As a pre-ontological, pre-subjective, pre-conceptual understanding this attuned bodily projecting is not a special cognitive ability. As Kleinberg-Levin puts it, it does not belong to an “ego-logical will”, but is how we *carry-out* an existence. The understanding which belongs to *Dasein* is not an addendum to their existence, it is not an assertive knowing by a subject, but is the co-formative conversing of a self and world as what makes for this *being-there* – a dynamic, on-going, sketching-out.

In understanding as an *existential*, that which we have such competence over is not a ‘what’, but Being as existing. The kind of Being which *Dasein* has, as potentiality-for-Being, lies existentially in understanding. *Dasein* is not something present-at-hand which possesses its competence for something by way of an extra; it is primarily Being-possible. *Dasein* is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility.<sup>126</sup>

Projecting in this sense, has “nothing to do with comporting oneself towards a plan that has been thought out, and in accordance with which *Dasein* arranges its Being”, but is the opening up to the horizon of the “there” as the *boundary*, the *horos*, of *that* situation’s limit, where we are always already comporting ourselves towards what is unveiling itself, always already (co)responding in such a way that we take what we encounter into our care – aiding it in “unfolding its own essence as far as possible”.<sup>127</sup>

What we become aware of in *Stimmung*, in the mood of the situation we find ourselves in, is an initial openness granting the appearance of a *there* to which we see our project of dwelling consigned, simple things of the everyday, while our *sketching-out*, our projective understanding, is the *arrangement* of this there in a way which allows things to belong to it, to a region of “Care”, and from this, to each other – it is the *freeing* up which *articulates* this

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<sup>125</sup> David Kleinberg-Levin, “The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger’s Thinking of Being”, 7.

<sup>126</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 183.

<sup>127</sup> Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 231.

there. Rather than two distinct actions, they are but a *two-fold* action of *making-room* – the referral of a dehiscence from *there*, to *here*. In this way, she comes *to* herself, touches herself, through her situation. From this *there* she comes back to herself – *nothing* but this ecstatic passage – *nothing* but this resonance of a *there*. Each time she is this distance, this yonder – making-room as a *prolongation of her body*, each time *extending*, each time not herself but the *bearer* of the there – responding only to the *that-it-is*, to which she adds nothing but *such as it is*.<sup>128</sup> Two pigeons on November's branches, sitting.

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<sup>128</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) 57.

**SKETCH: AN EXAMPLE**

We never have closed significations; we, like the humans of the past, have only open significations and situations whose sense is in genesis.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity*

The problem of the world, and, to begin with, that of one's own body, consists in the fact that it is *all there*.

– Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

It is to the *situation* of his own *facticity*, his own questionable *being-there* of his scene of living that Heidegger turns in his lectures *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity* to sketch-out an example of this *making-room*, this everyday, situated understanding of *Dasein*, which makes for a *roomy* sense of self. “The purest everydayness can be called on: tarrying for a while at home, being-in-a-room, where eventually ‘a table’ is encountered”.<sup>129</sup> Through his description of a table, Heidegger comes to sketch-out the implicit understanding through which he is *there*, in a particular space and time, in the inhabiting of sense, which is not an addendum to his existence, but constitutive of it – his *way of dwelling* in the world. Thus, what follows is his example of the table:

What is there in *the* room there at home is *the* table (not "a" table among many other tables in other rooms and other houses) at which one sits *in order to* write, have a meal, sew, play. Everyone sees this right away, e.g., during a visit: it is a writing table, a dining table, a sewing table – such is the primary way in which it is being encountered in itself. This characteristic of "in order to do something" is not merely imposed on the table by relating and assimilating it to something else which it is not. Its standing there in the room means: Playing this role in such and such characteristic use. This and that about it is "impractical", unsuitable. That part is damaged. It now stands in a better spot in the room than before there's better lighting for example...Here and there it shows lines – the boys like to busy themselves at the table. Those lines are not just interruptions in the paint, but rather: it was the boys and it still is. This side is not the east side, and this narrow side so many cm. shorter than the other, but rather the one at which my wife sits in the evening when she wants to stay up and read, there at the table we had such and such a discussion that time, there that decision was made with a *friend* that time, there that *work* was written that time, there that holiday celebrated that time. That is *the* table as such it is there in the temporality of everydayness and as such it will perhaps happen to be encountered again after many years when, having been taken apart and now unusable, it is found lying on the floor somewhere, just like other “things”, e.g., a plaything, worn out and almost unrecognisable – it is my youth. In a corner of the basement stands an old pair of skis, the one is broken in half – what stands there are not material things of different lengths, but rather the skis from that time, from that daredevil trip with so and so. That book over there was a gift from X, that one there was bound by such and such a bookbinder, this other one needs to be taken to *him* soon, with that one I have been wrestling for a long time, that one there was an *unnecessary* buy, a flop, I still need to read this one for the first time. My library is not as good as A's but far better than B's, this matter is not something one would be

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<sup>129</sup> Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 68.

able to derive pleasure from, what will the others say about this way of doing it, and the like. These are characteristics of the world's being-encountered.<sup>130</sup>

Rather than an understanding from without – an abstracted definition of the table according to its measurable dimensions, the table Heidegger depicts finds its meaning only *from within* a scene being inhabited for a while, at a particular time, where its sense is gathered in its *withnesses* – its being with other things, and other *Daseins*. What is encountered is not an isolated object in relation to a subject, but a scene of “Care”, where the table “shows up” only in relation to particular modes of bodying-forth an *inhabiting: writing, sewing, dining* – a living articulation of concern and solicitude. “The in-order-to and for-what (the daily meals, the habits of writing and working, sewing from time to time, playing from time to time) are not just arbitrary, free-floating modes of being-occupied at the table and tarrying for a while at it, but rather ones which are defined in the awhileness of their temporal particularity from out of a historical everydayness, defining and redefining themselves anew from out of such everydayness and for it in ways cut to the measure of its temporality”.<sup>131</sup> Rather than a static “there”, this scene is an on-going abode of “Care”, shifting and being defined through these modes of *bodying*, which occur in a time which belongs to the *temporality of everydayness* – through the concrete, lived situation as it is unfolding: “This side is not the east side, and this narrow side so many cm. shorter than the other, but rather the one at which my wife sits in the evening when she wants to stay up and read”. In lieu of an autonomously understandable object, Heidegger’s description conjectures that we cannot understand the table outwith its embeddedness in a “scene”, where it obtains its sense only through its *worldly* character, that is, in the gathering of what might be understood as an *ecology* of “Care”, given that ecology stems from the Greek *ἵκη*, meaning “house”, “dwelling”, and captures the manner in which this “there” is not a static site, but an on-going, inter-connected emerging environment, over which the human being does not rule, but *in* which they are *implicated*.

Such an ecological sense can be seen too in the *mode of inhabiting* this “there” which most occupies Heidegger in this scene, where *room is made* for the concern of writing – the only element from this scene retained in *Being and Time*, which otherwise replaces this making-room of his own facticity, with the example of the hammer.<sup>132</sup> Heidegger notes how the “ink-

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>132</sup> As John Van Buren observes in his translator’s notes to Heidegger’s volume: “What had also dropped out was Heidegger’s powerful fifteen-page phenomenological example of ‘tarrying for a while’ in his home, ‘being-in-a-room’ there, and the ‘sewing’ of his wife, the ‘playing’ of his children, his own ‘writing’, and their daily meals at the table in this room. This central example was replaced by

stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room”, these “Things”,

never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of *realia* and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us...is the room; and we encounter it not as something ‘between four walls’ in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment for residing. Out of this the ‘arrangement’ emerges and it is in this that any ‘individual’ item of equipment shows itself. *Before* it does so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered.<sup>133</sup>

The things find their articulation from within a scene of “Care”, that is, they are *internally related*, find their significance in their belonging together through the “Care” of the inhabiting of writing. Each item “makes sense” in relation to the whole of the concerned dealing. In a similar way, the books of this scene of writing, this study, are *encountered* from *within* a scene of “Care”, and belong thus to a situated making-sense: “The beings-which-are-there do not stand within the definiteness of definitions, but rather within that of everydayness and its historicity, e.g., the books coming forth for a while at particular times from out of the “intensity” of anxious concern and its apprehensions”.<sup>134</sup> As with the table, and the writing equipment, rather than the books being encountered as “things” of determinant, isolated signification, they are given-room within a particular scene of writing and signify in relation to this situated concern: “what has significance signifies itself and points itself into the “there” of a particular tarrying-for-a-while and situation of everydayness”.<sup>135</sup> The sense that is made in this making-room is, thus, one of a veritable *vernacular*, as it is through *use*, contingent upon a *situated inhabiting* – there for a while, at a particular time – where meaning is determined. Rather than isolatable “items”, *Dasein* makes sense of the “there” through the gathered *internal relations*, where things are *articulated* through the scene as a whole – one which is contingent not only on *concern* but also *solicitude*, where others are part of this scene of writing being disclosed. Things are not understood or related *extrinsically*, nor is *Dasein* an atomised individual who then comes into relation to others, but is always already comprised of otherness, is always already *being-with* in receiving themselves from the outside. *Dasein’s being-in-the-world* is an ecology of “Care”, understood not as a bounded system, but as a whole which is not the sum of its parts, nor an enclosed environment, but a whole which is constantly being formed – “is” only as an on-going working-out of an inter-relatedness, where the sense being made of any given

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that of a ‘hammer’, and what survived of it was a cursory mention of a ‘table’ in a ‘room’ with ‘writing’ and ‘sewing’ equipment on it”, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 98.

<sup>134</sup> Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 72.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

scene is one which is always implicative and tending towards others: “what will others say about this way of doing it”,<sup>136</sup> “those Others for whom the ‘work’ is destined are ‘encountered too’”.<sup>137</sup> These others, while not *overtly* what appear within the *there*, are nevertheless entwined in the sense being disclosed: “Others – definite others who are defined at particular times and for a while from out of temporality – are there in what is being encountered in everydayness...Initially and for the most part, those with us in life and close by, those-who-are-there-with-us in everydayness, do not turn up in an isolated explicitness, but rather in advance come to appearance precisely in what one pursues, in what one is occupied with”.<sup>138</sup>

In the projective understanding of a *bodying*, sense is made through the *gathering* of the situation being inhabited, where something is seen only through its *parenthetical* being alongside, where it is part of a scene of sense being revealed *as* this situation – “a definite signifying and pointing” into the *there*. “Significance can only be understood on the basis of the disclosedness which is found in it and from out of which *what is being encountered* signifies itself through a pointing within the other things we encounter and in this way presses forth into its *there*”.<sup>139</sup> The sense of the table is given, in this way, not through an articulation of what it “is” – substantially, and once and for all – but from within the play of *inhabiting* – the unpredictable, incalculable, improbable concurrency of occurrence.

The significance of such an example, as Heidegger goes on to point out, is that the human being is *immediately* given to themselves through their being involved in a situation – through their disclosure of a here-there dynamic they understand themselves not as an “I-thing” but as the very articulation of the “there”, where they dwell for a while, at a particular time.

In the appearance of those who are being encountered in a with-world, one-self is therewith what one pursues...In the *there* of the table and other such “things” which are being encountered. And this not – and even less so than in the case of the others – in the sense of something grasped theoretically or in some other explicit manner. And above all one-self is there in this manner without any self-observation turning back upon an ego, without reflection – on the contrary, one encounters one-self in this being-occupied with the world in dealings.<sup>140</sup>

It is in describing a simple, everyday thing that Heidegger comes to articulate the *ecology of “Care”* in which, and *as* which *Dasein* dwells, where they are not an encapsulated *ego*

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 76.

*cogito*, but exist only through what they *are not* – through the *witnesses* of the there: “in the dealings of everyday life which are closest to us the environing world, the world round-about is always there also as a with-world and a self-world”, where this does not mean regions against each other but “definite modes of the world’s being-encountered – each displays the specific character of the round-about”.<sup>141</sup> Something he would further emphasize in *Basic Problems of Philosophy*:

Each one of us is what he pursues and cares for. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of activities we pursue and the things we take care of. We understand ourselves by starting from them because the Dasein finds itself primarily in things. The Dasein does not need a special kind of observation, nor does it need to conduct a sort of espionage on the ego in order to have the self; rather, as the Dasein gives itself over immediately and passionately to the world, its own self is reflected to it from things.<sup>142</sup>

It is in *bodying-forth* the *there*, immediately and passionately, that *Dasein* exists. She encounters herself in the *inhabiting* of a vernacular *signifying* – a tense of the everyday – localised, *there for a while, at a particular time*, and yet never *locatably* there, but shifting onwards, being displaced in a time that is on-going, and marked by past and future, pressing onto this scene. *Being-there* is not a “now” followed by another “now”, but is what Heidegger would call in these lectures a *kairological time*: “What we are concerned about and attend to is there as not yet, as to be...for the first time, as already, as approaching, as until now, as for the time being, as finally. These may be designated as *kairological moments of being-there*”.<sup>143</sup>

As Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time*, this is a *temporality*, where “The future is *not later* than having been, and having been is *not earlier* than the Present”, but “Temporality temporalises itself as a future which makes present in the process of having been”.<sup>144</sup> The temporality of Dasein as a kairological moment, is a time in which past and future are involved in a chiasmatic interrelation, which gives to the “present” its *dimensionality*, its *room*. As he would later put it, “Dimensionality consists in a reaching out that opens up, in which futural approaching brings about what has been, what has been brings about the opening up of openness. Thought in terms of this threefold giving, true time proves to be 3-

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>142</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 159.

<sup>143</sup> Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 78. Kairological time, in the ancient Greek sense, contrasts with chronological time – the linear sense of time, abstracted from the lived situation. Kairos pertains to the context and refers to the opening of an opportunity – the so called “right time” – it fits the occasion.

<sup>144</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 401.

dimensional”.<sup>145</sup> What *has been* does not simply vanish, a completed moment unto itself, this morning is echoing through to her afternoon; similarly the future is not a point to be reached ahead, but her afternoon anticipated this morning. In this sense, what characterises her *no longer* and *not yet* is their reciprocal heterogeneity, where they mutually constitute each other. In this late essay Heidegger speaks explicitly as to how this time is one that *makes-room*, gives the “there” its specific locality:

Time-space now is the name for the openness which opens up in the mutual self-extending of futural approach, past and present. This openness exclusively and primarily provides the space in which space as we usually know it can unfold. The self-extending, the opening up, of future, past and present is itself prespatial; only thus can it make room, that is, provide space.<sup>146</sup>

In an extending and retention room is made – a kairological present in which a tone still sounds opening onto the present arriving, what Nancy comes to call the *melody* of a time as a *sonorous present*; a “unity of *and in* diversity”.<sup>147</sup> It is this structure of time which allows for the condition of the quotidian to be a certain *way* of being, a play, a modulation, in an unfolding melody of her life.

Rather than this kairological time being understood only as the moment of an intense, eye-opening experience, John Van Buren comes to read Heidegger’s sense of the kairological as a moment “in the sense of the circular movement of the ‘context’ of the ‘whole situation’ that includes past and future...The *kairos*, ‘the time’, ‘its time’, is not a punctual instant, but the temporal spacing of an intentional stretching along (*Erstreckung*), from the past through the future and into the moment. At any particular time, Dasein is this stretch, tract, or spacing of time and the circular being-on-the-way along it from the cradle to the grave”.<sup>148</sup> The kairological time is *circular*, as Van Buren goes on to explicate, “because the past is not only behind one, as it were, but also in front as something that has always already circled back into the future in terms of the possibilities that are bound up with it. One’s having-been is not a finished product for theoretical observation, but is rather still open, unfinished, on the way, an *energia ateles*. Thus to retain and stretch along into the past is actually to stretch beyond it into the horizon of its unfinished and unpredictable business, toward which one

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<sup>145</sup> Martin Heidegger, “On Time and Being”, trans. Joan Stambaugh (London: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 11.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>147</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 18.

<sup>148</sup> John Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumour of the Hidden King* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 280.

futurally lives”.<sup>149</sup> The *kairological* time of a situation being inhabited is an anticipative understanding where past, present, and future are not separated but are bound in a *topological stretching*. Rather than a succession of moments of “now”, the kairological time spirals, always *tending towards* itself, never coincidental.

What characterises the everyday present is its *presentation* of itself – what Samuel Weber comes to understand as the strange, non-coincidental split time of the present participle – a time that *is* only in *parting-with* itself, reaching towards itself, in an on-going emergence, where its presence is “suspended” as the “interval linking and separating that which is presented from the presentation ‘itself’”.<sup>150</sup> It is a connection and division arising from the convergence of its articulation with what it articulates, making for a *redoubling* which splits and joins it – a repetition which makes for a present which is always “both ahead of and behind itself, an ambiguity that in English is condensed in the preposition ‘after’. As present participle the present is ‘after’ itself, in hopeless self-pursuit”.<sup>151</sup> As demonstrated in Heidegger’s example, *Dasein* exists in their *parting-with* themselves in a projective understanding – they *are* in their *hyphenated* being-there – *tending towards* themselves. As Weber notes: “In order to share or partake, there must...be a concomitant dividing or divesting, a *parting* or, perhaps, more precisely, a de-parting, a taking leave, a *partitioning* in order to *im-part*. All of this is uncannily condensed in the English phrase *parting-with*. The ‘with’ suggests that parting entails a departure, not simply as the dissolving of a relationship, but rather as a singular way of (re)constituting one”.<sup>152</sup> It is in this sense that the paradoxical nature of *Dasein*’s issue of being comes to light, as it is only in parting-with themselves that they have a relation towards themselves, and yet this very parting makes for their inability to ever fully arrive at themselves – theirs is an assignment continuously in formation, arising in an emergence that is neither here nor there but *on the way*. “This is the enigmatic mystery and resource of the present participle: it is present only in departing, present only partially, never fully, never completely present. It is present to the quick, right now, but in an ongoing recurrence that is always also on the verge of taking leave, of departing”.<sup>153</sup> The present participle is an *uncanny* time, in this way, as it *is* only through being constantly altered; it *is* only through what it is *not*. Presence is always, in this sense, a repetition, a duplicity, where the two-fold of the present participle, as Weber notes, signals not “*two* folds, but rather the crease of a *singularly single fold*, enfolding and exposing its constitutive difference from

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>150</sup> Weber, *Theatricality as Medium*, 15.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 66.

itself”.<sup>154</sup> Heidegger’s two-fold structure of *Dasein* as a *thrown-projection* can be seen as following this *complication* of time, where an initial opening has already opened up a *there*, a *field*, a *whole*, from which the future comes *back* towards us *here*. It is a structure where “meaning” resides not in a signified, not in a signifier, but in the singular event of *signifying*, where meaning is *beside itself*. The *kairological* present is not, in this sense, ever identical to itself, but inherently open and comprised of otherness. Such is the *immediacy* of her everyday, where the day and her are one, in what simply seems to be so, where this scene cannot be defined, but is the same by parting-with itself, *as such* – the books splayed in another arrangement; the “s” key now slightly defunct from the accident yesterday; the sky outside ink black. Today is Saturday.

What the present participle gives us is not what something “is” – the definiteness of definition, but *how* it appears from within a situation – what it is *like* – a *way of being*. In this sense, what is encountered by *Dasein* in their projective understanding gives rise to what Heidegger comes to call the “structure of the as” – the *logos*. Indeed, in *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger directly relates the *logos* with this projective understanding when he notes:

This primordial structure of world-formation, namely projection, also displays, in its originary unity, that which Aristotle necessarily had recourse to in his question concerning the possibility of logos. Aristotle says: The logos, in accordance with its possibility, is grounded in the originary unity of joining and separating. For projection is an occurrence which, as raising us away and casting us ahead, takes apart as it were – in that *apartness of a raising away*, yet as we saw, precisely in such a way that in this process there occurs an intrinsic *turning toward* on the part of whatever has been projected, such that that which has been projected is that which *binds* and *binds together*. Projection is that originary simple occurrence which...intrinsically unites contradictory things: binding together and separating...this projecting is also that *relating* in which the ‘as’ springs forth. For the ‘as’ expresses the fact that beings in general have become manifest in their being, that that distinction has occurred. The ‘as’ designates the structural moment of the originary *irruptive* ‘between’. We simply never first have ‘something’ and then ‘something more’ and then the possibility of taking something *as* something, but the complete reverse: something first gives itself to us only when we are already moving within projection, within the ‘as’.<sup>155</sup>

What the *logos* indicates is a mode of signifying in which there is displacement and difference as the occurrence of meaning. The *parting-with* of the present participle makes for a binding through *separation* – a meaning which occurs in the irruptive hyphenation. Rather than a seeing something as *something*, this “structure of the as” is what first gives us

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>155</sup> Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 365.

something *as such*. What we see *there* is only seen *from here* – a certain perspective, a certain direction, a certain disposition which reveals certain aspects more than others. What is seen cannot be divorced from the seer, its being *as-such* is for *this one* who is involved in a making-room – *there* for a while, at a particular time. This *logos* as *discourse*, as Heidegger comes to read it in Plato and Aristotle, is not the sense later translated as: “‘reason’, ‘judgement’, ‘concept’, ‘definition’, ‘ground’, or ‘relationship’”.<sup>156</sup> Discourse is not a “binding of something with something else”, but is what lets something be seen by *pointing* it out – it is a “synthesis” that *gathers* not already constituted elements, but is the *movement* that first allows things to be distinguished not definitively, but as a *how* of an appearing. It is the singular *attunement* where something, someone, some situation, is revealed *as such*, in the present of their presentation.

‘synthesis’ does not mean a binding and linking together of representations, a manipulation of psychical occurrences where the ‘problem’ arises of how these bindings, as something inside, agree with something physical outside. Here the *ouv* has a purely apophantical signification and means letting something be seen in its *togetherness* with something – letting it be seen *as* something.<sup>157</sup>

The *as* refers to the *situational* disclosure of coming to see something from within the limit of this *there*, in a time that is tending towards itself, and in this way it has an ambivalent relationship to truth, for in its revealing it, at the same time *conceals*, in the manner in which something cannot be revealed in its totality but as *this*, within the facticity of *this* day, *this* week, *this* year. What the “as” articulates, in this sense, is what something *is* and *is not*; *Dasein* is always simultaneously in the truth and untruth. “To exhibit anything is to take it together and take it apart”.<sup>158</sup> The *as* both *binds* and *separates* – it is the *jointure* which articulates, as Heidegger puts it, not intelligence, not knowledge, but “Intelligibility”<sup>159</sup> – that which first makes any cognitive intelligence possible. This discourse can be understood as the *bodying-forth* of a being-there for a while, where we respond to the world, and *discuss* it – come to see it *as* something. In the inhabiting of this present which is always *tending towards* itself, *is* only as this *gap* between, sense is made in the swinging and swaying of concealment and unconcealment, in the difference and distance which this repetition creates, where something is *turned* in this turbulent time of returning; a veritable *conversing* of sense.

The “as” signals, in this sense, what Heidegger characterises as definitive of this projective understanding – its being an apprehension of *possibility*:

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<sup>156</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 55.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 201.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 204.

When one understands oneself projectively in an existentiell possibility, the future underlies this understanding, and it does so as a coming-towards oneself out of that current possibility as which one's Dasein exists. The future makes ontologically possible an entity which is in such a way that it exists understandingly in its potentiality-for-Being. Projection is basically futural; it does not primarily grasp the projected possibility thematically just by having it in view, but it throws itself into it as a possibility.<sup>160</sup>

Yet this is an anticipative projecting which is always bound to a *there* – to how something *has been* understood from within the historic and cultural milieu into which you have been thrown, along with the particular thrownness of this *attunement*, in this situation:

Possibility, as an *existential*, does not signify a free-floating potentiality-for-Being in the sense of the 'liberty of indifference' (*libertas indifferentiae*). In every case Dasein, as essentially having a state-of-mind, has already got itself into definite possibilities. As the potentiality-for-Being which is *is*, it has let such possibilities pass by; it is constantly waiving the possibilities of its Being, or else it seizes upon them and makes mistakes. But this means that Dasein is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself – *thrown possibility* through and through. Dasein is the possibility of Being-free for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. Its Being-possible is transparent to itself in the different possible ways and degrees.<sup>161</sup>

In such an understanding characterised by *possibility*, of seeing something only within the uncanny time of a present participle, nothing rests in a simple identity, but is opened to the alterity of tending towards itself. Here, the encounter with things is never a defined event, but what takes place within a horizon of possibilities, possible valences of sense, where, as Clive Cazeaux notes, “‘it could be this’ or ‘it could be that’ – which is constitutive of receptivity”.<sup>162</sup> The projective understanding is the opening up to the opening of this *speil-raum* disclosed in an attunement, where something is not yet defined, but is open to being seen *as* something. As Cazeaux puts it, the *as*-structure is a “structure of anticipation” which “on the one hand...confers unity upon the experience, while, on the other, allows the experience to occur within a range of possibilities”.<sup>163</sup> What it makes for is a “*continuous questioning* of whether what we next encounter will be a ‘*this*’ or a ‘*that*’”.<sup>164</sup> Our encounter and understanding of the world remains open to a play of possibility, where it is *open to error* – the possibility of taking something, or indeed someone, to be what they are not. To see something *as* something, in this way, is not the comparison of an established something

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 385.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>162</sup> Clive Cazeaux, *Metaphor and Continental Philosophy: From Kant to Derrida* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 96.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 156.

with something else, but is the *differential* experience of non-coincidence in this time that is always tending towards itself:

In trying to fathom just how something-as-something functions primordially, it is important to remember that there is no clearly demarcated ‘something’ which consciousness then likens to something else. Rather, something-as-something is the structure of comparison per se whose bifocal outlook allows similarity and difference to be recognised.<sup>165</sup>

What is under critique, it would seem, as Krzysztof Ziarek remarks, is “the road from the specific to the generic, characteristic of perception and understanding”, where the emphasis is shifted “as Heidegger’s analysis of a table makes evident, from the object to its worldly context and from its essence to the character of its worldly being (that is, its temporal and historical dimension)”.<sup>166</sup> Rather than isolated identities of referential sense, the things we encounter in the world are only ever significant from *within* a context of cross-references, where, as in Heidegger’s example, the table is seen through its implications and complications *with*. Its significance lies not in itself, but in this space *beside itself* where its singular sense unfolds, where it *is* through what it is *not*.

Discourse belongs, in this way, not to a determinable sense, but to the play of difference within a situation, the opening and closing, the disclosing and concealing of a *there* being inhabited for a while, at a particular time. The “synthesis” of the logos is not a logical judgement, it is not a dialectic of constituted statements, but a field of tension, which cannot come to an internally rendered resolution, but can only be interrupted from without, given that the present participle has no internal principle of closure. It is a synthesis, in this way, which operates more as a *configuration* or *constellation* of sense, rather than a subordination of elements to a logical synthesis – a sense that is made not by an “ego”, but by being *given over* to the situation being inhabited, *bearing it forth*, which makes for a manifestation of a “there”, the making of *room*, as both an event and the place where the event occurs. As Malpas articulates it,

What is brought to salience in and through the situation, in and through the ‘there’, is also what participates in the very happening of the there – myself, the others who are there with me, the things that I find myself alongside. This structure of situatedness...does not allow of any grounding of the structure as a whole by reference to any one element within that structure nor by reference to anything apart

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>166</sup> Krzysztof Ziarek, “The Ethos of Everydayness”, *Man and World* no. 4 (1995): 386.

from that structure, but rather through the already interconnected – the ‘gathered’ – character of the structure as such.<sup>167</sup>

*Discourse*, in this way, is primarily a disclosure of a self-world conversing, where there can only be an *attunement*, a jointure and separation, rather than a “logic” of assertion – what Heidegger reads as the Western inheritance of the Greek understanding of *logos*, where “this logic was based upon the ontology of the present-at-hand. The basic stock of ‘categories of signification’, which passed over into the subsequent science of language, and which in principle is still accepted as the standard today”.<sup>168</sup> If the human being is understood not as a present-at-hand entity, but as a *being-there*, an on-going event of a disclosure, *discourse* is never the solidification of sense, but the articulation of an appearance, what gives to something its being “*as such*” – the particular arrangement, its appearance, its singular presentation, which is only momentarily suspended, rather than caught, or captured. The world is open to making-sense but only ever in a *finite way*. Significance comes not from *what* something is, but in *how* it is revealed, *how* it is disclosed, the *singular way* of its showing itself *as* something, in a *there* being inhabited in the stretch of the *kairos* – of being there for a while, at a particular time.

What characterises this projective understanding of *Dasein* is its inherent *analogical* nature, where their articulation of the “there” is not completely different, nor entirely the same, but *similar*. As Van Buren notes, this sense of an analogical understanding of the facticity of the world is something that characterised Heidegger’s early work, in particular on Dun Scotus, where being is not characterised by either “homogeneity, identity, univocity” nor “pure heterogeneity, difference, equivocity”, but as a structure of *analogy*.<sup>169</sup> It is this “as-structure” which allows for both the multiplicity of the *thisness* of the world, the difference of a singular apple, whilst also being an identity of apple; it allows for a *continuity in difference*; a “unity-in-multiplicity and multiplicity-in-unity”;<sup>170</sup> the recognition of a face, and the trace of a flicker of otherness across it. *Presence* is always *analogical* – we come to know someone through what they are *like*, which is never just a one-off impression, but an on-going variation of their melody of being – sometimes like *this*, sometimes like *that*, and sometimes so different we hardly know them at all. Their presence is their face, how they inhabit their limit, how they show themselves – their *style* of being, which, though recognisable, is entirely improbable, entirely unpredictable, and completely inappropriable. When we phone someone we love, more than anything else, more than any of the chatter of

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<sup>167</sup> Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology*, 58.

<sup>168</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 209.

<sup>169</sup> Van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumour of the Hidden King*, 108.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

what is said, the “news” they convey all at once is the song they are singing today – a response to the implicit question of the call – *how* are you doing? The phone call is an attempt to tune into their presence, to become attuned again to their *way of being* – a melody which is always subtly different. And it is this presence that we miss most about those who depart us, what cannot be summarised in any “biography” without reducing their life to a banality. Their presence was their strange familiarity that opened up an aspect of the world to you and you to them, an aspect that was in constant evolvment, up to the end – and goes on beyond, even if the other now is the silent counterpart of the conversation.

In this way, *Dasein* is presented as neither a universality nor a particularity, neither a “monism (univocity) nor a pluralism (equivocity), but rather an identity-in-difference and a difference-in-identity (analogy)”.<sup>171</sup> *Dasein*’s making-room is the way in which the world comes to be articulated *as such* – through the *situated* being-there for a while, at a particular time, through, that is, the *individuation* of space-time. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty puts it:

The past, therefore, is not past, nor the future future. It exists only when a subjectivity is there to disrupt the plenitude of being in itself, to adumbrate a perspective, and introduce non-being into it. A past and a future spring forth when I reach out towards them. I am not, for myself, at this very moment, I am also at this morning or at the night which soon will be here, and though my present is, if we wish so to consider it, this instant, it is equally this day, this year or my whole life. There is no need for a synthesis externally binding together the *tempora* into one single time, because each one of the *tempora* was already inclusive, beyond itself, of the whole open series of other *tempora*, being in internal communication with them.<sup>172</sup>

The understanding that is formed through seeing something *as* something, in this way, is one which is, as Merleau-Ponty calls it, a *passive synthesis* through the unfolding of time – a time that is always situational.

it is indeed clear that I am not the creator of time any more than of my heart-beats. I am not the initiator of the process of temporalisation; I did not choose to come into the world, yet once I am born, time flows through me, whatever I do... What is called passivity is not the acceptance by us of an alien reality, or a causal action exerted upon us from outside: it is being encompassed, being in a situation – prior to which we do not exist – which we are perpetually resuming and which is constitutive of us. A spontaneity ‘acquired’ once and for all, and one which ‘perpetuates itself in being in virtue of its being acquired’ is precisely time and subjectivity. It is time, since a time without its roots in the present and thence a past would no longer be time, but eternity.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 315.

<sup>172</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 489.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 496.

We know the world and come to understand it, in this sense, because we are not divorced from it, are not “in” it as the water is “in” the glass, but are ourselves *worldly*. It is in this way that Merleau-Ponty would tender that our language of inquiry is not what “I” know, but what *she knows* – it is a *being known* by the world, where we are already given over to a *there*. “if I wanted to render precisely the perceptual experience, I ought to say that *one* perceives in me, and not that I perceive. Every sensation carries within it the germ of a dream or depersonalisation”.<sup>174</sup> What philosophy in its assertions forgets is this *non-knowing* of the beginning, this *sojourn* in the *there*, where you *are* only through what you *are not*. “It is through the world first that I am seen or thought”.<sup>175</sup> The language of inquiry of our bodies is something which was perhaps the root of Merleau-Ponty’s perduring question – the questionability which served as the crux of his phenomenological investigations, given that the sensible, as he came to understand it, presents itself to the perceiver in the form of a puzzlement, a query to be corresponded to, an address, where sense is always being resumed. Take the following, for example, when he speaks about perceiving the colour blue:

a sensible datum which is on the point of being felt sets a kind of muddled problem for my body to solve. I must find the attitude that will provide it with the means of becoming determinate, of showing up as blue; I must find the reply to a question which is obscurely expressed. And yet I do so only when I am invited by it, my attitude is never sufficient to make me really see blue or really touch a hard surface. The sensible gives back to me what I lent to it, but this is only what I took from it in the first place. As I contemplate the blue of the sky I am not *set over against* it as an acosmic subject; I do not possess it in thought, or spread out towards it some idea of blue such as might reveal the secret of it, I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery, it ‘thinks itself within me’, I am the sky itself as it is drawn together and unified, and as it begins to exist for itself; my consciousness is saturated with this limitless blue.<sup>176</sup>

As the sky *begins to exist for itself* – here is a very different sense of perceiving contrary to the dichotomy of perceiver and perceived. What is proffered is not that the world is simply “there” and we receive its sense, but that what is involved is a *participation within* something. For the astronomer or geographer, as Merleau-Ponty notes, the sky does not indeed exist for itself, but for the one experiencing it in their *being-there*, it provides “the theatre of a certain living pulsation adopted by my body”.<sup>177</sup> Perception is always a certain *way of being* in the world – variations on modulations. It is in this way that we are in *communion* with the world – we *synchronise*, as Merleau-Ponty articulates it, with a “certain

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>175</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 274.

<sup>176</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 249.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 249.

rhythm of existence”<sup>178</sup> being put forward, a form of existence, where we open up to it, or retract from it. We find the *attitude* of our bodies which will correspond with the blue.

Our relationship with the world is such that there is an *innate kinship* in which, as with the chiasm of a crisscrossing of touching and being touched within our own bodily being, we both sense and apprehend the world, and are *sensed*, and *apprehended* by the world – each gives and coexists with the other, rather than being distinct, separate acts. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, “he who looks must not himself be foreign to the world that he looks at...he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he *is of it*, unless by principle, according to what is required by the articulation of the look with the things, he is one of the visible, capable, by a singular reversal, of seeing them – he who is one of them”.<sup>179</sup> In this way, as Merleau-Ponty sketches, the body *sensed* and the body *sensing* are the *two-fold* of a single movement, “two segments of one sole circular course which goes above from left to right and below from right to left, but which is but one sole movement in its two phases. And everything said about the sensed body pertains to the whole of the sensible of which it is a part, and to the world”.<sup>180</sup> Touching is inhabited by a *not-touching*, vision by an *invisible* – all perception is organised around a *not* of which it is comprised – the *other side*; the *reverse*; the presence of a certain absence.

It is in this sense that Merleau-Ponty conceives of a fundamental narcissism in all perception and understanding of the world. What is felt in being given over to the world is not an invasion of an alien reality, but the sensing of our own otherness, our own *non-being* and capacity to be passive with regards to *ourselves*, submitting to ourselves as if we were an exterior power. “the body feels the world in feeling itself”.<sup>181</sup> What is key with reversibility is this *incapacity* which is *part* of capacity, where seeing is always a seeing *with* the absence of seeing; touching, always a touching *with* the absence of touching.

The subject of sensation is neither a thinker who takes note of a quality, nor an inert setting which is affected or changed by it, it is a power that is born into, and simultaneously with, a certain existential environment, or is synchronised with it. The relations of sentient to sensible are comparable with those of the sleeper to his slumber: sleep comes when a certain voluntary attitude suddenly receives from outside the confirmation for which it was waiting. *I* am breathing deeply and slowly in order to summon sleep, and suddenly it is as if my mouth were connected to some great lung outside myself which alternately calls forth and forces back my breath. A certain rhythm of respiration, which a moment ago I voluntarily maintained, now becomes my very being, and sleep, until now aimed as a significance, suddenly

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>179</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 134.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 118.

becomes a situation. In the same way I give ear, or look, in expectation of a sensation, and suddenly the sensible takes possession of my ear or my gaze, and I surrender a part of my body, even my whole body, to this particular manner of vibrating and filling space known as blue or red.<sup>182</sup>

We experience the world, as in the sky that *exists for itself*, by allowing ourselves to participate in the arrangement of a whole, where each part is “‘sensitive’ to what happens in all the others, and ‘knows them dynamically’”.<sup>183</sup> Such is the organisation of *gestalts*, as Merleau-Ponty would proffer, were we come to perceive through the *internal relations* of a particular configuration. This “gestalt” Merleau-Ponty refers to is not the sense of a static form perceived and known by a subject, but the *internal relations* from within a *field of perception* which the perceiver is an *attuned* part of. It is not a “completed form”, given that, as Merleau-Ponty continuously emphasises, perception is never a complete or completable act – we can only perceive from a given perspective, situated in a particular circumstance, and so it is more like a form that is *momentarily* formed within a situation that is moving – a form more akin to a singular *configuration* than a *fixed*, objectifiable form of a *schema* - what allows the world not to be a static, *definable* sense, but ambiguous, always shifting, and inherently formed in and as its *context*. Merleau-Ponty’s sense of gestalt is more akin to Heidegger’s “as-structure”, where the meaning derives from the particular *arrangement*, the joining and separation, where something is both seen and *not seen*. As with the table, what is perceived is only the gathering from within a “there”, a certain constellation, where the table is not “in” space, lodged there in a pre-existing site, nor is it a-spatial, but more organises and articulates certain manners and ways of being-there. Its sense is constituted *laterally*, spreading beside itself, in a time being inhabited.

The *Gestalt* is not a spatio-temporal individual, it is ready to integrate itself into a constellation that spans space and time – but it is not free in regard to space and time, it is not aspatial, atemporal, it only escapes the time and space conceived as a series of events in themselves, it has a certain weight that doubtless fixes it not in an objective site and in a point of objective time, but in a region, a domain, which it dominates, where it reigns, where it is everywhere present without one ever being to say: it is here.<sup>184</sup>

The *gestalt*, in this sense, is more of a structure of possibility than it is a fixed form, and yet it is nonetheless a form that always articulates a certain arrangement of perceptibility. It is not a form conceivable in advance, but more of a *hinge*, or *pivot*, which is open to correspondence – an understanding modelled on this *chiasm*, this primordial *as-structure* of

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<sup>182</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 245.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>184</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 205.

the body which, through its *dehiscence*, through its enantiomorphic structure, is an *openness* to dialogic possibility. The *flesh* is Merleau-Ponty's way of conceiving the *whole* of which we are a part – a whole which is formed *asymmetrically*, “*is a mirror phenomenon*”.<sup>185</sup> “The body” is a pivot point – the *axis* of a turning of self and world.

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...The 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...There is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other. Or rather, if, as once again we must, we eschew the thinking by planes and perspectives, 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...<sup>186</sup>

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“Flesh” is for Merleau-Ponty what *Stimmung* is for Heidegger – it is an “element” of being, a “*general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being”, it is not a fact “or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to *location* and to the *now*. Much more: the inauguration of the *where* and *when*, the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word: facticity, what makes the fact be a fact”.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, as with the musical resonances of *Stimmung*, what is known in this *facticity of flesh* is what Merleau-Ponty comes to call the “musical ideas” – those which are proffered in this veiled mode of the *as*, telling us not simply what something *is* but revealing whilst at the same time concealing; a visibility lined with invisibility, one which is not waiting for the right light, the proper method to one day be brought out of its obscurity, but is the simple *facticity* of a *chiaroscuro* of bodily apprehension – what “I” do not grasp or understand, but what *she* is grasped *by*.

We do not possess the musical or sensible ideas, precisely because they possess us. The performer is no longer producing or reproducing the sonata: he feels himself, and the others feel him to be at the service of the sonata; the sonata sings through him or cries out so suddenly that he must ‘dash on his bow’ to follow it...There is a strict ideality in experiences that are experiences of the flesh: the moments of the sonata, the fragments of the luminous field, adhere to one another with a cohesion without concept, which is of the same type as the cohesion of the parts of my body, or the cohesion of my body with the world.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., 152-153.

It is in this sense that it is a musical sensibility above all else that this one beneath me carries with her and bears her through the world – her *way of being*-there for a while, at a particular time another play *modulating* the melody of her life, like a fugue, constantly re-iterating the same scene not entirely *differently*, but *similarly*, letting *this* aspect be revealed now, *that* aspect be revealed then, without a full grasp, and so a language still tending towards, a language on the way, where a sense is continuously being returned to, resumed, *begun again*.

**SKETCH: ETHO-POESIS**

Beside one's conceptual commerce with the world there remains a rhythmic participation.  
– Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity*

Being a body is being a certain 'tone', a certain tension. I'd also even say that a tension is also a 'tending'. Consequently, there are possibilities for ethical developments that we might not expect to find here.  
– Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*

For tenuity, tendency, tenderness and tension all derive from a Greek root *teino*, meaning stretched or drawn out, with a paradoxical relation to words radiating out from *tenire*, which signify transformations of touching or holding: content, intention, attention.  
– Steven Connor, "Flat Life"

In her sketching-out of her conception of natality Hannah Arendt mentions how the ancient Greek and Latin designate

two altogether different and yet interrelated words with which to designate the verb 'to act'. To the two Greek verbs *archein* ('to begin', 'to lead', finally 'to rule') and *prattein* ('to pass through', 'to achieve', 'to finish') correspond the two Latin verbs *agere* ('to set in motion', 'to lead') and *gerere* (whose original meaning is 'to bear').<sup>189</sup>

It could be said that *Dasein's* two-fold being as a *thrown-projection* follows this *agere-gerere* structure, where they are *thrown* in a particular body not as contained within, but as a limit from which they begin in their sketching-forth, *bearing-out* a sense, following through having been set in motion – a structure which is continuously repeated in the thrownness into each limited *there*, from which their presencing begins. The body then as a *gesture of existing* – the on-going bodying-forth of a there. Indeed, it is to gesture that Heidegger would later appeal as the *gathering* of a *bearing* of sense in and as an idio-local region:

What does the word 'gesture' mean? Etymologically, it comes from *baren* [cf. Latin *ferre*: to carry, to bring]. To bear or to bring forth [*gebaren*] comes from the same root. The German prefix *Ge*<sup>190</sup> - always refers to a gathering, to a collection of things, as in *Ge-birge* [mountain range], which is a collection of mountains. From its human

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<sup>189</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 189.

<sup>190</sup> This sense of "gesture" as a gathering of internal relations is something which was perhaps accommodated through the German language and its way of articulating a world in which there is an easier expression of the "gathering" of internal relations rather than the delineation of external forms and an understanding of relation as between distinct entities. Whilst English is a language which once spoke to the more reflexive happening of subjectivity – "methinks", "melikes", it has historically moved to a more atomistic self, the "I" of a separate self. As Franz Mayr highlights in his afterword to the translation of the *Zollikon Seminars*, English is a language which "prefers contingent 'external relations' between beings (entities), which can be formalised logically", whilst German inclines more towards "understanding and expressing 'internal relations', that is, the immanent interconnection of things with things and the relations of part to whole or of whole to part".<sup>190</sup> Mayr goes on to specially dwell on the prefix "*Ge*" which informs Heidegger's articulation of gesture above: "Many German words have the prefix "*Ge*-" [together, "gathered"] indicating a completed action as in *Geschenk* [gift] and *Gestalt* [completed figure] or community and interrelationship, as in *Gemeinschaft* [community], *Gesellschaft* [society], *Gebirge* [mountains], *Geschick* [destiny], *Gebarde* [to bear, to bring forth], *Geschlecht* [gender, sex], *Geviert* [the fourfold]", *Zollikon Seminars*, 323.

origins, ‘gesture’ means one’s gathered [*gesammelt*] bearing and comportment. Within philosophy we must not limit the word ‘gesture’ merely to ‘expression’. Instead, we must characterise all comportment of the human being as *being-in-the-world*, determined by the bodying forth of the body. Each movement of my body as a ‘gesture’ and, therefore, as such and such a comportment does not simply enter into an indifferent space. Rather, comportment is always already in a certain region [*Gegend*] which is open through the thing to which I am in a relationship, for instance, when I take something into my hand.<sup>191</sup>

The body then, as the *sub-jectum*, as Michel Serres proffers, who in projecting “throws itself underneath, *sub-jects* itself, knows suddenly what one must *sub-ject*, and how to do it, recognises itself as thrown beneath – *sub-jectus*, subject. I carry therefore I am”.<sup>192</sup> Not an “object”, not an abode of an “I”, but a *capacity*, an “I can”.

the flesh, the *Leib* is not a sum of *self-touchings*...but not a sum of tactile sensations plus ‘kinestheses’ either, it is an ‘I can’ - - The corporeal schema would not be a *schema* if it were not this contact of *self* with *self* (which is rather *non-difference*) (common presentation to...X).<sup>193</sup>

On balance, the body cannot be reduced to either a fixity or a reality: less real than virtual, it aims at the potential, better, it lives in the modal...it moves; it doesn’t merely travel the course from here to there, but forms, deforms, transforms, tightens and stretches, figures, disfigures, transfigures, polymorphous, proteiform...you’ll only stop these variations by defining it as capable. It can. This capacity sums up, like an indefinite integral, the open set of postures and grimaces, bearings and positions. I would even gladly define the body as a pre-position: precondition for every position and preparing them all. We have just considered only *vers*.<sup>194</sup>

*Bodying-forth* meaning, in this sense, is an understanding marked by *possibility*, but at the same time, always underscored by *impossibility*. The body is the bearer-forth, the originary measure of time and space, their instrument of retention and protention which both gives her her inquiry, and refuses all definitive answers, for her understanding only ever exists *in-between* – this and that, here and there, earlier and later, near and far in an understanding something *as* something. In this bodying-forth an understanding, the meaning is not “there” as a present-at-hand “thing” but exists in the *experiential tension* between – like that between her left hand and her right. Hers is always a subtle perception of *similarity*, that is, of the not completely different, nor the completely same – it lies in neither one nor the other but in her ability to hold together, to *gather* what is usually held apart – the contradictions the Western world segregated into binaries. She wisely only ever understands them *together*, in a synthesis that does not destroy their difference. Her understanding something *as* something

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<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>192</sup> Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: a philosophy of mingled bodies*, trans. Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (New York: Continuum Int. 2008), 320.

<sup>193</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 255.

<sup>194</sup> Michel Serres, *Variations*, trans. Randolph Burks (Minneapolis: Univocal Publishing, 2011), 148.

exists neither in one nor the other, it is neither here nor there, neither what has been, nor in what is not yet, but in the on-going tension between. Anticipation can occur based only on what has been, what has been makes no sense without its anticipation, for it is always already imparting itself. Neither one comes before the other, but they are *chiasmatically* construed.

There is a *tact* that links her, thus, to her past, an almost skin-like tegument that binds her to what *has been*, one which is not separated from the tact that links her too to what is *not yet*, stretching her into the time that is ahead. It is this sensed tension which Serres attends to in the Latin *tendere*, meaning to stretch – a verb which belongs to the old measurement of *toise*, equivalent to “six feet or around two meters”.<sup>195</sup> To *tendere* is matched *tendre*, or *tenir* in the Greek, meaning to hold, which was once, as Serres tells us, a “serious rival...as the source of time”.<sup>196</sup> A conflict thus, between time understood as discontinuous measurable elements, and time as a *stretched duration* – one which is indissociable from space and characterised by *tension* and continuity. “Contentance signifies capacity or volume and *maintenant* [now] holds the present instant in the hollow of its palm more than it marks it”.<sup>197</sup> The body as the original *tensor* of space-time, not a definable entity, but a developmental capacity – constantly carrying-out, bearing-forth, beginning and re-beginning in an opening that tests and probes, plays out different *variations* in response to the living situation – changing, transforming, altering, adapting, modifying, differencing, deviating.<sup>198</sup> It is the *spaces between*, the *non-coincidence*, which makes this bodily understanding possible. It is the *attuned jointure*, rather than the simple *mergence* with the world, or complete *separation*, which allows for her perception of similarity; the non-coincidence in the anticipative turning of what has been that allows for her understanding to occur. Without this difference the repetition produces *the same*, rather than the *similar*. Hers is an inquiry of a situated articulation from where she is now, with her thrownness, her inheritance of a particular socio-cultural history, being anticipatively turned and returned in an on-going projecting. What *she* understands is not a present-at-hand *thing*, a *cognised* object, but a *Stimmung*, an attuned jointure with something, a *tension of the outside*.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 141.

<sup>198</sup> Kleinberg-Levin too gestures towards an understanding of “the body” as a capacity to be developed, where the body is a “process” of dispositions and capacities that can be “taken up and nurtured, unfolded, carried forward, metaphored, through *Bildungsprozesse*, processes of learning”, “The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment: Heidegger’s Thinking of Being”, 5.

Her sketching-out can be understood as a *rhythm* of making-sense, if rhythm can be re-constructed not as a metrics of time, but as a *situated* metron of a making-room – a space-time not discernible from *without*, but a spatiofugal formation from *within*. Such a possible understanding of rhythm is present in a re-reading the linguist Émile Benveniste presented in a short essay entitled “The Notion of Rhythm”. In his sketching-out, Benveniste comes to discern how rhythm, *ruthmos*, in its most ancient uses meant *form*, in the sense of the *configuration*, the “arrangement of the parts in a whole”.<sup>199</sup> This configuration was always only the improvisatory, momentary arrangement of “what is moving, mobile and fluid” – the form of what does not have “organic consistency” but “fits the pattern of a fluid element, of a letter arbitrarily shaped, of a robe which one arranges at one’s will, of a particular state of character or mood. It is the form as improvised, momentary, changeable”.<sup>200</sup> Rhythm is here understood as the singular *attunement*, which is indicated, as Benveniste notes, in the particular suffix which forms *ruthmos*, one which always refers not to an *accomplished* motion, but to its *particular modality*: “For example...the particular dance seen as it takes place”.<sup>201</sup> The very structure of the word itself indicates that rhythm is not to be objectivised, to be made a concept of, but is a word which is evocative of the *singularity* of a *way of being*, is a movement tied to a *situation*, to the jointure of a space-time. *Ruthmos* is tensile, bespeaking its own finiteness – not a fastened form once and for all, but the momentary form of what is in movement. It cannot, in this sense, be the form of a *schema*, another Greek word for form as what is set, “realised and fixed in some way as an object”,<sup>202</sup> but is a *configuration* without “fixity or natural necessity and arising from an arrangement which is always subject to change”.

What alters, as Benveniste traces it, with Plato, is the manner in which this configured form becomes determined by “a ‘measure’ and numerically regulated”.<sup>203</sup> Rhythm becomes the flow which is “broken by metre into alternating intervals”<sup>204</sup> – an ordered sequence of slow and rapid movements – which shifts its sense from the improvised form of movement in a particular situation, to the abstractable *schema* of a form. “We may then speak of the ‘rhythm’ of a dance, of a step, of a song, of a speech, of work, of everything which presupposes a continuous activity broken by meter into alternating intervals”.<sup>205</sup> Rhythm

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<sup>199</sup> Émile Benveniste, “The Notion of Rhythm”, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971), 283.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

becomes a *determinable* something, a *what*, rather than the improvised, situated *modality* – the *how* – the structure of seeing something *as* something. What Benveniste’s reading sets in motion, thus, is the manner in which rhythm can be understood as a singular *structure of possibility*. What perhaps Heidegger was attempting to indicate in *Dasein* as a *being-there*, where the “form” of the human being’s existence is one which must be situationally *sketched-out*, in a praxis of making not directed by an “I” but as a bearing-forth a *making-room*. Rather than a form which is intentionally formed, this is a form that is the singular *rhythm* of an emergence of sense from within a situation – her *room* only ever a momentary *configuration* – a tensile, improvised form that is subject to change; an arrangement without fixity or natural necessity; an ecological whole dynamically being articulated *as-such*. What is at stake is a sketching-out of existence that cannot be conceived from *without*, but can only ever be articulated *from within*, that is, through an idio-local *bodying-forth* an existence – a qualitative versus a quantitative understanding of time, in and as a singular *situation*. Her *making-room* is not something objectivisable, it is an inquiry which cannot be abstracted from its situation of a *bodying-forth* a space-time, where something is not *cognitively known*, but *attunely* sensed through the *tactics* of a tensional tending, through understanding something *as* something.

Such a sense of rhythm resonates with what Raimon Panikkar picks up on in his own proffering of rhythm as the structure of “Being”:

There is a fundamental difference between the series of time-beats (in German *Takt*) and rhythm. The former is pure repetition, and it involves our conscious faculty of reckoning perception. The latter is the return of the similar in a new way. *Taktschlag* is repetition, rhythm is innovation. ‘Tact’ in English is not this time-beat, and yet it is related to the (well-timed) opportune time of rhythm. A person who has tact is aware of and respects the rhythms because that person is in ‘touch’ (*tactus*) with the real situation of the particular circumstance.<sup>206</sup>

Again, here rhythm refers to the *particular* situation, and as such, as Panikkar attunes to, cannot be a universal principle, it cannot be turned into a general concept, because it exists not as a definable *thing*, but as a certain *tact*, a *touch*, producing not the same, but the *similar* – holding within it enough diversity in order for it not to be the simple repetition of the same, and yet enough similarity in order for us to perceive it. The “time” at play here is a more “primordial sort of time”,<sup>207</sup> as Panikkar puts it, something he illustrates through the famous comment by St. Augustine: “What then is time? If nobody asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know”. St. Augustine struggles with

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<sup>206</sup> Raimon Panikkar, *The Rhythm of Being: The Gifford Lectures* (New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 41.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

understanding time not because it is something he does not know, but because he knows it in a different way, other than a conceptual understanding. The time here gestured towards is not the objectifiable, quantifiable, chronological time, but the *kairological*, qualitative, *experiential*, bodied-forth time – the time of “Care”, of a *making-room*. Indeed Panikkar proffers how it is “not linear. If anything, it could be imagined as somewhat curved. Rhythm is not possible on a plane surface. It needs the curvature of both space and ‘time’. It recoils, but in a peculiar way. The ‘second’ movement is new and yet not new because it is not disconnected, but second. It is the same only as an abstraction, abstracted from its...living context”.<sup>208</sup> Rhythm, as a structure of *similarity*, is perhaps conceivable as a spiral, which indicates a movement both *regular* and *irregular*, both somewhat predictable and unpredictable, an “interplay of pattern and variation”.<sup>209</sup> This is the time we experience in living – how the day itself is experienced as in part predictable and yet in other parts totally wild. No day is the same, and yet no day is disconnected from the next, we expect what tomorrow might bring, and yet cannot know what to expect. The time we live is a strange jointure, perceptible only when things seem to come out of joint. “we discover rhythm when we experience the subjective difference of an objective identity, but we could equally have said: the objective difference of a subjective identity. Identity and difference, subjectivity and objectivity, are overcome. In other words, the experience of rhythm is the experience of the neither-identity-nor-difference of the real”.<sup>210</sup> Rhythm, then, as the singular attunement of what *joins* and *separates*; an enantiomorphic chiasm of connection and distinction, of seeing the world *as this, as that*, in a relational understanding from which we are not divorced.

The perception of rhythm, as Panikkar proffers, lies, as perhaps what Merleau-Ponty was proffering with *gestalt*, in the apprehending of a *whole* comprised of internal relations, in the momentary presentation of something *as-such*.

It has no real parts. Any partition would destroy the rhythm, which is not the sum of its components. Each sound, if isolated, would make no rhythm, nor would it do so if each sound were not ‘inside’ its neighbours, so to speak...rhythm demands a certain type of *perichoresis* (a dancing interpretation...) being so intertwined that we are not able to decompose the ‘units’ without destroying the true rhythm. If you do not perceive the Whole, there is no rhythm.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 47.

To say what rhythm *is* is impossible, it can only be sketched. It is what Panikkar calls a “symbol”, in the sense that it necessitates a *participation*, a *bodying-forth*, in order to *be* and to be understood. It is a *structure of possibility*, rather than an a defined *thing* – perhaps what can only be configured mutely as an X that stands for something that *is* and *is not*, a movement that is also a stillness, a drawing together and apart – an idiological marriage of space and time that is always singular.

Rhythm is both temporal and spatial; it is the combination of different times in the same (apparent) space and of diverse spaces in the same (apparently repeated) time. Linear time is somewhat defeated; rhythmic time is all in the ‘timing’. Space is also defeated; the *situs* changes but the *locus* remains the same. It seems as if you would expand, and yet you are not displaced. Rhythm is the marriage of space and time...time has become space and space, time. You can distinguish them, but cannot separate them.<sup>212</sup>

Rhythm, then, is the time that *presents* itself, parting-with itself in a tending towards itself that constitutes its localisation. Rhythm is not the “same”, nor simply a “pure difference”, but the *similar* – an *identity-in-difference* and a *difference-in-identity*. Whilst metre or schema is the return of the *same*, rhythm is the return of the same *differently*.

It is through *rhythm* that *Dasein's* existence is begun, and which maintains them in an on-going beginning, an on-going form in formation – their inquiry formed in the cohesion of an “as”, that is, in a synthesis that is not logical but *tensional*, through the *inhabiting* of a *bodying-forth* of sense. Her language of inquiry is articulated through the *non-coincidence* of a *rhythmical* sense – the, as Jenny Wiskus highlights, “cohesion of temporal impossibles – of initiation and end, future and past – that creates, in music, the impression of movement”.<sup>213</sup> Her existence is formed in the tension between *agere-gerere*, where she does not begin herself but is *begun* – rhythm being instituted, as Wiskus would have it, not by the first note, but by the *retrospective* turning of the second note *back*.

Despite our common notion of rhythm as a series of definite, articulated sounds, the musician knows rhythm in quite a different way: as the interval *between* articulated sounds. It is the relationship of a second articulation to the first that creates a rhythm. This is why a conductor who leads an orchestra never begins a piece of music from the initial note; before the first sounded note, there must be a gesture (sometimes only a breath) that, when placed in relation to the first note, will initiate rhythm or a pulse for the entirety of the musical movement or phrase. Rhythmically, the first gesture is never the beginning; it is the second gesture that initiates a beginning. Rhythm can be instituted only retroactively; it turns back from the second note to the first in order to recover the interval of silence between the two, even as it then lays

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>213</sup> Jessica Wiskus, “On the Musical Idea of Proust”, *The Rhythm of Thought: art, literature, and music after Merleau-Ponty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 92.

forth a new structure that would support the articulation of an unfurling melody. Rhythm promises an ongoing, dynamic process that works by looking both forward and retrospectively, applying itself through the noncoincidence of each sound.<sup>214</sup>

The gap between her thrownness and projection, her being there-here is the retrospective referral through which her rhythmical understanding is begun – an understanding which will be her on-going *melody of being*, her analogical unity-in-difference and difference-in-unity.

The melody gives to us a particular consciousness of time. We think naturally that the past secretes the future ahead of it. But this notion of time is refuted by the melody. At the moment when the melody begins, the last note is there, in its own manner. In a melody, a reciprocal influence between the first and the last note takes place, and we have to say that the first note is possible only because of the last, and vice versa.<sup>215</sup>

In this sense, her two-fold structure of *thrown-projection* is a structure of a form which is not posed by a self, is not the *making* of an ego, but is a form which emerges from divergence, where she becomes, as Merleau-Ponty describes the temporalising of musical ideality “the form that has arrived at itself, that is itself, that poses itself by its own means, is the equivalent of the cause of itself...auto-regulation, cohesion of self with self, identity in depth (dynamic identity)”.<sup>216</sup> Rather than a schema of identity, she is the *compositional* unfolding through differentiation – her language of inquiry a continuous articulation of the world *as-such* – a melody of being, which is never complete, but on-going, in a constant *returning* – turning again what she thought she was. Her language existing only in the alterity of a *trans* – in the movement of an inhabiting of possibility – a language of inquiry always *on the way*, caught in the *transformational transition* of a *transitive* sense – this ecstatic existing in a time that never simply “is” but *is* by parting with itself, making for an existence that cannot be held in completion, but *is* only in the *articulation* of a *transitioning* – the *tension between*, the seeing something *as* something.

Man is that inability to remain and yet is unable to leave his place. In projecting, the *Da-sein* in him constantly *throws* him into possibilities and thereby keeps him *subjected* to what is actual. Thus thrown in this throw, man is a *transition*, transition as the fundamental essence of occurrence. Man is history, or better, history is man. Man is *enraptured* in this transition and therefore prevails as ‘*absent*’. Absent in a fundamental sense – never simply at hand, but absent in the essence of his prevailing, in his *essentially being away*, removed into *essential having been and future* – prevailing in absence and never at hand, yet *existent* in his essential absence...<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Wiskus, “Mallarmé and a Proffer of Silence”, *The Rhythm of Thought*, 9.

<sup>215</sup> Merleau-Ponty quoted in Wiskus, “On the Musical Idea of Proust”, 96.

<sup>216</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 208.

<sup>217</sup> Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 531.

Her language of inquiry is a *form in movement* – always tending towards, searching toward herself, never having reached a destination of self-coincidence, but scouting out possibilities. What defines her existence is that it is not definable, it “is” only in the searching, only in this *mode of inquiry* which never relents, this corresponding to having been addressed.

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It is through an idiosyncrasy of rhythm, an ido-local making-room, scene by scene, that her language of inquiry *takes-place*, where her form can only be the singular *staging* of a space of time and a time of space, an eventmental happening of self and place, where inquirer and situation are born together – a coexistence of an event and the place where the event occurs – an eventmental happening as Casey comes to define the idiosyncrasy of place, where space and time are enjoined, *as such*.

A place is more an event than a thing to be assimilated to known categories. As an event, it is unique, idiolocal. Its peculiarity calls not for assumption into the already known – that way lies site, which lends itself to predefined predications, uses, and interpretations – but for the imaginative constitution of terms respecting its idiolocality.<sup>218</sup>

place is not entiative as a foundation has to be but eventmental, something in process, something unconfined to a thing. Or to a simple location. Place is all over the place.<sup>219</sup>

The ‘eventmental’ character of places, their capacity for co-locating space and time (even as they deconstruct this very dyad), can be considered a final form of gathering. This form is not the gathering-out of particular persons and things in a configured place or region, or the in-gathering effected by the body as the crux of nature and culture, but a still more general and pervasive gathering-with that occurs by virtue of the very power of implacement to bring space and time together in the event. Such comprehensive gathering is the turning point of space and time, the pivot where space and time conjoin in place. Just as this most inclusive and momentous gathering is the undermining of space and time construed as independent and pre-existing dimensions, it is also the basis for any theory of space and time taken as absolute or relative, simultaneous or successive, intuitive or conceptual. The deconstruction of space and time by place clears the way for their conjoint reconstruction. But the two dimensions remain, first and last, dimensions of place, and they are experienced and expressed *in place by the event of place*.<sup>220</sup>

It is through an example of reflection on his own scene of thinking, from within his own reading room that Casey shows how this making-room of a self as an entwinement of space and time occurs:

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<sup>218</sup> Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 329.

<sup>219</sup> Casey, *Fate of Place*, 337.

<sup>220</sup> Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 340.

We realise the essential posteriority of space and time to place whenever we catch ourselves apprehending spatial relations or temporal occurrences *in a particular place*. Now I am in a room in Atlanta, and it is here that I am composing this essay. Not only the punctiform here and now, but also relations and occurrences of much more considerable scope collect around and in a single place. My quarters are an integral part of a house in a certain neighbourhood and city, themselves set within an entire region called ‘the South’, all of which have their own dense historicities as well as geographies. Even these extensive geo-histories I grasp from within my delimited room-place.<sup>221</sup>

Space and time are always experienced *together* in a certain room that is made through an idio-local gathering. The space-time of implacement is an eventmental happening where the spatial relations occur *at a particular time*, but this happening occurs in a space that is also particular. The “event” of making-room, in this way, is the “spatiotemporalisation of a place, and the way it happens as spatiotemporally specified”.<sup>222</sup> Here is the *rhythmical* articulation of a making-room – there for a while at a particular time – idio-local, where the *horizon* of her *being-there* is not simply temporal, not simply spatial, but a spatio-temporal boundary – the limit of her being from which she continuously begins, changing with the scene.

What characterises her inquiry is that it cannot be defined from *without*, it cannot be held under a general concept, under a general way of proceeding, but is definable only through the singular *modality* of its *taking-place* – the idio-local making-room *from within*, which is a singular staging of rhythm. Indeed it is *style* through which Casey finally comes to define place, where style is understood not as a marker of a homogeneous unity of identity, but as a “unity-in-diversity”, where a “type or style admits of degrees”.<sup>223</sup> Style as the singular *attunement* of her *analogical* understanding – *an identity-in-difference and a difference-in-identity*, where the *there* is understood *as such*. The “kind of” which Casey comes to define as place, is an indefiniteness which paradoxically makes not for an *indeterminacy*, as he is keen to emphasise, but is what allows for the *idiosyncrasy* of an *implacement*, the *inflection* of a there in its *tensional*, differential *way of being*: “I would even say that the open-endedness of place, its typological status as morphologically vague, its de-finition, creates the semantic space within which definite demonstrations and exact localisations can arise”.<sup>224</sup>

It is the emptiness of her “there”, the manner in which it is indefinable apart from its *taking-place*, which allows her life to unfold continuously in *possibility* – to be a melody of being

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 330.

in-formation. Hers is, in this way, an inherently *theatrical* inquiry – a bodying-forth meaning, a materialising of possibilities not as an “expression” of a self, but as her *presentation*. Indeed, the *ontology of present participles* Butler calls for is what Weber comes to argue as the core of *theatricality*, where the present participle is the “theatrical tense par excellence”<sup>225</sup> – its sense-making a *staging*, an understanding which is not grounded in advance but is contingent on the *mode* of its taking-place, on its singular presenting *as such*. As a staging, this “there” can never be taken once and for all, and never even fully, given that each making-sense is an incomplete *scene* of *Dasein*’s existence in their tending towards, their always being on the way. Indeed, such an eventmentality is how Weber comes to describe the theatricality of staging:

when an event or series of events take place without reducing the place it ‘takes’ to a purely neutral site, then that place reveals itself to be a ‘stage’, and those events become theatrical happenings. As the gerund here suggests...such happenings never take place once and for all but are ongoing. This in turn suggests that they can neither be contained within the place where they unfold nor entirely separated from it. They can be said, then, in a quite literal sense, to *come to pass*. They take place, which means in a particular place, and yet simultaneously also *pass away* – not simply to disappear but to happen somewhere *else*. Out of the dislocations of its repetitions emerges nothing more or less than the *singularity of the theatrical event*. Such theatrical singularity haunts and taunts the Western dream of self-identity.<sup>226</sup>

In the *implacement* of sense, where there is a reciprocity, a co-functioning of *Dasein* and world, the understanding never coheres into a simple present at hand representation, but is the *tension* of a jointure and separation – a sense articulating a *possibility* from within the inhabiting *here-there* – a sense which is always open to being set in movement once more. A stage is never, as Weber emphasises, a spot enclosed onto itself, but is inherently split by being open to an outside – split in being both *here*, where the action unfolds, and *there*, in the space of the audience. It is a place defined by its *parting-with* itself in the relational attunement of the *as such*.

A theatrical scenario thus never takes place ‘once and for all’ but rather ‘one scene at a time’. It is singular and yet repetitive, ongoing and yet never complete. It is both nearby and distant, familiar and strange, present and passing. It is marked not by acts or even by actors, but rather by acting. Its tense and temporality is that of the *present participle*. ‘Presenting’ rather than ‘present’, it entails a *participation* that never comes full circle, never forms a whole. This is what distinguishes all theatrical staging...from ‘art’ in the aesthetic sense: the former results not in a *work*, but (at

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<sup>225</sup> Weber, *Theatricality as Medium*, 212.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

most) in a 'working through'. In its immediacy and elusiveness, such theatricality is familiar and yet strange. Strange in its familiarity.<sup>227</sup>

Such is the ordinary strangeness of our existing not in the abode of identity but in the uncanny differential of a thrown-projection, where we are continuously attempting, unsuccessfully, to tend towards, to apprehend, what has apprehended us. The understanding of possibility which comprises this *being the there* is an *implacement* of sense characterised as the relational co-functioning of a *both and* rather than an either or – the gathered collecting of a difference which effectively, as Casey argues in his reflections on the idiosyncrasy of place, *deconstructs* the binaries of dichotomous thinking which is the lot of our philosophical inheritance in the West:

Place is not only compenetrative but also...deconstructive – deconstructive of oppositions that it brings and holds together within its own ambience. These oppositions include binary pairs of terms that have enjoyed hegemonic power in Western epistemology and metaphysics. I am thinking of such dichotomies as subject and object, self and other, formal and substantive, mind and body, inner and outer, perception and imagination (or memory), and nature and culture themselves. It is always from a particular place that a person, considered as a knowing 'subject', seizes upon a world of things presumed to be 'objects'. The reduction of persons to subjects – and, still more extremely, to minds – and of things to objects could not occur anywhere other than in place. Yet to be fully in a place is to know – to know by direct acquaintance as well as by cultural habitus – that such a double reduction delivers only the shadowy simulacrum of the experiences we have in that place.<sup>228</sup>

Her language of inquiry is always, in this sense, an eventmental *taking-place*, a certain presentation, an on-going *staging*; each scene a making-room there for a while, at a particular time, dwelling in its continuous unfolding, rather than in any shelter that could buffer her against the pummelling buffets of time; her "there" both the place where the event of her existence happens, and the happening of this event, neither one the ground of the other. Indeed, Heidegger would invoke the theatrical in his essay "The Origin of the Work of Art", in speaking of the opening not as "a rigid stage with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of beings runs its course. Rather...The unconcealedness of beings... is never a merely existent state, but a happening. Unconcealedness (truth) is neither an attribute of factual things in the sense of beings, nor one of propositions".<sup>229</sup> *Being-there* then, as an on-going eventmental *fictitious* taking-place – a play of concealment and disclosure, where the world *presents* itself *as such* in the time of an *imparting*, a *tending towards*. *Dasein's* inquiry is a veritable *scenography* of passage – each *being-there* a *scene* of sense where the total

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<sup>227</sup> Samuel Weber, *Freud Legende* (California: Stanford University Press, 1982), 7.

<sup>228</sup> Casey, *Getting Back Into Place*, 338.

<sup>229</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", *Poetry Language Thought*, 52.

“plot”, or “drama”, is only carried out through the dynamics of its on-going manner of unfolding, where though each scene is a gathered unity in itself, none are *complete*. The “whole” is not the sum of the parts, but is what is constantly being worked-out through this dynamic happening. It is in this sense that *Dasein*’s life is a *form in-formation*, where each scene is a repeating of their originary assignment – their originary *language of inquiry*.

If we are ourselves in question in the very unfolding of our life...it is because we ourselves are one sole continued question, a perpetual enterprise of taking our bearings on the constellations of the world, and of taking the bearings of the things on our dimensions.<sup>230</sup>

The *questionability* of her being is the definition of her movement form, her inquiry of sketching-out – opposed to an externally imposed shape, hers is only the singular articulation in and as the *taking-place* of a situation, the rhythmical space-time of the structure of the “as”.

‘Self’ determines the ‘as’ of Being: if it is, it is *as* it is. It is ‘in itself’ prior to any ‘ego’, prior to any presentable ‘property’. It is the ‘as’ of all that is. This is not a presentable property, since it is presentation itself. Presentation is neither a propriety nor a state, but rather an event, the coming of something: of its coming *into the world*, where the ‘world’ itself is the plane or the exposing of every coming.<sup>231</sup>

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It is in this sense that the *logos* of discourse [*Rede*] is, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “the most valuable witness to Being, that it does not interrupt an immediation that would be perfect without it, that the vision itself, the thought itself, are, as has been said, ‘structured as a language’, are *articulation* before the letter”.<sup>232</sup> To perceive something *as* something is the momentary configuration, an eventmental singular *arrangement* arising from the staging of *Dasein*’s taking-place. The rhythm is the *attuned jointure* which brings us into nearness with the world, and the others therein, whilst keeping them distinct, strange. Rhythm is the *immediate mediacy* of the “there”, expressing not what something is, but *that it is* – the *tensional* sense of a *Stimmung*, of being caught between *here* and *there*, one who *is* and *is not*. Heidegger’s conception of language, in this sense, is one whereby *mood*, *rhythm*, *a way of saying*, is what first opens up the sense of the world through this relational attunement of the *as*. Rather than an addendum to meaning, the *way* is the ontological opening. Language is first and foremost a *form-of-life*, that is, it gives the *ruthmos* of *Dasein*’s taking-place, there for a while, at a particular time. It is a *logos* of which *I* am not the organiser but is *her*

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>231</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 8.

<sup>232</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 126.

bodying-forth of sense, where meaning is the *configuration*, the singular *constellation* of an articulation of the “there”, where what matters is not the significance of each thing but the *relations between*, the articulated *space* of a making-room.

At certain moments in *Being and Time*, Heidegger gestures to this sense of language as first and foremost an articulation of presence in space understood not as self-coincidence, but as the attuned jointure of a *roomy* presence, through the *Raumbedeutungen* of its spatial designations. At one point he rhetorically asks “Is it an accident that proximally and for the most part significations are ‘worldly’, sketched out beforehand by the significance of the world, that they are indeed often predominantly ‘spatial’?”<sup>233</sup> And at another states: “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’. This priority of the spatial in the Articulation of concepts and significations has its basis not in some specific power which space possesses, but in Dasein’s kind of Being”.<sup>234</sup> It is gestured to too in Heidegger’s specific choice of *Dasein, being-there*, as the word expressive of the human being where the “there” belongs in language to the *deictic* field of meaning, corresponding to a situated bodying where the “here” and “there” change in relation to the change of the situation.

W. Von Humboldt has alluded to certain languages which express the ‘I’ by ‘here’, the ‘thou’ by ‘there’, the ‘he’ by ‘yonder’, thus rendering the personal pronouns by locative adverbs, to put it grammatically. It is controversial whether indeed the primordial signification of locative expressions is adverbial or pronominal. But this dispute loses its basis if one notes that locative adverbs have a relationship to the “I” *qua* Dasein. The ‘here’ and the ‘there’ and the ‘yonder’ are primarily not mere ways of designating the location of entities present-at-hand within-the-world at positions in space; they are rather characteristics of Dasein’s primordial spatiality. These supposedly locative adverbs are Dasein-designations; they have a signification which is primarily existential, not categorical. But they are not pronouns either; their signification is prior to the differentiation of locative adverbs and personal pronouns: these expressions have a Dasein-signification which is authentically spatial, and which serves as evidence that when we interpret Dasein without any theoretical distortions we can see it immediately as ‘Being-alongside’<sup>235</sup> the world with which it concerns itself, and as Being-alongside it spatially – that is to say, as desevering and giving directionality. In the ‘here’, the Dasein which is absorbed in its world speaks not towards itself but away from itself towards the ‘yonder’ of something

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<sup>233</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 209.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

<sup>235</sup> “The proposition ‘*bei*’, like ‘*an*’, does not have quite the semantical range of any English preposition. Our ‘alongside’, with which we shall translate it when other devices seem less satisfactory, especially in the phrase ‘Being alongside’ (‘*Sein bei*’), is often quite misleading; the sense here is closer to that of ‘at’ in such expressions as ‘at home’ or ‘at my father’s’, or that of the French ‘*chez*’. Here again Heidegger seems to be relying upon Grimm, who proceeds to connect ‘*bei*’ with ‘*bauen*’ (‘build’) and ‘*bin*’”, translator’s note, *Being and Time*, 80.

circumspectively ready-to-hand; yet it still has *itself* in view in its existential spatiality.<sup>236</sup>

It is perhaps in this sense of her language of inquiry as an idio-local rhythm of understanding letting her  *dwell* in the world in a way that preserves its strangeness, that Heidegger would remark, towards the end of his lecture “Letter on Humanism”, “Aristotle’s words in the *Poetics*, although they have scarcely been pondered, are still valid – that poetising is truer than exploration of beings”.<sup>237</sup> Her language of inquiry a *poetic saying*, if poetry is understood not as a genre of literature, but *what first allows us to dwell*, to *inhabit* the world, in an *attuned jointure*, singularly *as such*.

The reference in *Being and Time* (p.54) to ‘being-in’ as ‘dwelling’ is not some etymological play. The same reference in the 1936 essay on Hölderlin’s word, ‘Full of merit, yet poetically, man dwells upon this earth’, is not the adornment of a thinking that rescues itself from science by means of poetry.<sup>238</sup>

Poetry then as perhaps more of a *rhythm* of sense – what first lets this *there* be perceived *as such* in its very *taking-place* – the ordinary *gathering* of sense. As Heidegger underscores in the elliptically titled “...Poetically Man Dwells...”, poetry should be understood not as a flight of the imagination, a “frivolous mooning and vaporising into the unknown”, nor is it simply a genre of literature, where it is subject to “the latest prevailing standard”<sup>239</sup> of the time; not an *aesthetic* addendum to our existence, “merely an ornament and bonus added onto dwelling”,<sup>240</sup> nor is it there in all dwelling, but is, as he articulates through attending to Hölderlin’s phrase, “...poetically man dwells”...”, what “first causes dwelling to be dwelling. Poetry is what really lets us dwell”.<sup>241</sup>

*Incongruity* is the mark of it – what Heidegger understands as the “same”, which is not the “identical”, that eradicator of *distinction* which brings everything into a “common denominator”, but the same understood as “the belonging together of what differs, through a gathering by way of the difference”.<sup>242</sup> Poetry as what articulates the *chiasm* of a jointure and separation, gathering difference through *tension* – a “synthesis” which retains what is “other”, bringing it not into agreement, but into accord, into a unity of difference through a relational *as*. And so, as Heidegger himself performs in this essay, it is only through a

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>237</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, *Pathmarks*, ed. William McNeill, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 275.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>239</sup> Martin Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...”, *Poetry Language Thought*, 213.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 216.

*divergence* from Hölderlin, dwelling in their *non-coincidence* and articulating this difference, that what Hölderlin was attempting to capture in the phrase “...poetically man dwells...”, can be brought to light: “we divine a path by which, through what is thought differently, we come nearer to thinking the same as what the poet composes in his poem”.<sup>243</sup> It is in allowing his own saying to differ from Hölderlin’s that he can come to read what he was trying to say. Heidegger himself is thinking poetically in this sense, as it is only in the crossing over of Hölderlin’s phrase in the trans of an *as*, that it remains the *same* – it is only in being *repeated* differently, that is, where another *rhythm* is introduced, that a relation to Hölderlin’s saying can be established. Poetry, in this sense, is not definable or confinable to a genre, but is the generative capacity of a non-coincidence – it is characterisable only as a *rhythm* of sense – the tensional *tendency* of a reading, of a situated understanding. It is in becoming different that the “identity” of Hölderlin’s saying is preserved where identity is here construed not as the identical, but as Heidegger argues, the ‘same’, where the same is the simultaneous gathering of what differs and holding apart what differs, operating according to a logic of “*both and*”, rather than “*either/or*”, in the tensional understanding of the *as*. The identical cancels this movement between, this oscillation here-there, setting things down into a this or that – the negation of this tensional difference – this carrying over, this crossing between. The rhythm of a poetic saying, joins and separates, it gives and takes, it is and is not; the moment of joining is also the moment of separating – it is a *live relation*, that allows movement – allows for a seeing something *as* something, as a gathering of *similitude*, in which difference is not eradicated, but *allowed to be*. It is an *attuned* measure – a measure which spans the *between* of “earth” and “heaven”, where the human being is the one who measures out their dimension on earth in relation to the heavens – to the unknown, which is not a measure-taking of “science”, metting out the world according to a standard metric, where the unknown is reduced to a known quantity, but the *cohesion without concept* of an idio-local measuring, *uniting* the known and unknown, heaven and earth. The unknown strangeness of the “gods” of heaven is not the measure of our dwelling, but the manner in which the unknown does not appear, but is “revealed *as* such by the sky”.<sup>244</sup> The appearance of the unknown through the known lets us see what conceals itself “but lets us see it not by seeking to wrest what is concealed out of its concealedness, but only by guarding the concealed in its self-concealment”.<sup>245</sup> As Agamben puts it, “facticity”, the *that-it-is* of Dasein, “must show itself in its concealment and opacity”.<sup>246</sup> The *saying* of Dasein is one

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 217.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>246</sup> Agamben, “The Passion of Facticity”, *Potentialities*, 202.

that says this unsayability – that articulates the unarticulability of the there. It is a saying that does not explain the wonder and perplexity of the *there*, but is in *attunement* with it, shows it *as such*. This measure of poetry is, as Heidegger notes,

A strange measure for ordinary and in particular also for all merely scientific ideas, 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 be taken. This is done by a taking which at no time clutches the standard but rather takes it in a concentrated perception, a gathered taking-in, that remains a listening.<sup>247</sup>

Rather than the reduction of what appears in the opening to what is known, through measurements that can be “confined within a quantity and order”, this measuring is not a quantum, a quantification, but an *accord* – a unity in and of diversity – what preserves not only a *revealing*, but a *concealing* too. It is a measure as *rhythm* – as the span of a making-room where we dwell *within* the world, rather than above or outside it. What characterises this *language of inquiry*, this poetic saying, is the showing in something of that which is other to itself – the *analogical* nature of an understanding that *gathers* sense in a gesture where something *is*, only through what it is not.

In such a way, poetry is to be understood not from out of language, but as that *language of inquiry* which first makes for language at all – the idio-local taking-place of a *rhythm* of sense. As Heidegger notes in another essay on Hölderlin, “Poetizing thus never takes up language as a present-at-hand material with which to work, rather, poetizing itself first makes language possible”.<sup>248</sup> Poetry is “that through which all those things first come into the open that we then talk about and discuss in our everyday language”.<sup>249</sup> This poetizing is the originary rhythmical *measure* of the world, understood not as a metric but as the arising of a bodying attunement, a *span* which cannot be known in advance, but which occurs in the *inhabiting* of a *there* – in the opening up to an opening *as such*.

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid., “...Poetically Man Dwells...”, 221.

<sup>248</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry”, quoted in David McNeill, *The Time of Life*, 144.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 144.

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Ethos anthropoi daimon  
– Heraclitus, *Fragment 119*

I dwell in possibility -  
A fairer House than Prose -  
More numerous of Windows -  
Superior - for Doors -  
– Emily Dickinson, 466

The purpose of poetry is to remind us how difficult it is to remain just one person, for our house is open, there are no keys in the doors, and invisible guests come in and out at will.  
– Czesaw Milosz, “Ars Poetica?”

Wittgenstein says the following. The difficulty in which thinking stands compares with a man in a room, from which he wants to get out. At first, he attempts to get out through the window, but it is too high for him. Then he attempts to get out through the chimney, which is too narrow for him. If he simply turned around, he would see that the door was open all along.  
– Martin Heidegger, *Heraclitus Seminar*

What characterises *her* language, above all, is the way in which the world’s, (and thus her own), questionability is left open – the strange facticity of her scene of thinking exhibiting itself continuously, *as such*. She thinks she knows it completely, abides in its predictable rigidity, only to be confronted one evening, mid-summer, by the inexplicable beauty of the light striking the green bottle *just so*, illuminating it in a dazzling radiance hued with a reticent tone. Even here, in the ordinary familiar, the unexpected breaks in – like the mouse she hears hiding in this room now wintering itself. Her language of inquiry always a capacity entwined with *incapacity* – an inability to see or show something entirely – all she knows is this play of an aspect in passing, leaving open other possibilities of sense, a different light-in-darkness; her inquiry always a not being able to grasp fully; her perplexity, questionability, on-going. Yet this permanency of a question is her “Care” – her preservation of truth in its dissimilitude – a tending to the tacit expressivity that avoids her clutch. Her question then, not an absence waiting to be filled by an answer, but an empty capacity to resound, continuously. What *she* understands is not a present-at-hand *thing*, a *cognised* object, but the feeling of a *tension* between – an attuned jointure – a *correspondence* with the world which is not static but constantly moving in a tending towards what it will have been.

Not an “I” who projects meaning onto the world, a subject as the measure of what is worthy to know, she is only ever a *correspondent* to the situation in its limited boundedness. Her truth, not what something “is”, but what it is *like* – the measure of a *possibility* from which she is not divorced and to which she must be born. She the *metron* of this encircling sphere, singularly such each time, *as this, as that* – the world towards which she tends – the world

which tends towards her – not an authoritative measure for the standard of measures, but the limited making-room in the access of its turning.

It is this poetic measure, her language of inquiry as an *attuned* jointure of a *staging*, singularly such each time, that makes for the strangeness of her dwelling in the world – that makes for her abiding as an *ethos anthropos daimon*. In “Letter on Humanism”, Heidegger comes to translate Heraclitus’s phrase in the sense of “ethos” as “abode, dwelling place. The word names the open region in which the human being dwells. The open region of his abode allows what pertains to the essence of the human being, and what in thus arriving resides in nearness to him, to appear”.<sup>250</sup> The rhythmic structure of her understanding, where she perceives the world in an *attuned-jointure*, in understanding something *as* something, this *poetic measure*, is what makes for the uncanniness of her existence as a self who *is* through what she *is not* – disclosed to herself only in bearing-out this *there*, in opening up a relation to the world, to others and thus, to herself, where her relations of concern and solicitude brings this otherness only into the “Care” of a nearness that preserves distance, through the *logos* of the *as*. The *attunement* of her language of inquiry, in this sense, is the most primordial ethics, as it is what first opens up her being-in-relation. As William McNeill notes,

the primary disclosure of the presencing of the world is, on Heidegger’s account, accomplished not by contemplative or philosophical knowledge, but by a fundamental *pathos* or attunement; and such *pathos* is fundamental in attuning, in advance of any explicit deliberative or discursive understanding, the way in which we are held in the presencing of the moment – in short, in attuning our entire *ethos*.<sup>251</sup>

Her *way of being-in-the-world* is, thus, what might be called an *etho-poesis*, a language of inquiry that poetically measures her *being-there*, singularly such each time – opening up the world, others, and her own being, *as such*; a language of inquiry which is her abiding in the *xenos* of coexistence, being-with, dwelling in the *hyphenation* of a between – what Agamben calls the *laceration* of her *ethos*: “the verb *daiomai*, ‘to divide, lacerate’), *daimon* means ‘the lacerator, he who divides and fractures’”.<sup>252</sup> What is most proper to her being-in-the-world is her separation, her division, her *non-coincidence*, her parting-with herself, which constitutes her relationality. “For man, *ethos*, the dwelling in the ‘self’ that is what is most proper and habitual for him, is what lacerates and divides, the principle and place of a fracture”.<sup>253</sup> Her

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<sup>250</sup> Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”, 269.

<sup>251</sup> William McNeill, *The Time of Life*, 2.

<sup>252</sup> Agamben, “\*Se: Hegel’s Absolute and Heidegger’s *Ereignis*”, *Potentialities*, 118.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

language of inquiry thus, the etho-poesis of an on-going sketching-out, an on-going understanding through non-coincidence – each *there* a scene revealed *as such* by dwelling there for a while, at a particular time – an on-going sketching-out of her ecology of care.

It is this relationality of the “as”, thus, which is the locus of a primordial ethics, where *language* is the abode of an originary ethos, understood not as the conceptual rendering of the world, but as the *attunement*, the understanding through a differential *tension*; the *logos* as the gestural rhythm of sense, which *joins* us to the world, and separates us from it, allowing us to be in relation to our lives, while maintaining them as inappropriable; the *logos* as the language that never sheds its questionableness, inquires into being not in order to explain it, but to enter into it; the *logos* as what *enables Dasein* to be, to dwell in *possibility*; the *logos* as the active passivity of a *bodying-forth*; the *logos* as the *situational* understanding inseparable from the *issue* of being – what is *in each case mine*; the *logos* as the analogical identity-in-difference and difference-in-identity, a structure that allows an openness to the otherwise; the *logos* of an *uncertainty* principle dwelling in *possibility*, in the *bodying-forth* a sense that is a synthesis without concept, standing in the receptive – vulnerable and exposed, and being claimed, being addressed, in an open availability to the world; the *logos* as a poetic making not by a wilful subject, but a *bearing-forth* possibilities through the tumult of an inquiry in a *questioning* that dwells in *being-questioned*.

Such is the “ethics” of her inquiry – not the rule-bound principles set out upon the ground of identity, but this *laceration* where she must dwell in being a stranger to herself.

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The riddle of life will never be found where the mystery of the living being has already been  
abandoned  
– Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides*

She is, most of all, a *reader*, not, that is, of the academic ilk, but a reader of *facticity*, reading this everyday, scene by scene, by giving herself over to it, understanding through what is *not there*; reading the differences, the space between, the presence of an absence – she a reader of rhythm, characterised by attending to the between of an *is* and *is not*, to the unarticulated in the articulated, in a space of time and a time of space, where something is taken together and taken apart.

In his reflection on Heidegger’s references to the enigmatic in *Being and Time*, Simon Critchley comes to define the enigma in both its perceptual and linguistic aspects, linking enigma to the task of reading.

Perceptually, an enigma is something one cannot see through. It is *undurchsichtig*, obscure, opaque and not transparent. Linguistically, an enigma is a riddle, like that solved by Oedipus. In Greek, *ainigma* is a dark saying, from the verb *ainissomai*, to speak darkly or to riddle. The modern German *Ratsel* shares a common Germanic root with the English *riddle*, and stems from the Old German *raeden*, which survives in the modern German *Rat*, and *raten*, as well as being linked to the *Rede* of which Heidegger speaks in *Sein und Zeit*. A riddle is therefore etymologically linked to the notion of speech, specifically giving advice and counsel. But *Ratsel* is also linked with guessing something unknown...such as guessing the solution to a riddle. In English, riddle goes back to the Middle English *redels*, and interestingly, there is an etymological link between a riddle and reading, namely that a riddle is something that one has to learn to read in order to ascertain its meaning. In this sense, hermeneutics would be the reading of riddles. There is also the sense of a person being a riddle, of trying to read the riddle of oneself or another.<sup>254</sup>

She is thrown into the stance of reading the riddle of the *there*, a shadowy *saying*, the *Rede* of a discourse *as such*, in which the riddle of her own existence is caught up. It is a riddling not of the unusual, but of the strange questionability of the everyday. The world speaks to her in a saying obscure, and it is into this darkness she looks, the open being, as Agamben puts it, an opening to closedness: “and whoever looks into the open sees only a closing, only a not-seeing”.<sup>255</sup> Hers is a peering into the enigma of the opening, where what she perceives is a *not* being able to see at the heart of what she sees – the dissimilitude of a surface that can’t be seen through. Dwelling in the recalcitrant *thereness* she undergoes and suffers the *daimon* of not something *other*, but the *daimon* of *her* own existence – the chiasm of her being and *non-being* – the *ethos anthropos daimon* of *being-there*. In her reading she reads only for *herself*, that is, for this being *towards herself*. The daimonic, then, as the abode of her being is not a stranger as such – the “voice of the friend” as Heidegger calls it, is only this stranger she is to herself, it is only her *questionabilty* – her inability to ever fully coincide.

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Yet this language of inquiry, this dwelling in nearness to the demonic, this *riddling* the enigma of her being, is what is all too easily covered over and dissimulated in a mode of dwelling that Heidegger comes to call “das Man” – a mode of understanding the world, others and one’s self characterised by a “fleeing in the face of uncanniness” – a covering over and turning away from the *openness* of which we are comprised. For the most part, the “Care” with which we dwell in the world, this etho-poetic understanding, gets covered over,

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<sup>254</sup> Simon Critchley, “Enigma Variations: An Interpretation of Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, *Ratio* XV (2002): 158.

<sup>255</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Open*, trans. Kevin Attell (California: Stanford University Press, 2004), 68.

the relation to ourselves dissimulated, by the manner in which we come to dwell in the world in a mode that is a *general* understanding, rather than a situated understanding *as* something, a rhythmicity. We come to see and understand the world, *as* everyone else sees and understands it, and thus lose sight of the singularity of our own situated understanding through this ontological *relation* to ourselves that constitutes us – this *questionability* which is, for each human being, an *issue* that is our own – no one else having the singularity of your thrownness. Our unpoetic dwelling is not, in this sense, an event that befalls us, nor is it that which happens to some more than others, but is simply what we fall into by being cast into a particular “there” and inheriting a *way of being* which, for the most part, covers over our own strangeness to ourselves. “This everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which Dasein has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed”.<sup>256</sup>

The understanding of *das Man* is one in which the *as* gets covered over, in an understanding which takes place in the definite time of a coincidental present and whose cognition is seen to be completed in its determination, where something is named, conceptualised, i.e. reduced to a homogenisation, rather than the radical alteration of a present presenting itself. What is encountered is subordinated under the genus of a class, a type, is understood as a determinant “what”. Here repetition is the re-iteration of the *same*, rather than the being exposed to the breach of a non-coincidence between *what* is signified and its singular haecceity. In such a way what comes to be understood is “cut off from that significance which, as such, constitutes environmentally. The ‘as’ gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand”.<sup>257</sup> In the *assertive* use of language, the *ecology* of “Care” gets covered over, this *envirning* of sense from within a situation being inhabited for a while, at a particular time, where meaning occurs only in the enactment of a *present* that is *tending towards itself* – one which is always still arriving, rather than having occurred once and for all. The understanding of *das Man* is static, rather than having to traverse the strange alterity of a *transitional* inquiry, in the tension of an attuned jointure, the opening of a *here-there*.

Being-there is always a differentiated *there* and *then*, through the opening and opening up of a situation, where this situation always has its particular *for a while* – a sense of its own time. And yet, for the most part, we live in a way which glosses over this situated sense of inhabiting. We live in a time that becomes schematised, whittled down and measured out,

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<sup>256</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 213.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 200-201.

not in the stretches of intensities, of depth and dimensionality, but in the superficiality of a time that is “managed”. “Thus it might be that our unpoetic dwelling, its incapacity to take the measure, derives from a curious excess of frantic measuring and calculating”.<sup>258</sup> This *language of inquiry* is what is furthest from us in a time that reckons with life as a business transaction and where language is utilised as a tool of manipulation by a subject who carves up the world according to their own measure and where “poetic” language is confined to the domain of subjective “expression”, whilst rigor remains the prevail of a rational, logical, “clear”, scientific prose.

For the most part, we reduce ourselves and are reduced by the world, to the ego of an “I” – get wrapped up in and consumed by the desire for the attainment of *more* in the securing and preservation of this seeming entity we call a self. Children become acclimatised to a way of being which closes off from the ec-stasis of their *being-there*. We forget, in the day-to-day goings on, in the strife and carefreeness of everyday existence, that we are, *still*, beneath it all, an *opening* onto otherness – a permeableness through and through – that we have been cast into the strange role of allowing the world to come to light through us, in our response to its claim. As Kleinberg-Levin puts it, “Long before we are old enough to realise it, we have always already defensively closed off the *ek-stasis*, what Blake called the ‘doors of perception’, shutting off the frightening solicitations, the immemorial and unfathomable claims on our capacity for disclosiveness, unconcealing responsiveness, that come from the presencing of being”.<sup>259</sup> Those we call the “poets” are the ones, perhaps, who have kept this capacity open – the ones who remain claimed by the world, and open, available to its address. For the most part, we do not see the *daimon* amidst the ordinary. Through the “idle chatter” of the familiar grid of meaning we copy and paste forms of existence – falling into step with the general way of things. Our *ethos* is attuned in a manner that dissimulates its *thereness* – its wonder and strangeness, and becomes whittled down to the taken for granted.

the evenly balanced lack of mood, which is often persistent and which is not to be mistaken for a bad mood, is far from nothing at all. Rather, it is in this that Dasein becomes satiated with itself.<sup>260</sup>

Our *ethos* becomes attuned to an objective *certitude* – a *stimmung* which Michel Haar locates as replacing the fundamental mood of philosophy from the Ancient Greek world of “thaumazein” – a scientific rationality taken to its apotheosis in technological determination:

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<sup>258</sup> Heidegger, “...Poetically Man Dwells...”, 226.

<sup>259</sup> Kleinberg-Levin, “The Ontological Dimension of Embodiment”, 8.

<sup>260</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 173.

The fundamental attunement has changed: the surprise and wonder of the Greeks has reversed itself to become Cartesian evidence and assurance. For us, the permanence of forms has become the habitual. Technology goes beyond even certainty. The will to will masters too well the essence of a world totally *produced* to be able to experience its enigmatic emergence. How could it surprise itself?<sup>261</sup>

In the assertive assurance of a technocratic understanding, the world is viewed through the ostensible “moodlessness” of “objectivity” – an attunement which disassembles the “as such” of its understanding in exchange for a fixity and stasis of form. It is an attunement of a certitude of knowledge, rather than a *knowability*, which Heidegger characterises as “curiosity” – an understanding which does not hold out in an *inhabiting*, is closed off from being amazed to the point of not understanding something, and is preoccupied with a knowing just in order to have known: “Curiosity, for which nothing is closed off, and idle talk, for which there is nothing that is not understood, provide themselves (that is, the Dasein which is in this manner) with the guarantee of a ‘life’ which, supposedly, is genuinely ‘lively’”.<sup>262</sup>

What is needed in order to come back into the “Care” in which we are already inhabiting the world, in this way, is a radical *sloughing* off of this veil of the habitual through which we inhabit the world in a *carefreeness*, untroubled by our own innate questionability. What is needed in order to come into what Heidegger calls an “authentic” mode of existence is a “reattunement”, as “mood” can only be changed “by way of a counter-mood; we are never free of moods”.<sup>263</sup> What is needed is a *reawakening*, that is, an evocation of an *attunement* we are already in, but which has fallen asleep – one which brings us to the *thrownness* of our existence – the *suchness* and *questionability* of the “there”. For Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, such an attunement is that of “angst”<sup>264</sup> – what returns us to this mode of inhabiting we are already involved in, this “Care” which comprises our being – a *Stimmung* akin to the beginning of philosophy in *wonder*, and awe, not at the unusual, but the simple *suchness* that there is anything at all.

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<sup>261</sup> Michel Haar, *Heidegger and the Essence of Man*, trans. William McNeill (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 170.

<sup>262</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 217.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>264</sup> “Angst” is translated as “anxiety” in the Macquarrie edition of *Being and Time*, yet as is remarked in a footnote: “While this word has generally been translated as ‘anxiety’ in the post-Freudian psychological literature, it appears as ‘dread’ in the translations of Kierkegaard and in a number of discussions of Heidegger. In some ways ‘uneasiness’ or ‘malaise’ would be more appropriate still”, *Being and Time*, 227.

**SKETCH: CARE OF THE SELF**

It is never too early or too late to take care of one's soul. We should therefore practice philosophy when we are young and when we are old.  
– Seneca, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*

What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialised or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?  
– Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*

It has been said that spirituality is above all an awareness that the individuated being is not completely individuated but still contains a certain nonindividual share of reality, which must be not only preserved but also respected and, in a way, even honoured, as one honours one's debts.  
– Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*

The “Care” which Heidegger comes to place at the core of what it means to be in the world, this project of responding to our questionability which *possesses us for as long as we live*, can be read as a re-articulation of the ancient practice of philosophy as “care of the self” – a decision by Heidegger to repeat a possibility that *has been*, and in doing so, make it his own by inflecting it from within his own *being-there* for a while, at a particular time – articulating the same, *differently*. The *questionability* of our being is, as Michel Foucault would explore in his later work, what lies at the core of this ancient practice of philosophy known in Greek as *epimelia heautou*, where it is precisely the ontological constitution of the self in a relation *to* themselves which makes both for the necessity, *and* the means of a practice of care for one's self. As Foucault sketches it, this practice of caring for one's self begins with the figure of Socrates, one who has been, according to his own words, *charged* by the Gods with calling people to care for themselves. As he famously says in his court defence: “If you put me to death you will not easily find another man...attached to you by the will of the gods in order to stimulate you like a horsefly stimulates a horse”.<sup>265</sup> Socrates is the figure of the philosopher who spends their life unsettling and disturbing the manner in which citizens have become absorbed in a concern for worldly goods and power, caught up in a concern with wealth, reputation and honour, at the cost of neglecting what should be the utmost concern of their lives – that is, the constant “Care” for their own souls, a concern for their own relation towards themselves. Socrates is the figure of the philosopher whose aim is not to teach *something* but to attempt to awaken in others this “Care” for themselves – to attempt to incite others to *return* to their *questionability*.

What characterises this care of the self, as Foucault traces it in his focus mainly on the Hellenistic period of this practice, is the manner in which it conceives knowledge, as Foucault finds articulated in the Greek, as having an “ethopoetic”, *transformative* impact on

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<sup>265</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005), 21.

the subject's way of being: "*Ethopoiein* means making *ethos*, producing *ethos*, changing, transforming *ethos*, the individual's way of being, his mode of existence. *Ethopoiios* is something that possesses the quality of transforming an individual's mode of being".<sup>266</sup> The distinction in the field of knowledge is not, in this sense, on *what* is studied, but on whether or not it "has a form and functions in such a way that it can produce *ethos*",<sup>267</sup> giving rise to the "ethopoetic subject". Rather than a knowledge with a purpose or end *outside* of itself, such a knowledge is simply for the *sake of itself*, that is, for the sake of being *towards* one's self; for the sake of the cultivation of one's self; the attempt to carry out and turn towards one's existence. Knowledge is used, in this sense, as a practice of *freedom*, through the *converting* effect it has on the self, making them shift and move from their absorption in *Stultitia*.<sup>268</sup> In this way, the purpose of coming to know the world is not a means to an end, but is a medium through which the self's own being can come into play and can be transformed. Here knowledge of the self is not, as Foucault highlights, "on the way to becoming the decipherment of the mysteries of conscience and the exegesis of the self which develops later in Christianity. Useful knowledge, knowledge in which human life is at stake, is a relational mode of knowledge".<sup>269</sup> With the "ethopoetic" knowledge, the purpose of philosophy is to engage in the constitutive relation of self, this tending towards one's self and to cultivate a form of living which will sustain the self in an authentic relation to the world, others and ultimately themselves, making them *ready for death*,<sup>270</sup> and producing the *wisdom* that gives them the "boldness and courage",<sup>271</sup> to stand firmly against the vicissitudes of life, where they can "be contenti (content with themselves, satisfied with themselves)...they will need nothing other than themselves. However, at the same time, they will find a number of resources within themselves, and the possibility in particular of experiencing pleasure and delight in the full relationship they will have with themselves".<sup>272</sup> The purpose of an etho-poetic knowing is not towards the glory and gain of a "boastful knowledge",<sup>273</sup> but is nothing less than a fuller relationship of being one's self, it is, as the ancients called it, a *ripening* of one's self in preparation for death; living and cultivating a

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<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>268</sup> *Stultitia* bears remarkable resemblance to Heidegger's "das Man" – it is a way of being in which we are neglectful of our relation towards ourselves, where we do not carry out an existence that is our own, but get carried by the whims of the time and circumstance. Foucault calls this *Stultitia* the "raw material" of a practice of care of the self.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 239.

form of existence whereby you have carried out your existence, rather than endlessly deferring or postponing it.

What is imperative with this form of knowledge is that it should be *inflected* in such a way that “it takes on a certain form and a certain spiritual value for the subject, in the subject’s experience, and for the subject’s salvation”<sup>274</sup> – knowledge is used as a way of coming into relation to one’s self and a way of binding one’s self *to* one’s self through the *poesis* of a practice of freedom. “Know thyself”, the Delphic principle “*gnothi seauton*”, which has been set as the founding pillar of Western philosophy, is re-situated here by Foucault within the framework of the practice of care of the self. Knowledge of the self is not a self examination, or self-knowledge, but is a “means” of *addressing* one’s self *to* one’s self – a means of reaching the self still outstanding, still arriving. Of crucial importance to this practice is the *subjectivisation* of knowledge, that is, making the philosophical inheritance *one’s own*, in which there is not “an objectification of the self in a true discourse, but the subjectivation of a true discourse in a practice and exercise of oneself on oneself”.<sup>275</sup> It is a practice of truth, a way not of subjecting one’s self to the truth of the philosophical tradition, but of binding one’s self to one’s self, a way of coming into *relation to* one’s self, by *subjectivising* the inheritance of a tradition, that is, making this discourse one’s own – articulating the same *similarly* – a practice inherently *analogical* of an identity in difference, a difference in identity. Such is the *art* of this practice of knowledge formation, where, without this play of difference there is no *ethopoeisis* – the discourse, and thus one’s life, one’s way of being, is not made one’s *own*: “It is a style of life, a sort of form one gives to one’s life”.<sup>276</sup> Through the practice of undergoing an inquiry in which their own being is brought into play, the self gives form to their existence, a form that is their *own*, rather than the generic schema of the *Stultitia*. Something Foucault understands through analogy with the “good architect”, as one who “uses enough liberty to give the temple a *forma*, a beautiful form. In the same way, the person who wants to make his life a work, the person who wants to employ the *tekhne tou biou* in the proper way, must have in his mind not so much the framework, fabric and thick covering regulations which he follows constantly and to which he has to submit”.<sup>277</sup> Life achieves its ethopoetic form not by submitting to already established modes of practices, but through making these practices one’s own, by bringing one’s own relation of self into play. The distinction between the Christian model and the Hellenistic model pivots around this crucial difference; the practice of care of the self as an art of living cannot adhere to a rule,

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid., 424.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 424.

but is a *form in formation*, where the “art of living and the art of oneself are identical”.<sup>278</sup>

Their knowledge is what effects and manifests their *way of being-in-the-world* as a *singularised* way of being – what enables them to *become themselves* in the way in which it *frees* them from a false dwelling in the cares of the world, and brings them back into the *care of the self*, into this relation towards themselves, through a “spiritualisation” of knowledge – the crucial aspect which seems to peak Foucault’s interest in this ancient practice of an art of living, for this care of the self presents a subject who is not always already in a position of having access to the truth, but is a subject who must be *transformed* through practices of the self in order to come to understand and know – an understanding and knowing which is only ever aimed, not towards some profit or gain, but towards the self – towards their being-in-the-world, towards the cultivation of their “ethos”. It is through the practice itself that the subject *becomes* one who can articulate truth.

As Foucault comes to understand, this care of the self is a *deliberate practice* of one’s freedom, and what constitutes an ethical existence: “what is ethics if not the practice of freedom, the deliberate practice of freedom”,<sup>279</sup> which means, as he further elucidates, that “Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the deliberate form assumed by freedom”.<sup>280</sup> It is the ontological structure of the self as a relation towards themselves which comprises this *freedom* to be otherwise, where the *deliberate* practice of this freedom constitutes the ethical life. And it is here where we seem to get to the crux of Foucault’s interest in this ancient practice, as it is precisely this relation of self to self, this freedom, which makes it possible for any power to operate. As he puts it: “there cannot be relations of power unless the subjects are free”.<sup>281</sup> It is at this axis of being-towards ourselves where power operates, in schemas of subjectivity. And yet it is precisely this axis which makes it possible for this schema to change and for relations of power to shift. The dynamic relationality always contains the possibility of being otherwise, of shifting. “It is like a movement to articulate one’s existence to the point where there would be nothing else before it but the possibility of death”.<sup>282</sup>

What is needed is a radical *dispossession* of the self from their sated state in *Stultitia*. This *art* of existence, this originary task of coming into care for one’s self, of taking on one’s

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<sup>278</sup> Ibid., 206.

<sup>279</sup> Michel Foucault, “the ethic of care of the self as a practice of freedom: an interview with Michel Foucault”, by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Helmut Becker, Alfredo Gomez-Müller, trans. J.D. Gauthier, *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 12 (1984): 115.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid., 115-116.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 120.

relation towards one's self, is a practice which cannot be managed and directed by the self, it cannot be controlled, but is the very *opening towards*, where any coherent "self" is displaced. The response to taking on the task of coming into care for the *poesis* of one's ethos cannot be accomplished, in this way, by a *willing* self, by an intentional self, for it is any coherency of a solid self which is being called into question through the very attempt to respond. It is precisely this *dispossession* of one's self in the creation of one's self that Agamben emphasises in his understanding of Foucault's work and interest in the care of the self:

The idea that one should make his life a work of art is attributed mostly today to Foucault and to his idea of the care of the self. Pierre Hadot, the great historian of ancient philosophy, reproached Foucault that the care of the self of the ancient philosophers did not mean the construction of life as a work of art, but on the contrary a sort of dispossession of the self. What Hadot could not understand is that for Foucault, the two things coincide. You must remember Foucault's criticism of the notion of the author, his radical dismissal of authorship. In this sense, a philosophical life, a good and beautiful life, is something else: when your life becomes a work of art, you are not the cause of it. I mean that at this point you feel your own life and yourself as something "thought", but the subject, the author, is no longer there. The construction of life coincides with what Foucault referred to as "se dependre de soi". And this is also Nietzsche's idea of a work of art without the artist.<sup>283</sup>

The "poesis" of this ethos is a "making", in this way, which also always involves an *unmaking*, and one which is always *on-going*. Care of the self is not a brief preparation for life, it is not an education one passes through and can be done with, but is a "form of life"<sup>284</sup> as Foucault notes, it is what can never be accomplished once and for all but belongs to the continuous *poesis* of one's *ethos*. One has never accomplished being free or ethical, even though the attempt to do so has an accomplished effect on one's self in the mode of being content with one's self, happy, despite the prevailing vicissitudes of life.

Such a *dispossession* as the way towards this happiness involves an inherent risk – the risk of losing one's way in any given inquiry, in the sense that, as there can be no defined path, as there can be no set rules of conduct, each one must take on this task of being free, of working out their own liberation, at the cost of getting lost, of being wrong, of making mistakes, and of not knowing where they are going. As Arnold I. Davidson remarks in the introduction to Foucault's *Hermeneutics of the Subject*,

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<sup>283</sup> Giorgio Agamben, interview by Ulrich Raulff, *German Law Journal* 5, no. 5 (2004). 613  
[http://www.germanlawjournal.com/pdfs/Vol05No05/PDF\\_Vol\\_05\\_No\\_05\\_609-614\\_special\\_issue\\_Raulff\\_Interview.pdf](http://www.germanlawjournal.com/pdfs/Vol05No05/PDF_Vol_05_No_05_609-614_special_issue_Raulff_Interview.pdf)

<sup>284</sup> Foucault, *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 494.

We have to prepare ourselves to face events in thought, events in our own thought. That is why Foucault's relentless pursuit of knowledge revolves not around the mere acquisition of knowledge, but around the value of losing one's way for the subject of knowledge, a losing one's way which is the price of self-transformation. If we seal ourselves off from this possibility, we will inevitably take up a posture that Foucault found ridiculous – the strident voice of the philosopher-legislator who tells others how to think and what to do...thought without risks is an etiolated substitute for what philosophy can be.<sup>285</sup>

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We should think of the action by which the archer launches his arrow towards his target. We are much closer here to the famous archery exercise, which, as you know, is so important for the Japanese, for example. We should think of this much more than of something like a decipherment of the self of the kind found later in monastic practice. Clear a space around the self and do not let yourself be carried away and distracted by all the sounds, faces, and people around you. Clear a space around the self, to think of the aim, or rather of the relation between yourself and the aim. Think of the trajectory separating you from that towards which you wish to advance or which you wish to reach. All your attention should be concentrated on this trajectory from self to self. Presence of self to self, precisely on account of the distance still remaining between self and self; presence of self to self in the distance of self from self: this should be the object, the theme, of this turning back of the gaze which was previously directed on others and must now be brought back, not to the self as an object of knowledge, but precisely to this distance from your self insofar as you are the subject of an action who has the means to reach your self, but above all whose requirement is to reach it. And this something you must reach is the self.<sup>286</sup>

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It is with Descartes that Foucault pin-points a significant change in this way of understanding philosophy as a practice of a care of the self, of a subject who must undergo a shift in themselves in order to come into a relation to truth, for it is with the “Cartesian moment” that a subject is instated who does not need to *form* an ethos, but is an autonomous Cogito whose access to truth becomes that of method: “to be capable of truth you only have to open your eyes and to reason soundly and honestly, always holding to the line of self-evidence and never letting it go. The subject, then, does not have to transform himself”.<sup>287</sup> Whilst Foucault calls this the “Cartesian moment”, this is not to say that it is Descartes himself that caused this shift, but rather that the self he comes to depict is the articulation of a whole bedrock of shifts which prepared the way for the institution of an autonomous subject. Such shifts are linked to scientific practices, but also, Foucault highlights, theology, which presented a rational subject that had access to God's truth *without* spirituality, without practices of self-transformation. With Descartes, knowledge ceases to be a question of access

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid., xxviii.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 190.

to the truth and becomes “knowledge of a domain of objects. So, if you like, the notion of knowledge of the object is substituted for the notion of access to the truth”.<sup>288</sup> In this way, the “Cartesian moment”<sup>289</sup> re-qualifies the ancient “know yourself”, where self-evidence becomes the

point of departure of the philosophical approach – self-evidence as it appears, that is to say as it is given, as it is actually given to consciousness without any possible doubt...[and] by putting the self-evidence of the subject’s own existence at the very source of access to being, this knowledge of oneself (no longer in the form of the test of self-evidence, but in the form of the impossibility of doubting my existence as subject) made the ‘know yourself’ into a fundamental access to truth.<sup>290</sup>

An ego-oriented pursuit of knowledge, rather than an “ethopoetic” truth. It is with the Cartesian moment then, that Foucault highlights a shift in the subject’s access to the truth – the point at which the practice of care of the self becomes excluded “from the field of modern philosophical thought”,<sup>291</sup> and the point at which philosophy can be practiced without spirituality.

We will call philosophy the form of thought that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth. If we call this “philosophy”, then I think we could call “spirituality” the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. We will call spirituality then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existing, etc, which are, not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject’s very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth.<sup>292</sup>

There is a need for a spiritual practice of philosophy then, when there is a conception of the self as one who does not already have access to the truth, who cannot, as they are, be capable of truth but whose being must be brought into play through certain practices in order to go through a process of self-transformation: “for the subject to have right of access to the truth he must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become...other than himself”.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>289</sup> As Arnold I. Davidson notes in his introduction to Foucault’s lecture series *Hermeneutics of the Subject*, this ‘Cartesian moment’ should be understood “not primarily as a chronological moment but as a conceptual moment in the history of thought, the moment in which philosophy is disconnected from spirituality”, xxv.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 15.

Knowledge becomes the *purpose* of philosophy rather than a means through which the subject's being is brought into play in order to transform themselves – in order to tend towards their self. It shifts from a medium through which the self's finitude is brought into play, to tumour into the “indefinite development of knowledge”,<sup>294</sup> where “Knowledge will simply open out onto the indefinite dimension of progress, the end of which is unknown and the advantage of which will only ever be realised in the course of history by the institutional accumulation of bodies of knowledge, or the psychological or social benefits to be had from having discovered the truth after having taken such pains to do so”.<sup>295</sup> Philosophy shifts from its link to a spiritual practice which can bring the subject into relation to themselves and transform their whole being-in-the-world, to a method divorced from the subject's own issue of being – a shift from a finite to an infinite thinking. There is, as Foucault reads it, a “slow transformation of an apparatus (*dispositive*) of subjectivity defined by the spirituality of knowledge (*savoir*) and the subject's practice of truth, into this other apparatus of subjectivity which is our own and which is, I think, governed by the question of the subject's knowledge of himself and of the subject's obedience to the law”.<sup>296</sup>

This shift in the mode of philosophising from a spiritual practice to an assertive knowing, coincides with a new sense of what it means to be *in* the world, through the Cartesian conceptualisation of a “there” as ascertainable through abstract measurement – the instigation of “site”, as Casey understands it, in lieu of “place”. Rather than a dynamic *in of inhabiting* in the two-fold thrown-projecting, rather than a reversibility of a *bodying*, the Cartesian knowing subject is one who belongs to a static, bodiless, homogeneous *in* which sets it in a position of knowing. As Malpas notes:

the modern ‘Cartesian’ ontology of the world in which things are understood in terms of present-at-hand ‘objects’ of knowledge is itself based on an essentially spatialised mode of understanding. Inasmuch as Heidegger claims that modern science is itself driven by a technological imperative – a consequence of Heidegger's view of technology as indeed a mode of world-disclosure...so the development of this understanding of space can be seen as driven by a technological ordering that aims to bring things within a single, uniform framework within which they can be produced, transformed, and controlled, within which ‘anything can take the place of anything else’.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., 319.

<sup>297</sup> Malpas, *Heidegger's Topology*, 295.

The understanding which characterises the “Cartesian moment” is one which is a veritable *site* rather than *place*-making – a disclosure of the world in which the idio-local *taking-place* of a “there” is exchanged for a homogeneous “there”.

With the instalment of an agental, knowing subject, truth can be ascertained without the engagement in one’s own *questionability*. The *singularity* of an event of a disclosure of understanding, which involves a finite being in their *issue* of being, is replaced by the inconsequential *anyone* – a “das Man” – where truth is not the formation or articulation of an ethos. As William McNeill puts it,

what is always and necessarily excluded in the scientific worldview are the worlds from which science itself originates (worlds that are intrinsically differential and which do not first need to be constructed): the finite action and activity of the scientist never enters the scientific “picture” as such; as a finitely acting being, the living individual is a matter of indifference to the force of scientific truth. Every scientist can in principle be substituted by another who can verify the same results.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> McNeill, *Time of Life*, 34.

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The self-concern appears easy and convenient, interesting and superior as ‘egoism’...Really: self-concern is precisely the most difficult, taking oneself to be less and less important by engaging oneself all the more.

– Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*

The hard thing is to accomplish existence.

– Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*

Man’s *perfectio* – his transformation into that which he can be in Being-free for his ownmost possibilities (projection) – is ‘accomplished’ by ‘care’.

– Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*

That by which this entity is essentially cleared – in other words, that which makes it both ‘open’ for itself and ‘bright’ for itself – is what we have defined as ‘care’.

– Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*

Heidegger’s sketch of *Dasein*, as a being whose very existence is constructed through “Care”, can be seen as a critique of the inheritance of thinking as based on the taken-for-granted ground of an ego and a recollecting of this ancient practice of “Care of the self”, setting it into movement again from within his own situation, rather than repeating it precisely in the form in which it existed. For Heidegger, *care of the self* is something that we’re already in, it is something that cuts to the heart of what it is to be human. In his reiteration of the practice, what is proffered as an authentic practice of philosophy, or as he preferred, *thinking*, is simply a *reawakening* to this “Care” – what he otherwise calls a *resolute* being-there – an inquiry as an engagement in our own questionability, our own language of inquiry we are already dwelling in. It is an effort of what he calls “the choosing to choose a kind of Being-one’s-Self”<sup>299</sup> – a deciding to take on and live out the *singularity* of one’s existence – taking a stand out in the strange and radical openness of *being-there*. “because *Dasein* is in each case essentially its own possibility, it *can*, in its very Being, ‘choose’ itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only ‘seem’ to do so”.<sup>300</sup> Such a “choosing” one’s self speaks not to deciding upon a given selection of “identities” already carved up, but is a choosing to live this *openness towards* ourselves, of which we are comprised; it is a choosing to inhabit the *gap* of being in relation to ourselves in the differential of a transitional projective understanding; it is a choosing to take on one’s *undecidedness*, one’s *questionability*; to take on the ability of being otherwise, in the sense of being one’s self, rather than a generic copy of an existence. It is an attempt to hold out in a thinking of *possibility* belonging to the situated *happening*:

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<sup>299</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 314.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

One would completely misunderstand the phenomenon of resoluteness if one should want to suppose that this consists simply in taking up possibilities which have been proposed and recommended, and seizing hold of them. *The resolution is precisely the disclosive projection and determination of what is factually possible at the time.*<sup>301</sup>

To “decide” to *be* the *there* is an inquiry open to the *undecidability* of the gathering of a *happening* of sense – it is a taking on the *anticipative* understanding of participating in a present of *possible* sense – this seeing something *as* something, from within the limit of being-there for a while, at a particular time.

Thinking, as Heidegger comes to sketch it, is not a special activity, it is not an academic pursuit, but a *comportment* towards the world – an openness to alterity which we are *already in*. The effort of any attempt at an *etho-poetic* thinking is simply to come back into relation with ourselves, it is simply a *wakefulness* for our questionability as he puts it, where we are not divorced from the inquiry, but our own being is the issue within the issue, where, in understanding the world, we come to understand ourselves: “Hermeneutics has the task of making the Dasein which is in each case our own accessible to this Dasein itself with regard to the character of its being, communicating Dasein to itself in this regard, hunting down the alienation from itself with which it is smitten. In hermeneutics what is developed for Dasein is a possibility of its becoming and being for itself in the manner of an *understanding* of itself”.<sup>302</sup> This is not, as he goes on to emphasise, an understanding directed by intentionality, but “a *how of Dasein* itself. Terminologically, it may be defined in advance as the *wakefulness* of Dasein for itself”.<sup>303</sup> Interpreting is not something added *onto* our existence, but belongs to it, all that is called for in a resolute inquiry is to come back to *her* sketching-out, to be awake to the strangeness of our existence, to be alert to the address of the world. The resolute practice of thinking, this *care of the self*, is simply, then, an awakening of *Dasein* to their own strangeness – a strangeness which is not extraordinary, but the ordinary itself awoken *to itself* – the world’s being encountered *as such* – the *questionability* of the *there* – its always being otherwise than expected. We are returned to the “Care” of our being *in relation to* our existence – our being an *opening unto* the world, rather than a strict identity.

The word Heidegger uses for interpretation in *Being and Time* is “Auslegung”, which literally means an explication<sup>304</sup> – a making *explicit* what was implicitly there, in the sense

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<sup>301</sup> Ibid., 345.

<sup>302</sup> Heidegger, *Ontology: The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, 11.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>304</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 188.

of a folding out, where “the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it. In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. Interpretation is grounded in understanding, not the other way around and nor is interpretation the gaining of information about what is understood but is instead the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding”.<sup>305</sup> The attempt is to come back to this inquiry we are already involved in and perceive again anticipatively what has been, in such a way where you, as Heidegger puts it, *become who you are*:

Only because the Being of the ‘there’ receives its Constitution through understanding and through the character of understanding as projection, only because it *is* what it becomes (or alternatively, does not become), can it say to itself become ‘what you are’ and say this with understanding.<sup>306</sup>

This “self-interpretation” of Hermeneutics is a reflective knowing, thus, though not of the solipsistic ilk, through an inspection of one’s thought, but by allowing oneself to be taken up in a *questionability* – that is, by *being-questioned*, opening up to the opening, in the event of a questioning as the sketching-out of a *there* – where a “discussion”, interpretation, is sketched-out through the non-coincidental *tending towards* – the stretch of a time of making-room, which makes sense in the *revealing-concealing* play of discourse, tending towards what it will have been. It is an effort of “engaging-oneself”, where engagement [*Sicheinlassen*], literally means “letting oneself into, to allow, to let, permit”.<sup>307</sup> This engagement is not a special activity of the self, but is that which we’re already involved in, in understanding the world through a *bodying-forth* – the extending *spacing* of being-there. To engage one’s self is to open up to the opening, it is an *active passivity* – the gathering comportment in its singularity – a *gesture*. To engage oneself is letting oneself into relation – the absorption of concern and solicitude for the world, in a resolute disclosure: “To be absorbed in beholding the palm tree in front of our window is letting the palm tree come to presence. This letting the palm tree come to presence, its swaying in the wind, is the absorption of my being-in-the-world and of my comportment *in the palm tree*”.<sup>308</sup> Such an engagement is proffered by Heidegger as an alternative to objective understanding where the knowing self is instituted in advance, is always already in a position of knowing how to proceed and can be determined in advance. In contrast, “engaging oneself” is an approach, a *way towards*, a “methodus” which can only be figured out by being *on the way*, that is, in adherence to the unfolding of a situation in its singularity, where the “knowing” self is not

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>306</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 186.

<sup>307</sup> Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 109.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., 161.

established in advance but is part of the disclosing situation, part of what is opened up in the sketching-out. Rather than a subject already in a position of knowing and directing the way of proceeding, as self-engagement, one's own *possibility* of being is part of the understanding. The "method" is incumbent upon an openness of *response* to the singular situation, to the dawning of sense *from within*.

Philosophy then, or as Heidegger exchanged it for, *thinking*, is nothing more than an attempt to make explicit this implicit language of inquiry she is already in – the reading she is already carrying-out. Not, that is, in an attempt to finally bring it to light, or explain it, to "solve" it, or find the meaning "behind" it, but simply to enter more fully into its enigma, to dwell for a while in its *questionability*, and doing so for no other purpose than to come into relation with one's self – coming back to the reading we've all along been involved in, whilst knowing all along the impossibility of corresponding with *her*, of coinciding with her.

Heidegger transforms the beginning point of phenomenology, from the self-evidence of the natural attitude to the enigma of a *Faktum*, the fact *that* one is...Philosophy begins with the riddle of the completely obvious.<sup>309</sup>

this experience of facticity, of a constitutive non-originary, is precisely the original experience of philosophy, the only legitimate point of departure for thinking.<sup>310</sup>

As such, the practice of thinking is not a special activity or method, but rather an *engagement* in this way of disclosing the world we are already in – this *chiasmatic* bodying *there* for a while, at a particular time, which involves us in an on-going *transformation* of being – in giving ourselves over to a *there*, in an uncanny, non-coincidental time of an *inhabiting*, where the true *question* lies not in a posing or proffering, but in radically *being-questioned*.

"Resoluteness",<sup>311</sup> in this way, is not a special practice we have to take on as an addition to our existence, but is an *engagement* in the way of being which forms this *staging*, this *background* of our everyday being – the pre-understanding of all understanding which gets covered over in the reduction of the self to a subject and the world to its object of sense. Being-resolute is a *modified* version of how we are already making sense of the world, it is, as Heidegger notes a "distinctive mode of Dasein's disclosedness",<sup>312</sup> where

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<sup>309</sup> Critchley, *Enigma Variations*, 163.

<sup>310</sup> Agamben, "The Passion of Facticity", *Potentialities*, 189.

<sup>311</sup> This "resoluteness" of Dasein is rendered by Heidegger in the German as *Entschlossenheit*, a word which is a modification of that which Heidegger uses for the disclosive understanding of the world we are already involved in as *Erschlossenheit*.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*, 343.

The ‘world’ which is ready-to-hand does not become another one ‘in its content’, nor does the circle of Others get exchanged for a new one; but both one’s Being towards the ready-to-hand understandingly and concernfully, and one’s solicitous Being with Others, are now given a definite character in terms of their ownmost possibility-for-Being-their-Selves.<sup>313</sup>

The *resolute* thinking, in this way, *repeats* the *making-room*, the *disclosure* of possibilities and in doing so, makes an inquiry for itself that is, as he calls it, a singularised “Situation”<sup>314</sup> – the formation of a “there” in a “definite character”.<sup>315</sup> It is a relation to living-thinking which does not *represent* a “there”, but *creates* a relation to it – is a *fictitious* making which makes for an *art* of living, coming to see the world, others, and one’s self through the structure of the “as”, in an analogical identity-in-difference and difference-in-identity. Life, in this sense, in order to *mean*, requires not a transformation of becoming something *different*, but a transformation which allows you to become what you already are – the singular language of inquiry being subtly, quietly carried out by the one beneath you. In such a way, thinking becomes a repeating this language in such a way that it gives form to your existence, making this “there” you are abiding in a *singularised* way of being, a *situation* of thinking, which is cut off in the general understanding of *das Man*, where “The ‘they’ knows only the ‘general situation’, loses itself in those ‘opportunities’ which are closest to it”.<sup>316</sup>

The practice of thinking as a *return to care*, as a *return* to an *etho-poetic* understanding, is, in this sense, an attempt at a *deepening* one’s engagement in the world, in an *openness* towards the strange, the different, of the familiar *situation*. As Miguel de Beistegui puts it, this resoluteness

is only a matter of intensification, a matter of letting Dasein’s own power of disclosedness bear on itself as disclosedness. It is, therefore, a matter of repeating that which already is, of circling back onto that which is from the very start and necessarily, but in such a way that the ‘thing’ in question (i.e., Dasein) *is* more intensely, in such a way that its very being is now brought to its full disclosure.<sup>317</sup>

As an intensification of a “there”, it is an intensification too of one’s whole *ecology of care*, of relations both of *concern* and *solicitude*, as de Besitegui also points out:

But to exist more authentically naturally means to be in the world more authentically, to be turned back into the world, returned to the world on the basis of one’s ownness; it is thus to relate to oneself, to the world, and to others again and

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<sup>313</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 346.

<sup>317</sup> Miguel de Beistegui, *Thinking with Heidegger: Displacements* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003), 26.

anew; it is a repetition of that which always and already is, but which, through this repetition, always already comes to be differently.<sup>318</sup>

Being resolute is a *doubling* of one's self, "a relation to one's relation to being."<sup>319</sup>

The inquiry of a resolute thinking, a practice of care of the self, is an attempt to re-perceive again *from within* the inquiry. Truth in antiquity, as Foucault frames it, was distinct from knowledge because the essential part of the experience of truth was the active *transformation of the self*. To philosophise, as Socrates had it, was to *learn how to die* – to undergo an experience of thinking as an etho-poesis, is to let go of the straits of ego.

What is critical about *care of the self* is that it is emphatically *not* about an "I", but about tending to, inhabiting, and realising the extent to which you are *not* "I" – the extent to which you are only an articulating *correspondent* of the world, where you belong to an ecology of care. The effort is to undergo a *dispossession* of the self, undergoing an otherness to one's self in conversing with this stranger, this *daimon*. As such, what is to be *taken care* of is the *opening* of which we are comprised – our being-in-relation, rather than being a self enclosed onto themselves. Thinking as an attempt to return to where we have never left – coming back to the stranger who is our greatest familiar.

It is only by plunging into *conversion* with one's *impossibility*, into conversion with that one who has been bearing-out your existence, this one beneath you who carries you through, that a thinking as a practice of "care of the self" can be carried out, a thinking as a radical *depropriation* in an inhabiting an understanding that is not projected by "me" but in which "I" am projected, thrown, cast outside my habitual comfort zone into the alterative temporality of a living passage, occupying the gap between a presence and absence, a has been and not yet, a strange hyphenation, an attuned jointure. It is by *opening up* to this *opening* that a "resolute" existence can be sketched-out. As Heidegger puts it in "The Origin of the Work of Art", "The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject, but the opening up of human being, out of its captivity in that which is, to the openness of Being".<sup>320</sup> It is simply an engagement in this *capacity to resonate* with the world, to be the bearer of a *there* that is this call of "care", to allow one's self to be *thrown*, to be *cast* into a situation of perplexity where a sense is made in the singular happening of a making-room, of a sketching-out. "Truth is never gathered from objects that are present and

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<sup>318</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>320</sup> Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art", *Poetry Language Thought*, 65.

ordinary. Rather, the opening up of the Open, and the clearing of what is, happens only as the openness is projected, sketched out, that makes its advent in thrownness”.<sup>321</sup>

It is, above all, an attempt at thinking which is, echoing the ancient practice, one of *freedom* – a taking a stand in relation to the “there” into which you have been thrown – the groundlessness of one’s existence – in such a way that a false ground is not proffered in its stead, but only the “ground” of this being-towards one’s self. To be committed to one’s self, the care of one’s being-there, is to be responsible to where and how one already is, “that potentiality-for-Being which in each case I as Dasein am already”.<sup>322</sup> Freedom in this sense is not a freedom *from* some power or authority, but is a *freedom for* – it is an availability – being-towards what is still out-standing, still arriving. In this sense, freedom is not so much something that *we* possess, or “have”, as what possesses *us*, given that it is only the openness of an ecstasis of *being-there* – the originary depropriation. Freedom is something that constitutes the human being *ontologically*, as a being who is characterised not as a present at hand entity, but as a being who dwells in possibility. Rather than an addendum to their existence, freedom is what they’re already in in being cast into having to *tend towards* themselves. In this sense, the freedom of *care of the self* is an ethics that cannot be based on the “rights” of an “individual”, but only on the *ethos* of this *daimonic* dwelling in non-coincidence.

What the resolute project proffers is that the only approach to an authentic community is for each individual to attempt to be themselves, that is, to engage in their own *possibility* of being – this *relation towards* themselves always and ever still outstanding. The world comes to expression through the *singularity* of each voice.

The practice of a *resolute* care of the self is not a solipsistic rumination as its name may suggest, but the originary *wakefulness* of Dasein to itself which constitutes the “origin” of philosophy in the West.

The practice and *art* of philosophising (which is therefore something other than teaching theories of existence)...seems to us to be nothing other than the attempt to be attentive to this wonder, to nurture its awakening, in oneself and in others, as one’s access to a world. For to experience wonder in one’s existence is to pause, to hesitate before something unknown, it is to have time, to be given or granted time. A time for what? A time to dwell for a moment in the presence of other beings, a time to deliberate, a time to think...To cultivate, perhaps, a sense of time.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>322</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 333.

<sup>323</sup> William McNeil, *Time of Life*, 74.

By engaging in philosophical problems, in trying to understand the world, we grapple with our own questionability by allowing ourselves not to be the active subjects of those who *know*, but the begun beginners who must be *born* to sense, who must be *transformed* within the engagement. We do not engage in the enigma of the world to explain it, but to enter more fully into the enigma of our own being – to have an *intenser* relation with ourselves and in doing so, with our whole ecology of care – with the world and with others. As an *art of living*, thinking *enhances* and *enriches* our experience of being human – this brief dash of a passage between birth and death.

To dwell etho-poetically is not to consolidate one's self into the coherence and regularity of an identity, but to be the continuous beginner – one who is *towards* a self, is on the way, in being extended from themselves. Etho-poetic dwelling is an inhabiting of the gap, the caesura of our being *towards* our existence – it is an opening up to this cleft of our being – a dwelling in *possibility*, where sense is always to be made – the non-coincidental character of poetic saying. What poetry recovers, as Merleau-ponty would have it, is the non-coincidence, the split of our being-there, and brings it to expression. “To criticize the ‘little man inside the man’ – perception as cognition of an object – to rediscover man finally face to face with the world *itself*, to rediscover the preintentional present – is to rediscover that vision of the origins, which sees itself within us, as poetry rediscovers what articulates itself within us, unbeknown to us”.<sup>324</sup>

To come back to an *etho-poetic* understanding, a seeing the world *as such*, is an *art* of thinking that does not belong to a separate domain of aesthetics, but pertains to one's very being-in-the-world. In attempting to articulate a language of inquiry which is *one's own*, the necessary *alterity* of truth shines forth. What marks the language of inquiry of “care of the self” is what Foucault calls the *parrhesia*, the ability of the philosophy to tell the truth in a way which is altogether *other*, has a quality of *strangeness* – it is etho-poetic in the extent to which it *stands out*, the extent to which it is not identical – with itself, or with what has come before. “The philosopher thus becomes someone who, through the courage of his truth-telling, makes the lightening flash of an otherness vibrate through his life and speech”.<sup>325</sup> In this way, their language of inquiry is a *presentation* – that which shows itself not as *something* but shows itself *as* something. “What I would like to stress in conclusion is this:

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<sup>324</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 208.

<sup>325</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 356.

there is no embellishment of the truth without an essential position of otherness; the truth is never the same; there can be truth only in the form of the other world and the other life.<sup>326</sup>

The hallmark of the etho-poetic thinking, in this respect, is its *difference* – its *through-otherness* – its divergent rhythm. Truth is marked not by a repetition which inscribes it within a domain of knowledge, but in a repetition that allows the uncanny to enter – a thinking that is an *encounter*.

In inhabiting an inquiry which cannot be determined in advance we stand exposed, open to the otherness of our own being. An etho-poetic thinking is an *inhabiting the gap* of the kairological moment, our tending towards ourselves, where it can never get a final grasp or come to full coherence – it is always a *failure* and it is this incapacity to fully understand or grasp which retains the world in its enigmatic wonder. Failure and incapacity belong to all accomplishment and capacity. The inhabiting a gap makes for a thinking which can only ever be *on the way, towards*, a becoming of sense tending towards what it will have been. The sense made is not willed by a subject, but constituted by the gesture of searching in the time of a present presenting itself, where every unfolding of sense is also its undoing – each return the destruction of what *was* in its renewal as alterative – time gathering and dispersing, taking together and taking apart, point and counterpoint. It is an inhabiting of sense which preserves the instability, openness and incompleteness of sense – an inquiry not seeking to *explain* the world, but to deepen our encounter with it, allowing us to shift between perceiving and being perceived in a chiasmatic fold which makes for our complicational being, our *questionability*.

The effort is to return to a thinking which does not wish to simply appropriate the world to our own ends. By returning thinking to the *moment*, to the *kairological* making-room, thinking is taken away from its systematisation of knowing, in lieu of an engagement in the *situation*. As Kathrine Frose notes,

By associating philosophy more closely with the moment, Heidegger suggests that it cannot produce a definitive outline of what Being is, nor should this be its intent. This is why he refers repeatedly to the ‘other beginning’, which is not a kind of primordial beginning that antecedes all subsequent beginnings, but is a constant beginning. If being does not have a single essence, then there are infinite ways of returning to it, and also countless ways of beginning the beginning again. The return

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 356.

to origins therefore signals a constant rebirth. Rather than distilling things into timeless concepts, philosophy must encourage a flowering of multiplicity.<sup>327</sup>

An etho-poetic thinking is a way not of carving up the world, but of entering it more fully, it is a “medium through which things are encouraged to reveal themselves”.<sup>328</sup>

we cannot relate to something that we can capture in its entirety. Only limited beings can reach out to each other and create the eternal flux of life in the process. Constantly changing horizons and possibilities are not impediments to knowledge but rather enhance its vitality. In short, absolute certainty would make living life impossible. If philosophy is to be an exercise in life, it must necessarily be fallible. Knowledge is virtue only because of its limited nature.<sup>329</sup>

Such an inquiry is not a seeking which supposes an end, but is a greater engagement in being. As Froese so elegantly puts it:

Instead of conceptually grasping the cosmos, one task of philosophy is to achieve a sense of unity by affirming and establishing our connection to it. Heidegger insists that the activity of bringing something from the shadows into the light is pleasurable and therefore the shadows should not be branded as enemies of philosophy. Without obscurity or darkness, our life would be devoid of wonder and pathos. If we attempt to pin everything down armed with concepts and logic, then we will not be open to the multiple voices that speak to us. For Heidegger, the relationship with Being can be likened to a conversation, where the joy is not gleaned in arriving at some kind of conclusion but in the act of talking itself.<sup>330</sup>

The effort is not to be done with thinking, but to hold out for as long as possible in a *questioning* – in a *language of inquiry*, a *rhythm* of meaning, where sense is opened by being *attuned*. Haar notes how in his lecture “What is Philosophy”, Heidegger “reaffirms, by playing on the root word *stimmen*, that all conceptual determination depends upon a certain mood. It is only from *Gestimmtheit* (being disposed, disposition, mood) that the philosophical utterance receives its *Bestimmtheit*, which is to say its determined, precise, situated character”.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Kathrine Froese, *Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Daoist Thought: Crossing paths in-between* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 43.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>331</sup> Haar, 160.

### The Gift

The writer's home he salvages from little pieces  
along the roads, from distinctions he remembers,  
from what by chance he sees – his grabbed heritage;  
and from people fading from his road, from history.

He reaches far out, being a desperate man;  
he comprehends by fistfuls with both hands.

But what can bring in enough to save the tame  
or be home for them who even with roofs are shelterless?

We give them scenes like this:  
a tree that blooms in a gale, a stone  
the gale can't move, a breath song  
against the pane from outside,  
breathing, 'Some day, tame (therefore lost) men, the wild  
will come over the highest wall, waving  
its banner voice, beating its gifted first:  
*Begin again, you tame ones; listen – the roads are your homes again*'.

William Stafford<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> William Stafford, "The Gift", *Stories That Could Be True* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 164.

## OPENING-UP

And now to begin as if to begin.  
– Gertrude Stein, “Composition as Explanation”

What if poetry belonged elsewhere – otherwise than the forms we take it to be – fixed and set in subsections of books, of bookshops, of societies – locatable, containable, consumable –

something to talk about at festivals, or to be studied in periods, “movements”, schools – accumulating the thick accretion of arguments and agreements of encasements –

What if poetry was something else entirely – not housed or instituted, say, but wandering, absconding – pitching the briefest of shelters thrown up against the night – each casting a ritual conversation of circumstance – damp soil, hard clay, deep grooves.

“Bayt”, Arabic says – the word for “verse” and the word for “tent”.

“Stanza” Italian says – making *room*.

A form of moving attention, say – different speeds in changeable weather – the gathering collected by feet traversing an endless expanse – surveying an unfolding landscape – or the passage of a wanderer at sea, charting the unknown – not in the *name* of anything – purpose, prestige, or wealth – the colonial drive to claim – but simply to measure, to notice, to see –

to say – that – there – this – *is*

which is a speaking that was not needed, but becomes a *necessary* conversation all the same – one which sketches outlines, patterns of orientation from the play of a certain angle of reflection – a measuring of a moment exposed, from here to there – from this *I* to *you*.

What if poetry were an *art of fugue*? The crucial passage-out, the breaking-open flight from identity into multiplicity – the splitting of voice – the splintering of being. What if poetry measured the distance taken from an “I” – extending –

the voice of a con-version of a self – a turning, or an *Atemwende* –

a word that makes it obvious I have been speaking with Paul Celan and his “perhaps” –

Perhaps – I am only speculating – perhaps poetry, like art, moves with the oblivious self into the uncanny and strange to free itself. Though where? in which place? as what? This would mean art is the distance poetry must cover, no less and no more. I know there are other, shorter routes. But poetry, too, can be ahead.<sup>333</sup>

Poetry as *desperate* conversation – the improbable crossing of an impossible expanse – a venture far out – a searching towards – the *ab-esse* of presencing –

poems are *en route*: they are headed toward. Toward what? Toward something open, inhabitable, an approachable you, perhaps, an approachable reality.<sup>334</sup>

the journeying *elsewhere* to arrive *here* – and know the place for the first time –

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<sup>333</sup> Paul Celan, “The Meridian”, *Collected Prose*, trans. Rosemarie Waldrop (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2003), 45.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

And are these paths only detours, detours from you to you? But they are, among how many others, the paths on which language becomes voice. They are encounters, paths from a voice to a listening You, natural paths, outlines of existence perhaps, for projecting ourselves into the search for ourselves...A kind of homecoming.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid., 53.

## PARATACTICS

*What is the condition of a problem if you are the problem?*

You move into the distributive texture of an experimental protocol.

*A bunch of uncanniness emerges.*

At 20 hertz it becomes touch.

*A concomitant gate.*

At the middle of your life on a Sunday.

*A dove, a crowned warbler in redwood, an alarm, it stops.*

You set out from consciousness carrying only a small valise.

*A downtown tree, the old sky, and still you want an inventory.*

You were an intuition without a concept.

*A gallery, a hospital, an hypothesis.*

Pure gesture.

– Lisa Robertson, *Cinema of the present*

You wonder if it is the condition of this thinking to be a continuous collecting

You wonder if it is the condition of this thinking to be only a recollecting.

You gather these fragmented pieces in the gaping stupor of their explicit inexplicability.

You arrange, you find a fit

that does not say, but *shows* and in showing says what can't be said.

“here”, you say –

bearing witness to an inheritance you were not here for, but for which you are responsible nonetheless.

You seek a way of correspondence.

You are the aperture of a scene – the emptiness of an unfolding staging.

And what has been gathered?

Some scenes, some passages, reading rooms.

That is all you have gathered – a series of citations you are re-collecting – examples merely, here placed side by side.

**SKETCHING-OUT: READABILITY**

Collectors are people with a tactical instinct.  
– Walter Benjamin “Unpacking my Library. A Talk about Book Collecting”

Collectors are beings with tactile instincts.  
– Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Collecting is a primal phenomena of study: the student collects knowledge.  
– Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

It is rare for collectors to present themselves to the public. They hope to be regarded as scholars, connoisseurs, if needs be as owners too, but very rarely as that what they above all are: lovers.  
– Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive*

Walter Benjamin is unpacking his library and he asks us to join him in a room covered in torn paper, the “air saturated with the dust of wood”.<sup>336</sup> He asks us to join him in the midst of the mess of crates where books are “seeing daylight again after two years of darkness”. We are asked to join him in this suspended state of his collection, *before* he places the books onto shelves, before they are allocated an order, and *after* they have been exposed to light again; this passage between boxes and shelves, chaos and order, darkness and light, memory and anticipation, confusion and clarity, old and new. We are asked to join him in an act of re-collecting in the now.

I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am. The books are not yet on the shelves, not yet touched by the mild boredom of order. I cannot march up and down their ranks to pass them in review before a friendly audience. You need not fear any of that. Instead, I must ask you to join me in the disorder of crates that have been wrenched open, the air saturated with the dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper, to join me among piles of volumes that are seeing daylight again after two years of darkness, so that you may be ready to share with me a bit of the mood – it is certainly not an elegiac mood, but, rather, one of anticipation – which these books arouse in a genuine collector.<sup>337</sup>

This mess, this confusion into which we are invited, this passage between, belongs to any collector facing their collection in which a “spring tide of memories” comes rolling in.<sup>338</sup> But this chaos belongs too, paradoxically, to the “familiar muddle” of the collector’s library in which any semblance of order is merely that of “habit having made itself so much at home among them, that disorder can seem like its opposite”.<sup>339</sup> The collection is always a collecting, a passage in which “order is nothing but a state of uncertainty, a hovering above the abyss”,<sup>340</sup> in which all that can be known for certain are the publication dates and the

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<sup>336</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library. A Talk about Book Collecting, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1999), 61.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>338</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2009), 162.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

formats of the books – the “regularity of its catalogue”.<sup>341</sup> We are plunged, thus, into a scene in which there are no simple dichotomies but revolving tensions “between the poles of disorder and order”;<sup>342</sup> between certainty and uncertainty, which is the lot of the collector. Thus, Benjamin eschews a literary or critical evaluation of his library, proffering instead the *palpability* of his relation to his collection – that is, he adumbrates, in this strange atmosphere, a *gesture of collecting*; the affectivity of a living involvement in movement, not the settled state of a collection – one which lives in the *passage of a threshold*.

A *Schwelle* <threshold> is a zone. Transformation, passage, wave action are in the work *schwellen*, swell, and etymology ought not to overlook these senses.<sup>343</sup>

The gesture of book collecting relies, in this way, not on strategies of acquisition, but more on a certain play of an improvisatory *tactics* – collecting in *transit*, in the chance encounters made *in movement*: “My most memorable purchases were made on holiday – when I happened to be passing. Possession, ownership, are tactical matters”.<sup>344</sup> Here the collector resembles that other figure of the transitory in Benjamin’s oeuvre – the flâneur – one who is suddenly stopped in their tracks by having been struck by something, who finds what they weren’t looking for in the midst of their wandering:

Collectors are people with a tactical instinct; their experience teaches them that when they capture a strange city, the smallest antique shop can be a fortress, the most remote stationary store a key position. How many cities have revealed themselves to me in the marches I undertook in the pursuit of books!<sup>345</sup>

Their tactics belong too to the gambler, to the risk involved in purchasing books via catalogues, where “even though the purchaser may be thoroughly acquainted with the book ordered from a catalogue, the individual copy always remains a surprise and the order always a bit of a gamble”.<sup>346</sup> The copy can disappoint or prove to be a happy find – it is based not on the logics of a rationality but on following a *hunch*, tracking a *trace*, adhering to the logic of oddity that Ernst Bloch depicts in “The Mark!”: “One should observe precisely the little

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>343</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 494. As implied in the translator’s note to this etymological rumination by Benjamin, it is, to all intents and purposes, an *invented* one – or at least a *creative licence* in the *resemblance* of these words to each other: “*Schwelle*, cognate with the English word ‘still’, has the root sense of ‘board’, ‘structural support’, ‘foundation beam’. According to current information, it is etymologically unrelated to *schwellen*”, *The Arcades Project*, 991.

<sup>344</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, 165.

<sup>345</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library. A Talk about Book Collecting”, *Illuminations*, 64.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 65.

things, go after them. What is slight and odd often leads the furthest”.<sup>347</sup> This is the tactics of a *tactile* sensibility, an almost *musical* sensitivity to *details* – to fine points not as atomistic units of sense, but as the potential indicators of a whole: “Year numbers, place names, formats, previous owners, bindings, and so on, all these things must speak to him – and not just to convey dry information, either; they need to sound in concert, and depending on the harmony and clarity of that sound he has to be able to recognise whether such and such a book is his or not”.<sup>348</sup> A para-tactic which might also be termed that of the para-textual – an attunement to what otherwise might be considered merely peripheral – as Benjamin demonstrates in his efforts to procure *Posthumous Fragments of a Young Physicist*, whose *preface*, he argues, is the “most important personal prose text of German Romanticism”, where the parenthetical punctum lies, as Benjamin himself notes parenthetically, in the way “(in which the writer, by way of delivering an obituary of his allegedly deceased anonymous friend, who is in fact none other than himself, describes his own life)”.<sup>349</sup>

The collector’s sensitivity to glimpses of a whole aligns him too, in Benjamin’s sketch, with the figure of the magician where “The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership – for a true collector the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia whose quintessence is the fate of his object”.<sup>350</sup> The details form the staged order for the unknown to be perceived, for the collector’s *divinatory* power to operate; in whose hands the objects of the world turn into the scenes of fate which they *interpret*: “one glimpses how great physiognomists (and collectors are physiognomists of things) become fortune tellers. One need only watch a collector handling objects taken from his cabinet. No sooner does he have one in his hand than he appears inspired by it; his eyes take on a remote look”.<sup>351</sup> The book collector “sees through them into their distant past”<sup>352</sup> – in their hands, books, and in particular, *copies* of books, meet their fate – in colliding with the collector they are *reborn*: “for the true collector, acquiring an ancient book is its rebirth”.<sup>353</sup> Here the image of the magician, that of the “old man” combines, or rather overlaps with another figure of the collector – that of the *child*. The collector’s gesture is marked by the “childlike element” that

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<sup>347</sup> Ernst Bloch, “The Mark!”, *Traces*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 5.

<sup>348</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, 166.

<sup>349</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>350</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library. A Talk about Book Collecting”, *Illuminations*, 62.

<sup>351</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, 163.

<sup>352</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library. A Talk about Book Collecting”, *Illuminations*, 62.

<sup>353</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, 163.

allows books to begin again – an impulse of renewal and transformation which belongs to a range of puerile tactics:

painting things, another cutting out, yet another copying, and so on through the whole gamut of the child's methods of appropriation from grabbing things right up to naming them. Making the world new again – that is the deepest drive in the collector's desire to acquire new things, and that is why the collector of older books is closer to the fount of collecting than the person interested in reprints for bibliophiles.<sup>354</sup>

This impulse of the collector is one that replenishes and revitalises a stultified world – re-enchants a disenchanting world of modernity. Here, the collector relates to the books outside the logic of commodification or professionalization. As Benjamin depicts the collector in his *The Arcades Project*, their gesture releases items from a commercial or use-oriented direction, lending them “only connoisseur value”.<sup>355</sup> In removing the book from its use value, its signification is transferred to the *internal relations* of the on-going collection whose meaning is held paratactically – in the unity of the gathering – a unity in and of diversity. Here each book obtains its significance not in their reduction to a broader category, but through their singular way of sharing a similitude:

What is decisive in collecting is that the object is detached from all its original functions in order to enter into the closest conceivable relation to things of the same kind. This relation is the diametric opposite of any utility, and falls into the peculiar category of completeness. What is this ‘completeness’? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system; the collection.<sup>356</sup>

The collector's gesture undermines a consumerist and historicist value of the book, alienating it from its use value and historical meaning. As Agamben has noted in relation to this figure of the collector in Benjamin's work: “Whether it is a work of art or any simple commodity that he, with an arbitrary gesture, elevates to the object of his passion, the collector takes on the task of transfiguring things, suddenly depriving them both of their use value and of the ethical-social significance with which tradition had endowed them”.<sup>357</sup> What the collector collects they do so not through the reception of a past which is disseminated chronologically, through tradition, through the categorical and systematic, which, as Arendt notes in her introduction to the collection of essays gathered under the title “*Illuminations*”,

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>355</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 19.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>357</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Melancholy Angel”, *Man Without Content*, trans. Giorgia Albert (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 105.

“separates the positive from the negative, the orthodox from the heretical, and which is obligatory and relevant from the mass of irrelevant or merely interesting opinions and data”.<sup>358</sup> In contrast, the gesture of collecting is “inflamed”, as Arendt puts it, by the encounter with a book’s *singularity*. The collector is interested in the book *for itself* – its being *as such* – the relation of it to itself, rather than its being commodiously definable. What defines the collection is this irreducible singularity of what is gathered together. Rather than being subordinated under pre-defined categories, the collector arranges a diaspora of their interest. The collecting is fuelled by the logics of a passion which comes across, stumbles upon, and tears a book from its received position and *alienating* it, that is, citing and tearing it from its context and giving it a new life within the collection. This capacity of renewal is one which can never be exhausted, or accomplished, “renewing existence is something that can be done a hundred times over; the ability is never lost”.<sup>359</sup>

Such a gesture of replenishment is, at the same time, obviously *destructive* and disturbing – in citing the object, taking it from its commercial place within the marketplace and from its sedimentation within historical progress, the collector interrupts its context – a move which is evocative of Michel Serres’s parasite – the one who, in creating a certain order *here*, creates disorder and chaos *there*. Agamben likens them to the revolutionary, “for whom the new can appear only through the destruction of the old”.<sup>360</sup> (melancholy). The collector, as a parasite, works on the *relation*. In occupying the *trans* they transform, re-arrange, re-position – their collecting is a parenthetical pocket. Indeed, as Agamben notes, it is at times of immense cultural shifts when the figure of the collector seems to flourish the most, as it is only in this breaking point from tradition that it is conceivable to have a collection, to collapse the chain of transmission and to be able to cite, to gather a collection of citations. This breaking is not a loss of a past but rather what enables a *relation* to form with it, where another way of reading the past is opened up. In this distance that is opened up a relating is established in which what the collector gathers, what their grouping “says”, is less a *message* than the *impossibility* of transmission; a *gesture* of collecting. The collector’s space is precisely that of Benjamin’s cluttered and disordered library on the way towards order – this space of tension between – this interstitial interval of *collecting*.

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<sup>358</sup> Benjamin, “Introduction”, *Illuminations*, 48.

<sup>359</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, 163.

<sup>360</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Man Without Content*, trans. Georgia Albert (California: Stanford University Press, 1999).

Such a mark of de-commodification, the stamp of a “real library”,<sup>361</sup> relies on a certain excess – the preservation of an under-mined repleteness – a surplus of books which have never been read. The collection only truly becomes one in relation to a certain practice of non-reading – a natality which marks it as the site of on-going possibilities, of puerile (im)potential, something also indicated by the inclusion of the “fringe items” of “two albums with stick-in-pictures which my mother pasted in as a child and which I inherited. They are the seeds of a collection of children’s books which is growing steadily even today”.<sup>362</sup>

What characterises the book collector most of all, though, is the overlap between their life and their collection – the inability to separate the study of their collection from their own being. For the books don’t so much come alive in the collector, as it is the collector who lives in them, by studying them, loving them, as the stage of their own fate. As Benjamin warns at the beginning of his essay, “such a man [a book collector] is speaking to you, and on closer scrutiny he proves to be speaking only about himself”.<sup>363</sup> What the book collector is really collecting, what they are really searching for, is nothing less than *themselves* – their searching is a search for possibility. For Benjamin the collector, the books are the scene of his fate – they are a stage of inexhaustible potentiality. Reading and non-reading are configured here as a site of one’s own possibility of being otherwise – the site of *transformation* itself. Indeed, it is this con-fusion of the collector with the collection which signals the close of the essay, where Benjamin literally merges with the collection in his *disappearance*. “So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting”.<sup>364</sup> The room Benjamin has been constructing is now complete, his unpacking undone at a late hour, “it is already past midnight”. And yet the space is not hermetically sealed, or contained. The place he has “erected” before us, characterised, as it is, as a passage, is not enclosed but *exposed*, is more of a scene, a *stage* – a place not fully present to itself but open to an outside – what takes-place from scene to scene, *is*, only in this passing. Something which is indicated by the breaking in upon this scene of previous scenes of collecting, other *reading rooms*:

Memories of the cities in which I found so many things: Riga, Naples, Munich, Danzig, Moscow, Florence, Basel, Paris; memories of Rosenthal’s sumptuous rooms in Munich, of the Danzig Stockturm where the late Hans Rhaue was domiciled, of Sussengut’s musty book cellar in North Berlin; memories of the rooms where these books had been housed, of my student’s den in Munich, of my room in Bern, of the solitude of Iseltwald on the Lake of Brienz, and finally of my boyhood room, the

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<sup>361</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking my Library. A Talk about Book Collecting”, *Illuminations*, 65.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

former location of only four or five of the several thousand volumes that are piled up around me.<sup>365</sup>

The collector we encounter in the vise of Benjamin, or Benjamin in the vise of his “Spitzweg mask”, is not so much an identity then, as a *gesture of collecting*. Rather than a collector and what is collected, there is instead only a *collecting* – one that takes-place from scene to scene, as passage, as reading room.

Addendum – a parenthetical remark

Two rather strange footnotes are to be found, side by side, in an English translation of this essay by Benjamin, first given as a radio talk in 1931.

2. [Benjamin’s paragraphs tend to be unnecessarily long; in the interest of readability, this translation introduces more breaks].

3. [The original line – by the North-African Latin poet Terentianus Maurus (*fl. c. AD 200*) – is ‘Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli’ (‘The fate of books depends on the capacity of the reader’), but the quotation usually appears in English in this truncated form, translated as ‘books have their fate’].<sup>366</sup>

Whilst both footnotes are indicative of a certain *readability*, they suggest rather different notions of what this might mean. Whereas footnote two implies a readability as the disambiguation of the text, that is, towards the actualisation of its definite possibility, footnote three shifts the possibility onto a different plane, where readability belongs more to the *gesture of collecting* the text has been speaking to – to the *situated* capacity of the reader – a possibility which is, as Benjamin so palpably displays in his essay, rather less exhaustible. What Benjamin’s staging of collecting and the happenstantial parenthetical find of these footnotes opens onto is, thus, a *readability* which might be defined as *reading room* – a staging of (re)collecting. To come to know what this might mean, or involve, necessitates a by-way through Benjamin’s concern with *language*, which lies at the heart of all his critical endeavours.

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<sup>365</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>366</sup> Benjamin, “Unpacking My Library. A Talk about Collecting”, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, 266.

The primary problem of language is its magic.  
 – Walter Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man”

Benjamin was concerned with articulating an idea of language based not on a “bourgeois” instrumentality, as a means serviceable towards an end, nor indeed as an end in itself, but as he would sketch in his short and dense essay “Language as such and the Language of Man”, as what first and foremost communicates a “*communicability*”, *Mittelbarkeit* – that *in which* all communication takes place: “all language communicates itself *in* itself; it is in the purest sense the ‘medium’ of the communication”.<sup>367</sup> What characterises language is not its communicating *something*, but *itself, immediately*. This “itself” is what Benjamin calls the “mental being” of language, (or otherwise translated as its “spiritual being”)<sup>368</sup> – the “*capacity* for communication”, as he puts it.<sup>369</sup> Such “mental” or “spiritual” being is what is found not simply in verbal language, but in the *expression* of all the languages in the world, in the understanding that language is not restricted to the human domain, but extended to the world at large. “There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of each one to communicate its mental contents”.<sup>370</sup> Something demonstrated in this essay, in Benjamin’s speaking of the “language of the lamp”, which communicates not the lamp, but the “language-lamp, the lamp in expression, the lamp in communication”.<sup>371</sup> Such language is directed towards the human being, in whom their magical immediacy comes to be called. This expression of the world to the human being, requires the *naming* of the “language of man”, in order to be brought forth. The things of the world are *mute* in their expression, communicating through an immediate communication, a *magic* “material community”, but lacking what is the “pure formal principle of language – namely sound”.<sup>372</sup> Through this incorporating of the mute language into sound, the human being directs *their* communication to God – something Benjamin fleshes out in turning to the Talmudic story of Genesis, not as an object to be

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<sup>367</sup> Walter Benjamin, “On Language as Such and on the Language of Man”, *Selected Writings Volume 1 1913-1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 64. Benjamin’s essay was only published posthumously, it was, in all intents and purposes a sketch and yet it has nonetheless become the most cited source on Benjamin’s conception of language. It began life as a letter, first written in 1916 to a friend and was a text he shared only with close friends.

<sup>368</sup> Samuel Weber, *Benjamin’s –abilities* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 116.

<sup>369</sup> Benjamin, “On Language as Such”, 64.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

interpreted, nor as an authority of truth, but as the “discovery of what emerges of itself from the biblical text with regard to the nature of language”.<sup>373</sup>

The creative word of God names things in a way which is coincidental with what it names – a perfect communion of name and thing, which is *nameless*. “Language is therefore both creative and the finished creation; it is word and name”.<sup>374</sup> Here language is structured as a two-fold action, where knowing and naming correspond absolutely; creating and understanding are equal. “In God, name is both creative and the finished creation; it is word and name”.<sup>375</sup> By contrast to the naming of things, God does not create the human being from the word, nor name them, but rather creates them in its image and gifts them the same language in which it has created and named the world: “Man is the knower in the same language in which God is the creator”.<sup>376</sup> Their capacity for naming comes from their having *not* being named, and their “mental” or “spiritual” essence lies in that in which the creation of the world took place – their language is a *reflection* of the creative word of God, and is a limited and analytic language “in comparison to the absolutely unlimited and creative infinity of the divine word”.<sup>377</sup> “Man is the knower in which God is the creator”.<sup>378</sup> And yet, in *naming* the things of the world, this limited language confronts the limitlessness of the creative word. In this way, the naming of the human being involves a particular capacity on their behalf not simply to call things as they like, but since things have already been made through the creative word of God, *to respond* to the language of the world in its soundless expressivity – a response which must be *receptive* to “how language is communicated to him”<sup>379</sup>, where, in the “mute magic of nature, the word of God shines forth”.<sup>380</sup> Theirs is a calling which seeks to touch upon this creative word of God, the “germ of the cognising name”.<sup>381</sup> The human being is instituted, in this way, into a responsibility to “give birth to the language of things themselves”, that is, to *carry out* what has been incepted – what lies not *expressionless*, but *nameless*. Here the relation between object and name is not simply accidental, language is not, as Benjamin would have it, the giving of “*mere signs*”.<sup>382</sup> Rather, the working of language is more of a dynamic reciprocal movement of both creating and knowing; both of a namelessness and naming; a muteness and sounding. Benjamin calls this

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<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid., 69.

internal dynamic, this relation of language, that of *translation* – a concept which lies at the crux of this essay by Benjamin, where he emphatically underscores that the core of language rests in this *translatability*: “the translation of the language of things into the language of man”.<sup>383</sup>

It is necessary to found the concept of translation at the deepest level of linguistic theory, for it is much too far-reaching and powerful to be treated in any way as an afterthought, as has happened occasionally. Translation attains its fullest meaning in the realisation that every evolved language...can be considered a translation of all the others. By the fact that...languages relate to one another as do media of varying densities, the translatability of languages into one another is established. Translation is removal from one language into another through a continuum of transformations.<sup>384</sup>

The human being is gifted language as a *translatability*, where it must listen to the call of the mute and *bear it forth* in the sonic; the nameless into the name. This carrying happens *within* language itself, for the nameless expressivity of things and the naming language of the human being are related in the medium God has bestowed to the human being. The human being comes to express their “mental” or “spiritual” essence in this *completion* of their language, that is, through naming the world. The *communicability* of the human being occurs in such naming. The world in its mute expressivity is a magic communication – the human being’s is knowledge. In naming, thus, the twofold action of language is carried out – the dynamic of God’s language is replicated not through the human being’s language alone, but only in *correspondence* with the mute language of the world. “It would be insoluble, were not the name-language of man and the nameless language of things related in God and released from the same creative word, which in things became the communication of matter in magic communication, and in man the language of knowledge and name in blissful mind”.<sup>385</sup> There is always a *collaboration* – one which unites both the mute *thisness* of the world, beauty, with knowing. For the human being they must *contemplate* the world and name it, allowing the mute language of things to *pass into* their language. In this way, in naming in the same medium of God’s creative word, “*man communicates himself to God*”.

The human being is summoned to respond to the world through language. As Benjamin quotes Friedrich Muller, “Man of the earth, step near; in gazing, grow more perfect, more perfect through the word”.<sup>386</sup> The human being and the things of the world are the corresponding twofold of the action of naming. The structure of language is, in this sense,

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid., 70.

that of *translatability* – a term to be found here in this essay and later taken up and fleshed out in “The Task of the Translator”. Through the correspondence of the language of things into the “language of man” the human being *expresses* its own *expressivity*, that is, not a subjective identity, but a through-otherness – the *receptive* germ that has called them and is borne out. Here, “to express oneself and to address everything else amounts to the same thing”.<sup>387</sup> The task of the human is to receive in their language this mute language of things which is tending towards them.

With “The Fall” however, there is a break in this communion between the language of things and the language of the human being – what gives rise to the human *word*, “in which name no longer lives intact and which has stepped out of the name-language, the language of knowledge, from what we might call its own imminent magic, in order to become expressly, as it were externally, magic”.<sup>388</sup> Now language expresses *something* other than *itself* – it ceases to be a *pure language*, and becomes *judgement* rather than *correspondence*. “man abandoned immediacy in the communication of the concrete – that is, name – and fell into the abyss of the mediateness of all communication, of the word as means, of the empty word, into the abyss of prattle”.<sup>389</sup> Here there is a turning away from the contemplative naming, from language and its knowing as a collaborative, concrete communion with the world, towards abstraction and an objective judgement.

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In his acute attention to the nuances of Benjamin’s writing, Samuel Weber proffers that the “communicability”, *Mittelbarkeit*, Benjamin speaks of, might be better translated as “impart-ability”,<sup>390</sup> and an “even more literal translation would be *the ability to part-with*”.<sup>391</sup> Weber’s focus in his book, *Benjamin’s –abilities*, as the title suggests, is on the manner in which he notices and highlights the significance of the “virtual” mode Benjamin chose to render his philosophical concepts in, where nouns are formed with the suffix “*barkeit*”, ability/ibility, which refer to a *possibility*, a *capacity*, rather than a simple actuality, thus indicating a nominalisation that never comes to completion as such, but

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<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>390</sup> Weber, *Benjamin’s –abilities*, 13.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

involves an “ongoing, ever-unfinished, and unpredictable process”<sup>392</sup> – one which necessarily involves *alterity*.

The mark of this virtualisation of the concept is Benjamin’s distinctive use of the German suffix *-bar*, which in English would have to be translated either as *-able* (or *-ible*). This tendency first emerges in this essay, [Language of Man] and as we have noted, it will persist throughout Benjamin’s entire, although abbreviated, career. To recapitulate, what results is a series of concepts that are all construed around this suffix: ‘Criticizability’, ‘Translatability’, ‘Citability’, ‘Reproducibility’, and ‘Recognizability’ in the *Arcades Project*; and ‘impart-ability’ in the essay on language.<sup>393</sup>

As Weber emphasises, the possibility of impartability refers not to a “potential act of communication”, one that has not happened but that could happen – a possibility which is annulled in its *actualisation*. Instead, what is at stake is a possibility which “is *immediately* effective qua possibility itself”.<sup>394</sup> Weber locates the philosophical precedence of such virtualisation of concepts with Kant, and in particular his use of the suffix in the *Critique of the Power to Judge*, which articulates, as Weber reads it, “a type of judgement that provides no actual knowledge, determines nothing, and is therefore not cognitive, precisely to the extent that it remains tied to a certain *singularity*. Kant designates this non-conceptual, non-cognitive judgement as ‘reflective’, since it merely reflects the movement of the mind judging, rather than executing an act of judgement itself”.<sup>395</sup> What is communicated in this communicability, this *reflective* judgement, is not a determined cognised *something*, but “a certain state of mind that is *felt* to be indissolubly linked to a singular representation”,<sup>396</sup> which is experienced as being potentially communicable. What is significant here, as Weber highlights, is that this is an affectivity which involves a “feeling” or “state of mind” not as a subjective interiority, but as what is produced in the singular encounter from without. This *Bestimmbarkeit* and *communicability* are shifted in Benjamin’s writings, as Weber notes, into language itself. As Weber puts it elsewhere in his understanding of the singularity of literary cognition, “It is a thinking that feels possibilities rather than cognising actual objects”.<sup>397</sup> The singular encounter with the world *demands* to be shared, but it is a demand which cannot be realised for it is tied to the situation. The attempt is an understanding where what is encountered is not subsumed under a general class of what has already been known,

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<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>397</sup> Samuel Weber, “The Singularity of Literary Cognition”, *Tiresias* 5 (March 2012): 22.

but the *singularity* of the situation is, whilst never capturable, somehow evoked in the manner of saying otherwise.

It is in this sense that the possibility involved, rather than being antithetical to an *impossibility*, is *inclusive* of it, for the communicating *as* possibility entails a process which *presents itself* in the joining-distance of *imparting*, and thus cannot be fully present to itself. The impossibility of communicating is contained in this structure of possibility. As Benjamin puts it, “For language is in every case not only communication of the communicable but also, at the same time, a symbol of the noncommunicable”.<sup>398</sup> This parting-with is the structure of *translatability* already at work *within* language, where the “*ability*” involved, structured as it is only in separation from itself, means that it can both never be fully realised, but also that it remains *open* to the on-going transformation which Benjamin characterises for language. In rendering his concepts through this mode of *ability*, Benjamin conceives of any origin as not what is *identical* with itself, but *is itself* through a *splitting*, an *imparting*, a *through-otherness*, in being in *relation to* itself as Weber notes:

In thus refusing the instrumentalist conception of language as a medium through which something is communicated by someone to someone else, Benjamin does not introduce an alternative version of immanence or identity – for instance, the medium itself as the message, or as end in itself. Rather, he opens a highly volatile space in which all ‘spiritual being’ – which is to say, all identity, whether of subjects, objects, things, or meanings – appears only in and through the process of parting company with itself, and in so doing, imparting itself to others.<sup>399</sup>

Benjamin proffers, in this way, a very different sense of the medium of language. Rather than an “instrument”, it is more of a *mode* – the “possibility of a particular way of being”,<sup>400</sup> as Weber puts it. The communication which is manifested in it cannot be a stable act, but is one which exists only *as movement*, as the *trans* of an (*im*)*possibility*. Rather than a definitive or determinant communication, it is the (*im*)*possibility* of being said, other than in the *other language* towards which it tends – as in the mute language of things into the language of the human being. Rather than a determinable *thing* to be understood by another, it is a possibility which must be *corresponded to*, *participated in*. As Werner Hamacher puts it, there is “the experience of the *demand* for its correspondence. This is the experience of the *demand* for an experience”.<sup>401</sup> Such is the reciprocity of the structure of language as a *translatability*. “Only with respect to its translation, its status as translatable, does a text become an original; and only with respect to the language of the translation does the

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<sup>398</sup> Benjamin, “On Language as Such”, 74.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, *Benjamin’s –abilities* 118.

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>401</sup> Werner Hamacher, “Intensive Languages”, *MLN* 127, no. 3 (2012): 489.

language of the original become language. The linguisticity of a language is defined not by what that language means, but by the other language toward which it points the way”.<sup>402</sup> The sense to be made lies not “in” the text awaiting to be uncovered as a containable object, but lies in its *way* of parting-with itself, its *immediate* communicability *imparting*. What is given is a proffering, a suggestion, a sketch, which must be borne-out, and in this movement of carrying, sense is “made” only in par-taking in the *impartability* of one’s own language. In the parting-with of the world’s expressivity, the world is itself constituted only in its tending towards another language – that of the human being, and the sense of their language lies only in *its* imparting. Every language *is* only because it originally gestures beyond itself, has always already abandoned itself at its origin, in its *parting-with*. It *is* only through what it is *not*. Here “essence” lies in the *trans* of all origins, its constitution *as relation* – the structure of (im)possible communicability, translatability. Language is language only in its *calling*, its *demand* for another language. This is a call which does not *say* anything, but *announces* itself. The *translatability* of language, in this way, is the always tending towards of language, where it is already not *itself* but is *parting-with* itself, not that is, to become something else, but to become *itself*.

The original...is original solely because in originally gesturing beyond itself, it had already abandoned itself. It is original and thus originary [*ursprunglich*] only because it is leaping [*auf dem Sprung*] into its translation.<sup>403</sup>

The *parting-with* is the simultaneous *jointure* and *separation* which allows for something to appear *as it is* – what both gives us access to it and yet denies us ever fully realising it. The “sense” of language so construed tenders not a known sense, but a sense that is *tending towards* a knowing – one which exists in the more ambiguous, never complete, partial mode of *knowability*. This is a sense that *is* in its *anticipation*, “the tentative assumption of something to come” which “searches, attempts, hints at, and realises the grounds of possibility of experience only ‘germinally or intensively’, that is, in such a manner that it reaches out beyond itself toward an other that it is not and that it cannot present other than through its own striving”.<sup>404</sup> Rather than producing an external object it is instead the “intensive relation of presentation”.<sup>405</sup> It is in this way that language proffers not categorical signification, but *historicised* sense – sense that is intensive.

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid., 493.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 494.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 508.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 509.

The *translatability* of the text refers not, in this sense, to whether a text can be translated or not – the actualisation of its possibility, but to the *structure of possibility* within it, whether or not the text is ever translated. In Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” this *translatability* is configured as what lies in “certain works”, where “a specific significance manifests itself”<sup>406</sup> through what he calls a “vital connection”<sup>407</sup> – the *life* of the original work – a life which *lives on* in the translation, yet only in the mode it originally lived, that is, in this *anticipatory tending towards*, in the movement of a *trans*, where it was already gesturing beyond itself. “Life” in this sense, is not that of “organic corporeality”, but is the life of *history*, where “The life of the originals attains in them to its ever-renewed latest and most abundant flowering”.<sup>408</sup> The *task* of the translator is not to attempt to replicate a “likeness to the original”, but as its *life*, its *translatability* is structured by alterity, the text is rendered the *same*, or *similar*, by becoming something different, and thus pertaining to the singular situation of the translation’s history.

For in its afterlife – which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living – the original undergoes a change. Even words with fixed meaning can undergo a maturing process. The obvious tendency of a writer’s literary style may in time wither away, only to give rise to immanent tendencies in the literary creation. What sounded fresh once may sound hackneyed later; what was once current may someday sound quaint.<sup>409</sup>

The *tendency*, the way of saying as possibility, is what must be continuously transformed and renewed in order to *translate* its *anticipative* tending towards. The task of the translator is to attune themselves to the *difference* of articulation from within a particular moment of time, attending, like the collector, to the *re-birthing* of the old world, which regenerates not just the original work, but the language of the translator. “Translation is so far removed from being the sterile equation of two dead languages that of all literary forms it is the one charged with the special mission of watching over the maturing process of the original language and the birth pangs of its own”.<sup>410</sup> What is thus shared between an original and a translation is a certain *kinship*, one which does not necessarily involve likeness, an “identity of origin”,<sup>411</sup> but in a shared *intention* towards *pure language* – a language that, like the language before “The Fall”, would communicate nothing but itself. Here the intention of the translator, as Weber notes, “does not aim at an object, much less a visual one. Rather, it addresses something that cannot be seen as such, but only read: a difference. The intention of

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<sup>406</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”, *Illuminations*, 71.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>408</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

<sup>409</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

the translator aims at the difference between languages, not in general, but in their specifically different ways of meaning the same things”.<sup>412</sup> Such a difference involves both the dissimilarity and similarity under which certain words can be chosen over others.

Beyond the reproduction of the same, the translator’s task is likened instead, as with the “language of man”, to a certain *receptive capacity*, in their listening to the *resonance* of the text and attempting to replicate in their own language this echo: “aiming at that single spot where the echo is able to give, in its own language, the reverberation of the work in the alien one”.<sup>413</sup> This *single spot* is also repeated by Benjamin in an example towards the end of the essay, where he likens it to the touch of a tangent upon a circle:

Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, with this touch rather than with the point setting the law according to which it is to continue on its straight path to infinity, a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course according to the laws of fidelity in the freedom of linguistic flux.<sup>414</sup>

This *small point* of the sense occurs not through *what* is said, but *how* – this is what configures the encounter. As with the expressivity of the language of things, this is the *germ* of the original – its *parting-with* itself, as what must be borne out, carried through, in the *naming* of the other language. The crossing is the *reception* of an expressivity, a connotative sense, a mode, which cannot be fully apprehended as such, given that it is not a *thing*, but the *possibility* of a *tending towards*. The *fidelity* of translation is to this sense rather than a direct transpositioning of the meaning of the words. “Fidelity in the translation of individual words can almost never fully reproduce the meaning they have in the original. For sense in its poetic significance is not limited to meaning, but derives from the connotations conveyed by the word chosen to express it. We say of words that they have emotional connotations”.<sup>415</sup> It is this *poetic connotative* sense, the “affective tone”,<sup>416</sup> as Weber renders it, which is the *gesture* of the original – the *tending towards* of an impartability, and in order for the translation to *itself* incorporate this element, it must “let itself go, so that it gives voice to the *intentio* of the original not as reproduction but as harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself, as its own kind of *intentio*”.<sup>417</sup> The translation must *listen* to the call of the text in order for it itself to be a call – one that needs to be listened to in turn,

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<sup>412</sup> Weber, *Benjamin’s -abilities*, 71.

<sup>413</sup> Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”, 77.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*, *Benjamin’s -abilities*, 73.

<sup>417</sup> Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”, 79.

where the “work reflects the great longing for linguistic complementation”.<sup>418</sup> Such an element is not what can be communicated but the additional “something that cannot be communicated”,<sup>419</sup> the *impossibility* of a sense intending – one which touches sense only “the way an Aeolian harp is touched by the wind”.<sup>420</sup>

This affective *tone* as the tendency of the text is not held within the individual words, but in their *jointure* – the manner in which they are bound together, the articulated spaces between – the way the text breaks apart from itself in its imparting. Benjamin likens the work of translating, in this respect, to a broken vessel in which the fragments to be glued must *correspond* to each other, but they need not be *like* each other. In attempting to replicate this distinct *articulation* of the text, the translation need not resemble the original but must “lovingly and in detail incorporate the original’s mode of signification”.<sup>421</sup> It is the specific *fragmentation* which is to be incorporated into the translation and *re-articulated* – joined and separated in a *harmony*, through its mode of *parting-with*. The attention is to the precise *para-tactics* of the text. It is in their “re-creation of that work”<sup>422</sup> that the translator liberates the *possibility* of the work. In allowing their own language to be, as Benjamin quotes from Rudolf Pannwitz, (who as Benjamin would have it, has characterised the true *freedom* of translation), “powerfully affected by the foreign tongue”,<sup>423</sup> returning to the “primal elements of language itself” in order to “penetrate to the point where work, image, and tone converge”.<sup>424</sup> In a rather more practical moment of the essay, a certain concrete dimension of this argument breaks through in Benjamin’s proffering that such harmony, such *imparting*, is achieved “by a literal rendering of the syntax”.<sup>425</sup> Here the sense is *articulated* in the jointure of the text – its manner of *parting-with* itself in a *spacing* that binds its singular mode of saying. As Weber puts it, “*binding* the way of meaning to particular words...For what is decisive is *how* an object or concept is bound to an individual word, and through it, to a particular way of being-meant. And this idea of being bound to or up with individual words depends on a spatial arrangement that can be designated both as syntactical and as singular”.<sup>426</sup> In this case, the *translatability* of the text is contingent upon the extent to which the original has *articulated* their text – the extent to which the original is a *gesture towards*, a tending towards another language – the extent to which theirs is a singular modality, that is,

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>426</sup> Weber, *Benjamin’s - abilities*, 73-74.

a singular *binding* of sense. “The lower the quality and distinction of its language, the larger the extent to which it is information, the less fertile a field it is for translation, until the utter preponderance of content, far from being the lever for a translation of distinctive mode, renders it impossible. The higher the level of a work, the more does it remain translatable even if its meaning is touched upon only fleetingly”.<sup>427</sup> The poetic *connotative* sense is what allows language to not only be *word* but *name* – that which *corresponds* with the world in its expressivity. It is not, of course, incidental that this essay by Benjamin existed originally as a paratext, serving as the introduction to his translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens* – an essay which was written, thus, from the struggle of being involved in translating itself and the attempt to render in another form the *singularity* of a *poetic* sense.

Translation is always a *recollecting*, which is not the restoration of what was, but the *making* it *possible* once more. In translation, the effort is not to repeat but to *reiterate*, that is, to *re-call*, where the calling of a name is *called* again from within another language. It is to inhabit not what the language is communicating, but its *communicability*, what *imparts itself immediately*. In this way, the translated text retains its quality of *possibility*, rather than the simple actualised communication of *what* the text says. The task of the translator, in this sense, is to find a way of suspending the work in the *milieu* of their own language, where it *continues* to exist, *lives-on*, in its *tending towards*, its *impartability* – suspended between possibility and impossibility – inhabiting the *trans* of a pure relation which might be symbolised as a *hyphenation* – a sign which says nothing but the parting-with of a gesturing ahead of itself, in order to *be* itself. What is *shared* between the original and the translation is this *relation to* itself.

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<sup>427</sup> Benjamin, “Task of the Translator”, 81.

Eyes staring at one's back  
 Meeting of glances  
 Glance up, answering a glance.  
 – Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archives*

Another “ability” casts a further light on this path towards *readability* that this essay is searching towards – that of the concept of *criticisability*, to be found in Benjamin’s doctoral thesis, *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism*. As Benjamin draws out from his reading encounters, predominantly with the mystics Baron Friedrich Von Hardenberg Novalis and Friedrich Von Schlegel, the work of criticism becomes a critical act not through any criteria of judgement pre-established in advance, but in the *unfolding* of the singularity of the work’s own structure of *criticisability*; *unfolding* the *germ* of the work of art, of its *possibility*. Criticism, as Benjamin comes to sketch it, is not something which happens *after* the work, but is already operative *within* it, if, as he comes to understand from the German Romantic perspective, the work of art is viewed as a *medium of reflection*, issuing not from an “I”, but from the *tendency* of the work towards itself. “Criticism of the work is...its reflection, which can only, as is self-evident, unfold the germ of the reflection that is imminent to the work”.<sup>428</sup> As with the naming of language, what is to be unfolded in criticism, borne out, carried through, is the *germ* of a creative word. Criticism is not the objective or subjective judgement of an “I”, but a *movement* which occurs in the work itself and which is to be *participated* in. There is, in this sense, no criteria of judgement pre-established in advance, it exists, rather, “in the fact of critique itself, because there is no other standard, no other criterion for the presence of a reflection than the possibility of its fruitful unfolding”.<sup>429</sup> As with the *translatability* of the text, the *criticisability* of a work is not reliant upon the skills of a given critic, but is a *structure of possibility* intrinsic to the work, whether or not it is ever brought to fruition. And as with the translatability of the text, this is based on the *singularity* of its *articulation* – on the manner in which it *parts-with* itself, tending towards, anticipating itself. “the critique of the work is not meant to do anything other than discover the secret tendencies of the work itself – that is, in its reflection that the criticism should go beyond the work and make it absolute”.<sup>430</sup> As with the translatable text, here the criticisable work or text is not a content of meaning, but something that is *tending towards* sense, and in this way, not simply *there*, but *on the way*. In inhabiting the *tendency* of the work or text, the critic sets it in motion again, inhabits its *movement*

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<sup>428</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism”, *Selected Writings vol. 1*, 159.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

towards, its gesture, where there is an inherent *incompletion* which is not accidental but integral to it – the *impossibility* of its possibility. In such a way, criticism is not so much an objective or subjective judgement of the work, as it is a “method of its consumption”,<sup>431</sup> where the critic, like the translator, must, in their own work, *repeat* this *movement* of tending towards which necessarily *alters* it – makes it the same by making it different. Criticism is an *intensification* of the work, taking the work and the critic *beyond themselves*, into a *movement towards*. This calls for what the Romantics coined as a “poetic criticism” which, as Benjamin notes, suspends “the difference between criticism and poetry”, quoting Novalis: “Poetry can be criticised only through poetry. An aesthetic it is one of those books that judges themselves”.<sup>432</sup> The *germ* of the work calls another work of art into being – its poetic *tendency*, another poetry. The critic must find *in their own language* an articulation of the work’s expressivity – the work’s *articulation*, its *parting-with* itself. It is an inquiry as Schegel puts it, as an “historical experiment”, and

with a view to the critical activity in which he was himself employed in 1800, he said: ‘I shall not forgo experimentation with works of poetic and philosophical art – as before, so also in the future, for myself and for the sake of knowledge’. The subject of reflection is, at bottom, the artistic entity itself, and the experiment consists not in any reflecting *on* an entity, which could not essentially alter it as Romantic criticism intends, but in the unfolding of reflection – that is, for the Romantics, the unfolding of spirit – *in* an entity.<sup>433</sup>

Whilst Benjamin emphasises that this criticisability is not contingent upon the skill of a critic, it does nonetheless necessitate a certain *comportment*, a certain *disposition* on their behalf, which is a skill in itself – the ability to give themselves *over to* the work and allow themselves to be occupied by, and participate in, its *reflective movement* – a disposition of what Benjamin calls “magical observation”,<sup>434</sup> where perception and method of research are one. This is an observation which involves an engagement in the *not-knowing* of the perceiver whose “observation fixes in its view only the self-knowledge nascent in the object; or rather it, the observation, *is* the nascent consciousness of the object itself”.<sup>435</sup> Rather than a knowing “I”, there is instead an altogether other activity in operation here, where, “in its not-knowing – in its attending – observation knows better, being identical with the object”.<sup>436</sup> In this reflective activity the thing which is perceived comes to be known *as such*, that is, as it is revealed from being *absorbed* in it from and as a particular scene of

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<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>432</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid., 148.

perceiving. In participating in it and anticipating it, it is given *as* such. “Simultaneous with any cognition of an object is the actual coming-into-being of this object itself. For knowledge, according to the basic principle of knowledge of objects, is a process that first makes what is to be known into that *as* which it is known”.<sup>437</sup> It is an engagement in our capacity for *attention* – something which Novalis also gestures to, as Benjamin notes:

Novalis never tired of affirming this dependence of any knowledge of an object on self-knowledge by the object. He puts this in the most paradoxical and at the same time clearest form with the short proposition: ‘Perceptibility [is] an attentiveness’. It does not matter whether in this sentence, over and above the attentiveness of the object to itself, its attentiveness to the one perceiving is also meant; for even when Novalis clearly enunciates this thought – ‘In all predicates in which we see the fossil, it sees us’ – that attentiveness to the one seeing can still be rightly understood only as a symptom of the thing’s capacity to see itself.<sup>438</sup>

And as a structure of *perceptibility* it indicates that rather than an object that knows itself, or knows us, or that we come to know by being known, once and for all, the hinge is left open for other perceptible events of perceiving.

This idea of the work’s movement, the critical *reflection* operative *in* it, is based, as Benjamin sketches it at the beginning of this text on criticism, on an understanding of reflection as this operation of *self-knowledge*. Objects are seen in this sense not as self-identical but as holding within them a movement of relation *towards* themselves, that is, a relation manifested through *separation* from itself – an *immediacy* of *impartability*. As Benjamin notes, “All knowledge is self-knowledge of a thinking being, which does not need to be an ‘I’”.<sup>439</sup> This does *not* mean, as Benjamin emphasises, that reality is formed by “an aggregate of monads locked up in themselves”,<sup>440</sup> but “on the contrary, all unities in reality...are only relative unities. They are so far from being shut up in themselves and free from relations that through the intensification of their reflection (potentiation, romanticization) they can incorporate other beings, other centers of reflection, more and more into their self-knowledge”.<sup>441</sup> The task of one who wishes to know this object is to *participate* in this movement of *self-knowledge*, this immediate impartability. Rather than thinking *about it*, the task is to enter into this *intensification of reflection*, this perceptibility.

the thing, to the extent that it intensifies reflection within itself and includes other beings in its self-knowledge, radiates its original self-knowledge onto these other beings. In this way, too, the human being can participate in this self-knowledge of

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>439</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>440</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 146.

other beings; this way will coincide with the first in the case of the knowledge of two beings through each other, a knowledge that is at bottom the self-knowledge of their reflectively produced synthesis. Accordingly, everything that presents itself to man as his knowledge of a being is the reflex in him of the self-knowledge of the thinking in that very being. Thus, there exists no mere being-known of a thing; just as little, however, is the thing or being limited to a mere being-known through itself. Rather, the intensification of reflection in it suspends the boundary that separates its being-known by itself from its being-known by another; in the medium of reflection, moreover, the thing and the knowing being merge into each other. Both are only relative unities of reflection.<sup>442</sup>

The *magical observation*, like the collector, *merges* with the collection, there is simply *observing*, simply *collecting*, as the scene of an intensification. Rather than a knower and what is known, there is the *immediacy*, the *absorption* of a *knowing*. “the being-known of one being by another coincides with the self-knowledge of that being which is being known, coincides with self-knowledge of the knowing being and with the being-known of the knowing being by the being it knows”.<sup>443</sup> There is a critical *chiasmus*, a *xenos* crossing, where the one who is attempting to know can only know through the self-knowledge of that which it is attempting to know, which occurs only in their *being known*, which comprises *their own self-knowledge*. Thus is the *self-affectivity* of a thinking that does not think *something*, but *thinking itself*: “the very thing that is reflected, that is thought, is the only thing which can reflect: thinking itself. Thus, it is self-actively thought. And because it is thought as reflecting itself, it is thought as immediately knowing itself”.<sup>444</sup>

This form of thinking, of a not-knowing *participation* and *absorption* in the world, is, as Benjamin quotes from Schegel, a *poetic thinking*: “There is a kind of thinking that produces something and therefore has a great similarity of form to the creative capacity which we ascribe to the ‘I’ of nature and to the ‘world-I’. This form of thinking is, namely, poetry, which in a way creates its own material”.<sup>445</sup> Poetry is here the capacity to *engage* in and *augment* the perceptibility of attentiveness: “Poetry is, indeed, only the more resolute, more active, more productive use of our organs, and thinking and poetry therefore are one and the same”.<sup>446</sup> As a faculty of *perception* it is observation attuned, it is “critical germ”<sup>447</sup> as Novalis puts it, of what is “at the same time thought and observation”. Here we are in the realm of the *expressivity* of nature Benjamin depicts in the “language of man” essay. The task of the critic is to return the work or text to its *possibility*, which is also an *impossibility* –

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 151.

to inhabit the manner in which it is not there but *tending towards* itself, parting-with itself. This attention cannot be willed as such, given that it comes not from an “I”, but from being *drawn away* and absorbed, taken up by something, being seen by it, in an *attunement* with it. As Novalis puts it, the world “reveals itself all the more completely through him, the more his constitution is in harmony with it”.<sup>448</sup> And it is here perhaps where the anticipation of Benjamin’s later thinking can be felt, both on the mimetic faculty, first sketched out in “Doctrine of the Similar”, and his thinking on the aura.

Indeed, in Benjamin’s 1939 essay, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”, Benjamin repeats Novalis’s sense of perception as a perceptibility of attentiveness in relation to *aura*:

‘Perceptibility’, as Novalis puts it, ‘is a kind of attentiveness’. The perceptibility he has in mind is none other than that of the aura. Experience of the aura thus rests on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationship between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in turn. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return.<sup>449</sup>

What it is contingent upon is a *desubjectivisation* – *not knowing*, but *being known* – what is described in the footnote to this passage by Benjamin as the “wellspring of poetry”:

Wherever a human being, an animal, or an inanimate object thus endowed by the poet lifts up its eyes, it draws him into the distance. The gaze of nature thus lifts up its eyes, it draws him into the distance. The gaze of nature thus awakened dreams and pulls the poet after its dream. Words, too, can have an aura of their own. This is how Karl Kraus described it: ‘The closer the look one takes at a word, the greater the distance from which it looks back.’<sup>450</sup>

In the experience of being looked at in perceiving, the perceiver is drawn out from themselves in an encounter, enfugued by a not-knowing. The closest, most familiar things can take on a distance in this meeting. The crossing of this meeting of glances is captured in a note in *The Arcades Project*, structured as it is chiasmatically:

Trace and aura. Trace is appearance of a nearness, however far removed the thing that left it behind may be. The aura is appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls it forth. In the trace, we gain possession of the *thing*; in the aura, it takes possession of us.<sup>451</sup>

In the *magical observation*, the world takes on a *face*, where it is a life-force and self-knowledge that matches our glance – a glance without which we cannot ourselves have self-

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<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>449</sup> Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”, *Illuminations*, 184.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>451</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 447.

knowledge. It is this perceptibility of *face-to-face* knowing which Benjamin would speak to as the *mimetic faculty* of the human being – a faculty of *perceiving similarity* which is, as Benjamin describes it, “nothing but a weak remnant of the formally powerful compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically”.<sup>452</sup> It allows a *magical* relation to the world – an ability to know it through *absorption* – a *reading* its physiognomy in the way the astrologer reads the night sky – making connections in the *flash of insight* in the space between two stars.

The moment of birth, which here decides everything, is but an instant. This directs our attention to another peculiarity in the area of similarity. The perception of similarity is in every case bound to an instantaneous flash. It slips past, can possibly be regained, but really cannot be held fast, unlike other perceptions. It offers itself as fleetingly and transitorily as a constellation of stars. The perception of similarities thus seems to be bound to a time-moment (*Zeitmoment*). It is like the addition of a third element, namely the astrologer, to the conjunction of two stars which must be grasped in an instant.<sup>453</sup>

It is language which has come to, as Benjamin notes, adopt and absorb this mimetic correspondence which at one time had a more pervasive presence in human life. Language, in this sense, as he sketched it in “The Language of Man”, is a *correspondence* to the world, an unfolding of its expressivity. This *magical* side of language is borne out not in *what* is said, but in its *mode*, its *tendency*. It is not housed within the semiotic element, but is nonetheless in relation to it: “the nexus of meaning implicit in the sounds of the sentence is the basis from which something similar can become apparent instantaneously, in a flash”.<sup>454</sup> The semiotic carries and bears forth something which can only be evoked rather than ascertained. The work of the word is not to represent the object but to provoke a *participation* in the similarity between what is said and the object – to become involved in its *self-knowledge*, its impartability. In the perceiver’s participation in the object, they know only through similarity – by being known by the object itself, becoming like it. In a similar way, language participates in the object through a *correspondence* of similarity.

This perceiving of similarity is, as Benjamin spells out, synonymous with a certain gesture of *reading*:

If, in the dawn of humanity, this reading from stars, entrails, and coincidences represented reading *per se*, and further, if there were mediating links to a newer kind of reading, as represented by the runes, then one might well assume that the mimetic faculty, which was earlier the basis of clairvoyance, quite gradually found its way

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<sup>452</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Doctrine of the Similar”. *New German Critique* 6, no. 2 (1979): 69.

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

into language and writing in the course of a development over thousands of years, thus creating for itself in language and writing the most perfect archive of non-sensuous similarity. Language is the highest application of the mimetic faculty.<sup>455</sup>

This reading is a participation in “that measure of time in which similarities flash up fleetingly out of the stream of things only in order to become immediately engulfed again. Thus even profane reading, if it is not to forsake understanding altogether, shares this with magical reading: that it is subject to a necessary speed, or rather a critical moment, which the reader must not forget at any cost unless he wishes to go away empty-handed”.<sup>456</sup>

As with the translator, the namer, the collector, this is an encounter with the *germ* – the chiasmus of a crossing in which *you are seen*, and a distance opens up. Rather than a reading as the decipherment of what is said, this magical, mimetic element is a reading for the nameless in the name – the mute expressivity – what retains the mystery of appearance – that aspect of language which does not judge, but *bears forth* the self-knowledge of the thing. It is the inclusion of the *tending towards* of the things of the world which need a correspondence. As such, this reading is, as Benjamin puts it in “The Mimetic Faculty”, a *reading what was never written*. It is not what is said about something which matters, but how it is evoked, how its relation to itself, its parting-with itself, is *imitated*. In this sense, the most “accurate” or “factual” description may tell us what something is, but it cannot tell us what it is *like*. The element missing, it would seem, is the *passion* of the collector, the passion of a *correspondent* who carries and bears out an element foreign to themselves, through an engagement in their own *reversibility*; in being cast into their own *questionability*. What, as Jane Hirshfield puts it, lives in words as “what words were needed to learn”.<sup>457</sup> Indeed, in an essay where Hirshfield addresses Novalis’s aphorism on perceptibility, she reads in it the work of how poetry perceives precisely as this chiasm of the *face to face*, the glances meeting, that point “where perceiver and perceived join, where inner and outer worlds meet; and what the poet attempts to discover, in his or her collaboration with language, is how best to let these joined worlds come forward and realise themselves. In the long process of hide and seek which the universe plays with itself, the poem will hold both hiding and seeking, for both are the point”.<sup>458</sup>

In a gesture not very far removed from Benjamin’s attempt to capture a different sense of the concept other than abstraction, Hirshfield notes how, “the etymology of ‘idea’”, bears the

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<sup>455</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>457</sup> Jane Hirshfield, “To Speech”, *After* (Northumberland: Bloodaxe Books Ltd, 2006), 78.

<sup>458</sup> Jane Hirshfield, “Entering the Bird Cage: Poetry and Perceptibility”, *New England Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): 114.

“same word in English as the Greek one meaning ‘concept’, which itself derives from *idein*, a form of the verb ‘to see’. The seen travels towards conceptualisation when it is transformed into a newly expanded, two-fold meaning, by means of attention to the qualities of primary experience”.<sup>459</sup> To invoke the concept, the *sensuous* dimensions of the experience must enter into language, this mimetic, magical immediacy. In doing so, the reader themselves becomes a *correspondent*, as Hirshfield depicts:

Most of the time, though, the source of an idea in the physical world eventually vanishes, and we are left wholly in the one-sided realm of the abstract. One of the gifts of the lyric poem of sensory image is its ability to keep alive the process contained in *idea*’s derivation: the poem built on the witness of the senses is thought kept close to the data of initial perception, rather than abstracted into language that, at least on the surface, leaves out the body. One of the great pleasures of such poetry is the way that perception travelling into understanding completes itself in the reader, rather than being determined and spelled out beforehand by the writer. In such poetry, light on its feet and deft in its strategies, the reader is given not an answer, but a journey.<sup>460</sup>

The reader is the *third element* of the text – one who must *read what was never written*. Like the astrologer, theirs is a moment of seeing, in the flash of insight, the non-sensuous connection between, the “idea”, which cannot be held or grasped, but its elements only reconfigured for another. The task of the reader is not to cast an objective or subjective judgement upon the text, but to *participate* in the movement operative within it – to unfold the *tendencies* of the work – something facilitated by the singularity of the form rendered which allows the reader to “play out their fate”, to have an *encounter* with an idea. It is a reading which reads the sense sensed by the words – a reading guided by the self-knowing of the text that lets them know themselves. The text is readable, in this sense, to the extent that it is a demand of an experience. As Benjamin quotes Novalis, “The true reader must be the extended author...In the course of reading, it is feeling...that decides in turn the crudeness of the culture of the book, and if the reader should adapt the book according to his own idea, then a second reader would refine it still more.”<sup>461</sup> Readability, as such, is the awakening of the text’s *own reflecting* – a setting it into movement again in its tending towards. It is an *intensification* of what the text already *knows about itself*. In this way it is carried-out, brought to knowledge of itself, as the completing motion of the two-fold movement of language. The text that is readable is the text that reads itself.

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>461</sup> Benjamin, “The Concept of Criticism”, 153.

Readability, in this sense, refers not so much to whether a text can or cannot be read, but to a *structure of possibility* contained within it. Rather than an actuality that can be algorithmically measured, the “sense” is something that must be *sensed* by an embodied other down the line – one who can attend to what is *not there*, who can listen to the *tending towards* of an anticipatory sense and one who can *respond* to the text in their *own language* – sketch-out what has been sketched in the draft of the text’s meaning – the otherness of its imparting. This is a reading *what was never written*, for it lies not in what the words *say*, but in the *tension* of their relating, their parting-with each other and in this way *recalling* what the text was *tending towards*, not what it expressly *says*. It is an inhabiting its *way* of saying, its *movement*. Which is perhaps what Merleau-Ponty meant when he said “we could not define a philosopher’s thought solely in terms of what he had achieved; we would have to take account of what until the very end his thought was trying to think.” What is needed is a certain creative or imaginative capacity to attend to what is not directly *said* as such, but gestured towards.

**SKETCHING-OUT: READING ROOM**

A reader is a beginner.  
– Lisa Robertson, “Time in the Codex”

What reader emerges from her study simplified? She has exchanged the propriety of an assigned identity for these charitably promiscuous folds.  
– Lisa Robertson, “Time in the Codex”

Nor need you be troubled to pin me down in my room  
Since the room and I will escape for I tell you flat:  
One cannot live in the same room twice.  
– Louis MacNeice, “Variation on Heraclitus”

## I

You are begun into the stance of beginning – of having to read, to undergo an experience of thinking that is not so much a willing. Lisa Robertson calls it a nilling. The will of not not-willing. Here is an undertaking, a passage, a bearing forth. Here is study as the interminable passion of suffering where you are not – subject to the one beneath you who carries you through; she the namelessness behind your name; she the silence behind your words; she the originary translator of your existence; she the aperture of perception.

You slip into the depth of an unknowing.

You are and are not there – the passage of a hyphenation “suspended between form and perception”,<sup>462</sup> in a generative non-coincidence.

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“reading opens a proposition. It receives in me the rhythm I didn’t know I missed”.<sup>463</sup>

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Reading’s beginning to the darkened white of an opacity; an opening as the words withdraw – a distance articulated – the dissimulated significance that draws her out.

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Reading turning back to set in motion what was never fully there. She a folding, inhabiting a time *within time*; a figural making.

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<sup>462</sup> Robertson, “Time in the Codex”, *Nilling* (Toronto: Bookthug, 2012), 15.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

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“Always for you the present is a wreckage, or it is the part of a science that does not yet exist”.<sup>464</sup>

“the dark demon of an unnamed science whose contours we are only today beginning to glimpse”.<sup>465</sup>

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Robertson (re)cites for reading and its thinking space, Hannah Arendt, for whom thinking is characterised most of all in its hiding countenance of *invisibility*: “to the invisible which manifests itself to thinking there corresponds a human faculty that is not only...invisible so long as it is latent, a mere potentiality, but remains non-manifest in full actuality”.<sup>466</sup>

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Reading, inhabiting the text as retreat and withdrawal – the study where invisibility cloaks and preserves a site of necessary inactivity, in a world ever more defined through the incessant production of marketable output. “The Epicurean *lathe biosas*, ‘live in hiding’, may have been a counsel of prudence; it is also an at least negatively exact description of the *topos*, the locality of the man who thinks; in fact, it is the very opposite of John Adam’s ‘*spectemur agendo*’ (let us be seen in action)”.<sup>467</sup>

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“A large part of attention is patience. Rhythm is maybe composed of an open practice of patience, one that makes a space also for fear”.<sup>468</sup>

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Reading as interruption which is interrupted too by its other side – the place of lastingness where ungraspable, unappropriable encounters are re-collected. “For a while the book splays on my chest as I gaze at the window, rather than through it, reach for my pencil, scrawl some words that are meant to later return me to a site, a temporality I have never quite

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<sup>464</sup> Lisa Robertson, *Cinema of the Present* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2014), 86.

<sup>465</sup> Agamben, “Aby Warburg’s Nameless Science”, *Potentialities*, 90.

<sup>466</sup> Robertson, “Lastingness”, *Nilling*, 22.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>468</sup> Lisa Robertson, “Lifted: An Interview with Lisa Robertson”, interview by Kai Fierle-Hedrick, *Chicago Review*, no. 4 (2006), 54.

experienced. And they won't return me, except to that invisible no-place of the mind I have contrived to inhabit. They return me only to the inconspicuousness I crave".<sup>469</sup>

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Hans Gumbrecht calls it *reading for Stimmung* – what the book lover, the connoisseur, rather than the professional academic “reader”, has been doing all along in their dwelling in the articulated atmosphere; in their losing themselves in the mood of the text. He speaks, of course, of *literature* – the beautiful word that does not know. An experience akin to the one Benjamin recounts to Theodor Adorno in a letter, speaking of the encounter with Louis Aragon's novel *Le Payson de Paris*, as the inspiration for his Arcades project.

I could never read more than two or three pages in bed at night before my heart started to beat so strongly that I had to lay the book aside. What a warning! What an indication of the many years which had to be spent between myself and such a reading.<sup>470</sup>

A study begun by an opening – an eros akin to the force Agamben would later speak to in relation to the shock of *his* collision with the “non-literary” writing of Benjamin.

Agamben relates that when he first read Benjamin in the summer of 1968 ‘it had the most immediate and astonishing effect on me’, to which he added, ‘with no author have I experienced such an uncanny affinity’. In characteristic fashion, Agamben paid tribute to this experience by drawing a parallel to Benjamin's life and works: ‘I seem to have experienced precisely what Benjamin himself did upon first reading Aragon's *Payson de Paris*, where, after a few moments, he was forced to close the book because his heart had begun to beat so fast’.<sup>471</sup>

The *latent* sense which is *encountered*, Gumbrecht says, because it is found not in a systematic search, but is *come across*, in moments of idle searching perhaps, of a happenstantial collecting.

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Gernot Böhme: “The basic function of language is the articulation of presence in space. How could we forget that?”<sup>472</sup> Examining poetry, Böhme presents this presence as *mood*, as

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<sup>469</sup> Robertson, “Lastingness”, 27.

<sup>470</sup> Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, *Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin The Complete Correspondence 1928- 1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz, trans. Nicholas Walker (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 86.

<sup>471</sup> Leland de la Durantaye, *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*, 53.

<sup>472</sup> Gernot Böhme, “The Space of Poetry”, trans. Timothy Chandler and Kate Rigby, *PAN: Philosophy, Activism, Nature*, no.7 (2010), 63.

*atmosphere* – the emotional tonality of felt bodily presence. Böhme reads a poem by Gottfried Benn, “A Shadow on the Wall”

A shadow on the wall  
of branches moved in the midday wind,  
that is enough of the earth  
and with regard to the eyes  
enough partaking  
in the play of the sky.

The hour is midday – a time in-between, the body is at rest, *idle* you might say, which is not doing *nothing*, but perhaps a different economy of doing. The scene is rendered sparsely – an indirect experience of space, “spread out between the wall and the moving branches, and further still the sun which shines on them”.<sup>473</sup> This is the span of earth and sky – the between in which the human being articulates an existence as a metric-less, *participative* space of simultaneous closeness and distance; the space of e-motion, of opening, of perceptibility of attentiveness, of chiasmic synchronisation. It is a poem which bears an uncanny resemblance to Benjamin’s description of aura. “If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch”.<sup>474</sup> Not the direct experience of a something, but an *indirect* experience of something’s shadow, noticeable only in an engaged self-forgetfulness – the “idleness” Benjamin captures in his convolute “m” of *The Arcades Project*, as a sense of being given over to a *charged* inactivity. “‘Empathy’ comes into being through a *décllic*, a kind of gearing action. With it, the inner life derives a pendant to the element of shock in sense perception. (Empathy is a synchronisation, in the intimate sense)”.<sup>475</sup>

In another essay in which he speaks about this *atmosphere* as a fundamental concept for a new aesthetics based not on judgement, but on embodied perception, Böhme seeks out Benjamin’s articulation of aura. The atmosphere is the sense of a work which cannot be reduced to a mere sign, but exists *for itself*.

Aura precedes from them, if the observer lets them and himself be, that is, refrains from an active intervention in the world. And aura is clearly something which flows forth spatially, almost something like a breath or a haze – precisely an atmosphere. Benjamin says one ‘breathes’ the aura. This breathing means that it is absorbed

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<sup>473</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>474</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, *Illuminations*, 216.

<sup>475</sup> Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 804.

bodily, that it enters the bodily economy of tension and expansion, that one allows this atmosphere to permeate the self.<sup>476</sup>

The text as a place of turning breath – reading taking her breath away, as a way of receiving it again.

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“I embrace the line that I am gazing at or the musical movement that I hear. Their desire is reborn in me and for me – or rather, in a withdrawn body that is not ‘me’ but the other ‘self’ in me that harmonises with this motion and emotion”<sup>477</sup> – what thinks itself *in me* – a sense to be sensed.

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“I submit to ink. I go into the elsewhere of chiaroscuro...the technique of the uncanny. I am etched with unknowing as I continue. I have crossed into a material reserve that permits a maximum of intuition, the ‘as if’ of a speculative thinking, which is outside of knowledge”.<sup>478</sup>

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Reading, an abandonment of the claim that the text be immediately intelligible; what is given is, at the same time, refused.

“Let me give a little hint...The point is not to listen to a series of propositions, but rather to follow the movement of showing”.<sup>479</sup>

Reading, a seeking possibility through “the failure of transparency” – the inaccessible as the singular access to what is truly being sought – reading the enigma of her own being, the riddle of her own existence; seeking an access to the “I” by leaving it; being thrown, being begun.

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“The inchoate state I crave dissolves and reshapes itself in the codex; reading feels like a discontinuous yet infinite rhythmic dispersal that generates singularities. It isn’t knowledge

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<sup>476</sup> Gernot Böhme, “Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics”, *Thesis Eleven*, 36 (1993):117.

<sup>477</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, trans. Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 94.

<sup>478</sup> Robertson, “Time in the Codex”, 13.

<sup>479</sup> Martin Heidegger, “Time and Being”, 2.

at all. It's a timely dallying and surge among a cluster of minute identifications. I prefer to become foreign and unknowable to myself in accordance with reading's audacity".<sup>480</sup>

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Reading as a desire not for knowing, but the escape of identity – a plunge into an experience of *possibility*. And perhaps why Robertson and her collaborator, Matthew Stadler, speak of it as “revolution”, in their collection of textual encounters gathered as *Revolution: A Reader* – the title ambiguously playing upon the double sense of a reader as *collection*, and a reader as *collector*. For what they present is not a historic chronology of “Revolution”, but what might be better described as a gesture of *collecting*, where the texts presented speak to “Revolution” only in an *analogical* fashion, according to the criteria of similarity, as those whose *readability* they have encountered and were transformed by. The “revolution” is situated, in this way, not so much as a concept but as a structure of *possibility*, and an engagement in the *limits* of one's being – the bodying-forth of a sense from within an ecology of care.

Our choice of texts answered our desire to be faithful to our existing histories as readers, rather than any need to become historians of a category. So this book doesn't represent revolution as a general concept, but it follows the specific revolutions we have experienced in our conversations with one another, in our friendships and communities, and with the writers we love. Every one of these texts is in this book because we have been moved by it, emotionally, intellectually, and bodily. And it was our need to bring revolution home into our bodies, to experience the radical potential of our limit, our human embodiment, that energised our work. The risk of embodiment is what these texts have in common too. We think that there is no public space that is not an embodied public space. We think that there is not a politics that does not begin in our desiring cells. We think that this corporal surplus, the movement beyond our biographies and our perceived or administrated limits, is the force that makes and changes worlds.<sup>481</sup>

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Reading, the strange sense upon encountering *that* philosophical text, *that* poem, *that* dense essay, not, as might be thought, as the garnering sense of intelligence, but rather more the scattering sense of *stupidity* – the stupor of an engagement that does not give information, reasons, theses, but gifts her back to the place she currently stands – *there* – the text's announcement coming as a break, an encounter, an interruption in the otherwise ordinarily ordinary – an articulated shock that remains unarticulable; expressed but inexplicable. A recombination of an ecology of care – the same furniture but rearranged.

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<sup>480</sup> Robertson, “Time in the Codex”, 13.

<sup>481</sup> Robertson and Matthew Stadler, *Revolution: A Reader* (Portland: Publication Studio, 2012), iv.

Reading books or even writing them brings no relief. If I have to explain why I find one book rigorous and another shallow, I can only point to the frequency of passages that bring forth a disconnection in the head, passages that draw my thoughts straight to places where no words can survive. The more frequently these passages occur in the text, the more rigorous the book; the sparser they are, the shallower the text. For me the criterion of a text's quality has always been: does it bring about a silent disconnection in the head. Every good sentence flows to a place in the head where what it triggers speaks in something other than words. And when I say books have changed me, that's why. Although the contrary is often stated in this respect, there is no difference between poetry and prose.<sup>482</sup>

Müller speaks of this as a *paradigmatic* understanding – a sense *presenting* itself in a giving that distances itself from itself, includes a spacing, a gap, an *opening*: “In Vona's sentences the disconnection is provoked by the lapidary style, what is stated becomes estranged from itself, it expands into a paradigm, and I don't know how or by what means. From the sentence's appearance you don't believe it capable of triggering what happens in your head”.<sup>483</sup> Each of the authors she quotes “achieve the same thing in my head in completely different ways: they bind me to their sentences and astound me to the extent that I stand outside myself again and must bring those sentences to bear on my own life”.<sup>484</sup> Reading as rupture – the breaking open of being cast, being *thrown* – instituted into a strange *questionability* – being reminded of this *openness* of which you are comprised, this inherent *groundlessness*. The text offers a *reawakening* to the strangeness in which you already reside, where you are *nothing* but the disclosure of this *there* – the opening of the *room* within which the *facticity* of the world occurs in its enigmatic suchness.

The task is akin, as Müller details in her description of writing *from within*, to holding a silence in what is said. “From the outside perhaps writing resembles talking. From the inside it's a matter of being alone. Written sentences are to lived facts what silence is to speaking. When I put lived experience into sentences a ghostly move begins. The guts of facts are packed into words, they learn to walk and move house to a place as yet unknown”.<sup>485</sup> In the transpositioning of lived experience into words what is captured is done so in the tacit *gaps* between what is *said* as such; the *truth* of what occurred rendered only in a *tensional* articulation; an architectonics of resonance.

Lived experience doesn't give a damn about writing, is incompatible with words. Real experience can never be captured one to one by words. In order to describe it, it must be cut out to suit the words and entirely reinvented. To enlarge, diminish,

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<sup>482</sup> Herta Müller, “In Every Language There Are Other Eyes”, *Christina and Her Double*, trans. Geoffrey Mulligan (London: Portobello Books, 2013), 29.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>485</sup> Herta Müller, “When We Don't Speak we Become Unbearable”, *Christina and Her Double*, 172.

simplify, complicate, include, omit – a tactic that has its own paths and that uses lived experience merely as a pretext. While writing, one drags lived experience into another field. One tests which word is capable of what. It's no longer day or night, village or city. Noun and verb are now in control, main clause and subordinate clause, beat and sound, line and rhythm. What really happened persists as a side issue, through words one gives it one shock after another. When it no longer recognises itself, it's back in the middle. To write about it one has to demolish the grandiosity of lived experience, leave that real street and turn into an invented one, for only the invented one can resemble the real one again.<sup>486</sup>

It is only by becoming *similar* that a relation to the lived experience is established. Rather than a language which attempts to correspond with “reality” through a documentative detailing of it, attempting to render it the “same”, it is only in being described in a singularised language that it *resembles* the “real”; in a disclosure that retains an unconcealment; in a chiasm of reality and fiction.

Writing always seems to me a tightrope walk between revealing and keeping secret. But it changes step between the two. While revealing something the real bends into the invented, and with that which is invented the real shines through, precisely because it's not formulated. Half the effect of the sentence upon reading is not formulated. This unformulated half makes the disconnection in the head possible, gives rise to the poetic shock, which we can call thinking without words. Or perhaps: feeling.<sup>487</sup>

Müller's description serves to highlight a relation of writing to the world which does not seek to represent it, does not give a present at hand *content* to be consumed, but is a sense that is meaningful only in an *encounter*, in a chiasmatic meeting, in a *passage across* – the bearing of these sentences onto her own life. It is a sense that occurs only *in movement*, in the *transitional* sense of the parting of the text with itself. The crux, perhaps, of an *etho-poetic* thinking where understanding is an *ontological* event – you are *changed, transformed, othered* to yourself. In the text's articulation the world taken for granted as *that* which is given, is questioned through its opening-up of another world that is seen *as such* – a fictitious making. What characterises this truth is its *difference* from “reality”, which is nothing less than the taken for granted – the imperceptible *there* we are inhabiting. Such is an uncanniness that is not the strange but the very ordinary itself *awoken to* itself in the sense that *this is happening*. Here is the *implicit* familiarity shaken up and encountered in the character of the unfamiliar, instituted once more into being a begun beginner – one whose existence is not yet decided, whose being is open in *possibility*.

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid., 173.

Reading not taking up occupancy of a text as what is simply “there”, but as what *is* in its being *inhabited* for a while, at a particular time; a text not fully formed as such, but a form in-formation; a sketching-out; a sense that occurs in *making-room*, that is, in what “is” only as a *being-there*, what must be *participated* in, must be *experienced* – the danger, (perium), being that this flight might destroy you completely, question your whole abode, your *ethos*, your way of living. Reading as a *bodying-forth* of what is articulated – of a thinking that occurs only in conjuncture with a *not-thinking*, with a *being-grasped* in a *Stimmung*. The text not as a present at hand sense, but a sense which is only ever *tending towards* itself, caught in the disclosure of a tensional *here-there*; an *I-you*; a *writer-reader*.

Whilst Müller speaks of literature, her emphasis that this *gap* of a *not-thinking* space is what both prose and poetry share could also serve in any attempt to dismantle a similar binary between philosophy and literature.

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“The others’ words make me speak and think because they create within me an other than myself, a divergence (*écart*) by relation to...what I see, and thus designate it to me myself. The other’s words form a grillwork through which I see my thought. Did I have it before this conversation? Yes, as a unique fundamental tone...not as *thoughts*, significations or statements”.<sup>488</sup>

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The shock of which Müller speaks must be a shock as much for the *writer* as for the *reader* – a surprise occurring within the happening of the writing – the unexpected slot of another word where the more familiar would have otherwise occurred; the comma where a full stop was anticipated; the parataxis of a paragraph break, illuminates, in a flash, a sense of the *whole* of the text’s coherence – only to all too suddenly flit on again. Here is a writing which is a gathering, a gesture, in that it cannot simply be an articulation from a knowing “I”, from an author’s will, but is a writing infused with moments where there is a *gifted* saying – a sudden *dictation*.

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<sup>488</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 224.

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Reading, she perceives not simply something, but perceives *that* she perceives; hears *that* she hears; experiences experience. Reading as *this is happening* – the text the enigmatic *that* it exists, drawing attention to its very *facticity* – *that-it-is-and-has-to-be*.

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The *claim* of reading akin to the encounters of friendship and love – those we do not so much choose, as what *happen* to us – the divergences and differences which recombine our ecologies of care.

for me, the topos of reading is necessarily inconspicuous, and if there can be any collectivist model of that inconspicuousness, I think that the complicities, erotics and discontinuities of friendship could suggest its shape. There is a dissidence in friendship, a necessary one. It happens often outside of, or in spite of, communities. Two people face one another; between themselves they project a world, which they then populate with gestures of care, mutual pleasure, conflict, futurity and sometimes failure. Or one friend dies. The specific agency of this space between two is an immodest one – it remains mostly unavailable to a community. This site is *for* the particularity of the other whom one faces – ‘because it was him; because it was me’, as Montaigne said of his passionate friendship with la Boetie...I have a strong sense that reading chooses me, as have my friendships.<sup>489</sup>

Robertson gestures here to the origins of essaying in the epistle form – the passionate letter conversations between de Montaigne and la Boetie, interrupted by la Boetie’s death, and yet somehow continued in the creation of another kind of letter form. The continuity might be understood as the inclusivity in both letter writing and essaying, of a *dedication* – a giving and bestowal to another down the line. The letters now written, though not sealed in an envelope, are nonetheless still an *address* to another – to a living being who can dispute, reject, acclaim, accede, renounce, joke, conjecture, sympathise, offer advice. The erotic zone of friendship now transposed onto the sphere opened between text and reader.

All letter writers, as Virginia Woolf tendered, “instinctively draw a sketch of the person to whom the letter is addressed...without someone warm and breathing on the other side of the page, letters are worthless”.<sup>490</sup>

In her reflection on this note by Woolf, Jan Zwicky, in an essay (re)reading Plato’s *Phaidros*, understands Woolf’s comment as a testament to the link between eros and thinking, eros and writing, established through its being an *address*:

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<sup>489</sup> Robertson, “Lastingness”, 23-24.

<sup>490</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (London: Hogarth, [1938] 1986), 5.

What, then, does it mean to say that a piece of writing is *alive* only insofar as it is an address? It means that living writing proceeds from *persons* and that, in its imaginative gestures, it establishes other *persons* for whom its questions are a concern. There must be something about which the writer genuinely cares – enough that it prompts speech; and the writer must then conceive the addressee as a being with genuine interests and intelligence, capable of walking away if the discussion is boring. Or, to put this another way: it is impossible to conceive writing as alive – as what I have been calling a gesture of address – without conceiving it to be driven by *eros*. Perhaps all good writing, good conversation, is in this sense philosophical.<sup>491</sup>

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In the prefatory text, “Dedication”, of his collection of aphoristic fragments, *Minima Moralia*, Theodor Adorno inscribes their gathering as owed to the “true field of philosophy” which has been covered over in its lapsing into method – that is, the “teaching of the good life”<sup>492</sup> – what stems only from “subjective experience” and from an ecology of care, as noted in his bestowal of the book to the one with whom he had remained in dialogue with, despite their forced separation.

The immediate occasion for writing this book was Max Horkheimer’s fiftieth birthday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945. The composition took place in a phase when, bowing to outward circumstances, we had to interrupt our work together. This book wishes to demonstrate gratitude and loyalty by refusing to acknowledge the interruption. It bears witness to a *dialogue interieur*: there is not a motif in it that does not belong as much to Horkheimer as to him who found the time to formulate it. The specific approach of *Minima Moralia*, the attempt to present aspects of our shared philosophy from the standpoint of subjective experience, necessitates that the parts do not altogether satisfy the demands of the philosophy of which they are nevertheless a part. The disconnected and non-binding character of the form, the renunciation of explicit theoretical cohesion, are meant as one expression of this. At the same time this ascesis should atone in some part for the injustice whereby one alone continued to perform the task that can only be accomplished by both, and that we do not forsake.<sup>493</sup>

In the thrownness of exile, Adorno’s writing is one carried out only by remaining turned towards, in conversation with his collaborator in thinking, on the “subjective experience” of being only by being in relation. This is a writing characterised not by theoretical cohesion but by its *parting-with* itself.

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<sup>491</sup> Jan Zwicky, “Plato’s Phaidros”, *Alkibiades’ Love: Essays in Philosophy* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 79.

<sup>492</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso Books Ltd, 2005), 15.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

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Robertson diverges again into the idea of friendship in an aside of an essay “Dispatch from Jouhet”, to counter to the notion of a “community” of writers.

When I try to think of what a friend is, I imagine these activities we pleurably share with someone we love—grooming, reading, sleeping, sex perhaps but not necessarily, intellectual argument, the exchange of books, garments and kitchen implements, all these exchanges and interweavings that slowly transform to become an idea and then a culture. Or a culture first, a culture of friends, and then an idea. Or both simultaneously. Writing is an extension and expression of friendship. Maybe friendship is more dangerous to think about and talk about because of its corporal erotics, mostly not institutionalized, not abstracted into an overarching concept and structure of collective protocols. For me, the drive to talk, to be in a room with someone I want to laugh or dance or fight with, to feed, all of those things—this has more to do with how writing happens for me, and also how I receive others’ writing, than community does. I think my friends have become models and incentives for my relationships with books and writing...I don’t want to call this community. I want to preserve the dark body of friendship.<sup>494</sup>

What marks the space is the *preservation* of the singularity of the other, the friend is *for* the other in their *inappropriability*, their bodily limit. What it is predicated on is not an homogeneous identity, but an ecology of care, an internal relation of being-with the other, of being in attunement with them and open to being passionately altered. Friendship preserves, in this sense, an analogical being-with, a relationality based on identity-in-difference, difference-in-identity.

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In an occasional seminar, Agamben comes to speak of friendship and philosophy as co-constitutive neighbours, where friendship “is so closely linked to the very definition of philosophy that one can say that without it, philosophy would not in fact be possible”;<sup>495</sup> philosophy holding within its very name the *philos*, the friend. The risk in attempting to understand this link is that which abides with all such close proximities – of not being able to get at it for its closeness. Something perhaps which happened in Agamben’s first failed attempt to understand friendship, when he and his friend, Jean-Luc Nancy, decided to converse on the subject of friendship through the exchange of letters. “We were convinced that this was the best way of approaching and almost ‘staging’ a problem which seemed otherwise to elude analytical treatment. I wrote the first letter and waited...This is not the

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<sup>494</sup> Lisa Robertson, “Dispatch from Jouhet”, *Poetry Foundation*, <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2009/11/lisa-robertson-dispatch-from-jouhet/>

<sup>495</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Friendship”, *Contretemps* 5, (2004): 1. [www.sydney.edu.au/contretemps/5december2004/agamben.pdf](http://www.sydney.edu.au/contretemps/5december2004/agamben.pdf)

place to try to understand the reasons...that caused the arrival of Jean-Luc's letter to signify the end of the project. But it is certain that our friendship – which according to our plans, should have given us privileged access to the problem – was instead an obstacle for us and was consequently, in a way, at least temporarily obscured". Friendship is shown not as a discernible "thing", a something to be conceptualised or made a property of, but belongs more to the openness of *being-with*, to the *facticity* of *being-there*, where the friend is perceived in the open enigma of their very existence – *that* they are, rather than are not, the perception *that* they exist, as articulated in the quote Agamben comes to dwell on in this essay, from Aristotle:

And if the one who sees perceives (*aisthanetai*) that he sees, the one who hears perceives that he hears, the one who walks perceives that he walks, and similarly in the other cases there is something that perceives that we are in activity (*oti energoumen*), so that if we perceive, it perceives that we perceive, and if we think it perceives that we think; and if perceiving that we perceive or think is perceiving that we exist (for we said, existing [*to einai*] is perceiving or thinking); and if perceiving that one is alive is pleasant (*edeon*) in itself (for being alive is something naturally good, and perceiving what is good as being there in oneself is pleasant); and if being alive is desirable, and especially so for the good, because for them existing is good, and pleasant (for concurrent perception [*synaisthanomenoi*] of what is in itself good, in themselves, gives them pleasure); and if, as the good person is to himself, so he is to his friend (since the friend is another self [*hereros autos*]) then just as for each his own existence (*to auton einai*) is desirable, so his friend's is too, or to a similar degree. But as we saw, the good man's existence is desirable because of his perceiving himself, that self being good; and such perceiving is pleasant in itself. In that case, he needs to be concurrently perceiving his friend – that he exists, too – and this will come about in their living together, conversing and sharing (*koinonein*) their talk and thoughts; for this is what would seem to be meant by 'living together' where human beings are concerned, not feeding in the same location as with grazing animal.<sup>496</sup>

The attempted speaking *about* friendship in the letter writing perhaps concealed the very *facticity* of its taking-place *as* the letter writing itself through the *address* to another. Friendship occurs in the space between a face turned to another face in their singular inappropriability – *that* they are, where perception of one's own existence is *concurrent* with perception of the existence of the friend. The friend, in this sense, is the always already *being-singular-plural* of *being-with* – the ontological structure of being already not pure self, but a being who exists only in the *xenos* of *coexistence*. Here is the *voice of the friend*, as Heidegger would put it, where "existing itself is divided, it is non-identical to itself: the I and the friend are the two faces – or the two poles – of this con-division".<sup>497</sup> It is in this sense that the heart of friendship is a "de-subjectivisation", where the friend is "not another I, but an

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>497</sup> Ibid., 6.

otherness immanent in self-ness, a becoming other of the self". In perceiving the suchness of my own life, I am concurrently aware of a perception that "dislocates it and deports it towards the friend". The political dimension of friendship is that it is a continues *showing* of this *being-with* which is our ontological make-up, our existing only as *coexisting*. Friendship is the sharing of what Nancy calls our *partage* – the reality of a *hyphenated* existence, an identity-in-difference, which *is* only its taking-place, its sheer facticity. The community of friendship in this sense, is not, as Robertson is afraid of, a subsumption under a common identity, the "sharing" of a fixed nomenclature, but the "sharing" of singularity, of the being-in-relation itself, rather than its objectification; a cohabitation "not defined by participating in a common substance but by a purely existential con-division and, so to speak, one without an object: friendship, as concurrent perception of the pure fact of existence";<sup>498</sup> a scene where you are both seer and seen.

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"Something can change. The dispersed rhythm of a wandering – musical and conceptual – is what its folds conduct. Rhythm is a figured, embodied improvisation, not a measure".<sup>499</sup>

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What is this silence: the silence that intervenes in reading, in the more or less (un)trustworthy and quantified *speed* of the reading voice? This interim, this punctuation of reading by a silence (the silence, perhaps, of a pause for breath in the headlong rush to complete the reading) is nothing less than the 'now time' of which Benjamin wrote, and which Agamben finds in the Aristotelian understanding of *pleasure*. Another name for this pleasure is *reading itself*, a reading which cannot be quantified in terms of abstract divisions of poetry which Augustine rejects and which constitutes a gap, a breath, a suspense, a halting of the speed of the representation of the poem by the reading voice. This silence is the interim or the gap between theatrical performances, between the instant which announces the imminent arrival of *truth* and the institution of a *process* conceived in terms of its completing or fulfilling final instance. The name I will give, in conclusion, to this silent *now* that intervenes, for Augustine as for Agamben, is *criticism*.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>498</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>499</sup> Robertson, "Time in the Codex", 15.

<sup>500</sup> Brian Dillon, "The Carcass of Time", *OLR* 19, no. 1-2 (1997), 145.

## II

Like all authentic quests, the quest of criticism consists not in discovering its object but in assuring the conditions of its inaccessibility  
– Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*

If a thinker could be said to have a haunt as such, a space where they tend to reside, Agamben's would be Benjamin's scene of (re)collecting, that is, not a pre-established definite spot, but an inhabiting the threshold and passage of its occurrence, where each text becomes not so much the expression of an idea, as the staging of its taking-place, a scene of writing, which cannot be definitively named, but only gathered as an on-going collection of heteronyms; experimentum linguae; gesture; middle; idea of prose; stanza; preface; study; whatever being. It is to this scene which Agamben perhaps gestures to at the beginning of his collection *Idea of Prose*, in a text whose title refers both to its subject matter and to its very taking-place – "Threshold" – an opening text which opens onto opening itself.

In a mode that repeats itself throughout this gathered collection, Agamben begins by taking a figure and an instance from history and sets about telling us its story. Dates are given, places, names, but the veracity of its narrative adheres not to the objective historian's recounting, but more to Benjamin's idea of the storyteller, with whom stories are re-told not for the dissemination of information or report, which must surrender and explain themselves to the moment completely, "without losing any time",<sup>501</sup> but in order for them to *live on*, by *imparting* them, allowing them to retain their vitality by becoming something else, joining up with a storyteller's life through which it is re-experienced and the capacity of the story not exhausted, but preserved, in the binding of their trace in the narrative, like "the handprints of the potter" clinging "to the clay vessel".<sup>502</sup>

Damascius is the first such figure, and the story told is of his last philosophical pursuit in exile, in which he attempts to take thinking back to the opening, to the origin from which anything is to be thought, devoting the last years of his life to the writing of a work entitled "*Aporias and Solutions Concerning First Principles*".<sup>503</sup> It is a pursuit as difficult and weary, as Agamben compares, to the thinking of first principles Plato had warned was "the root of all evil", which he nonetheless also ascribed as the only possible path to the naissance of truth in the soul of the seeker, given that "the suffering that the question caused in the soul was like birth-pangs".<sup>504</sup> Damascius helplessly admits this struggle and the impossibility of

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<sup>501</sup> Benjamin, "The Storyteller", *Illuminations*, 90.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>503</sup> Agamben, "Threshold", *Idea of Prose*, 31.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

the task at hand: “all that can be said in praise of my exposition is this: that it condemns itself through its recognition of its inability to see clearly, and its impotence to look at the light”.<sup>505</sup> His work is interrupted constantly by the doubt and uncertainty of this not-knowing, this inability and impotence, and yet he goes on, until the next inevitable crisis, for, as Agamben moots, “how can thought pose the question about the beginning of thought? Or in other words, how can one comprehend the incomprehensible”.<sup>506</sup>

The response comes for Damascius not in the form of an answer, or in a relief from the questionability in which he dwells, but in a moment of revelation which could be said to be only the disclosure of disclosure itself. Hence we are taken by Agamben to the scene of Damascius’ thinking, to his study, wherein one night

the image suddenly sprang to mind that would guide him – so he thought – through to the conclusion of his work. It was not, however, an image, but something like the perfectly empty space in which only image, breath, or word might eventually take place. Or, rather, it was not even a space, but the site of a place, as it were, a surface, an area, absolutely smooth and flat, on which no point could be distinguished from another. He thought of the white stone yard of the farm where he had been born, at the gates of Damascus, where the peasants threshed the wheat in the evenings to separate the grain and chaff. Wasn’t what he was searching for exactly like the threshing floor, itself unthinkable and unspeakable, where the winnowing fans of thought and language separated the grain and chaff of everything?<sup>507</sup>

The image interrupts Damascius and “For an instant”, he lifts his hand away and gazes at the tablet upon which he had been writing and remembers, suddenly, the “passage in the book on the soul in which the philosopher compared the potentiality of the intellect to a tablet on which nothing is written”,<sup>508</sup> prompting the dawning realisation that it was

this that he had been so futilely trying to grasp day after day, it was this that he had unceasingly pursued by the light of the brief flash of the unglimpsable, blinding halo. The uttermost limit thought can reach is not a being, not a place or thing, no matter how free of any quality, but rather, its own absolute potentiality, the pure potentiality of representation itself: the writing tablet! What he had until then been taking as the One, as the absolutely Other of thought, was instead only the material, only the potentiality of thought. And the entire, lengthy volume the hand of the scribe had crammed with characters was nothing other than the attempt to represent the perfectly bare writing tablet on which nothing had yet been written. This was why he was unable to carry his work through to completion: what could not cease from writing itself was the image of what never ceased from not writing itself. In the one was mirrored the ungraspable other. But everything was finally clear: now he could break the tablet, stop writing. Or rather, now he could truly begin... That

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<sup>505</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>507</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid., 34.

which can never be first let him glimpse, in its fading, the glimmer of a beginning”.<sup>509</sup>

In the momentary suspension of not-writing, Damascius is confronted with the pure potentiality of thought that he had been pursuing and which had concealed itself in its dissimulating proximity, its closeness at hand. In a flash, the task is revealed in its impossible possibility. The limit he was in pursuit of existed not elsewhere, was not an absolute *other* of thought, but that which gives thought to itself – a radical, inappropriable passivity. What he had been seeking was not something that could be sought, but the opening of seeking itself – what “withdraws from every composition of name or discourse”, along with any distinctions between the “knowable and the knower”.<sup>510</sup> What the flash reveals is that the greatest potential of thought, of writing, is what *cannot be written*, not because it cannot be reached, but because it is the very opening of any reaching, the very blank page of any *threshold* of writing.

Whilst Agamben is speaking here of a philosopher who lived in 529 A.D., he is, at the same time, it might be conjectured, speaking only about *himself*. For what is his own project of thinking if not this attempt to seek an understanding of possibility itself? To think thinking itself? To write what never stops from *not writing* itself? Indeed, as much is admitted by Agamben himself in at least two instances in his work where he gestures to this scene as the site of his own questionability:

Following Wittgenstein’s suggestion, according to which philosophical problems become clearer if they are formulated as questions concerning the meaning of words, I could state the subject of my work as an attempt to understand the meaning of the verb ‘can’ [*potere*]. What do I mean when I say: I can, I cannot?<sup>511</sup>

If for every author there exists a question which defines the *motivum* of his thought, then the precise scope of these questions coincides with the terrain towards which all my work is orientated. In both my written and unwritten books, I have stubbornly pursued only one train of thought: what is the meaning of ‘there is language’; what is the meaning of ‘I speak’?<sup>512</sup>

For the inappropriable beginning which occupies Agamben’s thinking, and to which it seems he always attempts to return, is the having been begun of language itself – the presupposition inherent in any use of language *that* there is language, rather than not a word at all; the “pure

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<sup>509</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>511</sup> Agamben, “On Potentiality”, *Potentialities*, 177.

<sup>512</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Preface”, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (London: Verso, 1993), 5.

fact” that one speaks, the possibility of speaking, rather than this or that signifying proposition.

An example of an instance when this “I can” was uttered lies at the beginning of his ruminations in his essay “On Potentiality”:

For everyone a moment comes in which she or he must utter this ‘I can’, which does not refer to any certainty or specific capacity but is, nevertheless, absolutely demanding. Beyond all faculties, this ‘I can’ does not mean anything – yet it marks what is, for each of us, perhaps the hardest and bitterest experience possible: the experience of potentiality.<sup>513</sup>

This poignant paragraph comes after Agamben has just recounted how the poet Anna Akhmatova came to write the poems gathered in her collection *Requiem*. In the queues outside the prison of 1930’s Leningrad, whilst trying to hear news of whether her son had been arrested, for months Akhmatova stood in line, where one day she was asked by another woman who recognised her, “Can you speak of this?” Akhmatova, as Agamben tells it, “was silent for a moment and then, without knowing how or why, found an answer to the question: ‘Yes’, she said, ‘I can’”.<sup>514</sup> What she meant by this, as Agamben reads it, is not that she was such a technically capable writer, but that she was willing to undergo an *experience of potentiality* – what is, as with Damascius, *the hardest and bitterest experience possible*.

It is in Aristotle’s ruminations on potentiality that this link is made for Agamben,<sup>515</sup> where he thinks with him what it means to have a *faculty*, to have the capacity to see, to speak, to think, if the nature of them implies that something “is or is not ‘in one’s power’”.<sup>516</sup> What Agamben comes to understand from this is that potentiality, rather than being an absence which can become present, what is not but which may be, is instead, the “*existence of non-Being*, the presence of an absence”.<sup>517</sup> Rather than that which is outstanding, yet to be actualised, the “pure” potentiality Agamben comes to understand is the *coexistence* of potentiality and *impotentiality*. Rather than a not-yet possibility that passes into actualisation, what is at stake is “a presence and a face of potentiality”.<sup>518</sup> Potentiality is the strange opening at the centre of our lives which we never ourselves catch a glimpse of – the concealed blind spot at the core of our perception, the darkness which accompanies all light and which allows us to experience not only light, but the absence of it. If the faculty of sight

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<sup>513</sup> Agamben, “On Potentiality”, *Potentialities*, 178.

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

<sup>515</sup> This reference to Aristotle is one which comes through his encounter with Heidegger, as he gestures to in his essay “The Passion of Facticity”, *Potentialities*, 185.

<sup>516</sup> Agamben, “On Potentiality”, 178.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

was only that of the potentiality for vision, if it existed only in the seeing of light, then “we could never experience darkness (or hear silence, in the case of the potentiality to hear). But human beings can, instead, see shadows, they can experience darkness: they have the *potential* not to see”.<sup>519</sup> The faculties of the human being, in this way, are *constituted* by their relation to their own lack, and so, the capacity to think *is* only in relation to a *not-thinking*; a knowing, only in relation to *not-knowing*; speaking, only in relation to a *not-speaking*.

As Agamben continues to read Aristotle, he strikes upon two statements which make even more explicit this relation of potentiality and impotentiality: “Impotentiality [adynamia]...is a privation contrary to potentiality. Thus all potentiality is impotentiality”.<sup>520</sup> And, “What is potential [*dynatos*] is capable [*endekhetai*] of not being in actuality. What is potential can both be and not be, for the same is potential to be and to not be”.<sup>521</sup> What defines potentiality in this sense is both the capability [*endekhetai*] to be *and* not to be. *Dekhomai*, as Agamben notes, means “I welcome, receive, admit”.<sup>522</sup> Potentiality, in its pure sense, becomes the *welcoming*, the *receiving*, the *hosting*, of non-Being – “fundamental passivity” – which is not the hosting of something other than itself, but the hosting of its own otherness – a “passive potentiality” that does not undergo “something other than itself”, but “undergoes and suffers its own non-Being”.<sup>523</sup> What potentiality is contingent upon is a *xenos* coexistence of being and *non-being*.

The question becomes, “what is the actuality of the potentiality to not-think?”<sup>524</sup> What is at stake is a potentiality in which there would be, as Aristotle puts it, “nothing impotential”,<sup>525</sup> which is not the irradiation of impotentiality in the moment of actuality, as Agamben highlights it has been traditionally read, but the *potentiality to not-be* which belongs to all potentiality passing into actuality. “This does not mean that it disappears in actuality; on the contrary, it *preserves itself* as such in actuality”.<sup>526</sup> Agamben concludes his essay with an extract from Aristotle which proposes that “to suffer is not a simple term”:

In one sense it is a certain destruction through the opposite principle, and in another sense the preservation [*soteria*, salvation] of what is in potentiality by what is in actuality and what is similar to it...For he who possess science [in potentiality] becomes someone who contemplates in actuality, and either this is not an alteration

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 183.

– since here there is the gift of the self to itself and to actuality [*epidosis eis auto*] – or this is an alteration of a different kind.<sup>527</sup>

What is revealed to Damascius in the momentary flash of insight is the radical *impotentiality* of the potentiality of thought – what cannot be thought as such, but is the not-thinking which allows and preserves thinking. The attempt to think the threshold of thought is the undergoing of this *impotentiality*, this *non-being*, this *thrownness* of one's being. What he comes to understand in his grappling with the incomprehensible is the “sense of the maxim stating that by knowing the unknowable it is not something about it we know, but something about ourselves”.<sup>528</sup> Standing in the concealment of the opening of thought, experiencing his own incapacity, Damascius *suffers* and *undergoes* a hosting not of something other, but his own non-Being – a giving of himself to himself. The inquiry, after all it seems, is a seeking his *own self* through the radical depropriative and desubjectivising *experience of potentiality* – being cast into hosting his own otherness, his being a stranger to himself – the hardest and bitterest experience possible. The task it seems, for writing, is to welcome and host a *not-writing*, a *not-saying* within what is said – for the blank tablet to, as Agamben puts it in another sketch, *write its own passivity*:

Thanks to this potential to not-think, thought can turn back to itself (to its pure potentiality) and be, at its apex, the thought of thought. What it thinks here, however, is not an object, a being-in-act, but that layer of wax, that *rasum tabulae* that is nothing but its own passivity, its own pure potentiality (to not-think): In the potentiality that thinks itself, action and passion coincide and the writing tablet writes by itself, or, rather, writes its own passivity.<sup>529</sup>

The facticity of speaking is the very blank tablet Damascius is confronted with – an *unsayability* which does not lie *outside* language, but is its very *possibility*, is its opening, its revelatory capacity; the radical passivity of its impotentiality.

the un-said, are in fact categories which belong exclusively to human language; far from indicating a limit of language, they express its invincible power of presupposition, the unsayable being precisely what language must presuppose in order to signify... The singularity which language must signify is not something ineffable but something superlatively sayable: the *thing* of language.<sup>530</sup>

The unsayable facticity of language, whilst not utterable *through* language, is, nevertheless, what is always spoken *in* language as its *immediate communicability*, to speak with Benjamin, its *opening*, its *threshold* – the blank tablet which does not say *something*, but

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 184.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 34.

<sup>529</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 1993), 36-37.

<sup>530</sup> Agamben, “Preface”, *Infancy and History*, 4.

which allows for all saying to occur – the *revelatory capacity* of language which cannot reveal itself. “The meaning of the revelation is that human beings can reveal beings through language but cannot reveal language itself... humans see the world through language but do not see language”.<sup>531</sup>

What Agamben’s opening text of *Idea of Prose* opens onto is not the clarity of a prefatory statement of what the book will be “about”, but a *demonstration* of the opening onto an opacity which he attempts in each “idea” of the sketched essays in the collection. The task, it seems, as Agamben here shows, is to *inhabit* this facticity of language, where writing becomes not the ordinary presupposition of such communicability, but, as Daniel Heller-Roazen puts it, its “*exposition*”.<sup>532</sup> The task, as Agamben sees it, is to “bring language itself to language”,<sup>533</sup> that is, to experience “not some language content or some true proposition, but the fact itself of speaking”.<sup>534</sup> In this sense, what is presented is not a proposition *about* something, but a writing that “does not have any objective content”,<sup>535</sup> and refers only to an *event of language* – to its *taking-place*, “to the *factum loquendi*”.<sup>536</sup> Rather than supposing an object to be known and one who can know it in advance of the text’s writing, there is only the revealing-concealing *situation* of writing. The *intelligibility*, how something is able to be known, is not taken for granted or presupposed, but *inhabited*.

Agamben ends the sketch of the title of the collection, “Idea of Prose”, evoking Plato, who “rejected the transmitted forms of writing, and fixed his gaze on that idea of language which, according to the testimony of Aristotle, was for him neither poetry nor prose, but their middle term”.<sup>537</sup> Alexander Duttmann, in his introduction to the collection, shifts the translation of Agamben’s “*Ne poesia ne prosa, ma il loro medio*”,<sup>538</sup> from the translator’s rendering of *medio* as “middle term”, to *milieu/midst* in order to highlight how this *medio* is not a “term placed in between” poetry and prose, nor is it an amalgam of an element of poetry and an element of philosophy, but the original shared between of language itself in its *communicability*, its *impartability*. Rather than a static *term* of a medium to be occupied, this *medio* is the *immediate mediality* of language as the opening, each time, of the dynamic milieu of its taking-place. The *idea of prose*, in this sense, is a writing which attempts to

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<sup>531</sup> Agamben, “The Idea of Language”, *Potentialities*, 40.

<sup>532</sup> Agamben, “Introduction”, *Potentialities*, 5.

<sup>533</sup> Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 85.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>536</sup> Agamben, “Linguistics and Philosophy”, *Potentialities*, 66.

<sup>537</sup> Agamben, “Idea of Prose”, *Idea of Prose*, 41.

<sup>538</sup> Agamben, “Introduction”, *Idea of Prose*, 3.

inhabit this *passage* as what gives rise to a scene of writing – both the event and the place where the event occurs. What Agamben stages in the opening of his book is the opening itself – the inherent *theatricality* of a writing that cannot be divorced from its mediality – each text operating not on a ground laid out in advance, but as the *staging* of its own scene of making. “*The task of philosophical presentation is to come with speech to help speech, so that, in speech, speech itself does not remain presupposed but instead comes to speech*”.<sup>539</sup> The task of *il loro medio* is to inhabit language in its *taking-place*, its *coming to be placed*. The task of thinking, as performed in the opening to *Idea of Prose*, is not to presuppose the opening, but to *show* its taking-place. Here there is not an *object* to be known by a *subject*, but the revealing-concealing of something from within a *scene of writing* from which writer-reader are not divorced but are implicated in – must *suffer* in undergoing an experience of potentiality, like Damascius and his scene of study where he does not know.

In such a way, the question of *form* cannot simply be the concern of a literary adventure of writing, but philosophy itself becomes a *language of inquiry*: “To restore the thing itself to its place in language and, at the same time, to restore the difficulty of writing, the place of writing in the poetic task of composition: this is the task of the coming philosophy”.<sup>540</sup> In inhabiting the *communicability* of language, the taken for granted barrier between philosophy and poetry ceases to operate, and is instead occupied as the *il loro medio* of what they share. The point at which a dichotomy of form versus content, a word that is beautiful and a word that knows, breaks down is in a writing that attempts to *show* its own communicability, its own intelligibility, inhabiting the (im)potentiality of language – what Agamben comes to proffer as the *gesture* of writing – “*the exhibition of a mediality...the process of making a means visible as such*”.<sup>541</sup> Here to *show* “a word does not mean to have at one’s disposal a higher level (a metalanguage, itself incommunicable within the first level), starting from which we could make that word an object of communication”, but it means instead to “expose the word in its own mediality, in its own being a means, without any transcendence. The gesture is, in this sense, communication of a communicability”.<sup>542</sup> The gesture is the impartability of language *in* itself – what is not *said* but the mute showing of language *parting-with* itself.

It has precisely nothing to say because what it shows is the being-in-language of human beings as pure mediality. However, because the being-in-language is not something that could be said in sentences, the gesture is essentially always a gesture

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<sup>539</sup> Agamben, “The Thing Itself”, *Potentialities*, 35.

<sup>540</sup> Agamben, “The Thing Itself”, 38.

<sup>541</sup> Agamben, “Notes on Gesture”, *Means Without End*, 58.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

of not being able to figure something out in language; it is always a *gag* in the proper meaning of the term, indicating first of all something that could be put in your mouth to hinder speech, as well as the sense of the actor's improvisation meant to compensate a loss of memory or an inability to speak.<sup>543</sup>

Gesture, is not then, as he further emphasises in an essay engaging in the work of the critic Max Kommerell, “an absolutely non-linguistic element”, but “closely tied to language”<sup>544</sup> – the “forceful presence in language itself, one that is older and more originary than conceptual expression. Kommerell defines linguistic gesture as the stratum of language that is not exhausted in communication and that captures language, so to speak, in its solitary moments”.<sup>545</sup> The solitude of gesture is the manner in which it exists for another only insofar as it *exists for itself*. This a-conceptual, yet *expressive* dimension is, paradoxically, *speechless* – indicative of the *incommunicability* of this immediate mediality. What it bears resemblance to is Benjamin's mimesis of language as it is akin to the *face* in which can be read, as Kommerell puts it, “the history of solitary moments”, that is, the imprint of character which comes not only in dialogue with others, but away from them, in the mimicry imposed “by solitude and inner dialogue”<sup>546</sup> – a solitariness which is mostly heard in poetry, where language converses *with itself*. What Kommerell proffers with gesture, as Agamben comes to read it, thus, is “the other side of language, the muteness inherent in humankind's very capacity for language, its *speechless* dwelling in language. And the more human beings have language, the stronger the unsayable weighs them down”.<sup>547</sup> The gesture is the *blank tablet* which cannot be spoken as such, but which allows for the possibility of saying anything at all. What gesture expresses is “Being in language itself” – the *facticity* of speech, which does not *say* anything, but exists in the modality of (*im*)*potentiality*. The effort, it seems, and one which Agamben has dedicated himself to in his own work, is to inhabit this *opening* of language, this *communicability* – the emptiness that cannot be filled, as “humankind's most proper dwelling”.<sup>548</sup> For it is in the relation between living and saying that gesture seems to truly reside, as what Kommerell comes to read as the concern modern poets have in the figures of the angel, the half-god, the marionette and the animal – not a substance or property, but the “intimacy of living here and now”, in a profane mystery whose sole object is existence itself”,<sup>549</sup> that is, an *initiation* of life not into meaning, but into *itself*. “Into something that, in its incarnation in beauty, pain, and enigmas, constantly borders on

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<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>544</sup> Agamben, “Kommerell, or On Gesture”, *Potentialities*, 77.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid., 84.

meaning without ever uttering it and while remaining unnameable. Life thus has a secret; indeed, life is a secret. After every single realisation, however compelling, after every single disenchantment, however terrible, life returns to its secret”.<sup>550</sup> Gesture, as a way of coming not to explain the enigma of existence, but of entering into it more fully, through the life lived in the text as a *theatricality* which “lies beyond all psychology and, in a certain sense, all interpretation. It opens not onto literary history or theory of genres but onto a stage”.<sup>551</sup> It is this staging of sense which Agamben comes to understand as *criticism* and as the political stakes of gesture, where the authority of the author is nothing but an actor speaking in the guise of an improvisatory *gag* – something Agamben returns to in another short sketch entitled “Author as Gesture”, where the writer inhabits this *border of meaning*, a threshold, where they *are* and *are not* there.

The author is the point at which a life is offered up and played out in the work. Offered up and played out, not expressed or fulfilled. For this reason, the author can only remain unsatisfied and unsaid in the work. He is the illegible someone who makes reading possible, the legendary emptiness from which writing and discourse issue.<sup>552</sup>

The text is attributable not to the psychological individual existing outside the text, nor to a locatable presence within the text, but in the more ambiguous realm of a *potentiality* within the text – the *presence of an absence* which results from:

the encounter and from the hand-to-hand confrontation with the apparatuses in which it has been put – and has put itself – into play. For writing...is an apparatus too, and the history of human beings is perhaps nothing other than the hand-to-hand confrontation with the apparatuses they have produced – above all with language...so must subjectivity show itself and increase its resistance at the point where its apparatuses capture it and put it into play. A subjectivity is produced where the living being, encountering language and putting itself into play in language without reserve, exhibits in a gesture the impossibility of its being reduced to this gesture. All the rest is psychology, and nowhere in psychology do we encounter anything like an ethical subject, a form of life.<sup>553</sup>

The author as gesture is the theatricality of a thinking that exists only in the text’s *taking-place*, its singular staging, where the “thought and sentiment” become real for the writer “while writing”;<sup>554</sup> where the sense is made *transitorily*, in the *passage* of the writer being there for a while, at a particular time. For, if feelings and thoughts “require a subject to

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<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>552</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “The Author as Gesture”, *Profanations*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 70.

<sup>553</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid., 71.

experience and think them”, the thoughts cannot reside “in” the text, nor “in” the one who writes it, but *within* the text’s being *imparted*.

In order for them to become present, someone must take up the book and read. This individual will occupy the empty place in the poem left by the author; he will repeat the same inexpressive gesture the author used to testify to his absence in the work.<sup>555</sup>

It is precisely “this place that remains empty” that Agamben proffers “makes reading possible”<sup>556</sup> – what comprises its *reading room*, its *readability*, the veritable *stanza* which is the *capacity* of what was protected by the poets of the thirteenth century as the “‘capacious dwelling, receptacle’, because it safeguarded, along with all the formal elements of the canzone, that *joi d’amor* that these poets entrusted to poetry as its unique object”.<sup>557</sup> Agamben asks what is this object? This “receptive womb of its entire art?” A question which cannot attempt to be answered without re-awakening its questionability, for it is a question which is “barred by the forgetfulness of a scission that derives from the origin of our culture and that is usually accepted as the most natural thing – that goes, so to speak, without saying – when in fact it is the only thing truly worth interrogating”.<sup>558</sup> This schism is nothing less than the gulf between poetry and philosophy, distinguished here by Agamben as a language that “enjoys the object of knowledge by representing it in a beautiful form”, “possesses its object without knowing it”, and another which, “knows its object without possessing it”, “has all seriousness and consciousness for itself but does not enjoy its object because it does not know how to represent it”.<sup>559</sup> It is between these poles of an “inspired-ecstatic” and a “rational-conscious” that Agamben comes to place his own attempt at knowing, at “criticism”, where the text becomes the tracing out precisely of a *stanza*, wherein is secluded the preservation not of *something*, but the impotential *nothing* of possibility: “criticism opposes the enjoyment of what cannot be possessed and the possession of what cannot be enjoyed. In this way, criticism interprets the precept of Gargantua: ‘Science without consciousness is nothing but the ruin of the soul. What is secluded in the *stanza* of criticism is nothing, but this nothing safeguards unappropriability as its most precious possession”.<sup>560</sup> Here is the purpose of a *gesture* of writing, which, unlike an “appropriation without consciousness” or a “consciousness without enjoyment”, is an “enjoyment that cannot be possessed and the possession of what cannot be enjoyed”<sup>561</sup> – a writing which “traces...a

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<sup>555</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid. 70.

<sup>557</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “Introduction, *Stanzas*, xvi.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid., xvii.

<sup>561</sup> Ibid., xvii.

topology of joy, of the *stanza* through which the human spirit responds to the impossible task of appropriating what must in every case remain unappropriable”.<sup>562</sup> What it occasions is an approach to the object of concern which is neither master nor slave, but is more of a “refined love”, that dwells in the *both and* of enjoying and deferring, negating and affirming, accepting and repelling. In this sense, the *stanza* is not the “‘place’ as something spatial”, but the more originary dwelling of “a pure difference” – this inhabiting the *schism*, the split of a hyphenation that *makes room* in such a way where, as Agamben quotes Plato, “‘what is not, will in a certain sense be; and what is, will in a certain sense not be’”.<sup>563</sup> Rather than a dichotomy of a knowledge that is contained in the form, and a knowledge that is contained in the content, there is their complication in the *inhabiting* of the text in its *taking-place*, a *scene of writing*, in which there is a movement between knowing and not-knowing and whereby an object is “attained” only in this passage of seeing it *as* something from within an ecology of care, where it *takes-place* by becoming not what it “is”, but what it is *like*<sup>564</sup> – a “topology of the unreal”,<sup>565</sup> as Agamben terms it. The text becomes the *room* not presenting what is *there*, present at hand, but what is coming to be there – the staging of a text that exists only in its *coming* into existence, and as such, is one which never fully arrives. Agamben situates the “sense” of the text as what occurs only *in transition*, *in movement*, that is, not “in” the text as a present at hand sense, simply “there” in the words which lie printed on the page, nor “in” the one who wrote it, nor even “in” the one who reads it, but rather in the “in” of an *inhabiting* and *imparting*; an “in” which is not an enclosure but a *dynamic* mode of *coming to be placed*; an *in* where sense is made in the *hyphenated* “in” of being *in-between*, being *in the midst*, in *il loro medio*, that *makes-room*. In this sense, the structure of readability, of a criticisability, is that which is never self-coincidental, but in existing *for itself*, that is, in tending towards itself, it exists for another. As a *staging* of sense it can only exist in a *singular taking-place*.

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid., xviii.

<sup>564</sup> Agamben, “Infancy and History”, *Infancy*, 25.

<sup>565</sup> Agamben, “Introduction”, *Stanza*, xviii.

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An inventory of the uses of a word might have no end; an inventory of the uses of a sentence could not even be begun.

– Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*

Naming echos. The nothing, like the poem, like the subject, has no referent, for it does not pre-exist itself. Rather, it predicts itself, calls itself into being by means of calling or being.

– Norma Cole, *To be at Music*

To the gift of Being and its generous releasement corresponds the self-effacement of the thinker who names what is by withdrawing in front of it.

– Martin Heidegger *On Time and Being*

As the putting into play a subjectivity within language, Agamben's sense of gesture, as many have noted, was borne out in his earlier work with reference to the linguist Émile Benveniste's writing on language, specifically what he came to call the *discourse* of sense which *takes-place* in the *discurre*, the *passage* of language being put into use. One of Agamben's encounters with Benveniste comes in his essay *Language and Death*, wherein he notes how Benveniste understood deictic indication as referring not to a substantial reality, but rather, to the reality of the instance of its *use*, what Benveniste tendered as *discourse*, as opposed to the system of *language*. The subject of language, the "I", refers not to any individual, but is an *empty sign* which obtains its significance only from within a singular situation, only by referring to the singular *instance of use*.

There is no point in defining these terms and demonstratives in general through *deixis*, as is the usual practice, if we do not add that *deixis* is contemporaneous with the instance of discourse that bears the indication of the person; from this reference the demonstrative derives its unique and particular character, which is the unity of the instance of discourse to which it refers. Thus the essential thing is the relation between the indicator (of a person, a place, a time, a demonstrated object, etc.) and the *present* instance of discourse.<sup>566</sup>

The subject exists in language, in this sense, in the convergence of its saying with what is said – a simultaneity which is also a *split* in the gap between the "I" that speaks and the "I" that is spoken, between enunciator and enunciated, where this interval gives rise to the *singular event* of a saying from within language. As Benveniste highlights, the subject exists as the *relation between* the "I" and the instance of its occurrence.

*Deixis* or indication...does not simply demonstrate an unnamed object, but above all the very instance of discourse, its taking place. The place indicated by *demonstration*, and from which only every other indication is possible, is a place of

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<sup>566</sup> Émile Benveniste quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus and Micahel Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 24.

language. They indicate that language *takes place* and so they refer to the ‘event of language’.<sup>567</sup>

The subject in language is the very *opening* of what is presupposed in all uses of language – its taking-place. Rather than referring to an external reality, an “I” of an autonomous individual, it refers only to *language itself*. The subject is the fold of a making-room, where language does not say something, but shows its *communicability* by indicating *that* it is taking-place. The subject is present in the text as this *relation*, this *referral*, rather than *what* is enunciated. They are present not as something directly attainable, as a “substantial reality present in some place”,<sup>568</sup> locatable *somewhere* in the text as “represented” therein, but are the very presentation of the text itself, the *stanza* of a *nothing* which allows for something to be shown.

We should pay attention to the specific condition of the utterance: it is the very act of producing an uttered, not the text of the uttered... This act is the work of the speaker who sets *langue* into motion. The relation between the speaker and the *langue* determines the linguistic character of the utterance.<sup>569</sup>

The subject is the *impotentiality* of the very potentiality of language itself – the blank tablet which allows for something to be said. What is not *said*, but *shown* in this gesturing of language’s communicability is, in a move which seems to link this earlier thinking of Agamben with its return, and differential re-iteration in his later work, this correspondence between the taking-place of language and *being* as potentiality, though not named as such here:

Linguistics defines this dimension as the putting into action of language and the conversion of *langue* into *parole*. But for more than two thousand years, throughout the history of Western philosophy, this dimension has been called *being, ousia*. That which is always already demonstrated in every act of speaking... that which is always already indicated in speech without being named, is, for philosophy, being. The dimension of meaning of the word ‘being’, whose eternal quest and eternal loss... constitutes the history of metaphysics, coincides with the taking place of language; metaphysics is that experience of language that, in every speech act, grasps the disclosure of that dimension, and in all speech, experiences above all the ‘marvel’ that language exists. Only because language permits a reference to its own instance through *shifters*, something like being and the world are open to speculation.<sup>570</sup>

The *gesture* as the emptiness within which something can be said speaks, in this way, to the *ontological* dimension of language – what communicates not *something*, but our *being-with*

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<sup>567</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>568</sup> Agamben, “The Author as Gesture”, *Profanations*, 72.

<sup>569</sup> Agamben, *Language and Death*, 25.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid., 26.

each other, our *being-in-the-world*, whilst the ontic dimension of language corresponds to *what* is said and signified within this opening. It is the *voice* which Agamben goes on to link with this ontological opening of language, as it is voice which signals the deictic *singularity* of language in use: “contemporaneity and existential relations can only be grounded in the voice. *The utterance and the instance of discourse are only identifiable as such through the voice that speaks them*”.<sup>571</sup> This voice, however, as the *emptiness* within which something is said, is not coterminous with an “individual”, nor is it simply the sounds of the words, but is the *ground* of the text as what “*goes to the ground* and disappears in order for being and language to take place.”<sup>572</sup> The “voice” is the *passage* of the writing as the inhabiting of an interval between what is being said and the saying itself, that is, the event of a *signifying*. The “voice” is “present” in the text only as the text’s singular way of parting-with itself, the occupying of *il loro medio*. Rather than a stable objectifiable “thing”, the voice is only the *tendency* of the text, in the on-going movement of *tending towards itself*, caught always in-between this and that. The “voice” is the *passion* of the gesture where sense is *bourne* out in the *present* instance of discourse – in the non-coincidental *time* of the text; the *articulated* absence; the presence of an absence. As Agamben puts it, “Nothing is in the voice, the voice is the place of the negative...that is, pure temporality”.<sup>573</sup>

Voice constitutes the model according to which Western culture construe one of its supreme problems: the relation and passage between nature and culture, between *physis* and *logos*. This passage is always already conceived as an *arthron*, an articulation; or rather, as a discontinuity that is also a continuity, a removal that is also a preservation (*arthron*, like *armonia*, originally derives from the language of woodworking; *armotto* signifies to conjoin, to unite, as the woodworker does with two pieces of wood). In this sense, the Voice is truly the invisible *harmony*, which Heraclitus said was stronger than visible harmony...because in its double negativity, it enacts the conjoinment that constitutes the essence of that *zoon logou echon* that is man. In this definition, the *echein*, the *having*, of man, which unifies the duality of the living being and language, is conceived of as always already existing in the negative mode of an *arthron*. Man is that living being who removes himself and preserves himself at the same time – as unspeakable – in language; negativity is the human means of *having* language.<sup>574</sup>

The voice is the *pure temporality* of a time not as the flow of instants, an on-going continuity, but as the time of a discontinuous continuity; a time that is re-iterative, doubling, both ahead of and after itself; a time that is *localised* and yet never simply locatable in a particular spot; a time of a folding that *makes-room*; a present never simply present to itself

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<sup>571</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>572</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., 85.

but *shifting*; a time that gives and also refuses; a time that moves and yet goes nowhere; a time that is, each time, a singular staging. The gesture is the demonstration of a subject who is *nothing* but this groundlessness of not having language but having to take it up as a ground that exists as a nothing but the *there* of the text in its singularised taking-place, for a while, at a particular time. It is the *infancy* of one who never coincides with their language, but must continuously take it on, must continuously attempt to dwell in it, yet not as a permanent residence, but only as a singular staging, which, in its very taking-place is always already parting-with itself, pointing elsewhere. The “voice”, then, as the resonance of sense – the singular *attunement* of the text in its gathered harmony, what is and is not there – the *jointure* of an articulation of a structure of the “as”, where this “as” itself is not presupposed, but *exposed*.

The thinking that tries to grasp being *as* being retreats toward the entity without adding to it any further determination...comprehending it in its being-such, in the midst of its *as*, it grasps its pure non-latency, its pure exteriority. It no longer says *something* as ‘*something*’, but brings to speech the *as* itself.<sup>575</sup>

The voice, then, as the *Stimme* of a singular *articulation* of what is present only as the jointure-separation of a *Stimmung* which Agamben labels as the *joy* of criticism founded on the *refined love* which stands in the open concealment of the facticity of language, its *opening* which allows for something to be said *as-such*. A *Stimmung* of the angst of “Care” which Agamben reads as akin to the “*thaumazein*, astonishment or wonder, which according to a very old and constant tradition is the *arche* of philosophy”.<sup>576</sup> The angst of having to be the *there* not as what is contrary to joy then, but as Heidegger himself put it, is in “secret alliance with the cheerfulness and gentleness of creative longing”.<sup>577</sup> The *stanza* of criticism is marked, in this way, as the enclosed nothing of a *Stimmung* of love, an eros re-inscribed from an identity game, to the love as the giving of an emptiness, an openness. Reading against the grain, Agamben comes to argue in his essay “The Passion of Facticity” for an understanding of the very structure of *Dasein* itself as *love*. What marks the human being in their passionate existence, as Agamben notes, quoting Heidegger in his text *Ordo Amoris*, is our being first and foremost those whose beings are comprised of a capacity to love: “Before he is an *ens cogitans* or an *ens volans*...man is an *ens amans*”.<sup>578</sup> Love is what first *opens* the possibility of knowing, of access to the truth. Indeed, Heidegger himself would later gesture to such an understanding of the ontological “Care” of *Dasein* when he underscores how love cannot be “added” to *Dasein*, but is the very structure of their *being-there*: “if understood

<sup>575</sup> Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 99.

<sup>576</sup> “Vocation and Voice”. *Qui Parle* 10, no. 2 (1997): 93.

<sup>577</sup> Heidegger, *Pathmarks*, 93.

<sup>578</sup> Agamben, “The Passion of Facticity”, *Potentialities*, 186.

correctly, that is, in the sense of fundamental ontology, *Sorge* can never be differentiated from ‘love’ insofar as it names ‘comprehension of Being’ as the fundamental determination of the ek-static temporal constitution of Dasein.<sup>579</sup>

What Agamben tunes into is the sense of *Dasein* as the passion of facticity, of not-knowing, as the emptiness of a love which procures for thinking the necessary inappropriability of criticism:

(in the etymological sense of the word passion, *pati, paskhein*). Love is the *passion of facticity* in which man bears this nonbelonging and darkness, appropriating them while guarding them as such. Love is thus not, as the dialectic of desire suggests, the affirmation of the self in the negation of the loved object; it is, instead, the passion and exposition of facticity itself and of the irreducible impropriety of being. *In love, the lover and the beloved come to light in their concealment, in an eternal facticity beyond Being.*<sup>580</sup>

The *passion* of this gesture of writing is the undergoing, in this way, not of something other, but a suffering one’s own *non-being* – coming back to this one beneath you who carries you through. It is, then, an understanding of love as the “Care” of one who undergoes an experience of making-possible something, or someone, by giving their single possession they have been gifted with in life – being a “self” as the nothingness of *being-there*.

To attempt a practice of writing which is a *care of the self*, in this sense, is one marked by standing in the opening of language, its facticity and inappropriability – in the manner in which it shows and does not show, connects us to the world and does not connect us to the world; the manner in which it gives us what something *is like* – a fictitious making which is its truth. A writing which follows, thus, that “method” Mallarmé tendered, of language *reflecting upon itself*.

The writing subject exists as the X of what can’t be said, but is the gathering of what makes for a place of thinking as abandonment, as exposure to the singularised differential of a making-room, a stanza as staging. In this way, the *Stimmug* of a gesture of writing as “Care”, is a text where writer and reader can be resolute, in the sense of confronting their *death*, in the *emptiness of being* nothing but the *there* – a dissolution of self so that something, the object of criticism, and someone, the writer-reader, can be given over to their singularised possibility.

The essential relationship between language and death takes place...in Voice. *Death and Voice have the same negative structure and they are metaphysically*

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<sup>579</sup> Heidegger, *Zollikon Seminars*, 304.

<sup>580</sup> Agamben, “The Passion of Facticity”, 204.

*inseparable... To experience Voice signifies...to become capable of ...no longer simply a deceasing, but a person's ownmost and insuperable possibility, the possibility of his freedom.*<sup>581</sup>

It is in this sense that voice is the site of an ethics construed not on the identity of the individual, but as the abandonment of "Care", that does not appropriate the world in its facticity, but bears it forth in its singular being-such. What is proffered to another is only this *empty room* for themselves to undergo an experience of *expropriation*, to be cast to their own freedom of the love of abandonment. The *reading room* is simply the enclosed silence of a listening in an art of fugue.

philosophy must necessarily leave behind its habit, always already alienate itself and divide itself from its habit, in order to be able to return there, walking through negativity and absolving it from its demonic scission. A philosopher is one who, having been surprised by language, having thus abandoned his habitual dwelling place in the world, must now return to where language already happened to him. He must 'surprise the surprise', be at home in the marvel and in the division. When it wishes to return to its *arche*, philosophy can only grasp the taking place of language in a negative; that is, the *daimon* itself as *ethos*... That which it has to grasp is, after all, simply a dispossession, a flight.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid, 93-94.

### III

Tension is the song. The tune carries the words. When one separates them, nothing more than words cross over – the decoys of meaning.  
– Henri Meschonnic, “Rhyme and Life”

a state of significance indefinitely being born  
– Henri Meschonnic, “Rhyme and Life”

Poetically, we do what we do before knowing what we do. And we must never do what we know  
– Henri Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translating*

Agamben’s stanza of the gesture of writing, as an attempt to undo the schism between the word that knows and the word that is beautiful, is akin to what Henri Meschonnic came to proffer as the *poetic subject*, that subject who is manifested in a singular, situated use of language – a subject articulated not *through what* is said, but *in its modality*, what he came to call the *rhythm* of writing. As he perceived it from within his practices of writing, as poet, critic, translator, and inspired by Benveniste’s conception of discourse, and essay on rhythm, Meschonnic came to proffer rhythm not as an addendum to sense, but what first *opens* it – a crucial factor which is lost in treatments of language according to what he understood as the politics of the “sociology of the sign” still governing the topos of our understanding in terms of opposed binaries; life and words; rational and irrational; poetry and prose; the discontinuous and continuous; individual and social; personal and political; domestic and civic. In his *ethics* of translation, he came to argue for a practice of translation which attempted to render meaning not as the transfer of one system of language into another, but as the transformation of the “subjectivisation” of discourse in another, rendering, that is, the idio-local rhythm of a text; the “poem” of discourse.

An ethics of translating means translating the maximum subjectivisation of a system of discourse created by the poem. To translate a poem into an enunciation by the terms and means of the sign is to reduce the infinite to a totality. The poem has disappeared because the ethics of the poem has disappeared.<sup>583</sup>

In a sentiment which resonates with Benjamin, Meschonnic argues for the necessity of translating to be a creative practise not through a lexical rendering of meaning, but through the translating of the text’s *tendency*, where the text “lives on” in its parting-with itself, its becoming something *similar*, rather than a re-iteration of the same. What Meschonnic presents in his understanding of rhythm is an attempt to preserve the *capacity* of the text, the stanza if you like, where the translator’s/reader’s role is to consign the text once more to *potentiality*, where its sense means only in being set into motion once again, *experienced*: “it

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<sup>583</sup> Henri Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translating*, trans. Pier-Pascale Boulanger (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001), 55.

is not only a matter of keeping what the words want to say, it is a matter of reinventing what they say. That is what does achieve and always has achieved poetry, the thought of poetry, the poetry of thought”.<sup>584</sup> This “poetic subject”, this *subjectivisation* of discourse, is not coterminous with the individual, but is the *individuation* of language in use – the singular *rhythm* of the text which makes for a “poem of thought”.<sup>585</sup> It is this aspect of the text which is the political and ethical dimension of writing for Meschonnic, as it is here where its *transformational capacity* lies:

*Conscience* and the individualistic idea of the individual both act as obstacles to the historicity of language. They split language into the dual components of the sign: society is split into the individual and the social, literature into the writer and the work. But what one calls a *work* (*oeuvre*) is what can be passed on to others, indicating that the subject is that very property of transformation and continuity – not the individual as a person. The writer and the reader become subjects through the work. An “agent” would imply that some previous entity passes through it.<sup>586</sup>

It is a sense of the *power* of the text which must be translated – not what the text *says*, but what it *does* – what lies in the *tension*, for it is only in the sense of *resonance* that the poetic subject resides, that is, a residing not as the occupancy of a *site*, of a subject present at hand, one who is “there”, but the *making-room* of a subject who is *coming to be there*, who is there as a present *absence*, as a *capacity*, a *transformational* property which constitutes an etho-poetic effect of a *form of life* – turning writer and reader into subjects through a *listening* – in the *reflexive* movement of language as a listening that compels a listening.

Poetry turns everything into life. It is that form of life that turns everything into language. It does not come to us unless language itself has become a form of life. That is why it is so unquiet. For it does not cease to work on us. To be the dream of which we are the sleep. A listening, an awakening that passes through us, the rhythm that knows us and that we do not know. It is the organisation in language of what has always been said to escape language: life, the movement no word is supposed to be able to say. And in effect words do not say it. That is why poetry is a meaning of time more than the meaning of words. Even when its course is ample, it is contained in what passes from us through words. It does not have the time of glaciers and ferns. It tells about a time of life. Through everything that it names. Even its haste transforms. Since it is a listening that compels a listening.<sup>587</sup>

the only task of the poet!...is to listen to everything that one doesn't know that one hears, everything that one doesn't know that one says, and everything one doesn't know how to say, because one believes language to be made of words.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>585</sup> Henri Meschonnic, “The Rhythm Party Manifesto”, trans. David Nowell Smith, *Thinking Verse* 01 (2011), 170.

<sup>586</sup> Henri Meschonnic, “Interview”, by Gabriella Bedetti, *Diacritics* 18, no. 3 (1988): 101.

<sup>587</sup> Henri Meschonnic, “Rhyme and Life”, *Critical Inquiry* 15, no. (1988): 90.

<sup>588</sup> Meschonnic, “Rhythm Manifesto”, 168.

The poetic subject exists “in” the text not as a present at hand sense, but as the singularised *organisation* of the text, in the internal architectonics of its taking-place, an idio-local space-time as the *form* of language in use – the *configuration* of a sense which is not *contained in the words* – rhythm is not what is in the “meaning”, as understood as the unit of the sign, but in the sense of a present absence as what must be *listened to*, articulated in what he calls the “signifiante”.

In discourse, discourse is rhythm and rhythm is discourse, not a parallel discourse, interior, hidden under the words but the same discourse. Rhythm is the synthetic ensemble of all the elements which contribute, organisation of all the unities small or big,....I define rhythm in language as the organisation of marks by which the signifiants, linguistic and extralinguistic...produce a specific semantic, distinct from the lexical sense and which I call the signifiante: that is to say the values, proper to a discourse and only one.<sup>589</sup>

*Signifiante* is a term Meschonnic constructs from the present participle *signifiant* in a way to highlight how the “meaning” of the text resides not in a present-at-hand manner, but in the rhythm of a sense that is always *coming*, arriving, not standing still to be comprehended or apprehended once and for all. It is an attempt to undo the binary of signifier/signified and its concomitant segregation of form and content. A move which is analogous to a *rhythmic* translation Weber performs in tuning into Ferdinand de Saussure’s thought in an attempt to listen to him otherwise than how he has been historically translated. Here Weber re-begins an understanding of Saussure: “The particular translation that I am referring to has become so familiar that it may be difficult for you to see it as a problem at all. I mean the translation of the French word, *signifiant*, by the English *signifier*. In French the word is a gerund, formed from the present participle of the verb, but used as a noun”.<sup>590</sup> In the present participle there is a *non-coincidence* between what is signified and the process of signifying. What Weber comes to draw out from this, is the manner in which signifying is constituted in a *non-coincidence* of a time of the present participle parting-with itself, which makes for a dynamic of sense-making which is on-going and without any internal property of closure. As re-iterative, it can only achieve a status of “signified” by being interrupted – something which “over time may be sanctioned by routine, convention and therefore naturalised. It can then appear to be more or less self-evident, like a proper noun”.<sup>591</sup> What is inherent to the signifier as such, is its heterogeneity. In light of this, Weber argues that the English gerund

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<sup>589</sup> Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du Rhythm* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1982), 216. All translations are my own.

<sup>590</sup> Samuel Weber, “Singularity of Literary Cognition”, 5.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

“signifying”, may be closer to the French “singifiant” – what cannot be so easily defined, resists *determination*, and exists as a *tendency*:

it is iterative, ongoing, a discontinuous series of articulations that moves both *away* from its immediate appearance or location and *toward* something or somewhere else. It is thus split between enactment and articulation, and as such never complete. As an iterative movement that is situated by reference to its articulation, the present participle has no internal principle of closure. It therefore requires some sort of *intervention from without*, some sort of *interruption*, in order to achieve the status of ‘signified’.<sup>592</sup>

What such a translation undermines is the ability of language to cohere into a definite signified, it is to cast into doubt a determinable *object* to be cognised, as this play of “differential signification” never congeals into an identified signified, it remains *questionable* – a questionability which “in turn can call into question the identity of the cognitive subject as well”.<sup>593</sup> Weber is here speaking in relation to the singularity of *literary* texts but it is precisely this aspect which is what Meschonnic construes is the etho-poetic element of *any* text – any text, that is, which is a “poem of thought”, a situated singularity of sense in which the reader-writer does *not know*, but is given over to bearing-forth of sense which could be this, or could be that – inhabiting the *gap*, the *interval* between *what* is being signified and the signifying process itself – this articulation of the *as*.

The sense of the text, in this way, is established not *in* it but by pointing away, to an elsewhere – a “here” which is only in relation to a “there”, an “I” in relation to a “you”, a “has been” only in relation to what is “not yet”. The heterogeneity of the present participle is such that it can only *tend towards* itself, never coinciding, but always anticipating *ahead* through what has been. To inhabit the text’s tendency, thus, is to inhabit the way in which it was anticipating you – “you” being the future it was pointing towards. It is this pointing elsewhere that must be translated, in this sense, as it is in this respect that language is continuously re-generating itself – making similar what was said. What is crucial is the difference between a sense oriented towards the past participle, a sense that can be fixed in time that occurred once and for all, and a sense oriented towards *possibility*, to the future, to the heterogeneous outside – a context the text cannot control and which will not so much *determine* its meaning, as *participate* in its participle of parting-with. The reading-writing for rhythm in this way, is one which must necessarily be *situated* – taking-place not fully, or determinably, but in a manner which is continuously arriving. It is in this way that Meschonnic differentiates a sense through *signifiance*, as it is only in the singularity of

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<sup>592</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid., 7.

*encounter* that “meaning” resides – one which is always idio-local and incomplete. The sense articulates only a *singular* sense, what cannot be held, grasped, or consumed, but only experienced, only *sensed*, only, that is, *bodied-forth* by she who bears-forth what *is* and *is not* there, in her locus of being in-between. The sense lies in the inhabiting of the gap of the present participle, in the “internal cut”<sup>594</sup> of signifier and signified. The sense exists in the text, only in the *tendency* of a *tension*, and so it cannot come to say what something “is”, but articulates a *possibility* – what something is *like* – one which cannot be *cognitively* grasped, but must be *attuned* to. Rather than the “meaning” of what resides “in” the text, the *signifiante* is a sense that must be *participated* in by a bodied other down the line. What is clear is that rhythm is not, for Meschonnic, an aesthetic *addendum* to the writing, but is the way that something is revealed-disclosed, how something comes to show itself *as* something – it is the opening that lets us open-up to a meaning that exists only in the experience of a singularity, in what can’t be held, but what holds us. It is contingent upon what Meschonnic retains from Saussure’s work as the notion of “value” – a certain force of meaning which is contextual – the valence of a word contingent upon the *internal relations* of a given text and which can add a new or renewed sense to a word.

Saussure speaks of “the river of language” (*la fleuve de la langue*), which means that the system and history are in constant relationship, synchronic and diachronic at the same time, whereas structuralism placed the synchronic in opposition to the diachronic, the static in opposition to the dynamic. My Saussureanism balances what you would call my Heracliteanism – not as a compromise, but in the same direction. The continuous and discontinuous are both at work and inseparable.<sup>595</sup>

The text operates, in this sense, as only a proffering, a sketch, a call – as a sense which is not present at hand but is coming to be there, it is a proposition, a hailing. The poetic subject exists only in the encounter of a face to face meeting of reader and writer, an “I” in relation to a “you”, in the sense Karl Bühler proffers in respect to his understanding of deixis as *reception signals* – what causes “the gaze to turn...and the result is a reception”.<sup>596</sup>

A text is a point of departure, not a point of arrival. It is a text because it is, on the translinguistic level, that which a I-here-now is on the linguistic level, namely a shifter, indefinitely metaphorizable, indefinitely bearer of the relation with a reader who is always new, despite the aging of language.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>594</sup> Meschonnic, “Rhyme and Life”, 92.

<sup>595</sup> Meschonnic, “Interview”, 102.

<sup>596</sup> Karl Bühler, *Theory of Language*, trans. Donald Fraser Goodwin (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2011), 122.

<sup>597</sup> Henri Meschonnic, “Texts on Translation”, trans. Anthony Pym, *Target* 15, no. 2 (2003): 337.

This is the sense of those *face to face* forms Susan Stewart traces whose meaning cannot be divorced from *how* they are articulated, how they have been framed: “Deixis fuses form, expression, and theme as one event in place and time – the inseparability of frame and context in deictic forms is evident in the impossibility of paraphrasing or abstracting them”.<sup>598</sup> It is the singular *thisness* of the text’s rhythm which strangely makes for its openness – its being extended to unknown others: “The form creates or defines its location and the listener, viewer, or apprehender finds his or her position in established in relation to the concrete determinants of the form – everything “matters” as an aspect of the manifestation. In this way the artwork’s very specificity, its “finality of form”, enables its context independence”.<sup>599</sup> It is the *finitude* of form which allows for an *infinite* capacity of generating sense, where each reading is a situated listening, an experience of sense-making contingent upon a *desubjectivisation* – the paradox of the etho-poesis of a “poetic subject”, given that listening is a sense sensed only in being *towards* ourselves. As Nancy puts it, listening is to be on the “lookout for a subject, something (itself) that identifies *itself* by resonating from self to self, in itself and for itself, hence outside of itself, at once the same as and other than itself, one in the echo of the other”.<sup>600</sup> Here is the formation of a subject as a *unity in and of diversity*.

This *rhythm*, this signifiacance which provokes a listening, “works outside or against the notion of literary genre: poetry, novel, drama, essay, philosophical text”, if rhythm is

the subjectivisation of a system of discourse by a subject inventing itself in and through its discourse, inventing a new historicity, the continuum of the poem does not know the difference between genres. From this point of view, there is poem in novels, plays and even in a so-called philosophical text if there is invention of the subject, invention of historicity. It is in the inseparation of affect and concept that meaning finds its power and invention. It is even because it holds a poem within it that a novel is a novel and not a dime novel, and that a philosophical text is an invention of thought and not a discourse on philosophy.<sup>601</sup>

The meaning resides not in a *signified*, a determined sense, where something is seen as *something*, but it is the *as* which is brought forth. In bearing-forth a singular rhythm it is the participation in movement that is being asked of the reader, where sense is made only in the *transitions* between words, sentences, paragraphs etc. in the lateral *internal relations* of the text. Meaning is not made into a static “thing”, but is to be *bodied-forth* by another down the line, where they must suffer their own non-being in a sensing whose perception is a visibility

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<sup>598</sup> Susan Stewart, *Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 156.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>600</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, 9.

<sup>601</sup> Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translating*, 69.

lined with invisibility, a touching lined with a tactic no-touching, a listening to articulated silence

#### IV

What everybody takes to be intelligible is in fact not intelligible at all...When something becomes too familiar it stops making sense. What is immediately accessible is bound to be lifeless.

Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*

An exaggeration which no longer measures itself against something given or presupposed, something to which it could be reduced and which would account for its intelligibility is neither an indication of truth nor a symptom of madness and delusion, it is neither thinking nor its opposite, rather it is thinking as gesture

– Alexander García Düttmann, “*Thinking as Gesture*”

Gesture is that play of meaningfulness among words which cannot be defined in the formulas in the dictionary, but which is defined in their use together; gesture is that meaningfulness which is moving, in every sense of that word: what moves the words and what moves us.

– Blackmur, *Language as Gesture*

Another name to add to the collection of heteronyms to describe the gesture of writing as a practice of criticism, could be that *experimentum linguae* otherwise known as the *essay*, in the manner Theodor Adorno comes to read it, as a writing which adheres to the logic of *music*, that is, to a sense characterised by its cohesion through *tension* – a sense that exists in the singular attunement of its momentary jointure. What Adorno articulates, without articulating it, is a proffering of the essay as an idio-local *rhythm* of sense, in the manner in which it is a singular *configuration*, where the text is a *collection* of words, an assemblage drawn together and apart where meaning resides in this singular structure.

All of its concepts are presentable in such a way that they support one another, that each one articulates itself according to the configuration that it forms with the others. In the essay discreetly separated elements enter into a readable context; it erects no scaffolding, no edifice. Through their own movement the elements crystallise into a configuration. It is a force field, just as under the essay’s glance every intellectual artefact must transform itself into a force field.<sup>602</sup>

Here the meaning rests not in the words, but in the conferment of their being joined together, articulating a singular correspondence in which their sense is constituted only para-tactically, only through the lateral relations of their configuration, where they, as Nancy proffers in his own consideration of rhythm, “respond to one another”, “refer to one another”.<sup>603</sup>

This is called *rhythm*, which in Greek is initially a configuration – quite simply, the fact of not escaping into infinity but of coming back toward one’s self and of turning

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<sup>602</sup> Theodor Adorno, “The Essay as Form”, trans. Bob Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will, *New German Critique*, No. 32 (1984), 161.

<sup>603</sup> Nancy, *The Pleasure of Drawing*, 70.

the division of space, the cut which opens it, into a curve that folds it without closing it.<sup>604</sup>

The text's sense operates in a *referral* of sense, in a sense of *resonance*, where, as Adorno puts it, there is no ground set out in advance only the "grounding" of the text's singular *taking-place* – in the articulated *transitions* of a *tensional* sense:

the essay verges on the logic of music, the stringent and yet aconceptual art of transition; it aims at appropriating for expressive language something that it forfeited under the domination of a discursive logic which cannot be circumvented, but may be outwitted in its own form by the force of an intruding subjective expression.<sup>605</sup>

Here sense is contingent upon the *use* of language, the *discourse* of a sense manifested in a way akin to the one who comes to know through *experience*, through an engaged *involvement* for a while, at a particular time, rather than an abstract theoretical knowledge. A method comparable to, as Adorno sketches it,

the behaviour of a man who is obliged, in a foreign country, to speak that country's language instead of patching it together from its elements, as he did in school. He will read without a dictionary. If he has looked at the same word thirty times, in constantly changing contexts, he has a clearer grasp of it than he would if he looked up all the word's meanings.<sup>606</sup>

The essayer as the *reader* gleaning sense from a *situated* use, where words find their sense not by being defined in advance, but by being taken up within a scene of unfolding sense, where words turn back upon other words and disclose between them a silent realm of possibility – a non-coincidental space for thinking.

The "scaffolding" of the essay, in this way, is a *spatiodifugal* making, given that its structure is obtained not from *without*, according to a model or plan measured in advance, but in the singular *measuring* of sense from *within* – in an idio-local making of *inhabiting* a *there* for a while, at a particular time. It is an articulation of an *ecology of care*, an, as Alan Bleakley has coined it, "eco-logical" reflection, rather than "ego-logical", where reflection is not modelled on a constituted "I" reflecting on itself, but is the reflection of being absorbed in an *experience*, what he comes to proffer as an *aesthetic* reflection:

The locus for reflection is then not "in" the individual (decontextualised), but 'in' the total event, involving the embedding of act in a context that itself guides or moulds the act. Importantly, the reflective act can then be framed as a sensitivity –

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<sup>604</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>606</sup> Adorno, "The Essay as Form", 161.

an aesthetic event rather than a functional or technical adjustment (the Greek *aesthesis* means ‘sense awareness’).<sup>607</sup>

It is in this sense that writing from *within* is an articulation not from a self who is the director of the situation, but its participant. Rather than an identity of “designer”, here is the design of a *Dasein* involved in a making in the jointed time of a present presenting itself, in the non-coincidence of an on-going shifting situation where past and future press on the scene of writing. It corresponds to what Bleakley calls a “*reflection-as-action*”, as distinct from “*reflection-on-action*”, and “*reflection-in-action*”, which both suppose a separate subject and “are both open to technical-rational programming and can be readily defined as skills. Reflection-as-action is rather a play of sensitivity within a habitat, based on immediacy, and is not open to formulation as a taught skill. It is rather a mode of being grounded in passion and body rather than cognition and mind”.<sup>608</sup>

It is as a *reflexive* text that Réda Bensmaïa comes to define “the essay” too, as a form which cannot be surmised in advance of its singular taking-place: “if an Essay cannot be summarised or translated into terms other than those it *presents*, it is because the procedure at the origin of its ‘objects’ designates less a form than an *activity*, less a structure than a *structuration*”.<sup>609</sup> Rather than an *immobile* form given in advance, the writing *from within* is a singular manifestation which adheres not to systematisation but to the revealing-disclosing play of language which cannot be divorced from its situated articulation, and yet is not congealed “in” this situation.

Writing from *within*, in this sense, cannot be *controlled* or *willed*, but is the capacity to hold out in a sense that is arriving, without forcing, but engaging in our *impotentiality* as Agamben would have it, the *inconnu* as Meschonnic puts it, which is *involuntary* – the “unknown in the subject which makes the poem, the rhythm”.<sup>610</sup> What it involves is an engagement in a capacity to see something *as* something, in a *bodying-forth* sense – the projecting not from an “I”, but in being *cast* and undergoing the *passion* of this sense that is always between, in a tension of what has been and is not yet. The writer is the collector who inhabits that position between, *bodying-forth* as a *gestalt* which *participates* in every *gestalt*, as Merleau-Ponty would have it – the “central hinge or a pivot which is openness to”.<sup>611</sup>

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<sup>607</sup> Alan Bleakley, “From Reflective Practice to holistic Reflexivity”, *Studies in Higher Education* 24, no. 3 (2006): 324. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03075079912331379925>.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>609</sup> Réda Bensmaïa, *The Barthes Effect: the essay as reflective text*, trans. Pat Fedkiew (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 35.

<sup>610</sup> Henri Meschonnic, *Critique du Rythme*, 102.

<sup>611</sup> Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, 205.

“turning about the text as if it were an anamorphosis, thus prompting the appearance not of its signified but of its transversal reflection – what it reflects ‘obliquely’, as Montaigne would say”.<sup>612</sup> The emphasis on this writing from *within*, as a sense being *inhabited* in a being *in-between*, is on the *transitions* as Hejinian articulates it, where the “eco-logical” sense resides:

That, indeed, is the function of logics; they motivate the moving rather than on the places – poetry follows pathways of thinking and it is that that creates patterns of coherence. It is at points of linkage – in contexts of encounter, at what Andre Breton called *points sublime* – that one discovers the reality of *being in time*, of *taking one’s chance*, of *becoming another*, all with the implicit understanding that *this is happening*.<sup>613</sup>

As Hejinian puts it: “The writer works from the inside out, but never gets out, partially because she can’t and partially because, in any case, she doesn’t want to”.<sup>614</sup> Rather than a tool *through* which something is said, language is used as a medium for *experiencing experience; perceiving perception; thinking thinking*. It is this inhabiting language *from within* which necessitates a constant *reinvention* of form, where the efficacy of the writing resides precisely in its being an *experience* of language as much for the writer, as for the reader, in its (im)potential taking-place. As she states in relation to certain insights on the relation between perceiving and writing, “...I want to make it clear that I learned most of these things by writing the poem, not in preparation for it, and that this perceiving from within the writing...provides me with the necessity for writing”.<sup>615</sup> Here the language is a seeking a form and the form of a seeking – an invention of form in its taking-place, where form is a *force*, a dynamics – “not a fixture but an activity”,<sup>616</sup> which must, if it is to be a *form of life*, of thinking, involve “more than the filling out of forms – the exercise of formalities; it requires an *invention of form*”.<sup>617</sup> In a writing *from within*, the text is a form that arrives at itself, in the manner in which there is no distinct “object” which is perceptible *before* the writing *takes-place*, but the perception of *what the writing is about* occurs in and as the taking-place of the text – a perception which is only a visibility lined with an invisibility. The text is an on-going sketching-out between what has been articulated and what has not yet been articulated, working out what something is *like* through the *movement* of its articulation – the incessant question being from *where to where*, and how to get there – a question of *transitioning*.

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<sup>612</sup> Bensmaia, *The Barthes Effect*, xxx.

<sup>613</sup> Hejinian, “Introduction”, *The Language of Inquiry*, 3.

<sup>614</sup> Hejinian, “A Thought is the Bride of What Thinking”, *Language of Inquiry*, 16.

<sup>615</sup> Hejinian, “Language and ‘Paradise’”, *Language of Inquiry*, 61.

<sup>616</sup> Hejinian, “The Rejection of Closure”, *Language of Inquiry*, 47.

<sup>617</sup> Hejinian, “Forms in Alterity: On Translation”, *Language of Inquiry*, 301.

The material is gathered, laid out on a table say – accumulation upon accumulation. The thoughts have been encountered, they brim and agitate, and yet you wait, hold off, not for anything in particular, only perhaps the right beginning that will set the tone and begin to give form to the mess – a key note that will set the arrangement, will establish the *relations between* – begin to *show* connections both perceived and unseen. It is, then, always a question of *composition*, of a certain *fit*, of articulation; the *joint-work* of drawing together *articles* through division – spaces, commas, periods – the placement which breaks and joins the flow. It is a question of configuration, where elements come together, join and meet through the play of centripetal and centrifugal forces outside of your own control. It is a question of rhythm, of course, of where to end the line, begin another paragraph, when to introduce *this* concept, how to connect *that here*. A question of how to interrupt the action –

What marks the “essay”, in this sense, is its attempt to *present* not a logical judgement of a cognisable object, but as Adorno would elsewhere articulate it, a *judgementless synthesis*, where what is proffered is an *attunement*, rather than a definite “thing”.

The ‘play’ of music is play with logical forms as such, of positing, identity, similarity, contradiction, whole, part, and the concentration of music is essentially the power with which these forms articulate themselves in the material, in the notes... The threshold between music and logic does not therefore lie with the logical elements, but rather with their specific logical synthesis, the *judgement*. Music does not know judgement, but rather synthesis of a different kind, a synthesis which constitutes itself purely from the constellation [i.e. the particular configuration of musical material], not from the predication, subordination, subsumption of its elements. The synthesis also stands in relation to truth, but to a completely different truth from apophantic truth... The reflections would have to terminate in a definition like *Music is the logic of judgementless synthesis*.<sup>618</sup>

This incredible resonance with the essay form and its allusions to its coherence through a logic of music, comes from Adorno’s *unwritten* work “Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music” – an attempt which remained in the note-stage as sketches – fragments and notes toward writing – never finding a configured *form* for their articulation. The editor of the post-humously published sketches describes the collection as his attempt to configure such a form, to “bring the kaleidoscope of material to a standstill”.<sup>619</sup> The difficulty for Adorno, in his inquiry, seemed to pertain not so much to *what* to say about music, but *how* – how to find a *judgementless synthesis* for what we do not grasp but what *grasps us*: “We do not understand music – it understands us. This is as true for the musician as for the layman.

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<sup>618</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Beethoven: The Philosophy of Music*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, trans. Edmund Jephcott (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 11.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid.*, x.

When we think ourselves closest to it, it speaks to us and waits sad-eyed for us to answer”.<sup>620</sup>  
It was a question of how to find an adequate *arrangement*, a *configuration*.

It is a judgementless synthesis which he perhaps *did* achieve in another unfinished, though closer to complete work, in his *Aesthetic Theory*. In a remark which bears allegiance to Benjamin’s syntactic translation, and Meschonnic’s rhythmic rendering of form, Robert Hullot-Kentor, translator and editor of the 1997 English version of the book, speaks in the introduction to his attempt to retain the *spatial organisation* of the text, where the

major sections of the English text are divided only where the original divides. The sentence structure and phrasing of the original were maintained wherever possible, given the tremendous differences of English syntax from the original. All words foreign to the original, including English words, occur here in italic. This translation, however, took its lead not so much from the aim to copy the appearance of the original, but rather from Adorno’s description of the hearing implicit to Mahler’s music: an ‘amplitude of a hearing encompassing the far distance, to which the most remote analogies and consequences are virtually present’. In *Aesthetic Theory* this amplitude occurs...in the medium of concepts as their subterranean, dynamic relations.<sup>621</sup>

Hullot-Kentor’s allegiance is to the *possibilities* of the text – what is not *there* as such, but is the *presence of absence* in the text – what must, as he evokes, be *listened to*. And it is precisely in the text’s *parting-with* itself, in the paradigmatic *parataxis* of its arrangement that these relations are rendered – in the “density of insight” rather than “external structure”.<sup>622</sup> It is in the *transitions* articulated *from within* the writing in its *movement* that the relations are rendered. As Hullot-Kentor learns in his inhabiting the text in translating, the “sense”, or *signifiante*, exists not in a progressive argumentation, in propositional statements, but in the propositional *tension* of the text’s internal relations, which “defines the text’s – and its translation’s – particular vulnerability: the slightest slackening of intensity threatens to dissolve the text into a miscellany”. What he attempts to preserve is precisely the text’s *tendency*, its lack of ground other than the “intensity with which it draws on and pushes against itself”.<sup>623</sup> Whilst the thrust of the movement is forward, it proceeds “concentrically” rather than in a linear progression.<sup>624</sup>

His effort to preserve the singularity of the form is in stark contrast to its initial rendering into English in the 1984 edition where it was viewed, as Hullot-Kentor himself puts it, as “a

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<sup>620</sup> Ibid., xi.

<sup>621</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xv.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid., xix.

superstitiously imposed impediment that would only stymie the book's consumption...the 1984 translation arrived on bookstore shelves divided into numbered chapters with main headings and subheadings inserted in the text. Paragraph indentations were distributed arbitrarily throughout, completing the image of a monodirectional sequence of topic sentences that could be followed stepwise from chapter 1 through chapter 12. This subordinated the text's paratactical order to a semblance of progressive argumentation that offered to present the book's content conveniently".<sup>625</sup> The *readability* is reduced to the *schema* of a form already known and the etho-poiesis of the text's singular rhythm is nullified.

The rigorous, eventmental *taking-place* of language is, for Adorno, as it was for Meschonnic, a political necessity – and to write to be understood, is simply to write under “the sign”, to speak with Meschonnic – something Adorno echoes in a note entitled “Morality and style”: “Only what they do not need first to understand, they consider understandable; only the word coined by commerce, and really alienated, touches them as familiar”.<sup>626</sup> A writing which assembles itself otherwise, apart from a re-iteration of predictable “pre-existent patterns, appears inconsiderate, a symptom of eccentricity, almost of confusion”.<sup>627</sup> And in another note “Memento”: “The prudence that restrains us from venturing too far ahead in a sentence, is usually only an agent of social control, and so of stupefaction”.<sup>628</sup> What Adorno seems to point towards in this fragment is an attention to the *rhythm* of the text – the manner in which words are bound together: “A word is seldom banal on its own: in music too the single note is immune to triteness. The most abominable clichés are combinations of words...For in them the brackish stream of stale language swill aimlessly, instead of being dammed up, thrown into relief by the precision of the writer's expressions. This applies not only to combinations of words, but to the construction of whole forms”.<sup>629</sup> The etho-poetic question of the text concerns its *arrangement*, the *organisation* of its combinations. Indeed, such was the struggle Adorno intimated in relation to his final incomplete(able) work, *Aesthetic Theory* – a text configured in para-tactical form.

The *essay* above all perhaps, is a text which, like Benjamin's reflective medium, contains a *germ* – is a *generative capacity* – a language that calls other language into being through the *bound* singularity of its rhythm of thinking.

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<sup>625</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid., *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, 101.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., 85.

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My tendency is not to oppose poetry to philosophy, in the sense that these two experiences both take place within language. The home of truth is language, and I would distrust any philosopher who would leave it to others – philologists or poets – to look after this home. We must take care of language.  
– Agamben, “Thought is the Courage of Hopelessness”

*An author who teaches a writer nothing, teaches nobody anything.* The determinant factor is the exemplary character of a production that enables it, first, to lead other producers to this production, and secondly to present them with an improved apparatus for their use. And this apparatus is better to the degree that it leads consumers to production, in short that it is capable of making co-workers out of readers or spectators.  
– Walter Benjamin “The Author as Producer”

Poetry may show us that when we sing to the subjectivity of the other, without determining that subjectivity, this is politics.  
– Henri Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translating*

The “form” of the essay, of a *gesture* of writing, of an *experimentum linguae*, of a *writing from within*, is not, in this sense, a form as a static schema, but is the form as the singular *passage* of a subject being put into play in language – the formation of a *poetic* subject through the discourse of a situated rhythm of sense: “A rhythm is a sense if it is a passage of a subject, the production of a form – disposition, configuration, organisation”.<sup>630</sup> Rather than cohering into a genre where it is subsumed under the logic of identity, this writing from *within* escapes such generalisation, for it is defined only through its making a paradigm of itself, of being only ever an identity-in-difference and a difference-in-identity – an analogical singular *as-such*, each time, defined by its reflexivity, that is, its being in relation *to* itself, existing *for itself*.

What the writing is “about” is not discernible but exists only in the going about, in the movement itself between, and so is not a stable “thing” only the perception of *similarity*, there is only a sense that must be *sensed*, that is, bodied-forth, for the synthesis it proffers is that of a *cohesion without concept* – a certain *judgementless* synthesis of *attunement* through tension. What is at stake is a thinking, a language of inquiry, which is not the expression of a constituted subject’s willing, but the passionate undertaking of something being brought into being – something entirely *improbable* and *unforeseen* in a *making-room*, an *anticipative* understanding, where what *is* becomes what *is not*, what is not becomes what is; what is closest most distant, most distant closest. Not an *actual* sense, but a *possible* one. The *gesture* as the undergoing and bearing-out a sense that is being born in its taking-place,

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<sup>630</sup> Meschonnic, *Critique du Rythme*, 83.

producing, as Thomas Carl Wall puts it, “the imaginary...something like fiction, something that remains only *possibly* intelligible”.<sup>631</sup>

The poetic subject does not exist “in” the text, nor does it exist “in” the one who wrote it, nor even “in” the one who reads it, but only in the “in” of an *inhabiting*, where the sense is made in the chiasm between writer-reader and text, in the between, the fold, of a *thrown-projection*; in the *re* of a referral; in the resonance of a sense; in the *relation* of an *as-such*.

The roles are reversed. It is the reversibility of listening. The encounter takes place in a moment where we relate to the infinite of history and to the infinite of meaning. A voice hearing its own history, a voice speaking its history is heard as a recitative. What we hear in it is not what it says but what it does. What it does to itself, to the one speaking it, and also what it does to the one hearing it. It transforms. It does what we do not know to be hearing. The work of listening is to recognise at certain moments, unpredictably, all we did not know we were hearing. The mouth to ear becomes the mouth to mouth.<sup>632</sup>

What is the *transformational* quality of the *poetic subject* is, for Agamben, what he comes to call the *developmental* capacity of the text – that articulated emptiness within what is said, that *tension* of difference, that fold of divergence, that *rhythmos*, which is the *philosophical element* that *makes room* for further thinking – its *etho-poetic* effect if you like.

If a work, be it a work of science or art or scholarship has some value, it will contain this philosophical element. It is something which remains unsaid within the work but which demands to be unfolded and worked out. By the way I think this is a very good definition of philosophy. Philosophy has no specificity, no proper territory, it is within literature, within art or science or theology or whatever, it is this element which contains a capability to be developed. In this sense philosophy is scattered in every territory. It is always a diaspora, and must be recollected and gathered up.<sup>633</sup>

These texts gather into their saying an *incapacity* to say, an incompleteness that is not the flaw of writing, but its *impotentiality*. “This ignorance names the supreme art of writing, to allow something to remain as a potential so the reader can develop it”.<sup>634</sup> The text is, in its *structure* of possibility, not the constructed *end* of a thought, but rather, its *beginning* – it is an *opening*, a *sketch* – something which retains an inherent *incompleteness* not accidental to its sense, but constitutive of it – indicative of the *incapacity* of language here not concealed, not stepped over, but *inhabited*. A writing that cannot close, or end, but only *interrupt* itself,

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<sup>631</sup> Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity*, 2.

<sup>632</sup> Meschonnic, *Ethics and Politics of Translating*, 137.

<sup>633</sup> Giorgio Agamben, “What is a Paradigm”, lecture presented at European Graduate School 2002, [www.file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Giorgio%20Agamben.%20What%20is%20a%20Paradigm.pdf](http://www.file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Giorgio%20Agamben.%20What%20is%20a%20Paradigm.pdf). This “developmental capacity” is a borrowing by Agamben from Feuerbach and is originally rendered in the German as *Entwicklungsfähigkeit*, whose literal sense can be translated as “viability”.

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid.*

or be interrupted – a *thinking* held in *suspension* – a conflict momentarily halted rather than completed in a synthetic synthesis.

It is in such a way that the schism between poetry and philosophy comes undone in an experiment of language taking-place, an *experimentum linguae*, whose purpose is not to pursue or present a consumed or consumable thought, but for the writing itself to be an articulation of a *possibility* of thinking, where the writer-reader's own being is at stake through their undergoing an *experience* of language in its taking-place.

What characterises gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported. The gesture, in other words, opens the sphere of *ethos* as the more proper sphere of that which is human.<sup>635</sup>

I call *thought* the nexus that constitutes the forms of life in an inseparable context as form-of-life. I do not mean by this the individual exercise of an organ or a psychic faculty, but rather an experience, an *experimentum* that has as its object the potential character of human life and of human intelligence. To think does not mean merely to be affected by this or that thing, by this or that content of enacted thought, but rather at once to be affected by one's own receptiveness and experience in each and every thing that is thought a pure power of thinking.<sup>636</sup>

In being delivered over to something that not only *gives*, but also *refuses*, the reader is given a suggestion which must be borne-out, carried-through, in a sketching-out. It is a solicitous *making-room* for another to inhabit the text from their own situated *being-there* – an openness for a situated other to make sense of what is not overtly said, but gestured to, sketched; a saying which leaves room for the play of your own singular being-there, your own carrying-out and bearing a sense. It is only in the *gag*, the *incapacity* of a text, where the pure possibility of undergoing an experience in language resides.

The Wittgenstenian definition of the mystic as the appearing of what cannot be said is literally a definition of the 'gag'. And every great philosophical text is the 'gag' exhibiting language itself, being-in-language itself as a gigantic loss of memory, as an incurable speech defect.<sup>637</sup>

As the para-ergon to a work that is not written and cannot be written, the text itself does not accomplish thought, but *points towards* it – its meaning must be developed by a reader who inhabits, or allows themselves to be inhabited by, the white space of the page, in the muteness and silence which underscores what is said. In this sense, the words are a frame for something that can't be articulated directly and the task of the reader is to *listen* to rhythm,

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<sup>635</sup> Agamben, "Notes on Gesture", *Means Without Ends*, 57.

<sup>636</sup> Agamben, "Form-of-Life", *Means Without End*, 9.

<sup>637</sup> Agamben, "Notes on Gesture", *Means Without End*, 59.

rhythm being that which is *not heard* but is the *articulated* silence, the *stanza* of a reading room, in the imaginative task of coming to *read what was never written*.

What the work opens us onto is the manner in which we are still undecided beings – those who always have their existence *to be* regardless of all the numerous schemas of existence we have subscribed to. Such is the radicality of reading – an encounter that can throw you into a groundlessness that destroys your very way of being and forces you to question who you are. The etho-poetic text opens you onto this space beside yourself – the *impotentiality* of your *developmental capacity*. It is in this sense that the *philosophical element* is truly the text's *capacity*, its *room*, to *develop* the one who encounters it, in the sense of creating a situation where they must body-forth a sense, undergo an experience of *impotentiality*, where they are *othered* to themselves in a *not-knowing*, in having to suffer their own non-being. The developmental capacity engages this space beside you – this *there* that is still, always, on-going, it casts you into a situation of having to *tend towards* yourself. What is at stake for the writer-reader is undergoing and bearing forth sense from this *not-knowing*, this *impotentiality*, and from it, letting something be.

Only when we succeed in...experiencing our own impotentiality do we become capable of creating, truly becoming poets. And the hardest thing in this experience is not the Nothing or its darkness, in which many nevertheless remain imprisoned; the hardest thing is being capable of annihilating this Nothing and letting something, from nothing, be.<sup>638</sup>

fold of the presence on which they are established: the *logos*, which characterises the human as *zoon logon echon* (living thing using language), is this fold that gathers and divides all things in the 'putting together' of presence. And the human is precisely this fracture of presence, which opens a world and over which language holds itself.<sup>639</sup>

The reading room is the thinking space, in this sense, not as the thinking about *something*, but as thinking the *nothing*, being confronted by the not-knowing of being thrown, the impotential of not-seeing, where there is a holding-back, a restraint on knowing.

In order for it to be an experience of thinking, thought cannot have simply passed into an act; in order for communication to be an experience of sense it cannot have simply passed into what is said – we can think and communicate only through what remains potential, in ourselves as in others, that is, our *impotentiality*, our *radical passivity*, our not-thinking thrownness. "We can communicate with others only through what in us – as much as in others – has remained potential, and any communication (as Benjamin perceives for

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<sup>638</sup> Agamben, "Bartleby, or On Contingency", *Potentialities*, 253.

<sup>639</sup> Agamben, *Stanzas*, 156.

language) is first of all communication not of something in common but of communicability itself”.<sup>640</sup>

The sign of the etho-poetic text is the extent to which it is inclusive of that which *never ceases from not-writing* itself, in order for it to be *readable*, for it to be an *experience of potentiality*. Such is the *desubjectivising* of etho-poesis, of a truth that is “without truth, for truth is what is at issue in them”.<sup>641</sup> The reader must inhabit the *threshold* of the text, dwelling in its dark potentiality – being neither *here nor there*, but caught in the chiasm of being grasped and attempting to grasp, being thrown and attempting to cast – the hyphenated reality of *being-there* – in a suspended time within time.

In his own ruminations on rhythm, Agamben comes to read it as that “principle of presence” which opens the work “in its original space. As such it is neither calculable nor rational; yet it is also not irrational, at least in the purely negative meaning this word is commonly understood to have. On the contrary, precisely because rhythm is that which causes the work of art to be what it is, it is also Measure and *logos (ratio)* in the Greek sense of that which gives everything its proper station in presence”.<sup>642</sup> The rhythm of the work throws us out of the chronometrically measurable succession of instants, into the more “original time” – that of an *ec-stasis*, a “being arrested...being-outside”.<sup>643</sup> What rhythm throws us to is our thrownness, the impotential potentiality of one who does not project sense but is *projected* – one whose *being* is at stake, is an *issue*, in the *poesis* of a *making-room*. “In this authentic temporal dimension, the poetic status of man on earth finds its proper meaning. Man has on earth a poetic status, because it is *poesis* that founds for him the original space of his world... Only because he attains, in the poetic act, a more original temporal dimension is he a historical being, for whom, that is, at every instant his past and future are at stake”.<sup>644</sup> In the manifestation of a *poetic subject*, the writer occupies and is occupied by the gap of a time in its *taking-place*, the *non-coincidence* between what is said and the saying itself, which places their being into question – throwing them into this *relation towards* their existence that is still outstanding. The reader in turn comes to occupy this gap of a sense that is not fully present, but the presence of an absence – the relation that is also a suture – the gathering that is also a separating. Their task is to occupy this *reading room* as a *staging* that must take-place, singularly such, each time – to become the opening for a sense that *has begun*, is

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<sup>640</sup> Agamben, *Means Without End*, 10.

<sup>641</sup> Agamben, “Bartleby, or On Contingency”, *Potentialities*, 260.

<sup>642</sup> Agamben, “On the Original Structure of the Work of Art”, *Man Without Content*, trans. Giorgia Albert (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), 98.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>644</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

sketched, and at the same time, must begin, must be sketched-out. The poetic subject is the gift of the *present instance of discourse* to the reader – between what has been and is not-yet. The *reading room* is a space of suspension, a *stanza*, a *halting place*, a time within time, interrupting the identity of an ego where the reader must be *desubjectivised* – occupying the place of emptiness for the presencing of a sense that is not simply present, but on the way. The reading room is a gift which gives and holds back, for what it proffers is only the experience of (im)potentiality – the experience of being *towards* one's self. The reading room is, thus, an originary *architectonics* in the sense Agamben proffers as the *poesis* of origin – “the gift of the original space of man”<sup>645</sup> – that which throws us back into relation with this one beneath you who has been carrying you through – not what “I” know, but what *she knows*.

The reader, in this sense, is not one who comes *after* the text is written, but is a structure operative *within* the text, as the split of a “there” in a jointure where it *is* only through what it *is not*. The sense resides in the subtle *showing*, rather than what is directly said, a deictic demonstration that comes to pass, tied to a situated articulation, to the *hyphenation* of its taking-place. Here is *her* understanding which exists only in the *attuned jointure*, in the participative sense that is always in-between – never solidifying into a distinct signified but a sense that is constantly being worked-out through the non-coincidence of what has been articulated and what is not-yet articulated – the articulated silence, the gaps in-between. She a reader of that which is never written.

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In his text, the writer sets up house. Just as he trundles papers, books, pencils, documents untidily from room to room, he creates the same disorder in his thoughts. They become pieces of furniture that he sinks into, content or irritable. He strokes them affectionately, wears them out, mixes them up, re-arranges, ruins them. For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live. In it he inevitably produces, as his family once did, refuse and lumber. But now he lacks a store-room, and it is hard in any case to part from left-overs. So he pushes them along in front of him, in danger finally of filling his pages with them. The demand that one harden oneself against self-pity implies the technical necessity to counter any slackening of intellectual tension with the utmost alertness, and to eliminate anything that has begun to encrust the work or to drift along idly, which may at an earlier stage have served, as gossip, to generate the warm atmosphere conducive to growth, but is now left behind, flat and stale. In the end, the writer is not even allowed to live in his writing.

Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

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<sup>645</sup> Ibid., 101.

## V

If there is an ideality, a thought that has a future in me, that even breaks through my space of consciousness and has a future with the others, and finally, having become a writing, has a future in every possible reader, this can be only that thought that leaves me with my hunger and leaves them with their hunger, that betokens a generalised buckling of my landscape and opens it to the universal, precisely because it is rather an *unthought*. Ideas that are too much possessed are no longer ideas  
– Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*

Whoever wants to understand something verbal in a hermeneutical manner must constantly attend to what is tacitly meant, though not openly expressed...and avoid the potentially objectivising view of language that confines it to the purely logical content of what is stated  
– Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*

It is this *developmental capacity*, this etho-poesis which characterises those texts which, though they have been read to death it seems, continue to be readable, for their function is not to deliver a content of thought, but to choreograph a situation of thinking. And so a text like *Being and Time* can be considered such a *writing from within*. As Heidegger himself understood it, the work was not a thought to be *consumed*, but a sense that had to be *inhabited* in order to signify. Such a writing from within he himself rendered “gesturally” by calling it a method of “*formal indication*” – a sense that is not “present” in the text, but a sense that exists only in being set in motion, in its *enactment character*.

The formal indication is intended primarily as an advance indication of the relational sense of the phenomenon, in a negative sense at the same time as a warning! A phenomenon must be pre-given in such a way that its relational sense is held in suspense. One must guard against assuming that its relational sense is originally theoretical. This is a position that opposes the sciences in the extreme. There is no insertion into a content-domain, rather the opposite: the formal indication is a warding off, a preliminary protection, so that the enactment character remains free.<sup>646</sup>

Heidegger’s formal indication can be understood as an attempt to open up a space between what regular words have been taken to be and what they can signify – creating a gap between sign and signification, where the *relational sense* is held in suspension, that is, the *as* is not covered over, but exposed. Everyday words are emptied-out of their regular sense and only *sketched*, awaiting another to come to inhabit them from within their own language of inquiry. What the “there” means, what “time” means, what “understanding” means, are not the conceptual strata of a system, but are only *indicative* and must *take-place* in order to signify, suspended as they are in the relational “*as-such*”. In this way, they are akin to “symbols” in Panikkar’s sense, or *deixis*, which signify only from within a situated *taking-place* – there for a while, at a particular time – their sense contingent on the *trans* of being

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<sup>646</sup> Martin Heidegger quoted in S.J. McGrath, “The Logic of Indirection in Heidegger and Aquinas”, *The Heythrop Journal* 54, no. 2 (2013): 280.

*carried-out*, borne by a *Dasein* and in this way are etho-poetic, *implicative* of their *possibility*, their issue of being.

The whole connection between authentic and inauthentic existence, between the moment of vision and the absence of such a moment, is not something present at hand which transpires within man, but one which belongs to *Dasein*. We can only understand the *concepts* that open up this connection as long as they are not taken to signify characteristic features or properties of something present at hand, but are taken rather as *indications* that show how our understanding must first twist free from our ordinary conception of beings and properly transform itself into the *Dasein* in us.<sup>647</sup>

It is an understanding which takes-place only *in movement*, only in the *transition* of its taking-place. The reader is prompted to undergo an *experience* of *Being and Time*, in the sense of having to bear-forth its sense.

To undergo an experience with something – be it a thing, a person, or a god – it means that this something befalls us, strikes us, comes over us, overwhelms and transforms us. When we talk of ‘undergoing’ an experience, we mean specifically that the experience is not of our own making; to undergo here means that we endure it, suffer it, receive it as it strikes us and submit to it. It is this something itself that comes about, comes to pass, happens. To experience something means to attain it along the way, by going along a way. To undergo an experience with something means that this something, which we reach along the way in order to attain it, itself pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into itself.<sup>648</sup>

To understand Heidegger’s sketch of *Dasein* is to be prompted to undergo a *reading* of it, a sense that must be *participated* in, *bodied-forth*, from within your own situated *being-there*. To understand it is to stand in the same world differently. What, in this sense, has been called a great tome of philosophy is, after-all, only a mere *sketch* seeking to be sketched-out.

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<sup>647</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 296.

<sup>648</sup> Martin Heidegger, *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1971), 57.

## TOWARDS A LANGUAGE OF INQUIRY

You see, that's why I work like a dog and I worked like a dog all my life. I am not interested in the academic status of what I am doing because my problem is my own transformation... This transformation of one's self by one's own knowledge is, I think, something rather close to the aesthetic experience.

– Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy and Culture: Interviews and Other Writings*

The question of the world did not occur at the beginning of time, it occurs every day.

– Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*

The activity of thinking is as relentless and repetitive as life itself, and the question whether thought has any meaning at all constitutes the same unanswerable riddle as the question for the meaning of life; its processes permeate the whole of human existence so intimately that its beginning and end coincide with the beginning and end of human life itself; its processes permeate the whole of human existence so intimately that its beginning and end coincide with the beginning and end of human life itself.

– Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*

The present is our greatest (im)possibility – inhabiting the gap of a non-coincidence, a parting-with, taking up home in the uncomfortable zone between what has been and is not yet. Such was the home in homelessness Arendt proffered for thinking as the *time within time* needed for a critical conscience. Thinking is that which, as Arendt depicts it, is *interruptive* – it forces a pause, a gap in the incessant doing, a removal from the day to day existence and the inhabiting of a parenthetical pocket to the *das Man* – entering into a *time within time* wherein a relation to the world can be established, where the necessary distance can be gained in order to see it *as* something – something otherwise than we've taken it to be. For, in this withdrawal, what is taken a distance from too is the ordinary *language* as it is being used and schematised. In the time within time, time is taken to say something *otherwise* than how it is being articulated – the phrases, the blocks of ways of saying, which broker us against the strange ordinariness of what can't be captured in any word.

Thinking as the inhabiting of a gap, is, as Arendt sketches it, the task of each generation, each individual, to be worked out for themselves – a *care of the self* which must be sketched-out anew by each new generation, by each beginner cast into having been begun into the world. This gap is, as Arendt depicts it in *Life of the Mind*,

the region of the spirit...the path paved by thinking, the small inconspicuous track of non-time beaten by the activity of thought within the time-space given to natal and mortal men. Following that course, the thought-trains remembrance and anticipation, save whatever they touch from the ruin of historical and biographical time. This small non-time space in the very heart of time, unlike the world and the culture into which we are born, cannot be inherited and handed down by tradition, although every great book of thought points to it somewhat cryptically – as we found Heraclitus saying of the notoriously cryptic and unreliable Delphic oracle:...('it does not say and it does not hide, it intimates'). Each new generation, every new human

being, as he becomes conscious of being inserted between an infinite past and an infinite future, must discover and ploddingly pave anew the path of thought. And it is after all possible, and seems to me likely, that the strange survival of great works, their relative permanence throughout thousands of years, is due to their having been born in the small inconspicuous track of non-time which their author's thought had beaten between an infinite past and an infinite future by accepting past and future as directed, aimed, as it were, at themselves – as *their* predecessors and successors, *their* past and *their* future – thus establishing a present for themselves, a kind of timeless time in which men are able to create timeless works with which to transcend their own finitudes.<sup>649</sup>

The time within time is a time aimed towards its own singularised taking-place, that is, for the sake of *itself*. Thinking, in this sense, is characterised not by the production of certain utilitarian “outputs”, but only begins to “assert itself”, when, as Arendt sketches it in *The Human Condition*, the thinker *overreaches* themselves, and produces “useless things, objects which are unrelated to material or intellectual wants, to man's physical needs, no less than to his thirst for knowledge”.<sup>650</sup> In contrast, cognition is that which is always driven towards an end-point, it is a *process* with a determinant beginning and end, rather than a dwelling in the midst, and whose “usefulness can be tested” and thus, as such, can *fail* if it “produces no results”.<sup>651</sup> Cognition is ends-directed, thinking, in contrast, exists only for *itself*, it “has neither an end nor an aim outside of itself, and it does not even produce results; not only the utilitarian philosophy of *homo faber* but also the men of action and the lovers of results in the sciences have never tired of pointing out how entirely ‘useless’ thought is”.<sup>652</sup> Its purpose is, perhaps, only the undergoing of experience – an intensification of living itself. In this respect, it is telling that, above all, Arendt comes to understand thinking as coming closest to itself in *poetry* – that art of recollection attributable to, as she proffers, “*Mnemosyne*, the mother of the muses”<sup>653</sup> – the goddess of memory who is, as Heidegger was wont to remind us, the daughter of earth and sky – hers the measure of the in-between, and a recollection characterised above all, as Arendt would have it, by *rhythm* – that through which the life of recollection *lives on*.

The recollecting of *Mnemosyne* is evoked by Agamben in his essay on Aby Warburg, in which he reads a dark nameless method of an inquiry which dwells in the schism between poetry and philosophy.

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<sup>649</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Inc, 1971), 211.

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>651</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>652</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

Perhaps the fracture that in our culture divides poetry and philosophy, art and science, the word that ‘sings’ and the word that ‘remembers’, is nothing other than one aspect of the very schizophrenia of Western culture that Warburg recognised in the polarity of the ecstatic nymph and the melancholic river god. We will be truly faithful to Warburg’s teaching if we learn to see the contemplative gaze of the god in the nymph’s dancing gesture and if we succeed in understanding that the word that sings also remembers and the one that remembers also sings. The science that will truly take hold of the liberating knowledge of the human will truly deserve to be called by the Greek name of *Mnemosyne*.<sup>654</sup>

In Warburg’s work with the image, Robertson comes to read his inquiry as an attempt to trace the *irregularity* of transformational process whereby

he foregrounded transitional periods, such as the Florentine quattrocento, as matrices of intense historical activity hinging on a kind of innovation that was unopposed to a *problematized* continuity. It was the dynamic movement of life itself that Warburg sought in the image and its stylistic developments and borrowings: the late 19<sup>th</sup> century language of vitalism, so present in the thought of Nietzsche, Richard Semon, Bergson, strongly inflected Warburg’s methods of research as well as that research’s subjects and figures.<sup>655</sup>

A dynamic movement which, as Robertson comes to trace it, was modelled on the spatial figure of the *ellipse*: “the irregularly curving movement traced by the planets on their various orbits around the sun” and the figure on which Warburg modelled the design of his library – *Mnemosyne* – his thinking space, his *reading room*, “the traffic island of the thoughtful”.<sup>656</sup>

What seems to possess Robertson’s attention in Warburg’s work was his interest in *movement*, not simply as the content of his inquiry, but as the movement of that inquiry itself – one of a strange discontinuous-continuity. At the time of the construction of Warburg’s elliptical reading room, he was himself involved in a construction of his own – the panels which would form the *Mnemosyne Atlas* – and which had an in-built place within the shelves of the reading room itself, where they could be exhibited and shown in lectures: “there was a lip built into the shelving for this purpose”.<sup>657</sup> Yet the panels, as Robertson reads them, were never merely illustrative teaching aids, but a *staging* of thinking. As montages of “reproductions of various kinds of documents – maps, charts, documentation of sculptures, frescos, ritual objects, paintings, drawings and news clippings” the “grouped images of each panel function as a semantic circulation; they are stages, in the theatrical sense of the word...”.<sup>658</sup> Such a staging was an attempt, as Robertson reads it, to capture “the movement

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<sup>654</sup> Agamben, “Aby Warburg and the Nameless Science”, *Potentialities*, 100.

<sup>655</sup> Lisa Robertson, *Thinking Space* (New York: Organism for Poetic Research, 2013), 6.

<sup>656</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

of complex historical explorations into the tropes of renewal, and life in motion”.<sup>659</sup> The panels are not, in this sense, secondary discursive aids, but each one a *staging* of gesture and itself a staged gesture – a “material concept setting out a proposition about the movement of ideas”,<sup>660</sup> where each panel speaks to “knowledge in flux”. Robertson reads the panels then, as “active sites of experimental thinking”.<sup>661</sup>

Above all, the elliptical movement is what Robertson comes to understand as “time itself”, in the lived, experiential time, where

it wobbles, its centre shifts, it doesn't pertain to hierarchy. The mode of rationality of the irregular curve called the ellipse is fundamentally dangerous...it falls short of predictability. The word itself comes from the Greek term for chasm or gap. Warburg called the ellipse a space for thinking, and for him his library with its elliptical hub was a lantern, and it was an observatory.<sup>662</sup>

The ellipse is better understood as the play of a force which cannot be named as such, the dark body of a nameless science, as Agamben would have it. As Robertson quotes from Sarduy's conception of the ellipse, “now the reigning figure is no longer the circle, with its single center, radiating, shining, paternal, but the ellipse, which opposes this visible focus with another focus, equally active, equally real, but blocked, dead, nocturnal, a blind center, the opposite of the solar, germinating *yang*: absent”.<sup>663</sup> *Mnemosyne* then, as a reading room, a space of recollecting in the gap of a time that *is* only in relation to what *is not*; a thinking in relation to not-thinking; a presencing *with* absence; a singularised, unpredictable, attuned jointure; a space-time of a *situated* metron of a making-room; a spatiofugal formation *from within*; a singular configuration subject to change.

Robertson ends her essay by drawing us into the scene of her own thinking, its situated articulation, where ideas are recollected in the gathering of a cohesion without concept, in the gesture of a judgementless synthesis.

As for me, at this moment I write in a Paris hotel room, with papers and index cards spread across the bed, and my computer propped up on one pillow. The desk is too small. It's a fifth story room and I look through ruffled tulle curtains across mansard roofs. I've brought in my bag Frances Yates's *Art of Memory* (Yates was a lifelong member of the Warburg Institute), Thomas Bernhard's *Correction*, which is itself about the space of thinking as error, my battered red Carlyle, a large grey Muji notebook I used for transcription in the Warburg archive, and many coloured index cards, clipped together in various loosely themed stacks. To write this talk I've

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<sup>659</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>662</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid., 37.

taken, in my own way, Didi-Huberman's description of Warburg's method for the *Atlas* – I keep moving ideas on a surface until there's a fit, an energy, an engram-like stimulus. But the fit isn't about a collapse of ideas into one another, nor is it a chain of causation or even influence. It's about the charge of a distance, a tension.<sup>664</sup>

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Etho-poetic thinking is not an abstract philosophical rumination, nor is it a "poetic" dally, it is the *critical* stanza of a space of suspension, a halting place, a time within time, and a thinking that takes time, dwelling in the doing, un-doing of an on-going inhabiting, making a rhythm and room of one's own; a thinking not purposeful – what is *for* something, nor purposeless – what is not *for anything*, but a thinking whose only purpose is *for itself*, that is, for entering into dialogue with the one beneath who carries you through, this inappropriate *daimon* who constitutes your ethos, the abode where you abide only in relation to *non-being*. Care of the self then, not as a practice of self-absorption, nor self-renunciation, but as the *critical* practice of *desubjectivisation* – of entering into the solitude of a saying that converses *with itself*; entering into the expropriation of a removal from the small mindedness and pettiness of ego-centricism, into an *ecological* "Care" for *being-in-the-world*; connected, yet distinct, in an attuned jointure with others, taking on a language that is and is not your own – sketching-out an articulation that cannot equate with the on-going suchness of the world. The "art" of an *etho-poetic* thinking is an attempt to exist for the sake, not of this or that external prestige or gain, but for the *sake of one's self* – attempting to inhabit the limits of this situated *being-there* – making one's existence one's own in the short passage between birth and death, unfolding in an improvisation of a language of inquiry, rather than the schema of identity.

Etho-poetic thinking is a vocation, a call, which attempts to take care of one's self, to protect one's self, not in the immunity of an "I", but in the preservation of one's own otherness – the inappropriate strangeness which is the potentiality of a thinking-as-living, a form-of-life – yearning and seeking, in a desire not to *know*, but to undergo an *experience*, in order, simply, to be able to *live*, by accepting that we are able to die – not as an abstract event, but as the shadow of our day, the dark body of our own impotentiality.

Etho-poetic thinking is not a reproducible method – its character of truth, as Foucault notes, is recognised only by its *difference*, contingent, as it is, on saying not what something *is* but what it is *like* from within a given situation, in an inquiry not divorced from one's being, but implicative of it. It is in this articulation in which the *as* is not presupposed, but *exposed*, that

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<sup>664</sup> Ibid., 40.

a language of inquiry calls another into being – its dissimilitude, its silence, seeking another to sketch-out what was not-said – seeking a correspondence with another whose own language itself becomes a call, which itself seeks a response. A chain of continuous dialogue which rests upon a certain ability to *read* what was never written – to become attuned to the tactic of the tacit that must be *sensed*, rather than cognitively known, to undergo an *experience of (im)potentiality, of being-thrown*. Listening to the call contingent on an ability to attend, to become attuned to the milieu, the *Stimmung*, to the opening of what is said.

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Whilst this thesis has spoken and argued for the *situational* historicity of an understanding, it has not mentioned or gestured to its *own* situated historicity. And yet, perhaps it has, implicitly, for to dwell on the question of what makes for an etho-poetic thinking is a direct response to the contemporary malaise of an unpoetic dwelling, of a forgetfulness of a language of inquiry, a *care of the self*, both within the university and outside it. The effort has been, thus, an oblique critique of our contemporary situation, according to that approach intimated by Heidegger when he said:

That we dwell unpoetically, and in what way, we can in any case learn only if we know the poetic. Whether, and when, we may come to a turning point in our unpoetic dwelling is something we may expect to happen only if we remain heedful of the poetic. How and to what extent our doings can share in this turn we alone can prove, if we take the poetic seriously.<sup>665</sup>

The jargon of learning outcomes which inquiry is currently being submitted to resides only on the side of visibility; of actualisable potential; of accumulation and attainment; of continuous activity. Whilst the impulse of study remains unquenched in our time, it is being fostered and fed in a climate where the pearl of study is dimmed, and an inquiry whose only purpose is *for itself*, replaced by the demonstrable purpose.

What is in danger of being lost perhaps, in our current milieu, is the beauty of study, its art – the strange dissolution it operates in the inaccessibility of an encounter, in a *xenos* experience where we are moved towards the radical deappropriation of unknowing; the *political* and *ethical* possibility of radical desubjectification – study as a giving one's self over to being *otherwise*, where its greatest "potential" lies in its inaccessibility, in an *invisible* realm which cannot be brought out into the light of learning outcomes, or be made a product of. Etho-poetic thinking cannot be result-oriented, or defined through "learning outcomes", as it is a thinking which is not *causally determined*, but as a *gesture*, is a thinking

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<sup>665</sup> Heidegger, "Poetically Man Dwells", 226.

determined by its *tending towards*, by the *indeterminability* of the *future*. It can only be recognised by its *similarity*.

Perhaps what is beginning to mark our contemporary attempts at inquiry is what Arendt proffered as a *thoughtlessness*. Thoughtlessness was, for Arendt, the defining feature of the times she lived in – something captured in her infamous phrase “the banality of evil”, where she came to perceive the actions of Eichmann not as those of a monster, but as bathed in the ordinariness of a certain *thoughtlessness*, accomplished, significantly, through the manner in which his language was only ever a repetition of the official speech of the Nazi apparatus, as Arendt bore witness to at his trial, noting how, he “repeated word for word the same stock phrases and self-invented clichés (when he did succeed in constructing a sentence of his own, he repeated it until it became a cliché) each time he referred to an incident or event of importance to him”.<sup>666</sup> The language of this apparatus effectively shielded Eichmann from confronting his own otherness in having to take on a language that is and is not his own, of having to sketch-out a situated sense of articulation. In the on-going repetition of already established stock phrases, the uncanniness of language, and thus his own questionability, was effectively covered over. What characterised Eichman’s thoughtlessness, for Arendt, was not that he was stupid, but that he didn’t *think* – he didn’t enter into dialogue with the stranger beneath him, was, to all intents and purposes, not in a relationship of “Care” towards his own existence.

It is perhaps this *thoughtlessness* of language which marks our own time, the alienation of which Agamben spoke, in which it is being reduced to the repetition of stock phrases in the framing of all inquiry, both in how it is anticipated – what outcomes, outputs, results it will have, and how it has been carried out – missing the mark entirely of that space in-between in which any language of inquiry actually lives.

What an etho-poetic thinking proffers to counter this thoughtlessness, is perhaps only the *thoughtfulness* of gesture – what we acknowledge in the gifting of others which isn’t *something*, but the *facticity* of something, (even if it is a nothing), being given.

We say that it is a “nice gesture” to give a gift or remember to telephone a sick friend. The thing done may involve statements, but it is also framed as a statement in itself. It is not the gift, or what is said on the phone, but ‘the thought’ (that is, the gesture) that counts. Perhaps gesture is best understood as the moment when thought

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<sup>666</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 49.

becomes visible, tangible, or palpable, staged and framed as form – something to be held and to hold us in mutual prehension.<sup>667</sup>

It is, perhaps, only when thought becomes *gesture* that we are truly thinking, attempting not to say what something “is”, but dwelling in the gag that lets something be shown, *as such*. Gesture, then, a thinking as *thoughtfulness* – an attempt to give articulation to the world not in an effort to appropriate it, but to *show* it *as such*, in the enigma of its dissimilitude, in the chiaroscuro of its analogical *is* and *is not*. The *gesture* arises both from this necessary solitude and withdrawal which divorces the self from their social role, and allows them to inhabit a space of *imagination* in its strong sense; of *possibility*, in its *impotential* sense. Here the self *addresses* their own being, sends themselves *towards* themselves, by inhabiting their “two-in-oneness”, as Arendt would have it. And yet this *two* operates not as two established identities which converse, but more as the movement of a conversing which lets itself be taken by its own impotential, in the inhabiting of language’s solitude and withdrawal. Here it is a case not of two *established things* but a reversible topology, a milieu of relational forces, where the inhabiting of a gap involves being inhabited by a gap. The etho-poetic thinker is the one who interrupts themselves – the trajectory of a life tending towards death – they interrupt this, and dwell for a while in a thinking space, in a gap – the parenthetical suspended time – these unnecessary remarks in brackets, these pockets, these folds of time. The etho-poetic thinks *beside*, introducing a differential, complicating life from within – the par-ergon workers who, in their making, create a relation to their life they didn’t know was lacking.

Gesture names, thus, the zone of indeterminacy which is the inhabiting of a thinking, an inquiry, which advances only insofar as it retreats; the movement of a *reversing* which characterises *learning* as Benjamin would have it. “‘At mysteries and sacrifices, among Greeks as well as barbarians’, writes Plutarch, ‘it is taught that there must be two primary essences and two opposing forces, one of which points to the right and straight ahead, whereas the other turns around and drives back’”.<sup>668</sup> And it is such a *reversing* movement which “transforms existence into writing”.<sup>669</sup> The reflection comes in an essay where Benjamin reads the defining feature of Kafka’s work, as the *gestus*, which he both understands, and *does not understand*: “Kafka could understand things only in the form of a *gestus*, and this *gestus* which he did not understand constitutes the cloudy part of parables.

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<sup>667</sup> W.J.T. Mitchell, “The Poetics of Sign Language”, preface to *Signing the Body Poetic*, ed. Dirksen Baumen, Heidi Rose, Jennifer Nelson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xxi.

<sup>668</sup> Benjamin, “Franz Kafka”, *Illuminations*, 134.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

Kafka's writings emanate from it".<sup>670</sup> The essay ends with a consideration of the gestus of the "students" who appear in Kafka's work as spokespeople for a clan who reckon with "the brevity of life in a peculiar way".<sup>671</sup>

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Music, we could say, is one of the forms that the unconstruable question assumes, as an irreducible otherness it resists full explication by rational argument and remains a question that must always pose itself one more time.

– Ernst Bloch, *Sound Figures of Modernity: German Music and Philosophy*.

An etho-poetic thinking an attempt to reclaim the calling of *Stimmung*, from out of its contemporary deafness – being that we are those "absolutely non-musical" people, "without *Stimmung*, without, that is, a calling"<sup>672</sup> – a calling not to be this, or that, but to be the plenitude of emptiness of being-there, "the scoring in the soul of the inaccessibility of the origin".<sup>673</sup>

An etho-poetic thinking an attempt to claim, for its calling, an art of fugue, unfolding as a melody that cannot be made to say anything, apart from its own *facticity*, its own strange suchness, in the singularised rhythm of an arising and passing, a coming and going; repeating a flow that we step and do not step in twice. Each singularised configuration a play with the unconstruable question that has no mark, no final punctuation, but exists like an asking played continuously through us – seeking not to take a naming, but to endlessly *give* in resonating.

\*

– here, hand withdrawn from the keyboard, fingers suspended – she could give herself back to herself – to the assignment of being-there, without having to be this or that. Ending this writing she could see the impossibility of her task, and realised, not unjoyously, that she could cross out the words, score through all that had been written and stop writing – or rather, now she could finally begin, returning to where she had never been.

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<sup>670</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>672</sup> Agamben, "The Idea of Music", *The Idea of Prose*, 91.

<sup>673</sup> Ibid., 91.

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She entered into it, something changed, not the situation, which remained the same, but the milieu in which it was suspended – its possibility. She owned each day in living it to its limit – inhabiting each hour as if it was a large circle – its line her “T” only to discover at each rounded hour not enclosure but a circling on. She came and went this way – the way and going simultaneous. Letting the spiral loop around the emptiness of each hour, each minute, each second. Days came to be lived like this. Which did not change the situation but how it was. It went on like this. Never knowing more than what seemed to be so – the turn of a face; the green of a backlit leaf; the wind tossing the boy’s hair. There was no refuge in those circling hours, only the dense thickness of the world being like this, being like that – and her along with it, in the coming and going of what seemed to be so.

## ART OF FUGUE

A room, a table, and four chairs.  
The chairs are made of wood,  
the floor is wood,  
the walls are bare. But windowed.  
West light, east light. And a scent  
like cedar in the air. Here, the self  
will sit down with the self.  
Now it will say  
what it has to say. It looks  
into its own eyes. Listens.

A table, four chairs, east light,  
west. This is your self:  
what's left  
when it has been forgiven  
by itself, when it  
forgives. You feel it it's  
the weight of breath,  
transparent, clear.  
It folds its hands,  
looks up at you. You listen.

The self. They've told you  
that there's no such thing. A truth.  
But one of many. Come  
from the other side, from underneath  
erasure, chew your way through light toward  
different intelligence: you find  
that something, even in the task of letting go,  
goes on, has been; and in the cold shock of the plunge,  
your feet touch bottom. Sound comes out of silence, is  
its inner sense. The river of your  
listening, and the river of your voice.

West light, east light, a wooden table  
and four chairs: multiple, multiple, multiple  
are the voices of the inmost heart.  
Sister, brother, husband, wife.  
Father, mother, daughter, son.  
The compass points of human being  
and the being of red alder and  
the black tailed deer. Sleep and hunger,  
hope and loss. Silence,  
and what loves. What loves.

Sleep and hunger,  
Hope and loss,  
Sister, brother,  
mother, son.  
The floorboards of the soul  
are birth, are death,  
the four eyed love  
that makes a child.  
The patterns in your life  
repeat themselves  
as premonitions, sudden gifts.  
A scent like cedar  
drifting in the room. A table  
and four chairs.

Once again, the moment of impossible  
transition, the bow, its silence voice  
above the string. Let us say  
the story goes like this. Let us say  
you could start anywhere.  
Let us say you took your splintered being  
by the hand, and led it  
to the centre of a room: starlight  
through the floorboards of the soul.  
The patterns of your life  
repeat themselves until you listen.  
Forgive this. Say now  
what you have to say.

The dead are dead:  
parents, siblings, children, spouse.  
Death comes upon us:  
blindness, deafness, madness, or  
the slow gag of neglect.  
Put your arms around them:  
they are what is given, as you knew.  
Hand takes hand.  
Dave Dravecky: cancer of the elbow.  
Sigmund Freud: cancer of the mouth.  
The man who had a heart attack,  
and who survived,  
because he fell in love.  
Your own death, lifting from your past  
to meet you: palmprints multiple and  
shaped to match your own.

So it begins. Silence  
gathers, looks up, and becomes  
a voice: the thrum, the distillate,  
we call a soul. Impossible  
translation, for the breath  
that moves in you  
is wind, the wind  
that cherishes the trees and cools  
the stars. You are,  
you are not,  
nothing, shaped  
by what you love. The echo  
of what's left when everything  
has been let go.

A voice from the other side, a river: here,  
the current steady, there, thickened with silt  
shoals, sandbars, the spill of grief, misunderstanding,  
hope and love. You've come  
to it before, birdwatching maybe,  
looking mostly at the trees. But  
now you know. Now you will set  
the suitcase down, the backpack, and the book  
you love, the book you haven't read, your lunch.  
The water's neither cold nor warm.  
Your mind has never been as clear.

Once again, the moment of impossible  
translation: how good it is  
the heart has settled out its load  
of wanting and regret. To take  
what's left and lead it to the centre of the room  
a table, four chairs, and the river  
of the human voice. The floorboards  
have been swept, the room  
is bare, square to the compass of  
your death and birth. You fold  
your hands, look up it's  
nothing: light  
ahead of you

Jan Zwicky<sup>674</sup>

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<sup>674</sup> Jan Zwicky, *Forge* (Kentville, NS: Gaspereau Press, 2011).

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