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The Placiality of Thought

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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All experience is embodied and, concomitantly, all experience is emplaced. It follows that abstract thought, as a mode of experience, is always emplaced. In what sense is this the case? Following the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, this dissertation seeks to answer this question. A first key insight comes from *Phenomenology of Perception*: namely, the suggestion that every thought is a bodily experience, and that abstract thought expresses bodily capacities that, through imagination, enter into realms of the virtual. A second key insight comes from Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, especially *The Visible and the Invisible*: this is his account of language as a situating power and mode of participating in the world, an account that goes against a common philosophical habit of treating linguistic meaning as operating at a level that is removed from the sensible. With these insights in mind, we can develop a concept of place as that which solicits the bodily capacities through a dynamic process that is incessantly being transfigured; for humans, this transfiguration manifests especially through the situating power of language. This notion of emplacement is further enriched by a concept of metaphor that, building off the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, regards metaphor as the mechanism by which situated, bodily understanding leaps from one placial domain to another in the constitution of new understanding. We can thus understand thought as a mode of inhabitation of place.

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Abbreviations

Merleau-Ponty

EM Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind," in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, Johnson, Galen A. and Michael B. Smith, eds. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993.

ILVS Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," in *Signs*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

PL Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "On the Phenomenology of Language," in *Signs*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

FNP Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Film and the New Psychology," in *Signs*, Richard C. McCleary, trans. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

PS Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Philosopher and His Shadow," in *Signs*. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

CLA Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, Hugh J. Silverman, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

PP Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*, Donald Landes, trans. New York: Routledge, 2012.

S Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Signs*, Richard C. McCleary, trans. Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

PW Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Prose of the World*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

VI Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*, Alphonso Lingis, trans. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Deleuze

DMM Deleuze, Gilles. "Dualism-Monism-Multiplicities (Desire-Pleasure-Jouissance)," Daniel W. Smith, trans. *Contretemps* 2, May, 2001, pp. 92-108.

DR Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

FB Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,

ATP Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1987.

AO Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1983.

WIP Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Lakoff and Johnson

LJ Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

J Johnson, Mark. *The Body in the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Casey

GBP Casey, Edward S. *Getting Back Into Place*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

FP Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.

Preface

If you go out in the desert you find yourself already at the verge of the sky, a sky that is not a distant dome but an infinite depth that grazes the face of the earth. The plants that grow around you are strange, still anthropomorphs with spiked crowns or supplicating arms. The ground you walk on is not layered in soft organic sediments; it is bare geology, a bone landscape, and the ridges that rise from it are like the gigantic spines of half-buried primeval beasts. They rise even from the far side of the horizon, and nothing obstructs the view of them, and the daylight sucks them skyward and shimmering, some strange optical effect of vast distances, and you are drawn to see even over the bend of the earth. The monsoon heat of summer afternoons spawns pillars of cumulonimbus that stand as isolate sentinels billowing to the edge of space, arrayed across the landscape like pieces in some colossal game. You see their dark curtains of rain drape over far hills, and the wires of lightning that glow here and there along the rim of the land. The stormtops fan across the sky at the end of day and the light of the sun as it sets is cast up from the horizon to limn their undersides, and the ceiling of the world is red with a luminance that is returned by all the things around.

Introduction

> *The truth about the world, he said, is that anything is possible. Had you not seen it all from birth and thereby bled it of its strangeness it would appear to you for what it is, a hat trick in a medicine show, a fevered dream, a trance bepopulate with chimeras having neither analogue nor precedent, an itinerant carnival, a migratory tentshow whose ultimate destination after many a pitch in many a mudded field is unspeakable and calamitous beyond reckoning.*
>
> *The universe is no narrow thing and the order within it is not constrained by any latitude in its conception to repeat what exists in one part in any other part. Even in this world more things exist without our knowledge than with it and the order in creation which you see is that which you have put there, like a string in a maze, so that you shall not lose your way. For existence has its own order and that no man's mind can compass, that mind itself being but a fact among others.* – Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*[1]

All experience is embodied and, concomitantly, all experience is emplaced. The first clause of this statement would seem self-evidently to be the case, given any sort of broadly evolutionary understanding of biology – *would* seem so, at least, if not for the very old and very powerful tradition in the West of defining the essential characteristics of human existence (construed variously to be reason, language, or thought) as non-bodily. This tradition is not to be lightly dispatched. But it should certainly not be blindly presumed, however much the weight of historical thought pulls us in that direction, especially when, at least since Darwin, there are good reasons to deny that anything in human existence supercedes the biological and, hence, the bodily. This is, if you ask me, one of the stronger reasons to take seriously the phenomenological approach in philosophy: if we are an evolved species, then whatever truths we may uncover can only be discerned through our evolved bodily capacities. Investigation of what and how these capacities reveal the world in which we live should, then, be a necessary condition for philosophical understanding.

But what about the second clause of the above statement – that all experience is emplaced? Really, it should be as self-evident as the first, certainly if we are starting from a phenomenological perspective, for to have a body is to be open to the world through one's bodily capacities, and if there is an openness between body and world, then what defines experience for a bodily organism is not simply produced in or by a body, it is produced in the

[1] McCarthy, 245.

encounter between a body and a world, an encounter which, as expressed by those capacities which adhere to the body yet at the same time are solicited by the world, always occurs in *place*. Therefore any philosophical investigation of experience should be just as much an investigation of place as one of the body. Yet even for those who are predisposed to a phenomenological approach, this other side of the experiential coin tends to be overlooked. The reason *why* this is the case may have to do with the situation of phenomenology with regard to the dominant tradition in Western thought: even though it in many ways (and often explicitly) seeks to function as a counter to that tradition, it nonetheless has its roots in it. Most significantly, it has roots in the Kantian and Cartesian lineages which tend toward the diremption of mind and world, and to attempt to overcome this diremption it is not sufficient simply to locate the mind in, or to identify it with, the body. In making this observation, I don't mean to imply the overly broad and reductive claim that all attempts at providing accounts of experience as embodied, let alone all criticisms of the diremptive pattern of modern Western thought, have fallen into just this trap; I only mean to suggest that there is a tendency in this direction, and the upshot of this tendency is an over-emphasis on subjective embodiment at the expense of that which solicits embodiment – namely, place.

But what do I mean by place? What is the justification for treating experience as structured by place? The choice demands explanation, given the long philosophical tradition of subordinating place to space. To provide this explanation, then, requires at least a brief look at this tradition. My goal is not even so moderately audacious as to provide a historical survey here; but I would at least like to provide a sense of the historical contingency of the dominant philosophical concept of space by contrasting it with alternative conceptions which have preceded it, and which have come since.

The modern concept of space

Notice how I have already entered into the language of distinguishing space from place. Without my having even explicated these terms, there is already a sense of what is at stake: space is familiar to us as a fundamental dimension of the universe, an abstract element in

which the concrete things of the world are situated, whereas place is – what exactly? Perhaps nothing of philosophical import at all. If space is a universal dimension of nature, infinite in extension and homogeneous in its constitution, places (it seems natural to use the plural form) are, perhaps, positions within space, small portions of that space that may be colored by our practical concerns, but ultimately reducible to spatial terms. Such, at least, I take to be an approximation of how a modern educated Westerner might describe the relation between space and place. The ancestral lineage of this "common sense" view takes us back to the early modern period, where we find the modern concept of space coming into full form.

Descartes, as for so much else in modern philosophy, was a seminal figure for the development of this concept. He defined space as pure extension. In explaining this concept, he invites us, as per his usual style, to partake in an act of imagination. Attend to the idea we have of a stone, he instructs us, but subtract "everything we know to be non-essential to the nature of body": its hardness, its colour, its weight, its temperature, and so on. "After all this, we will see that nothing remains in the idea of the stone except that it is something extended in length, breadth and depth. Yet this is just what is comprised in the idea of a space – not merely a space which is full of bodies, but even a space which is called 'empty'."[2] Space, then, is fundamentally the same everywhere. It is the remainder when a body is shorn of its particularity; It has a "generic unity."[3] Add that space extends indefinitely, as Descartes maintains, and we have two features that are prototypical of the modern concept of space: homogeneity and infinite extension. This space is not a vacuum for Descartes, for it is in fact identical to substance, but it is a void in the sense of its uniform and undifferentiated character.

What becomes of place in this formulation? It is entirely inert and passive, figuring primarily as subordinate to space as infinite extension: "[t]he difference between the terms 'place' and 'space' is that the former designates more explicitly the position, as opposed to the size or shape, while it is the size or shape that we are concentrating on when we talk of space."[4] Place and space refer to just the same thing, then, albeit with a slightly varying emphasis. Following the Scholastic tradition, Descartes does make a further distinction in his discussion of

[2] Descartes, 227-8.
[3] Ibid., 227
[4] Ibid., 229.

place, namely, between internal and external place. Place that is internal with respect to a body, he says, is just the same as space, whereas external place is "the surface immediately surrounding what is in the place."[5] A role for place, then, but a passive one: it is simply the boundary or "common surface" between a given body and surrounding bodies.

Such homogeneity ensures that other characteristic feature of space in modern thought, its measurability. Casey quotes Gassendi, who wrote: "Clearly, wherever it is possible to conceive some [purely spatial] interval, or distance, it is also possible to conceive a dimension because that interval, or distance, is of a determinate measure, or can be measured."[6] An abstract uniformity and homogeneity guarantees that space will be subject to measurement everywhere and always in the same way.[7] Gassendi's theory of space in its broad contours is adopted by Newton, who characterizes "absolute space" as "always similar and immovable."[8] With Newtonian space, the subordination of place becomes complete: place is simply "a part of space which a body takes up, and is according to the space, either absolute or relative. I say, a part of space; not the situation, nor the external surface of the body."[9] The notion of place as boundary has been explicitly extirpated. It is no more nor less than a portion of space. Note that a place can be either absolute or relative. But to be a relative place is not to be oriented or situated in a subjective way; it is to be related to another place in terms of its measurable position, and thus to belong to the homogeneous spatial field. Absolute places, meanwhile, are "immovable" and retain "from infinity to infinity… the same given position one to another."[10]

Following Newton, place goes underground, at least as far as Western physics is concerned.[11] In philosophy, meanwhile, the hegemony of space is maintained through Kant, in whom the modern concept of space perhaps reaches its apotheosis. In *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, for instance, we encounter the rather blunt statement: "The

[5] Ibid., 229.
[6] FP, 139. Quoted from Gassendi, 387.
[7] Note that spatial uniformity thus entails a temporal one as well, and indeed, Gassendi also regarded space as boundless in time as well.
[8] Newton, 6.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Newton, 9.
[11] Casey notes that a passage in Newton "may represent the last official serious assessment of place in Western physics" (FP, 143).

place of every body is a point."[12] In the elucidating example, Kant argues that if we want to know the distance from the earth to the moon, we must measure it from the points at the center of each of those bodies. Thus presumably, standing on earth, we would find ourselves to be several thousand miles from its place. It is difficult to imagine that our living relation to place could be more fully eclipsed by a concept of abstract spatiality. This radical abstraction of place to the most minimal geometrical term is mirrored in Kant's treatment of space which, as a pure form of intuition, becomes that in which matter and force and position are intuited. It is "nothing but the mere form of all appearances of outer senses."[13] It is infinite and absolute, yet in its mode of maximal abstraction as a category of intuition, it seems to abstract itself right out of the world, existing purely in the mind of a subject.

A richer history of the modern concept of space could be (and has been[14]) told, but in the brief sketch of these few figures we find the fundamental attributes of that concept: as Casey puts it, it is always a unity that "*stays the same*: absolute and infinite, homogeneous and unitary, regular and striated, isotropic and isometric."[15] Place, in this framework, shrinks down to a point, or is dissolved in space altogether. It is not hard to see that this concept, the product of centuries of evolution in Western thought, culminating in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, remains dominant to this day. We see it in the presumption of universal measurability of distances; in the longitudinal and latitudinal gridding of the earth's surface that, thanks especially to the proliferation of GPS technologies, is a mode of abstract spatiality that is increasingly insinuated into our daily lives; in the language of science (interestingly, considering that, e.g., the limitations of Newtonian physics have been evident for a century now); in the sundry impositions of abstraction on the modes of human dwelling in place (as we shall see); and, certainly, in the premises, hidden and otherwise, of many philosophers.

This habit of thought, though, is one that has been inculcated in modernity; it would be fallacious to regard this understanding of space as natural. To see this, we only have to look to those two truly empyreal figures of ancient Greek thought, Plato and Aristotle.

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[12] Kant (1985), 21.
[13] Kant (1996), 30.
[14] See Casey (FP), Jammer, Grant, et al.
[15] FP, 193.

Plato

In the "likely story" presented in *Timaeus*, Plato introduces the receptacle as a distinct metaphysical entity or stratum – a third term in addition to that which is changeless and intelligible on one hand, and that which is changeable and available to the senses on the other. Plato refers to this receptacle as *chora*, a term which, as Keimpe Algra notes, primarily meant "land/region/ground," and which, when translated as 'place' or 'space', indicates an extension which is or can be occupied.[16]

This third term is necessary to mediate between the changeless ideas, which serve as the model for things, and changeable becoming, which imitates the model. The necessity of the receptacle is due to the fact that becoming is always in flux: air condenses into mist, mist falls as rain, rain turns into earth, and earth disperses into air once again. In fact, nothing in the realm of becoming can even properly be regarded as self-identical: "since none of these appears ever to remain the same, which one of them can one categorically assert, without embarrassment, to be some particular thing, *this* one, and not something else? One can't."[17] So what can we refer to as 'this' or 'that'? That "*in* which they each appear to keep coming into being and *from* which they subsequently pass out of being."[18] This is the receptacle, which bears the things of becoming. These things – imitations of the forms – impress themselves on the receptacle, much as the shape of some molded thing may be impressed in gold (to use one of Plato's metaphors). But like impressed gold, the receptacle remains what it is, even as it takes on the innumerable characteristics of the panoply of becoming.

The three kinds, then: "that which comes to be, that in which it comes to be, and that after which the thing coming to be is modeled."[19] The first constitute the sensible world; the last constitute the intelligible world and are available only to rational understanding, not the senses. But what of *chora*, this ground of the sensible world? Where does space place in this

[16] Algra, 33.
[17] Plato, 49d.
[18] Ibid., 49e.
[19] Ibid., 50d.

schema? Interestingly, Plato himself seems befuddled by the concept, even as he is introducing it: it is, he says, "a thing very difficult to comprehend,"[20] and "[i]t is apprehended by a kind of bastard reasoning that does not involve sense perception, and it is hardly even an object of conviction."[21] It inheres in the world of appearances, yet it does so imperceptibly. It is as if an element of intelligibility must be smuggled into the sensible world in order to prop up its very sensibility, as without the receptacle the imitative image could find no base upon which to manifest itself. In this way chora is something like a mirror's face in which all one can see is the image it reflects. Or, to use two of Plato's metaphors, it is like gold, a substance which is present as that of which molded things are made; or the odorless base which is infused with fragrances to create fragrant ointments. Of course, such metaphors are drawn from the sensible world itself, which points to the pseudo-material nature of chora.[22]

The imbuement of the sensible world with this intelligible dimension anticipates the abstract space familiar to modern thought. But Plato's notion of chora is hardly reducible to such a concept. One significant difference is that, whereas modern space is often regarded as essentially measurable and therefore *submitted for* our concern or *subject to* our gaze,[23] Plato's receptacle *gives rise* to appearances. It underlies them, and in a sense contains them – chora is that *in which* things come to be. It has a supportive, even generative and nourishing quality – Plato likens it variously to a "wetnurse"[24] and a mother.[25] The requirements of measurement entail that we impose a homogeneity on space, according to the modern concept – it must be rendered everywhere the same, and similar with regard to our perspective, if our measurements are to be commensurable with each other in their all-encompassing purview. By contrast, the receptacle provides the possibility for heterogeneous particulars to arise. Though it is itself characterless, this is only because "the imprints are to be varied, with all the varieties

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[20] Ibid., 51b
[21] Ibid., 52b.
[22] Indeed, many interpreters consider chora to be material. Algra argues that "the receptacle is at least in some important sense a constituent factor and as such might indeed be described as matter" (Algra,103).
[23] Casey notes that Gassendi, for instance, "held that part of the purity of spatial dimensionality is its strict *measurability*" (FP, 139). Newton, meanwhile, thoroughly geometrizes space in order to render it measurable.
[24] Timaeus, 49a.
[25] Ibid., 50d.

there to see."[26] Whereas the intelligiblity of abstract space for modern thought is imposed on particulars so as to render them subordinate to a totalizing and homogenizing dimension, the quasi-intelligibility of chora is a basis for localized and heterogeneous particulars to emerge.[27]

Aristotle

Contrary to Plato's cosmogonic approach, Aristotle pursues a more straightforwardly physicalist understanding of place in the *Physics*. His starting point is the use of 'place' in everyday language – in particular, what it means to say that something is *in* some place. The grammatical logic of this word 'in' leads him to conclude the following: that place is that which surrounds a body; that it is distinct from that body; that it is neither greater nor less than that body; that it is separable from the body; and that place always has some relation to up and down, such that bodies will naturally be carried to some place with respect to this vertical orientation. After considering several possibilities, Aristotle concludes that place must be the innermost boundary of that which contains a body.[28]

Place as container: superficially, this seems to be an image of place as passive, or at least as active only to the extent that a limit or boundary actively bounds a body, as a vessel holds the water within it.[29] But this is, in itself, a powerful function – as Aristotle puts it, place

[26] Ibid., 50d.

[27] One other notable aspect of Timaean chora is its place in a sort of optical metaphysics. The receptacle is made to "appear different at different times" (50c); it is itself "invisible" (51a); that which is perceptible to the senses is an "image, which is invariably borne along to picture something else" (52c).[27] And Plato tends to single out the visual characteristics of that which becomes for special emphasis. Generally, the receptacle (and by extension the sensible world) is treated above all as a realm of appearances – a motif that is familiar from those other of Plato's works which concern the relation between intelligible forms and sensible things.

* E.g., "This, of course, is the reason why we shouldn't call the mother or receptacle of what has come to be, of what is visible or perceivable in every other way…" (Ibid., 51a); and "[that which keeps its own form unchanglingly] is invisible – it cannot be perceived by the senses at all – and it is the role of understanding to study it" (Ibid., 52a).

[28] Note the echo of this definition of place in the Cartesian concept of "external place," though for Descartes this notion lacks the potency that Aristotle ascribes, as we will see, to place – there is no suggestion that it has the capacity to draw objects, nor the inherent directionality, of Aristotelian place, as it is subsumed under homogeneous space.

[29] (here we are not far removed Plato's idea of place as receptacle)

"exerts a certain influence;"[30] every body in the world is set apart by the limiting function place provides. If it is again likened to a vessel, it is not so merely in the sense that the vessel holds the water, but in the sense that the vessel simultaneously limits and sustains the presence of the water.

But the power of place exceeds even this bounding capacity, and the way in which it does so is relevant to Aristotle's understanding of the properties of oriented space and what we might refer to as intrinsic space. For his observation that place has potency precedes these remarks:

> Each is carried to its own place, if it is not hindered, the one up, the other down. Now these are regions or kinds of place – up and down and the rest of the six directions. Nor do such distinctions (up and down and right and left, &c.) hold only in relation to us. To us they are not always the same but change with the direction in which we are turned: that is why the same thing may be both right and left, up and down, before and behind. But in nature each is distinct, taken apart by itself. It is not every chance direction which is 'up', but where fire and what is light are carried; similarly, too, 'down' is not any chance direction but where what has weight and is made of earth are carried – the implication being that these places do not differ merely in relative position, but also as possessing distinct potencies. [This is made plain also by the objects studied by mathematics. Though they have no real place, they nevertheless, in respect of their position relatively to us, have a right and left as attributes ascribed to them only in consequence of their relative position, not having by nature these various characteristics.][31]

The power of place doesn't just surround and contain bodies; it seems to *draw* them. And it does so according to a vertical directionality which has a double character – it is that which we know with reference to our own bodily position (things are above or below us, in front of or behind us, etc.), but it is also that which is intrinsic to the natural movement of things: the boulder rolls down the mountain rather than up into the sky because it is heavy, and therefore will move *down* as long as it is unencumbered from doing so, a tendency that is irrespective of the judgments we make about where up and down are.

Aristotle asserts, then, that there is an intrinsic directionality to place – or more precisely, it is the potency of place which gives rise to directionality, and moreover, this directionality is expressed through the natural movements of objects. This is something that could not be achieved by an undifferentiated and universal spatial medium, wherein places are

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[30] Aristotle. *Physics*, IV, 1.
[31] Ibid.

separated merely according to "relative position"[32] – as Aristotle recognizes, spatial differentiation is a necessary condition for orientation. However, he also denies that such differentiation is simply something we project onto the world. It is present in the world itself, and engendered by the potent exertions of place upon things.[33] This is a striking philosophical perspective: distinctly at odds with modern universal and abstract space as inert and passive, yet totalizing and homogeneous; but also affording an intrinsic capacity to place which goes beyond our mere human capacity to assign orientational significance from a subjective perspective.

For both Plato and Aristotle, then, place has a certain power that is integral to the structuring of the world. For Plato, this power is necessary for us to make sense of the world of appearances; for Aristotle, it gives rise to directionality, which is to say it is what allows us to be oriented in the world. But the Greek concepts of chora and topos, and the sense of generativity and potency pertaining to place, generally fell out of prominence over the course of centuries. In its stead, we find a concept of space more closely tied to the Greek concept of kenon, or void, than to either chora or topos. Such is the intellectual progression which would give rise to the modern concept of space.[34]

Suppose we acknowledge that our modern intuitions that tend to treat space as abstract are historically contingent, a product of the post-medieval age out of which we have perhaps not yet fully emerged. Suppose we recall instead that we are living beings, and that life itself is not abstract – it emerges from, and remains a part of, the concrete world – and that therefore whatever space and place may be, we know them only as living organisms. Don't we

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[32] Of course, we understand the natural movements of objects according to their relative weight as a function of gravity operating in just such a universal spatial medium, in which "up" and "down" are locally determinable according to a sort of potency exerted by mass. It is interesting that we've generally abandoned the concept of place in favor of that of universal space in the explanation of such phenomena when it is just such a potency (which we name 'gravity') that gives rise to directionality which has been revealed to us through Newtonian physics.

[33] 'Up' and 'down' have meaning with reference to the world primarily, rather than human judgment about the world: down is that which is towards "the middle of the universe" and up is that which is towards the "extremity" (Aristotle, *Physics*, IV, 4).

[34] Am I guilty here of that bad philosophical habit, the lacuna-ization of Medieval philosophy, of even the whole nearly two-millennia period between Aristotle and Descartes, the very period out of which the modern world was birthed? Indeed, I am guilty of precisely this. My only defense is to say that I am not attempting any sort of remotely comprehensive history of the concepts of space and place; for that see Casey (FP), Jammer, Grant, et al.

find that the way to understand the nature of space and place, then, is through our experience of it? For how else than through experience do we attain knowledge of any kind? In other words, to make these suppositions is to approach the question from a phenomenological perspective, which begins from situated experience rather than from disembodied reason. It is not surprising, then, that when we reach the phenomenological tradition of the twentieth century, we find the re-emergence of place as philosophically salient. In particular, in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, the modern subordination of place to space reverses itself.

Heidegger on place in *Being and Time*

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger turns decisively away from the notion that the essential characteristic of space is its measurability. As he argues, what is ready-to-hand for Dasein is characterized by closeness – a closeness "which is not to be ascertained by measuring distances."[35] When something presents itself as close in this way, it is not simply present-to-hand at some spatial position. Instead, it is available for our active engagement with it, as equipment which occupies place –"as one place out of a whole totality of places directionally lined up with each other and belonging to the context of equipment that is environmentally ready-to-hand."[36] Directionality here entails the taking place of the thing, its situatedness within the arrangement of other things which in turn are oriented within and towards a region.

We go about our daily lives within regions.[37] The spatiality we encounter in doing so has an oriented character: "The 'above' is what is 'on the ceiling'; the 'below' is what is 'on the floor'; the 'behind' is what is 'at the door'."[38] The spatiality being suggested here is one which is always particular to our circumstances.[39] Interestingly, Heidegger refrains from invoking the body as the origin of such circumstantial spatiality; rather he invokes the spatiality of a room or

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[35] Heidegger (1998), 102.
[36] Ibid., 136.
[37] "The regional orientation of the multiplicity of places belonging to the ready-to-hand goes to make up the aroundness, the 'round-bout-us' – of those entities which we encounter as closest environmentally," Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 136-7.
[39] The etymology of 'circumstances' – the term literally means "surrounding conditions" – points to an inherent spatial embeddedness.

dwelling. And indeed, Dasein does not locate its own place primarily in terms of a corporeal identity or as the position of a body. Rather it understands its own "here" in terms of its surroundings (that is, the milieu of its concernful engagement); it finds itself *in* those things with which it concerns itself.[40] Dasein, then, always fills up a certain space – the space of whatever it is with which it is concerned. It is essentially emplaced.

Spatiality that is meaningful for us, then, will have something of the character of an abode – it will form a periphery in which we operate, perhaps with apertures that open on to other portions of a broader world. But the "abode" within which we find ourselves is always some region, and within a region we encounter things as arranged in places.[41] And anything which is ready-to-hand has its place, so that what we encounter in our daily lives are nothing but emplaced things. Dimensional space, by contrast, is "never proximally given."[42] Space construed as a "multiplicity of possible positions which gets filled up with Things present-at-hand" is not something we come across in our encounters with the ready-to-hand. Nor are the things which we do encounter determined or comprehended through the measurement of space; no such exercise is involved in our everyday negotiation of space.

Our disposition towards the sun is exemplary. It is not present to us in terms of its geometrical positioning vis-à-vis the horizon or whatever. The sun "has its own places – sunrise, midday, sunset, midnight" which are meaningful to us in that they allow us to do certain things: the rhythm of our lives is bound up in the movement of the sun.[43] As Heidegger points out, this solar placiality becomes intricately involved in further placial arrangements – of buildings, gardens, streets, farms, and almost any other realm of human activity. We can add that the sun is almost definitive of the temporality of our everyday placial experience: the world of work is a place in which we gather with others by the light of the sun. The setting of the sun opens up a different sort of social world, often a more libidinous one. And if there is a single activity that is

[40] In Heidegger's words: "Dasein, in accordance with its spatiality, is proximally never here but yonder; from this 'yonder' it comes back to its 'here'; and it comes back to its 'here' only in the way in which it interprets its concernful Being-towards in terms of what is ready-to-hand yonder" (Ibid., 142).
[41] The region is prior to the place, Heidegger claims: "Something like a region must first be discovered if there is to be any possibility of allotting or coming across places for a totality of equipment that is circumspectively at one's disposal," Ibid., 136.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 137.

definitive of home, it is sleep. Home is where we return to sleep, the place of sanctuarial calm that makes sleep possible; and if we have no place to which we can regularly return to sleep, then we have no home. The possibilities of each of these realms are granted to us in some large part by the place of the sun, the cyclical character of which imbues our very biological nature. Even if electricity has allowed us to interrupt (if not overcome) these diurnal exigencies, this doesn't change the fact that they shape the pace and order of the world in which we live. All of which is to say, we don't encounter the sun as a geometrically positioned object, we encounter it rather through this living engagement, and so it goes with all things that have their place in our daily lives.

Even insofar as we experience something like a spatial totality, this is not an abstract spatiality which we perceive as that into which the things of the world have been placed. Rather, the "specific worldhood" of the environment – the world of significance which we negotiate – "[a]rticulates the context of involvements which belongs to some current totality of circumspectively allotted places."[44] Discrete places, encountered through our meaningful engagement with them, cohere not by virtue of some dimensional field which undergirds them or lends them a universal spatial logic by which they can be understood; it is the meaningful engagement itself which vouchsafes their coherence.

Distance itself, of course, is encountered and understood through such meaningful engagement as well, rather than through any abstract metric. Through "deseverance" Dasein brings things close. That is, in my concern for something, I draw it forward from the world around me, or even from the farther world beyond the horizon of my environment, and in so doing I make it proximate.[45] Within my field of vision, for instance, I might focus on a jar sitting on a mantle on the other side of the room, and in so doing it becomes prominent in my

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[44] Ibid., 138.

[45] Degrees of closeness in this sense and our sensory dispositions are implicated in each other. Our senses of vision and hearing, for instance, tend to focus on a middle distance. This is especially obvious when we consider equipment which is geared towards these senses: for instance, though our glasses are measurably closest to our face, it is the painting on the wall which is drawn closest in our concern when we look at it; the telephone receiver is right next to our ear, but it is the speaker on the other end of the line who we more truly draw close to ourselves (Ibid., 141). And as these senses are usually those with the greatest scope (in measurable terms), it is in them that deseverance principally operates. By contrast, the sense of touch is usually limited to whatever is within grasp of our bodies, though cases of deserverance wouldn't be out of the question here, either (as with manually controllable robotic arms).

attention, and thus it takes on a closeness for me, a proximal engagement in which I have it "in readiness" and "to hand."[46] But also I might think about the destination of my trip, and in so doing both the destination and the route I plan to take to get there are highlighted; they emerge from the background of the plenitude of things beyond my present horizon which I might (but don't) choose to concern myself with.[47],[48] Distances never appear to me according to fixed and objective systems of measurement, but according to my active and concernful engagement with the world. "We say," for instance, "that to go over yonder is 'a good walk', 'a stone's throw', or 'as long as it takes to smoke a pipe'."[49] All of these expressions connote an experiential dimension of the world, rather than a uniformly measurable dimension, and the two ways of accounting for distance need not align: a 50-mile ride down an unpaved road in the back of a truck in rural Laos covers a far greater distance, as far as we are concerned, than a trip that covers the same number of miles on a four-lane highway on the Texas plains.

Such differences in our experience of similarly measured distances should not be regarded as subjective distortions of some more real dimensional space intrinsic to things; rather, "this 'subjectivity' perhaps uncovers the 'Reality' of the world at its most Real."[50] This "true world" is that which Dasein "is already alongside."[51] Space is essentially that which Dasein engages and in which it is embedded. Indeed, "*Dasein is essentially de-severance – it is*

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[46] Ibid., 140.

[47] This should not imply that that plenitude is always latently present, as if the world were always dimly arrayed in the back of our minds and we choose at times to shine a spotlight on it here or there. It is more like we make and re-make a meaningful world for ourselves as things and places arise in our consciousness. In so arising, these images take their place within a world, and in taking place they in turn transfigure that world, as every new brushstroke both takes place in and transfigures a painting.

[48] Heidegger notes that "in Dasein there lies an essential tendency towards closeness" which is expressed through technology (Ibid.). For him the paradigmatic example is radio, but we have since seen generations of technology arise which deliver an ever more radical closeness of things. The internet, of course, is paradigmatic for us, as the web link makes possible a total and equivalent proximity of almost anything which is suitable for the medium (which is to say, anything written, any sound recording, any two-dimensional image). (The totality of this proximity is curious, though, in that it simultaneously renders things absolutely separate: to follow a link from one web site to another is not like negotiating nearby items in the context of everyday embodiment, in which the context itself acts as a sort of gathering background; it is to plunge instantly into another context altogether. There is, in a placial sense, nothing which contextually binds these radically proximate things together.)

[49] Heidegger, 140.

[50] Ibid., 141.

[51] Ibid.

spatial."[52] We could say, then, that Dasein and space are co-constitutive: Dasein perpetually takes up the space of its concern and is oriented within this space, and its concern is that which gives the measure of space. The activity of subjecting space to a uniform measurability would be merely one, and by no means the most essential, way of expressing this concern.

In addition to deseverance, directionality is characteristic of the spatiality of Dasein. Through any act of deseverance one takes an approach towards a thing in some direction "so that one can come across it with regard to its place."[53] This is, like deseverance, an integral and ineluctable aspect of Dasein's involvement with regions. This is also the source of the distinction between right and left – a distinction which is not found in the world independent of the subject, nor found solely in the subject as a purely internal sense or feeling, [54] but which is found rather in the directedness which is always inherent to one's engagement with the world.

We can, of course, choose to treat space as measurable and homogeneous.[55] But when we do so, we reduce the regions of our active engagement to pure dimensions, and places to "a multiplicity of positions for random Things."[56] Our experience is primarily of a world in which we involve ourselves, and to bring a measurable and homogeneous space to the fore is to strip this world bare, and in a sense to remove ourselves from our natural disposition of engagement – a disposition so natural, in fact, that we rarely thematize it for ourselves. Yet to pare away this worldly character means to have already started *from* this worldly character. Measurable, homogeneous space is not something discovered as a fundamental category and ground of reality; it is rendered from the worldly space with which we involve ourselves in order to facilitate certain concernful actions.

Merleau-Ponty on bodily emplacement in *Phenomenology of Perception*

[52] Ibid., 143.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Heidegger criticizes Kant here for the suggestion that this orientational distinction amounts to a "mere feeling."
[55] Heidegger is quick to point out that we do so when engaging in certain activities, e.g., "in building and surveying" (Ibid., 146), rather than in establishing some fundamental spatial ground for the world.
[56] Ibid., 147.

Like Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* finds that the space of our active engagement with the world is prior to any sort of objective space. But for him it is the body which is primordial, that which provides the possibility for active engagement itself – whereas Heidegger only vaguely alludes to the problematic of bodily nature. And the body, for Merleau-Ponty, has its own spatiality, an integrated system which allows each of us to bear our bodies as "an indivisible possession" (PP, 100). The mechanism of this integration is the body schema. The body schema does more than just coordinate the parts of the body and establish an awareness of bodily position; it integrates the whole body in the performance of tasks. That is to say, it is implicated in all acts of engagement with the world.[57] Bodily spatiality, then, is situational rather than positional: I don't need to have a clear awareness of the precise arrangement of my limbs and so forth to engage in some task; in fact I very rarely am aware of such things. Instead my focus will be on the zone of active engagement. If I am painting on an upright canvas, my attention will draw towards my hand as it works the brush – or more specifically, towards the zone of interaction of hand, brush, and canvas with the brush (as tool) a portion of the world that is very closely enmeshed with my bodily spatiality, almost an extension of it. My awareness of the spatial positioning of the rest of my body fades much further into the background, as I orient my posture mainly to serve as a sort of platform for my hand to perform its task. Cases where I make myself explicitly aware of my bodily positioning, in fact, are rare: typical when I'm trying to learn a new task, perhaps, but if anything an impediment when I'm performing familiar tasks at which I am skilled. Tasks which are habitual for me – which I "don't even have to think about" – don't require my explicit awareness. Generally speaking, in such cases the spatiality of my body integrates smoothly into whatever act of engagement I am involved with at a given time. When I refer to the "here" of my body, then, I am not talking about a position in space; rather I am designating "the installation of the first coordinates, the anchoring of the active body in an object, and the situation of the body confronted with its tasks" (PP, 103). My body is not arrayed in space; the spatial world flows out of my active engagement with things.

[57] This includes acts both "actual or possible" (PP, 102).

Bodily spatiality, then, is an integral and irreducible element of spatial experience in general. It is, as Merleau-Ponty writes, "the always implied third term of the figure-background structure, and each appears perspectivally against the double horizon of external space and bodily space" (Ibid.). We see here a system of spatiality in which my embodiment is the condition of possibility for engaging with the world. At the same time, though, it is only through engaging with the world that my spatial embodiment manifests itself. The space of the world and the space of my body have sense and structure only by virtue of their co-determination. This system of spatiality is always already with us; space and perception mark "the perpetual contribution of [the subject's] corporeality, and a communication with the world more ancient than thought" (PP, 265).

But it is not the case that the simple having of a body in the world *as such* is sufficient to generate spatial existence. The double-horizoned system of spatiality arises fundamentally through action – the active engagement with the world in which the orientation of an object toward the body and the body's possibilities for engaging the world through the performance of tasks are implicated in each other. Orientation only arises through "my body as a system of possible actions, a virtual body whose phenomenal 'place' is defined by its task and by its situation" (PP, 260). Insofar as the act flows out of my body's enmeshment in its surroundings, this act doesn't require mediation by any abstract conceptualization of space, it requires only the abilities I've acquired as a body existing in and towards the world. And along with this act flows oriented spatial existence itself.[58] In this sense it is the "gearing of the subject into his world that is the origin of space" (PP, 262). The engagement of the active body with its world is *the origin of space* – we see how far we have already come from the modern concept.

Indeed, to be spatially oriented is an ineluctable quality of experience, for "since every conceivable being relates directly or indirectly to the perceived world, and since the perceived

[58] Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that it's not that the subject is the generative origin of spatial existence. He gives the example of an experiment in which the subject "only sees the room he is in through the intermediary of a mirror reflecting the room at a 45[-degree] angle from the vertical." He "at first sees the room as oblique" (Ibid., 259). But after a few minutes the subject adjusts, a sense of orientation finds purchase, and a "miracle takes place: the reflected room conjures up a subject capable of living in it" (Ibid., 261). It isn't that he compels the apparent arrangement of the slanted world to swing toward him; rather, he and the world meet in the smooth performance of habitual action. Through movement in a milieu a sense of space emerges.

world is only grasped through orientation, we cannot dissociate being from oriented being" (PP, 264). Even to recognize an object at all, no matter how nebulous it may be, is to have some orientation in space, for to take something as an object is already to be enmeshed in a world, which is to say, it is already to have a certain attitude or disposition towards the world and thus to be already oriented. Any sort of intentional relationship to the external world – and thus any perception – therefore involves being oriented. This is why lived space is always oriented space, and oriented space is always lived space.[59] Spatial existence is thus a matter not of being in space, but of *inhabiting* it.

Merleau-Ponty considers the objection that this system of spatiality presupposes an objective space, "or that, in order to experience a skillful gesture as a figure *on* the solid background of the body, the hand must be united with the rest of the body through this relation of objective space" so that the figure-background structure itself ultimately relies on "the universal form of space" (PP, 103). But, he asks, "what sense can the word 'on' have for a subject who could not be situated by his body in front of the world?" (Ibid.) I can only understand an object as being *on* something if I can identify an up and a down; otherwise there'd be no way to distinguish 'on' from 'under' or 'to the left or right of.' I do this by seeing the object as fitting some category with which I am familiar based on the relations of my body to objects in the external world. In other words, to construe this system of spatiality in terms of objective space is already to presuppose an embodied spatiality which is the source of the modes of orientation by which I can make determinations about the orientation of objects; objective space in itself is insufficient to provide these categories. Just as Heidegger argued, an objective, universal space follows from oriented space, not the other way around. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "being is synonymous with being situated," and this remains the case even when we project our situation to the highest degrees of abstraction, as in the constitution of abstract space (PP, 263).

The priority of place

[59] Even in a case of abject sensory deprivation, the proprioceptive sense would allow us to maintain a sense of uprightness and balance, and thus a sense of orientation.

For the reasons given above, I think that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty are right that objective space – space which is universal, isotropic, homogeneous, and positional – derives from lived space, which is always oriented and placially situated. But what is the source or the ground for this lived space? Here Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty each offer important insights which complementarily provide, perhaps, the best approach to this question.

For his part Merleau-Ponty, unlike Heidegger, shows that spatial existence is fundamentally embodied. And as we've seen, whether we are talking about situated and concretely embodied experience, or the flight from this in the sort of abstraction that is involved in the negotiation of objective space, we always experience space from some perspective; and indeed, all experience, as perspectivally situated and embodied, is spatial. This is not simply an inert relation between body and world, either, but one which is determined through active engagement, so that the body's possibilities for action lie at the very root of spatial experience. Though this sort of engagement seems to be implied by Heidegger's notions of directionality, equipment, and the ready-to-hand, in the absence of more than a vague allusion to the role of the body in spatial experience it cannot be made explicit. There lies a curious absence in the center of the spatial world for Heidegger, one which Merleau-Ponty fills with the actively engaged body. This is a good idea for a number of reasons. For one, it accounts for the role of active engagement which is necessary for understanding space as directional and oriented, qualities which remain unaccounted for despite their phenomenological centrality for Heidegger. For another, embodiment is existentially and experientially ineluctable; one is never without a body, and the very having of a body is what allows for and delimits one's range of possible actions.[60] Furthermore, appreciating the role of embodiment in the structure of experience allows us to focus on the concrete perceptual apparatuses which are employed in this structuring, namely, the senses; if the body is what structures experience, then the senses are what open onto various modes of engagement with the world by determining our dispositions in embodiment (something which will become very

[60] And besides its role in active engagement, one's body is always among the things which populate the place in which one finds oneself. One engages *with* one's body – both in a transitive and an intransitive sense.

important further on in this dissertation). If lived space is what emerges out of the interaction between an active body and its surroundings, then there simply can be no space without a body.

But if Merleau-Ponty highlights the absolutely essential role of the body, not just in the constitution of space but of experience generally, perhaps he goes too far in making the body the *center* of experience. Of course, in an important respect the body *is* the locus of experience: the sense organs are clustered together within a single fleshy mass and together form an overall unity which expresses itself as the lived body, the *corps propre*, and it is this, after all, which does the experiencing. Of course, one of the motivations for placing the body at the center of experience in this way is to overcome the mind-body dualism that had dominated much of the history of philosophy and of which Descartes is the chief exemplar. Yet if Merleau-Ponty's substitution of the mind as the central organizing principle of the subject or experience with the body attempts to undo this sundering, it nonetheless perpetuates a concomitant diremption: that of subject and object. For Descartes, this dualism involved a strict metaphysical separation of the mind from the material world, and while this couldn't be said of Merleau-Ponty's actively engaged body, it is nonetheless the case that, at least in *Phenomenology of Perception*, this body becomes something like a central and constituting node of experience. By way of the intentional arc, the world provides affordances for this active body, yet it is still the body alone which acts; the world remains the relatively inert object of this action.

This criticism may seem strange at this point: of *course* it is the body that acts upon the world; the body is what perceives, is motile, thinks, has agency, and so forth. But an alternative view – one which is significantly informed by Merleau-Ponty's own work later in his career, especially in *The Visible and the Invisible* – will be fleshed out in chapter three. To at least hint at the direction of this alternative, we can consider what I suggested were some important insights from Heidegger regarding spatial experience to which Merleau-Ponty does not pay sufficient attention. These concern the role of place itself as exerting some pull. Recall his characterization of oriented space: "The 'above' is what is 'on the ceiling'; the 'below' is what is

‘on the floor’; the ‘behind’ is what is ‘at the door’.”[61] He does not characterize oriented space in terms of the body, but in terms of a *room in a dwelling*, the strong suggestion being that it is not simply a matter of us orienting ourselves in the world; rather, at least to some extent it is the world that orients *us*. The dimensions of directionality – above, below, behind (along with, presumably, in front of, and to the left and right) – are determined not (just) by the body, but by our surroundings. We can see that this is the case if we imagine ourselves to be in such a room, with a door that is ‘behind’ us: it may not be directly behind us – that might just be a blank portion of a wall; the door might be off-center a bit. But that door is where entrance and egress are possible, where things might happen, and which opens on to the rest of the world; for these reasons it offers itself to us as salient, and so draws our attention as what is behind us, even if it is not so in a strictly geometrical sense.

His example of the sun makes the point even more clearly, for the sun, he writes, “has its own places – sunrise, midday, sunset, midnight.”[62] Though these places are by definition relative to some observer, they are nonetheless the *sun’s* places. And it is with respect to these that we orient our houses and our gardens, and by these that we structure our daily activities; indeed, they structure time itself for us. So places which are not even those of the perceiving body, but are defined by a certain astronomical relation, exert an influence on us that is bound up in our inhabitation of the world in every sense from the social and the cultural to (even if Heidegger doesn’t say it outright) the physiological and the biological.

If we accept these complementary insights – from Merleau-Ponty, that spatial orientation occurs through the active, situated engagement of a body with the world; from Heidegger, that our surroundings have a power to situate us according to their features – then we can begin to sketch an outline of place as that which serves as the ground of spatial experience. For if we are always enactively embodied, then we always contribute to defining the places we find ourselves according to our bodily capacities and possibilities for action; and if the surroundings we find ourselves in have the power to situate us, then place solicits our expressions of enactive embodiment. One way to put it, then, is to say that place is that in

[61] Heidegger, 136-7.
[62] Ibid., 137.

which actively engaged bodies and solicitous surroundings equiprimordially draw each other out; and to be emplaced in this way is the condition for all experience.

The placiality of thought: an overview

If all experience is emplaced, then all thought must be emplaced. That seems clear enough. But what can it mean to say that thought is emplaced? Certainly *we* are emplaced whenever we are engaged in thought – and this in itself is not a trivial fact. For it entails that part of the background of any given act of thought is our bodily situation. It shouldn't be surprising if our placial context plays a role in shaping thought; and it certainly accords with experience to suppose that travel to a new destination, or return to an old home or any other place of deep personal resonance, may breathe potent life into the course and tenor of our thinking. At the other extreme, meanwhile, a person who is forced to inhabit a radically denuded place, such as the prison cell of solitary confinement, is likely to suffer a dissolution of their very self; Lisa Guenther has shown that such a placial condition can be literally torturous.[63]

But I am arguing that thought is placial in this further sense as well: every thought is a bodily experience, and if to be embodied is concomitantly to be emplaced then every thought is an experience of place. This assertion is perhaps not so self-evident. I don't think it is too controversial to say that our concrete perceptions of our surroundings are experiences of place, but what about memories, or expectations, or acts of imagination? What about mathematical calculation or reason? What about emotions? These too, I will argue, are all emplaced. To see how this is the case, we will turn in chapter one to *Phenomenology of Perception*, in particular Merleau-Ponty's discussion of concrete and abstract movement. Here we find the case of the patient Schneider, whom Merleau-Ponty regards as having lost the "function of projection" which allows for abstract movement. Whatever the validity of his analysis of the pathological case, though, the significant point for present purposes is to elucidate both the distinction, and the intricate interweaving, of experience that is concretely emplaced and experience that leaps free of the concrete in imaginative projection. The key is that in employing imagination, and

[63] See Guenther, 2013.

thus entering into domains of the virtual, we are employing the same bodily capacities which we use to get around in the concrete world; we etch our movements on a "free space," as Merleau-Ponty calls it. To be sure, in imaginative projection these capacities take flight from their heavy constraint by physical laws. Yet never is thought shorn of the body; it is always an expression of bodily capacities, which is also to say, it is always an expression of possibilities for emplacement. The chapter will continue with a discussion of the modes of expression of these capacities, these means by which we open onto the world – namely, the senses – including, most importantly, the kinesthetic sense by which we have a sense of our own bodies as a portion of the world and navigate the world through movement, and which is therefore indispensible to our *participation* in the world as thinking organisms.

Once this relation between the concrete and the abstract – or what might be better to say, the continuation of the capacities of concrete existence in abstraction – is established, we will for the most part leave *Phenomenology of Perception* behind, and turn instead to Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, especially *The Visible and the Invisible*. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, by his own admission Merleau-Ponty adheres in his earlier work to a philosophy of consciousness which, in the end, confines him to the very Cartesian tendency from which he seeks escape. That is, despite his revolutionary situating of consciousness in the body, consciousness nonetheless remains constitutive of a subject in a fundamentally dualistic relation between subject and world. His recognition of this leads him toward the ontology of the flesh.[64] One of my starting points here is that every thought is an event in the world, every thinking organism is embedded in worldly material processes, and we should therefore reject any account of consciousness that treats it as fundamentally different from the world. No dualist am I! In the ontology of the flesh, we find Merleau-Ponty making his boldest attempt to go beyond dualism himself, and his insights in his later work provide immeasurable resources for considering the nature of thought in non-dualistic terms. Thus, chapter one concludes with a discussion of the nature of sensory emplacement in *The Visible and the Invisible*, and this will set the stage for further discussion throughout the rest of this dissertation.

[64] By the same token this leads him, arguably, beyond phenomenology, as it may be that traditional phenomenology is beholden to the Cartesian tradition precisely because of its presuppositions regarding the conscious subject.

The other reason for following Merleau-Ponty in this turn concerns the importance of language for human thought. Surprisingly often, considering the nature of the enterprise, philosophy fails to really contend with the language-imbued nature of human experience: either it treats the world as having meaning that is accessible independent of the very words with which the world is described, or meaning is held to obtain solely in language, independently of the world in which it is used. It is as if language and the world are too much to take ahold of at the same time. My suspicion is that this is because of the discomfort philosophers tend to have in approaching the world from *within*: only by absconding to some discrete level can we adopt a perspective that would purport to take in *the whole* as arrayed before us. In particular, by severing language from the world we may find a perch that either takes language as an unanalyzed given, thus presuming a ground that is adequate for describing the world as it is; or, in a move that is more typical (though certainly not universal) since the linguistic turn, treating meaning as obtaining solely within language, as in, for instance, the emphasis on propositional analysis that follows the Fregean tradition, or (in a different way) the structuralist approach of treating meaning solely as a matter of internal relations within a linguistic system. This unmooring of language from the world amounts to its own sort of dualism; and, as language is traditionally taken as the definitive capacity of the thinking subject, this dualism is complementary to, if not co-implicated with, the dualism that separates the subject from the world.

It is not surprising, then, that Merleau-Ponty is deeply concerned with language, and increasingly so as he attempts to move beyond a "philosophy of consciousness." Even early on, we see him grappling with language at the level of its most basic expressive unit, the phoneme – a concern which makes him rare, if not almost unique, among philosophers.[65] By the time we get to *The Visible and the Invisible*, we find that language is thoroughly interwoven into the "carnal existence of the idea" which itself expresses the flesh that constitutes the reversibly sensing and sensible world. That is, he presents language as belonging to the sensing body and, by the same token, as belonging to the world; language is one of our capacities, as sonorous organisms, for participating in the world. In particular, as we will see in chapter two, language

[65] See, e.g., CLA, p. 23ff.

has a situating power: to be emplaced is to be oriented in some way, it is to have a topographically resonant world unfold through and before us. Language is, for those organisms who use it, inextricable from how we are placially oriented – not because it functions as a map-like system of meaning or description which we can use to navigate a represented world, but because it is intricately insinuated into place itself; it limns place from within even as it is solicited by it, and in so doing it ramifies meanings at every turn. Far from removing us from place in the constitution of meaning at an abstract level, language expresses emplaced existence in its intricate and ever-shifting depth of meaning. Attention to this relation between language and meaning allows us to appreciate the social dimension of emplaced meaning: language is of course constituted in social interaction, and if it is inextricable from meaningful engagement with the world, then our participation in the world is also a participation with others.

A picture begins to emerge of thought as fundamentally situated: perspectival, bodily, an opening towards the world, or more precisely, an opening of the world towards itself as a sort of folding over, to use one of Merleau-Ponty's coinages. In these respects, thought is a continuation of the expressive participation in the sensible – or the situated intra-action of the world, to use a phrase that emphasizes the participatory *withinness* of consciousness with respect to the world[66] – that is by no means unique to language-bearing organisms. But with language the possibilities for situated intra-action become incalculably more intricate, more expansive and at the same time more subtle and delicate. To give due to the complexity of this intra-action, we need to elaborate a concept of place, which will be the task of chaper three. In particular, the movement beyond dualism which allows us to see the participatory nature of language and perception also allows place to regain something of its ancient potency, for we no longer need to regard the world as the inert object of our understanding or the mere venue for

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[66] The term 'intra-action' owes a debt to Karen Barad, from whom I am pretty sure I unconsciously appropriated it. Barad uses 'intra-action' to signify "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction,' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action" (Barad, 33.). I do not presume to imply the sort of quantum metaphysics that Barad fleshes out in her work (though neither would I object to it); but I do share with her what I take to be a general concern for thinking the sensing organism as belonging to the world, rather than viewing it from the perspective of separation, and this is my reason for using the term.

our willful action. The movements of thought, as continuations of the bodily movements that express motile life, are intra-actions between organisms and their milieus; even the very physiognomy of a creature emerges through evolutionary processes as a sort of grip on place, a grip we know as inhabitation. Every bit as much as these movements are enacted by organisms, they are solicited by place. Thus there is no bodily action that is not an engagement with the body's surroundings, and there is no thought that is not constituted on the gradient between concrete and virtual place. All these actions, as the moving beyond itself of the organism and the drawing into itself of place, are expressions of desire.

Chapter three will explore these solicitations, being always attentive to the insinuations of language in place. After all, if language participates in place as a form of expressive action, then it is solicited by place. It is a sort of gesture, a mode of "singing the world," as Merleau-Ponty describes it (PP, 193), but it reveals contours and topographies and exposes emotional resonances with an economy that no other gesture could ever match. In so doing, it radically expands possibilities for inhabiting the world. Most notably, since language is among the things of the world, the possibilities for action which language-imbued places solicit include linguistic acts themselves. If we use language to orient ourselves toward the world, then, we can use language that is about language to orient ourselves *toward our own orientation* in the world. Thought becomes self-reflective; we orient ourselves in place not simply in terms of a given situation, but in terms of the incessant production of altogether new situations. Through language, place erupts out of place in the incessant transformation of desiring movement.

This is not to say that there is no stability in place, however. The concrete world is always ineluctably *there*, and indeed, through its solicitations it orients us: we are not the focal nodes of every place; place has its own foci, its own relief, and our movements proceed lococentrically through this topography. Place has a sort of mutable constancy, which is necessary for orientation, and thus for meaning to emerge at all.

This goes as well for abstract places, those in which we dwell imaginatively. They also solicit us, and unfold according to logics of their own. How is it the case, though, that our bodily capacities are projected from concrete emplaced experience to these abstract realms? What is it that organizes these abstract placial logics? To answer these questions, we turn in chapter

four to a discussion of metaphor. This discussion follows, especially, the work of Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, who argue that understanding is fundamentally metaphorical. Contrary to the traditional concept of metaphor as pertaining essentially to language, Johnson and Lakoff conceive it as pertaining to what they refer to as experiential gestalts: we say that 'love is a journey,' to use one of their examples, and this means that the whole experiential domain of love is structured in terms of our understanding of journeys. This structuring is always only partial (otherwise the source domain and the target domain would be identical) and open to indefinitely many extensions (otherwise it wouldn't be able to contribute to our understanding). Ultimately, as Johnson in particular shows, these metaphors are grounded in our bodies and the ways that we interact bodily with our surroundings. Under this light, then, metaphor can be thought as the projection of our bodily capacities from one domain to another.

Such a concept of metaphor allows us to see how abstract thought expresses our bodily capacties as emplaced organisms. In Lakoff and Johnson's telling, however, the concept can sometimes tend toward the schematic, which prevents it from capturing the texture of moving human thought. If we think it in terms of the depth in "carnal existence" in which ideas are embedded, as Merleau-Ponty describes, we can perhaps recoup something of that texture. In particular, it may be useful to see a notion of embodied and emplaced metaphorical understanding as expressing *resonances*: dynamic interactions between elements by which dimensions of experience are drawn through and transform each other in the production of meaning. Specifically, in metaphor resonances leap from one domain (i.e., a type of milieu) to another in an expressive movement that produces a new sort of intra-action between body and world, and thus a new form of understanding. Crucially, this sort of expression has to be thought as obtaining in a language-imbued world, for it is through language that the possibilities for resonant movement radically expand, in particular through the open-ended possibilities for further linguistic expressions which incessantly remake our situated orientation toward things. Understanding thus becomes a process of perpetual transfiguration.

If abstract thought is always an expression of the intra-action between body and world, then does this entail that the sorts of bodily capacities we employ in thinking will shape the

possibilities for thought? Indeed it does! To see how this may be the case, and what it implies for the nature of abstract thought, we turn to Deleuze in chapter five. Specifically, Deleuze describes two general dispositions in embodiment – the haptic and the optical – which are solicited, respectively, by two forms of space (as he calls them) – the smooth and the striated. Importantly for our purposes, it is a matter of solicitation, in the sense described here: the forms of space are primary; the bodily dispositions are drawn out by them. And, it turns out, the mode of interaction between body and space has profound implications for thought. As we will see, the major theme in Western thought of a representationalist epistemology couched in the dichotomy of subject and object has a basis in striated space, whereas smooth space is that which allows thought to become expressive.

Given Deleuze's critical attitude towards phenomenology, including his specific criticisms of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the flesh, it would be a bit haphazard to simply mesh the two philosophers together. But when these criticisms are aired, it allows for a dialogue between the two that can actually enrich our understanding of each, and thus deepen the relevance of Deleuze's insights regarding the "spatial" character of thought. In particular, Deleuze's stance that "fleshism" unwarrantedly presupposes a natural coherence of being and world, an innate bond expressed in the intrinsic meaningfulness of experience, spurs us to consider just how it is that meaning arises for the later Merleau-Ponty. This leads to a closer consideration of the openness – the *ouverture au monde* – that defines expressive existence for Merleau-Ponty, and how this pertains, in particular, to wild being. This element serves as the source of meaning, but does not bear a preconstituted meaning in itself; paradoxically, and contra Deleuze's criticisms, it is thus in the encounter with wild being, in the form of a solicitation from beyond the horizon of what is sensical, that we find meaning. These considerations, and Deleuze's own contributions on the subject, lead to a fuller reckoning of the role of desire in the placiality of thought.

I conclude, in the final chapter, by considering how this portrayal of thought might redound upon our actual inhabitation of the world – if we are always emplaced, after all, surely our creation and treatment of the places in which we actually live is of the highest importance. Built places are those which we most directly inhabit – not just architecture but the

organization of place in cities, where more than half of the world's people now live, contribute more to defining the contours of our experience than perhaps any other art or technology. How should we build these places? What ideas should they express?

Yet beyond the horizon of the built environment, a broader world solicits us. The natural world, in which we are profoundly enfolded, and which we express, is omnipresent even as it recedes from us, our progenitor and the element in which we subsist, even as we act as its force of self-annihilation. Is there a way for our species to remove ourselves from the course that appears to have us careering toward the decimation of the natural world? I can scarcely pose the question, let alone answer it. But perhaps the whole of this dissertation could be regarded as an effort to frame the context for it.

Finally, I would just like to note that Merleau-Ponty's late philosophical thought is a work in progress; that, really, all philosophical thought is a work in progress. And while this project is constructed in many ways as a continuation of that thought, it is not strictly conceived as "Merleau-Pontian," let alone as an exegesis of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The idea, rather, is to open up certain aspects of that thought, to see where they might be carried, to attempt to make heard some of the resonances that want to emerge – between Merleau-Ponty and other more recent thinkers, including Deleuze, Lakoff and Johnson, and Casey among others; and between his landscapes and those others which he may not have known. This is a matter of introducing Merleau-Ponty to the solicitations of those landscapes, and of being attentive to the resonances that emerge from these encounters. This project, then, is an attempt at an act of listening.

Chapter One: The Sensing of Place

Like every other living thing, we are always emplaced.[67] But the contours that define our inhabitation of the world have a curious tendency to run free of our actual surroundings in an incessant profusion of virtual realms. Despite the ephemerality of these imaginal places, they bear the profoundest meanings for us, and recur upon the concrete to structure our bodily inhabitation of our milieus at every level of our actions, from the establishment of long-term goals to the way we fidget in a moment of distraction. This capacity for inhabiting a world that presents itself to us not simply as given but as bearing an inestimable capacity for re-articulation and virtual transformation is what allows us to engage in abstract thought; and it is this manner of inhabitation that defines the texture of emplacement for us as thinking organisms. So what is this ability? How do these realms of abstraction emerge? Merleau-Ponty engages with this question explicitly in *Phenomenology of Perception*, where his discussion of the function of projection, and of concrete and abstract movement, allows us to see how place is structured for us; it lets us see, in particular, how abstraction is woven into our experience, even as experience never fully takes leave of the concrete. With this structure in mind, we can turn to the senses to try and see in just what ways the world opens up to us placially. This account of the sensing of place will lead us into Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, a turn which will allow us to take on what it means not just to sense but to *participate* in an idea-endowed world.

Space out of place: the emergence of the homogeneous milieu

A lot can be revealed about the structure of place if we consider the process – discussed in historical terms in the introduction – by which place itself becomes occluded by a concept of homogeneous space. So how *does* intelligible or objective space[68] arise? It is, Merleau-Ponty

[67] I want to say, "Like every other thing…" but are electrons emplaced? Neutrinos? Black holes? As is often the case, a universal claim becomes dubious at the extremes of physical scale.
[68] Merleau-Ponty appears to use these terms interchangeably, along with 'homogeneous space.'

writes, “nothing but the making explicit” of oriented space (PP, 104) – but what should we make of this comment? We can indeed imagine an objective space of which a point-horizon structure determines some segment. That is, we can imagine space as constituted by points or figures occupying positions in a homogeneous milieu. However, as Merleau-Ponty writes, “the point-horizon structure can only teach me what a point is by organizing in advance the zone of corporeality in which the point will be seen and, around this zone, the indeterminate horizons that are the counterpart of this act of seeing” (Ibid.). We may indeed impose such a point-horizon structure on oriented space, and thus re-interpret oriented space in terms of a universal, homogeneous space; but we can only do so because the point-horizon structure itself arises from our experiences as oriented bodies, and it is always through oriented experience that we can engage with such a structure.

What is critical to Merleau-Ponty’s account here is that the imagining of objective space is *an act of seeing*. It requires us to adopt a perspective from which we gaze out, taking in some positional arrangement of objects within a homogeneous field; and this homogeneity is ensured by the fact that we can, “by a shift of the gaze,” alter our perspective at will: the positional arrangement can be taken in by any of an indefinite number of perspectives, each of which entails its own horizon or limit, and the coherence of these “interlocking… experiences” around some given object fixes it in an indefinitely extendable milieu. This milieu, unlike a road on which we physically travel or a building in which we purposefully go about various tasks, is not navigated through a full-bodied inhabiting of space. Instead, we navigate it by an imagined movement, in which we flit from point to point, and from the adoption of one perspective to another, instantaneously (or nearly so). That is to say, we take on a god’s-eye view, by which all perspectives are accessible.[69] There are no barriers and no encumbrances in this field of imaginative movement. Our physical body does not serve as the limitation of possibilities for action. Unlike the smooth highway or the rural cowpath which must be physically navigated,

[69] Merleau-Ponty makes just this point in the context of a discussion of the experience of depth: ”In order to treat depth as a breadth considered in profile and to arrive at an isotropic space, the subject must leave his place, his point of view upon the world, and conceive of himself in a sort of ubiquity. For God, who is everywhere, breadth is immediately equivalent to depth” (Ibid., 266). But before we can launch into this flight of perspectival projection, we must first be grounded in a perceptual world; as Merleau-Ponty put it, “surely it is the world itself that invites us to substitute dimensions and to think of it from nowhere” (Ibid., 267).

and therefore measured against the scale of our task in doing so, the measure of distance in objective space is everywhere and always taken in the same way. So, though the body does not serve as the limitation of possibilities for movement in objective space, it does serve as the *condition* of possibility for such imagined movement. That is, with every perspective we adopt, we imaginatively project ourselves into some situation from which we cast our gaze – we employ our capacity to see in fixing a given object in objective space.

But does it follow that this positional, uniform, objective space *derives* from situational, oriented space? In regards to this question, Malpas makes an important observation. As he notes, "[o]bjective space is not to be derived, for instance, from a mere concatenation of subjective spaces. Indeed, the idea of such a concatenation presupposes the idea of objective space itself, for to conceive of a plurality of subjective spaces that can be located in respect of one another already presupposes the concept of a single space within which such location can be made."[70] And not only this, but subjective space as such can only be conceived in relation to objective space, for "[o]nly if one has recourse to the concept of objective space can one begin to explain how a particular orientation and a particular set of behavioural and experiential capacities can give rise to a particular grasp of spatiality."[71] To speak of subjective space, then, is already to accept that other orientations, and thus other subjectivities, are possible. Concepts of objective space and subjective space therefore implicate each other. This reminds us that the objective and the subjective themselves form a dirempted pair – that neither is prior to the other, but each entails the other. When we refer to space as that which is lived by a body in engagement with the world, then, we shouldn't think of this as subjective space; it is perhaps a bit dicey even to refer to it as oriented space, as this may already seem to connote a multiplicity of possible orientations within a homogeneous and objective milieu.[72] It would be better to follow Merleau-Ponty in speaking of this as lived space, and to bear in mind that this is always experienced as place – as a meanginful milieu we inhabit bodily. It is out of place that concepts of subjective and objective space emerge. (With this is mind, the term 'place' will take priority

[70] Malpas (1999), P. 60-61.
[71] Ibid., 65.
[72] Though it will still be useful to speak of a body's *orientation in place* to refer to specific patterns of engagement in the intra-action of body in world.

over ‘space’ from here on out, except when dealing with that particular mode of emplacement which we call “objective space.”)

Malpas comes to a similar conclusion when he writes that “[t]he idea of place thus provides the framework within which the complex interconnection of notions of *both* subjective and objective spatiality can be understood.”[73] But perhaps he would disagree that objective space is a mode of place.[74] He argues, at least, that objective space is non-experiential, for objective space “goes beyond, and in this sense is strictly distinct from, any particular experience of space.”[75] I would suggest, though, that even if objective space is conceived as always going beyond any particular perspective, it is always approached from some perspective. The point is exemplified by the map, which Malpas takes as “the paradigmatic *representation* of objective space.”[76] Maps, by and large, adopt a certain perspective, which Malpas notes; and as he further notes, these perspectives will be tailored to particular audiences with particular interests: “a road map intended for English-speaking Australians is unlikely to be printed using only Chinese characters or to assume a method of identifying road systems that directs its users to the presence of certain concentrations of carbon monoxide.”[77] So not only do maps adopt a particular visual perspective (most typically, an overhead or bird’s-eye view of the land), but they indicate specific features and suppress others in a way that makes them useful for some purpose, i.e., that opens on to certain possibilities for action. When we read a map, then, we project ourselves into a perspective outside of ourselves which allows us to make sense of some portion of the world. This is to adopt an objective perspective, in Malpas’ sense, for all that is required for a concept of objective space is that it be “removed from any particular experiencing or acting subject and any particular location associated with such a subject.”[78] Yet as the map example shows, this

[73] Ibid., 70.
[74] And if so, perhaps he would disagree that place is something that is always experienced.
[75] Ibid., 66.
[76] Ibid., 56.
[77] Ibid., 58. Perhaps schematic maps are the closest thing to aperspectival maps, as they function more as instructions for movement without assuming some particular vantage point on the scene they depict. Yet even in this case the map can only be “read” be emplacing oneself in terms of it, that is, by translating its internal relations to relations in the world.
[78] Ibid., 59.

objective space is negotiated by adopting particular perspectives – specifically, ones which are extrinsic to our concrete situation in any given moment.[79] Indeed, what could it mean to negotiate space that was purely aperspectival? As Malpas himself notes, "to abstract from *all* subjective features of a space… is to be left, not with a purely objective space, but with no concept of space at all – there is nothing 'left over', as it were, from some particular subjective space when one abstracts from the experiential perspectivity of that space."[80]

So, while we may conceive of objective space as independent of any particular perspective, it is through a movement between multiple perspectives that we engage with the world "objectively," and there is no such engagement absent some perspective. If we deny that objective space is derived from subjective space, then, we still need to see it as subordinate to place – as a particular inhabitation of place by means of a bodily capacity which has been unfettered, and which, by virtue of this unfettering, is able to weave together indefinite situational possibilities into a homogeneous fabric. In particular, it is a sort of virtual power inherent in the capacity of sight that runs free of bodily fixedness in establishing the objective world.[81] It is experiential to its core.[82]

[79] Though there is some degree of "objective" space, in this sense, that is intrinsic to comcrete emplacement, as will be discussed below.

[80] Ibid., 62.

[81] This process likely relates recursively to the development of techniques of measurement. We know that 'inches' and 'feet,' for instance, started out as measurements of a literally bodily nature. But through standardization they became unmoored from this originary source (and to such an extent that the units of standard measurement could be turned back on the body itself). This standardization in turn has surely made it easier to conceive of space in objective terms, and now we no longer count a mile as a thousand paces, but think of a distance we might walk in terms of miles.

[82] Is the concept of homogeneous space really grounded in this sort of perceptual weaving? Perhaps not with a full sense of self-awareness; yet still it may rely on such a foudation in perceptual experience, whether that foundation is acknowledged or not. And if it does, it would imply at the least that the homogeneity of space would be strained as we approached the limit of the medium of perception, for it is within that medium that space is constituted. In the case of sight, which is the dominant sense in the constitution of objective space, this medium is light. It is the near-instantaneity of the movement of light that allows us to easily project ourselves into different perspectives on an object (say, a moving projectile) without any disruption of the coherence of possible situated perspectives. (Compare this to a process by which we might try to constitute a homogeneous space primarily through our sense of hearing: while sound travels fast relative to most human purposes, it is not so fast that there is not a perceptible lag between a visible event and the sound produced by that event as experienced from a moderate distance; and, of course, it is possible for people to travel faster than the speed of sound. In the case of a projectile approaching near to or faster than the speed of sound, or of a situated observer traveling at such a speed, space as conceived primarily through the sense of sound would be distorted, and its homogeneity would be lost.*) But of course light doesn't move *infinitely* fast. And as post-Einsteinian physics has shown, it is just when an object or an observer approaches the speed of light that space begins to perceptibly warp: it contracts or distends according to one's

If objective space is a mode of emplacement, what is the source of the temptation in modern thought to take objective space as foundational? Why is there a tendency to deny that spatiality emerges out of lived experience, and instead to insist that such experience merely distorts "pure" objective and homogeneous space? In large part, it is a matter of intellectual control. The danger philosophy always faces is that it be enticed to adopt as its mission to encompass the world in a totalizing purview of understanding. The appeal of isotropic, objective space for such a mission is that it allows for all perspectives to be taken in all at once, to be gathered together under that god's-eye view from which the whole of existence is accessible and transparent – for such a perspective both undergirds objective spatiality (insofar as the latter must be able to be perceived from everywhere and anywhere for its spatial totalization to be ensured) and depends upon it (insofar as a perspective which in principle sees everything and anything in the same way can only do so if the medium of sight is everywhere and anywhere homogeneous). In this way spatial universality and homogeneity extends its dominion to the limits of the conceivable. The baroque multifariousness of lived experience, the weltering motions of an ever-changing perceptual world, can be brought to order under the aegis of a single spatial form. It would then be possible to see through the complex and shifting weave of lived space to the underlying principle of a single objective spatiality – one clear and distinct notion which would render stable all the discombobulations of a world ever in flux. If it is true that all existence is spatial existence, then universal homogeneous space becomes the mechanism by which a rationalist dominion is established over all of existence. And if such a universal spatiality is the ground for perceptual experience then the fulfillment of the dream of

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situation vis-à-vis a given event.** In other words, the homogeneous and objective character of space falls away, as various situated perspectives can no longer be made to cohere as they can in everyday experience; or more precisely, they can be made to cohere only by abandoning the notion of space as homogeneous. The fact that it is the *coherence of situated perspectives* that must be maintained, rather than the previously accepted characterization of objective space, is an indication that scientific accounts of the nature of physical space have a phenomenological basis, rather than a basis in any theory about its a priori nature.

* In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Thomas Pynchon captures the surreality of such an effect in a description of the experience of being bombarded by supersonic missiles like those which rained down on London during World War II: "Imagine a missile one hears approaching only *after* it explodes. The reversal! A piece of time neatly snipped out… a few feet of film run backwards… the blast of the rocket, fallen faster than sound – the growing *out of it* the roar of it's own fall, catching up to what's already death and burning… a ghost in the sky…" (Pynchon, 159).

** Of course, time begins to warp as well, which suggests the positing of homogeneous, objective time may be subject to a similar analysis as is space.

comprehensive understanding is only a matter of subjecting the perceptible world to this principle of universal spatiality, that is, of determining the rules that obtain in this milieu and applying them to any given situation which might arise anywhere within it – which is to say, anywhere at all.

Objective spatiality, then, brings us to the perspectives of science, "according to which I am a moment of the world" (PP, lxxii). Such perspectives turn the objective nature of space back on the perceiving subject, regarding her as another object embedded in the universal milieu. To regard her as such is appropriate enough for certain endeavors and the constitution of certain sorts of knowledge. But the temptation towards an encompassing philosophy can lead to at least two errors here: first, to consider this perspective and its accompanying co-constitutive spatialization as fundamental, rather than a certain dimension of lived experience; second, to suppose that the knowledge attainable from such a perspective is the totality of what can be known about the world. As Merleau-Ponty's criticism of empiricism shows, the explanatory power of scientific accounts is not coeval with our understanding of the world, and indeed this power is owed to lived experience (and place), which is its ground and the condition for its sense.

Concrete and abstract movement

If placial existence is fundamentally situated – if being is essentially oriented being – by what means do we come to posit objective space, and even in a sense to inhabit it? I have suggested above that a certain bodily disposition is involved in constructing objective space. To answer this question more fully, though, we have to look at how, precisely, this disposition expresses itself, and for this we have to return to the point that it is through action that we take up situated spatiality. The space in which I find myself situated is always a realm of possibilities; it is always constituted in such a way as to be amenable to certain tasks, and in turn the sorts of tasks I engage in, or that are open for me to engage in, constitute the space as meaningful for me. It follows that when I treat space as objective, it is characterized for me by a certain range of possibilities for action – that, indeed, these possibilities are what define it as objective space.

To understand the nature of objective space, then, and to see how it derives from our experience of place, we need to see what these possibilities for action are. To this end we can take a look at Merleau-Ponty's discussion of movement.

Drawing on Gelb and Goldstein, Merleau-Ponty suggests that oriented and objective space find corollaries in two types of movement. The body in purely oriented space (such as that inhabited by the patient Schneider) expresses itself through *concrete movement*. Such movement expresses the body as fully enmeshed in some situation. A concrete movement "does not pass through the objective world" (PP, 108); there is no mediation between intention and action by a conceptualization of positional space. When I reach for my mug of coffee, I do not do so by negotiating a space laid out as a system of rectilinear coordinates, nor do I perform the action by following some consciously formulated strategic plan ('lift arm, rotate forearm clockwise 90 degrees, open hand,' etc.). Rather the action involves an immediate engagement with my surroundings, or "a sort of coexistence with that location" in which I find myself (Ibid.). The paradigmatic act of concrete movement is grasping, a movement which is "magically complete; it only gets under way by anticipating its goal" (PP, 106). In grasping my mug, I am not making a judgment about the objective world – I am not determining the position of the object and from this deducing the proper approach to it. The intentional act here is immediate; I am geared into the world, and this is enough for me to be able to act. In concrete movement, I am absorbed in my actions; the situation in which I find myself solicits certain actions and the performance of certain tasks, and these I perform without any need for reflection. They involve the sort of habitual capacities which comprise our body schemas.

Abstract movement, by contrast, only becomes possible when a further dimension is added to spatial experience. It requires the *construction* of a background which allows for the "superimpos[ition of] a virtual or human space over physical space" (PP, 114). That is, whereas concrete movement proceeds within the physical world inhabited by a person, and expresses the modes of this physical inhabitation through immediate actions, abstract movement involves an engagement in a virtual realm – a realm of imaginable possibilities. We are not limited merely to actual physical situations; we can employ our body to "turn away from the world, apply its activity to the stimuli that are inscribed upon its sensory surface, lend itself to

experiments and, more generally, be situated in the virtual" (PP, 111). By means of this capacity, I can integrate various partial impressions into a whole by, in a sense, filling in the blanks of what is partially given, thus constituting a whole image in imagination. By contrast, for someone like Schneider, who has no capacity for abstract movement, there is no way to go beyond the concrete perception. That is, he can not go through the imaginable possibilities that emerge from one's relation to some object, or to one's own body. This is why, if given instructions to perform some physical movement (such as tracing a shape in the air) he "does not seek and does not find the movement himself; rather he agitates his body until the movement appears" (PP, 112). He has no way of pursuing a possibility in movement, since he has no way of expressing that possibility to himself in the first place. As Merleau-Ponty puts it, "[t]he distinction between abstract movement and concrete movement is thereby clarified: the background of concrete movement is the given world; the background of abstract movement is, on the contrary, constructed" (PP, 113). One who lacks the capacity for abstract movement simply operates within the actual, such that the grasping of a mug or the scratching of an itch presents no difficulty – it merely involves a direct operation based upon given perceptions – but the achievement of a prescribed abstract task can only occur through blind chance, if a random concrete movement happens to line up with the task that is being attempted.[83] There is, then, no "background" beyond the given world. But for the normal person, the abstract task is performed as the realization of a possibility of bodily movement, a possibility which is set into a constructed background. It is not that such a possibility need necessarily be established in advance and then achieved, like a tracing of an image; the movement and its background are both present as "'moments of a single whole'" (Ibid.). The possibility is present in, and at the same time realized by, the movement itself. It is in this sense that possibility guides action by means of a constructed background.[84]

[83] E.g., "If [the patient] is asked to trace a square or a circle in the air, he first 'finds' his arm, then he brings his hand forward, just as a normal subject does in order to locate a wall in the dark, and finally he attempts several movements in a straight line and along various curves, and if one of these movements happens to be circular, he promptly completes the task" (PP, 112).

[84] Gallagher refers to a case study which is in many ways just the inverse of Schneider's: Ian Waterman suffers from a sensory neuropathy, acquired at age 19, resulting in a lack of a sense of touch and of any proprioceptive sense below the neck; his "initial experience was the complete loss of postural and motor control" (Gallagher, 43).

Merleau-Ponty, in characterizing the view of Goldstein, refers to this process by which abstract movement is made possible as the "function of projection"; it is by this function that "the subject of movement organizes before himself a free space in which things that do not exist naturally can take on a semblance of existence" (PP, 114). The sorts of tasks which are made possible by this function – which is to say, the sorts of tasks that involve abstract movement – include many which are remarkably basic: not just tracing a given shape in the air, for instance, but also placing objects on one side of a dividing line, coordinating movement in terms of directional opposites, and so on. More complicated tasks like reading a map or following the rules of a game of chess would presumably be out of the question for one who is incapable of this function of projection. But interestingly, so are tasks which aren't ostensibly involved with the negotiation of space. Patients like Schneider have difficulty "indicating the previous day or month" (Ibid.); they cannot engage in play; they cannot give explanations for why they hold a certain view on social or political matters. Merleau-Ponty points to the common dimension of these tasks:

Even the most basic motor programs, such as those involved in sitting up in a chair, were beyond his ability to control. He had, essentially, lost the capacity for concrete movement. Gradually, though, he was able to compensate for this loss by exerting conscious control over the movement of his body. One method he used to do so involved imagining certain movements, and then visually monitoring his body in order to carry them out (Gallagher, 50). It was almost as if he was marionetting his own body (and videos of Waterman bear out this impression). Apparently, Waterman was able to substitute abstract movement for the functions of concrete movement; or, as Gallagher puts it, "Ian, who is unable to depend on a body schema, must employ his body image to guide his movement" (Gallagher, 45). The substitution was not complete, however; the phenomenological character of Ian's experience is different from one who has a functional body schema. For instance, Ian "estimates that walking over a flat, well-lit surface takes about 50-70 per cent of his attention, though walking over an uneven surface still requires close to 100 per cent" (Gallagher, 49). It would seem that Ian is incapable of engaging with the world in the way most people are; rather than directing his attention *through* his body towards the objects of the world, he must focus attention *at* his body in carrying out the most basic tasks. He has been able to employ his imaginative capacity for abstract movement in creating a functional spatial existence, in particular by using visual monitoring to direct bodily movement – an impressive demonstration of the plasticity of human bodily capacities. But lacking the full array of normal sensory capabilities, he is not able to gear into the world in the same way; he must always be turned toward himself. Ian's case points to how critical concrete movement is to the integration of self and world in placial existence; but it also shows the degree to which abstract movement can, through the construction of a "background" on which imaginative possibilities can be etched, imbue the lived world with sense, even to the extent of substituting for many of the functions of concrete movement. (We might ask, too, whether the fact that Ian *used to* have the capacity for concrete movement is significant for his ability to engage in abstract movement; perhaps his abstract imaginative capacities depend on having had a functioning body schema.)

By the way and to be clear, I don't mean to conflate the body image-body schema dyad with Merleau-Ponty's abstract-concrete dyad. Though body schema is implicated in concrete movement, it is not reducible to it; it is, rather, that which makes concrete movement possible.

> all of these operations require the same power of marking out borders and directions in the given world, of establishing lines of force, of arranging perspectives, or organizing the given world according to the projects of the moment, and of constructing upon the geographical surroundings a milieu of behavior and a system of signification that express, on the outside, the internal activity of the subject. The world no longer exists for [patients like Schneider] except as a ready-made or fixed world, whereas the normal person's projects polarize the world, causing a thousand signs to appear there, as if by magic, that guide action, as signs in a museum guide the visitor. (PP, 115)

This function of projection is also what makes abstract movement possible, since in order to engage in such movement "I must also invert the natural relation between my body and the surroundings, and a human productivity must appear through the thickness of being" (Ibid.).

I think we can say a few things in elaborating on this idea of projection. We can say, for one, that what are being projected here are possibilities of the body, imaginatively expressed. Through an "inversion," I etch my possibilities for action on a "free space," unencumbered by the limitations of actual bodily movement. I can, for instance, instantly project myself thousands of feet into the air and gaze down on my city in order to lay out its street plan before me so as to envision a route for getting to a café on the other side of town. Or I can manipulate numbers in my mind, as if I were writing them out in a void. Or I can determine what day of the week yesterday was, by treating the temporal sequence of days as a spatial arrangement as it might appear if I were to lay it out before myself, such that I find my place in the arrangement ("Wednesday," say), and then have only to move or orient myself one "space" to the left to find the previous day ("Tuesday"). This capacity involves the organization of a milieu for our virtual engagement through the employment of our bodily capacities in the performance of imagined movements or tasks; as such, it is implicated in all acts of imagination. Projection, in this sense, can be understood as the extension, in imagination, of our bodily capacities in movement through this virtual milieu. I project my gaze into various perspectives: I see the city as it would appear from miles above; I negotiate turns on an imagined walking route through a sort of virtual kinesthesia, a feeling of a tendency to turn left and then right and then right again; I "weigh my options" and really feel a sense of mass exerting a greater gravitational force from one direction over another. In each case I negotiate a situation given in imagination according to the possibilities which arise given some particular orientation to this imaginal space.

The point is probably obvious, but it's worth noting that the employment of bodily capacities through this sort of projection into the virtual realm is distinct from their employment in actual situations (which is why we are able to make the distinction between virtual and actual in the first place). Unlike in actual space, we are free to alter or demolish virtual space in an instant; indeed, its character is as ephemeral as can be, as virtual tasks and projected perspectives flit through our thoughts with darting speed. Further, we are not encumbered by the physical limitations which bind our possibilities for action in the actual world; we can shift perspectives instantaneously, even projecting ourselves to the other side of the planet, or farther than that. We can whirl the Empire State Building about on its spire like a spun basketball, if we are so inclined. At the same time, this virtual space does not have the sort of hold on us that the actual world does. Perhaps in the case of dim or ambiguous perceptions, I may be able to will away that which actually appears to me in lived experience. Nonetheless, I must contend with this world in which I find myself – I can not will away the passing traffic if I am to cross the street; I really have to look both ways first. That which I call forth in projection, by contrast, does not demand a response from me. It does not furnish my milieu as if it were comprised of real objects. I can sweep this free space clear and start again from any new perspective, thought, or emotional disposition which may arise for me. Related to this is the fact that things in actual space have some indefinite number of aspects which further investigation would reveal, while that which we encounter in virtual space does not extend, and has no further aspects, beyond our imagining of it.[85]

All of which is to say that, though the function of projection draws on embodied experience – indeed, is dependent on embodiment as the reserve of capacities which it expresses – it is not *simply* an extension of actual embodied experience; the places of projection do not bind us as actual places do, nor does it have the ineluctability of the latter.

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[85] This is not to say that imaginative experiences don't unfold according to a certain logic; some degree of internal coherence is typical. If I imagine a family of elephants on the African veldt trundling down to a river to drink, I'm liable to think of them as fleshy beasts and whole from every perspective. That is, imagination is liable to draw them up from experience as they really would be. But there's nothing stopping me from imagining myself coming around to their starboard side only to find that from that perspective they are just hollow concavities; whereas everything in my experience tells me that such a discovery about an *actual* family of elephants would be an impossibility.

Projection does not present to us a mere adumbrated or deficient mode of perception. As an imaginative ability it operates, rather, through a bodily capacity of its own kind, and according to its own bodily logic.

At the same time, though, this distinction between concrete involvement with one's surroundings and imaginative projection should not by any means be taken as a pure diremption of conscious experience; just as a virtual space of projection necessarily draws on lived bodily experience, my lived experience can be influenced by that which I virtually construct, and we shouldn't make the mistake of supposing that to "enter" the field of projection is to leave the field of our actual surroundings – our surroundings open up new possibilities for abstract movement at every turn, and these possibilities contribute to the constitution of the situations in which we find ourselves. A walking route I plan out through projection, for instance, allows the neighborhood as I actually experience it to be imbued with a certain sense; it contributes to determining the scope of my attention or sense of place, and causes certain landmarks which mark my route to loom more prominently. Indeed, potential paths radiate off my planned route at every turn ("should I swing by my friend's apartment to see if she wants to join me? should I stop off for a slice of pizza down the block?"). Or a slight smell of woodsmoke in the air transports me to some other place altogether – an Asian village I lived in a decade ago, perhaps – and suddenly I am projecting myself into a whole different world, one from my past, and emotionally gearing into that world, adopting a sort of affective habit that is familiar from that time and place. And yet this world, distant as it is, does not simply emerge out of the ether to displace my actual surroundings; rather, my surroundings (the woodsmoke in the air) call me into that other world. And now that other world, that place of memory, is present for me within my surroundings, perhaps eliciting a different stride as I walk down the street, and casting the buildings I pass in a different light; they appear to me somehow as they would have a decade ago; they express a different mood, a different mode of being, one which coheres more fully with the world inhabited by my younger self, and which in doing so redefines the horizons of the world in which I presently find myself. In such ways as this, the possibilities immanent in the actual can trace out the most unpredictable routes, and these routes in turn allow my concrete surroundings to unfold in protean ways. Everywhere the

concretely given world opens beyond itself, toward what is not immediately given, and in this opening the depth of meaning is present to us.[86],[87]

But we don't need to ascend to this level of imaginative tableau to see that through imaginative projection the world we live in is imbued with meaning. For even in the identification of discrete objects as exemplars of a certain kind, for instance, we employ this capacity. When we walk into a building and understand it *as* a building – as the *sort* of place that it is, with all the associated expectations that such a place entails – we are going beyond what is simply concretely given, and inhabiting the place according to a certain abstract orientation, i.e., all that goes along with employing the concept of 'building.' This involves making certain divisions in places, for instance, 'inside' and 'outside,' 'first floor' and 'second floor,' and so on. The abstract organization of this concept articulates our surroundings for us in a certain way which is intrinsic to the experience of them, in the manner of a gestalt. The virtual places of projection are not so much superimposed on the actual places of experience, like a map or system of transparent signs overlaying a milieu, as they structure actual places from

[86] Kelly claims that the distinction between these two modes of spatial orientation reduces to "the distinction between essentially bodily understandings of space and spatial features, on the one hand, and essentially cognitive or reflective understandings of these on the other" (Kelly, 376). Much of my argument here, though, suggests that cognitive processes are in fact expressions of bodily understanding – that in principle human cognition is not possible without the perspectives of embodiment, which provide the ground for language, logical reasoning, and so forth, matters which will be discussed at length in later chapters. Perhaps, though, Kelly is arguing that "essentially cognitive or reflective processes" are just those which rely on the modes of embodiment which I am claiming here are implicated in abstraction or imaginative projection. This would have to be an unconventional understanding of cognition, however, since it is not as if patients like Schneider or DF, who is discussed in Kelly's own article, are incapable of certain operations traditionally classified as cognitive, such as understanding language and making judgments about their concrete surroundings. Kelly's distinction, then, seems to me a false one, and rather than understanding understanding in terms of this bodily/cognitive distinction, it would be better to understand it in terms of the epistemic possibilities which are engendered by different bodily capacities and dispositions in embodiment.

[87] Mikel Dufrenne goes so far as to remark that "the essential function of imagination is to preform the real in an act of expectation which allows us not only to anticipate and recognize the real (as Alain showed) but also to adhere to it." We should therefore resist Sartre's view that imagination essentially concerns the unreal. And indeed, through projection we are often – indeed, for the most part – concerned with the world as it is and what we might or could do in it. The possibilities we explore through projection are generally employed not in service of idle counter-factual imaginings, but in playing out scenarios for potential (not merely possible) actions, or for getting a handle on the situation with which we are actually involved, as in the quotidian examples of abstract movement mentioned above. (Dufrenne (1973), 355.)

within. (In this sense they introduce another dimension of ephemerality to experience; for not only are things themselves subject to change, but the structure of our experience of those things is subject to change as the conceptual structures through which they are expressed in our perception changes. As we will see, this is especially the case with language.)

Merleau-Ponty's statements that the function of projection expresses "on the outside, the internal activity of the subject" and that it "invert[s] the natural relation between my body and the surroundings" (PP, 115), then, need to be qualified. Projection is not simply an extension of certain bodily capacities which we have as actual embodied beings; it is the imaginative employment of those capacities in the construction and organization of virtual (and thus ephemeral) places which allow us free reign. Through projection, we are no less embodied beings than we are in the field of concrete movement, as our embodiment is manifest in all experience. Yet as it is an imaginative capacity, it leaves us free of constraints on how that embodiment might express itself; it leaves us free even of physical law, yet it remains always rooted in the possibilities of bodily inhabitation in place. It does not so much allow for the construction of an alternative domain, a realm of abstract manipulations, as it allows for the eruption of the possible out of the actual.

We can also elaborate on the nature of the "free space" in which the virtual unfolds through projection (PP, 114). We might be tempted to regard this as a manifestation of objective space – a homogeneous, unbounded, positional space, familiar from the likes of Descartes and Newton, displaced to a plane of purely imaginative experience. There is, after all, an ease of movement in virtual places which permits the adoption of the god's-eye view – the perspective of all perspectives (which is really no more than the ability to adopt an indefinite number of perspectives in sequence); as discussed in the previous section, the lack of physical constraint which permits the god's-eye view suggests the illusion that imaginable space has just the characteristics of homogeneity and indefinite extension that are found, for example, in the Newtonian conception. Yet if existence is placial, and placiality is always situational, then this is no less true when the aspect of existence in question is that which is encountered through projection. And indeed it is the case that this "free space" – the space of virtuality, of possibility, imaginatively constructed – is always situational: it always entails some perspective,

some inhabitation by an embodied being whose gaze (or other sense) is oriented in some particular way. It is always a space which has its own *sens*. We should not construe it as a spatial *medium*, latent and ready for us to populate it with the objects of imaginative projection. (Such a conception would return us to the passivity of space found in Newton, for instance.) Nor should we think of it as an autonomous domain. Rather, it is made anew whenever our capacity for projection goes to work; in each instance we generate and inhabit a new situation, adopt some perspective in engaging particular possibilities – and these possibilities are always spun from our experiences of the actual world.

This returns us to the question of how it is that we come to posit objective, homogeneous space, if spatial existence is in fact always situated. Again, the capacity for instantaneous perspectival shifts in what Merleau-Ponty refers to as 'free' space allows us to conjure something like a homogeneous and objective space (though the rigorous development of such a concept of space in physics reveals it to be illusory; even the space of contemporary physical science is heterogeneous, and its characteristics shift depending on one's perspective). The capacity for projection – the imaginative extension of our bodily capacities in virtual places – is what allows for this sort of perspectival disposition toward space. This is the source, then, of our conception of objective space.

This points again towards the compelling nature of such a concept for that certain philosophical tendency I described above – the desire to cast a purview of understanding over the totality of being. For, having obscured the situational nature of spatial existence, we presume that the fundamental character of space is objective, and situational experience is merely derivative of it – an instance of the failure of embodied existence against the standard of the ideal. Only objective space, it seems, can live up to that standard; and, by ensuring the homogeneity and constancy of a spatial field, only objective space can provide a secure ground for an existence that otherwise appears to be ever in flux.

Sensory emplacement

As I argued in the previous section, the employment of imaginative projection in inhabiting a virtual place does not simply result in an oriented place writ large, or a representation in that virtual place that is isometric to what is experienced bodily. Nor does it mean that we leave actual places behind altogether; the abstract is complexly interwoved into the concrete, and is the means by which we negotatiate a world whose meaning for us extends beyond what is immediately present. We can see this first by considering in what sense experiences of emplacement are expressed through the senses.

Each of the senses allows for different possibilities in the constitution of spatial existence, and each does so with a synesthetic openness toward the other senses, and toward the world in general. On the face of it, the most circumscribed of these possibilities are those bestowed by the sense of taste which is, after all, in a concrete sense only ever experienced as occurring in a certain enclosed zone, in a milieu of variously hard, gripping, and squishy body parts arranged within the lower part of the head. This zone is not without placial dimensionality: certain tastes predominate towards the front of the palate, others towards the back; a savored flavor may be rolled around on the tongue like a marble in the palm. But taken as an isolate sense, taste is blind to the world beyond the horizon of the teeth.

Yet as any eater knows, there is no such thing as pure taste – that is, a sense of taste divorced from the other senses and from all context. A chile relleno that is golden-crispy on the outside with cheese gloriously melted on the inside tastes delicious; the same flavors pressed into some sort of dystopian paste would not. The taste of a given food is inextricable from its texture, and likewise from its smell and appearance. Furthermore, beyond its intertwining with the other senses, taste is inextricable from its broader experiential context. Eating is a primordially social activity for humans, and the pleasure of the experience is woven through our relations to those with whom we share our meals. A certain taste may conjure up a whole realm of social existence for us – for instance, the realm of family and home and all else that attends the experience of “comfort food” for any one of us. And then, of course, there are the worlds unfurled from Marcel’s madeleine…

Taste opens on to the world, then, as surely as any of the senses do, and this openness is without definable limit, as we see with the immense connotative powers which can be stirred

by taste. But I think it is also fair to say that there is a placiality that is characteristic of gustation. It begins with the mouth, which is where taste is most literally and directly experienced, and which marks it as in many ways the closest of the senses – we actually experience it within our bodies. But given the inextricability of the other senses from even the immediate experience of taste it extends as well into the placiality that is implicated in the act of eating. This act is a *bringing into* ourselves: the hunger which taste gratifies originates in the stomach as well as the mouth, and of course we use our hands to bring food to our mouths. Of course we aren't literally employing our taste buds when we work a knife and fork, nor when our mouth begins to water at the sight of our entrée being brought to the table. Nonetheless, this arc of hand-to-mouth-to-stomach defines a zone of salience with respect to taste. It is a very intimate placiality, one which involves not just the involuted directedness of eating, but the traversal of the boundary between self and world – the taking-in through the orifice of the mouth; and indeed, ingestion is nothing other than the absorption of the world into our bodies. (Surely the intentional placiality of gustation is the reason that television commercials almost invariably present food in close-up, as overflowing the boundaries of the TV screen in cornucopial abundance – the chicken sandwich is shown to us as a totalizing presence; it eclipses the world in its delectable immediacy – which is, after all, more or less how we experience it when we lift it to our mouths.) When our concern for the world is operating primarily through taste – when that is the sensory mode which predominates in our dealings with things, as when we are eating (or perhaps just seriously wanting to eat) – we bear a certain bodily disposition toward the world, a way of being which draws horizons around our experience in certain ways, which allows some things to burgeon up in emphatic presence and others to slip into the shadows of irrelevance.[88] The placiality that emerges through such engagement has a characteristic breadth; it occupies a realm of a certain scope (though again,

[88] It is revealing that even in describing the dispositional mode typical of the sense of taste that visual metaphors seem unavoidable.

this experience will inevitably unfold, through connotation or allusion, into other realms further afield or even closer in).[89]

I mention the example of gustation because if the interoceptive sense of taste, that most localized of the senses, defines a bodily disposition which opens onto the world by means of a certain mode of placial existence, that is a fortiori the case for the other senses as well, which are all capable of operating across distances. The sense of smell, so intimately linked to taste, tends to be suffusive: we find ourselves all at once surrounded by an odor, and only then search out its source.[90] A sort of directional placiality can emerge along the axes of the visceral feelings of attraction or repulsion which smells tend to provoke. The sense of hearing allows for a much more fine-grained locational directionality, as well as some ability to gauge distance (though the sense of depth tends to be relatively vague; we hear sounds as originating from nearby or far away, but generally without the precision with which we can judge the distance of visible objects). The spatiality of touch would seem, at first blush, to be co-extensive with our body's reach (though there will be more on haptic capacities in chapter five), though artificial implements can function as tactile prostheses. And much could be said about the many and diverse ways that the senses communicate and synesthetically commingle with each other.

Of the several senses, though, two are worthy of more considerable elaboration – the one because of the overly central role it has occupied in the characterization of human bodily experience and in the ways it has tended to be projected in philosophical concepts of abstract understanding; the other because of the manner in which it has tended to be marginalized in terms of just these functions.

Vision

[89] This description of the human sense of taste does not necessarily apply to all animals. Some fish, for instance, have taste receptors distributed across the surface of their bodies. We can only imagine what it is like to have such a sensory capacity; we can be certain, though, that it involves a placial dimensionality of its own kind.
[90] At least this is how it goes for us humans (and for some more than others). Other animals with a more acute olfactory sense than us undoubtedly inhabit a far richer and more orientationally detailed world of smells.

Of all the senses, vision seems, at first glance, to present us with the clearest and most totalizing sensation of place, and perhaps for this reason the disposition in embodiment that is characteristic of visual spatialization has been preeminent in the philosophical tradition. For one thing, it is – for those of us who are sighted, at least – nearly always with us. No matter where we look, the world appears to us in plenary abundance; even the blue void of the sky is a totalizing void, a blue that fills the sky to an infinite depth. Even if we close our eyes, it is not that visual experience ceases for us; we *see* a darkness, which is at any rate not really an absence of visual stimuli but a churning static of entoptic phenomena. What's more, the visible world is present to us in far greater detail and to a far greater degree of precision than it is by means of the other senses; we can hear a jet flying overhead at cruising altitude as a distant roar that swells up from one edge of the sky and passes vaguely to some other region before fading away (and all this with a temporal lag, as the sound discernibly trails the sight of the jet), but we can make out the shape of the same jet visually from miles distant, locate it precisely in the sky, observe the slightest deviation in its course, and trace its progress up to the very moment it disappears over the horizon. And no matter where we cast our gaze we find this sort of detail: plunging intricacies in the barest visible scraps of things left swept into a corner…[91]

This is not to say that vision is superior to the other senses – that would be as absurd a category mistake as to say that we hear better with our eyes than with our ears. But in the plenitude that vision presents to us, in its baroque detail, and in the depth of the world that it presents, vision seems more than any other sense to draw us into a completely furnished

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[91] Catherine Thinus-Blanc and Florence Gaunet further note that whereas haptic attention can be sharply focused and auditory perception can be easily solicited, "only vision possesses both" properties. Furthermore, vision allows "that the spatial properties of the surrounding world are perceived as invariant, despite the apparent motion of the array on the retina during locomotion," whereas in

> blind conditions, feedback from external sources is not reliable, invariant, or necessarily correlated with movements. For example, in the case of auditory information, many of the sources of sound are themselves moving objects. Therefore, even if vision is not inherently qualitatively different from other sensory modalities, its relation with action confers on it a specific status that allows it to readily and accurately 'inform' the participant about the perceptual consequences of his or her ongoing displacement. (Thinus-Blanc and Gaunet, 22)

Vision, then, is integral to establishing our sense that the world has a degree of permanence (or mutable constancy), at least with respect to our actions, which sense of permanence is surely essential for the coherence of spatial existence. For this reason, individuals who become blind later in life have had the "visual feedback information provided by locomotion, and this sensitivity would remain even when visual information is eliminated" (22-23). The integration of vision with movement, then, plays a very important role in one's spatial abilities.

world. Sounds or smells tend to dissolve into neutrality – the hum of the refrigerator that we only notice when it suddenly turns off, the scent of our home which only returns to us when we've been away for weeks. Haptically, we become numb. A parallel sensory decay can occur with vision: we lose sight of the details of the visual world, we become inured to its immersive depths through the ossifications that tend to occur with habitual looking. Still, vision expresses itself with incomparable insistence; we blink open our eyes, and instantaneously we are insinuated into the whole panoply of the world, overflowing itself with solicitations for our gaze, and this visual dimension is with us for as long as we are conscious.

And again, it isn't as if the senses operate as a set of isolated operations. We are the foci of various expressions of the world which may lap up against our skin, or our tongue, or wash over us in the way of a visually immersive scene; but always it is our whole being that takes shape in these expressions, with an affective depth that plunges through the fullness of our being. (Perhaps you fell in love once, and walked through the city, and everything there appeared warm and rich like it never had before. And what can it mean to say that things 'appeared' 'warm' and 'rich'? The force of sensations are not bounded by the categories of the senses; a warmth is present to our skin or our eye or our stomach – it finds purchase where it may.[92])

And, while any of the senses may be involved in imaginative projection, vision seems to provide the most immediate sort of escape from the thickness of concrete situatedness. When I adopt an aerial perspective on my surroundings for navigational purposes, for instance, I at once leap free from the constraints of a weighty, earth-bound being, a being of meaty volume, subject to the ground's perpetual claim. In adopting such a perspective, does my whole body imaginatively take flight – or is it not just my vision that soars; or rather, *a* vision, an anonymous vision, as Merleau-Ponty might say, that becomes present to me? It is not a full sense of embodiment that is involved in such a projection, nor does the sense of emplacement need to be as vivid, as comprehensive, or as ineluctable as emplacement in the actual. Indeed, the aerial perspective may present as a mere intimation within the actual, a suggestion of

[92] Or we could say that each of the senses opens up the others – the fact that we can feel warmth allows us to see it; the fact that we can hear the shatter of glass allows us to see the shatter in the broken shards on the floor.

schematic arrangements which imbue the visible surroundings with an orientational sense relevant to my concerns, and extend the scope of that sense beyond the visible horizon; it may even amount to little more than a general sense of cardinal directionality – just what is necessary to swivel the world onto an axis that comports with my goals (or my wandering speculation, as the case may be). So it is not an extension of full embodiment that is employed in cases such as this, but a partial extension of a visual capacity that shoots free of the corporeal density that constrains our actual movements.

It is tempting to consider an unmoored vision such as this, however adumbrated it may be, as essential to constituting the free space of imaginative projection. For the organization of a free space which is achieved through the function of projection typically involves the conjuring of some sort of array – an arrangement of things that are accessible to the imagination on a model provided by vision, and an approach to the world which regards such arrangements might seem to be implicated in the construction of free space. "Marking out borders and directions in the given world, … establishing lines of force, … organizing the given world according to the projects of the moment" – such operations seem to be primarily performed by vision (PP, 115). Indeed, when Merleau-Ponty, in discussing the operation of projection in normal people, declares that such operations cause "a thousand signs to appear there, as if by magic, that guide action, as signs in a museum guide the visitor" (Ibid.), the invocation of the capacity of vision becomes all but explicit.

This threatens to reduce, however, to a mere extension of the visual capacity what is in fact a mode of emplacement that belongs to one's whole existence as a placially situated being. Consider those capacities which Gelb and Goldstein's patient Schneider seems to lack. "For thought," Merleau-Ponty writes, Schneider's disorder "primarily affects his power of recognizing simultaneous wholes" (PP, 128). Suppose we grant this analysis. Is there any reason to suppose the recognition of "simultaneous wholes" depends on a visual capacity? Would it not be just as reasonable to suppose that such recognition is grounded in a capacity to *grasp* things rather than to take them in visually? I *see* my coffee mug as a unitary whole, but this is because when I take hold of it I bring the whole thing to my lips, without the disintegration or physical distortion of the object. Of course, Schneider doesn't lack the ability to lift a coffe mug;

he lacks the ability to express such an action in abstract movement, through imaginative projection. But I think it would be a mistake to understand this as an inability to translate the grasping action into visual terms; and indeed, Merleau-Ponty contends that there is no definitive evidence that it is only the visual capacity that is affected by Schneider's disorder (and, in fact, that there is in principle no way to experimentally test whether this is the case); [93] and he asserts that "[v]isual contents are not the cause of the function of projection."[94] Yet he goes on to say: "[v]isual contents are taken up, utilized, and sublimated to the level of thought through a symbolic power that transcends them; but this power can only be constituted on the basis of vision," and "vision is this gift of nature that Spirit had to make use of beyond all expectations, to which it had to give a radically new sense and upon which nevertheless it depended, not merely in order to become embodied, but even in order to exist at all" (PP, 128).

Is vision, then, a necessary condition for the accomplishment of abstract thought, even if it is not its cause? Certainly not in the sense that an individual's capacity for that sort of projection which is, in fact, a necessary condition for abstract thought, depends upon their having a fully functional capacity for vision – the congenitally blind can certainly think abstractly.[95] Could it be necessary for abstract thought, though, in the sense that a visual capacity imbues the other senses, and the whole of one's being, with a certain capacity for constituting the world as having that quality by which abstract operations are possible? For instance, if Schneider can not say what day of the week the 27th is, if the 28th falls on a Wednesday, perhaps this is not because he lacks the visual orientation which is necessary for making the determination, but because he lacks some holistic bodily orientation which relies on a visual capacity (such that, hypothetically speaking, he can not "grasp" the sequence of the days abstractly through tactile means, because even such grasping requires an orientational

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[93] PP, 119. He does, though, suggest that there seems to be a manifestation of the disorder in the domain of tactile experience, or, at least, that such an interpretation remains open

[94] PP, 128. Also: "visual representation does not explain abstract movement because this representation is itself inhabited by the same power of projecting a spectacle that appears in abstract movement and in the designating gesture" (PP, 117). The representation is the manifestation of spatial existence, not its cause.

[95] Cornoldi, C. et al. found that congenitally blind individuals had more difficulty than the sighted when following a mental pathway through three-dimensional matrices which they were asked to imagine; but they were just as successful as the sighted when they were tasked with matching a mental pathway to a tactually explored wire silhouette. These blind subjects are clearly capable of the sort of projection which Schneider, for instance, is not, though they may rely on different sensory modes than sighted individuals to achieve it.

sense that is provided by vision; or because he has difficulty in kinesthetically understanding the movement that is involved in passing sequentially from one day to another because such movement depends on seeing where one can move). But as Merleau-Ponty notes, there are reasons for suspecting that Schneider's pathology does not simply affect a visual function: "For example, one subject who knows how to knock on a door can no longer perform the action if the door is hidden or if it is simply out of reach. In this latter case, the patient cannot execute the gesture of knocking on the door, or of opening it, *even if his eyes are open and focused on the door*." Merleau-Ponty treats this as provisional evidence that such a disorder would affect "a function deeper than vision, and also deeper than touch… it would concern the subject's living region, that opening up to the world that ensures that objects currently out of reach nevertheless count for the normal subject, that they exist as tactile for him and remain part of his motor universe" (PP, 119). We would be unwarranted, then, in assuming that a visual capacity as such is a necessary condition for the springing forth of abstract thought.

Indeed, we can go farther than this. For Schneider's case reveals that placial existence emerges not as a product of a distinct perceptual capacity, but through one's engagement with the world as an integrated whole being, or one's general "power of existing" (PP, 136). This is why Schneider's inability to imaginatively project virtual situations for himself has such multifarious ramifications: not only is he unable to "[survey] movement from above and… [project] it into the exterior world" (PP, 128); he also "never sings nor whistles on his own;" "he never takes the initiative sexually;" he "never goes out for a walk, but always to run an errand;" he can not hold a conversation which might take on a meaning that is not pre-determined and "solicit impromptu responses;" "he is incapable of playing;" he can not make judgments about situations that are not immediately present; and so on (PP, 136-7). What seems to unite these activities is not just a power of seeing, but a power of spontaneous action. A certain depth of experience seems to be lacking for Schneider – an imaginative ability, a taking flight of the senses from the given in the constitution of virtual worlds, seems to be lacking for him, and so the milieus he negotiates are destitute of this whole range of possibilities. But this imaginative ability, this leaping of possibility beyond the actual, is what is essential to abstract thought, and its operations are integral to the performance of even such quotidian actions as those

mentioned here. It is thus a general imbuement of his milieus with a certain sort of openness, rather than a specific visual capacity, that he seems to lack.

It so happens that vision is an especially important sense for humans in many respects; we are tempted to regard it as essential to the constitution of spatial existence thanks to the appearance it gives of having a uniquely totalizing power. It thus tends to be taken as the perceptual mode which has a sort of presiding authority over the others.[96] So, for instance, when we imagine the placial existence of the sperm whale in the black depths of the sea, echolocating its prey, or of the blind mole, navigating its labyrinthine tunnels, or of the ant that is affixed to the conveyor belt of its chemical trail, we tend to do so by analogy to vision – we might imagine that the whale "sees" the squid through its sonic frequencies, the mole "sees" the branching tunnel paths, the ant "sees" the trail like a ribbon laid down on the ground. But why would these animals need to experience place through their own senses on analogy to vision? Surely the perceptual capacities they employ in negotiating place are just those by which space is constituted for them. *They* don't need to translate their experience into visual terms – they have learned to get around in their own ways. Through their own evolutionary histories, placial existence has emerged through different perceptual modes – just as we have access to several perceptual modes, for that matter. Placial existence is best understood not as something constituted through a given perceptual mode, but as the way in which a world of depth is present for a given being, whatever perceptual modes may be employed in movement through this world.

The same goes for the echolocation of the sperm whale, or any of the rest of the ways nature has found for motile organisms to get around in space. And even in humans, all of the senses involve a placial dimension, and not just by reduction to some fundamentally visual capacity, as I discussed earlier in this section. Nor is it the case that abstract thought depends on vision for its existence, even if we have trained ourselves to adhere to a certain

[96] The notion that vision tends to dominate spatial existence, but without being essential for that experience, appears to be empirically corroborated. Thinus-Blanc and Gaunet cite Millar, who argues that "no sensory modality is necessary or sufficient, by itself, for spatial coding" (Millar, 257). Yet Thinus-Blanc and Gaunet also note that "the data do not demonstrate that vision is the only modality that can provide certain kinds of [spatial] information but, rather, suggest that the modality typically provides that information" (Thinus-Blanc and Gaunet, 22).

predominance of vision in the realm of abstraction. Other morphologically diverse animals, from birds, to octopuses, to mole rats, may take different approaches, according to the contingencies of their own bodily capacities, and to whatever extent abstract thought is available to them it likely takes on correspondingly varied forms; and indeed we blind ourselves to our own full capacities as thinking organisms if we suppose (tacitly or otherwise) that the visual sense is our only portal to the realms of abstract thought.[97]

Proprioception and movement

If there has been a tendency toward a sort of paradigmatization of vision not just in our conception of human sensory experience but in the metaphorical projection of bodily capacities in abstract thought, the proprioceptive sense has been marginalized to just as great an extent – so much so that it is usually skipped over entirely in the enumeration of the *five* senses. Perhaps this is a function of the very essentiality of proprioception to our experience of the world: only a capacity *so* fundamental, *so* ingrained in the texture of experience, could slide beneath our notice. But indeed, the sense we have of our own moving bodies is the only sense that is truly indispensible – the only one without which thought becomes unthinkable.

We are, as Maxine Sheets-Johnstone comprehensively argues in *The Primacy of Movement*, fundamentally animate creatures, and our sense of ourselves as moving bodies is the very thing that grounds our concept of what it means to be a living being. For the experience of ourselves as *moving* precedes the experience of ourselves as *doing* and it is this

[97] Perhaps this again raises the question: have we revealed an objective space that lies on the other side of the particular perceptual modes by which we aspectually perceive it? Do not our senses, and those of other perceiving beings, converge on this autonomous spatial dimension? Only in the sense that we already regard the world as spatial – which is to say, only insofar as our senses reveal it as such. The fact that multiple sensory modes open upon a placial world does not entail that these modes all converge on spatiality as something independent of each of them. It only means that placial existence unfolds through multiple modes – the modes through which the world expresses itself in perception. Our senses are placially integrated, of course, and it is a single placial world that we encounter through our senses: we see the pen, and grab it with our hand without difficulty. But this single world doesn't transcend our sensory engagement with things as its ideal object; the world is constituted through that engagement.

sense of being able to do things that underlies our concept of aliveness.[98] To be a living creature, then, is to move about in the world, and this is the source of meaning for us: animate beings, Sheets-Johnstone writes, "are primed for meaning; they come ready-made with a readiness to understand, with a readiness, that is, toward meaning."[99] A stone, by contrast, is not ready for meaning, because a stone "is not animated. It shows no responsivity toward meaning. It is not quickened toward meaning."[100] The capacity to *respond* is evident not just in animals with complex nervous systems, but in organisms as simple as bacteria – even they are primed for meaning. The bacterium "goes toward and away from things; it approaches them or avoids them on the basis of whether they are of value or toxic."[101]

Movement, then, is the condition for a living body to interact with a meaningful milieu, which is to say, it is the condition for place to emerge. Here we find the indispensibility of proprioception for experience: blind or deaf, we can still make our way around in the world (and in fact limitations in one sensing faculty can be compensated for in an increased acuity in another faculty); but this making our way around is precisely what is foreclosed if we lack a sense of our moving bodies. And lacking such an ability, no placial dimension would be open to us, which is to say that without such an ability there would not be consciousness, for movement lies at the root of perceptual experience. (Sheets-Johnstone goes so far as to suggest that *wherever* there is animate form, and thus a moving interaction with an environment, there is consciousness.[102])

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[98] Sheets-Johnstone, 116.
[99] Ibid., 340.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] "Attention to corporeal matters of fact," she writes, "demonstrates that a bona fide evolutionary account of consciousness begins with surface recognition sensitivity. It thereby acknowledges a meta-corporeal consciousness. It furthermore takes into account the emergence of a diversity of animate forms, showing how surface recognition sensitivity, while mediated by touch, is actually in the service of movement for creatures all the way from bacteria to protists to invertebrate forms to vertebrate ones. It strongly suggests how a form of corporeal consciousness is present in bacteria" (Ibid., 66).

However, I am not sure how *strong* this suggestion really is. It is one plausible criterion for corporeal consciousness; another, however, might be the situation of animate form in the context of possibilities for action. A bacterium (plausibly) reacts directly to surface stimulation but does not "choose" its reaction; i.e., it does not set out on one of the particular courses of movement that are open to it from among indefinite possibilities. Perhaps this openness upon indefinite possibilities is a necessary condition for corporeal consciousness, a condition that is only met provided a certain level of neural complexity. Such a possibility is suggested in Bergson, for instance, who

It is in fact not an exaggeration to say not just that movement is the necessary condition for sensible experience, but that the senses exist to facilitate movement. In order for an organism to make its way around in the world, to negotiate its milieu, it needs to know what is out there. For the bacterium, this may involve "a sort of molecular polling: … the positive 'votes' cast by receptors in response, say to increasing concentrations of sugar are matched to the negative votes produced by increasing concentrations of noxious compounds." In response, the little fella may change the direction of rotation of its flagella so that it may "[strike] out in a new direction, once again sampling to see whether the environment is improving or deteriorating."[103] To whatever extent this "molecular polling" constitutes a sense, this sense is in the service of the organism's ability to move in a manner that accords with what is meaningful for the organism. Meanwhile, a bird may employ certain sorts of photoreceptors in the eye to pick out the brightly-colored fruits in a verdant environment in order to facilitate its ability to eat. Yet without the bird's ability to move, and thus without a proprioceptive sense, the ability to see a world of color would be useless, nor would it reveal a meaningful milieu.

In fact, the very discerning of place is itself enactive – a form of movement that is a kind of palpation of a creature's surroundings, a constant (re-)orientation by means of the senses that is perpetually discovering new meanings. Sniffing the air, tasting a morsel of food, feeling an object's heft or its texture: these are movements that reveal aspects of a milieu, and every sensing gesture continues the dynamic interaction between an animate creature and its environment. (This interaction – or rather, this moving intra-action of body in the world – is, as we will see, as much a solicitation of place as it is an expression of bodily capacities.) Perhaps this is most clearly manifest for us in the case of vision: we are constantly *searching out* our surroundings through vision, moving our attention here and there, visually re-orienting ourselves through the incessancy of stochastic movements, re-focusing at various depths, and

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writes: ""From the humblest Monera to the best-endowed insects, and up to the most intelligent vertebrates, the progress realized has been above all a progress of the nervous system, coupled at every stage with all the new constructions and complications of mechanism that this progress required. … [T]he role of life is to insert some *indetermination* into matter... A nervous system, which neurones placed end to end in such wise that, at the extremity of each, manifold ways open in which manifold questions present themselves, is a veritable *reservoir of indetermination*" (Bergson (2005), 139-40; emphasis in original).

[103] Keeton and Gould, 452. Cited by Sheets-Johnstone, 340.

simply looking around. In the absence of this active looking, we wouldn't even consider there to be vision at all; we can imagine someone, their eyes open, staring straight ahead, glassily, unmoving and unresponsive: we wouldn't regard them as seeing – we would likely question whether they were conscious at all. And indeed, a vision that is truly paralytic would be incapable of sense-making: it could not focus on particular objects, track changes in the environment, or see in depth; in short, it could not discern meaning in its surroundings.

At a minimum, a certain bodily orientation is necessary for processes of sense-making. We hear a crashing noise down the street as coming from a certain direction, so that we are *exposed* to it in a certain way. The auditory perception already entails a certain orientation, a dispositional embedding of our bodies in a milieu. In the absence of such orientation, the senses would not open onto a milieu, they would only open onto chaos, if a truly dis-oriented sensation is even conceivable. The sensation is recursively and dynamically woven into our orientation as well: perhaps the noise startles us – we tense up, become more alert, cock our ears toward it, readying ourselves for certain kinds of action. Our posture, our gait, and indeed the whole mood of the scene changes. Likewise, the feel of the ground we walk on is inextricable from our walking posture: whether the ground is icy or pebbly, grassy or smooth, flat or sloped, will bear on how we balance ourselves in movement, and conversely that balance in movement will affect the way we feel the ground with our feet. If we utterly lacked a sense of balance, an upright orientation, and a sense of the pull of gravity, we would not be able to make sense of the ground as a *ground* at all.

In addition, the proprioceptive sense, being a sense that concerns the internal condition of the body, plays a unique role in integrating the body with its surroundings. For, though it concerns internal bodily conditions, it does so by relating those conditions to external ones. We just saw some of the ways that a bodily orientation is implicated in the sense-making sensation of the environment. But beyond this gearing into the world on the part of the body, there is a certain transversal movement between body and world by which the body proprioceptively *takes on* the orientation of things in the world through a sort of empathic responsiveness to place. One domain where this is particularly evident is in our experience of architecture. Take, for instance, the function of arches in the façades of masonry buildings. They serve the practical

structural purpose of discharging weight around apertures; but this alone doesn't account for their prevalence in traditional (pre-modernist) architecture. For what they provide beyond their structural purpose is a sense of movement and balance to the appearance of a building. An arch is, for one thing, anthropomorphic: we read it as bearing an upright posture like that of a human being (a human who may be variously slender or brawny, depending on the proportions of the arch). What's more, in so reading the arch, *we adopt its posture* – we feel ourselves elevated to the extent that the arch expresses a vertical uprightness. For this reason we can speak of the arch as a dignifying form: it draws us upright, makes us feel at home in our vertically-oriented bodies. (Contrast this with a building whose apertures are supported only by heavy flat lintels: we feel the weight as compressive, as bearing down upon us.) Even more significantly, perhaps, is the sense of movement that the arch provides. Even as the anthropomorphic form of the arch supports an elevating movement, its curvilinearity promotes a sense of a flow of energy around the apertures and into the ground, rooting it, so that the structure takes on an overall sense of vertical balance. This dynamic balance is something like that of a fountain whose waters shoot up vertically before parabolically cascading down. And again, we take on this movement in our *own* bodily sense of balance, our sense of feeling simultaneously upright and grounded. This is crucial to our experience of large buildings, in particular, which might otherwise loom over us menacingly. (I suspect that in cases in which buildings are derided as brutal or hostile to the human form, the lack of arches is often one of the most significant contributing factors.)

This kinesthetic dimension is evident in other visual arts as well. Consider the role of line in cultivating a sense of movement within a painting or photograph: this movement is not just a path that the eye follows through the image; it is felt viscerally (literally, in the gut) as a kind of incipient kinesis. Think of Piet Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, a painted image – a gridded one, no less – which conveys an unmistakable sense of frenetic movement, which movement is not just visual; it is felt synesthetically as a certain bodily livening. Similarly, we speak of the *balance* of a composition, and it is not just an objective balancing of the elements

of the image that we mean, but a sense of balance that extends to our own bodies in the experience of the image.[104]

The principle is generalizable: whatever our experience of our milieu may be, it is not just an experience of an 'external world,' but an interweaving of sensations that crosses the boundary of our flesh and that, by means of our sense of our own moving bodies, insinuates us into the world. It is more than anything along the lines of these insinuating threads that the world has an affective dimension for us. The architectural element that raises our posture makes us feel calm and confident, because these emotions are expressed in that bodily disposition which is solicited. (It is fair to say that sense-making very often involves the anthropomorphization of the world – we read our surroundings as everywhere presenting a body or a face to us; as Merleau-Ponty quotes André Marchand as saying, "[s]ome days I felt that the trees were looking at me" (EM, 129). But it would be just as fair to say that we understand our bodies cosmomorphically: they resemble the world.) This is the transversal nature of sense-making with respect to our bodies and the world.

We see this in the case of emotion which is, as much as anything, the experience of certain bodily feelings. It is never *just* this, though: to have an emotion is also to be involved in the world in a certain way, to have it display certain aspects to us, to have a certain mood, and to have it resonate with certain of our desires (as a bountiful, warm place, engaging a full-bodied spontaneity if we are joyful; as barren and indifferent – solicitationally destitute – if we are depressed). Our emotional lives – which is to say, the must fundamental dimensions of our existence – express the entangling of our flesh with our surroundings. And this can hardly be observed without mentioning that the most meaningful elements of our "surroundings," and those which are most emotionally resonant for us, are other people, so that this transversality of feeling that crosses our bodies with the world is above all a transversality with respect to ourselves and others. Any engagement with others has this emotional dimension whereby a bodily disposition passes between the other and ourselves in at least an attenuated form: even the smile or the scowl of the passing stranger on the street inflects our own mood, and in more

[104] In speaking of painterly balance, Mark Johnson argues that such balance is metaphorical (83-5).

intimate encounters we participate with others in the literal sharing of feeling, which is perhaps most fully realized in the case of erotic touch.

If a sense of our moving bodies is a necessary condition for meaning to emerge in our embedded engagement with our milieus, then this is no less the case for the modes of corporeal understanding which we employ in abstract thought. For just as meaning emerges from movement in our engagement with a concrete milieu, thought too must be moving if it is to produce meaning. Take the visual disposition in embodiment that is entailed by the bird's-eye perspective that we use, for instance, in reading maps: this is, in fact, no less a disposition in movement as well, for it depends on our ability to flit from one aerial perspective to another instantaneously. Implicit in this movement is a sense of an oriented body, one which can make sense of its perspective in terms of up and down. Or when we understand a logical argument, we are able to do so because we understand it as a progression, from one position (a premise) to another (a conclusion). And at each step of the way we read propositions in terms of various relations (of disjunction, conjunction, or negation, say) which, as metaphorical projections of bodily experience, can only make sense to us from an implied oriented bodily perspective, and which, furthermore, we read in terms of forces in tension with each other – for instance, as balanced or imbalanced – and which, as forces, entail movement.

There will be more to say about this in chapters four and five. For now it is just worth noting that abstract thought, like all experience, is placially situated. It is so insofar as one is able to take up imagined situations, which is to say, abstract thought depends on our ability to project ourselves into milieus of placial existence which go beyond the purely concrete. This engagement in abstract milieus is inherently a form of movement, and so it depends, at its root, on the proprioceptive capacities of our bodies oriented in the world. These capacities involve a sense of being oriented, upright, and balanced to some degree or another; but, in the manner of the body as a sensory unity, they operate through all the other senses as well, so that we can only see our surroundings if we are able to cast our glance about, and we can only feel the texture of surfaces if we can run our hands over them. As always, the interrelations of sensory modes in experience are complex and ever-changing, as they infuse each other with sense – or rather, as sense only emerges from the full weave of sensory experience. But the ways in which

these modes interweave varies as might the pattern of a tapestry. In particular, a certain mode can predominate over the others, especially given the partial or free embodiment that is characteristic of imaginative experience.[105] The implications of this for abstract thought are significant: for if the capacities of abstract thought are determined by one's ability to take up imagined situations, then the *manner* in which one takes up those situations – one's disposition in embodiment in the constitution of imaginative places, especially in movement – will to a substantial degree determine what thought can achieve. A primarily visual disposition will reveal the world through abstraction in one way; tactile or kinaesthetic dispositions will reveal it in another way. If we are going to understand the nature of thought and what it is capable of, then, we are going to have to understand the ways in which dispositions in embodiment affect abstract thought. We'll come back to this in chapter five. It is enough to note for now that thought is a form of movement, and as such it always takes us out into the world.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the dependence of thought on movement doesn't entail a dependence on *actual* bodily movement; it demonstrates instead that the movements through which meanings emerge far exceed the body's capacities for concrete movement, even if some such concrete capacity was necessary at some time to allow the abstract capacities to develop. Certainly Stephen Hawking's physical limitation due to ALS hasn't prevented him from exploring some of the richest and most expansive imaginal spaces known to anyone, and Jean-Dominique Bauby's memoir *The Diving Bell and the Butterfly* is a testament to the limitless expressive possibilities of a nearly paralyzed body.[106] (Both Hawking and Bauby, fortunately, retain enough in the way of bodily movement to be able to communicate with others; without this ability to participate in a social world, I wonder to what extent thought itself would atrophy.)

<u>The nature of sensory embodiment and embeddedness in *The Visible and the Invisible*</u>

[105] Contrast this with concrete experience in which, though our performance of a given action usually emphasizes one or another of the senses, any sufficiently assertive perception will rise to the fore of our attention, whether it is pertinent to that action or not.
[106] Thanks to Megan Craig for pointing out the pertinence of the example of Bauby.

Phenomenology of Perception provides us with rich resources for understanding the experience of emplacement, in particular the relation between concrete bodily experience and the realms of projected embodiment that are integral to abstract thought. Yet we will find ourselves constrained by an unsatisfactory account of emplacement if we rely solely on what Merleau-Ponty gives us in this text, for a reason that Merleau-Ponty himself acknowledges: ultimately *Phenomenology of Perception* does not escape a dualism that, despite the work's inestimable contributions to the philosophy of embodied experience, situates it within a flawed tradition running back through Husserl, Kant, and Descartes. As Merleau-Ponty himself puts it, "The problems posed in Ph.P. are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness'-'object' distinction" (VI, 200). The insufficiency lies in the retention of a subject-as-consciousness, an ontological presupposition that he took it as his task in his later work to overcome, and a bifurcation of existence that follows from the Husserlian logic of a constituting consciousness (which itself continues a tendency in philosophical thought which had been present in Kant, Descartes, et al.). Despite his best efforts to move beyond this tradition, in *Phenomenology of Perception* Merleau-Ponty can still write, for instance, something like this:

> Bodily space can be distinguished from external space and it can envelop its parts rather than laying them out side by side because it is the darkness of the theater required for the clarity of the performance, the foundation of sleep or the vague reserve of power against which the gesture and its goal stand out, and the zone of non-being in front of which precise beings, figures, and points can appear. (PP, 103)

The subject as it is depicted here, in a nearly Sartrean formulation, is a focal node and negativity with respect to the world. Foreclosed in this ontology is a genuine openness between perceiver and perceived, an openness that is necessary to account for the participation of a living body in the world. This openness is fundamental to the nature of emplacement, and thus to the nature of thought, for, as we will see, it is what makes meaningful engagement with the world possible.

As Ted Toadvine argues, despite this vestigial ontological matrix, in *Phenomenology of Perception*'s chapter on space, Merleau-Ponty is already en route to a new conceptualization of consciousness as embedded in the world. The formulation in the quote above entails a traditional understanding of nature as fully present, and inherently lacking in depth and

orientation until they are introduced by the human subject; but later in the chapter he describes space as always already constituted, and therefore the perceiving subject, rather than being the source of a meaningful spatiality, is rooted in a "prehuman space of nature." Orientation is not imposed by the subject in the constitution of space, but "is revealed as a fundamental intersection of body and nature."[107] Yet the movement in this direction is only begun here. A fuller formulation of this encounter between sensing and sensed would not emerge until Merleau-Ponty's later – indeed, his last – works. Only then does the one who senses truly become a *participant* in the sensible world, and only once this principle of participation is established will we be able to reckon with the potency of place and what it means for thought to be emplaced. From here on out, then, we will be concerned primarily with Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy, beginning with the nature of sensory embodiment and embeddedness in *The Visible and the Invisible*.

Vision figures prominently, starting from the very title, in Merleau-Ponty's late and unfinished work *The Visible and the Invisible*. This prominence invites us to think of philosophical insight or understanding as a kind of seeing. But it's important to note that vision, in this context, functions as a synecdoche for sensing in general. In the ontology of the flesh which is elaborated in the chapter on the chiasm, the visual and the tactile in particular are bound up in a general sensing which is the embeddedness in the flesh of the world. Indeed, in a way the tactile is a more direct, more exemplary manifestation of this embeddedness, as is evident in the fact that it is by means of the tactile that the embeddedness of vision is explicated. The visible "envelops, palpates, espouses the visible things."[108] Merleau-Ponty asks:

> What is this prepossession of the visible, this art of interrogating it according to its own wishes, this inspired exegesis? We would perhaps find the answer in the tactile palpation where the questioner and the questioned are closer, and of which, after all, the palpation of the eye is a remarkable variant. … [B]etween my movements and what I touch, there must exist some relationship by principle, some kinship, according to which they are not only, like the pseudopods of the amoeba, vague and ephemeral deformations of the corporeal space, but the initiation to and opening upon a tactile world. This can happen only if my hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it

[107] Toadvine, 99-100.
[108] VI, 133.

> takes its place among the things it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible world of which it is also a part. (VI, 133)

The immediacy and the density of contact with things through touch comes closer to revealing the common dimension of the sensing and the sensed. For the hand that touches is manifestly a thing in the world – a thing we can see, and indeed a thing we can touch (with the other hand). It meets resistance when it slaps against the table in the same way that the ball meets resistance when it lands in the palm.[109] Likewise, we grab a doorknob to push open a door, and we meet a resistance – the door pushes back. We run our hands across a surface to feel its texture, and we can only do this because our hands are themselves things. This commonality of touching and touched – their mutual embeddedness in the place of contact – is what makes it possible for the tactile world to open up to sensing; for tactile perception to be achieved that which touches must belong to the touchable world. The hand has to *move through* the world of the tactile in order to feel textures; it must take objects in its grip – must get a handle on things and feel their heft – in order to lift them. To accomplish a tactile experience, one doesn't simply receive stimuli as an inert sensor might register movements of the earth; the hand must actively engage with things, must grip or stroke or lift them. And it would be strange to talk about tactile experience without mentioning erotic touch, in which the complex reciprocity of moving tactile engagement between bodies reaches its most meaningful, most sensually resonant form. It becomes very difficult to imagine, then, that we simply *represent* the world through touch, or that a world of objects is translated by touch into a tactile representation.

The tactile world is not manifest for us through our reflection of its tactile characteristics in the sense of touch – or rather, it is manifest through "a sort of reflection," as Merleau-Ponty calls it (following Husserl) in *Signs*, a reflection that is really more like a participation. There he

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[109] Perhaps we only understand the notion of resistance in things in the world because we experience it as bodies. Merleau-Ponty describes the body as an "*exemplar sensible*, which offers to him who inhabits it and senses it the wherewithal to sense everything that resembles himself on the outside" (VI, 135), a line which echoes his comment in Phenomenology of Perception that the power of projection involves "constructing upon the geographical surroundings a milieu of behavior and a system of signification that express, on the outside, the internal activity of the subject" (PP, 115); and again "carnal being… is a prototype of Being" (VI, 136). These comments suggest a kind of bodily logic which we extend or project onto the world, and by which we come to understand the world. Yet if this is a useful logic, it is because the world solicits it, because we *do* in fact belong to the world, and such a logic is therefore not a matter of *mere* projection, but a revelation of our participation amidst things

describes, as he does in *The Visible and the Invisible*, the phenomenon of his right hand touching his left, at which moment "an extraordinary event takes place… The physical thing becomes animate. Or, more precisely, it remains what it was (the event does not enrich it), but an exploratory power comes to rest upon or dwell in it… In it, through it, there is not just the unidirectional relationship of the one who perceives to what he perceives" (PS, 166). The hand that feels does not stand outside of what is tactile; it is tactile itself, and is only able to feel by virtue of its belonging to the tactile world. This phenomenon, in fact, is enough for us to overthrow our naturalistic idea of the thing as object, since we find ourselves suddenly *among* the world of objects, and this "results in an ontological rehabilitation of the sensible" (PS, 166-7). More specifically, it is not by our mere presence but by our moving about in the world, discovering its resistances, and providing resistances of our own through acts of touch that our participation in the tactile world is effected, and this participation is the condition for our experience of it.[110]

Only once we see this do we see that vision and the visible operate according to the same principle; that, in fact, "the palpation of the eye is a remarkable variant" of the tactile encounter with things. This is less apparent in the case of vision for a few reasons. For one thing, we can neither see nor touch our eyes in the way that we can see and touch our hands. The sensing organ is experienced solely from within, as it were, or as an in-itself; it is never an object for us, and so we never see it alongside the things it senses.[111] Vision is wholly transparent in this sense.

Furthermore, we feel ourselves to be at the locus of our visible surroundings, forever occupying an invisible point before which they are arranged, and so we don't seem to project into them in the way that our searching, grasping, extended, three-dimensional body does. We do, in fact, "cast our glance about" – as we have seen, movement is inherent to vision – but we

[110] As Merleau-Ponty says, "The intentionality that ties together the stages of my exploration, the aspects of the thing, and the two series to each other is neither the mental subject's connecting activity nor the ideal connections of the object. It is the transition that as carnal subject I effect from one phase of movement to another, a transition which as a matter of principle is always possible for me because I am that animal of perceptions and movements called a body" (PS, 167).

[111] Even in a mirror's reflection, though we do see them as objects, the eyes we see are not our seeing eyes. They are reflections of our eyes, and the reflection is inert, like the eyes in a photograph of ourselves; there is a distance that separates these eyes from *our* eyes which actually possess the power of sight.

do so without changing the position of our eyes, only their orientation. Or, if we want to change their position, we have to move our head, or actually get up and walk around. But in that case we sense our eyes as immobile within our moving body, like pilots in a moving plane; though in an important sense they do have their own capacity, as our hands do, to move about in the world, their manner of doing so is not in direct contact with things, and it is easy to overlook the fact that in order for our eyes to function they must take their place amidst things. (Perhaps the fact would be clearer if our eyeballs were mounted on flexible stalks.)

FInally, and perhaps most importantly, vision operates at a distance. Whereas touch demands immediate contact with things, vision requires a separation. Things can actually be too close to be seen; an object held up directly in front of one's face blurs, becomes indistinct and unidentifiable, and occludes all context so that there can be no way to place it. At the limit it actually becomes invisible, as it shuts out all light or, if it is a translucent object, functions as a filter *through* which we see. Only when there is a gap between ourselves and that which we see does the object resolve into a worldly thing, such that an intentionality can emerge out of our relation with it. The visible world (in the narrow sense, not Merleau-Ponty's synecdochal sense) always appears to us at a remove, across a gap that is bridged by vision. It is therefore harder to experience visual experience as embedded, as participating *in* the world of the visible as the sense of touch participates in the world of the tactile.

For these reasons, it is difficult to apprehend this fact: that vision does in fact participate in the sensible world as surely as does touch. For at a fundamental level, as the example of tactility demonstrates, this is just what it is to sense: to make contact with the world, to be among things rather than before them. After all, I am visible as a seeing thing, even if by physiological circumstance I am not visible as a seeing thing to myself; as Merleau-Ponty notes, "[i]t is a marvel too little noticed that every movement of my eyes – even more, every displacement of my body – has its place in the same visible universe that I itemize and explore with them" (VI, 134). And, just as it is only by belonging to the world of touchable things that the hand is able to feel, so the eyes can only see by virtue of their emplacement in a visible world.

Moreover, vision is every bit as active a sense as is touch. A person who does not cast their glance about, who does not move, in vision, from one thing to another almost incessantly, and rather seems to passively allow the visual spectacle to play before him, doesn't even seem to be seeing at all; they would rather seem like a somnambulist, not consciously engaged in their environment, or perhaps simply blind. But such a notion of the seer as passive is what we are led to if we deny that vision is a faculty that is embedded in the world. For it is only as an embedded faculty that we can acknowledge vision as active, as being in constant motion, as determining objects and delineating regions and zones of significance, as drawing us toward objects of interest, as projecting the course of moving objects, as establishing orientational relationships between objects. And all these things vision surely does. Due to its very transparency, its very invisibility to itself, vision doesn't seem to project into the world, doesn't seem to be placed among the things it sees – certainly not as manifestly as our hands plunge into their tactile surroundings. Yet every shift of the glance re-focuses one's attention and re-orients one within one's surroundings, and thus bears with it a new set of significances. In this sense the activity of sight, like touch, emplaces us, and every experience of place that depends on vision depends on an *active* vision. The places we inhabit are at least in part constituted through vision, and it is in this active constitution of place (as it is for the other senses) that we see that vision doesn't just reflect or represent the visible world, but participates in it and belongs to it.

So we see that this sort of belongingness is characteristic of sensing in general; that the sensible world is open to us as sensing beings because we participate in it – an active participation, a movement that always takes us beyond ourselves in the incessant palpation of our milieus. And, as actions are carried out by our whole moving, sensing body, rather than merely any isolate sense, the unity of the body is entailed in any sensory experience. As discussed above, we should think of this unity not just as a bundling together of the several discrete senses; the senses don't just add to each other's perception of our surroundings, they interpolate each other, and operate according to each other's modes. Thus we *see* the tactile qualities and *feel* the visible qualities of things; or as Merleau-Ponty puts it "there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also

between the tangible and the visible, which is encrusted in it, as, conversely, the tangible itself is not a nothingness of visibility, is not without visual existence" (VI, 134). We can see the bark of a tree as rough, for instance, or the polished marble of a pillar as smooth; we can search among the jumbled objects in a dark closet and images of them are presented through touch; we see the shatter in the "visible glass" shards on the floor. Or as he says elsewhere, "Even normal subjects speak of hot, cold, shrill, or hard colors, of sounds that are clear, sharp, brilliant, rough, or mellow, of soft noises and of penetrating fragrances. Cezanne said that one could see the velvetiness, the hardness, the softness, and even the odor of objects. My perception is therefore not a sum of visual, tactile and audible givens: I perceive in a total way with my whole being; I grasp a unique structure of the thing, a unique way of being, which speaks to all my sense at once" (FNP, 49-50). This unity is evident everywhere as a kinesthetic harmony: imagine the tennis player who sees the ball coming towards him, as already a torsion twists through his body which is in unity with the flight of the ball and the contact with his racket which is being solicited by the flight of the ball in the context of the game's geometry – vision and proprioception are together and inextricably caught up in movement. It is through such intermodal sensory experience that the world is open to us as a place for possible action. When we "palpate" our surroundings with our look, then, we are able to see the mug on the table as something to grasp, we see the sand on the beach as having a certain texture and promising a distinctive muffling resistance if we were to run through it, we see the coolness of the water in the brook, as if in looking we had already taken our first step into it. Our bodies provide the unity that allows such meanings to unfold across the senses.[112]

And though this depth of the world is defined by our possibilities for action, this is not to say that the way the world is present to us is constrained by those actions which we might

[112] Merleau-Ponty had already taken note of this unity in the close relation of the visible and the tactile, in particular, in *Phenomenology of Perception*. As he wrote there, "I do not translate the 'givens of touch' into 'the language of vision,' nor *vice versa*; I do not assemble the parts of my body one by one. Rather, this translation and this assemblage are completed once and for all in me: they are my body itself;" and "'[v]isual givens' only appear here through their tactile sense, and tactile givens only through their visual sense" (PP, 151). One's orientation to one's surroundings is achieved at the level of the whole body, through the intertwining of the senses, or their fleshing out through each other. Ultimately, this unity is determined by one's possibilities for action, for movement in the world – for instance, "a certain style of hand gestures, which implies a certain style of finger movements and moreover contributes to a particular fashion in which my body moves" (Ibid.).

actually perform. Possibilities, in this sense, are not constraints, as if they represented some bounded set of options, or as if the world were tethered to our bodily capacities. Rather, such possibilities are the ways in which the world opens up to us, the ways it draws us out of ourselves and presents surfeits of significance, through perpetual movements of emplacement. Imagine the dome of stars in some remote wilderness night, distant and untouchable. Yet even this resolves into a place of tactile depth for us: the scatter of stars gently pricks our vision, the band of the Milky Way appears as a certain liquid silkiness, as if we might run our fingers through it, and even the capaciousness of the dark sky draws us out to fill it, as though we expanded to occupy the whole night. The world solicits us through and between our senses to move beyond our immediate practical concerns into a perpetual unfolding towards fractal depths.

These are the "invisible" depths which, for Merleau-Ponty, fill out the thickness of the "visible" world. We see then that what he has in mind in referring to the visible goes far beyond what we can see with our eyes. The visible world is what we encounter through the full fleshiness of our being; it is, indeed, that in which we are caught up as living, bodily organisms, moving about as participants in our surroundings. It solicits us as whole beings and expresses itself through the interpenetration of sensory experience.

Chapter Two: Situating Speech

We have seen that all experience is embodied and emplaced, and that this embodiment and emplacement are concomitantly produced through our sensory interaction with our environment – our perception of the world is both solicited by the world and generated through our capacities for sensing. This interaction is the basis for acts of projection, by which we are able to negotiate imaginatively constituted virtual worlds that expand the domains of meaning beyond the concretely given world. In this sense, abstraction is derivative of the concrete; indeed, *all* experience is concrete in the sense that we never find ourselves outside of some particular situation – even those abstract perspectives which are characterized by their approximation of universality and homogeneity are merely subsets of the concrete, products of certain particular dispositions in embodiment.

This account itself remains overly abstract, however, if it fails to engage with what is in some ways our most essential means for participating in the world: language. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty presents his most mature effort at developing the ontological ramifications of our embodied and emplaced existence. Notably, this effort also finds language occupying a more prominent role in the unfolding of these ramifications.[113] This provides us, then, with a rich vein of material with which to develop an understanding of how language use, which might seem to present to us as the imposition of the abstract on the concrete, can be understood as concordant with the above account, which regards abstraction as an extension of our emplaced bodily capacities. Such is the goal of this chapter. As we will see in following Merleau-Ponty, language truly does transfigure our experience – not by casting the world under a purview of linguistic meaning, but as the expression of the possibilities of sonorously sensible participation in the world.

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[113] Len Lawlor has argued that in his later works, "Merleau-Ponty places language at a level more fundamental than perception. This is why we can speak of a rupture between the Merleau-Ponty of *The Phenomenology of Perception* and the Merleau-Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible*" (Lawlor, 9.) For my part, I agree that there is a greater attention to and emphasis on language in the later work, but as I will argue below, this does not amount to a placing of language at a more fundamental level than perception; rather, VI moves towards a view of language as continuous with and a chiasmic expression of the sensible.

The carnal existence of the idea

As we have seen, the world unfolds for us in depth through our active participation, our embodied emplacement, in the world. But what summons these depths? What allows for these unfoldings that constitute the meaningfulness in things? Here we encounter "the bond between the flesh and the idea, between the visible and the interior armature which it manifests and which it conceals" (VI, 149).

It is through ideas, for Merleau-Ponty, that the visible is given its shape, its significance, and its depth for us. But this is not to say that ideas reside outside of the sensible, like some bellows of intelligibility puffing up the objects of the world. The idea is not opposed to the sensible; it "is its lining and its depth" (Ibid.). This goes against the grain of the predominant philosophical tradition, by which ideas are either abstracted from or generative of sensible experience; in either case, they are that of which the pristine clarity and purity is ensured precisely by their independence from the concreteness and contingency of sensible experience. By virtue of this clarity, they are thought to be suitable for establishing a ground of certainty by which we may, through our epistemic delineations and the deduction of logical relations, come to take account of things, which is, on this traditional view, to understand them.

Yet when we turn to the idea from the perspective of embodied and emplaced existence, as Merleau-Ponty does, we find its most exemplary manifestations not in crystalline abstraction, but in those moments of expression which have the most tremendous, world-shifting affective power; for it is through the potency of the idea that the visible extends into depth, and it is therefore in the deepest experiences – those richest in connections, in textures, in movements, in dimensions of existence – that the idea is most evident. Science can illuminate ideas; it can render the invisible visible through "detach[ment] from the sensible appearances and [allow ideas to be] erected into a second positivity" (Ibid.). In this sense science is the inheritor of the dominant philosophical tradition (and, it should be said, manifests

its great success).[114] But precisely in this detachment a reduction occurs; in the conceptual extrication of forces and laws from sensible encounters, the texture and movement and dimensionality of expressive nature are subsumed under the abstract idea, and treated as derivative of it. Some intricacy, some depth of experience must necessarily be sacrificed in order that a general principle be established. By contrast, "[t]he musical idea, the literary idea, the dialectic of love, and also the articulations of the light, the modes of exhibition of sound and of touch" express the singularity of ideas. They "have their logic, their coherence, their points of intersection, their concordances," even their own "'forces' and 'laws'." But unlike the ideas of science, which for their existence depend on the reduction of the sensible, these literary or musical or affective ideas only have their full expression in our primary sensible experience of them: "it is as though the secrecy wherein they lie and whence the literary expression draws them were their proper mode of existence" (Ibid.). It is therefore among such expressions that ideas come into their fullest bloom; and so it is to literature that Merleau-Ponty turns to illuminate the nature of the idea. He turns, in particular, to Proust.

Marcel encounters an idea in the little musical phrase: "he had seen the mass of the piano part all at once struggling to rise in a liquid swell, multiform, undivided, smooth, and colliding like the purple tumult of the waves when the moonlight charms them."[115] The music conjures oceanic movements; and this is not to say merely that it resembles the sea, but that it resembles the *purple tumult* of the waves – that abyssal force – as *the moonlight charms them* – as it leaps free of that abyss, becomes almost celestial, participates in that primeval interplay of sea and moon… Well, to give such commentary is about as tedious as explaining why a joke is funny; and that's exactly the point. The idea here, the depth of the musical expression borne by those few notes, is irreducible. It may leap from one singular expression to another, as the musical idea here emerges out of Proust as a literary idea. But it can not be reduced, as by an explanation, to its essential components; for such an idea, its existence is its essence, and any schematization of it can not help but hollow out its depth.

[114] This is not to say that scientific ideas stand outside the sensible, in some realm of the purely intelligible; but they have their sense according to a logic of sensible abstraction, akin to that which prevails over concepts of objective space as discussed in the previous chapter.
[115] Proust (2002), 216.

But the musical idea is not simply some refined sensory experience; it is more than this that renders it irreducible. For Marcel, the few notes also “opened his soul.”[116] At other moments, a musical phrase might tend to “spread out before our eyes over surfaces of varying dimensions, to trace arabesques, to give us sensations of breadth, tenuousness, stability, whimsy.”[117] Music compels us to bear a certain placial disposition – a kinesthetic relation to place, especially: an attitude of expansiveness or of constriction, of soaring movement or of heavy weight. It may channel the celestial or the chthonic. It can create moods – is, in fact, the purveyor of moods par excellence. Like the woodsmoke that conjures up a distant home, it can have that deep resonance with a particular place and time in our lives that immediately transports us back, places us on that stage, and invites us to inhabit the world in some way, in the unity of our embodied and emplaced existence. It can lead us to dance. In hearing a particular piece of music – even, as for Marcel, a particular “little phrase” – we are embedded in a whole world of significances,[118] which is to say we take up a whole manner of being; and all of this depends on our nature as embodied beings. The music enters us through the ear, but the expression of the musical idea entails far more than just the way it sounds.

We might say as well that the possibilities for expressions of the idea are open to us insofar as we bear certain dispositions in embodiment that are amenable to those expressions: Marcel must be open to the fluid movements of the music in order to hear it in the way that he does; it is my experience of love, my yearning feelings and all the rest of it, that are unlocked for me when I hear the music, and these experiences that I’ve had are resuscitated when I hear it. At the same time, the music solicits these dispositions, it seduces us into these modes of inhabiting the world, and indeed of inhabiting our own bodies, and it is hard to say, in fact, whether the music stirs an antecedent feeling of love, or whether one first recognizes the feeling of love from having already heard it in music.

The captivation of the little phrase demonstrates the expression of the idea at its most potent, but ideas are not restricted to such transcendent expressions. Rather, they form the

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[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid., 217.
[118] I prefer this word to ‘significations’ because I figure it connotes more of the implicative nature of perception and language.

depth that structures our experiences of the world in general. We are never presented with a simple "quale" – for instance, of the color red (VI, 131). There is, first, so such thing as an isolated property of redness; we see only red things – even an indistinct patch of red we would see *as* an indistinct patch. And the color is enmeshed in the texture and heft, the tactility, of the object. It resonates as well with the play of light and shadow, the colors of the background, the movements associated with it, and so on, so that the "simple" appearance of red is woven into a whole milieu, a context which lends it a sense; the red is not an atom, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, but "a concretion of visibility" (VI, 132). It solicits the gaze in a particular way. And further, the red is imbued with meanings that extend far beyond the immediately present object. For an appearance of a red dress, say, belongs to all those other red things it evokes; it becomes a "punctuation in the field of red things, which includes the tiles of roof tops, the flags of gatekeepers and of the Revolution, certain terrains near Aix or in Madagascar" (Ibid.). Landscapes, cities, historical movements become bound up in the appearance of red – not as an invoked class of consciously thematized objects, but as the tendriling associations which form the intricate weave of sensation and emotion and thought that simultaneously courses out from and gives rise to the appearance.[119] The placement of the red in these webs of significances will, of course, depend on our personal memories and dispositions, our physiological characteristics, our familial and social identities, and our cultural attitudes and cultural histories. And all these forces operate through unconscious imaginative processes to create an *expression* of red, a red that, by virtue of this voluminous personal and cultural background, is open as well to certain realms of possibility, a red that suggests new worlds. Such intricacy, such depths, seem inexpressible, seem almost inconceivable, yet they constitute the ideas which give volume to even the scarcest sensation of the world. Think of this intricacy as akin to that of the particular motions of particles which form a billowing cumulonimbus; the complexity of this structure is unimaginable, but the cloud is its testament.

[119] Consciousness has been likened to a sea; only the surface glimmers in the sun, and perhaps the first few meters are illuminated, but the light fades on descent towards the invisible depths; yet those depths are the source of forces that drive the tide and the currents and the waves – they are the volume that supports the surface. So it is with the depth of ideas beneath appearances: we may be largely unaware of the associations and resonances which underlie appearances, even as they provide this invisible depth to the visible world.

When we speak of the idea, then, we are speaking of nothing less than the manner in which the world opens up to us. The idea forms the "interior armature" of the sensible world, the constellations of significances which give depth to appearances, and in these meaningful depths we find the connections and associations that unfold into new possibilites for engaging with the world. Far from being a subsumption of the particular under a general principle, then, the idea in its most exemplary form is utterly singular – as singular as our living encounter with the world.[120] And it is this singularity, this unfolding across dimensions of significance and the sedimentations of our physiological, personal, cultural, and biological selves that allows us to be emplaced in the world, and that thus allows the world to be meaningful for us.

Resonance

It might be objected that this notion of 'ideas' is too indeterminate: how can it refer to everything from the simple gestalt of an object appearing against a background to the whole breadth of our personal history? This question draws us toward one of the characterstically perplexing and profound essential terms of Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy: *écart*. It is this term, variously translated by Lingis as 'divergence,' 'spread,' 'deviation,' and 'separation,' that defines the relational structure of the flesh. This *écart* is the very "meaning of perception," since it is the "*relief*" which allows a figure to appear against a background (VI, 197).[121] The invisible depth that unfolds within vision is a field of differentiations, of contrasts and divergences, and it is in these differences that contours emerge in this depth and we are drawn into meaningful interaction. In the most straightforward sense, even for an object to appear to

[120] In a sense, each new sensation entails a new idea: "With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. The idea is this level, this dimension" (VI, 151). New experiences of the sensible world become new nodes in the constellations of associations and resonances which define ideas, and thenceforth serve to frame our experiences. (A certain damp, mulchy coolness I remember from a particular time I shuffled my feet through dead leaves some pale November late afternoon as a young child still comes upon me when autumn returns in certain climates – even sometimes when I just think about autumn; and the likelihood that the memory is confabulated, as so many early memories are, doesn't diminish its salience for me.) But insofar as sensible appearances are always placially and temporally situated, each one is unique, and, we might speculate, to that extent contributes in its own small way to the shaping of our ideas and the situating of our future experiences.
[121] Italics in original.

us in the first place is for it to stand out from its surroundings, and this standing out is a differentiation between the figure and the ground; nothing is there for us in the world – including ourselves – but for its interplay with its milieu, an interplay that entails difference (it is precisely in "disarticulation," the dissolving of *écart*, that perception collapses, and memory falls into oblivion (Ibid.)). This is all the more the case when the milieu is expanded to include not just physical surroundings but that to which the sensible harks when it calls across landscapes, across affective dimensions, and across the temporal depth of our experience.

If perception (and hence thought) require such differences for the contours of meaning to emerge, though, it is because those differences are what emerge in the *play* of elements. I am therefore going to introduce a term here to emphasive the other side of *écart*, that expresses the bringing together of these things: I am going to refer to this as resonance. (And in doing so, I am myself diverging somewhat from Merleau-Ponty's ontological approach, though certainly not fully departing from it.) One reason I think this calls for emphasis is that these gaps, these contours that define meaning, exist because things are brought into proximity with each other. They present aspects to each other, and the meaning that is defined by their differences does not so much exist in the gap between them (though this gap is necessary) as it does in the way in which they are imbued with each other and thus transformed. In an example from a working note, Merleau-Ponty describes a certain yellow that

> at the same time gives itself as a *certain* being and as a *dimension*, the expression of *every possible being* – What is proper to the sensible (as to language) is to be representative of the whole, not by a sign-signification relation, or by the immanence of the parts in one another and in the whole, but because each part is *torn up* from the whole, comes with its roots, encroaches upon the whole, transgresses the frontiers of the others… It is thus that the sensible initiates me to the world, as language to the other: by encroachment, *Ueberschreiten*. Perception is not first a perception of things, but a perception of *elements* (water, air…) of *rays of the world*, of things which are dimensions, which are worlds. (VI, 218)

As a certain word can be used to say something by virtue of its place in the system of all words, so a thing we encounter in the sensible has its place by virtue of its relation to all other things – a sort of diacritical ontology. No thing is given in isolation, its meaning is always borne by its insinuation into a world of meaning. But what is given is always given as encroachment, as

boundary-crossing (both between the self and the world in the act of perception and amongst the elements of the sensible field itself).[122]

Metaphors are given here in quick succession, and the notion of resonance adds one more. But hopefully it is one which connotes one specific fact about this dimensionality of sensible meaning: that, just as audible resonance entails both sensing at a distance and its registering as visceral – the sort of hearing with the gut which is involved in listening to music, when the sonorously sensible hooks us at the core – so the resonances which constitute meaning are not functions merely of spatial proximity, they are rather the intimacy of things with each other across distances. And as perceivers who open onto these dimensions, across whom patterns and forces within the fields of diffraction pass according to our style of perceiving and of moving about (and in particular in our style of using language), we are participants in these fields as well, we are joined with them, as they pass not only through the breadth of the world but through our pasts, our temporal depths, as well.[123]

There are thus synchronic and diachronic elements of this resonance: the resonance of the background with the perceived object as something which solicits our attention *as* an object occurs simultaneously and within the very act of perception (and here the simultaneity of the 'background' is not merely that of the given visual field, but the whole dimensionality of the world that is given to us when an object claims our attention), whereas the associative resonances that carry us into imaginative flight unfold temporally – both in the sense that the depths revealed through resonance evolve moment by moment so long as we sustain our

[122] Lawrence Hass speaks of the "paradoxical experience of encountering the other-than-me *only through me*," paradoxical because "if I envelop the things with my perceptual powers, this happens only by my being enveloped by them." This mutual involvement and envelopment which dissolves the subject-object dichotomy is suggested by Merleau-Ponty's references to overlapping and encroachment. This should guide us away from placing too much emphasis on the *écart* as purely a separation that defines the distinction between perceiver and perceived – even if, as Hass notes, it is possible for "one's predicative thoughts" to "break this connective tissue apart by first conceiving one side ('my *subjective* perception') and then flipping over to the other side ('the *objective* things')." Commentary which becomes particularly enamored of Merleau-Ponty's famous example of the hand that touches the touching hand may occasionally be prone to this temptation (Hass, 127).

[123] Interestingly, Tuan uses the term 'resonance' to describe the Chinese cosmological order, in which "things belonging to the same class affect each other. The process, however, is not one of mechanical causation but rather one of 'resonance.' For example, the categories east, wood, green, wind, and spring are associated with each other. Change one phenomenon – green, say – and all the others will be affected in a process like a multiple echo" (Tuan, 96-7). Such resonances define the relations by which humans are embedded in nature.

attention, and in the sense that the object carries us into our own depths as temporal creatures through the summoning of memories and anticipations. This distinction, though, is a conceptual one rather than a pure diremption, akin to the concrete-abstract distinction discussed earlier: just as there are already abstract significances present in the concrete perception, there are already emotional depths in the very solicitation of our attention which resonate with our past experiences. Think of a face in a crowd that catches you from the corner of your eye – you think for a flash that it is an old flame you haven't seen in years, and this perceptual recognition is inseparable from the flood of emotion that accompanies it.

The meaning of the thing is always determined by the waves of resonance which diffract across depths. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in another working note, it is "by virtue of depth [that things] coexist in degrees of proximity, they slip into one another and integrate themselves. It is hence because of depth that things have a flesh… a resistance which is precisely their reality, their 'openness,' their *totum simul*" (VI, 219). And the meaning of things is revealed through this proximity: "We understand then why we see the things themselves, in their places, where they are, according to their being which is indeed more than their being-perceived… it is that this distance is not the contrary of this proximity, it is deeply consonant with it, it is synonymous with it" (VI, 135). It is this very proximity in distance that is the "thickness of flesh." So the depth that characterizes carnal existence is a depth of meaningful proximities; it is, in other words, placial.

We could construe ideas, then, as the landscapes of these resonances – landscapes in relief – that define the contours of the integration of the thing with the broader world; and furthermore, we can take it that this integration is what is most real about things – that indeed, things qua identities are fundamentally notional entities at the nexuses of these resonances. (That is not to say that things are not "really" objects for us: this book on my desk is clearly a solid thing which I can grab, lift up, and read. It's rather that the manipulability and the readability of the book, its place in the whole tradition of book-reading that makes such actions meaningful, and everything else that goes into my intentional relation to it – these resonances, among others – are what constitute it for us as an object, rather than its objectness that constitutes it as manipulable, etc.) What a thing *is* for us, then, is defined by these resonances,

so that there will be as much of a range in their resonant depths as there is in the meaningfulness of things for us. We could therefore consider some element of the sensible in terms of its "idea" – its resonant depth – whether we are regarding it with merely practical concern as an item in our surroundings, or as something that reverberates through the core of our experience.

We could, as well, speak of degrees of depth in terms of the resonant power of the sensible. In our everyday engagement with our environment the resonant depth of things is roughly defined by our practical concerns.[124] But then there are certain moments that resonate so strongly that they seem to sweep across the whole of our being, and re-configure our relations to the world – which is to say, our *selves* – in the process. In such moments, resonances don't merely follow the habitual channels which define the arrangements of that which constitutes the quotidian world for us; they flood over these landscapes, washing away what was once familiar and carving new channels, submerging some things and sweeping others onto promontories, in some places effacing the connections between things and in others creating new ones. In these moments resonance becomes creative.[125]

Ideas and Language

These resonances always occur relative to some perspective, which is to say, they always occur *for* someone in a given situation. This is not to say, however, that the idea resides in some private domain, exquisitely sculpted by a personal logic but inaccessible to those who don't share one's own precise situatedness in the weave of things. Ideas are communicable, are even the basis for communication; and conversely, to a very large extent their nature is defined by their communicability.

There is a growing emphasis on language in Merleau-Ponty's later work, and the final few highly allusive pages of in *The Visible and the Invisible*, especially, make clear that the depth

[124] This is certainly not to say, though, that practical engagement is a firm limit to this depth in typical circumstances – indeed, it is *always* the case that there is at the very least some affective dimension to our experience that exceeds our practical concerns.
[125] The nature of this creativity will be elaborated in chapter four.

of the sensible world, the volume with which it is endowed by ideas, is intimately coiled with and within linguistic practice. It is decidedly not the case that this depth is *reflected* in language; rather, language is the continuation, the enhancement, and the self-recursive force of the idea-endowed world. Linguistic meaning, he writes, "is not on the phrase like the butter on the bread, like a second layer of 'psychic reality' spread over the sound" (VI, 155). It is gathered by the senses as much as is any other sort of experience. Language is how we express ourselves as "sonorous beings" (Ibid.) – it is one of the ways (and for our species a highly distinctive way) by which we belong to the sensible world. In vibrating our vocal chords and shaping our mouths to speak, in focusing our attention to listen, we are not summoning an intellectual domain as something that transcends the sensible; we are participating in the world in the distinct way that our bodies know how to do.

As we have seen, this sensible world in which we participate is not a world of bare percepts or qualia shorn of context. It is run through with the resonances of associative and affective depths, and these make the world meaningful for us. When our participation occurs by way of language, new dimensions of these depths open up to us. For language, in a manifestation of the "reversibility" of the sensible, both summons and is summoned by these meanings. Certainly, we find ourselves compelled to give expression to the ideas that are present in things, and language is one way of doing this: the idea of the little phrase that is expressed musically for Marcel also wants to be given linguistic expression in Proust's writing; the quality of a certain light calls us to speak of it, to give expression to its curious affectivity. More prosaically, we are in a constant babble of giving account of things, making arrangements, determining facts, establishing social relations, interrogating each other, and doing everything else that characterizes us as so ebulliently sonorous. Through all of these operations meanings are called forth, and the world as that in which we participate is given expression.

At the same time that the world calls language forth, though, language gives new shape to the world, as through its very volubility and incessancy, its compulsive need to express, language is the source of a radical profusion of ideas, an eruption of meanings both generative and destructive which is constantly transfiguring the world. As Merleau-Ponty says, "the whole

landscape is overrun with words as with an invasion, it is henceforth but a variant of speech before our eyes" (Ibid.).

How should we take this metaphor? On one hand, language tends to impose itself on things – indeed, as a sort of invasion. As we have seen, we don't see the dress as simply red, we see its redness integrated into webs of significance which extend into the depths of our whole existence in the world; but not only do we see the dress as red in this sense, we see it as 'red' – that is, the word is there not only when we seek to describe the dress, but, like the idea of redness, the linguistic expression is internal to the very perception of it. Indeed, the word 'red' and the idea of the redness of the dress themselves become inextricably entwined. For the sonorous force of the word[126] can tend towards reification – the blunting of the idea and its subsumption under the rigid conceptual delineations of abstraction. Whatever we see in a particular instance of redness, whatever chromatic and textural variations there may be, whatever shifting hues are expressed in the play of light and shadow, may be absorbed into the idea of 'red,' as the eidos supplants the idea expressed in the particular instance. A generic idea of red thus imposes its own paradigmatic associations. A depth is still present, but its particularity has been to some degree dulled, its unique intricacy worn down. Likewise, language is already with us when we look out at a landscape of mountains and desert and cactus, and it becomes for us a 'landscape' of 'mountains' and 'desert' and 'cactus.' We don't see the unique presence of what is before us, we see the clichés of what is before us through the harness of a certain style of looking – we see only the eroded ideas, a sort of generic depth. It takes training to be able to see past such abstractions. I see a person's face as light brown, say – maybe nutmeg, if I am inspired – but an artist who knows how to look, and who knows how to give expression to color, sees the purples and greens and yellows in it, the nameless colors, the depth of color that is not subsumable under a categorical term.

On the other hand, this is not to say that language simply dulls the world down through its reifying impositions. For if language bears this reifying tendency, it is also the antidote to it. After all, it is entirely wrong to think that language just operates as a denotative system of labels (or signs, if you prefer) which fits the objects of the world neatly into categories: here a

[126] Including that of the written word, perhaps a fortiori, given writing's stubborn insistence on just sitting there.

‘red,’ there a ‘book,’ yonder a ‘mountain.’ To make the point as clearly as possible, let’s set aside for the moment all of those functions of language which don’t even resemble description: social banter, directives, ejaculations, imperatives, jokes, and so forth. Even if we consider only those uses of language which are uncontroversially acts of description, those attempts to name what we see, we find that language almost immediately overflows with possibilities for expression. A musical phrase is not just a short series of notes, it is “a liquid swell, multiform, undivided, smooth, and colliding like the purple tumult of the waves when the moonlight charms them.”[127] This is *creative* language – language that invokes our inhabitation of a place, a way of being, that has a potent resonance for us and that can not be reduced to mere cliché. Such language unlocks the resonant potential that is in the sensible prior to language. In a section entitled “Philosophy and Literature” in the working notes of *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty says that philosophy, “precisely as ‘Being speaking within us,’ expression of the mute experience by itself, is creation” (VI, 197). What Merleau-Ponty could say of the creative work of philosophy he says of literature: it is an “*inscription* of Being” (Ibid.).[128] Far from being necessarily reifying, then, language that is creative generates original meaning. Moreover, this inscription is not etched on a tabula rasa; we must understand it as expressing a resonant power, which is to say, as that which is summoned forth by some depth in things, that draws on our experience of the world in order to reconfigure it, and thus to open up to new modes of understanding. When Proust describes the little phrase as a meeting of oceanic movements with the moonlight, he is describing something we can understand because we’ve experienced these elements before, or can at least imagine them – but we’ve never experienced them like *that*, as expressing that *particular* affective dimension. So a resonant power is drawn out of our experience to create something new, an original existence, and something which, without language, we could not have experienced. Language is not just the imposition of the general on the particular; it allows new particularities to emerge as well. And indeed, insofar as it gives expression to the world, it “must be poetry; that is, it must

[127] Proust, 216.

[128] In this sort of creative work, then, we see what is common to literature and philosophy.

completely awaken and recall our sheer power of expressing beyond things already said or seen" (ILVS, 52).

Though not all language can be called creative, it is in fact impossible for language to *simply* represent; it is never a *mere* reflection of things. Any linguistic act produces a relation to things, and in its doing so a meaning emerges. Even some mundane statement of fact – 'the kettle is on the stove' – picks out a relation and draws us towards a scene, which opens up to us as a place for possible actions, and can be integrated, in its small way, into our general picture of the way the world is. But this scene is only depicted because something salient has been picked out. A thing has been named, an emphasis has been placed, and an orientation has been established. That is to say, a situation has been produced according to an incarnate logic, and this means that we involve ourselves in a field of meaning that inevitably extends beyond what the word might be taken to directly refer to. As Merleau-Ponty puts it in his essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," "What we mean is not before us, outside all speech, as sheer signification. It is only the excess of what we live over what has already been said. With our apparatus of expression we set ourselves up in a situation the apparatus is sensitive to, we confront it with the situation, and our statements are only the final balance of these exchanges" (ILVS, 83). Language colludes in the production of the very situations in which it participates; to imagine that language simply reflects states of affairs, by contrast, is to deny its essential function, and thus to deny the manner in which meaning emerges for us.

Furthermore, we can acknowledge what Merleau-Ponty says in *Phenomenology of Perception*, that "speech accomplishes thought" (PP, 182-3). Language is no more the reflection of thought than it is the reflection of things in the world, and no more does the thought precede language than a perception precedes the idea by which it appears in depth to us. Accordingly, we should dispense with the notion that language mediates between our internal experience and others, when it is rather the case that language, which is inherently social, produces thought, as we might say, of its own accord. ("[M]y spoken words surprise me myself and teach me my thought," Merleau-Ponty writes (PL, 88).[129]) In language thought burgeons

[129] Or as he also writes, "For the speaking subject to express is to become aware of; he does not express just for others, but also to know himself what he intends" (PL, 90).

into existence in the production of situations; were it not to gain expression through language, a thought "would fall into the unconscious the moment it appears, which amounts to saying that it would not even exist for itself" (PP, 183). This does not imply, I would argue, that ideas or even thought are inert prior to their full linguistic expression.[130] Even the pre-grammatial gesture of summoning the name for an object entails its recognition (which is to say, a placing of the idea of the object), and this is enough to situate us, to anchor us according to certain dimensions of experience and possibilities for action. Yet such naming only has this degree of meaning because the word employed bears an adumbrated suggestion of other words, which is to say, it already situates us and embeds us in an idea-endowed world of depth in a minimal way. In any such situating act (i.e., in any meaningful gesture of speech), and a fortiori in expressive speech, language leads thought into realms of inexhaustible linguistic possibilities. This is the world of thought for us, opened up by language; and indeed, by this process the whole world becomes a world of thought – not through the erection of some abstracted double which supplants the original, but through the multiplication and amplification of the resonances which constitute the world itself.

Language is by the same token, then, both the condition of possibility for and the constraint upon what we might express. For speech "magnetize[s] discourse," it draws expressions toward certain "poles" (PL, 89), which implies that it draws us toward certain perspectives (and dispositions in embodiment) – it enamors us, in a certain way – and this of

[130] This suggestion may seem to go against Merleau-Ponty's comment that "We say that a thought is expressed when the converging words intending it are numerous and eloquent enough to designate it unequivocally for me, its author, or for others, and in such a manner that we all have the experience of its presence in the flesh in speech" (PL, 91). I think the potential for contradiction here lies in the sense connoted by 'thought': is it manifested only when accomplished in cogent expression, or is it already present in an inchoate form prior to this? If we regard thought as grounded in certain dispositions in embodiment, as I would like to do, then its possibilities for expression may already be established to some degree in, say, our adoption of a certain bodily posture. (Experiments have shown that judgments and ascriptions of value and so forth are influenced, for instance, by subjects being compelled to hold their hand closed (as when holding the handle of a briefcase) or open (as when holding a serving tray).) Or if we are engaging with an interlocutor who has a certain attitude – relaxed and convivial, or tense and combative, or whatever the case may be – then this will already shape our possibilities for thought. The quote given above is perhaps one of those where Merleau-Ponty provides grist for those who would argue that, at least in his later philospohy, language takes on a function more fundamental than perception; but as I have argued, I think that what follows from his discussion of language generally is a picture of language as reciprocally intertwining with, and at the same time belonging to, perception, and thus that there can be at least adumbrated expressions of thought prior to their thematization in speech – adumbrations that may be as subtle as a certain hand gesture or facial expression.

course forecloses expressions that are not concordant (or which cannot at least resonate meaningfully) with those perspectives. On the one hand, this may manifest in the reification of language, and thus of our experience of the idea-endowed world, as when our perception of a landscape becomes subordinated to a certain genre of thought; on the other hand, by establishing such perspectives language unleashes an inexhaustible potential in ideas to give depth to the world through its incessant transfigurations. This constraint and this possibility are deeply intertwined – they are what it means to bear a certain style in speech; for any style implies a rootedness in sedimented meanings (i.e., habitual modes of interaction with things), but at the same time this rootedness allows for an opening to indefinite possibilities for further expression (or as Merleau-Ponty puts it, "The consequences of speech, like those of perception (and particularly the perception of others), always exceed its premises" (PL, 91)). These indefinite possibilities include both those further expressions which operate within the ambit of sedimented language, and those which spring free of such established language to become creative (about which more will be said in chapter four).

It should be clear by now that we would be employing a very poor image of meaning if we said that it were *contained* by language – an image that we may be tempted towards if, for instance, we presume an essentially Cartesian distinction between thinking subject (or 'speaker') and the external world, which may lead us to conclude that what is meaningful can lie only in us, in our system of signs or referents. Such is the case, for instance, in truth-conditional theories of meaning, whereby there is no meaning beyond the representation of facts contained in the proposition. The idea, according to such theories, can only be expressed in terms of abstract propositional content; that is, the depth of the world which is present in the idea must be reduced to a system of facts. If we encounter a red dress, we can say 'this is a red dress,' which is a meaningful, if inane, linguistic expression.[131] But this doesn't capture why our attention is drawn to it in the first place, how it stands out from its background, the sort of

[131] Much philosophy of language tends to focus on the most inane uses of language, which perhaps betrays its commitment to abstraction: inanities are most amenable to abstract expression, since it is precisely in their inanity – their lack of resonance with a broader world of meaning – that they most resemble the generality and decontextualized character of abstraction. But to approach purely "abstract" language is to approach meaninglessness, as in the ideal case there would be no context, no resonance, at all – and thus no meaning.

mood it involves us in, its relation to memory or personal association; it expresses nothing about why we *care* that this is a red dress, why we even *notice* it, and how the particular utterance situates us in terms of a meaningful world. We can, of course, complicate the proposition; we might say, 'this burgundy garment that ripples in the breeze recalls to me a woman who smiled at me across a pathway in a San Francisco park when I was 19.' Can we plausibly claim that the meaning of this statement is exhausted by the facts it expresses? The garment 'ripples in the breeze' – so the air is stirring, a certain movement which one can't help but feel against the face as well. And if the rippling recalls this memory, it must be because the woman was wearing a dress that also rippled, and if her dress rippled it must have been against her leg that it did so; already an erotic significance is suggested, and this is reinforced by the memory of the smile, not to mention the geographic and temporal context – 'San Francisco when I was 19' is not the same as 'San Francisco when I was 75' or 'San Francisco when I was 6,' even if three different speakers have in mind the same city in the same year when they utter it; nor, if we are being honest, would 'Wayne, NJ when I was 19' connote the same erotic depth.[132] And, of course, gender and sexual identity matter to these connotations as well – those of both the speaker and the listener. Maybe one could object that such exegeses could always themselves be expressed as propositional content; but this would only resolve the problem if an end of the exegetical chain could be reached, and meaning is in principle unbounded, as there are always further dimensions of any given 'fact' – further aspects of its situatedness, and further volumes in its depth for us.

If we identify meaning as holding solely at a "linguistic level," as a system of reference that represents the objective condition of the world,[133] we cannot account for the ways that

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[132] We could turn to Merleau-Ponty's characterization of sexuality as expressed not through discrete sorts of perceptions but as a general attitude which permeates a situation with affective depth for a suggestion of how a mere allusion to something like a red dress might carry us into a whole zone of attitudes, possible actions, and relations to the world.

[133] Or, in the case of structuralism, a "system of interdependent terms in which the value of each term results solely from the simultaneous presence of the others," as Saussure puts it (Saussure, 114). Whereas representationalist theories of linguistic meaning tend to tie language to objects in the world (or mental representations of objects) by lines of correspondence, structuralism frees meaning from this sort of correspondentism, but at the cost of constituting meaning solely at a "psychological" level. As Hass points out, the influence of this manifestation of the linguistic level is discernible, for instance, in Derrida's claim that all meaning

meaning is embedded in the world for us. On the contrary, pure reflection or representation is an impossible task for language, which by its nature creates original existences and establishes resonances (even if these often conform to familiar channels which reaffirm, rather than remake, our views of the world). Language opens up the world to us, it carries us into it, and to make a statement like 'this burgundy garment that ripples in the breeze recalls to me a woman who smiled at me across a pathway in a San Francisco park when I was 19' is not simply to state a fact but to emplace oneself, which involves taking on certain relations to the world, being in a certain mood, bearing a certain disposition in embodiment.

In short, language conjures. To make an utterance is not to perform an act of representation; we could only regard it this way if we presume that it refers to some pre-existing world of objects, across some gap of conversion by which those objects become meaningful for us. Rather, the reversibility of the touching and the touched, of the seeing and the seen, is characteristic of our existence as sonorous beings as well. Just as, in sensing, we participate in the sensible world, in speaking we participate in a world that solicits our speech, that draws our speech into itself – and out of itself as well. Merleau-Ponty describes speech as "a gaze of the mind" (VI, 155) and here we have to remember that 'to gaze' – to perceive the visible – is not just to look, but to engage as an embodied being with all of one's senses, to be insinuated into things as a sensible being, as one who belongs to the world. Our voices resonate with the world, which they can do only because they belong to it, because they erupt out of the world itself. The meaning of our words, then, does not belong to some extramundane or intellectual realm; meaning is expressed in the ways in which the world itself resonates with our voices, which is to say, in the ways that the world takes shape by way of our voices. When a voice opens up to say "the red dress," this is not an ostensive indication, nor a mere signification, but a step in the approach towards some possibility in things. It is a determination that generates an unfolding of the depth of the world. In the most elemental exemplification of our intuitive notion of words as essentially signifying (which is not necessarily to say the most elemental use of language), an object is named: it is either pointed to or called forth in the

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resides in the text, and in Foucault's social constructionism, which regards the body as a blank slate imprinted by social forces (Hass, 189).

imagination. Through speaking or hearing such an utterance, we situate ourselves; first of all, we direct our attention towards the object, which is placed before us.[134] But against what background do we see it? Is the background entirely neutral? What would such a background be? A white void? The white of the science lab, of industrial fluorescence, of the background against which consumer products are highlighted in TV commercials… A black void? The black of the theater stage, or of sleep, or of empty space… Even the most neutral imaginable context diffracts into a field of connotations and associations. And so a whole experience of emplacement springs forth, a whole affective dimension, as our situational existence becomes brimful with meaning. To say that language conjures, then, is as much as to say that *language orients*. It turns us towards the world in some direction, with some emphasis, according to some concern, and with some affective depth. That is, it places us *in* the world. The resonances of language don't just pass between objects in a field of perception; they pass through us as well. As sensing, we belong to that portion of the world for which things express their depth, wherein resonances become ideas. And as sonorously sensible, we are that portion of the world where ideas become creative, where the world brings to bear a power to summon its own potentiality into existence – a power that is not simply that *of* language, but of our striving, imagining, sexual, humorous, and indeed often sort of hilarious bodies, expressed *through* language.

I have alluded to two commingled ways in which the world takes shape and place emerges through language: direct description and implication. Naming is a sort of description; it picks out an object as a salient identity, something for which we have concern (which concern is demonstrated by the act of naming itself). But already we've seen how the simplest such descriptions implicate inexhaustible depths of significance through their unfolding. And indeed, such depths are already present in the act of naming itself, and without them the act of speech can not even have any sense. This is a fortiori the case, of course, in more elaborate acts of description.

[134] Even if the object is behind us and we are in no position to turn around and look, it is before our attention; to attend to an object is always, in this sense, to face it.

Some speech directly describes, but all speech implicates, because all speech is situated and situating, and thus calls forth certain possibilities and dimensions of existence in things (and is at least in this sense performative). The imperative 'Stop!' for instance, is not descriptive. But if shouted by a police officer at a thief on the street, it indicates to the thief that he is seen, places him in a way that is fraught with legal consequences; a barrier circumscribing the thief is established, and by virtue of the imperative any movement that crosses this barrier will be a transgression of authority. These lines of force draw their potency from a certain social relation, as the cop is empowered by her unique social position in a way that a mere bystander would not be. Or we could imagine the imperative 'Stop!' issued by a victim of assault; this is in some sense also a directive, but the implications of the act of speech are entirely different. Here the imperative is an act of defensive resistance, and could possibly be what in fact defines the situation as assault. Or we could think of a first date, the conversation of which fills the air with descriptive accounts, perhaps, but where the real meaning of what is said lies mostly in the establishment of a comfortable physical space between the participants, a rapport of coordinated interaction; and here the gestures, body language, facial expressions and tone of voice do most of the work. But of course examples could multiply indefinitely…

So, just as perception always reveals the world from some situated perspective and according to some particular purview of concern, so speech reveals the world. And we see in the implicative nature of speech that the depth of the world unfolds from acts of speech much as it does from acts of perception. But these are not merely parallel structures; again, we have to understand speech as a *continuation* of perceptual experience (and, given the chiasmic relation between speech and world, we should also have to say that the converse is partially true as well[135]). It is true that speech adds something to the world – namely, the sounds that are expressed through the voice – and perhaps this is one reason why we might be tempted to regard it as constructing upon the world a system of reference. But these extrusions of breath through lips and mouth and vibrating vocal chords are fundamentally actions of the body, just as are the movements of the glancing eye or the palpating hand. Speech, like those other

[135] That is, we can understand some but not all perceptual experience as a continuation of linguistic experience.

gestures, participates in the sensible world – indeed, as Merleau-Ponty says in *Phenomenology of Perception*, "[s]peech is a gesture, and its signification is a world" (PP, 190). And if "[w]hat counts for the orientation of the spectacle is… my body as a system of possible actions, a virtual body whose phenomenal 'place' is defined by its task and situation" (PP, 260), then so does language contribute to this orientation by further expanding and defining these possibilities; for speech itself, of course, consists of actions, and to know a language is to bear the possibility for linguistic action.

Yet speech floats more lightly than our dense, weighty head and limbs and so forth.[136] And because of this, the transformative possibilities of emplacing perception are wildly expanded, as if language amplified the flow of perceptual experience by some order of magnitude. The movement is akin to the unleashing of sensory possibilities through the function of projection, in that it allows perception and one's experience of emplacement to spring free from the limitations of concrete situatedness. Language takes flight, placially and temporally, through a profusion of virtual places and connections between them.[137] And so not only is it the case that "the whole landscape is overrun with words," but whole landscapes are conjured through the incessantly emplacing generativity of language.

Ideas, as they are understood by Merleau-Ponty, are omnipresent, giving shape to experience. But it is in the frantic generativity of language that they are brought to the fore, re-made, and dispersed along various vectors of resonance across the dimensions of experience. We see an example of this in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*, a novel which carries us through the fragmented history and queasily paranoid tones of American society in the second half of the 20th Century. Among its themes: violence, repression, waste, nuclear annihilation. In the final

[136] Merleau-Ponty writes: "It is as though the visibility that animates the sensible world were to emigrate, not outside of every body, but into another less heavy, more transparent body, as though it were to change flesh, abandoning the flesh of the body for that of language, and thereby would be emancipated but not freed from every condition" (VI, 153).

[137] It often seems to do so of its own volition, casting itself into the world prior to our formulation of what it is going to say. Hence the blurt, the statement of judgment that precedes our consideration of circumstances. Or our experience, in socializing, of establishing a certain tone, which is not so much a matter of choosing what to say as it is a matter of adopting a certain disposition and allowing words to emerge in an appropriate cadence, to play around in a world of certain sorts of possibilities. Or, in writing philosophy, when a thought sometimes emerges on the page before we've really held it in mind and can only evaluate it after the fact, as if language sometimes bypasses the head of the writer altogether and expresses itself directly through the fingers. Or when the muse speaks through the poet. Or even simply in the incessant rising up of language through internal dialogue.

page of the novel, though, a certain word emerges; it "appears in the lunar milk of the data stream" into which human knowledge is increasingly channeling itself by the 1990s, when the novel was written.[138] We don't yet know what this word is as DeLillo describes a scene:

> And you can glance out the window for a moment, distracted by the sound of small kids playing a made-up game in a neighbor's yard, some kind of kickball maybe, and they speak in your voice, or piggy-back races on the weedy lawn, and it's your voice you hear, essentially, under the glimmerglass sky, and you look at the things in the room, offscreen, unwebbed, the tissued grain of the deskwood alive in light, the thick lived tenor of things, the argument of things to be seen and eaten, the apple core going sepia in the lunch tray, and the dense measures of experience in a random glance, the monk's candle reflected in the slope of the phone, hours marked in Roman numerals, and the glaze of the wax, and the curl of the braided wick, and the chipped rim of the mug that holds your yellow pencils, skewed all crazy, and the plied lives of the simplest surface, the slabbed butter melting on the crumbled bun, and the yellow of the yellow of the pencils…[139]

A world of depths. Everything in this room, every "random glance," is embedded in a life, it all bears the weight of a past, from the "apple core going sepia" since lunch to the "chipped rim of the mug" that has surely held its station on the desk for many years. These are not just objects of reference but the material sediment of experience; the objects of this quotidian scene, so described, are given as no mere inventory, but as the testament of a life. These things are *handled*, and as handled objects are thick with the resonances of a personal past, a style of living. They are a little dishevelled, a little stale, a little sad in the way that late afternoons are sad. The words of this passage enter into things, build out their depth, and give them this complex texture which, in all, creates a mood, an affective dimension which is itself inseparable from the cadence of the passage, even the sounds of the words (the smoothness of "the glaze of the wax" is present in the sound of the words as much as in the image; likewise the sequence of phonemes that constitute 'curl of the braided wick' is itself somehow curliform), as well as the narrative context – coming, as it does, on the last page of this 800-page novel, it reads as an exhausted exhalation; and further depths in the pronominalization, the first time "you" make an appearance and become, on this final page, the center of the story, a 'you' which could refer to the protagonist, but which of course also invites *you* to inhabit the perspective from which

[138] DeLillo, 826.
[139] Ibid., 827.

this scene is taken in, and at the same time reads as the author inserting himself into his own novel, and glancing around his own office, with perhaps even a suggestion of melancholy appraisal at the completion of his writing task. It is hard to imagine that this meaning – the depth of these ideas – could unfold either without some prelinguistic significance in the sensible nature of these things[140] or without language plying at them to bring the meaning to light. Only the intertwining of word and world can summon this meaning. But then the tone shifts:

> …and you try to imagine the word on the screen becoming a thing in the world, taking all its meanings, its sense of serenities and contentments out into the streets somehow, its whisper of reconciliation, a word extending itself ever outward, the tone of agreement or treaty, the tone of repose, the sense of mollifying silence, the tone of hail and farewell, a word that carries the sunlit ardor of an object deep in drenching noon, the argument of binding touch, but it's only a sequence of pulses on a dullish screen and all it can do is make you pensive – a word that spreads a longing through the raw sprawl of the city and out across the dreaming bourns and orchards to the solitary hills.
>
> Peace.[141]

The working of the word upon the world itself becomes thematized in these final lines of the novel. We are given the word to imagine, first, as "a thing in the world" – overrunning the landscape, we might say – but we don't even know yet what the word is. Instead we are presented with its depth, its senses and tones, its connotations of ways of being in the world with others (the spirit that is present when we bid "hail and farewell"). It is a word of rest, a word that rectifies the pressing jumble of life, a word that frees us of that weight. You see the smiles, the weightless postures, the frictionless connection with others. Only at the end do we find out what incantatory word has cast the world this way. Coming at it from this direction – from its depths of meaning first, before it has been chimed in our mind – we can not read it as a cliché. A generic meaning can not supplant this particular vision because we've already been initiated into it, we've already inhabited the realm that has been conjured (and inhabited it by

[140] Though these things aren't literally present for us as readers, they become so through the writer's depiction, and we are able to gather a sense of the scene in part because we have seen these sorts of things and have experienced this general mood before. The words suggest the scene, and from our own sensible experience we draw the depths that flesh out the meaning, so that the intertwining relation between language and world plays out within our imaginative experience.

[141] Ibid.

this very act of conjuring). So when we encounter the word, finally, it is not so much that the word imposes an idea on the landscape, but that this living landscape focuses *its* idea, its depth, its full way of being, on the word, so that the word bursts through with the possibility of this landscape, becomes effulgent with its meaning, where otherwise the word might bear only the eroded ideas of unthinking slogans and ossified dispositions. At the same time, though, we might ask: could we have entered into this landscape if the word hadn't been there already, shaping it from the depths of our understanding, giving rise to its possibility? Even as the landscape imbues the word with its significance, isn't it generated by the word in the first place? In fact they've grown up together: landscapes gathered together in the word, and the word spawning new landscapes with every novel use. It is in such a way as this that the word participates in the world, a sort of veining that is insinuated through things, spawning and being spawned by their meaningful depth. Meaning is present not in the correspondence of words to things, but through the germination of each from the other, in the common allegiance with things that characterizes the sonorously sensible.

But there is a tragedy here as well. For, despite its incantatory power, it is "only a sequence of pulses on a dullish screen and all it can do is make you pensive." The promise which the word makes is broken, as it proves to be, finally, incapable of full realization. Its tremendous generative capacity opens up new ways of seeing the world – new visibilities, in Merleau-Ponty's sense – but in doing so it also opens a gap between the actual and the possible, between the binding force of concrete reality and the unfettered potentiality of a world that is always being re-made. For though language can uncover these potentialities in the landscape, and can even allow us to inhabit them through projective acts of imagination, the concrete reality always calls us back. The promise of 'peace' gives way to unease, then, in a minor moment of characteristically human agony, as the ephemeral possibility of the word inevitably fades.

But perhaps there is another dimension of the "longing" that spreads "through the raw sprawl of the city and out across the dreaming bourns and orchards to the solitary hills." Something here is reaching towards a stillness that lies beyond the hum of civilization; and from "raw sprawl" to "dreaming bourns and orchards" to "solitary hills," we are traveling a vector

that is not just spatial but temporal as well – from the urban/technological to the agricultural to the pastoral, or even to the wilderness that was our original home. This distance, out to those hills, is created through the world-making power of language, and the cities and freeways that literally overrun the landscape are only there because language went first and entwined with the world to make it the sort of place where cities and freeways could be built. And now that they're there, of course, they constitute the world that now shapes the possibilities of language: a sort of catalytic feedback that is the moving force of human civilization and – what amounts to the same thing – human knowledge. But the longing which the word expresses is perhaps not just for 'peace' to become the condition of this landscape. It may also be a longing to escape longing; that is, to escape this painful ephemerality, the cacophony of our own experience as linguistic creatures embedded in the world – to return to that peace which is sensed in the hills, sensed as a silent call, as that which abides beyond language, beyond the procrustean impositions of thought. It may, in short, be a longing for silence. Maybe this is logos expressing a desire for escape from itself, to return to that silence from which it has sprung. If so, the tragedy of the invocation of 'peace' is doubled, because not only does the world fail to live up to the perfection of this vision which is invoked, but the condition at which it aims ultimately lies beyond the ken of language, and so the very nature of the desire – as an expression of our linguistic existence – entails that its satisfaction is in principle unattainable.

This reading, though, is just pointing towards new questions: is that which is beyond language truly unattainable? Is the alienated longing "you" seem to be experiencing here our inevitable fate as linguistic beings? Or on the contrary, is language capable of opening up experience beyond its own range? Is it in fact the very capacity by which we hear the silent call? And what sort of call is this? (As soon as it is heard we seem to need it to be formulated.) Could it be that the task for philosophy, qua language about language, is to ask these sorts of questions, and does this imply that, by the same token, philosophy is not the place to search for their answers?

I don't know.

Language as expression of our social existence

It happens that the image at the end of DeLillo's novel is of a lone individual engaging in a moment of reflection – almost an exemplification of the traditional philosophical figure of the solitary subject. But this figure is one of philosophy's great illusions. For language is our expression of ourselves as social beings, and to the extent that reflection is a linguistic practice it is a manner of participating in a *shared* world. When language speaks through us, aloud or in the busy silence of thought, it would be no less accurate to suppose that the proper subject of this speech is our language community, or simply the living language itself, which has found purchase in our bodies. Or, as has already been suggested, the world itself.

But perhaps a more preliminary observation would be simply to note the sense in which linguistic meaning is socially determined. The fact that language participates in the sensible doesn't mean that it pertains to a private realm, referring properly only to the experience I have as a sensing and sensible being. It means instead that we *mutually* participate in the sensible,[142] that my experiences are available to others, and theirs are available to me – that our social existence is defined by this ability to share experience. As Merleau-Ponty remarks, "for me to have not an idea, an image, nor a representation, but as it were the imminent experience of [the colors, the tactile reliefs given to the other], it suffices that I look at a landscape, that I speak of it with someone" (VI, 142). For one thing, since I do not experience the world as representation, mirroring reflection, or mental reconstruction, but as a participant in the sensible, there is no diremption between what I am as a sensing and sensible being and what the world is as sensed that would countenance my skepticism as to whether another person were sharing this same world with me: clearly we are both sensing beings, and everything about our relations to each other, our actions in the world, and our general bearing and orientation implies that we are sensing basically the same things.[143] Furthermore, were it

[142] As Merleau-Ponty says, "My right hand was present at the advent of my left hand's active sense of touch. It is in no different fashion that the other's body becomes animate before me when I shake another man's hand or just look at him." The reversibility of the sensible enjoins others along with ourselves. (PS, 168).

[143] If some disagreement arises – for instance, if the other person starts acting in some way which implies things that she is seeing a different world than I am – then we immediately seek to resolve the difference, which we presume to be a misunderstanding, so that the communicative interaction coheres in a coordinated fashion once

the case that language simply represented an internal experience, we would always be in doubt whether an idea which we gather from another person's expression was actually what she had in mind; but such doubts never arise in the context of successful communication for anyone but schizophrenics and philosophers. On the contrary, language is the means by which some idea, some resonant depth, crosses over from one person to another: for me to share an idea of a certain landscape with another, for instance, it is enough "that I speak of it with someone. Then, through the concordant operation of his body and my own, what I see passes into him, this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades his vision without quitting my own, I recognize in my green his green, as the customs officer recognizes suddenly in a traveler the man whose description he had been given" (VI, 142). Ideas are transmitted through language: we can accept that this is the case – not, though, as an operation at an intellectual and insensate level, but as the means of mutual participation in the sensible. And so, "it is not *I* who sees, not *he* who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us, a vision in general" (Ibid.). We don't take the world to be immediately accessible to us, and only accessible to others by inference; we take the world to be accessible in itself (or, indeed, as already accessed), and accessible to others in just the same way that it is accessible to us. This is why it is perfectly natural to presume that meaning can pass from myself to another, and from another to myself, without inspiring doubts about the real meaning that lies behind the words, in the internal experience of the other person.

If it seems that such a crossing over amounts to an imperfect rendering of the primary experience, such that the sensible can only be shared with others up to a point, as if the private experience were somehow subject to a loss in translation, we can remember three things:

Firstly, the astonishing detail and vividness which language is capable of conveying. The best writers are able to produce a situation such that there can be no mistake about what image is being conveyed, nor how we are to experience its affective depth. (When Ralph Ellison describes getting knocked out in a boxing match in this way: "It was a dream fall, my body languid and fastidious as to where to land, until the floor became impatient and smashed up to

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more. Such moments are, then, the exceptions that prove the rule of presumption of a shared, mutually visible world.

meet me," then we know *just* what he means, even if we've never been knocked out in our lives.[144]) So we should not underestimate the eloquence of language, its power to conjure even utterly original scenes and moods with startling clarity.[145]

Secondly, we can remember that our "internal" experiences, even at the level of "bare" perception, are to a great extent shaped by and expressed through language in the first place. Language is, in this sense, already present even in our solitary sensory experience. We shouldn't think of language, then, as something that comes after the fact as an interpretation or translation of our experience which we can then communicate to others. It is there from the beginning, integrated into and coursing through our experience of the sensible. And, of course, no words have meaning other than through their social use; linguistic meaning is intersubjective. It is learned through and with others. So insofar as our sensible experience is already a linguistic expression, our social existence is prior to our "private" experience.

Thirdly, no perception is ever identical to another perception, even from moment to moment within our own experience. In this sense no perception is ever complete; it is always open to new resonances, and the depth of these resonances is inexhaustible. It would be nonsensical, then, to establish as a criterion for "full" communication with another person that an idea must be exactly the same for each of us. My sense of the greenness of the meadow will have a slightly different resonance for me than it does for you, if for no other reason than our physical perspective is slightly different; resonance implies difference, and this includes those resonances which pass from one person to another through language. But this is no more profound and untraversable a difference than is that between moments when the quality of light changes, or a breeze stirs a shimmer into the grass, or a wandering thought juxtaposes some other meadowly experience from years ago. It is in the nature of sensible experience to shift and change from moment to moment. And indeed, the same could be said of meaning

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[144] Ellison, 25.

[145] Of course, most of us are not so eloquent in our everyday speech. But even our bumbling attempts at description can often be sufficient to convey the most particular notions; even if our verbal gestures are vague, they can be and are often sufficient for a meaning to click for our interlocutor – for them to *lock on* to the sense of what we are saying.

itself, which never expresses itself as a mere adequation of some object, but as a resonant movement which takes on new significance at every iterative moment.

Insofar as language is a transmission of meaning between bodies, then, it brings those bodies into a common participation in a world.[146] But the image of a transmission, which suggests that communicative content has its origin in the individual, is still insufficient to express the sense in which we get carried up by language, through our conversations with others, and thus how meaning is intersubjectively constituted. It would be more revealing of the way that language emerges through our living engagement with the world if we place the locus of communicative autonomy not in the speaking individual (which has the concomitant tendency of identifying the listening individual as the passive recipient of communication) but in the communicative interaction which expresses itself as both the speaking and the listening of its participants. Consider this comment from *The Prose of the World*:

> The other's words, or mine in him, do not limit themselves to vibrating like chords the listener's machinery of acquired significations or to arousing some reminiscence. Their flow must have the power of throwing me in turn toward a signification that neither he nor I possessed before. In watching an organism orient gestures toward its environment, I begin to perceive its perceiving because the internal organization of its gestures is the same as my own conduct and tells me of my own relation to the world – in the same way, when I speak to another person and listen to him, what I understand begins to insert itself in the intervals between my saying things, my speech is intersected laterally by the other's speech, and I hear myself in him, while he speaks in me. Here it is the same thing *to speak to* and *to be spoken to*. (PW, 142)

A subject-centered account of communication would have it that some content is produced in the individual, who then passes it on to an interlocutor who can in turn reciprocate by passing on her own content. On this account, communicative interaction would simply be a kind of sharing of erstwhile private information, where the significance of social interaction for

[146] "Rationality, or the agreement of minds," Merleau-Ponty writes, "does not require that we all reach the same idea by the same road, or that significations be enclosed in definitions. It requires only that every experience contain points of catch for all other ideas and that 'ideas' have a configuration. This double requirement is the postulation of a *world*" (PW, 143). To exist in the same world as another, then, would be to move about according to the same cohering system of ideas – and I don't think any harm is done by inscribing Merleau-Ponty's notion of ideas as developed later in *The Visible and the Invisible* into this observation. To participate in the same world, then, is to share enough of the depth in things with someone else that communication becomes possible.

meaning-making goes no farther than an additive process of information accrual. Merleau-Ponty's remarks here, though, point to a constitution of meaning that is beyond any individual, and beyond any such additive process; rather, the social interaction produces a locus of meaning that is irreducible to the individual contributions of its participants. Thus one speaks *through* the other in dialogue – an understanding emerges that is expressed not just through one's own utterances and the utterances of the other, but through a transfiguration of the perspective of each by that of the other such that some new perspective is produced. We see that in this sense, again, speech is revealed as a continuation of embodied and emplaced perceptual experience: the meanings which are produced through the crossing between participants in dialogue are an extension of those intercorporeal crossings which characterize our bodily interactions with others. Thus the remark that "I hear myself in him, while he speaks in me" echoes the observation in *Phenomenology of Perception* that "[The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others… It is as if the other person's intentions inhabited my body and mine his" (p.215)]. In social interaction, including speech, the locus of operative intentionality is not just an 'I' but also a 'we.'[147]

Hanne De Jaegher and Ezequiel Di Paolo have developed a notion of "participatory sense-making" to account for the ways in which meaning is generated and transformed through processes of interaction between individuals.[148] For them, the "creation and appreciation of meaning or *sense-making*" is what defines a cognitive system.[149] This meaning is produced not through the representation of an organism's environment, but through active engagement with it. In finding the locus of perception neither in the world as wholly independent of our own interests and upon which we passively spectate, nor in an internal representation of the same, but in the interaction between the individual and their world, this perspective is concordant

[147] According to Merleau-Ponty (following Guillaume) in *Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language*, a child does not proceed from a consciousness of self to a consciousness of others. Rather, others are at the center of the child's world, and the representative self is constructed from others; "[t]he child considers himself 'another other'," which is confirmed in the language learning process: for instance, the child's first words relate to other people, and he uses the names of others before he learns to use his own name (CLA, 37-8).
[148] Discussed, e.g., in De Jaegher and Di Paolo (2007).
[149] De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 488.

with what has been argued here. As social beings, of course, we comprise important elements of each other's worlds – really, we are the center of each other's worlds: other persons are the foci of our awareness and attention much, and probably most, of the time, such that "the world" for us is primarily a world of people and of interpersonal relationships much more than it is a world of things, though this fact tends to go oddly overlooked in traditional accounts of the relation between subject and world. This means that in our capacity as sense-making organisms, a considerable portion of our attention is directed at other organisms who are engaging in their own sense-making.[150] And when sense-making organisms are engaged with each other, a coordinated social interaction can emerge (where 'coordination' can be taken as "the non-accidental correlation between the behaviours of two or more systems that are in sustained coupling, or have been coupled in the past, or have been coupled to another common system"[151]) in which "the agents sustain the encounter, and the encounter itself influences the agents and invests them with the role of *interactors*."[152] Once this occurs, an autonomous process emerges in which the interaction can not be reduced to the individual agents participating in it. Social interaction, then, "has two characteristics: (1) there is a coupling, which is regulated so as to generate and maintain an identity in the relational domain… And (2) the individuals involved are and remain autonomous as interactors."[153] The interaction is sustained by "the mutual influence between coordination patterns and the interaction process."[154]

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[150] De Jaegher and Di Paolo stress that such interactions needn't be limited to the human species – possibilities for social cognition surely exist for other species, and across species as well.
[151] De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 490.
[152] *bid.*, 492.
[153] Their precise definition of a social interaction is: "the regulated coupling between at least two autonomous agents, where the regulation is aimed at aspects of the coupling itself so that it constitutes an emergent autonomous organization in the domain of relational dynamics, without destroying in the process the autonomy of the agents involved (though the latter's scope can be augmented or reduced)." So, for instance, exchanging body heat at a crowded bus stop is not a social interaction because the agents do not actively regulate the coupling. (Ibid., 493).
[154] The authors invite us to imagine two people attempting to pass each other in a narrow corridor: "They have to decide whether to continue walking as they are, or shift their movement to the right or to the left… Instead of choosing complementary movements that would allow them to carry on walking, the individuals move into mirroring positions at the same time… [creating a] symmetrical mirroring relation. This symmetry, in combination with thte spatial constraints of the corridor, increases the likelihood that the next move will be a mirroring one (there are not many other moves available). Thus, the coordination maintains a property of the relational

In social interaction, then, sense-making individuals coordinate their movements in a manner that sustains their interaction. So, if movements (embodied interaction with the world) are the means by which meaning is produced, as the authors propose, then "social agents can coordinate their sense-making in social encounters."[155] Agents can thus achieve "participatory sense-making": "the coordination of intentional activity in interaction, whereby individual sense-making processes are affected and new domains of social sense-making can be generated that were not available to each individual on her own."[156]

Speech is, of course, a form of movement, one which Merleau-Ponty characterizes as gesturing. We have seen how this is the case: in speaking, as in perceiving, we open ourselves up to some milieu by means of some bodily disposition, which milieu and disposition co-constitutively define our possibilities for engagement with the world. But speech is inherently social: it is not even just that there is no speaking without a listener; there is no social interaction through speech, in De Jaegher and Di Paolo's sense of interaction, without mutual coordination in which the interaction itself – the *conversation* – becomes generative of meaning. It is not that meaning is conveyed by a speaker and received by the listener, who conveys their own meaning in turn; rather, in listening one contributes to the sense-making activity, and likewise in speaking one expresses a sense which could not emerge without this contribution of the listener. Imagine, for instance, the ways we might describe some complicated social predicament we find ourselves in with a lover or a family member. Depending on who we are speaking to, we may find ourselves casting the predicament under various lights. We may incorporate or omit certain details according to the particularities of the interactive situation in which we find ourselves, a situation which, in turn, is temporally embedded in the whole history we share with our confidant. The interaction is embedded in this situation, and the way we tell of our predicament finds expression according to the

dynamics that forces the individuals to keep facing each other and consequently to remain in interaction" (De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 493). The example is interesting because the interaction persists *despite the intentions of the two participants to end it*. In such a case, the autonomy of the process is most indisputable. But of course an everyday, pleasant conversation exhibits autonomy as well, and in a much more conventional way, as the participants take pleasure in maintaining the coordination.

[155] Ibid., 497.

[156] Ibid.

possibilities which are thereby opened up. This is not simply a matter of "giving one side of the story." Through the telling we may *produce* a meaning, one which the particular interaction has made possible. We've surely all had the experience of coming to regard some such predicament in a wholly new light, not necessarily due to some friend's counsel, but simply by unburdening ourselves according to the circumstances which define the friendship. Such epiphanies may be relatively rare, but at the least the sharing of a predicament with a given person is imbued with a certain mood, defined by the subtle ways in which we come to define ourselves within a given relationship, which in itself is enough to give a new affective dimension, which is to say an original expression, to our predicament.[157] Thus can my conversation with the other "turn toward a signification that neither he nor I possessed before" (PW, 142).

However, we shouldn't make the mistake of treating social interaction as the constitution of a new sort of absolute identity. To succeed as an autonomous interaction, it must remain open to the world, just as the autonomy of the individual is ensured only by her openness to the world. As De Jaegher and Di Paolo emphasize, there are degrees of coordination, and the coupling involved in a given social interaction needn't be (and, strictly speaking, never is) total. "Systems in relative coordination do not entrain perfectly," they write. "Instead they show phase attraction, which means that they tend to go near perfect synchrony,

[157] My claim here is that it is in the nature of the speaker-listener interaction that simply by listening, the listener contributes to the meaning that is expressed. But there is a further sense in which the listener is not simply a passive participant in conversation: listening is, in itself, an expressive communicative activity. One's facial expressions, gestures, nods, continuers and back-channeling responses ('yeahs' and 'mms' and whatnot), body language, and so forth all provide feedback to the speaker, including expressions of interest, resistance, insinuation, judgment, solicitation, and so forth, that contribute positively to the flow of the conversation. (Just consider how impossible it is to *open up* to someone who is affectively neutral or disengaged. No one likes those sorts of conversations.)

The singularity of the social context in which a given conversation occurs points, by the way, to the *depth* that can develop over time through social interactions with those we are closest to. When we are engaging with strangers, we begin with relatively little background to serve as that against which meaning can emerge (though 'relatively' is the key term, as things like physical appearance, including gender and racial categories, age, tokens of social class and attitude, facial expressions, situational context and so forth already provide immense depth to even the most casual interactions); with our closest relations, the depth is such that even the most minimal of utterances or gestures may bear tremendous meaning. And furthermore, in any given interaction this depth extends beyond the proximate interaction. Merleau-Ponty writes: "Speaking is not just my own initiative, listening is not submitting to the initiative of the other, because as speaking subjects we are *continuing*, we are resuming a common effort more ancient than we, upon which we are grafted to one another and which is the manifestation, the growth, of truth" (PW, 144). Surely this depth extends beyond even the whole history of our culture, beyond even that of our species, to some biological depth, to the animal depths of our biological history that expresses itself in our desiring bodies. Does it extend deeper than that…?

and move into and out of the zone that surrounds it… Coordination can be like a swaying into and out of states that are close to stable, but not quite."[158] A perfectly coordinated interaction (if that is even possible between anything so complex, so prone to spontaneous movement, as human beings) could not be open to new expressions of meaning as it would be locked in a stable state. At the other end of the spectrum, if there is not a certain stability in the interaction, there will not be a sufficient degree of coordination to produce new meanings. It is only in dynamic, open social interaction that new meanings can readily emerge, and this requires movements toward and away from synchronicity. (Perhaps we could think of the spectrum between absolute and relative coordination as akin to the difference between a homogeneous wave and the dynamic interference pattern that emerges when waves interact with each other: a military march would be closer to the former end of the spectrum, a band's musical improvisation closer to the middle, and a conversation fraught with misunderstanding as occupying the other end.) A necessity for original sense-making, then, is a degree of submergence in non-sense. At least momentarily, at least from some perspective, we have to lose our bearings; things have to become obscure, disordered, free of conceptual reification. In this way the world can become an *original* place for us, one in which a new disposition suddenly rends the fabric of habitual existence. Merleau-Ponty writes: "[s]peech endlessly renews the mediation of the same and the other. Speech perpetually verifies for us that there is no signification without a movement, at first violent, that surpasses all signification… if the book really teaches me something, if the other person is really another, at a certain stage I must be surprised, disoriented" (PW, 142). *Disoriented*. We have to lose our place in the world for some new meaning to emerge. We have to become lost in a text to find a new path, and we have to see the alien red of the setting sun glow refulgent in the climbing summer cloud to know for the first time the place that we live.

But the interactive constitution of meaning doesn't characterize dialogue as if the latter were some special case of language use: interactivity is the essence of language, and this is true even in the case of the internal monologue. Maybe it would be better to refer to it as an internal dialogue, in fact, as it is comprised of imagined communicative acts. An imagined

[158] De Jaegher and Di Paolo, 491.

interlocutor is always implicit, and indeed this interlocutor often takes on an active role, as when an imagined interaction with a friend or family member passes through our stream of consciousness. In more subtle ways, too, the voices of others are present internally, as when we adopt a certain disposition or mood in thought which is one we have learned in interaction with particular others. But if linguistic meaning is intersubjectively constituted, and this extends even to the "private" experience of our stream of consciousness, then all dispositions in thought are learned in interaction with others; there is no subject independent of these interactions. This is not to deny personal identity, since each of us is particular in the interactions which have formed our linguistic capacities, as well as in the material substrate of those capacities (namely, our bodies, and including our genetically endowed abilities and predispositions) as well as our cultural practices, etc., and it is just this particularity which allows us to contribute to the meaning which emerges in interaction, and to maintain our autonomy as individuals. Therefore to say that all dispositions in thought are learned in interaction with others is not to say they are received from others whole cloth; it is only to say that our capacities for thought are developed through social interaction, and that our ability to make sense of things even in our solitary and introspective moments is fundamentally a social one. This gives us reason to reject the notion that there is some essential subject that lies beneath the interactions in which we participate, any more than there is an essential river that lies beneath the flow of the waters.

What De Jaegher and DiPaolo do not emphasize, however, is that the coordinated interactivity of linguistic interaction consists in a mutual participation in place. In communicating with others we share in a certain disposition towards a milieu. Even in argument, we dispute the contours of a milieu which is nonetheless generally shared (always shared at least to the extent that there is a background to frame the disagreement), and seek (perhaps forcefully) to compel others into "seeing things our way." And for that matter, to have even a solitary experience of meaningful emplacement is to take up those perspectives which we've learned through others, or to stitch them together in a kind of bricolage, as these various perspectives are solicited by our surroundings; and further, that these surroundings are defined primarily by those who inhabit them, and whose own perspectives belong to the texture of

those surroundings. Coordinated interaction is not just a bonding of individuals through communication, then, but a bonding in and by way of place, that both defines and is defined by place, and that suffuses experience.

The sensible world, imbued as it is with linguistic depth, is a world of places that solicit us as multiplicities, that emerge from our mutual interaction. In this complex sense, a complexity that is more akin to that of the interactions that constitute a whole ecosystem than it is like like the interactions of a single chemical bond, the world as we have learned to see it is the world as it is seen by others. Gaze out at any urban streetscape and the remarkable degree of mutual coordination on display shows this fact to be obvious: how could any of this be possible, from the emergence of the first urban societies to today's global cities, if it were not present to us in a shared way, as mutually inhabitable environments – as places whose meanings we shared, massively complex as they are?[159] But we have language, and so we are able to plan, we are able to project possibilities and imaginatively inhabit worlds constructed in the most intricate detail, and to share them with others; and we are able to turn these capacities back on the concrete world itself in the realization of those possibilities. This consideration leads us to see that intersubjective communication itself is properly couched in historical terms, as a process that goes back at least to the emergence of human beings. As Merleau-Ponty writes, "Speaking is not just my own initiative, listening is not submitting to the initiative of the other, because as speaking subjects we are *continuing*, we are resuming a common effort more ancient than we, upon which we are grafted to one another and which is the manifestation, the growth, of truth" (PW, 144). The world we inhabit as sonorous creatures, which is produced through the intertwining of landscapes and speech, is the product of the whole of human history. Language has billowed out across all this time in a process which is not necessarily teleological but which has generally moved in the direction of complexification – if nothing else, in the form of a profusion of language games, and therefore a profusion of

[159] Shared well enough, at least. Though clearly we might consider those instances when this sharing breaks down, different and sometimes contradictory resonances assert themselves to different groups, and society factionalizes. This perhaps suggests an avenue of political analysis which would regard social interaction on a political scale as metonymical to the spectrum of relative and absolute coordination that defines social interaction in general; representative cases at various points on the spectrum are easy to imagine.

possibilities for action[160] - a product of the tendency of language to ramify meanings and, through these ramifications and its chiasmic participation in the sensible world, to materially remake the world along technological, cultural, and aesthetic axes (as well as whatever else counts as a dimension of human experience), which re-made worlds themselves serve to subtend further ramifications of meaning, and so on: what I referred to above as the moving force of human civilization. This is the force that sweeps us up when we participate in the world through speech. It would be myopic, then, to regard our embeddedness in the sonorously resonant world as intersubjective merely in the sense that any given use of language implies a synchronous interaction between addresser and addressee; for such linguistic meanings as are possible, for the most part, are so only thanks to this temporal depth. It isn't as if Mexico City was built from scratch as the product of one clever conversation – or as if Iñárritu's imagining of it in *Amores Perros* was not a form of understanding that relied on countless historically-embedded discursive influences to be achieved.

A few words on speech acts

J. L. Austin himself suggests that "[p]erhaps indeed there is no great distinction between statements and performative utterances."[161] Austin referred to illocutionary acts as having "force," which is distinct from the mere content of an utterance: "I will make us dinner" and "I promise to make us dinner," according to this distinction, have the same content – that I will make us dinner – but the latter has the force of a promise, whereas the former has the force of a mere statement. This distinction has generally been maintained by speech act theorists ever since. We might wonder, though, whether anything remains of this distinction once a full accounting of force has been taken – whether, indeed, anything remains of the notion of "content" at all.

To see this, we first need to clarify what is at stake in this distinction between different sorts of force. If a speech act is a promise, it makes a commitment to pursue some course of

[160] Of course, much is always being lost; if this tree of human knowledge is characterized by its ever-burgeoning canopy, its lower limbs, blocked from the sun, are ever prone to wither (even if they often remain as the structural support for those higher branches).
[161] Austin, 52.

action in the future, which establishes the promisee's expectations, and entrains any number of other conditions as well. Whether the speech act is a question, a threat, a prediction, an offer, a directive, or whatever the case may be, will likewise contribute to the determination of the conditions involved. That is to say, the force of each of these types of speech act determines the consequences of the issuance of the speech act; or, to put it another way, the force of the speech act opens up the world in some particular way, makes certain actions (including certain further speech acts – further moves in a language game) possible. For instance, some speech acts directly call for further actions, such as in the case of commands, instructions, and some requests. Many speech acts establish or solicit some sort of social relation: a greeting serves as an acknowledgement of another person, to any degree of friendliness or hostility, informality or professionalism; a joke accompanied by a sly smile invokes a tone of flirtatious playfulness. Still other speech acts are mainly descriptive: their primary function is to convey information about the world, most commonly (I would have to think) about other people, and about the relations between other people. As we have seen, such descriptions emphasize certain aspects of things and allow us to see them "under a certain light," and to do so is to have them open towards us in a certain way, with certain resonances which will always depend on the particular circumstances in which the communication takes place. We could continue such a cataloguing of speech act types, carving distinctions between them as finely as we like.

We could also note that there is often, if not usually, some overlap between these different functions of speech acts. (In particular, it seems to me that the vast majority of instances of verbal communication involve some element of maintenance or establishment of social relations or some kind or another – they have what we might call social salience.[162]) The important point for present purposes, though, is just that the force of every utterance is that which has consequences: some actions become possible, some aspects of things become evident, some resonances are established, which define the utterance not just within a particular language game, but in the general flow of our lives. In other words, its force is that by which the utterance embeds us in a world that is meaningful for us. (It should also be noted

[162] Friendliness is, perhaps, the most typical mode of social salience: most interactions seem to be cloaked in a spirit of friendliness, which is to say, a movement towards friendship, even in the barest sense, as when one gestures for another to pass when stepping off of a crowded subway.

that, in addition to being situating, language is always situated; that is, it is always a response to a prior situation, and is always discursively preceded by other linguistic expressions.[163] It is, then, itself always a consequence of force, as well as generative of it. To be situating is also to be already situated.)

But as I argued above, this situating function, which I am here identifying with force, is what constitutes language as meaningful. Where, then, does this leave content? In principle, it is that element in a speech act which can be abstracted from a given situation. But if meaning is always situational, this abstracted content is utterly inert – it doesn't *do* anything. It has no consequences. The best we could do is to argue that, say, "I'll make the dinner" has some generic meaning, irrespective of circumstances, so long as we don't introduce any particularizing details to it. In fact, the very viability of the notion of 'propositional content' relies, implicitly, on the possibility of there being such generic meanings for propositions, for otherwise the proposition could not function as a unit of communicative significance. But what could such a "generic" meaning consist in, other than a sort of denuded imagined situation? If we are to regard the proposition 'I'll make the dinner' as meaningful to any degree, we have to concede that situational details are already implict in it: for instance, what dinner is, as a cultural practice, and what it "looks like" – e.g., that it is a social gathering, that it involves eating, etc.; also, roughly what it means to 'make' dinner; that a person making such a statement would be at least acquainted with their interlocutor; and so on. We imagine, in other words, a situation which opens on to some possibilities but not others. And however bleached and spare this situation may be, it is necessary that there be one for the statement to have meaning. For a language to be meaningful it must be situated, and in conjuring or embedding itself in a situation, however underdetermined that situation may be, language has force; therefore there can be no meaning without force. This entails what Austin, in any event, ultimately accepts: that all meaningful language is illocutionary. But it goes farther than this, too, in finding that content, as a unit of significance, or even as an isolable quality of a speech act, is an incohererent notion.

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[163] As Merleau-Ponty puts it in *The Prose of the World*, "it is essential to signification never to appear except as the sequel to a discourse already under way" (PW, 144).

We don't even have to rise to a sentential level to see that meaning depends on, and indeed resides in, situatedness: I say 'umbrella,' and you immediately imagine an umbrella. It may well be your own umbrella, or one you are familiar with, or at least share features with some familiar umbrella. Certain associations rise up (rain, a British gentleman, dampened foyers, the act of hanging up an umbrella, an umbrella floating upside down in a pond). It's as if the word is at the ready, prepared to leap in any of a number of directions, to take on any of a number of meanings, and in fact is already doing so provisionally. It seems to be already cloaking itself in significance, even if it would require some further communicative context to be fully meaningful. If it didn't have at least these provisional associations as context, the word would have no meaning for us. It would be like the way a word in a foreign language seems to us – merely a string of phonemes, with no connection to the broader world. But even in a mere mention of a term a situation begins to affirm itself, albeit inchoately; that is to say, some force in the term begins to cohere.

Would we say that such an inchoate situation is actually meaningful, though? It simply depends on how much precision we require in the linguistic gesture to be comfortable applying the term 'meaning' to a given utterance. There is no reason to establish hard criteria here: we can just say that to the extent that an utterance embeds us in a situation, it is meaningful.[164]

This implies that, strictly speaking, meaning can never be fully expressed in propositional or logical terms. This is not to say that logical analysis doesn't serve certain instrumental purposes, within certain boundaries (which, of course, impose their own situational logic); it is to deny, however, that logical expression ever suffices as an adequation of linguistic meaning. For as a situating function, language participates in the world in a manner that is never fully determinate, that is always open to indefinite possibilities, just as when one glances about a busy scene one can pick out indefinite aspects, points of interest, and resonances between things; and just as the visible opens on to invisible depths, speech opens

[164] Anyone who claims strictly grammatical sentences are necessary to produce meaning, however, ought to try to transcribe any informal conversation, especially if it is between people who are very familiar with each other: they are rife with particles, stammering, interruptions, back-channeling (the "yeahs" and "mms" that indicate engaged listenership) and are to a large degree incomprehensible absent the facial expressions, gestures, and other conversational tools which are integral to communication. Provided the scaffolding of these extralinguistic devices, a great deal is conversationally achieved through mere mentioning and the scantest of allusions.

on to silent depths.[165] And as a situated function, it has always sprung from some context; its sense always emerges against some particular background, from some past, without which it could never have arisen.[166] As Merleau-Ponty observes in *The Prose of the World*, "[t]he living relation between subjects is masked because one always adopts, as the model of speech, the *statement* or the *indicative*. One does so because one believes that, apart from statements, there remain only stammering and foolishness" (PW, 144). This is the instinct behind propositional analysis: to distill what is essential in linguistic expression, to render it clearly, so that it may be free of the inessential, the opacities and adornments which encumber the particular expression. But it is in these inessentialities that the meaning emerges, because it is they which embed the linguistic expression in a particular situation and thus open towards meaningful depth. Strip away these qualities completely from an utterance and nothing is left.[167]

This tendency towards essentialist reduction of linguistic expression is evident even in certain attempts to build upon the fundamental insight of speech act theory – that language is not essentially descriptive, but active – and even when such efforts seek to broaden the contextual horizon of utterances (which is necessary in order to address some of the tensions inherent in treating utterances on the model of context-independent propositional statements). Mitchell S. Green makes such an attempt when he tries to incorporate a speech act approach to linguistic analysis into a "scorekeeping" semantic model.[168] According to this model, "speakers uttering indicative sentences have those sentences entered into the

[165] Thus Merleau-Ponty writes that "all language is indirect or allusive – that it is, if you wish, silence" (ILVS, 43).
[166] PW, 144: "it is essential to signification never to appear except as the sequel to a discourse already under way."
[167] Another motivation for this instinct towards propositional analysis is, surely, the apparent fixity of the written word: written statements are durable; they seem permanent. It therefore seems especially plausible to apply such an analysis to written language – as if it were a static lump of material needing to be carved down to its bare essence like a cube of marble, rather than a fluid process which was in a perpetual state of change. But this merely obscures the fact that the written language is every bit as situational as speech. This is so on at least two levels: first, in that writing is still linguistic expression, and therefore situating; what is written on the page opens up to embodied and emplaced experiences for the reader – the novel, for instance, is nothing but a sequence of narrative situations (and strictly speaking this could be said of anything written). Second, in that writing is always *by* someone and *for* an audience, so that a pseudo-dialogue is established in which the writer is imaginatively present for the reader. There may be any number of factors involved in establishing the contours of this situation – the type of writing, the presumed composition of the audience, the style, the explicitness of the authorial voice, the medium in which the work is written, etc.
[168] Green, 466.

conversational record unless there is a demurrer from an addressee, and once in the record the content of those sentences may be used as fodder for future inference as well as be presupposed by their speech acts"[169] A development of this model "will make clear what sort of questions an interlocutor is apt to reject or, alternatively, to endorse and attempt to answer. Following a discussion of some technical refinements to this model, Green concludes that we could "articulate a conception of linguistic meaning according to which (a) a single bit of contentful language can serve any of a variety of communicative tasks, while (b) the meaning of certain expressions can only be properly elucidated in terms some extralinguistic purpose that their utterance subserves [sic]. Thus developed, the scorekeeping model will permit an explication of certain sorts of expressions in terms, in part, of their use without jeopardizing a systematic and rigorous treatment of their meaning."[170]

What is interesting is that Green sees the need to treat meaning as contextually embedded, at least to the extent that conversational context is drawn into the discussion of what matters for an utterance to have meaning. Yet he remains thoroughly committed to treating language as solely operative at a linguistic level; that is, the "extralinguistic purposes" invoked don't actually extend beyond the terms of the linguistic analysis to, say, an actual, living situation – they merely extend the frame of reference for that analysis to incorporate other indicatives issued within the conversational context. The implication is that the demand for a "systematic and rigorous treatment" of linguistic meaning can succeed only if it operates free of situational embeddedness – free, for instance, of the milieu in which a conversation takes place, of the social status and nature of the relationships between the participants, of the cultural background which is presupposed by the conversation, of mood and tone and gesture and facial expression, etc. Such elements are integral to the processes of sensible interaction with the world by which meaning is produced – so integral, in fact, that there can be no meaning without them.[171] The cost of the "systematic and rigorous treatment" of linguistic meaning is, then, that it doesn't actually account for meaning at all.

[169] Ibid., 467.
[170] Ibid., 469-70.
[171] Contrast this to Merleau-Ponty's observations regarding the seemingly banal character of a recording of a conversation that at the time seemed brilliant: "The presence of those who were speaking, the gestures, the

To approach meaning with real comprehensiveness, we certainly have to begin by considering conversational context. But we have to go much farther than this, too. We have to escape the illusion that there is a self-sufficient linguistic level independent of the world which we physically inhabit. Instead, we need to see language as a form of embodied action by which we participate in the world we inhabit. In other words, we have to treat language as an emplaced phenomenon. It is only in doing so that its meaning is revealed.

Abstract terms and embodied cognition

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of language in *The Visible and the Invisible* has implications as well for how we can give an account of abstract language as embodied and emplaced. Though the dominant paradigms concerning language comprehension tend to treat it as an archival process, [172] and thus tend to reify meaning by treating it as something that can be retrieved, for those philosophers and cognitive scientists operating within the embodied cognition paradigm, there seems to be relatively little resistance to the idea that concrete terms can be accounted for in terms of embodied cognitive processes.[173] If I say that 'the kettle is on the stove,' for instance, the idea that the meaning of this expression can be given in terms of motor intentionality systems and the affordances of a kettle and a stove, etc., for my bodily action is intuitively graspable. But what about a term like 'freedom' or 'God'? How can the meanings of abstract terms like these be expressed through embodiment if they are things that we can't grasp or point to or engage in any other concrete way? This apparent difficulty is addressed by Anna Borghi and Felice Cimatti in a paper entitled "Words as Tools and the Problem of Abstract Word Meanings." Their proposal is that there are two simultaneous

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physiognomies, and the feeling of an event which is coming up and of a continuous improvisation, all are lacking in the recording. Henceforth the conversation no longer exists; it *is*, flattened out in the unique dimension of sound and all the more deceptive because this wholly audotory medium is that of a text read" (ILVS, 57).

[172] Lawrence W. Barsalou, for instance, points this out (Barsalou (1999), 62). Barsalou goes on to argue that language comprehension is fundamentally preparation for situated action, though without abandoning some of the representationalist language that would place him at odds with a Merleau-Pontian account.

[173] Among those who have argued for the embodied cognition view of language are Glenberg and Robertson; Glenberg and Kaschak; Zwaan, et al.; Richardson et al., as well as Johnson and Lakoff, whose theories regarding embodied metaphor will be discussed extensively in chapter four.

cognitive sources for word meanings: one which is based on individual embodied experience, and another which is based on social embodiment. The latter is located not in the mind of the individual, but in a socially shared language. While the meanings of concrete words like "paper" or "cat" depend more on individual sensorimotor experience, abstract words like 'God' or 'freedom' depend primarily on "the use of the social word/tool 'God'" or 'freedom.'[174]

Clearly the authors don't intend to treat this distinction as a firm dichotomy between individual embodied experience and social/linguistic experience; it is more like a spectrum, with concrete words deriving their meanings more from individual embodied experience and abstract words deriving their meanings more from social embodied experience. Nonetheless, they seem to be suggesting that the meanings of words which are not manifestly integrated into sensorimotor experience are constituted at a linguistic level – a dimension of things which, though it is internal to experience, nonetheless is in a representational or mapping relation to concrete sensible experience. In their account, abstract words are something like socially-constituted things, which can then be used to refer to our internal experiences. Thus they write,

> How can we have experiences corresponding to non existing entities? We propose this solution: we can have experience of the apparently abstract entity GOD (that actually does not exist and there is no need of postulating its existence) only through the use of that particular modal thing that is the english word 'God.' If I am able to use such a word in the appropriate contexts my mind is later able to make internal experience of God.[175]

The implication seems to be that there is some "internal experience" to which the word corresponds through a system of reference. Despite their avowed commitment to going beyond the notion that every word must be attached to some physical referent, they reify their notion of abstract concepts in order to treat them precisely as something which can be referred to: namely, as a kind of internal experience.

From a Merleau-Pontian perspective, however, the question of how abstract concepts are embodied is not: how can our experiences correspond to non-existent entities? It is: in what ways do abstract concepts allow us to situate ourselves in the world? When we sonorously project these words into the world, what sort of interaction takes place? It is not a matter of

[174] Borghi and Cimatti, 2307.
[175] Ibid., 2308.

accounting for a correspondence between internal states and language, but of accounting for the sorts of dispositions in embodiment that are employed, and the sorts of actions that become possible, when we use a given term under particular circumstances. To speak of "god," then, is to adopt, perhaps provisionally, a certain perspective which opens on to certain possibilities for interacting with things; and of course just what this perspective is will vary with context – will vary at every level from the historical or cultural to the particular conversational instance. Likewise, when we speak of 'freedom,' we inhabit the world in a certain way – perhaps with a certain sense of lightness, of spaciousness, of disinhibition. When we speak of 'order,' we inhabit it in another way – with an emphasis on spareness, rectilinearity, homogeneity, and calm. In establishing such moods, in opening up in depth through their ideas, abstract terms orient us within our world.

Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings help to show what such orientation consists in. In one study, they presented participants with either concrete terms ('bird,' 'sofa,' 'car'), abstract terms ('truth,' 'freedom,' 'invention'), or terms that seem to have an intermediate degree of abstractness ('cooking,' 'farming,' 'carpeting'). Participants were then given one minute to provide an open-ended description of the given concept. In one analysis, the statements participants gave were then categorized as belonging to one of five general groups: taxonomic, entity, setting/event, introspective, and miscellaneous, where taxonomic statements pertained to the category of a concept, entity statements pertained to a property of a physical object, setting/event statements pertained to a property of a setting or event, and introspective statements pertained to the mental state of someone in a situation.[176] For all three concept types (concrete, intermediate, and abstract), setting/event statements turned out to be most common in participants' open-ended descriptions, consistent with the authors' hypothesis that concrete and abstract concepts alike are defined by situational content. There were some differences in how concrete and abstract concepts were described, however: whereas descriptions of concrete concepts focused somewhat more on entity properties, those of abstract concepts focused more on settings/events and introspective properties. Meanwhile, a second analysis looked at the use of the above sorts of statements in the context of their

[176] Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings, 140.

broader descriptive context, and found that "contingency and other complex relations," such as relations to social institutions, were more common for abstract concepts, lending support to the hypothesis that the representations for abstract concepts are less localized and more complex than for concrete concepts, as such relations are necessary to coordinate diffuse components across a situation.[177]

Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings' findings are consistent with a notion of concepts as serving situational action. In particular, concrete concepts would be those which are more focused on physically localized situations, while abstract concepts would be those which pertain to more diffuse patterns and relations distributed widely across a given situation. This is perhaps the very definition of conceptual abstraction: "We have increasingly come to believe," the authors write, "that abstract concepts seem 'abstract' because their content is distributed across situations."[178] From Merleau-Ponty (and DeLillo) we have seen just what this means: an abstract term, and the ideas that are implicated by it, does not refer to some object; it is involved in the solicitation of a whole orientation and a whole mood that defines the ways we are insinuated into the world. It is not that such moods or dispositions *are* the meanings of these terms; it's that they are employed in *producing* meaning – the meaning itself will always depend on the particular context. "Pass me the salt" at the dinner table will orient us towards situated action in one way and "pass me the ball" in a football game will do so in another way.[179] Likewise, a civil rights activist who appeals to 'freedom' situates us in one way; a marketing campaign for a soda company that invokes 'freedom' will situate us in another way. In the civil rights case, the sense of lightness and openness that fleshes out the idea of 'freedom' pertains to a realm of political possibility and ideas involving, for instance, legal equality, economic opportunity, and political representation. In the marketing case, the pertinent ideas concern the satisfaction of desires, a sense of personal fulfillment, and so forth. (And needless to say, in any particular instance, the enaction of a given situation through

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[177] Ibid. 150.
[178] Ibid., 136.
[179] Research has clearly shown a link between language use and motor activation and, further, that the particular motor activation involved is context-dependent: motor systems involving grasping actions will be involved when we are asked to pass the salt, whereas systems involving kicking actions will be involved when we are asked to pass the ball. (See, for instance, van Elk, et al. Also Fischer and Zwaan.)

language will involve the complex interaction of a number of terms both concrete and abstract, in various grammatical arrangements.)

This is generally consistent with Barsalou and Wiemar-Hastings' view. It is worth noting, though, that despite their appreciation for the situated nature of meaning, they do not entirely unshackle themselves from the language of representation. They write, for instance, that it "is not enough to say that an amodal node or a pattern of amodal units represents an abstract concept. It is first necessary to specify the concept's content, and then to show that a particular type of representation can express it."[180] Even in this criticism of amodal symbolic processing theories of language comprehension, they adhere to an implicit schema of reference: a concept has a *content* that is *represented*, and they maintain this terminology throughout their paper. But if language is a mode of participating in the world, then an abstract term, like any other use of language, is not something that has representational content any more than a bodily movement has representational content – any more, say, than the twisting of a can opener when we are opening a can of tomatoes, or the toss of a tennis ball when we are playing with our dog on the beach, have representational content. For linguistic gestures, like these other bodily gestures, are ways of participating in the world, not of representing it. An abstract term is not a depiction of a situation, it is a means by which we are insinuated into a situation. I think Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings generally appreciate this point, but the language of representational content suggests the hard dying of old habits.[181]

(One more point can be made in passing here. It is worth considering the significance of "introspective" statements which are particularly prevalent in the characterization of abstract concepts. These are statements concerning the mental state of someone in a given situation. If abstract concepts characterize situations in diffuse ways, then this goes for those particular

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[180] Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings, 129.

[181] On the other hand, it is tempting to wonder whether something a little more systemic is being expressed by this old habit: in particular, whether the authors' perspectives as empirical scientists is predisposing them towards such language. Could it be that the structure of scientific observation – which requires the identification of a determinate object (in the case of the study in question, the coded transcriptions of study participants' descriptions of concepts) and an observer who, at least in theory, is external to the phenomena observed – entails an understanding of those phenomena in representationalist terms, even in a case like this, in which the experiment supports a theory that in important ways subverts a representationalist account of language? This terminology, at any rate, is rife in the cognitive science discourse.

concepts which we know as mental states – e.g., beliefs, emotions, attitudes and so on. So, to characterize a concept in terms of certain mental states is to characterize it in terms of how it contributes to diffusely situating someone. Such a concept, then, situates us with regard to our own (or others') situation; it is meta-situating. This is an extremely important characteristic of language, as it allows a form of situated action that is far less readily available to creatures without linguistic capabilities. I will discuss this a bit more in the next chapter.)

The approach outlined here allows us to address the so-called simulation constraint – that is, the idea that, for an embodied cognition account to hold, language comprehension must involve the simulation or re-enactment of our own sensorimotor experiences. For we do not use abstract terms like 'freedom' or 'war' or 'love' as things that *correspond* to particular sensorimotor experiences; instead we use them to summon our general capacities as living bodies to interactively inhabit the world in some manner in any particular instance. To have the concept of 'freedom' is to have the capacity for opening up to the world in a certain way according to all those different instances in which the term might be uttered: it is to project ourselves into a world where certain ways of being are possible. And Don DeLillo has already shown us at least one way that the word 'peace' can open us up to modes of situated existence, with its "sense of serenities and contentments… its whisper of reconciliation… the tone of repose, the sense of mollifying silence, the tone of hail and farewell, a word that carries the sunlit ardor of an object deep in drenching noon, the argument of binding touch."[182] What we find here is not a predetermined motor program, but a disposition, a style of being, that is opened up as a way of engaging with the world given a particular employment of the term. There is no simulation in the sense of correspondence then; rather, there is an original expression of a way of being situated in the world, spun from our abilities as interacting bodies.[183] The nature of this situated participation in the world, and in particular the manner in which abstract language is involved in this participation, will be pursued further in chapter four.

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[182] DeLillo, 827.

[183] This implies that motor intentionality would be associated with abstract language use, since motor intentionality is implicated in embodied and emplaced existence. And this is indeed the case, according to, among others, Glenberg, Arthur M., et al. These authors claim to "provide neurophysiological evidence for modulation of motor system activity during the comprehension of both concrete and abstract language. In Experiment 1, when the described direction of object transfer or information transfer (e.g., away from the reader to another) matched

Perhaps it is worth pausing for just a moment to consider the complexities of the resonances which emerge through language. Philosophy tends toward the schematic because of the holism and conclusiveness such an approach affords. But look at what happens when a word bursts into the world – when, for instance, DeLillo unleashes 'peace' into the streets: a concept is not set out there, to be pushed around and set aright like a great construction block; rather, *everything in the scene changes* through a liquid re-articulation. "*The whole landscape is overrun*." The gestures of speech allow the world to shimmer in a certain way, a shimmering that is also enacted in our own movement in the world (including the movements of speech itself). Through these gestures – performed by us, solicited by our milieu – the world unfurls in possibilities beyond all conceivable measure. Philosophy needs to yield to this intricacy and this endless self-transfiguration of the world; it needs to be open to it without containing it. Too often it is seduced by the false rigor of encapsulating thought and the safe purchase of the linguistic level. An honest effort to participate in the world doesn't abide this pinched vision.

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the literal direction of a hand movement used to make a response, speed of responding was faster than when the two directions mismatched (an Action-sentence compatibility Effect). In Experiment 2, we used single-pulse transcranial magnetic stimulation to study changes in the corticospinal motor pathways to hand muscles while reading the same sentences. Relative to sentences that do not describe transfer, there is greater modulation of activity in the hand muscles when reading sentences describing transfer of both concrete objects and abstract information." A certain enactive disposition in embodiment, then, seems to be involved in the use of abstract terms like 'information.' I am also arguing, though, that abstract terms should not be reducible to *specific* operations of motor systems: presumably, for instance, motor system activation would be different depending on whether we are talking about information being 'passed along,' 'gathered,' 'obscured,' 'lost,' 'censored,' or whatever the case may be, not to mention all the circumstances which pertain to each use of these terms. (This sets aside the question of whether "motor systems" are the proper units for denoting those processes by which embodiment and emplacement are manifested at a neurophysiological level when we are talking about the adoption of a holistic mode of being, as in the case of the deep experience of the idea of 'peace' which DeLillo describes, which might be another thing to consider.)

Chapter Three: The Nature of Place

But look! here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremest limit of the land…

- Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*[184]

The Visible and the Invisible, by the nature of its incompleteness and perhaps also by the nature of its content, lends itself to multiple interpretations and multiple continuations, probably more so even than most philosophical texts. Starting with the previous chapter, this project is in part a development of a certain potentiality that resides in it. With respect to this effort, I take two insights which were discussed in the last chapter as paramount: first, that language belongs to and participates in the sensible world, even as it allows for the extraordinary ramification of modes of inhabiting the world; second, that as a participant in the sensible, the individual is not essentially set apart ontologically from the world. Yet given these premises, and given the account of placial embodiment in chapter one, what we need to do in order to develop an account of the nature of thought as an expression of inhabitation in the world, as expression of participation in the sensible, is to attempt a fuller characterization of place and its relation to embodied experience – something that Merleau-Ponty himself does not do. The goal here will be to give an account of how meaning is produced, to put it in not-quite-Merleau-Pontian terms, through the reciprocal intra-action of body in world. In this moving intra-action, the body is always oriented toward some place of inhabitation by virtue of its possibilities for action; but just as importantly, place always exerts some situating pull on the body, a power which I will refer to as solicitation.

The emergence of place

All else being equal, things affect each other according to a principle of proximity: two hydrogen atoms and an oxygen atom will form a bond provided they come into close contact with each other, otherwise they will not; an earthquake moves through the ground along

[184] Melville, 11.

radiating lines of force, rather than haphazardly leaping from one point to another many miles away. Of course, all else is never equal – the characteristics of the chemical milieu will affect whether a bond is formed at a given degree of proximity, and the geological profile of the land will affect the force of the temblor as it passes through any given point. Countervailing forces, such as the qualities of the medium in which things occur and so forth, will of course influence the movement of resonances through space, and such movements are therefore rarely homogeneous.[185] Nonetheless, a criterion of proximity holds, and the relative strength of a given resonance will depend on the distance from its origin as, given sufficient distance, countervailing forces will inevitably serve to mute or absorb it – energy is absorbed into the environment, for instance, as with light that is dispersed and scattered and grows dim with distance.

Living systems, too, are produced through local interactions: the characteristics of air, in direct encounter with fleshy motile organisms, allow for the emergence, over millions of years, of winged flight; long, grasping toes develop on these flying creatures to facilitate perching, an interaction between them and the tree branches among which they move; talons protrude from these toes, good for eviscerating the rodents on which they prey. In fact, biological evolution is a process that pertains not so much to species as it does to forms of local interaction – interactions between individuals, between processes within individuals, between species, and between individuals or species and their environments which may be sedimented across time on scales that far exceed the duration of any single species (a certain interaction between the early hominid or the reptile or even the fish and its milieu may still be expressed in human behavior).

But at some level of biological organization, for the first time things happen not simply according to a principle of ceteris paribus proximity, but also according to the *interests* of some portion of things.[186] For (at least some) motile organisms are perceiving and desiring organisms,

[185] This admittedly elides superpositionality, what Einstein famously referred to as "spooky action at a distance." Nonetheless, this interaction across distances does not operate on a principle of meaningfulness, which is a difference from the propinquities of place which are discussed below.

[186] Perhaps, as Evan Thompson argues in *Mind in Life*, there is perception wherever there are living systems; perhaps perception emerges with the sort of dynamic environmental interaction that occurs with motile organisms, or at some more complex level (for instance, as I mentioned previously, only in animals with suitably

and as such they enact the world's looking back upon itself – its "folding back" upon itself or "invagination," to use two of Merleau-Ponty's terms (VI, 152) – according to the particular sorts of interactions they have the capacity and the drive (i.e., that they are solicited) to perform.[187] The raptor glides above the meadow and finds a distance from which to scan for prey – it seeks a perspective which will allow some *meaning* in the environment to present itself; a slight movement on the ground captures its attention, not because the movement is intrinsically prominent, or because it has the greatest effect on its surroundings of all the elements in the scene, but because the raptor sees it as food; the raptor dives, and the rodent swoops up into the center of things. Or a monkey suddenly catches sight of a small patch of yellow fur which, though it is a trivial discrepancy against the boundless verdure of the jungle surrounding it, bursts like an alarm in her perceptual field; instantly the monkey's attention shoots to her infant just a few feet from the leopard; a languorous, generally undifferentiated scene has

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complex nervous systems for whom their milieus present possibilities for action, rather than merely determinate responses).

[187] Does desire entail perception? I don't know, though I find it an intriguing possibility that desire and perception are actually concomitant. For his part, J. E. Malpas is committed to the idea that any creature "capable of organised behaviour in the world… must have some grasp of space." He "take[s] is that a creature, no matter how it is constituted – whether organic or inorganic in its constitution, whether natural or 'manufactured' in the manner of its coming into being – can be said to 'possess an ability to use some spatial framework' when the behaviour of the creature is such that an explanation of the behaviour or of certain instances of that behaviour necessarily makes reference to the spatial framework at issue" (Malpas (1999), 45). Does having a "grasp" of space or possessing "an ability to use some spatial framework" entail conscious perception? This does seem to be implied by his comment that any creature capable of organised behavior must have such a grasp, "for otherwise it would be unable to distinguish, and so to control, its own actions in contrast to those other events with respect to which it is merely a passive observer" (Ibid.), unless "passive observer" is being used in a wholly metaphorical sense. Furthermore, he goes on to point out that modern missile systems, for instance, can navigate long distances to strike their targets, but the "behaviour of the missiles is simply the result of a certain programmed capacity to react in specific ways to specific stimuli," so we shouldn't say that these systems have a grasp of space (Ibid., 46).

But if having a grasp of space does entail conscious experience, then surely many plants are conscious, because an account of their behaviour certainly requires reference to space: the growth of a tree's roots, for instance, will slow when they encounter a nutrient-rich patch of soil; many plants grow towards the sun; venus flytraps close around their prey; for that matter, an account of simply taking root or growing or flowering would seem to require reference to a spatial framework. Or what about white blood cells which react to viruses? Is this not a case of "organised behaviour in the world," an account of which would require reference to a spatial framework?* If a grasp of space implies a conscious experience of it, then it seems Malpas would have to say these entities are conscious. (I happen to sort of like this idea: it would imply that "organised behaviour in the world" were a sufficient condition for consciousness, and perhaps even its ground, and that would be really interesting; but to conclude this seems far from warranted, and I'm pretty sure it is not Malpas' intention.)

*Of course, according to what I am arguing throughout this dissertation, an account of *anything* requires reference to a "spatial framework," in the sense that Malpas uses ther term.

become one of urgency and sharp, even mortal, contrasts; the monkey cries out.[188] These creatures' milieus are shot through with resonances that *concern* them.

When perception emerges in the dynamic intra-action of the world, it does so attendant to some interests; and because perception is interested, meaning can emerge. In this sense, meaning is founded in desire, for to have interests is to be oriented in terms of desires; that is, in terms of an expressive movement that tends toward the cultivation of resonances. When the world reaches out towards itself in intentionality, in perception, it is because it has been drawn there by desire, a desire which is perhaps most fundamentally manifest in the self-perpetuation – the self-regulating insistence – of living systems. Something quivers in the muck, it begins to move out of itself and to interact with things. In this moving out of itself is the origin of expression. This expression emanates from the desiring body, as the world draws it into itself; it begins to move about, and to facilitate this movement it trails perception along with it as it is drawn into the world. Perception is therefore fundamentally in the service of desiring movement. For this reason, the folding back of the world on itself is never a matter of simple or homogeneous reflection. Guided by desire, perception *seeks out* the world, it discerns the meaningfulness of things in their association to some interests, which is what allows things to stand out as differentiated and heterogeneous, to present as zones of density or significance; and this is the same as to say that the world *draws out* perception. According to this principle of desiring perception, milieus emerge as those zones of dynamic intra-action in which the world becomes expressive according to the interests of living bodies. This emergence of meaningful milieus, by way of the world's looking back upon itself through embodied perception, is the emergence of place.

Place is not defined solely by spatial proximity, but it does create its own propinquities. For the hawk, the rodent leaps out as salient – whatever may be its measurable distance, it is in the foreground and at the center of the hawk's world. For the monkey, her infant and the leopard are likewise foregrounded, and further they are thrust into a proximity to each other

[188] The examples suggest experiences that are not so foreign to the human imagination. It's probably good to remember, though, that there are likely ways of inhabiting meaningful space that are much more exotic: what is it like for an ant to follow a chemical trail, or to be lost from one? What is it like to be an octopus squeezing itself into a bottle? What is it like to be a bee?

which, again, is not defined in terms of precisely measurable distance but in terms of affectivities and anticipations. In such ways as this things stand out and are associated with other things according to the interests of the perceiving organism, and thus comprise the meaningfulness of a milieu (which includes the perceiver). Simple inert reflection of the environment would be without meaning; it would function in the field of resonances no differently than insensate matter, as a mirror reflects. But because perception is interested, because desires erupt out of some portions of the world, things can resonate with each other in expressive ways. In this way the world gains depth – what we saw in the last chapter was the association of things according to their ideas, by which they are embedded in domains that are not merely proximal but based on interests as well. The consequences of this are not confined to perceptual experience either, nor merely to the patterns of interactive engagement between organisms and their world, for interactions between organisms and their environments may bring about changes in the actual material organization of things: the male satin bowerbird of eastern Australia builds stick structures for mating purposes which it prefers to decorate specifically with items that are blue or purple – flower blossoms, bits of discarded plastic, and so forth[189]; it brings things into spatial proximity according to a certain order (in this case, color-based) that never could have occurred if that class of items hadn't stood out for it as meaningful puncta in its environment. In other words, it re-arranges its world according to aesthetic principles (that is, according to a desiring inclination towards certain arrangements of things[190]). In this way it establishes a place of special resonance, a zone of salience from which meanings radiate.

With thinking beings, resonances are gathered together in virtual places. Perhaps the bowerbird does this by envisioning the structure it wants to build; certainly some corvids, who have been seen placing nuts on roadways so that passing cars will crush their shells,[191] are capable of planning and therefore of negotiating virtual places. As Sheets-Johnstone mentions, monkeys and apes use gestures to refer to possible situations, and even honeybees use expressive movement in order to communicate the direction, distance, and richness of food

[189] See Borgin (1985).
[190] So defined, there is an aesthetic dimension to all action and perception.
[191] See Attenborough.

sources to others.[192] Such thought is an expression of imagination – the leaping of desire out of the actual in the construction of possible experiences. This allows for the creation of new modes of inhabiting the world. As we've seen, though, virtual places are not divorced from the actual. They are intertwined with it, imbuing the perceptual experience of the world with depth; having imaginatively oriented itself in terms of a certain possible action, a certain plan, the crow thenceforth bears a new orientation towards, for instance, cars – we might suppose that it sees the car *as* a shell-crusher. The car stands out in a new way; it has a particular salience for the crow that it didn't before.

The possibilities for meanings to emerge, for resonances to leap domains and to form entirely new ones, are compounded by gesture, the potentialities of which become fully realized in language. The essential function of language, as we saw, is the production of situations within which we orient ourselves in and toward the world. Through language, a sonorous dimension of meaningful action is solicited by and insinuated into our placial milieus that is unique in its power to summon disparate elements into new arrangements or to draw attention to erstwhile hidden bends in the landscape. This power brings about an immeasurable profusion of the possibilities for placial expression, as it makes possible a vast new potential for engaging in modes of embodied interaction with the world, which is to say, for inhabiting the world, which is also to say, for gathering together meaningful milieus, which is to say yet another way, for emplacement.

In at least one sense, this power represents a difference in kind rather than degree from the sorts of emplacement that are possible through pre-linguistic sensible experience. Language does not just project into the world but redounds upon itself as well; that is, insofar as linguistic expressions belong to the world, they are among those things upon which further linguistic expressions act. In this way language participates in the linguistic world in a sense which is an extension of that in which the sensing body participates in the sensible world – as the body can only sense by belonging to the sensible, language can only produce meaning by belonging to what is meaningful. Merleau-Ponty draws attention to these parallel structures (which are really continuations of the same structure of reversibility): "as the visible takes hold

[192] Sheets-Johnstone, 16. On honeybees, see, e.g., von Frisch (1967).

of the look which has unveiled it and which forms a part of it, the signification rebounds upon its own means, it annexes to itself the speech that becomes an object of science, it antedates itself by a retrograde movement which is never completely belied – because already, in opening the horizon of the nameable and of the sayable, the speech acknowledged that it has its place in that horizon" (VI, 154). Speech is a manifestation of the intertwining of sensing and sensible; so far, then, it is continuous with other forms of sensible place-making experience. But because of its unique capacity to gather diffuse elements of the world together in the production of situations, speech that is *about speech* orients us towards our own orientation in the world. A crow that uses traffic to crack nuts might be able to express a creative thought, but it seems probable that its abilities to express thoughts about those thoughts are minimal at best. For those of us who use language, though, our words become parts of the world towards which we can direct ourselves, and we thus become concerned with our own concerns. At the core of our nature as a language-bearing species is a placial *mise en abyme*. Andy Clark makes a similar point when he refers to this ability to speak about speech, and thus to think about thinking, as a "cognitive super-niche."[193] Clark includes tasks such as self-evaluation, self-criticism, self-improvement, and self-reflection among those which express a meta-linguistic capacity by which we can "objectify, reflect upon, and hence knowingly engage with, our own thoughts, trains of reasoning, and personal cognitive characters," such that we can "construct… an open-ended series of new cognitive niches."[194] (The term 'niche,' which is often employed to characterize the manner in which a species dwells in its environment, is very apt.)

Language, then, as an expression of the desire that is the always incomplete bond between the sensing and the sensible, is not just insinuated into the landscapes of perception but is insinuated into itself as belonging to those landscapes, and so comes to express desires about desires. It thus compounds the movement of desire, draws it deeper into things, as it is turned towards imaginatively projected situations and worlds – turned toward the very possibilities which it has given rise to: it becomes possible always to imagine the next horizon, the next region to furnish with meaning. Emplacement for language-bearing creatures like

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[193] Clark, 372.
[194] Ibid. We could add irony to this list as an inherently self-referential linguistic gesture.

ourselves is therefore never in stable equilibrium, defined by some fixed set of drives and impulses that determine the scope of possibility as they might for organisms bound by silence. When language first leapt into the world, it initiated a process that was no longer merely movement from place to place, which is the character of flux common to all sensing creatures, but that was also the power of place to spawn new possibilities for emplacement by way of language about language. And it isn't as if this is some special or occasional feature of sensible experience: for those who can speak, language is ubiquitous, as if language, once introduced into consciousness, were to swell up to fill its whole volume, or at the very least to imbue everything with certain accents – to overrun the landscape (and thus to overrun ourselves as well), but also to extend itself over every horizon, and every new horizon that it creates in a polyvocality that can seem to scramble in every direction at once. Hence the incessancy of language even in silent thought: it is as if speech were constantly palpating its surroundings, seeking new paths to proceed along and new clearings to enlist in the production of meaning. And since it already belongs to its own surroundings, since it goes before itself in opening up its own possibilities for original expression, it is always reconfiguring itself, and indeed this self-reconfiguration is its movement into new domains, and its emplacing intra-action with the world.

This helps to explain how something as strange and unruly as technological civilization can emerge out of mere "matter," or even out of mere "life." For if there are material consequences to the emergence of intra-active emplacement through sensible experience, the material consequences of linguistic expression are greater by a magnitude proportional to the magnitude by which the possibilities for placial expression in language exceed those of mere sensibility. Through its self-recursivity, language allows us not merely to employ what is given in a particular situation in the pursuit of some desire, but allows us also to situate ourselves towards that situation, to ask how we might alter the situation itself, and even how we might cultivate or alter our desires. This power is perhaps nascent in other tool-using animals, as an ability to see certain potentialities in reconfigurations of things is available to creatures who can think. But with language we are able to develop projects – we can perceive not just the potentialities of a given situation, but also what altogether new situations might be produced.

These imaginative projections which language makes possible allow us also to imagine new technologies as that which allows the new possibilities to cohere with other domains of knowledge. (We imagine the piercing of animal flesh from a distance, or flying to the moon, and it is then only a matter of determining what sort of arrangements of things will deliver these possibilities into actuality through the language-imbued process of reflecting on the virtual places toward which we have oriented ourselves through language itself.) And of course, with the development of each new technology, the world itself undergoes material change, our relationship to it changes, and with the new horizons of experience that are thereby established new projects – new possibilities for exceeding those horizons – emerge.

The human body in place

Yet as we have seen the possibilities for imaginative projection, and for emplacement in general, are not unlimited, as they are both enabled and constrained by the capacities of the body. "We get into place, move and stay there, *with our bodies*," Casey writes. "But the fact is neither innocent nor trivial; it is momentous in its consequences" (FP, 239). This momentousness lies in the fact that it is always by virtue of our bodies that we encounter place, and it is in the interaction of body and place that experience is constituted.

For the human body, one of the things that determines our relation to place is our upright bodily posture. Other than the configuration of our sense organs, this posture is perhaps more integral to our ability to make sense of our surroundings than is any other aspect of our physiology. And as Aristotle had already observed, things find their natural place according to a vertical orientation, thanks to the physical force that we now understand as gravity; perhaps this is why we are never more disoriented than when the dimensions of the vertical axis, up and down, fall into confusion. As Casey notes, this verticality is also reflected in the ways we see the world: "[m]y uprightness is manifested in the uprightness of the world's body, and the latter's upward-tendingness is embodied in my own standing-upness" (GBP, 80). To have an upright body, then, is to gear into certain arrangements in the world; it is to have them be salient for us. Thus we make sense of things in terms of their vertical fit – their

"natural place," we might say, along this axis. It isn't just that we construe the world on the model of our own bodies; as we saw in the first chapter, the uprightness that is characteristic of ourselves as well as things in the world is a function of our common bond with them as participants in a world governed by gravity. This strange experience of being perpetually pulled toward the earth is omnipresent for us as well as for nearly everything we encounter in our lives.[195] Accordingly, metaphors employing vertical spatial relations are quite ubiquitous. Typically these metaphors valorize that which is regarded as 'above,' 'up,' or 'on top.'[196] We speak of getting 'on top of' problems, of being 'morally upright,' of 'standing up for ourselves,' and so forth. Even the word 'understand' refers to our upright posture, and suggests that to conceptually make sense of things is to orient ourselves in terms of our upright posture.[197]

The fact that we have a front and a back is likewise integral to the ways we relate to place. In particular, what is in front of me is the world that is visible, since my eyes are located in the front of my head; it is the world of tangible things, since I can most easily reach in front of me with my hands; it is the world of the social, since I face those with whom I interact. Indeed, though we speak of the ego-*centric* perspective to refer to the way I am perceptively oriented towards the world, I am by no means at the center of my perceptible world – it unfolds primarily before me, with only adumbrated intimations of what lies behind me. (If I want to know what's behind me, I turn to face it.[198]) 'Ahead' is generally the direction in which we move, as well, and so our actions, which are essential to our relation to place, generally concern what is in front of us; thus to be active is to 'charge ahead,' to 'meet things head on,' to make

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[195] Perhaps it is the omnipresence of this, and all the other aspects of existence which we share with things, that makes it so easy to forget this common bond: whatever is omnipresent becomes simply an element of the world, and thus becomes invisible. (See also the discussion of Heinrich Wolfflin's views in chapter six.)

[196] Jon Tolaas (1991), for instance, discusses several examples of normativizing English expressions which employ such arrangements.

[197] Peter Woelert observes that, "in many Indo-European languages, concepts denoting cognitive processes such as comprehension or understanding are often constituted by employing the word 'stand' in combination with a spatial prefix" (Woelert, 124).

[198] There are at least partial exceptions to this. Driving, for instance, provides training in attentiveness to what is behind us. Drivers tend to maintain a more fully circumambient awareness, since they need to know the distance and speed of cars coming up behind them, an awareness which is facilitated by rear-view mirrors. Still, what is behind us when we are driving remains ghostly and uncertain relative to the lucidity of the scene in front of us. Hearing, meanwhile, is relatively symmetrical with regard to the bifurcation of what is in front of and behind us. We can hear what is in front of us somewhat more clearly, especially in synesthetic combination with vision; but we can certainly also hear what is behind us in a way that we can't see what's back there.

‘progress,’ and so on. We could even say that all the metaphorical extrapolations from the act of seeing are implicitly structured by the in-frontness of the visual field. And certainly, the ahead/behind dyad is deeply involved in how our understanding of time is placialized: to plan for the future is to ‘map out the road ahead,’ whereas we ‘leave the past behind.’

The left/right dichotomy completes the axiological bifurcations that follow from the form of the human body. On the face of it, left and right seem like the most symmetrical of the pairings considered here: we are morphologically more or less symmetrical with respect to left and right, unlike the upper and lower portions of our body, and the world is constituted indifferently with regard to left and right, unlike above and below; we are sensorially oriented in the same way in terms of left and right, unlike the before/behind pairing. Yet left and right are not symmetrical in terms of our bodily capacities: handedness plays a very important role in our orientation towards the world, an asymmetry which seems to be distilled into an even more pronounced difference at the level of metaphorical projection. Robert Hertz found that nearly everywhere cultures divide the world into polar opposites according to a schema of left and right; and what’s more, it is nearly always the right which is valorized.[199] Yet Woelert, citing a study by Cassanto,[200] notes that the valorization seems to run in the opposite direction for *individuals* who are left-handed – perhaps an unsurprising fact, but nonetheless a revealing fact.

We see from each of these examples that the basic physiology and morphology of the human body contributes in an essential way to our experience of place, both concretely and through abstract projection. But what has been given here is only a minimal sketch of the ways in which the body contributes to place; elsewhere I discuss the distinct ways in which each of the senses contribute to our emplacement, distinctions which will play an especially important role in the discussion of dispositions in embodiment in chapter five. And of course a full account of the significance of embodiment for the constitution of place would encompass the full range of possible actions by which we engage with the world: crawling, walking, running, talking,

[199] See Hertz (1973).
[200] See Cassanto (2009).

throwing, dancing, eating, having sex, and so on – clearly an inexhaustible task. But such examples will arise throughout the discussion of modes of emplacement.

However, a word of caution is in order, and this follows from what we've already seen regarding the role of language in situating ourselves in the world. Though the human body both constrains and is the condition for our emplacement in the world, we should not dismiss the reciprocal role of language in shaping the particular forms of emplacement, including the very ways we perceive place. For instance, Casey refers to the 'here-there' dyad as a "primal pair" (GBP, 56), but in the Altaic language Kyrgyz, to take an example from my own experience, there is no such dyad; rather, there is a *triad* of 'биакка-тиакка- ониакка' ('biakka-tiakka-oniakka') which roughly corresponds to 'here-there (near)-there (far),' and which reflects a similar бул-тигил-он' ('bul-tigil-ohn') structure that corresponds to 'this-that (near)-that (far).'[201] Similar triadic structures obtain in other languages, including Spanish, and Tuan notes that the American Indian language Tlingit has four demonstrative pronouns, each corresponding to a different degree of proximity and availability of an object to the self, and "[t]he Chikchi in northeastern Siberia have as many as nine terms to express the position of an object in relation to the speaker."[202] Could such linguistic differences have implications for the embodied schematizations and relations by which we relate to place? It is certainly possible to treat 'here' and 'there' as indicative of a fundamental schism between the place we occupy and that which is otherwise than this place, and such a distinction no doubt plays an immensely important role in structuring our experience of emplacement as well as any number of metaphorically-constituted realms of understanding. But the examples of other ways of drawing placial indexical distinctions suggest alternative schemas, and it is not a huge leap from there to conceiving of a here-there spectrum which has at one pole the "animal body" itself (which Whitehead described as "nothing more than the most intimately relevant part of the antecedent settled world"[203]), and the unseeable cosmic "elsewhere" at the other end, with

[201] This observation is based on my first-hand experience as a Kyrgyz speaker living in the northwestern part of Kyrgyzstan for close to two years.
[202] Tuan, 47.
[203] Whitehead, 64.

concentric zones defined by various levels of engagement and action in between.[204] Depending on our use of language, and on which language we use, we may employ one or another concept of placial indexicality; as always when it comes to embodied understanding, the possibilities are ramified by language, and while those possibilities are not arbitrary, they are indefinitely many.

Place as solicitation

But it would be going too far to say that the desiring body, or language, or sensible experience in general, *created* place. For the desire which gives rise to emplaced experience, linguistic or otherwise, is not purely a projection of the perceiving entity; it is equally a solicitation that is issued by the world. This is an intra-action that runs at least as deep as life itself, which only emerges as the realization of a material possibility of particular milieus. In this sense from the very beginning the world drew life into itself just as much as life thrust itself into the world, and of course all of the transmogrifications which living processes have undergone through evolutionary processes have been a continuation of this solicitation by the world through intra-action. When eyes emerge through these processes (as they have many times independently in evolutionary history), it isn't just because organisms have the ability to project a vision onto things, but because things are such that they have the capacity to be seen; their latent visibility draws eyes into the world. Likewise, when imaginative thought emerges, it is not simply because virtual arrangements are projected by thinking organisms, but because things lend themselves to being arranged in certain ways which have some sense in the context of intra-active perception. The universe is such that it spawns perception and thought and draws them into itself, as if it were a spectacle so compelling that it conjured its own audience – but an audience that emerged out of the spectacle.

James J. Gibson developed a similar and very fruitful concept with his notion of affordances, a term which has since taken on a central role in phenomenological discourse. The affordances of the environment, Gibson writes, "are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides*

[204] The possibility of such a spectrum sets 'here-there' apart from the other placial dyads ('above'/'below', 'in front'/'behind', 'left'/'right'), for which diametric opposition is an analytic quality in each case.

or *furnishes*, either for good or ill."[205] They "impl[y] the complementarity of the animal and the environment,"[206] and are thus neither simply subjective nor simply objective; the only way to understand an affordance is to regard it as involving the interaction of an organism and its environment. It is by virtue of affordances that an environment is perceived as meaningful and as having value, and this meaning and value is directly perceived – it is not added on to the perception as an interpretation of an otherwise value-neutral stimulus; the meaningfulness of the environment is internal to the perception. It is thus not a world of qualities that we perceive, but a world of affordances; it is not a world of objects we sense but a world of values and meanings. Examples given by Gibson include cliffs which afford falling and injury, and which we therefore perceive as dangerous; terrestrial surfaces, which afford support (so long as they are horizontal, flat, extended, and rigid – otherwise they might afford climbing, falling, or sinking); elongated objects "of moderate size and weight,"[207] which afford wielding, as a club or hammer; graspable rigid objects, which affords throwing; and so on. And of course other people comprise the richest and most massively complex set of affordances, especially, as Gibson notes, "[a]t the highest level, when vocalization becomes speech and manufactured displays become images, pictures, and writing."[208]

In its attentiveness to interactionality and the value-laden nature of perception, and its challenge to subject-object dualism, the concept of affordances resonates strongly with phenomenological accounts of intentionality, and – what is most pertinent here – Merleau-Ponty's in particular. (If Gibson's challenge to ontological dualism is not as fully developed as Merleau-Ponty's, it is nonetheless strikingly bold for a psychologist who was evidently not directly engaged with philosophical discourse; its compatibility with elements of that discourse is equally striking on the same grounds.) Yet I think these ideas can be enhanced if we shift from a language of affordances to a language of solicitation, a term which I have already alluded to.

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[205] Gibson, 127.
[206] Ibid.
[207] Gibson, 133.
[208] Ibid., 137.

There are a few reasons for preferring this terminology. The first is that, if we are serious about understanding sentient processes as intra-actional – not as the actions of subjects operating with respect to a world of objects, but (following the reading given here of *The Visible and the Invisible*) as ways of participating in the sensible through the world's expressive eruption out of and back upon itself – then we should cast into question our habitual ways of understanding agency. Shouldn't we understand these processes as produced mutually by the body *and* the world? If the world is dynamic in this sense, if it is not simply a neutral field of action for the organism to act upon, but actually draws the organism out, then a more active verb is called for in describing this process. 'Affordances' are comparably inert; they lie in wait, ready to be employed by the organism. 'Solicitations,' on the other hand, *compel* processes of interaction, to the same degree, at least, that the expressive actions of organisms do. This is so at the scale of the individual organism that participates in the world – such participation is always solicited. But if we consider life as a fully temporal process, we recall that this solicitation is what gives rise to the very forms of biological life. Graspable rigid objects of a medium size may afford throwing for humans, but more than this, the very size and shape of the human hand has evolved to be able to grasp such objects[209]; their latent throwability has solicited, at the evolutionary scale, the very hands that throw them. In fact, certain features of human anatomy including the structure of shoulder joints and the size and shape of teeth have evolved in response to technological developments;[210] we living beings have been conforming ourselves to the world since the dawn of life, and we continue to do so even as we re-make it.

Another reason to prefer the language of 'solicition' to that of 'affordance' is that the former allows us to regard meaning as operative at the level of the milieu rather than the isolated object or element. There is no reason to doubt that Gibson appreciates the contextual nature of meaning; he employs, for instance, the concept of the ecological niche, which "refers more to *how* an animal lives than to *where* it lives… The niche implies a kind of animal, and the animal implies a kind of niche."[211] He argues that a niche can best be understood as a set of

[209] This sort of process is always immeasurably complex, of course, and proceeds through a kind of evolutionary bricolage: that hand-that-throws-stones arose because it was, before that, a hand-that-grasps-limbs, and so on.
[210] See Hawks (2014).
[211] Gibson, 128.

affordances. There is a suggestion here that affordances belong to systems, and perhaps even that such systems constitute the life of the animal. Yet Gibson continually makes reference to affordances as properties of individual things. This is an understandable simplification for expository purposes, but it threatens to lose sight of the fact that no affordance could be meaningful absent the milieu to which it belongs. If throwing is a meaningful activity, it is because graspable rigid object affords throwing *and* because some other thing – an animal, maybe – affords being thrown *at*. And this entails that the animal affords edibility, and so on. It is by virtue of mutual involvements such as these that things have their meaning for us, and these meanings extend, as we have seen, into the most intricate depths.[212] This is, of course, the very structure of the idea-endowed world. But if this is the case, then it is always at the level of the milieu (what Gibson calls the 'environment') that these meanings emerge. In other words, it is not individual things but *places* which draw us out. Best to distinguish this structure of meaningful interaction, then, from 'affordance' and its implication of something more like punctual meaning.

When we give our attention to the role of a milieu in soliciting action, we also notice another limitation of the language of 'affordance': a certain utilitarian bent, in the general sense of the term. For if we regard an affordance as what a thing offers, provides, or furnishes for an animal, we are surely drawn to think in terms of that animal's practical actions. But what is afforded by the pattern of passing clouds in the sky, or a sunset, or the slow alien trill of cicadas on a south Texas prairie? It would require contortions to cash out such phenomena in terms of what these things offer or provide in terms of practical actions. Yet they do matter to our manner of inhabiting the world. In particular, they contribute to the mood of our environment, and thus they contribute to the pervasively aesthetic character, the quality, of experience. This is not to deny that it is fundamentally in terms of possibilities for action that we are oriented in the world; it is to assert, rather, that those possibilities are structured not just in terms of specific, local actions, but in terms of *styles* of action. If cicada songs do not solicit specific actions, they solicit a style of inhabitation by way of involving us in a particular

[212] Again, Gibson is surely aware of this complex interdependence of meanings, as we see, for instance, in his example of the postbox, which "affords letter-mailing to a letter-writing human in a community with a postal system" (Gibson, 139). The affordance of the postbox depends on a whole cultural background.

kind of world, with its particular sensory and emotional resonances. By referring to the affordance of a thing in the environment, we can catch at best an adumbrated glimpse of the style of action that might be involved; but by directing our attention to place qua soliciting milieu, we can get a sense of how the encompassing nature of place may draw out such styles, while at the same time paying due to those "useless" elements of the environment which nonetheless matter – in an *integral* way – to how we inhabit the world.

Gibson rightly, if fleetingly, points out that for a language-bearing species like ourselves, language resides among the things that provide affordances for us. Or as I would want to put it, language is among the things that solicit our inhabitation of the world. But since language does not just constitute things in the world, but constitutes actions as well, it does not just solicit us but is *solicited by* the world. Just as much as language overruns the world, the world solicits language and the meaningful uses of language, though indefinitely many, are not arbitrary. There may be an indefinite number of ways to divvy up the color spectrum with different terms, but it would be very strange if a given color term were to refer to arbitrarily disjointed slices of that spectrum. And if the word 'peace' is such that it can bring about a disposition in embodiment involving a certain scope or emphasis in possible action, this is only the case because those dispositions and those actions are possible orientations which the world might bear as a coherent mode of intra-action. Every language, then, and every language game, is a realization of some possibility for emplacing intra-action with the world which is drawn out by the world. This is not to say that the intra-action takes place as a sort of compromise between the way the world is in itself and the way the perceiving entity is in itself. It is to say that place and the sensing body are concomitant conditions for this intra-action, and whatever perception or thought we might have about 'the world in itself,' for instance, will itself be an expression of it; that is, it will be a manifestation of emplaced experience.

And again, if as I've argued the material world would better be thought of as a field of resonances than of objects, then things are by nature relational. The intuition that there might be things "in themselves" coheres only within a logic of solids, which entails the perdurance of the autonomous and independent identity of things. If things are thought rather through a logic of relationality and resonance, then intra-active relations are the deepest level at which things

exist. This doesn't mean that things don't bear material intra-actions that are beyond the ken of perception – a tree that falls with no one around to hear it may or may not make a sound, but it certainly causes vibrations in the air that *would* be audible were there ears to hear it. But the only way to comprehend such a possible event is to imaginatively adopt a perspective that could take it in and make sense of it.

Lococentrism

Metaphysics aside, though, we can consider the concrete ways in which the world solicits action that reveal the power of place to be something that exceeds the egocentric point of view. Beata Stawarska notes, following Holenstein,[213] that we don't simply orient ourselves in place according to this egocentric perspective: external reference points are integral to the ways in which we situate ourselves. For instance "[w]hen I am standing in the market square surrounded by houses, it is the square's centre, possibly accentuated by a clearly visible monument, that provides the reference point with regard to which I orient myself, and not the other way around."[214] Consideration of this example shows the experience of such allocentric orientation to be quite ubiquitous. We could extend it, for instance, to a situation in which I am sitting near the side wall of a café. I see myself as most proximally and meaningfully occupying a place – ask me where I am, and I will say "in a café" – in which I am bodily at the periphery. (Or even if I am sitting in the middle of the room, I am still in the middle *with respect to the room*, not primarily as the egocentric pivot of my perceptual domain.) If I can be said to have an egocentric perspective, it is one that is shaped by the room: my sense of being situated extends to fill up the room; it is the volume and shape of this room as a meaningful milieu, as a place, that most proximally situates me and in regard to which my actions and awareness are oriented. It is hardly as if my attention forms a halo that circumscribes me equidistantly in every direction; this sort of arrangement is in fact rarely, if ever, the case. Place always exerts some pull, *it* centers *us*, and draws out our perception, attention and general sense of inhabitation

[213] Holenstein, E. *Menschliches Selbstverständnis*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985.
[214] Stawarska, 403.

according to its own characteristics, its own zones of density or significance.[215] (Here we are picking up a Heideggerian thread that was laid down in the first chapter.) This is no merely incidental fact: this situating power is what allows meaning to emerge, for the mutable constancy of place provides the skeleton for meaning; the orienting power of the café or any other place is what allows my actions to cohere from moment to moment.

There is, then, an allocentrism that is already present in the egocentric perspective, a phenomenon which we could call *lococentrism*. And, given the intertwining relation of concrete and projected place that has been discussed above, it should come as no surprise that this lococentrism is recapitulated in projected place as well. For instance, just as I can refer to myself as being 'in a café,' I can refer to myself as being 'in New York' or 'in the United States.' These entities are not simply constitutive of my concrete milieu; even if I am in a literal sense concretely situated within them, they extend well beyond the horizon of my immediate perceptual domain. Yet I can take them up as meaningful places of concern which solicit certain dispositions and actions (which will be bound up, as always, with my affective relations to them, the context of reference, and so on) through a certain projection of emplacement. But, as neither a Kansan nor a Manhattanite, I'm certainly not at the center of these domains[216] – or

[215] This centering, in addition to its functions of drawing our attention and of providing a certain volume that constitutes a place that solicits certain coherent modes of action, also seems to draw out a certain sense of identification with our surroundings. In one experiment by Pasqualini, Llobera, and Blanke, participants were placed in rooms in which the side walls were positioned either near or far from them, and given head-mounted displays which projected an image of their bodies (from the back) in front of them. By means of synchronous stroking of the participants' backs with the depicted stroking of their virtual bodies, participants were made to identify with those virtual bodies. "Moreover," the authors write, "in the narrow room we observed weak feelings of illusory touch with the sidewalls and of approachiing walls. These subjective changes were complemented by a stroking-dependent modulation of length estimation only in the narrow room with participants judging the room-size more accurately during conditions of illusory self-identification" (Pasqualini, et al., 1). The authors suggest that this finding can be interpreted with respect to Heinrich Wolfflin's theory of tectonic expressivity, by which he understands architecture in terms of its facilitation of embodied experience: "The arousal of characteristic architectonic sensations (e.g., familiarity, safety, containment, infinity, etc.) and "moods" (e.g., "atmospheres") seems therefore to be evoked through an empathic resonance that the built environment induces within the human body. Hereby the structural moments of architectonic articulation can be felt by empathic observers, related to bodily physiognomy (e.g., through orientation, verticality, and symmetry) and to own-body processing" (Ibid., p. 15). It could be argued, then, that one's surroundings do not just solicit certain actions and modes of engagement – they are actually *incorporated into* one's body schema, so that inhabitation involves a partial identification with a milieu. (See chapter six for a discussion of Wolfflin's architectural theory.)

[216] And if you're paying close attention, you might notice that Manhattan is not in fact at the *center* of New York – that would actually be in Bushwick, Brooklyn, on Stockholm between Wyckoff and Nicholas, according to *The New York Times* (Pollak (2005)). But I bet you didn't notice, because it's so easy to think of Manhattan as "the center" of

again, if I am it is only incidentally, as such centering would only be with respect to a place which has a potency that supervenes on my power to perceive it. In situating myself with respect to such domains, then, I am oriented according to a perspective that is my own (if I say 'I am in New York,' etc.[217]) but of which I am not the center, and which encompasses a domain far more extensive than my concrete milieu. And here we see again a case of the abstract imbuing the concrete with significance, as my concrete milieu is 'in New York' and as such simultaneously extends the domain in which I am emplaced beyond my concrete horizon; and this extension recurs on the concrete itself, as being 'in New York' lends a certain depth to my surroundings. It facilitates the diffraction of resonances across dimensions of my personal history, my affectivity, and socially constituted significances (expressed, for instance, in a sense of "being a New Yorker," an expression which I may feel either includes or excludes me) in the fractally complex manner by which perceptual experiences have depth for me, and by which place expresses itself as meaningful.

And beyond such bounded geographical zones, we are also drawn into cultural and technological systems, which may involve us in both concrete material structures and metaphorically-extended systems which we may understand in terms of an abstract placial logic. Margo Viljoen gives the example, for instance, of the experience of being in the Beijing Airport, which is also a system (for facilitating movement of people, baggage, and so forth) that is in turn embedded in a larger system (the international air transportation network).[218] Our

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the city, thanks to a recursive movement in our concept of the city from the cultural, economic, historical, infrastructural, and political spheres back onto the "objectively" spatial – a metaphorical movement from the spatial to those other domains that then returns upon the spatial to color our very sense of space itself.

[217] Of course, I can also say "you" or "we are here," which would be to adopt another perspective; see discussion on 'the social constitution of place.'

[218] Viljoen, 321. The system of the airport itself includes many sub-systems, such as "plumbing and sewer systems, human transport (horizontal and diagonal escalators and elevators), and fire control systems (fire-staircases, sprinklers, smoke alarms, etc). Restaurants, shops, and many other ancillary systems, operate separately and collectively within the whole" (Viljoen, 321-2). We can note a couple of things regarding this observation. First, that these systems operate at various degrees of transparency or opacity for us, and these degree will in large part be determined by our orientation qua passenger, airport employee, etc. And situational context is always subject to change: we take no notice of fire control systems, for instance, until…

Another thing to note is that the very notion of a 'system' depends on some sort of placial logic. To conceive ourselves as participating in any kind of system is to conceive of certain elements of the world as causally connected to each other in some way or another, as facilitating or imposing some sort of movement, and as some sort of conceptual coherence despite its dispersed material elements (which elements may be less abstract (as in

experience of the airport is fully meaningful only if we are open to the solicitations of place at each of these levels simultaneously.

This lococentrism, and the broader phenomenon of placial solicitation, will be critical in going forward. It is also a notion that is not without parallel in Merleau-Ponty's thinking. In the context of the reversibility of the flesh, by which every perception is a participation in the sensible, the milieu is not merely passively subjected to the gaze; it is an active co-conspirator in the production of meaning. This is especially thematized in "Eye and Mind" where, for instance, Merleau-Ponty quotes André Marchand, who "says, after Klee: 'In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me, were speaking to me… I was there, listening… I think that the painter must be penetrated by the universe and not want to penetrate it… I expect to be inwardly submerged, buried. Perhaps I paint to break out'" (EM, 129).[219] Merleau-Ponty goes on: "There really is inspiration and expiration of Being, respiration in Being, action and passion so slightly discernible that it becomes impossible to distinguish between who sees and who is seen, who paints and what is painted" (Ibid.)[220] And what goes for the concrete milieu goes for more abstract realms as well, such as those opened up by language. As he writes in *Signs*, regarding the silent background of voiced expression: "things are said and are thought by a Speech and by a Thought which we do not have but which has us" (S, 19).[221] The reversibility of the sensible entails a logic by which action should not be thought in terms of the agency of a willful subject,

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the case of sewer systems, for instance) or more so (economic systems, philosophical systems, etc.). Chapter four will show how such conceptualizations are achieved through metaphor.Our experience of the air transportation system might involve, for instance, an at least schematic arrangement of cities ("destinations") in terms of nodes and connections, as well as vectors of movement *from* and *towards* ("arrivals" and "departures").

[219] Quote is from Charbonnier, 143-5.

[220] There are other examples of this line of thought in "Eye and Mind," for instance, where he writes that "Vision reassumes its fundamental power of manifestation, of showing more than itself. And since we are told that a bit of ink suffices to make us see forests and storms, light must have its own power to generate the imaginary… No longer is it a matter of speaking about space and light, but of making space and light, which are *there*, speak to us" (EM, 138). And, speaking in analogy to painting, he notes that "Apollinaire said that in a poem there are phrases which do not seem to have been *created*, which seem to have *shaped themselves*. And Henri Michaux said that sometimes Klee's colors seem to have been born slowly upon the canvas… [Art] is truly the 'inarticulate cry,' as Hermes Trismegistus said, 'which seemed to be the voice of the light'" (EM, 141-2).

[221] S, 19.

but in terms of an interaction that is as much a drawing out by the world as it is the movement of a desiring organism.

These remarks point to a general property of the world as soliciting, yet they do not reveal the force of place which is always revealed in its particularity as drawing us along certain vectors to occupy certain volumes according to a certain mood and its attendant possibilities for action. With his focus remaining at this level of generality, even in his more radical, later philospohy, and despite his keen attunement to the dynamic interaction between self and world, an attunement that extends to the effort of collapsing the distinction between those traditional ontological poles, the body remains for him in an essential sense the sole locus for this interaction. Thus, "[t]he visible can… fill me and occupy me only because I who see it do not see it from the depths of nothingness, but from the midst of itself; I the seer am also visible" (VI, 113); yet "[t]he things – here, there, now, then – are no longer in themselves, in their own place, in their own time; they exist only at the end of those rays of spatiality and of temporality emitted in the secrecy of my flesh" (VI, 114). For Merleau-Ponty I belong to the world, I am embedded in it and of its substance, but as something like the perceptual node by which the visible gains coherent expression; or, as Daniela Vallega-Neu more nicely puts it, the body is "conceived as the site of articulation of I, others, things, world, in their encroachment."[222] An ontological geometry of egocentrism still prevails.[223] Though, as I have mentioned, it is self-evidently the case that all perception adheres to a body (in the broad sense that includes imaginatively projected acts of perception), we cannot say that this fact entails that things are "no longer in their own place"; for to do so would be to deny that *things being in their own place* is precisely what allows us to encounter the world as meaningful.

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[222] Vallega-Neu (2005), 68.

[223] For an especially explicit example of this ontological geometry, see where he writes, in "Eye and Mind," that "my body is a thing among things; it is one of them. It is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, *it holds things in a circle around itself*. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrusted in its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made of the very stuff of the body" (EM, 125; italics added). Acknowledging that the body is swept up in participation in the sensible does not prevent Merleau-Ponty here from treating the body as the central pivot of that sensibility, whereas, for the many reasons given here, it is important to see the senses in which the body derives meaning from the world through its embeddedness in a multiperspectival and variegated topology with regards to which it is often, if not generally, peripheral.

The nesting of places

The examples given above of being *in a café*, *in New York*, etc., demonstrate another feature of place that is important for understanding the way in which place solicits: this is the fact that place is always nested (a feature which Malpas draws attention to[224]). I am at a table, in a café, in New York, in the United States… It can simultaneously be said that I am in all these places (or at levels of greater scope, in regions) at a single moment. The fact that each of these can be considered as a meaningful place that structures our situatedness can be seen in the fact that placial indexicals, like 'here' and 'there,' can be used to refer to place at any of these levels: "She's here!" could mean that she has approached from the other side of the room, that she's in the neighborhood, that her plane has landed elsewhere in the metropolitan region, or even that she's returned to the country from abroad. It would seem, in any event, that in each of these cases 'here' refers to a meaningful milieu (i.e., this part of the room, this neighborhood, etc.) which is not necessarily exclusive of the others; each is, with regard to some context or set of interests, a place.

Despite the fact that I am always simultaneously located in multiple nested places, my attention is not liable to take all of them in at a given time;[225] typically one tends to focus on a level that is more local and concrete. This nesting, though, introduces a form of proximity that is integral to processes of emplacement. For not only do places open onto each other by a principle of lateral proximity (as when you walk down the street and one block unfolds onto the next, one neighborhood onto another), they unfold according to a principle of "vertical" proximity as well: your attention may be drawn from the street you're walking down to the city as a whole, and so on. This is often characterized as a relation of containment – places are said

[224] Malpas (1999), 101-106.

[225] Indeed, it may be impossible to focus simultaneously on the indefinitely numerous places in which I am located at a given moment. Certainly, though, multiple levels of emplacement can simultaneously present themselves, and I might even focus on the interaction between these levels itself – I might take note of myself as sitting in "a typical New York café," in which case my attention is drawn both to the particular café, and to the city as a whole of which it is exemplary, and this will heighten the resonances between these two levels of place.

to be contained by those other places, greater in scope, in which they are nested.[226] I would argue, though, that this characterization is in some ways misleading. For a notion of containment could be taken to suggest the existence of a restrictive boundary which interrupts movement from one placial level to the other. The nested character of place, though, actually facilitates emplacing movement between regions of varying scope. Furthermore, places themselves rarely have entirely firm boundaries; even rooms or buildings have apertures which allow in something of the external world. Politically-defined territories are among the closest things we have to precisely delimited places, but even in these cases edges tend to blur (if the Rio Grande shifts its course, where exactly is the boundary between the United States and Mexico?), and at any rate my experience of being in such a territory is not solely or even primarily defined by my sense of the location of political boundaries, which I usually don't know precisely in any event – the experience of being in a city or a country, etc., is defined far more saliently by the depths that are expressed in one's sense of certain modes of identity, culture, character or atmosphere, and so on. Borders are clearly imprecise and pervious with respect to such resonances.[227] (I speak with some conviction on this point as one who grew up in "the border region" of the United States and Mexico – for me, a border, which is really a permeable boundary, itself is home.)

Perhaps, then, it is better to say that the nesting of place follows a principle of embeddedness rather than containment: for to be embedded in something, rather than contained by it, is to be insinuated into it, to belong to it as a part rather than to be delimited from it. This results in a less restrictive determinacy in the definition of place, as to be embedded in something is to be perspectivally situated within it, and thus to open on to it in

[226] Malpas, for instance, says that nesting "[fundamentally] cannot be understood independently of some notion of spatiality – for it is essentially a notion of containment – and this is so even in relation to the nesting of one event in another" (Malpas (1999), 104). He does, however, acknowledge that "[p]laces always open up to disclose other places within them (within the place that is a garden or a house, a town or a countryside, there are places for different activities, for different things, for different moods, for different people), while from within any particular place one can always look outwards to find oneself within some much larger expanse (as one can look from the room in which one sits to the house in which one lives)" (Ibid., 170-1). I think he recognizes that this openness is essential to the structure of place, so my words on the potentially misleading nature of the term 'containment' to refer to these nesting relations is more a caution than a criticism.

[227] One reason to focus on this perhaps seemingly minor semantic point is that the misconstrual of boundaries as rigid and impermeable has significant ramifications for the possibilities for abstract thought and for our modes of inhabitation in the world, as will be discussed below.

the manner that one opens on to one's milieu – as amidst things, and thus within an indefinitely bounded place; it therefore also suggests greater freedom of movement between places and regions of varying scope. If we say that places are nested in the manner of embeddedness, then, we can make room for the sorts of proximities that are involved in nesting relations and which solicit the movements of emplacement.

Place-names

However, it is not as if any arbitrary place within which another is spatially situated can make such a solicitation – for instance, it can't be said that San Francisco is nested within a quadrilateral defined by 37 and 39 degrees north latitude and 121 and 123 degrees west longitude, even if it is located there. That is simply an arbitrary segment of geographical space, a product of the abstract geometrizing of place (that is, its treatment as space in the classically modern sense), not a meaningful milieu. We can say, however, that San Francisco is nested in northern California, the West Coast, North America, the Pacific Rim, and other such region-places, as each of these exerts some meaningful pull, and can therefore be involved in situating us. And here once again we see that place and language are entwined in a relation of reciprocal interaction that is expressed, especially, through place-names. An arbitrarily delineated spatial zone does not solicit such interaction because it does not serve as a locus for resonances that constitute meaningful depth; we do not have *ideas* of such spatial zones in any rich sense. But if we say that San Francisco is a 'West Coast' city, then we situate it in a meaningful way - as a place of certain cultural attitudes and political leanings, a certain calm and expansive air, a certain mild climate, a certain history, and so forth. We will have some affective relation to it qua West Coast city, depending on how these associations resonate with our personal proclivities, attitudes, beliefs and experiences.[228]

The relation between places and the names we use to identify them, including both generic terms and proper place-names, is characteristic of the language-imbued world. Tuan

[228] This principle is certainly appreciated by real estate brokers, who will arbitrarily expand the territories of neighborhoods (and even concoct wholly new appellations) in their listings in order to entice potential buyers by invoking a certain cachet that might be evoked by the name.

puts the point succinctly: “Speech is a component of the total force that transforms nature into a human place.”[229] The name ‘San Francisco’ becomes a powerful conductor of resonances, opening onto the depths that will be greater or lesser, and have a distinct and more or less positive emotional tone, depending on our personal relation to the place.[230] The name thus issues a powerful solicitation that orients us towards a particular place, and in doing so invites a whole mode of inhabitation. Indeed, such solicitation in the case of place-names is paradigmatic, as places are precisely what we inhabit. In the case of cities, in fact, the place itself is *defined* by inhabitation, by the fact that people conduct their lives there. To speak of them, then, is to invoke not just a certain practically-oriented disposition, but a whole manner of inhabiting the world, a style of life, defined by its geographical, historical and cultural depths, and above all by its *atmosphere* – that nearly ineffable mood which suffuses every city, and indeed every place.[231]

The place-name, in particular, draws up such depths. But as we’ve seen, naming is a double-edged sword. On one hand, language can tend towards the erosion of the idea as the imposition of a general idea on the particular. The name, which so powerfully conducts resonances, may also tend to lock those resonances in place, like a magnet that draws a scatter of iron filings into a fixed concentric pattern. Even as I walk up a hill in San Francisco, I may experience myself as walking up a hill in ‘San Francisco,’ as the sedimented place-name overruns the particularity of my experience in the imposition of a cliché. The name can have a habituating effect, which may be bound up with a feeling of inhabitation itself, even a feeling of belonging, but which may also wear down the particularity of the place in such a way that I become oblivious of certain possibilities for experiencing it. (This exemplifies a tendency in the experience of place in general: habituation to particular modes of emplacement can numb us to those depths we felt upon our first experience of them, something that is particularly

[229] Tuan (1991), 685.
[230] Of course, this doesn’t mean the place-name has a ‘private’ meaning for each of us; these meanings are personal insofar as they depend on our particular orientation and personal history and so forth, but as with all language use, the fact that possible meanings are indefinite does not entail that any meaning is possible – ‘world peace’ is not a ham sandwich, and ‘San Francisco’ is not a politically conservative city in Alabama.
[231] But only *nearly* ineffable, for simply to utter the name ‘San Francisco’ is already to conjure something of a mood.

noticeable when, upon returning home from a long trip, we find ourselves encountering some uncanny scent or quality of the air that reminds us of a certain depth in things, some *sense of place*, that we had entirely forgotten.[232] Or we can think of the dulling of a sense of possibility that occurs when we become *too* oriented in a place: if we could picture our whole city as from a map projection, for instance, and always know roughly where we are within its overall configuration, it is hard to feel the sense of curiosity and openness we might have had when we first moved there, when we didn't know what was around every corner; the perspective of familiarity binds us, it creates a horizon that is delimiting rather than enticing. It is the price we pay for our knowing and skillful negotiation of place.)

On the other hand, the place-name can serve as a linguistic focal point for the depths that suffuse places with meaning, and can thereby open up possibilities for the creative expression of those depths: as with language in general, place-names don't merely impose the general on the particular, they also unleash possibilities for summoning depths, for being entwined with creative expressions, and thereby to gather new meanings. The lowest point on the continent, which is also the hottest, one of the driest, and likely the most inhospitable, is not invoked neutrally, as a mere site, as a mere spot on the map, but is summoned as a burning presence in our consciousness, when we call it by the name 'Death Valley.' The place already has a personality when we give it such a name, and a certain mood, and already inchoate narratives begin to stir. The example is particularly blunt, but consider the metropolis that lies not far from that desert landscape: there is nothing inherently evocative about the name 'Las Vegas' (the name means "the meadows" in Spanish – an ironic misappellation, if anything), but

[232] Dylan Trigg finds in such uncanniness an essential characteristic of memory qua experience of place: "After all, what can be fused with a greater intensity of strangeness than the experience of remembering, which by dint of its structure, invites a no-longer-existing world, fundamentally absent in its structure and discolored in its content, into the experience of the still-unfolding present?" (Trigg (2012), 33). Trigg says that "As experience shows us repeatedly, when returning to a place from our past, the effect is invariably alienating rather than reassuring," which is at least in part because "encountering a place from our past in the material world establishes itself in a relationship of difference and otherness to that of our memories" (Ibid., 35-6). This can occur – but as the example I give would suggest, this return to place can also stir memory out of oblivion: it can awaken what might have calcified with the distance of time, and bestir a muscle memory which might have atrophied. It can allow us to participate in the world with a sense of belonging we may have forgotten, and this is surely the very antithesis of alienation.

because of its cultural significance it evokes a very particular place in its own way, and already at the sound of the name the neon of the Strip pops on in the hot night air.

This suggests one important sense in which place-names are unlike most denotative terms: they are always singular. As proper names, they always refer to one specific place, unlike terms such as 'desert' or 'city.'[233] As such, they are the only terms which refer to specific meaningful milieus, and in fact define them as meaningful precisely in this reference. In the case of place-names, language comes as close as it ever does to literally overrunning the landscape, which becomes populated by named places – one is, in fact, never outside the purview of multiple place-names, an appellative layering that reflects the nested character of place. The process by which place-names garner their meaning is, as always in the interaction of word and world, an ambivalent one – a place is not liable to be named if it does not have some antecedent significance.[234] This significance is consecrated in the place-name: thus to give a place a proper name is both to acknowledge its allocentric pull, its power to situate *us*, and to instantiate it; it is an indication of the *captivation* of place.[235] But at the same time, the place-name can reveal places that would otherwise not be present to us. For instance, "French explorers in the seventeenth century carried the word 'Mississippi' (of Algonquin origin) all the way from the source of the river in Minnesota to its mouth on the Gulf." This name eventually replaced all the local names, in numerous languages, that referred to its various segments, and "[t]he name 'Mississippi River,' henceforth, evoked an image of a vast hydrological system: the name can be said to have created the system by making the entire river, and not just the parts visible to observers on the ground, accessible to consciousness."[236]

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[233] Though a generic term like 'the city' or 'the lake' can function essentially as a proper name in local contexts; e.g., in a town where the statement that one is "going down to the lake" can be taken to refer to one specific lake.

[234] An exception to this might be a suburban developer who scrapes a new subdivision out of the landscape with some moniker like 'Hollow Oaks' or 'Nostalgia Glen.' These are not meaningful milieus, at least when they are built. But this meaninglessness is an exception that proves the rule, for the developer, at least, sees the need to bestow upon these sites the pretension to a sense of place. This is surely a necessity for such developments to attract newcomers.

[235] This is not to suggest that place-names flatten all places to the same level of significance; it's not as if 'Plano, Texas' resonates just in the same way that 'Machu Picchu' does, simply be being named. Place-names indicate a place that has some situating power, but the nature and extent of that power are another matter.

[236] Tuan (1991), 688-9.

Frequently place-names directly refer to the geographical features of a place. Perhaps even more often they refer to some historical figure or event, or even some place that lies elsewhere (as with New York, neé New Amsterdam, and Boston, for instance). But such provenances are for the most part incidental, and left behind almost as soon as the name is put into effect – 'San Francisco' may connote many things, but I doubt that the patron saint of animals is at the forefront among them for many people.[237],[238],[239] As singular references, place-names become bound up with the places they name in an especially intimate way, such that they are quickly carried away from such originary connotations. But this means that they are carried *toward* something else. What could this something else be? Surely it is the meaning of the place itself for those who experience it – a meaning that evolves with time, but that also remains bound to those perduring qualities of geography and topology, of land and air and patterns of clouds and light, as well as those historical traces that find expression in the present, out of which a sense of place emerges. The name may contribute little to this meaning, but it does come to gather it together as a resonant focus, to evoke such meanings for purposes that may be expedient or poetic. On the other hand, in some cases the name may contribute quite a lot to our definition and understanding of places. Tuan provides an example: "'That the Rockies are called the Rockies is now written in stone, but how subtly different they – and North America itself – would seem if the range had been named the Northern Andes, as it was called in 1804.'"[240]

Of course, as linguistic expressions, place-names join us together in socially shared meanings – they are necessarily expressions of meaning not just for ourselves but for some community to which we belong. This demonstrates the autonomy of named places, insofar as

[237] Perhaps the resonance tends to be stronger for Spanish-speaking Catholics, but whatever religious associations can be made are surely adventitious ones.
[238] The general irrelevancy of place-name provenance was demonstrated by the King County council in Washington in 1986 when they voted to rename 'King County' (named after historical afterthought William Rufus King) to 'King County' (named after Martin Luther King, Jr.) – they essentially altered the provenance by decree, something they undoubtedly wouldn't have done if the name would have had to actually change.
[239] This is not to deny the political exertions involved in the naming of places: otherwise the Soviets wouldn't have bothered to rename Saint Petersburg as Leningrad, nor would 'Mt. McKinley' be in the process of reverting to its traditional name 'Denali'; nor, moreover, would members of the congressional delegation of Ohio – William McKinley's home state – have impeded efforts to officially recognize the name 'Denali' (See Monmonier, 67). But it does suggest that political intentions are rather feeble constraints on the meanings of place-names.
[240] Tuan (1991), 688. Quoted from Notes and Comment. *The New Yorker*: September 4, 1989. p. 62.

the pull they exert is not simply a function of our internal dispositions or psychology but is such as to draw some substantial number of people into their ken – proof enough that they have a power that transcends any of us as individuals. Relatedly, this also demonstrates the autonomy of certain places from any particular perspective, for there are any number of ways and any number of perspectives from which one can orient oneself towards 'San Francisco'; Mount Rainier exerts an ineluctable pull whether one sees it from Seattle, Tacoma, or Olympia; and so on.

Landscape

Perhaps this can help to address something that Casey notices: "It is a curious fact that we do not normally *name* a landscape, even though the land on which it is located may have its own proper legal name" (GBP, 24). There is an ambiguity in the term 'landscape' which might point to why this is, an ambiguity that is suggested by Casey's characterization of landscape. For on the one hand, he says "[t]here is landscape wherever there is a felt difference unrecuperable by the usual designators of place" and that landscape "is what encompasses those more determinate places, such as rooms and buildings, designated by the usual idiolocative terms" (Ibid.). (He quotes Lyotard, who writes that "[t]here would appear to be a landscape whenever the mind is transported from one sensible matter to another, but retains the sensorial organization appropriate to the first."[241]) On the other hand, it is equated to a "spectacle," such that when I gaze out at a group of mountains whose name I do not know, for instance, it is "evident to me that I am standing in a particular place (also, perhaps, unnamed) and standing before a particular spectacle: this spectacle and no other. Still, as a spectacle it does not bear a name of its own" (GBP, 24).

If we take 'landscape' in the former sense, that which engenders a certain "felt difference," then I think it can be said that we *do* have place-names for many of them: examples would include the Chihuahuan Desert, Appalachia, the Great Plains, the Mississippi Delta, the Tibetan Plateau, the Midwest, the Middle East, the Far North, the South Pacific, and

[241] Lyotard (1989), 212.

Midtown.[242] None of these places have fixed boundaries because landscapes are not political entities (though they might have political salience), but we nonetheless use proper names to refer to them.[243] And there is undoubtedly some commonality in what it *feels* like to be in, for instance, the Chihuahuan Desert, whether I am in central Coahuila, the Big Bend of Texas, or the Florida Mountains of southwestern New Mexico. This commonality is not reducible to any determinate set of factors, as what constitutes the feel (or atmosphere, ambience, or sense) of a place can never be so reduced, but certainly such things as flora, topography, and climate all contribute to it. And, as with all places, landscapes are defined not simply by a commonality in how they look, but by their smell, their feel, even their sound.[244] Landscape places may be nested as well; for instance, the White Sands are a landscape of sand dunes within the Tularosa Basin, which lies within the Chihuahuan Desert.

But Casey is referring to 'landscape' in the other sense, as a spectacle or scene. This would seem to be closer to the sense we have in mind when we refer to landscape painting or photography. Yet landscapes are still named even in this case, insofar as Thomas Cole makes a painting *of* the Catskills, or Ansel Adams takes a photograph *of* Half-Dome. Still, it is true that there is not a name for a particular *view* of the spectacle of the landscape as such. But do views – particular perspectives as such – ever have names? Certainly not proper ones. Perspectives are always *of* something, which is another way of saying they are always emplaced; and this is to say that place always solicits our experience. What we name in a perspectival experience is that which the experience is *of*. And it's true, as Casey says, that a landscape, even as spectacle, has its own determinacy, for how else "could it be painted or photographed, discussed or remembered, or even merely gazed at?" (GBP, 24) In soliciting our gaze, the landscape does exert a pull on us. And the precise way it does so will always vary: the desert will look differently under the bannered skies of sunset than it does in the chilly glare of morning; it will

[242] And all the considerations regarding place-names discussed above must be applied to these landscapes as well.
[243] It should be said that while I am treating these examples as terms of physical geography, every one of them is complexly intertwined with political and cultural geographies as well, in the manner in which land, culture, and politics are always complexly intertwined.
[244] Emphasizing the multisensory nature of landscape, Malpas notes that "Seamus Heaney's two-line evocation of an Irish village: 'Inishbofin on a Sunday morning/ Sunlight, turfsmoke, seagulls, boatslip, diesel' is as much a work of the representation of a landscape (and one that is, it should be noted, not restricted to the landscape of nature, as is any simple visual portrayal" (Malpas (2011), 13).

look differently when we are sober than when we are stoned. But the very power of place is that it transcends such individual experiences, even as it is the condition for their possibility. This is why we can take in a landscape of and surrounding the Guadalupe Mountains of West Texas at dawn or at dusk, in winter or summer, and however protean the variations of the scene may be, it is always the same place we see (where sameness is not to be understood as a fixed and permanent identity, but more like a musical theme, something that presents itself as a variety of expressions all emanating from the same place, akin to what Husserl might call a morphological identity, and which I referred to above as mutable constancy). The particular variations don't receive place-names because they aren't places; they are ephemeral aspects of place. (We don't name a particular angle of view of the Empire State Building either; we name the building itself.) But the variations can, of course, be given expression – and the art of doing so was precisely that at which Thomas Cole and Ansel Adams were such skilled practitioners.

What, then, is the relation between place and landscape? As I have been describing it, place is essential to the structure of experience: we are always in some meaningful milieu which solicits our living bodies in defining our possibilities for action. In this sense, we are always in some place, and place is always where we (as perceiving bodies) find ourselves. Does this mean that landscape is just another kind of place, albeit one of especially broad scope? Casey argues that landscapes are, in fact, too broad for place: "A landscape seems to exceed the usual parameters of place by continuing without apparent end; nothing contains it, while it contains everything, including discrete places, in its environing embrace," whereas the body "fall[s] short of place… Nevertheless, body and landscape collude in the generation of what can be called 'placescapes,' especially those that human beings experience whenever they venture out beyond the narrow confines of their familiar domiciles and neighborhoods" GBP, 25).

I would like to give an interpretation of how we can understand this exceeding of place, without abandoning the idea that landscapes are, in fact, places. For a named landscape like the Chihuahuan Desert, the Amazon Basin, etc., can be that which we might denote by the indexical 'here.' But it exceeds our experience of proximate emplacement in this sense: its domain, the source of the pull it exerts on us, not only suffuses the whole of the concrete sensible world where we find ourselves, it also exceeds the horizon.

Casey writes that the horizon "is the ultimate *perimeter of places*. It encompasses all places, those in the far sphere most decisively (around these it forms a firm boundary), but those in the near sphere as well (since the near sphere is itself contained within the far sphere)" (GBP, 62). What I am suggesting, though, is that landscape is a place that extends beyond the horizon, and that this extension is key to our experience of it. This is different from phenomena of projection which I described above – where we see ourselves as located in "the United States" or "North America," for instance.[245] In these cases we adopt an abstract perspective, perhaps through an aerial or map-like orientation. When we orient towards a landscape, by contrast, we remain embedded in our concretely embodied perspective, but we have a sense of our concrete milieu as something that exceeds the scope of our senses.[246] This is seemingly a paradox if we are wedded to an idea of place as constituted by sensory experience, for then it would seem that the scope of the sensible at any given moment would define the maximum possible extent of place. But if we remember that emplacement is not simply a power which the body projects onto the world, but that place itself has the power to solicit and to emplace us, then we realize that the body is not the sole source of an a priori delimitation of the scope of place. Place can speak for itself, and when it does so as landscape it draws us as a place that exceeds the horizon of the senses. Unboundedness is therefore an integral feature of our experience of landscape – not because landscapes necessarily lack boundaries, but because we can't see that far.

If Kant is right that unboundedness is a quality of the sublime, then perhaps what we ought to say is that landscape expresses the sublimity of place. And if the sublime produces an emotion that is characterized by "a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger,"[247] and if that which arouses a

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[245] Though it is not a typical manner by which we orient ourselves, I think it *is*, actually, possible to treat places like "the United States" and "North America" as landscapes. We might sit in Manhattan, for instance, and gaze west, and by a sort of effort of thought have a sense of the whole continent unfolding out before us in unseeable distances, yet without leaving our perspective of concrete emplacement – without, for instance, adopting the cartographical perspective. We could even extend this sense to encompass the whole earth as a landscape.

[246] Or in imagination, we project ourselves *into* landscapes, never to a perspective *above* them, which can not be said, for instance, of our imagined orientation with regard to cities.

[247] Kant (1987), 98.

feeling of the sublime inspires “respect and admiration”[248] even as it “appear[s], in its form, contrapurposive for our power of judgment, incommensurate with our power of exhibition, and as it were violent to our imagination,”[249] then isn’t this what we experience in landscapes?

Well, Kant would certainly disagree, for by his lights the sublime has a “basis merely within ourselves” and we ought to “[separate] our ideas of the sublime completely from the idea of a purposiveness of *nature*,”[250] and this is clearly just the opposite of the suggestion here that place introduces the sublime of its own accord, as it were – or at least in collusion with the senses.[251] Nonetheless, I think there is something important in Kant’s intuition that the sublime is characterized by an unboundedness that exceeds our senses that applies to landscape, and that is indeed integral to our experience of emplacement in the world.

When we are inside buildings, the places in which we move about circumscribe us almost entirely (though windows and doors allow for important forms of interaction with the outside world, and we may have an adumbrated sense of the landscape in which the building is embedded). When we step outdoors we find ourselves negotiating places that are more indefinite in scope; yet these places may still be roughly bounded, in the manner of city blocks, parks, public squares and so on. But sometimes our attention is drawn to the landscape in which we are situated, and when this happens we find ourselves embedded in a realm that has no sensible boundary for us. We may encounter this in a city, wherein the urban landscape spreads out in every direction, always bearing with it its distinctive styles, modes, and atmosphere with it, so that we feel ourselves to be in a place that suffuses our surroundings entirely. What marks this as a landscape[252], as opposed to a mere locale, is that there is something *unmanageable* about it. We can’t contain it within the purview of our senses, nor

[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid., 99.
[250] Ibid., 100.
[251] As if to pre-empt this very argument, Kant writes, “true sublimity must be sought only in the mind of the judging person, not in the natural object the judging of which prompts this mental attunement. Indeed, who would want to call sublime such things as shapeless mountain masses piled on one another in wild disarray, with their pyramids of ice, or the gloomy raging sea?” (Kant (1987), 113). It is as if, even as he valorizes the capacity of nature to overrun the imagination, he feels this value can only be redeemed by being made manageable, by being reduced to something that can fit snugly into the mind. But it seems telling that his descriptions of nature here – mountains in “wild disarray,” the “gloomy raging sea” – become uncharacteristically colorful.
[252] In this case, a cityscape, which is a species of landscape.

does the landscape simply terminate at the horizon. If we're walking the streets of Amsterdam, it's not as if we feel like the canals and bridges and crow-stepped gables and bicycles all just come to a halt at the end of our line of sight; we have the sense that insofar as these elements define the place, what they define is an urban landscape that is broader than the "inner surface of a sphere"[253] that constitutes our visual terminus.

This is all the more the case when we go out into open country – "into the land," as we sometimes say – for here the sense that the landscape exceeds the sensible through its transhorizonality is compounded by its sheer vastness, so that we find ourselves drawn into a place that literally expands the scope of the sensible, even as it resists subordination to that scope. Here is where we find places that are truly capacious, especially if we are out amidst desert or mountains or steppe or sea, where we encounter horizons that encompass vast volumes (or rather, volumes that encompass distant horizons). As with the urban landscape, we don't have the sense that these expanses are delimited by the horizon; a major reason they feel expansive is our sense of their unboundedness, our sense that they extend into distances that are quite indifferent to the scope of our perception. Yet we feel that these expanses are unified, too – unified as a landscape, as a meaningful milieu that exerts a pull on us, that draws our attention toward it as a place that has its own unity, even as that unity suffuses and overwhelms all that is before us.[254] But because our attention is drawn to the landscape, because it wants to take it all in, it is drawn over the horizon. Thus the landscape invites exploration, which at a minimum takes the form of the searching gaze, as if our vision were compelled to fill up an unfillable volume, or to search out a perimeter that it cannot reach.[255]

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[253] Casey's characterization of the horizon (GBP, 61). Though to be perfectly honest the world generally looks quite a bit more irregularly shaped than a sphere to me.

[254] Casey argues for the sublime in landscape (or "wildscapes") as a multiplicity: the "surround" of the wildscape is not "a simple, single place: it is (in J. J. Gibson's word) a 'layout' of places, a collocation (not just a co-location) that as a gathered group, draws this subject out, draws it to a nearby limit that cannot be reached as such" (Casey (1999), 17-18.). Certainly, landscapes are composed of places, and even of other landscapes, as I noted in the discussion of nesting; such is the fractal nature of place. But my image differs from Casey's in emphasizing that the sublime, at least when it is encountered by way of landscape, occurs in interaction with a placial unity, which is nonetheless a unity which can never be fully taken in as it always exceeds one's range. According to this image, it is the landscape as *a* place, *a* meaningful milieu in its own right, which opens us up to the sublime.

[255] It may solicit us to explore it by legwork; the exploration by foot of the writer Tim Robinson's home region of Connemara and the Aran Islands in the west of Ireland; for him among others, according to John Wylie, "walking is

And this perimeter is not a line but a sphere, as Casey puts it – landscape does not surround us as the perimeter of an area, it pervades our surroundings as a volume, and the transhorizonality which characterizes it is not just a continuation over the most distant point, but a plunging depth we encounter in the scent of the air we pull into our nostrils, or in the texture of the ground where we plant our feet.

Erwin Straus describes this depth of landscape in a way that couldn't resonate more strongly with the depth that characterizes the sensible for Merleau-Ponty. For see what he says of landscape painting: "it makes visible the invisible, although it be as something far removed. Great landscapes all have a visionary character. Such vision is of the invisible becoming visible. This becoming-visible can be depicted in our human perceptual world – which means, presented as universal, communicated. But that which can be presented to vision belongs, at the same time, not to this perceptual world; *it transcends its borders* both downwards and upwards."[256] The distinction here, between perceiving and sensing, is the distinction between bearing an objective disposition towards the land – the perspective entailed by the geographical map – and being embedded in a landscape of rich depths, that absorbs us by acting upon our senses, which is to say, upon our full bodily capacities as sensing beings.

We see, then, that the landscape is more than a mere spectacle or a nice view. It solicits a mode of relation from the body, a disposition in embodiment, and in particular a sense of expansion into depths that exceed what is tractable. Nor is this excess simply a matter of quantifiable scale. Landscapes are characterized by movement and change, and as such are host to forces that manifest their greatest power of emplacement: think of how a summer thunderstorm can be spawned of a landscape (almost literally, through the heating of the land that causes rising air currents through a moist atmosphere, but also in that we sense the landscape as the theater of the storm, as the place which the storm shades and overtakes and then passes out of again), or how the first gust of wintry air makes even a claustrophobic East Coast city street suddenly feel swept up in the continental play of seasonal change, or how the slow moil of the Mississippi, a river vast enough to constitute its own landscape, speaks

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a privileged route to deeper knowledge of landscape" and is an activity that is "seen as *proper* to dwelling" in certain romantic traditions (Wylie (2012), 371.).

[256] Straus, 322. My italics.

simultaneously of its enormous volume and the fantastic temporal depth of its ever-changing presence (an excess of our *temporal* horizons, even unto geological scales, being an important way that landscape is present to us as unbounded).[257]

Elements of Kant's account of the sublime again seem apposite, as there can be something "violent to the imagination" in the experience of such movements. The way I would put it is that, in the absence of a delimiting perimeter, disorientation may seem to threaten. If being oriented is always a matter of being emplaced, and being emplaced is a matter of bearing certain possibilities for action, open landscape confronts us with place on a scale that so far exceeds any concrete actions we might reasonably consider performable as to engender a sense of futility in our own existence. It can make us feel puny (an experience potently encountered when we situate ourselves in relation to the cosmos, which is in some respects the ultimate landscape). The threat is that we may feel overwhelmed by place.

Yet there is a kind of shrinking agoraphobia in this reaction to landscape that ignores the sense in which we can feel at home – can, in some ways, feel *most* at home – in vast landscapes. If there is the potential for terror in the sublime, there is also "respect and admiration" in it. Perhaps this is a matter of personal conditioning for me, having grown up in the Southwest. Far from a sense of abandonment or desolation, the *range* of open landscapes seems to me to solicit a feeling of heightened emplacement and of calm belonging, an intimacy in vastness, as if the scope of the landscape were commensurate with its power to emplace, as

[257] Straus contrasts landscape to geography: "sensory space stands to perceptual space as landscape to geography," he writes (Straus, 318). The contrast is exemplified by different modes of travel: "in landscape we always get to one place from another place" (Straus, 319), a movement which one imagines to be paradigmatically that of walking. By contrast, "[g]eographical space is systematized and closed… The modern forms of traveling in which intervening spaces are, as it were, skipped over or even slept through, strikingly illustrate the systematically closed and constructed character of the geographical space in which we live as human beings" (Straus, 319-20). Thus, "Before the advent of the railroad, geographical connections evolved, for the traveler, from the change in landscape… But now we can get on a French train in the morning, and then, after twelve hours on the train (which is, really being nowhere), we can get out in Rome" (Straus, 320). What Straus is describing is essentially the difference between an abstract, objective perspective on place, one which treats it as a homogeneous system that is flattened in its uniformity, and the singularity of landscape, endlessly intricate and powerfully solicitous. It is geography we engage when we treat the land as quantity, as measurable distance; it is landscape we engage when we become absorbed in place, when we "sacrifice, as far as possible, all temporal, spatial and objective precision" (Straus, 322).

if its unboundedness were an indication of its limitless captivation.[258] And if anything, it seems to me that the solicitation of the senses by what Casey, following Husserl, refers to as the "far sphere" seems to enhance one's feeling of subjective presence, for it is just by means of the far sphere that one's perceptual field achieves a kind of placial maximalization; if one is emplaced by a landscape, one in some sense occupies it, one fills it up with one's presence. In some ways one becomes co-extensive with one's place, and in the case of landscape this means one achieves, in a certain sense, the greatest capacity of one's embodied self. But this begins to border on solipsism, or perhaps megalomania, if we fail to remember that it is the power of place that enables this feeling of belonging, and that it is in the interaction of place and body that the sublime resides. For it is not, as Kant would have it, that the sublime is located in the subject, whether in the play of the rational and imaginative faculties or in the transcendence of the subjective on place. Rather, it is when the body is drawn out by landscape towards a certain

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[258] Note that this is far from the "effect of displaced desolation" that accompanies experiences of the desert-like qualities of barrenness, vastness, impenetrability, and isolation, according to Casey (GBP, 195-7). It is also far from Maxim Gorky's description of the Russian plain. As Gorky wrote,

> The boundless plain upon which the log-walled, thatch-roofed village huts stand huddled together has the poisonous property of desolating a man's soul and draining him of all desire for action. The peasant may go beyond the limits of his village, take a look at the emptiness all about him, and after a while he will feel as if this desolation had entered into his own soul. Nowhere are lasting traces of toil to be seen… As far as the eye can see stretches an endless plain, and in the midst of it stands an insignificant wretched little man, cast away upon this dreary earth to labor like a galley slave. And the man is overwhelmed by a feeling of indifference which kills his capacity to think, to remember past experience, and to draw inspiration from it. (Maxim Gorky, "On the Russian Peasantry," quoted in Koslow, 35. Quoted from Tuan, 56.)

What is striking in Gorky's description is that the landscape is primarily viewed here through the perspective of labor: in the face of all this untilled land, the individual seems meek and despairs, presumably, because of the inconceivability of ever being able to work over such vast untamed lands. Such labor as he could perform could make at best an infinitesimal scratch in the skin of such boundless earth. This description, and its contrast to contemporary accounts of the sublime or "scenic" landscape, suggest that some caution ought to be in order in ascribing non-historical meanings to landscape. From the perspective of the politically disempowered peasant, the landscape does seem to approach the terror of the Kantian sublime. What of the pastoralist, whose livelihood depends on nomadic movement across great distances? What of the Pacific islander, whose personal geography encompasses islands spread across similarly vast and ever-changing expanses of water? What of the nostalgic bourgeois scholar of the 21st Century? Such questions are interesting, but I will leave them aside for now. For present purposes, the essential feature of landscape is its manner of solicitation, and if nothing else, Gorky's description well captures that such solicitation can be a powerful force, whether it is a solicitation that makes us feel at home in its vastness or abandoned to its desolation (the denial of a sense of bodily belonging being itself a form of solicitation, albeit one that acts on us as an alienating force).

For my own take on truly displacing environments – places which are truly hostile to embodied human experience, which are not even redeemed by the awesomeness of the sublime – see the discussion on the modernist urban environment in chapter six.

disposition in embodiment, a certain mode of inhabitation, which opens up toward a depth that reveals the very potency of place itself that the sublime is encountered. Nor does the sublimity of landscape lie simply in its scale or magnitude; to regard it this way would be to reduce the variety of landscapes to a common quantitative measurement. The sublime landscape is always a singular one (thus, as Casey notes, "[t]here is no landscape of space, though there is landscape both of place and region"[259]) and whether we come across it in the San Juan Valley of southern Colorado or the Ala-Too of northern Kyrgyzstan or Halong Bay in Vietnam, it is the particular character of the place that opens up to us as sublime, an intra-action of body in world that could not occur anywhere else.[260],[261]

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[259] Casey (2001), 689.

[260] What can we say, then, about landscape in the sense that is connoted when we speak of landscape painting and photography? I don't want to present any tendentiously reductive account of such art; there are surely many different functions it can perform and many sorts of resonances which it can elicit. But it does seem to me that it frequently suggests an expansiveness that is akin to the character of transhorizonality which I've discussed here. The more satisfying landscape images generally seem to suggest a continuation of the scene beyond the frame, as if the frame is not large enough to contain the landscape (which, after all, it surely isn't). Those of us who don't particularly know what we're doing with a camera, by contrast, tend to fail miserably when we try to "capture" a landscape. We don't have a knack for presenting the landscape as larger than the frame; we try to take it all in with the camera, and then are appalled at how fantastically we fail to render in the image the grandeur that is right there before our eyes.

[261] Perhaps what the sublimity of landscape points towards is the cosmological, or at least that cosmologies have their roots in landscapes. (Indeed, what is a cosmology but a sort of ultimate landscape?) Consider what it is to have a place in a cosmological order, or to belong to a certain "moral universe." This is to belong to an order that extends beyond the mere *world*, that is utterly suffusive, and that is considerably determinative of one's possibilities for inhabitation. Is landscape not the model for this sort of placial structure?

Cormac McCarthy, one of the great American writers of landscape, is nonpareil in his evocations of the proto-cosmological characteristics of landscape. In *Blood Meridian*, a troop of castaways and would-be marauders sets out, in the wake of the Mexican War, into the yet-unsubjugated desert lands of West Texas and northern Chihuahua. Here is how McCarthy describes a stretch of their progress:

> They rode on and the sun in the east flushed pale streaks of light and then a deeper run of color like blood seeping up in sudden reaches flaring planewise and where the earth drained up into the sky at the edge of creation the top of the sun rose up out of nothing like the head of a great red phallus until it cleared the unseen rim and sat squat and pulsing and malevolent behind them. The shadows of the smallest stones lay like pencil lines across the sand and the shape of the men and their mounts advanced elongate before them like strands of the night from which they'd ridden, like tentacles to bind them to the darkness yet to come. They rode with their heads down, faceless under their hats, like an army asleep on the march. By midmorning another man had died and they lifted him from the wagon where he'd lain among and buried him also and rode on.
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> Now wolves had come to follow them, great pale lobos with yellow eyes that trotted neat of foot or squatted in the shimmering heat to watch them where they made their noon halt. Moving on again. Loping, sidling, ambling with their long noses to the ground. In the evening their eyes shifted and winked out there on the edge of the firelight and in the morning when the riders rode out in the cool dark they

could hear the snarling and the pop of their mouths behind them as they sacked the camp for meatscraps…

> They moved on and the stars jostled and arced across the firmament and died beyond the inkblack mountains. They came to know the nightskies well. Western eyes that read more geometric constructions than those names given by the ancients. Tethered to the polestar they rode the Dipper round while Orion rose in the southwest like a great electric kite. The sand lay blue in the moonlight and the iron tires of the wagons rolled among the shapes of the riders in gleaming hoops that veered and wheeled woundedly and vaguely navigational like slender astrolabes and the polished shoes of the horses kept hasping up like a myriad of eyes winking across the desert floor. They watched storms out there so distant they could not be heard, the silent lightning flaring sheetwise and the thin black spine of the mountain chain fluttering and sucked away again in the dark…
>
> In the morning a urinecolored sun rose blearily through panes of dust on a dim world and without feature. The animals were failing…
>
> All night sheetlightning quaked sourceless to the west beyond the midnight thunderheads, making a bluish day of the distant desert, the mountains on the sudden skyline stark and black and livid like a land of some other order out there whose true geology was not stone but fear. The thunder moved up from the southwest and lightning lit the desert all about them, blue and barren, great clanging reaches ordered out of the absolute night like some demon kingdom summoned up or changeling land that come the day would leave them neither trace nor smoke nor ruin more than any troubling dream. (McCarthy, 44-47.)

What writing can depict of landscape, which neither painting nor photography nor even film can do, is its changeability, not just as we spatially advance towards (but never over) its horizon, but how it plays out temporally as a theater of forces. Here we see day and night in their diurnal-eternal succession, a cyclicity that is of course common to nearly all terrestrial places. And this allows us to see how integral the celestial realm is to landscape (something that is far more clearly manifest in the desert, for there is no pale morning or fading day there; it is night and then there is blaring sun until the cacophanous skies of sunset and then it is night again). Where these figures *are*, bowed by that shrill sun or following the arc of the "nightskies" (that most ancient locus of orientation, even if the travelers see it with geometrically-attuned "Western eyes"), is a landscape that extends into astronomical depths. Indeed, its extent is perhaps greater even than that. McCarthy later writes: "The jagged mountains were pure blue in the dawn and everywhere birds twittered and the sun when it rose caught the moon in the west so that they lay opposed to each other across the earth, the sun whitehot and the moon a pale replica, as if they were the ends of a common bore beyond whose terminals burned worlds past all reckoning" (McCarthy, 86). This is a landscape that initiates us into a cosmic order, and yet even at that placial magnitude it does not find its limit, but a suggestion of further distances and further horizons that bend the imagination. Landscape here expresses the ultimate openness and unboundedness of place, for its limit is not merely an unmapped territory but the unknowable itself.

There are other movements in this place that is a cauldron of them: the wayfarers themselves, burdened and plodding and visited by death indifferently; the wolves, spectral yet belonging in that place more than the men; the wagon wheels, askew and "wounded" by the harsh landscape. And the night storms that billow colossally, their forms limned in flashes from within (one imagines, especially if one *knows* these clouds), quasi-mythical yet ephemeral. There is a strange union in this landscape – one could say in the major theme of the novel – of beauty and violence. The land is awesome and fearful, but also captivating, and the biblical character of the prose reinforces a sense that something of the Old Testament, some chord struck deep in the Western psyche, resonates with this place. Yet it does not do so by subsuming the landscape under a monotheistic worldview; on the contrary, it resonates by giving expression to some older sense of things that itself, in another world, might have been the very sense of the sublime that motivated that monotheistic intuition in the first place, and here returns through the land itself, perhaps because it is beyond the boundary of Western civilization, or is the cusp of that civilization outrunning its own horizon and thus spilling into a world that has not been tamed by that homogenizing force of universalizing thought, that realm of God and law that has here been left behind.

Note the interweavings: first, of humans and landscape; the landscape is something that they perceive, and it shapes their perception. Second, of cultural-historical perspective and landscape: the landscape is what it is for the travellers because of who they are and where they come from, and in no small way because of how they

But I don't mean to present here an exclusive definition of the sublime (or even a definition of it at all). Perhaps there is sublimity in the intricacy of certain microstructures in nature, or in the stillness of a pond, or in the deep temporality we find in pebble-sized fossils of sea creatures that have been thrust onto mountain slopes by the vicissitudes of geology, or in a willow bowed at dusk; indeed, if Merleau-Ponty is right that the invisible depths of what we experience, even of something as quotidian as a red dress, are unbounded – if, in this respect, they always exceed their own horizon – then perhaps there is a potentiality of the sublime anywhere we look, provided our looking is attentive to these depths. At any rate, the reason I point to this quality of landscape is to highlight the potency of place, and in particular its capacity to draw us over the horizon. Indeed, insofar as place lococentrically situates us it engages us in a centrifugal movement, out, into, and through the world, which is ever remaking the horizon, repositioning us in terms of it, even as the horizon always recedes, the landscape always stretches farther on, in invitation to an exploration that is never finally accomplished once and for all – a structure that is not unlike that of desire itself.[262]

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alter that landscape by their manner of inhabiting it, namely, by making of it a domain of violence, war and death (though their treating it as such is also in a way drawn out of them by it having already had that character) – and then this relation in turn will shape future modes of inhabitation of the landscape. Third, of the author and the world of the novel: the writer creates a world, but one that is solicited by an actual landscape and an actual history; and then the manner in which this landscape and history expresses itself through his writing itself becomes a solicitation, drawing out further narrative events and descriptions in the development of a compelling story and a coherent style. Fourth, of language and place: the linguistic descriptions situate us with regard to the landscape and the landscape draws out those descriptions and those modes of imaginative inhabitation; and though there may be indefinitely many ways to describe this landscape, not just any description could be countenanced, nor could the world (the cosmological order) that is here depicted be borne by any landscape. The sum of these interweavings is a disposition towards existence as such, which is to say, again, a sort of cosmology – not one that is a closed system, but one that is incomprehensible in scale, unbounded, and anything but anthropocentric. Humans are not more than flotsam in the gyres of this sea, yet they are participants in it: both in their violence and in their aesthetic disposition towards it, the characters partake of its order (or its chaos; the distinction doesn't seem to hold particularly well at this scale); and at another level, of course, so do author and readers. And in this participation we find an opening on to something more expansive than our own perceptual world, and something deeper in time and deeper in meaning than anything we can fathom, even as we are absorbed into it, even as we express it by our inhabitation. This opening we find through landscape.

[262] John Wylie argues for the inherent incompleteness of our inhabitation in landscape, and thus for landscape as fundamentally displacing. He cites the writer Tim Robinson, who describes the "mode of being" of a pod of dolphins as "an intensification of their medium into alert, reactive self-awareness; they were wave made flesh, with minds solely to ensure the moment-by-moment reintegration of body and world" (Robinson (1986), 11-12. Cited in Wylie (2012), 374). Wylie asks if there is an equivalent manner in which humans might belong to landscape to that by which the dolphin belongs to the wave. If, as he takes it, walking is the form of human action most associated – or as one might put it, most *strongly solicited* – by landscape, then is it possible to take the "good

The significance of landscape for the movements of human emplacement is not simply a matter of a romantic dwelling in the sublime, however. Landscapes are implicated in our cultural and practical concerns; in one sense they lie at the root of all of them, as every human culture and civilization arose by virtue of what its landscape afforded for human activity.[263] Every culture and civilization therefore developed a knowledge of landscape that was integral

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step" that would unite us with landscape, and thus effect a sense of pure dwelling in it? He concludes that, if by a "good step" is meant a *fusion* or *identification* with landscape, then the answer is no. This is because there is an aporia, in the Derridean sense, at the heart of any such step, "a figure of doubt, contradiction and dislocation that haunts from within any ontological claim"; rather, the "good step, supposedly an articulation of the quintessence of dwelling, in actuality displaces dwelling. But "this, in fact, *is* the 'goodness' of the step – in displacing a thought of dwelling, it opens rather than encloses landscape, un-earths it, as it were, while remaining committed to grounds yet-to-come" (Ibid., 375).

These are interesting and compelling points.* But what exactly is meant here by 'displacement'? Wylie describes it as a "creative tension of land and life" (Ibid., 377), but he does not say precisely why it is creative, wherein the tension lies, nor why displacement is a precondition for it. Yet see another quote from Robinson's oeuvre which Wylie employs in describing the openness of this displacement, a description of walking in the Connemara landscape:

> as the foot descends through space, a surface exactly the size and shape of the foot-sole receives it; this support is the top of a column of inconceivable height that goes down and down, narrower and narrower, until it rests upon a point, a nothing, at the centre of the earth, and from that point opens up again in the opposite direction like the cone of futurity opening out of a moment, into the unsoundable. (Robinson (2009), 544.)

This step, Wylie notes, "remains incomplete, suspended in the 'cone of futurity' rather than firmly anchored to the stone, a spacing at once ineffable and provisional" (Wylie (2012), 376). If this ineffability and provisionality is what Wylie means by 'displacement,' then what he seems to have in mind is a mode of existence in place that is without boundary, that instead opens onto the (literal) depths of the earth, and opens as well onto depths of time – both the futurity which is explicitly invoked, and the presence of the deep past that is implicitly summoned in the invocation of the geological. What is experienced here is the embeddedness of what is in some ways the most characteristically human action in a milieu that exceeds our comprehension. What Wylie means by 'displacement,' then, would seem to be our participation in a world that summons us yet exceeds the sensible. Such a relation, I have been arguing, is not displacement, but *em*placement in a world that exceeds our reckoning, and that by this excess makes possible the very movements out of ourselves which characterize us as expressive creatures. In other words, it is this openness and, ultimately, unboundedness that is in fact the *condition* for emplacement. It seems to me that if we want to refer to this as 'displacement,' then, we would have to deny the possibility of *ever* being emplaced at all.

*We also do well to be wary of what Wiley elsewhere calls "a romanticised account of being-in-the-world, one troubled by both myths of primitivism and baleful notions of authentic or proper dwelling" (Wiley (2009), 282). This possibility concerns landscape in particular, since landscape is the level at which place may plausibly be called *home* for a people.

[263] It wouldn't be sufficient for a culture or civilization to be grounded in anything less than a landscape – that is, anything less than a sense of place that suffuses the world out to and beyond its horizon – for the coherence of any culture or civilization entails an orientation that would necessarily extend to all they surveyed. For the most local of societies, this would mean a certain relation to a given landscape; for world-straddling empires, it would mean the incorporation of multiple landscapes into this orientation (though never in a manner in which those landscapes don't pull back against these impositions in the assertion of their own, which demand certain appropriate ways of inhabiting them).

to its cultural practice, and frequently (always?) a relation to a homeland, a territory, that bound their culture to a landscape: the place of a people. Cultural knowledge could in large measure be understood as the intertwining of people and landscape, not just in terms of their concept of self-identity as a culture and their place in a broader cosmography, but in terms of the material basis for their survival. For hunters and gatherers, this would no doubt involve a very detailed biological knowledge, a keen directional sense based on the ability to read the landscape for orientational signs, and so forth. For nomadic pastoralists, different sorts of knowledge and different ranges of movement would be involved. With agriculture, humans began to actively alter the landscape, drawing out its latent potentialities in a way that rooted them in it, that thus made the fundamental affordance of the landscape one of production rather than movement. For industrial civilization, the material relation to landscape becomes one of extraction: geological mapping for the facilitation of mineral extraction, road-building to serve logging enterprises, and railroads to deliver these "natural resources" to market are the emblems of this new relation. Even industrial-age agriculture follows a paradigm of extraction, as the maximization of yields is pursued through pesticide use, monoculture, and harvesting practices at the expense of soil and water resources, and therefore at the expense of the long-term viability of those practices. The industrial age has also marked the emergence of the truly urban landscape – the first landscapes that are for the most part constructed.

This extractive approach to landscape complicates the relation to landscape as place of inhabitation in numerous ways. For one, it is by definition unsustainable; arguably, the economic forms which both undergird and rely upon the extractive approach *demand* unsustainability, as disequilibrium (in the form of perpetual growth) is necessary to provide overall returns on investment. For another thing, it entails a distancing (or displacement) from those landscapes which sustain us. Whereas pre-industrial peoples generally occupy the landscape where their food and goods are produced, those sustaining landscapes are for the most part invisible to industrial peoples (a fact which is surely not unrelated to a rise in the popularity of landscape art that is contemporaneous with industrialization[264]). This distancing

[264] Vincent Scully writes that, while Greek writers from Homer on were engaged with the power of landscape, "it is only when the older, more intense belief in the gods tends to flag by the fourth century b. c. that romantic,

renders all the more problematic the fact that our current mode of inhabitation in the world is a self-destroying one, as the manifestations of this destruction have so far remained, for the most part, remote. These are issues to which I will return. For now, I only mention them to point to the deep sense in which inhabitation relates to landscape. If we inhabit the world through emplacement, then landscapes are the places through which our modes of inhabitation are most broadly determined.

Conclusion

If the idea that place may have this power to solicit seems counter-intuitive, we should (as always) question what it is in which out intuitions are couched. If we recall the history of place, we can see that this idea was at the very least not counter-intuitive for philosophy's foundational figures; that, indeed, the intuition seemed to run the other way: for Plato, how could things appear as meaningful to us if they were not supported by place? for Aristotle, how could the directionality inherent to the natural movement of objects manifest itself if it were not determined by place? With this in mind, we might also consider the fact that the rendering of place as passive and inert was the product of many centuries of evolution in Western thinking that culminated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even if the concepts of absolute space and rational subjective agency that dominated that era have since come into question, there is no doubt that their shadows still loom. If Plato and Aristotle were onto something – if place does have a potency; if our actions are not simply the product of autonomous agency but emerge through a collaboration between ourselves and the world – then it would be quite possible that this fact has been occluded by these modern concepts. Following in the footsteps of Merleau-Ponty and others, I have tried to show that this is indeed the case.

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picturesque poetry, nostalgically descriptive of landscape delights, like the idylls of Theocritus, makes its appearance, to be joined later by some tentative landscape painting. Again, it is only when the gods finally begin to die completely out of the land and when many human beings begin to live lives totally divorced from nature – at the beginning, that is, of the modern age – that landscape painting, picturesque architecture, and landscape description, like that of the romantic rediscoverers of Greece itself, become the obsessive themes of art" (Scully, 2.)

The social constitution of place

In earlier sections I argued against the priority of abstract and objective space in favor of concrete and embodied space as experientially and conceptually fundamental. I also argued that it would be a mistake to conflate this lived space with subjective space. But there is a further sense in which this notion of lived space needs to be qualified in light of some of the preceding considerations regarding social existence, and which goes against some traditional phenomenological accounts of subjectivity. This will also show another way in which the power of place exceeds a merely egocentric point of view.

In the previous chapter, we saw that in participating in the world as linguistic creatures, we take up meanings which are produced through social interaction, and therefore that the very ways we perceive the world are bound up in expressions of our social existence. This should already cast doubt on any notion we might have that there is a "transcendental ego" at the core of our experience of the sensible – if for no other reason than that the idea of such an ego, or any other notion of the autonomous subject, is itself socially-constituted.

Of course one might argue that such an idea, though socially-constituted, nonetheless expresses something essential about the structure of experience; after all, as we've just seen the relation between language and the world is intertwining, not arbitrary – it may be the case that the idea of the ego is appropriately solicited by this structure, even if we grant the intersubjective nature of linguistic meaning. If so, then it may make sense to conceive of concrete space as "subjective" in this traditional sense. Stawarska, though, gives good reason for doubting this argument. As she points out, indexicals like 'I' and 'you,' 'here' and 'there,' are intelligible to us only if we appreciate the reversibility of these terms when we are in conversation with others. For instance, someone says 'You, over there,' and I respond 'Here I am': if I "fail to understand that the demonstrative 'there' reverses into a 'here' following the change of speaker roles from the other to myself I have not grasped the meaning of 'here' fully

and am unable to use this deictic expression in the canonical situation of utterance."[265] The same goes for the reversal of 'I' and 'you': if I can not understand that *I* am '*you'* to another and *she* is '*I'* to herself, then I can not be said to understand the meaning of these pronouns. To appreciate this reversibility, on the other hand, is to be situated according to a polycentric orientation – I appreciate that the other person is likewise situated from her own perspective in this placial milieu that we share; that each of us is one of multiple loci which define it as a place of meaning. If we recall de Jaegher and di Paolo's analysis of the autonomy of interactive social processes, we can see already that in sharing this milieu, and in engaging in this pronominal reversibility, we are establishing an orientation which is based not purely on our egocentric situation, but on a situation that is constituted through an autonomous social interaction that involves multiple perspectives, including ones which are independent of any single perceiver.

As Stawarska points out, following Gurwitsch[266] and Humboldt[267], every actual act of speech implicates, minimally, an 'I' and at least one 'you,' since every act of speech involves a speaker and an addressee. It is not the case, then, that the polycentrism of placial situatedness is an extension or projection of some more fundamental unitary egocentric perspective. The autonomous egocentric perspective, instead, may be a product of a sort of linguistic illusion, for the "'I' boasts a guaranteed reference – it reliably indicates the speaker in the production of the utterance in which it occurs."[268] This reliability might seem to elude all doubt, since the one who refers to 'I' *always* refers to themselves. Indeed, this indubitability is what Descartes rather famously took to be the case. But this is sort of funny: because it is the reversibility of the 'I' that ensures that it is a guaranteed reference, since 'I' always refers to the speaker, *no matter who the speaker is*. In other words, it is the very fact that 'you' are also an 'I' (for yourself) that introspection will invariably reveal oneself to be an 'I.' So the very characteristic of the pronoun which expresses our essentially polycentric spatial and social situatedness is what seduces a philosopher like Descartes into deducing the radically egocentric perspective of the Cogito. The upshot, as Stawarska writes, is that "the pronoun 'I' therefore evidences the existence of a

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[265] Stawarska, 403.
[266]See Gurwitsch (1977).
[267] Humboldt, 304–30.
[268] Stawarska, 406.

communicative space with a vibrant polycentric orientation, where each individual speaker role is performed relative to other speakers via a continuing reversal of addresser/addressee roles and perspectives."[269]

There is, then, no 'I' without a 'you.' Perhaps the appeal of the egocentric perspective is a consequence of language – the seemingly irrefutable singularity of the word 'I' may present as a sort of metaphysical bollard, safely mooring us against the inconstant sea of perpetual flux and indeterminacy. But this word itself depends on a prior polycentricity, a placial situatedness that already incorporates the perspectives of others,[270] and that is presupposed by my very ability to communicate with others.[271] Or, if there are modes of communication prior to the mastery of pronoun reversibility, these nonetheless already depend on the autonomy of intersubjective interaction, as we have seen. So there is not just the polycentrism which is manifest in the reversibility of indexicals, but a polycentrism that emerges through the autonomy of interactive processes, such that to engage in communication with others is to adopt a perspective which is not simply one's own as an autonomous subject, but is a new perspective constituted through interaction (one which nonetheless does not completely supersede the autonomy of the individuals engaged in interaction), so that in a sense any interaction implicates at least *three* perspectives: those of an I, a you, and a *we*.[272] In conversation, we are ever shifting between these perspectives. And as always, we should think even of the internal stream of consciousness as the expression of multiplicities, whether it be

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[269] Ibid.

[270] This incorporation of others' perspectives is sometimes referred to as "having a theory of mind," for instance when referring to the capacities of infants or animals, which has struck me at times as being a bit of a funny projection of mind scientists' own abstract concerns.

[271] As Stawarska points out, empirical research seems to corrobate the notion that polycentric spatial orientation is a necessary condition for mastery of pronoun usage. For instance, Loveland investigated "the developmental relationship between understanding differences in spatial point of view and correct comprehension and production of *I*/*you* pronouns," and found that "a given pronoun tended not to be free of errors until the child understoof that points of view can differ" (Loveland, 535-556). Meanwhile, Ricard, et al. found that "children's performance on perspective taking tasks was correlated with full pronoun acquisition. Moreover, competence at coordinating two visual perspectives preceded the full mastery of first and second person pronouns, and competence at coordinating three perspectives preceded the full mastery of third person pronouns when a strict criterion was adopted" (Ricard, et al. (1999)).

[272] Or at the least, any interaction that is really interactive and not just, say, the unidirectional relation between a drill sergeant and his troops (though even in that case, one might argue that the total submission of the troops to the sergeant's commands is itself tacitly interactive, as the unidirectionality of the relation itself depends on their obedience).

explicitly so, as when we imagine a conversation with someone, or implicitly so, as in the sedimentation of others' voices – others' perspectives – in our own.

We can now see the caveats that are required if we are to treat the experience of concrete place as essentially "subjective." This experience *is* so, to the extent that it is invariably embodied and situated, and thus depends at some level on a body as a locus of sensible interaction with the world – the body is the "relational center of all spatial orientations and possible presentations," as Husserl puts it, insofar as all perceptions adhere to bodies.[273],[274] But it is *not* so in the sense of an egological subject that stands as the monocentric fulcrum of situated embodiment. Rather, emplacement emerges out of the resonances between the perspectives of multiple individuals with their surroundings and with each other. It is not even in a secondary sense that one is emplaced through the perspectives of others – one's "own" perspective is itself inextricable from a movement between perspectives; through interaction with others, as well as through the voices, the ways of looking, of others that erupt through our own voice and our own way of looking, our manner of situating ourselves is innately plural, polycentric, and dialogical.

This is integral to the openness of place: for not only is one's experience of place always exceeding itself through the ramifying depths of the idea-endowed world, it exceeds itself by constantly shifting perspectives, resonating across a polycentric situational domain which itself unfolds indefinitely onto new perspectival loci and new domains. This movement may occur on a number of different registers. For instance, the placial movement that occurs through my coordinated interaction with another person may shape my experience of place, both through the other person's overt descriptions of place and their implicit evocation of placial arrangements and patterns through their manner of speaking and so forth. Also, new relations to place emerge at the level of this coordinated interaction as itself an autonomous mode of orientation – an orientation that corresponds to the indexical 'we' (though it needn't be thematized as such). Simply engaging with someone socially may cast one's surroundings in a different light. Imagine unexpectedly running into a friend in some public space: the

[273] Husserl, 109.
[274] This is not to exclude the possibility of superindividual sensation, however, so this relation of dependence should not be taken to imply a necessary dependence on a *single* body.

surroundings may brighten and open up, become more familiar and hospitable; they take on a new valence simply through one's shift from a solitary disposition to a convivial one, an affective shift which will also manifest in the movements of one's thoughts. Even the attention and moods of strangers influence our placial orientation: we've all had the experience of becoming alerted to some disturbance by the suddenly alert posturing and gazes of others in a crowd, even before we sense the disturbance itself, as the mood diffracts through the crowd in advance of the perception of its source.[275] And generally, the power of crowds to conduct moods – everything from euphoria to rage to solemnity – is well known. In every case the crowd-channeled mood has an emplacing power.

But if the polycentric and inherently social nature of place allows for these sorts of perspectival shifts and placial movements, it also shows once again that place has its own power to situate us according to its own features. We see this in evidence anywhere people congregate: next to the fountain in Washington Square Park, for instance, where radiating paths, circumjacent benches, and a broad plaza-like space, not to mention the aesthetic appeal of the fountain itself, make it a focus for the activity of the park, drawing in buskers, proselytizers, and the sundry inhabitants of lower New York. We socially orient ourselves around such landmarks all the time. And generally speaking, despite the increasing ubiquity of technologically-mediated communication over the course of the last century or so, meeting socially – "face-to-face" – is an essential human activity, and we seek out places which facilitate it, for instance in the "third places" of barber shops, cafés and so forth. This term is used by Ray Oldenburg to describe those meeting spots, outside of home and the workplace, which are anchors for the life of the community, facilitate conversation, and provide a sense of place.[276] In this context, 'sense of place' can be taken in its colloquial (and arguably its most profound)

[275] Anyone who has ridden the New York subway has also witnessed the phenomenon of what I hereby dub 'track-bobbing': someone angles their body out over the truncated dome tactile paving of the yellow caution stripe abetting the track to see if a train might be coming, and almost with the contagion of a yawn others recapitulate this motion on down the length of the platform, as if another's querying glance might actually conjure a coming train, *and this had better be investigated*. Why do we do this? Nothing is gained by this action. Perhaps it is a near-involuntary response to seeing someone suddenly attentive to an invisible spectacle: we can't resist the desire to know what the fuss is about, even if we know that there is no train coming, and perhaps especially since our attention is already directed down that track in anticpation of the train that will eventually come.
[276] See Oldenburg (1989).

sense, as that which roots us, orients us, embeds us in a meaningful physical and social world, and which can even be expressed as a kind of love.[277] There is something about such places that draws us together, that makes community possible, and in many ways even *defines* community as that which is socially organized around them. And it is not just that each of us is drawn to these places as individuals; we are drawn to them as a 'we,' as members of a community; or even if the place is new to us we are drawn to it as social animals who enjoy the presence of others. These are the places that draw us out and draw us together. They solicit community, and it seems safe to presume that they have been common to every human society at least since the Paleolithic campfire.[278]

We can consider as well the ways that memory qua experience of place serves to bind us in socially-constituted understanding. This is true at the level of intimate personal relationships, for which it is invariably the case that memories of certain events in place have special meanings, and form the very glue of those relationships: our personal histories, indeed, are to a large, if not comprehensive, extent *shared* histories; the narratives out of which we construct our identities really consist of the intertwining of narratives concerning the interaction of others and ourselves. To think of someone as a friend is to think of them in terms of this shared history, a history which is always emplaced and is thickly present for us in those concrete places where that history was written.[279] This is also true at the level of cultural and national identity, another form of identity for which a shared history is essential. For to

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[277] As Keith Basso says, "sense of place – or, as I would prefer to say, *sensing* of place – is a form of cultural activity" (Basso, 83). As he goes on to say, this sensing "is a kind of imaginative experience, a species of involvement with the natural and social environment, a way of *appropriating* portions of the earth" (Ibid.). I think it would be important, though, to add to this description that it is equally an involvement by which portions of the earth appropriate *us*.

[278] Casey (GBP, 299) quotes Joseph Rykwert, who observes that "[h]ome could just be a hearth, a fire on the bare ground by any lair. That may well be the one thing that nobody can quite do without: a fireplace, some focus." Casey also observes elsewhere that despite the apparent threat to such places from solitary technological distractions – or perhaps because of this threat – third places retain their appeal for us: "The more places are leveled down, the *more* – not the less – may selves be led to seek out thick places in which their own personal enrichment can flourish" (Casey (2001), 685). Though his reference to the success of Borders and Barnes & Noble in the face of competition from Amazon now appears to be dated, it is perhaps an even more striking fact that *independent* bookstores have more recently maintained their popularity, even as their corporate brick-and-mortar competition has not done as well.

[279] And this allusion to language is not incidental – if not in the writing, then at least in the re-telling of such histories friendship is paid its homage.

understand oneself as belonging to such an identity is to understand oneself as sharing a history, which is to say, both a literal and a figurative landscape of historical significances, a memorial landscape that subtends cultural belonging (and which is as significant for what it occludes as for what it brings to light as meaningful, as significant for what is contested there as for what is consensually agreed upon).[280] Place, then, solicits us from the past in the complex layering of the present that is characteristic of memory.

But at an even more fundamental level, our embeddedness in a language-imbued world evinces the power of place to situate us not just as individuals but more fundamentally as social beings whose relation to place is structured through socially-determined meanings. We've already seen the role of place-names with regard to such meanings: a socially shared meaning develops through the intertwining of name and place that serves to draw us together in a common relation to the place. But we've also seen more generally that even when place-names aren't being invoked this is typical of the enactive function of language: to orient us towards things in a way that is determined by some mood, some interests, and some disposition in embodiment. So when I stand before a meadow with someone, it is enough for my oriented perspective to be shared with this person that I speak of it with him: in this way "through the concordant operation of his body and my own, what I see passes into him, this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades his vision without quitting my own, I recognize in my green his green" (VI, 142). Here a certain place solicits a linguistic expression by means of which an orientation towards that place (in this case, a way of seeing it) is shared. We can see by this light that language is not merely a tool with which sonorous creatures orient themselves in the world, it is also a means by which place solicits those orientations. Of course, we've also seen that language is present even in solitary perception, so that this soliciting power of place already expresses itself linguistically in such perceptions.

As language users, then, we are solicited by the world as fundamentally social organisms. This is, as Stawarska showed, revealed in the very logic of indexicals by which we identify ourselves and others. It is revealed as well in the power of place-names to situate us in terms of the social significance of places. And it is revealed in the fact that a perspective that is

[280] Trigg discusses the role of spatialized memory in historical understanding (Trigg (2012), ch. 2).

linguistically expressed to another becomes a shared perspective. What each of these examples show is that the world, for speaking organisms, is interwoven with language. As much as a world of things, it is a cacophonous world, a cocophony that resonates in the perpetual unfolding of placial existence, in which we are drawn into meaningful interaction through the expressions of others by a speech which antecedes us, a speech "which we do not have but which has us" (S, 19). A phenomenological account that simply takes the body as the sole locus for the interaction between self and world misses the essentially lococentric character of the world, its appearance to us as multitudinous in perspectives, populated by an ever-shifting array of zones of density and interlaced with innumerable paths, all of which are meaningful to us not because they are emanations of our bodily understanding but because bodily understanding is at its core already absorbed into the social, and thereby absorbed into the ceaseless re-articulations of the language-imbued world.

Place and abstract thought

We are always emplaced, in the literal sense that we are always embedded in some physical milieu: we are always literally *somewhere*. But the fact of where we are physically located only begins to suggest the importance place has for structuring our experience. Having taken a look at a number of the most important aspects of place, we can now begin to address the question of how abstract thought is an expression of emplaced existence.

First, we've seen that purely concrete emplacement for humans is exceptional.[281] In any given situation, we find ourselves encountering things which are already being shaped through abstraction – that is, the very ways we perceive things involve judgments about them, acts of categorization, and linguistic structuring by which the world already presents itself to us as bearing a meaning that carries us beyond the sensorily "given," in every major sense in which that term may be taken. Thanks especially to the incessancy of language, but more generally to the desire that causes us always to seek out meaning in any milieu in which we find ourselves,

[281] Such experiences are not necessarily impossible however; Schneider seems to be an instance of such experience in a pathological vein, and perhaps something like completely unabstracted experience is achievable through certain forms of meditation or other spiritual practice.

as soon as the concrete is present to us it already gives rise to abstract significances, and the concrete itself is not undisturbed by these projections – it is indeed molded by them in important ways. Our most immediate experience of place already incorporates depths that carry us into a milieu that exceeds the sphere of the concrete horizon. Insofar as emplacement is a matter of inhabiting a meaningful milieu, then, to be emplaced is to take on trajectories of thought that carry us beyond our local concrete environment and into realms of abstraction.

Yet we shouldn't think of the extension of our milieus in abstraction as simply the projections of an egocentric agent. For place-making is never simply the action of an autonomous individual for humans, but a social process that often proceeds from a polycentric orientation. When things take on abstract significance for us, it is frequently with respect to *us* as participants in a conversation (as when we mutually work out, with a companion, the route to reach our destination as we walk down the street), or as close relations who may not even be present (as when we imagine our surroundings through the voice of a friend, a voice that is neither fully theirs nor fully ours), or as a community (as when we express a socially-constituted sense of civic, national or ethnic identity). If Stawarska shows that the use of deictic terms already implicates a polycentric placial orientation, then this is surely all the more true of situations in which we "share our views" with others – a phrase which implies the exchangability of perspectives regarding matters abstract. And indeed, what we do in each of these cases is *adopt a certain perspective*: orient ourselves toward the world according to some particular concern and by means of some particular disposition in embodiment; we embed ourselves in a milieu that is never simply that in which we are concretely emplaced, but which opens up to us through social interaction (or through imagined interaction, which is itself a projection that draws on the habitual modes of coordinated interaction we've developed with other individuals). And all of these particular interactions are in turn set into the broader cultures and language communities to which we belong, so that our modes of emplacement, and the dispositions in embodiment which they entail, are expressions of possibilities which

those cultures and those language communities open up.[282] In engaging abstractly with things, then, it is not so much that we orchestrate abstract arrangements from an egological perspective as it is the case that through our social existence forces of sense-making take on valences which are conducive to our expressing them – verbally, in thought, or in action.

Of course, a point I've already made several times pertains here: human existence does not merely have a social *dimension*; it is inherently social. For even in solitude, language is with us, and to this extent, our experience is at a minimum always imbued with socially constituted meanings. These meanings, therefore, can never be exhaustively defined simply by reference to the individual; their depths always extend into social significances and they are functions of dispositions in embodiment that are inextricable from cultural modes of being. At the same time, however, the individual renders a given expression as singular: these meaningful depths that unfold within a given context of emplacement resonate with the individual's personality, personal history, mood, bodily capacities, gender, social position, race, occupation, and everything else that contributes to the contexts in which sense-making occurs.

We have also seen that emplacement is not simply determined by the body, even taking the body as socially expressive and construed as a multiplicity. Place also has its own power to solicit forms of interactions, and so emplacement is a process that emerges as much through the solicitation of place as it does through embodied action; or more precisely, these two aspects of embodied emplacement depend on and are inextricable from each other. This is true of abstract as well as concrete experience. In the first chapter, I discussed imaginative projection as a sort of taking flight of one's bodily capacities from concrete circumstances: while these capacities are unbound in projection, as when we adopt a bird's-eye view in imagining the street layout around us, we never fully leave them behind. They are always the media of our thought, so to say. But if we are engaging a milieu with our bodily capacities, then we are engaging in place (albeit a place which may be abstracted from our concrete surroundings, just as our bodily capacities may be abstracted from their concrete limitations).

[282] And cultures and languages are in turn expressions of our existence as a species: certainly the possibilities for our dispositions in embodiment and modes of emplacement that are culturally expresses are in many important ways determined by our evolved physiology, genetically-endowed behavioral tendencies, etc.

Accordingly, when the moving intra-action of body in world expresses itself in abstraction, this must likewise involve a solicitation by place.

In what sense is this the case? Here again we encounter the situating power of language. Indeed, when we extend beyond concrete embeddedness – when the tangible affordances and constraints of our concrete surroundings in interaction with our actual bodily capacities are no longer solely determinative of our possibilities for action – then the projective power of language to situate us becomes all the more integral, as it is largely through this irrepressible power of emplacement that we gear into virtual domains. This is not simply a matter of language limning a virtual environment, as if it painted a portrait which we could then step into and move about in. It is rather that language is the movement, the action within the virtual, by which that virtual world is spawned. The action of speech and the making of place through which that speech runs are equiprimordial. But as we have seen, language is always implicative: it never merely describes through a system of direct representation or reflection, like a ship that glides on the surface of the ocean revealing with sonar pulses the topography of the seafloor below. Language is situating, which is to say it places us in the world, and to be so placed is for things to open out towards indefinite horizons. Even the least utterance already sends out skeins of significance which invite one into the world in respect of some task or concern; when language is creative, it may even conjure whole worlds, sweeping us up in modes of inhabitation we may not have even previously known. In so doing, language gestures towards a world that far exceeds whatever is "literally" described.

"Call me Ishmael," begins *Moby-Dick*. "Some years ago -- never mind how long precisely -- having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world."[283] How much do we already know about this narrator? How much of his world do we already share? His identity is still mysterious – almost incidental (no need to spill data-ink here explicating the notorious ambiguities of those first three words). But already we are standing with him at the shore, gazing out at the sea as an enticement, a beguiling landscape (albeit a watery one) that is

[283] Melville, 11.

drawing us over the horizon. And it is *us* that it is already drawing – we are seeing it the way he sees it, sharing in the same kinesthetic pull.

What's more, as Melville writes, "If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean with me… Circumambulate the city of a dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, by Whitehall northward. What do you see? -- Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the spiles; some seated upon the pier-heads; some looking over the bulwarks."[284] Now we are a whole community, those sea-gazers and us, drawn together by the solicitation of the sea. And note that the solicitation is almost explicitly a pull from beyond the horizon: we are in the "insular city of the Manhattoes, belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs… Its extreme down-town is the battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land."[285] What we see of the ocean, even at the shore, comes to us from unseeable distances, and bespeaks resonances even from the other side of the world; in its nearness it already carries us to the farthest shore. In a few lines, we have found ourselves in New York, but an "insular" New York, one from which we choose to look out towards the wide world, a world of which the sea is the center. This globe-encircling sea is a *place* for us, one which centers us with respect to itself, which exerts a gravitational pull, inciting a sort of somnambulism of longing in the cityfolk. And as a "landscape" it extends beyond the horizon, suffusing the whole domain of the senses with a certain mood, a kind of enchantment that is the corrective for what the narrator refers to as "a damp, drizzly November in my soul"[286] (and how much does *that* passing phrase conjure? how much does it already speak to us of a suffusive manner of existing in the world, one which is as immediately recognizable, which is to say as inhabitable, as the transhorizonal draw of the sea?). The places we will encounter in this novel all belong to this landscape, whether they are literally at sea or not. The landscape, as suffusive element, is that in which everything else occurs; it imposes a kind of cosmic order on scenes and events – the places that are nested in

[284] Ibid., 11-12.
[285] Ibid., 12.
[286] Ibid., 11.

this landscape (not least the *Pequod* itself), the actions that take place in it, and even, in the case of Ahab, the mad defiance in the face of it, ultimately are *of* this element, and this is what is finally determinative.

As the sea solicits Ishmael and all of us readers who stand at his shoulder, so the world of the novel so far described must solicit further words from Melville's pen. Having thus emerged, the sea is a domain in which those words must be faithful participants, even as they press into it, draw it out of itself, and make manifest its own possibilities. The virtual realm of the novel captivates, just as actual places do, yet as abstract it does so with the permissiveness that is granted imaginative movement: we say that "anything is possible" in such virtual worlds, but to the extent that it is a coherent world, a fleshed-out world which initiates us into its meaningful depths, it will adhere to a logic of its own construction by which certain modes of inhabitation find expression, a logic that is somehow native to our world yet at the same time exceeds it, some pattern or force in things that has been loosed to construct a rarefied domain.

It may seem strange to regard the world of *Moby-Dick* as abstract, so exquisitely is it crafted and so comprehensively does it absorb us in its sensuality.[287] But of course we can only become so absorbed in it through acts of imaginative projection, extensions of our bodily capacities which are not fundamentally different than those we would employ, for instance, in considering the costs and benefits of a corporate restructuring proposal. If the latter strikes us as a less enticing engagement of the imaginative capacities, that is because it fails to absorb us in a rich imaginative world, one which has depths that resonate with what we find meaningful in our own lives, wherein the thickness of life resides.[288] Perhaps this is appropriate: perhaps prosaic verbiage is expedient for efficacious corporate management. Or perhaps it is just a social convention. At any rate, such language conjures and is recursively solicited by the sort of (relatively sensorily destitute) abstract places in which such calculations are, in practice, made.

[287] Though it should be said that this particular novel is known to have its dry moments as well.

[288] I am open to the possibility that this sentence reveals a personal bias. Nonetheless, we all surely have equivalent domains of abstract thought which we experience as comparably destitute, and there are surely businessmen out there who are not great Melville fans, even as the imaginative milieus of capitalist ambition thrill them to the bone.

And these places belong to their own landscapes, abstract landscapes, which exert their own power to determine the possibilities of thought.

There is danger in wandering into destitute places, though. For in doing so we may become uprooted, we may lose that which sustains us, which are the depths that connect us to living places. And in their destitution, places of destitute thought – of *mere* abstraction – are no less enervating and no less alienating than those places in the built environment that assail us with their indifference to our concrete embodied condition.[289] (And as we will see in chapter six, the destitution of abstraction and that of the world we build for ourselves are intertwined as aspects of the same process of forgetting our fundamental nature as embodied and emplaced.) Moreover, there is a false clarity in this destitution which is itself a kind of solicitation, an invitation to inhabit a simple world, a manageable one, a world that can be gathered in its totality under a purview of understanding. (We've seen this before…) And the danger is not merely that we risk alienation, but also that, precisely because such a world presents itself to us as manageable, because in its simplicity it appears to offer a ground of certainty against which the flux of existence may be judged and tamed (and in offering such a ground conceals its own nature as a degraded mode of emplacement), we may be tempted to turn such abstract worlds back upon the concrete, a movement which is essentially violent towards place. It is no coincidence that the depths of place come under the heaviest assault from the abstractions of economic thinking, for instance, particularly when that thinking becomes enchanted with its own tautological explanatory power and, having expunged the local, the particular, and the unquantifiable from its universalistic calculus, asserts itself as the sole metric of value. Thus it is that the richness of the environment, the rooted history of communities, "non-productive" cultural practices, and the sense of place as orienting and embedding – the very elements of the world in which the greatest depths of meaning reside – are those to which such universalizing abstraction is most blind, for it is precisely the *depths* of

[289] 'Destitute' here should by no means be taken as 'lacking in sophistication'; far from it, as "sophisticated" thought is very frequently the guise of destitution, and the most earthbound truths, those with the deepest and strongest roots, may often be lacking in the stylistic accoutrements of sophistication. (Said the academic philosopher…)

place of which such destitute logic can not take account.[290] We could say that there are *placial values*, and that these are precisely the values that have no place in a logic which is oblivious of its own placial origin.[291]

Imaginative projection, then, is capable of producing the most diverse movements of thought: on the one hand, through creative expression it may draw us into modes of emplacement that brim with rich detail, and may even exercise bodily capacities, in particular ways of feeling and seeing the world, that we didn't know we had; on the other hand, it may denude the landscapes of thought through a lack of imaginative depth or through a reticence in the face of the intricacy and open-endedness, or even just the affectivity, that is inherent to places that are more fully fleshed out. This structure is familiar from our discussion of language, where we saw that in its creative use language is capable of producing original modes of emplacement that open us onto new meaningful depths in the world, while at the same time sedimented language may ossify our perceptions and lock us into inert modes of relating to the world. But this is no coincidence, for of course language and abstract thought are deeply

[290] This phenomenon is common to economic fundamentalisms of both libertarian and Marxist veins, though it is obvious which of these is presently the more powerful ideology, and which therefore currently poses the greatest threat to those placial values mentioned here.

[291] Basso describes the profound significance of place in Apache ethics. He quotes the Apache man Dudley Patterson, who told him:

> Wisdom sits in places. It's like water that never dries up. You need to drink water to stay alive, don't you? Well, you also need to drink from places. You must remember everything about them. You must learn their names. You must remember what happened at them long ago. You must think about it and keep on thinking about it. Then your mind will become smoother and smoother. Then you will see danger before it happens. You will walk a long way and live a long time. You will be wise. People will respect you. (Basso, 70)

For the Apache, in Basso's telling, wisdom is learned through a knowledge of places – places which are bound up with narratives, stories of particular events that occurred at certain places and which have the power to instruct a reflective mind about how to act. Knowledge of the land, then, is quite literally an ethical knowledge, and the converse is also the case. This topological ethics, as we might call it, is not a system of rules and abstract principles. It is based, rather, on exemplary events, which are singular to the very extent that places themselves are singular, yet which make one wise insofar as knowledge of them allows one to draw parallels between those events and whatever new circumstances may arise. This wisdom is a kind of intuition, an ability to perceive danger before it completely manifests itself.

To develop an ethics of place would be a bit much for this project. But Basso's characterization of the Apache concept of wisdom is an intriguing suggestion of what might be entailed by an ethics that listens to place, in all its historical and topological singularity, that thus embeds us in the place-world, as opposed to one that imposes abstract systems of universal value on particular circumstances. And if, as Dudley Patterson puts it, wisdom sits in places, and if we commit ourselves to becoming wise, then we must surely recognize an obligation to place, an obligation not to silence or drown out that voice we listen to.

interwoven (though not synonymous) aspects of our general power to situate ourselves in place. And as language users we have the distinctive ability to turn this situating power back upon itself, to ask how we ought to situate ourselves, and to seek new ways of doing so. We can see, then, that this movement of thought by which we adopt a perspective of appraisal concerning our orientation in the world involves an act of projection, one which is enabled by language, an expression of desire that has burst free of biological determination as that which provides the motive force for the process by which human civilization emerges and perpetually exceeds itself. Innate to civilization, then, is a movement that proceeds by a self-recursive abstraction.

There is an awesome force in these guideless trajectories, and a kind of terror: self-impregnating thought that billows out towards every possibility in a chaos of manic ordering. This is place as conducted by the human organism, its material sediments entwining the whole earth, all bursting through its own conjured worlds to spawn new reticulations in the space of thought, like red-streaked highways through the desert wilderness under a silent swarm of satellites. See these electric pulses enlivening the face of the earth, past mountains a refulgent orange from parking lot lights set into absurd grids planar at the center of the night, a tidy rational obliteration, as at the fading edge of the surrounding darkness cactuses tremble in the starry wind. Everything strange to itself.

If it is our fate, as language-bearing creatures, to be forever re-making our world, is it possible for there to be an outcome of this seemingly inexorable process other than the destruction of the world, which is to say, our self-destruction? Is the phantasmagorium of contemporary technological civilization just the brief spectacular flash of a self-annihilating catalysis? Or is it possible for us to find some new disposition toward things that will allow us to avoid this fate? If it is our task to orient ourselves towards our own orientation towards the world, this would seem to be the essential question for us to ask at this particularly combustible moment in human history.

I don’t know the answer to this, of course. But what needs remembering, it seems to me, is a final point regarding the place of abstract thought, a point that is in some ways the most essential one of this whole project: namely, that *however powerful are our capacities for*

abstraction, we are still and always bodies emplaced in the actual living world. The desires that thought seeks to satisfy are bodily ones. Abstraction is not inherently an enemy of embodied and emplaced existence; on the contrary, as a projection of embodied emplacement, it is in certain ways an enhancement of it. It becomes dangerous only when it forgets this and regards itself as the ideal standard by which to take the measure of the concrete. But this temptation always lurks, it motivates its own powerful desire. The task, therefore, is to remain faithful to place (a disposition that is suggested when we say that someone is "grounded," "down to earth," or "salt of the earth"). This means that epistemological coherence needs to be sought not in the concatenations of a totalizing (and therefore tautological) system of thought which, as totalizing, entails the homogenization of places by casting them all under a single perspective. Rather, it needs to be sought in living emplaced experience. Or more than this, it should *add* depth to that experience. An abstract thought that is creatively expressive will bring out some resonance in things, will allow them to sing in a fuller voice, and in doing so will return us to the concrete and more richly embed us in the actual places we inhabit.[292],[293]

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[292] Perhaps in this regard music is the most place-bound form of abstract expression; for in its arrangements of high notes and low, its rhythm and meter, and so forth, it acts more directly and more powerfully on our flesh than any other. It suffuses us in its mood, which is to say it lends a richness to our interactions with our surroundings so powerful that the only word appropriate to describe it would seem to be 'ecstasy.' Such was certainly the case for Marcel and his little phrase, and I don't believe his experience seems foreign to many of us.

[293] It goes without saying that the world is in a condition of massive obliviousness regarding this attentiveness to concrete place. Consider, to take one of the more egregious of recent examples, the 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The well at Macondo was a wonder of engineering and, if we try for a moment to forget the familiarity with such technological marvels that has made them seem so banal to us, a breathtaking demonstration of the power of humans to penetrate their surroundings: it was a complicated hunk of industrial machinery boring a hole in the seafloor nearly a mile below the surface, in the cold and dark of an alien abyss far beyond the domain of what is hospitable to the human organism. The rig was named *Deepwater Horizon*, for heaven's sake. And indeed, it was such an exotic environment that when something went wrong, the rig exploded, and oil started gushing from that hole into the open sea, it took 94 days before the gusher was finally capped.

Consider what sort of *approach* was required by all parties involved in carrying out this deepwater drilling project*: a stupendous engineering ability; a faith in that ability that outruns even the ability itself; a fundamentally extractive disposition regarding the resources of the sea. These are all abstract dispositions. They do not attend to the particularity of circumstances – to the fact that things will eventually, inevitably, go wrong. And they certainly do not attend to the particularity of place – to our ability, or lack thereof, to inhabit an environment so far beyond the ken of our everyday experience that when things did go wrong we were helpless in the face of it for a full quarter of a year. The upshot was a disaster that stained a whole portion of the earth; satellite photos showed an oil slick the size of a state in the northern Gulf of Mexico. The ecosystem of this region (and what is an ecosystem but the manner in which place lives) was damaged immeasurably, and likely will continue to be damaged for years to come. The fishermen, oystermen, and shrimpers who most directly depended on this ecology had their livelihoods threatened, and likewise threatened were the communities of the Gulf. The

And what will it mean to be attentive to place? It will mean a greater depth to our connection with the living world we inhabit, for if abstract thought serves these places, rather than imposing itself on them, it will allow their intricacy and their capacity to solicit us as inhabitants not just to be expressed, but to grow even deeper. And, as social interaction is a sharing of place, as place is what brings people together, it will allow our interactions with each other likewise to become deeper. If what marks us as a unique species is our ability to speak about speech, to turn our attention towards our own attentiveness and to regard our concern for things concernfully, then to be attentive to place is to be attentive to the ways in which we inhabit the world, which is to say it is to view ourselves as participants in the world, as elements of this thing that is much larger than ourselves but to which we inextricably belong, and which we so powerfully affect. To attend to our emplacement in the world in this way could be a first step away from that road which we are currently traveling, which appears to have its destination in the comprehensive denuding of the living world.

Or so I would imagine.

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nightmare of oil-strangled fish and seabirds and dolphins that washed up on the shore speak to the stakes of this inattentiveness to place, and to where it is carrying us: this horrible tableau is increasingly how the world looks.

*Of course, as conventional oil supplies run increasingly short, deepwater drilling has become a more and more common method of extraction across the globe.

Chapter Four: Metaphor and Meaning

We've seen something of the way in which we participate in the world as embodied and emplaced animals through language, and how abstract thought arises primarily out of this interweaving of language and world. But what exactly is the mechanism by which this occurs? A description of such a mechanism would need to account for the ways in which bodily capacities are employed in constituting understanding in domains beyond concrete bodily experience, which is to say, such a mechanism would be one by which those bodily capacities leap from one domain to another. This mechanism is metaphor. Mark Johnson and George Lakoff have developed a concept of metaphor that occupies such a role in human understanding. Their concept is, broadly speaking, very useful, but I think it becomes even more so when we employ it in terms of the discussion of Merleau-Ponty's notions of language and the flesh of ideas that has been given here. In particular, I will argue, if we develop this concept of metaphor in terms of the desiring movement of resonant thought, we can give a fuller account of understanding as the transfigurative process of intra-action between thinking organisms and places.

The account of metaphor in *Metaphors We Live By* and *The Body in the Mind*

Aristotle gives the seminal philosophical treatment of metaphor, and from this inaugural moment metaphor is treated as pertaining to language. In particular, for Aristotle, it concerns the act of naming: "A 'metaphor' is the application [to something] of a name belonging to something else."[294] This transferral of a name occurs through the recognition of a likeness, through a sort of discernment that "is an indication of genius."[295] Others in the philosophical tradition have not looked upon metaphor so favorably: Hobbes regarded it as a form of deception not suitable for rational discourse.[296] More recently certain philosophers of an analytical bent (though by no means all of them) have similarly sought to exclude metaphor from the domain of reason; as Elisabeth Camp notes, "logical positivists like Ayer and Carnap

[294] Aristotle (1987), 57b7-8.
[295] Ibid., 59a8.
[296] Hobbes, Ch. 8.

assumed that because metaphors like… 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!'… involve category mistakes, they have no real meaning or verification conditions."[297]

In recent decades, however, numerous thinkers have sought to locate metaphor in deeper, prelinguistic cognitive structures. One prominent effort along these lines is made by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*. Their insight is that metaphors are, essentially, everywhere in human understanding: they structure not just our bodily actions but our interpretations of our actions as well. The authors' first example is the metaphor 'argument is war.' We use our idea of war to structure our understanding of argumentation, so we say things like, "Your claims are *indefensible*. He *attacked every weak* point in my argument. His criticisms were *right on target*," and so forth (LJ, 4). The key point here is that we don't just interpret what happens in arguments in terms that are borrowed from those we use to talk about war; the metaphor actually structures, to some extent, what arguments *are*: "We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies… Many of the things we do in arguing are partially structured by the concept of war."[298] The very actions that constitute arguments are structured by the concept of war (Ibid.). Such structures mean that certain actions are permissible within the context of an argument and certain ones are not, according to whether the given action coheres with the metaphorical concept.

We can see, then, that metaphor as it is described by Lakoff and Johnson is not merely or even primarily a matter of language. Metaphorical concepts don't structure how we talk about our experiences, they structure our experiences themselves – indeed, they structure thought itself: "human *thought processes* are largely metaphorical" (LJ, 6). According to the authors, language reflects this conceptual structuring: "The concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured" (LJ, 5). Prior to their linguistic formulation, these structures manifest themselves as experiential gestalts, and these gestalts allow us to organize experiences into

[297] Camp, 154. The metaphor is quoted from Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. V. i. 54.
[298] LJ, 4. Or more precisely, "[u]nderstanding a conversation as being an argument involves being able to superimpose the multidimensional structure of part of the concept 'war' upon part of the corresponding structure 'conversation'" (LJ, 81).

"structured wholes" (LJ, 81). Any given metaphorical use is not simply an isolated case, then; it brings along a whole family of entailments which cohere as aspects of these gestalts.

Such structuring is in this sense holistic, but it is also always only partial. If it were not so, then that which is understood metaphorically would simply be identical with that which serves as the source of the metaphor, and this would clearly be absurd – argument may be war, but this doesn't mean that it would be an acceptable argumentative gambit for me to fire actual cannons at my opponent. It is because this structuring is partial that there are some ways that I may elaborate the metaphor, and other ways that I may not. For instance, Lakoff and Johnson give the example of the metaphorical concept 'theories are buildings.' In line with this metaphor, we say things like "a good theory has a solid foundation" and refer to how a theory is "structured." Generally speaking, the parts of buildings that we use in the concept 'theory' are the "foundation and the outer shell," whereas "[t]he roof, internal rooms, staircases, and hallways" are not so used (LJ, 52). But these used and unused portions of the metaphorical concept are not strictly determinate. We might go beyond the conventional extent of metaphorical use in a given case. The authors suggest that we might say, as possible extrapolations of the 'theories are buildings' metaphor: "His theory has thousands of little rooms and long, winding corridors... His theories are Bauhaus in their pseudofunctional simplicity... He prefers massive Gothic theories covered with gargoyles... Complex theories usually have problems with the plumbing" (LJ, 53). If metaphors strictly delimited a given set of uses, then such "figurative" expressions would make no sense, since gargoyles, corridors, schools of design theory, and so forth are not conventionally part of the metaphor by which we typically talk about theories. Yet we can readily imagine situations in which any of these expressions would make sense. (Note that if a metaphor doesn't open onto extended uses, if it therefore didn't situate us within a domain of possible continuations of the metaphor, then it wouldn't in fact be a metaphor at all; it would be inert with respect to the structuring of our understanding.)

Though each metaphorical concept amounts to a partial structuring, with an indeterminate range of possible extensions, as expressions of experiential gestalts they nonetheless derive from "experientially basic" domains of experience, which the authors also

refer to as “natural kinds of experience” (LJ, 117). There are three basic sources of these domains: “Our bodies (perceptual and motor apparatus, mental capacities, emotional makeup, etc.)… Our interactions with our physical environment (moving, manipulating objects, eating, etc.)… [and] Our interactions with other people within our culture (in terms of social, political, economic, and religious institutions)” (Ibid.). These, the authors claim, shape both those domains of experience which are used metaphorically to define other domains, and those domains which are so defined (with the general rule being that more determinate domains of experience are used to make sense of less determinate ones) (Ibid.). Perhaps the most fundamental of these are orientational metaphors, for example the vertical relation of up and down, which is, as we saw in the last chapter, fundamental to embodied and emplaced human experience. Quite a few concepts are structured (both internally and with respect to other concepts) in terms of vertical orientation, and Lakoff and Johnson suggest a physical basis for a number of them. For instance, ‘happy is up; sad is down,’ the physical basis of which is that “[d]rooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state”; ‘conscious is up; unconscious is down,’ because “[h]umans and most other mammals sleep lying down and stand up when they awaken”; ‘health and life are up; sickness and death are down,’ because “[s]erious illness forces us to lie down physically. When you’re dead, you are physically down,” and so on (LJ, 15). Such gestalts are not isolated but consistent across a number of different expressions: the ‘happy is up’ metaphor may be expressed as “I’m feeling up,” “my spirits rose,” “my mood is elevated,” etc. Based on such examples they conclude that “[m]ost of our fundamental concepts are organized in terms of one or more spatialization metaphors” (LJ, 17).

Johnson elaborates considerably on the basis of conceptual thought in experiences of embodiment in *The Body in the Mind*. Here Johnson argues that “human bodily movement, manipulation of objects, and perceptual interactions involve recurring patterns without which our experience would be chaotic and incomprehensible” (J, xix). These patterns, which he refers to as “image schemata,” can be extended and elaborated through “metaphorical projection from the realm of physical bodily interactions onto so-called rational processes, such as

reflection and the drawing of inferences from premises" (J, xx). As an expression of bodily capacities, then, abstract cognition is grounded in embodiment.

Johnson gives as an example a passage from Tim Beneke's *Men on Rape: What They Have to Say about Sexual Violence*, a series of interviews with various men concerning their views, and sometimes their experiences, of that topic. Now, the example Johnson has chosen to use here couldn't be more emotionally and politically charged. The very obviousness of this fact leads me to suspect that he is subtly making a political point – that metaphors have a salience in forms of political understanding and political domination, and that to the extent that we want to confront the sort of thinking that motivates or justifies sexual violence, for instance, we must understand its metaphorical logic. This is speculation on my part; Johnson doesn't explicitly call attention to this issue. It feels uncomfortable, frankly, to retain the example here, but I do so for two reasons: 1) it is the example Johnson happens to use to most clearly describe the function of metaphorical logic; and 2) it reminds us of the political dimension of metaphor – how it shapes abstract thought that can be used to dominate others. A more thorough analysis of this matter is warranted, but for now I only want to point to the relevant aspects of Johnson's concept of metaphor, while remaining mindful of what is at stake. Here, then, are the words of one of Beneke's interviewees:

> Let's say I see a woman and she looks really pretty, and really clean and sexy, and she's giving off very feminine, sexy vibes. I think, "Wow, I would love to make love to her," but I know she's not really interested. It's a tease. A lot of times a woman knows that she's looking really good and she'll use that and flaunt it, and it makes me feel like she's laughing at me and I feel *degraded*… I don't like the feeling that I'm supposed to stand there and take it, and not be able to hug and kiss her… If I were actually desperate enough to rape somebody, it would be from wanting the person, but also it would be a very spiteful thing, just being able to say, "I have power over you and I can do anything I want with you"; because really I feel that *they* have power over *me* just by their presence… They have power over me so I want power over them.[299]

However abhorrent we might find it, the sentiment this man is expressing is clear enough. But how do we understand it? Why can we make sense of it? Johnson argues that we do so by our understanding of "shared metaphorical projections"; in this case, the dominant metaphorical structure that is in play is "physical appearance is a physical force" (J, 7). Thus the interviewee says things like "she's *giving off* very feminine, very sexy *vibes*"; "I'm supposed to stand there

[299] Ibid., 6. The quote is from Beneke, Tim. *Men on Rape*. New York: St. Martin's, 1982. P. 43-44.

and *take it*"; "the woman has *forced me* to turn off my feelings and *react*"; "they have *power* over me just by their presence," etc. (Ibid.) This metaphorical structure is familiar to us from expressions like "She's *devastating*. He is *strikingly* handsome… I find him so *attractive*," and so on. Clearly this is one of those structures which frames our everyday experience – a metaphor we live by.

The sense that is expressed in this passage is a logical expression within the context of this metaphorical structure. In particular, it goes like this:

> A woman is responsible for her physical appearance.
> Physical appearance is a physical force (exerted on other people).
> A woman is responsible for the force she exerts on men. (J, 10)

By this logic, a woman whose physical appearance has "caused" a man to feel "degraded" has done an injury to that man which, according to a folk theory of retributive justice (which itself could be understood, at least in part, in terms of a balancing of forces), could incite a desire for revenge.[300]

But the equivalence in the second line, Johnson points out, is a metaphor, and we can not make sense of the passage without it. This is something which classical logic can not countenance, for it can treat metaphor as expressing only "literal propositional meaning," not as having an irreducible metaphorical meaning in itself (J, 11). To understand what the interviewee is saying here is to draw on a basic experience of force, an experience that is fundamental to embodied experience, and the way in which this basic experience makes the world meaningful at the level of abstract cognition – at the level at which, for instance, we understand the dynamics of sexual attraction and sexual power – can not be captured in logical terms, nor in purely propositional terms. Johnson argues that only by approaching linguistic expressions as embedded in our experience as embodied, and as expressing embodiment by means of the imaginative act of metaphorical projection, can we take full account of them as meaningful, and in so doing we find that meaning as such is not the exclusive domain of language, but is involved generally in our interactions with the world.

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[300] Again, this metaphhorical structure has a political dimension, and as such it is embedded in larger structures pertaining, among other things, to sexual politics. A more comprehensive analysis would elucidate why and how such a violent logic might be countenanced.

Happily for this account of metaphor as structuring abstract understanding, there is considerable research that supports it. To give a sample: Ijzerman and Semin found that warmer temperature conditions (for instance, handing participants warm as opposed to cold beverages) led to greater feelings of social proximity, suggesting that the abstract understanding of social relations can be influenced by the bodily experience of temperature by which it is structured.[301] In an experiment by Schnall, Benton, and Harvey, participants who cleansed themselves after feeling physically disgusted, or simply having a concept of cleanliness activated, "found certain moral actions to be less wrong" than others, consistent with a role for notions of physical cleanliness and purity in structuring moral purity.[302] Several experiments by Jostmann, Lakens, and Schubert demonstrated a link between the concept of importance and the bodily experience of weight: in one, participants holding a heavy clipboard made "increased judgments of monetary value"; in another, those holding the heavier clipboards "consider[ed] fair decision-making procedures to be more important"; in two others, they demonstrated "higher consistency between related subjects" and "greater polarization of agreement ratings for strong versus weak arguments," suggesting more elaborate thinking processes.[303] Schubert found that the power of a group is influenced by its vertical position in space, as well as motor responses involving vertical movement, suggesting "that the concept of power is partly represented in perceptual form as vertical difference.[304] In two experiments by Boot and Pecher, participants were asked whether two pictures belonged to the same category, either animal or vehicle; responses to the images were affected by the positioning of the images with respect to a visual frame, implying support for a container schema in structuring understanding of categories.[305] All in all, there appears to be strong empirical support for Lakoff and Johnson's view of the embodiment of abstract understanding through metaphor.[306]

[301] See Ijzerman and Semin (2010). Similar findings are reported in Williams and Bargh (2008).
[302] See Schnall, et al. (2008).
[303] See Jostmann, et al. (2009).
[304] See Schubert (2005).
[305] See Boot and Pecher (2011).
[306] And one more pertinent example: N. L. Wilson and R. W. Gibbs demonstrate that "real and imagined body movements appropriate to metaphorical phrases facilitate people's immediate comprehension of these phrases. Participants first learned to make different body movements given specific cues. In two reading time studies, people were faster to understand a metaphorical phrase, such as *push the argument*, when they had previously

The key insight in the works of Lakoff and Johnson, it seems, is not about metaphors per se, but about thought; that is to say, it is about how we approach the world as thinking organisms. For they argue that the way that experience is structured for us, the way we make sense of things, is through these metaphorical concepts. They are the mechanisms by which a given utterance, or an event, or even in some cases a perception, opens onto a certain realm of engagement, where actions (including utterances) have their significance according to the structure of that realm. If argument is war, then, we find ourelves on a battlefield when we argue, staking out positions, attacking and defending, and so on. And such actions are possible because of the structure of the realm in which the argument occurs – the argumentative space, we could say. I would add that nested within this structure will be other metaphorical structures, pertaining, for instance, to individual points that are made in the argument, and the argument-as-war structure will itself be nested within others – the "vertical" organization of the institution within which the argument is made, perhaps, or the "horizontal" egalitarian principles which determine rules of "fair play."[307] In other words, the metaphorical structuring of experience is pervasive at every level of interaction, and all the more so as we get further removed from concrete embodiment, since what is determinative of possibilities for action in more abstract realms will be constrained less by actual physical circumstances and more by the metaphorical projections of embodied experience that structure those realms (and thus the sorts of metaphors we use will have a greater role in defining our actions).

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just made an appropriate body action…, or imagined making a specific body movement…, than when they first made a mismatching body action… or no movement. These findings support the idea that appropriate body action, or even imagined action, enhances people's embodied, metaphorical construal of abstract concepts that are referred to in metaphorical phrases" (Wilson and Gibbs, 721). Notably, real and imagined movement are continuous with respect to their function in facilitating construal of abstract concepts. Also notable is the authors' speculation that people may "be creating partial, but not necessarily complete, embodied simulations of speakers' messages that involve moment-by-moment 'what must it be like' processes that make use of ongoing tactile-kinesthetic experience" and that this obtains even when abstract language is being employed (Ibid., 729), which, if true, would be consistent with my arguments that understanding involves the embodied and emplaced negotiation of a multiplicity if perspectives in intersubjectively meaningful milieus.

[307] These examples of "vertical" and "horizontal" organizing principles suggest both the multidimensionality of metaphorical structuring that obtains in any given situation (since several metaphors are typically in play, and interacting with each other, in the determination of meaning at any moment) as well as the inherent potential for conflict between these structures (since they may not fully cohere with each other).

Johnson in particular shows how this structuring extends even into the concepts that define purely logical reasoning. He notes that "we understand the process of reasoning as a form of motion along a path – propositions are the locations (or bounded areas) that we start out from, proceed through, and wind up at," and to hold a position is to be "located at that point (or in that area)."[308] If holding a certain position is to be located at a certain place, then to hold the negation of it is to be located *outside of* that place. Since something must be either within a given area or outside of it (according to a 'container' schema), then with respect to a given proposition P, we must hold either P or –P. That is to say, based on a metaphor of reasoning as a path, combined with a metaphor of placial containment for positions along that path, we are led to the Law of the Excluded Middle.[309] This sort of metaphorical projection of image schemata is characteristic of logical rules.

To be able to think logically, then, is to be placially oriented in a certain way, and this means to have some affective sense, as such a sense is always implicated in directional orientation (as is connoted by Merleau-Ponty's use of the ambiguous term '*sens*'). William James argues as much in *The Principles of Psychology*: "We ought to say a feeling of *and*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*."[310] In elaborating on this passage, Johnson (impishly) asks, "Can you feel William James's *but*? If you can't, then there is something wrong with you, something suppressed and absent from your proper self-understanding. To feel James's *but* is to feel the quality of a situation as a kind of hesitancy or qualification of something asserted… Similarly, the feeling of '*and'* is a feeling of one thing being connected to another, linked in experience. The feeling of '*if*' is a feeling of expectancy of

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[308] Johnson (1987), 38. He gives several examples of this, including: "Let us *start out from* the proposition that Hamlet feared his father… You can't *move* to that conclusion from where you are now… *From here I'll proceed* to show that humans are slaves of their passions… The *next step* is to demonstrate that monkeys can make tools… He *got off the track* of his argument" (Ibid., 38-9).
[309] Ibid., 39. It is also possible to imagine more complex logical geometries. Consdier Deleuze's description of Hegel's account of contradiction: "Like Aristotle, Hegel determines difference by the opposition of extremes or of contraries. However, opposition remains abstract so long as it does not extend to the infinite, and the infinite remains abstract every time it is posed outside of finite oppositions: the introduction of the infinite here entails the identity of contraries, or makes the contrary of the Other a contrary of the Self…" (DR, 44). In some ways, Hegel (by this reckoning) could be said to be exploding the container schema employed in logical placiality to allow for a new kind of movement of thought.
[310] James, 245-6.

something to come, taken in light of the character of a present experience."[311] What we notice here in particular is how integral a sense of *movement* is to logical understanding. Each logical connective involves a kinesthetic motion, a shifting of weight: 'but' involves a "hesitancy," a reluctance to proceed ahead full-bore, a pushing away of some element or aspect of things; 'and' collects, it gathers together conjuncts as we might bring together our two hands or join together two parts of a tool or machine; 'if' poises us for some movement – we lean forward in anticipation of the inevitable 'then,' and only when the consequent arrives do we regain a sense of balance, much as we anticipate the next note in a song. (Of course, these connectives never function in pure abstraction like this, like some mere ghost-motion; even if they share in some general pattern or movement, they always connect particular elements within some context, and thus the sense of movement is never precisely the same from one instance to the next.[312])

This role of movement in such abstract understanding should come as no surprise, for as we have seen meaning is always produced through the moving intra-action of body in world. Every metaphorical projection thus involves a structuring of concepts in terms of motion, in one

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[311] Johnson, Mark. "Feeling William James's *But*."

[312] James was well aware of this. As he had written a few pages earlier, "Does not the same grass give us the same feeling of blue, and do we not get the same olfactory sensation no matter how many times we put our nose to the same flask of cologne? It seems a piece of metaphysical sophistry to suggest that we do not; and yet a close attention to the matter shows that *there is no proof that the same bodily sensation is ever got by us twice*" (James, 231); he gives by way of example that "[w]hen everything is dark a somewhat less dark sensation makes us see an object white" (James, 232). The same principle would surely apply to the "feelings" we have when employing logical connectives: the sense of hesitancy that is involved in the use of 'if' will surely differ depending on the subject matter, the social and emotional context, the communicative purpose, and other aspects of the particular use.

Incidentally, Wittgenstein is often taken to be criticizing James's ideas regarding such feelings, for instance when he writes "The meaning of a word is not the experience one has in hearing or saying it… Are you sure that there is a single if-feeling, and not perhaps several? Have you tried saying the word in a great variety of contexts? For example, when it bears the principal stress of the sentence, and when the word next to it does" (Wittgenstein (2001), 155). However, Wittgenstein was thoroughly engaged with James's *Principles of Psychology*, and it isn't plausible that he could have missed the point that James fully appreciated the context-dependence of meaning. Rather, Wittgenstein seems to be criticizing a particular *mis-application* of James's insight, or of the insight regarding the sense of words like 'if' in general. Such a mis-application would treat such feelings as the static meanings of words, such that they were isomorphic to them, which would be to treat language as operative at a linguistic level detached from particular contexts. Such a view would of course be anathema to Wittgenstein; and so he writes, "One misjudges the psychological interest of the if-feeling if one regards it as the obvious correlate of a meaning; it needs rather to be seen in a different context, in that of the special circumstances in which it occurs" (Ibid., 156). Notably, Wittgenstein is here *affirming* the existence of the if-feeling, while asserting that it can only be discerned in particular contexts – a view which is in agreement with James.

sense or another. This is ostensibly the case when we speak of a shifting of weight, or a gathering action, as in the case of these logical connectives. But it is no less the case with metaphors in which the vehicle is ostensibly immobile. On one level, every physical situation involves a play of forces, so to say that 'that man is a mountain' is not just to say that he is large, but also that he is resistant to force – which is an expression of force, and thus of a certain kinesthetic disposition, even if a mountain doesn't actually move. But on another level, every metaphorical projection entails a moving relation because it establishes a situation, a context for understanding, and to be situated is always to be solicited by one's surroundings in terms of one's disposition in embodiment; thus to imagine a 'mountain of a man' might be to feel oneself looking upward towards a foreshortened visage (like a mountain approaching a peak), to have a sense of the latent force stored in the man's muscles, to feel oneself shrinking and thinned. This is a dynamic relation; it must be, because every situation is dynamic.

We can find in Johnson and Lakoff, then, an account of thought as embodied and emplaced in the strong sense that *all* thought, no matter how abstract it may seem, is an expression of our bodily capacities as organisms interacting with our environment. Their view also displays a continuity between metaphorical expression and situatedness that is consonant with the continuity between language and situatedness. For metaphorical structures emerge in response to relations of things in the world at the same time that they act to shape those relations. If 'love is a journey,' to take one of Lakoff and Johnson's favored examples, this is surely because it unfolds over time, is marked by discrete events, has an emotional arc that suggests change much as a journey proceeds through changing surroundings, and so forth. That is, the experience of love (in our culture) is such that we can make sense of it in terms borrowed from our understanding of journeys – every metaphor, as they emphasize, has an experiential basis; the metaphors which we choose to define experience are never simply arbitrary. But as soon as the metaphor is in play, it structures our experience in turn, so that for us to regard love as a journey is for the experience to be able to unfold for us in certain ways and not others. The resonances that emerge through experience that is imbued with metaphorical expression are in this way reciprocal. And this sort of reciprocity is familiar: it is parallel to the resonances that emerge through language-imbued experience as I've discussed

them here. But this is no coincidence, for metaphor and language are both continuations of the same capacity for expression by which we orient ourselves meaningfully in milieus; that is, they are means by which we inhabit place. And the nature of such inhabitation is interaction, a resonance that functions simultaneously as the action of an organism and the solicitation of place.

A clear virtue of Johnson and Lakoff's view is that they do not relegate metaphor to a mere linguistic level. It is not even, for either of them, a primarily linguistic operation; since they conceive of meaning as obtaining through active engagement with the world, rather than solely in propositions, they are free to regard metaphor as structuring prelinguistic experience, and only derivatively expressed in language. Cast under this light, metaphor cannot be regarded, as it so often has been, as simply a way to add color to our descriptions, or as an imperfect approximation of the truth. Rather, to employ one of Merleau-Ponty's own essential metaphors, it belongs to the very sinews of the flesh of ideas.

A note on dead metaphors and the extent of the role of metaphors in abstract understanding

One criticism that is sometimes directed at Lakoff and Johnson's account is that many uses of metaphor are actually "dead": the metaphor no longer involves the structuring of one domain of our understanding in terms of another, because the metaphorical terms no longer refer to the source domain. When we refer to the "foot of a mountain," do we really anthropomorphize the mountain, or do we simply imagine the place where the mountain begins to rise from the surrounding land? Some clarity can be brought to this issue if we consider it in light of the situating power of language. The reason that metaphor contributes to the structuring of our understanding is that it allows us to employ our bodily capacities in approaching various milieus. A metaphor may become 'dead' when our negotiation of a certain domain (i.e., a type of milieu) becomes habitually sedimented to the extent that the source domain no longer contributes to our understanding. However, it remains the case that our understanding is embodied and emplaced. (Perhaps we don't imagine the mountain in terms of a human body, but the term 'foot of the mountain' nonetheless orients us bodily – an image comes to mind,

our bodily disposition readies itself for the imminence of an ascent, etc.) It is not necessary to claim that the source domain of the metaphor remains active in structuring understanding; but this does not entail that understanding is a cognitive process independent of our bodily capacities. It is just that the bodily movements involved in the diffuse situational structuring in which abstract concepts are involved have taken on their own habituality. In cases of abstract concepts with which we are quite familiar, in particular, direct experience with a target concept may be considerably more significant than whatever metaphors might be used in structuring it. Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings point out, for instance, that in the case of 'anger,' though we might elaborate on our experience through metaphorical projections based on, say, our experience of a boiling pot of water, we have enough situational experience with anger that we can directly draw on to meaningfully employ the concept. Furthermore, they point out, for the metaphor to structure a concept, that metaphor must have its own structure for the metaphor to map onto[313] – or in my own terms, there must be a coherent domain with which the source domain of the metaphor can resonate. Again, this does not mean that our understanding is not embodied and situational; it's just that in employing a concept like 'anger' we imaginatively construct situations based on our direct experience of that concept – we imagine an angry face, say, a raised voice, a muscular tension, and that sharpening of energies that occurs when an angry mood is present. (Then, too, we can employ 'anger' as a metaphor for structuring other domains: even as I write this a *violent* storm is forming outside, *furiously* hurling lightning bolts across the sky…[314])

This points to one limitation of the "schema" formulation: if we treat metaphorical projection as simply a schematic matter, we lose sight of the necessarily situational nature of language. Bodily capacities are surely employed in understanding abstract concepts, for instance, but as we saw in chapter two, they may only do so within a particular situational context. An image schema that is projected from one domain to another does not, by itself, organize the topic domain; as Pecher, Boot, and Van Dantzig point out, a given schema might be mapped onto several domains ('power,' 'valence,' 'divinity,' and 'quantity' might all be

[313] Barsalou and Wiemer-Hastings, 133-4.

[314] This latter, by the way, being a case of a more abstract concept ('anger') structuring a more concrete one ('storm').

understood according to an ‘up-down’ schema), so something more is necessary to distinguish the various concepts.[315] The authors rightly suggest that “the rich perceptual, motoric, and evaluative details of specific situations” are necessary to ground abstract concepts.[316] In other words, meaning only emerges through embedded intra-action in a particular situation; only because of this can the proprioceptive, visual, and other sensory capacities that may be involved in discerning a vertical relation understand that relation as one of ‘power’ in one case, ‘success’ or ‘quantity’ or ‘quality’ in others.

Metaphor and language

Lakoff and Johnson avoid the error of relegating metaphor to a mere linguistic level, but they perhaps do not avoid the (historically unusual) error of not giving *enough* attention to the role of language in metaphor.[317] Again, according to their formulation, “[t]he concept is metaphorically structured, the activity is metaphorically structured, and, consequently, the language is metaphorically structured” (LJ, 5). Language is determined by bodily experience, which is itself metaphorically structured. This seems too passive a role for language, though, for surely language is not merely reflective of the ways that experience is structured; to treat it this way is to treat language as essentially reflective of bodily experience, in which case we will have to press further after all if we want to avoid treating language as occupying a linguistic level that is separate from the structures that define experience. (It is also a little curious that they do not expend much energy in dispatching with the role of language in metaphorical structuring of concepts, given that *all instances of structuring they provide are written down*, appearing in a book as they do.)

[315] See Pecher, Boot, and Van Dantzig.
[316] Pecher, Boot, and Van Dantzig, 246ish.
[317] Though in a way, either error is a form of the perennial philosophical error of treating language as separate from the world – an error that may take the form of treating language as merely a reflection of the material world, which is what is essentially real, or that may take the form of treating language as the sole domain of meaning, and thus supposing that truth and meaning obtain at the level of propositions, as if language can ever be meaningful outside of particular contexts.

I would suggest – and this will not come as a surprise at this point – that we can't account for the structuring of human experience without regarding language as intrinsic to that experience. It is not that language stands solely in a relation of derivation with regard to some prelinguistic structure, as Lakoff and Johnson suggest; this could only be the case if language were inert with respect to the structure of experience – a mere reflection of it. But language is part of experience, utterances are among the things with which we engage as situated and embodied entities, and so any account of how experience is structured has to incorporate language into that of which it gives account.

Consider again Lakoff and Johnson's example of the metaphorical concept 'argument is war.' We say things like, "Your claims are *indefensible*. He *attacked every weak point* in my argument. His criticisms were *right on target*," and so forth (LJ, 4). But, they wonder, what if we understood arguments according to the metaphor 'argument is a dance,' in which "the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way" (LJ, 5). This would be quite a departure from our own conception of argument. It would be such a departure, in fact, that if another culture employed such a metaphor "we would probably not view them as arguing at all: they would simply be doing something totally different… Perhaps the most neutral way of describing this difference between their culture and ours would be to say that we have a discourse form structured in terms of battle and they have one structured in terms of dance" (Ibid.).

When they say that we wouldn't even use the word 'argument' to refer to a discourse form structured in terms of dance, it seems to me that they're saying the meaning of the word 'argument' is anchored in a certain mode of engagement, one that has sense (at least in part) by virtue of its metaphorical relation to war. But is it plausible to say that the word has no role in structuring that mode of engagement? If it had no such role, what would even be explained by the function of metaphorical projection? Note that arguments belong to a list they give of "natural kinds," which also includes "love, time, ideas, understanding… labor, happiness, health, control, status, [and] morality" (LJ, 117). All of these "require metaphorical definition, since they are not clearly enough delineated in their own terms" (LJ, 118). Metaphorical projection, then, serves to make these ideas clearer. But *what* is it making clearer if not some

domain of experience that is gathered together by language as a situating faculty? If not for this gathering, there would be nothing to do the clarifying, just further instances of individual bodily experiences. If we couldn't talk about 'happiness,' for instance, we would just have various agreeable bodily sensations which might bear a similarity to each other but which would not need to be understood in terms of some other bodily experience; but with the word 'happiness' those sensations are gathered together in their common bodily dimension. Or more precisely, the word and those associated sensations are involved in a mutual solicitation that allows for certain possibilities of oriented understanding. And so it is with arguments: if we did not have this word to distinguish a certain range or type of interaction there would be nothing around which the 'argument is war' metaphor could organize itself; there would just be various particular interactions, some of which might have an oppositional character, others of which might be characterized by balance and aesthetic harmony. But because we can use the word 'argument' we can structure our actions to accord with some manner of abstractly situating ourselves. This is where metaphorical projection comes in: this manner of situating ourselves is an expression of certain bodily capacities and dispositions. And as we've seen, the relation between language and world is reciprocal, so that when we talk about 'arguments' it is because language compels a certain orientation; yet at the same time things are such – there are certain consistent tones of oppositionality across certain sorts of interaction, for instance – that we are able to make sense of them by the particular ways that language gathers them together (in this case, as 'arguments'). Without language we would not be able to situate ourselves in such a way that concrete bodily experiences could be metaphorically projected to structure abstract situations.

Or at least, our ability to do so would be far more limited; it may be the case that certain other animals have some capacity for such constitution of abstract situations through metaphorical projection, for instance.[318] But the example of arguments is particularly salient here because it refers primarily to a domain of linguistic experience. To give an account of what

[318] Likely candidates would be those animals with large brain sizes and/or high encephalization quotients, including apes, cetaceans, elephants, corvids, and octopuses.

arguments are, then, is a metalinguistic exercise,[319] and is therefore an example of our ability to situate ourselves *with regard to our own ability to situate ourselves*. It is due to this ability that we can not just employ concepts, we can make the self-conscious effort to improve them, and can even concoct new ones. This is, in fact, what Lakoff and Johnson do when they propose the metaphorical concept 'argument is a dance.'[320] By turning their attention towards the way we characterize a certain form of linguistic interaction, they are able to conceive of a new way that we *could* interact. The raw materials of this new concept are familiar domains of experience – dance, for one, but also arguments themselves: even if we wouldn't recognize argument understood in terms of dance as argument at all, there is clearly something about arguments – its participatory aspects, perhaps, especially its archetypally mano-a-mano structure – that lends itself to fruitful resonance with the experience of dance; otherwise Lakoff and Johnson couldn't even have made the suggestion.

Here we encounter again the role language has in simultaneously being the condition, and constraining our possibilities, for expression, as well as the perpetual dialectical tension between these two aspects of speech. For we see that the 'argument is war' metaphor binds our actions in argumentative contexts to a certain logic so that, even as it makes it possible to understand certain interactions as arguments (that is, as it helps us to discern meaning in them), it also constrains those interactions, causing them to adhere to certain tones and patterns of movement, much as the perception might tend towards the sedimented notion or the artistic image might tend towards the cliché.[321] But we also see that it allows for the creation of new ideas and new modes of situating ourselves in the world – expressions which then have the potential to ossify into merely habitual modes of understanding themselves.

[319] Strictly speaking, I guess it is meta-metalinguistic, since it concerns our ability to situate ourselves with regard to the way we situate ourselves (when we talk about arguments) with regard to the way we situate ourselves (when we are actually arguing).

[320] One gets the sense that are proposing this not just as an exemplary hypothetical alternative, but as an alternative conception of argument (or "discourse form") that would actually in some ways improve discourse.

[321] Such constraints might be imposed either directly or indirectly: directly, by the labelling of a given interaction an 'argument,' which causes the interaction to adhere to the conventional metaphorically-constituted understanting of what arguments are *supposed* to be; indirectly, by leading us to adopt a certain mode of active engagement, consistent with our prior experiences, that is structured by the concept 'argument' even if the word isn't explicitly invoked. (Again, this differs from Lakoff and Johnson, who do not regard language as having a role in constituting metaphor.)

Language and resonance

When we talk about metaphor in this context, then, what exactly are we talking about? The straightforward definition given by Lakoff and Johnson is that metaphor is essentially "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (LJ, 5). This notion becomes more detailed in Johnson's elaboration of meaning as emerging through schematic structure, where he argues that meaning emerges through the pattern and order in "our actions, perceptions, and conceptions," and an image schema "is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing ordering activities" (J, 29. These schemata, which are present in perception, cognition, and bodily experience (J, 79), are dynamic in two senses: they actively construct or constitute the meaningful ordering we encounter in experience, and they are flexible in their ability to be instantiated across varying contexts (J, 30). A force schema, for instance, can be applied to the experience of physical attraction to constitute the experience as meaningful – indeed, as the term 'attraction' suggests, the schema is already actively present in shaping the experience itself. Metaphor[322] is the process by which a schema is extended from one domain of bodily experience (typically from a more fundamental bodily experience, such as force, or the 'in-out' schema[323]) to another; it is a creative process, founded in embodied experience, which is pervasive in human understanding.

The terms "metaphor" and "image schema" are employed in the compelling effort to account for human understanding in terms of embodied experience. Also compelling are these authors' explicit efforts to point out the dynamism of these concepts. Yet it is curious that the notion of metaphor, by this telling, almost loses its relation to language, which as I have suggested surely belongs more centrally in an account of embodied human understanding; and

[322] Construed to include metonymy and synecdoche.

[323] Johnson argues that "our sense of *out* orientation is most intimately tied to our experience of *our own* bodily orientation. Our body can be the trajector, as in 'Paul walked out of the tunnel,' or it can be the landmark, as in 'She shoveled potatoes into her mouth.' In other words, the body can take up the role of the 'thing contained' or the container.' But, in either case, we seem to develop our sense of in-out orientation through a host of bodily movements, manipulations, and experiences" (Johnson, 33-34). Note that in these examples it is the body *in interaction with the world* that lies at the root of the in-out schema.

the notion of image schema, despite Johnson's efforts, remains a bit, well, schematic. This schematism, I believe, opens up their view to a certain criticism which is expressed by Elisabeth Camp. She argues that, though metaphors may be very useful in understanding abstract ideas, we aren't warranted in concluding that they are the *sole* means for doing so: "It might just be that metaphors reflect and reinforce similiarities between our independent mental representations of the two domains: for instance, our distinct representations of argument and war."[324] Such a similarity-based view would seem to be more consistent with the fact that, for instance, "I've been in very many arguments, but I have only very little, very indirect, experience with war; and that experience itself is quite unconnected to the highly strategic aspects of war that underwrite metaphorical descriptions of arguments."[325] Why would we understand a more primary and direct kind of experience in terms of one that is less so? Wouldn't it make more sense to suppose that the metaphor of war is only useful in some respects in describing arguments, rather than presuming that arguments are understood simply in terms of war?

It would. And the description of the metaphorical relation at issue as a 'schema' – viz., 'argument is war' – perhaps suggests such a simple relation (though to be fair to Lakoff and Johnson, they say that this schema should only be taken as structuring the understanding of arguments "in part"[326]). A better way of understanding the relation, though, is that the dispositions (including linguistic ones) borrowed from the domain of war feature prominently in our experience of arguments, but only in dynamic interaction with any number of other metaphorical relations. I mentioned a couple of these above: vertical relations of institutional authority and horizontal principles of equality and fair play, which both obtain at a broader level of organization. But there are also metaphors that obtain at the level of individual statements and gestures within an argument. In the context of an argument, for instance, one person might make a joke to defuse a sense of 'mounting tension,' thus 'bringing the disputants

[324] Camp, 159.
[325] Camp, 159.
[326] LJ, 5. If the structuring were total, rather than partial, "one concept would actually *be* the other, not merely be understood in terms of it. For example, time isn't really money. If you *spend your time* trying to do something and it doesn't work, you can't get your time back," etc. (Ibid., 13).

together' in a spirit of reaffirmed friendship or collegiality, and the meaning of such gestures is in turn grounded in the broader context of what it means to be in an argument. Or even at the level of the argument itself, a metaphor of 'argument is war' might obtain simultaneously and in dynamic interaction with a metaphor of, say, 'argument is a game.' This is to say, if understanding of abstract concepts is constituted by projected bodily experience, then it is surely not simply in the manner of *one* domain of experience mapping onto another; it is rather in the interaction of multiple domains, each of which extends in depth into whole vast networks of associations and experiences, which in turn open onto others. The metaphor bears certain bodily capacities into new realms of engagement with the world; it does not function as a singular vector of meaning, but in multiplicities, in swarms of bodily capacities, of trajectories drawn into the world, running through things, and through each other as well.[327] Indeed, we already have the model for this type of complex interaction: it is the manner in which ideas extend into depth for Merleau-Ponty.

I believe we might be able to facilitate a broader development of this concept of metaphor if we view them as grounded in a deeper structure. This returns us to a notion which I've discussed already, but which can now receive a fuller treatment: the notion of resonance as it pertains to the structure of thought. The first time resonance came up was in the context of Merleau-Ponty's discussion of ideas in *The Visible and the Invisible*. These ideas are the "lining and [the] depth" of the sensible (VI, 149): things are present and meaningful for us in terms of the ways that they resonate with their surroundings, with their histories, and with the depths of our experience. I see a red dress and it recalls a landscape in Madagascar. And this landscape itself resonates for us – we see it under a certain light, a golden light that imbues the

[327] In Camp's account of the philosophical literature concerning metaphor, all of the models which try to account for metaphorical comprehension "are theoretically and empirically useful because they offer relatively specific algorithms against which we can test actual thinkers' intuitions about particular cases" (Camp, 166). This is, however, also a drawback: "precisely because they are algorithmic models, they are unlikely to replicate the full range of our intuitive responses to metaphors" (Ibid.). Well, indeed; if, as experience suggests, meaning is a matter of fractal complexity that emerges out of our insinuation as active, sensing organisms in a world that is intricate and vast beyond all measure, as an openness onto indefinite realms of possibility, then the effort to reduce meaning to such an algorithmic representation – an effort which only has any plausibility if it is based on the false assumption that meaning obtains at a linguistic level removed from the dynamic depth of particular circumstances – is destined to fail. I am inclined to paraphrase what I said in regards to Mitchell Green's effort to construct a theory of speech acts under similar assumptions: the cost of such "theoretically and empirically useful" treatments of metaphor is that they don't actually account for metaphorical meaning at all.

red soils around the stout trunk of a baobab tree under a dry-blue sky, perhaps… At least, something like this image arises for me every time I read Merleau-Ponty's line about "certain terrains" in Madagascar (VI, 132). As it happens I've never been to Madagascar; yet something resonates for me in this mention of terrain, of Madagascar, and even (or especially) of the red dress, to stir this image into existence, much as the interplay of diffracting ripples in a pond produces new ripples, and these interplay with each other in turn… But to refer to this as a mere *image* is perhaps too inert a formulation, for it has its own depth for me; it summons certain domains of my own experience (if I haven't seen the actual terrain of Madagascar, I have seen the red soils of Georgia during a droughty summer, and these are likely drawn into the image from some further depth), and it has its own mood, one that is warm and rich, and maybe a bit soporific.[328] Needless to say this experience involves adopting a particular embodied perspective. Of course, now that I've spent several moments thinking about this imagined landscape, it is starting to deepen through attention, and to change; I can now hear the sound of a tropical breeze through tall brown grass, a few cumulus clouds are coming into focus just above a swelling edge of land, and some low village roofs in dappled light are emerging on a valley floor. These elements have been conjured out of the depths of my memory through this reflection on an imagined place by a sort of capillary action; the Madagascarian terrain that was drawn up by such a force for Merleau-Ponty by the sight of a red dress has drawn up for me all these other attendant images and moods, diffracting through each other in the creation of new images and moods, and drawing up further ones in each successive moment. Such interactions between interactions are the resonances that organize experience.

But what could I have had of this experience without the word 'Madagascar' invoked in the context that it was? That it was likened to a red dress brings out its ruddiness; that its 'terrain' is mentioned causes me to see its earth and its landscape[329]; that a 20th Century French

[328] A certain post-prandiality on my part may be having an influence on the imaginative constitution of this scene.
[329] The word 'terrain' seems to connote something of the walkability of a place, especially given the latinate prefix, and so I see it from ground-level, in its walkableness, out in its countryside, and not, say, from the perspective of an Antananarivean street. Incidentally, the Latin *terra* originally meant "dry land" (as opposed to sea), and the Greek *teresthai* meant "to dry," and the word 'terrain' perhaps retains something of this aridity, which is why I may

philosopher is mentioning it lends it a certain French colonial tint, which recalls to me a vibe I've encountered in certain corners of Southeast Asia, and also in the director's cut edition of *Apocalypse Now*. In short, the imaginative experience is a product of the situating power of language to gather diverse elements into resonant propinquity with each other in the establishment of a new meaningful milieu. And language is there, as well, in the details that added themselves to the scene through my attention; indeed, I *wrote those descriptive words down*, lending them a pseudo-permanence in the form of a kind of material precipitate of this situated experience to which I can return in order to re-situate myself at any moment. Furthermore, these thoughts have now been sedimented around the idea of Madagascar for me, so that the word 'Madagascar' has acted upon itself, by way of this foray through imaginative reflection, to gain a new significance.[330]

One thing to recall here is that language itself belongs to the fields of resonance through which meaning emerges: it forms concretions of ideas which draw dimensions of experience together in depth, while it is also acted upon by those depths in the evolution towards new meanings, that is, new ways by which we may become situated through the activity of emplacement.

And resonances, as interactions, are reciprocal: any instance of resonance does not pertain to an active and a passive element, but to elements which are mutually transformed through each other – if some memory of Georgia was appropriated in my imagining of Madagascar, then this memory itself has in some way changed. As this applies to language, it means that, strictly speaking, each new use of a word transforms its meaning into something that has never existed before. And, as belonging to the sensible world, language resonates with itself as well, which, as we have seen, is a process by which we situate ourselves with regard to our own situatedness.[331] I can therefore wonder how accurate my image of Madagascar is, can

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have pictured a rather parched scene, even though much of the island is wet enough to support rain forests. The depths of a word's meaning carry us into its whole etymological history.

[330] Given that this is the most sustained thought I've given to Madagascar probably in years, I will undoubtedly have trouble thinking about that island nation for quite a while without conjuring thought of the little scene I've now spent the better part of an afternoon considering.

[331] This is, again, likely not an exclusively human ability. Several species, including chimps, dolphins, elephants, and some birds, can pass the "mirror-recognition" test: they can recognize their mirror reflection as an image of

wonder about its origins in the depths of my experience, can consider whether it's a good example to illustrate the point I want to make or whether it will strike the reader as an odd rambling digression; and all of these reflections will constitute new resonances between the image, the context in which I am considering it, my broader purposes in doing so, and the general flow and rhythm of my reflective thought.

But consider, to use a more classically philosophical term, the intentionality of this experience: what does it consist in? I am thinking of Madagascar, which is a real enough place, but it is not one I've so much as visited, so it does not have an especially deep personal significance for me. It belongs to a certain kind of what Yi-Fu Tuan refers to as "mythical space," the world that is beyond my direct personal experience and pragmatic activities, the "unperceived field" that is characterized by a "fuzzy ambience" in which "factual errors abound."[332] Most of the world belongs to this space for me. Plentifulness of the errors in my factual knowledge notwithstanding, I am not unaware of these places; I even know about many of them in some detail, and may even have a meaningful sense of place with respect to them (or at least think that I do), thanks in particular to literary and cinematic depictions of them that I may have encountered. But if this is an actual place that I have not experienced directly with my senses, then I can only know about it by way of language.[333] Only through language can I do something as fanciful as situate myself with regard to an *actual place on the opposite side of the world* (a feat that would seem incredible if it weren't so commonplace for us).[334] What language allows me to do, then, is intend Madagascar, despite its extreme distance from my directly perceivable world; and this is to say that it is brought into my world of ideas, in the

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themselves. They therefore seem capable of adopting a perspective external to themselves: they can see themselves from the outside, as it were. Perhaps not incidentally, most (all?) of these species have, at the least among their linguistic abilities, distinguishing individual calls which others of their species can recognize. (See Neubauer…)

[332] Tuan (1977), 87.

[333] It might be more precise to say that I can only know about it by way of meaningful communication, which might include, besides language, someone holding up a series of images locating Madagascar on a map, depicting its landscape, and so forth; but for all intents and purposes we're talking about knowledge that is gained through linguistic communication, and in any event language surely undergirds any other conceivable practice by which such transmission of knowledge might occur.

[334] I do not merely situate myself in abstraction, either; I might actually buy a plane ticket and *go there*.

Merleau-Pontian sense – the world that is meaningful to me, the world that solicits me to participate in it, the world as resonant.

We see, then, how language belongs to and situates us in the resonant world, and how in doing so it expands that world and its possibilities for meaning literally beyond the horizon, that is, beyond the limit of the actually perceivable. It allows us to draw on the depths of our embodied and emplaced experience to imagine new and far-flung milieus. But these milieus are not limited to actual geographical locations; they include virtual places as well, including those which are almost completely abstract. The negotiation of such abstract places is integral to "higher-order" thought, in which the generality of certain forms of linguistic usage – certain language games – allows us to detach from all but the barest and most isolated elements of embodied situationality. As we have seen, for instance, Mark Johnson describes the grounding of certain rules of logical necessity in image schemata pertaining to force: propositions are identified with certain locations, and the "force of logic moves us from one propositional location to another – forcing us to conclusions… Correspondingly, logical possibility is the absence of any barrier blocking the path to a given location" (J, 63-4). Meanwhile, we understand logical connectives in terms of certain kinds of movement of force. Therefore, we can understand a proposition like 'necessarily not-P' as corresponding to "the bounded area where there is an overwhelming force leading to the area outside of the space defined by P."[335] Relations such as these, Johnson writes, "form the foundations of all accounts of logical necessity."[336]

What one imaginatively perceives in adopting the perspective that is employed in such an abstract account of reasoning is radically pared down from the plenary richness of our actual surroundings: compare the ghostly ephemerality of the movement of force and the minimal characteristics of the barriers and bounded spaces described here with, say, the complex commotion of commuters in Grand Central at rush hour – all those manic little vectors of force

[335] Ibid., 64.

[336] Ibid. Note that the particular rules of the language game that is involved will define different placial orientations. For instance, as Johnson point out, "axioms will vary when we move from logical to moral to epistemic necessity and possibility. For example, in the moral realm moral force is not overwhelming, and so we do not always do what we ought to do" (Ibid.).

interactively coordinated right up to the cusp of catastrophe; or compare it to the incalculable intricacy of the motions and geometries of fecund natural places. Compare it even to the detail of a particular imagined scene, such as my poorly-informed image of Madagascar. The realms of logical reasoning are comparably destitute, as we saw in the last chapter; but of course it is just this placial sparseness which allows us to engage with things at levels of abstract generality. Such is its sparseness, in fact, that it tends to recede from attention altogether, so that we have the illusion that we are proceeding solely at a linguistic level, as if the language we used in formal reasoning had meaning by virtue of an internal structure that had nothing to do with situating us in place. At any rate, the point here is that such operations involve the projection of our bodily capacities in the negotiation of a virtual milieu.

My contention is that, just as in the case of our orientation towards some distant place, we are only able to carry out such projection thanks to the situating power of language. For if language is not the necessary *condition* by which we are able to situate ourselves with regard to milieus that allow us to exceed the horizon of the concretely perceivable or perceived, it at least allows for the massive ramification of the possibilities for doing so.[337] How might we make sense of a notion like 'force,' for instance, if not by linguistically abstracting a certain element from disparate phenomena, an element that never appears as such (i.e., independent of those phenomena) in nature? How might we understand something like an exclusive barrier between internal and external space in abstraction without language to provide the architecture in which this spatial logic could emerge; and how could we formulate anything like a Law of the Excluded Middle if not by re-inscribing this logic back into language? Such abstract notions are expressions of resonances which are only made possible through the power of language to call them out. Or, at the very least, we could say that such abstract notions express resonances that can only develop over time through language as an intersubjective phenomenon because they

[337] Again, we must be attentive to what the thinking animals are doing. In particular, tool-using animals seem at least able to execute plans, which must involve the imaginative negotiation of some sort of abstract situation; what it does not necessarily entail, however, is the negotiation of a milieu involving elements that are not directly perceptible – a corvid may construct a tool to fish food out of a crevice, for instance, but it doesn't necessarily have to employ any elements outside of those which are given in its directly experienced environment to do so. And there is the question, too, of whether such abilities might depend on the linguistic or proto-linguistic capacities of these species.

go beyond the abstract capacity for emplacement of any sole individual, so that only by taking up language as a means of inhabitation that far exceeds our personal concrete experience can we enter into domains of such resonance. Only by way of language can we orient ourselves with respect to those abstractly defined domains onto which metaphors project, and which they partially structure.

I emphasize again that the point here is not that these resonances play out at a linguistic level; they play out through our experience in a language-enriched world. Note, for instance, the example of commuters in Grand Central station above: I was contrasting the complexity of such a scene with the abstract sparseness of the concept of force as it plays out in logical reasoning. But even in pointing this out I used the term "vectors of force" to describe those commuters, a term that itself, of course, refers to a physical abstraction. Hopefully, though, the situational context of this reference[338] was such that a certain resonance was evoked, a dimension of the scene was emphasized that allows us to see it under a certain light, as exhibiting a certain kind of movement and having a certain sort of mood. Language brings out this disposition in our situated experience by enlisting all those other instances of force (not to mention instances of the term 'force') that we have experienced in the past – instances that resonate with the Grand Central scene in some way so that this certain emphasis emerges. The "meaning" is not simply something that is found in the words; it is achieved in the situated experience in which the words participate. And this situation has its sense in resonance with the depths of our memory, our emotional associations, our cultural background, and all the elements of what others have referred to as our "life-world." Though language involves abstraction from particular experiences in the sense that it evokes resonances that play across disparate phenomena, it is always expressed as a particular instantiation that is solicited by and draws out these depths.

There is a further point that needs to be made here regarding the necessity of language for metaphorical projection, which concerns the fact that being situated by way of language is not simply a matter of reference – it is not that language points us toward the world in some particularly complex way, and that is that. As we have seen, to be situated is for certain modes

[338] Including the written project of which it is a part, of course.

of participation in the world – certain intra-actions – to be possible. Since language belongs to the world, and is present even in our perception of things, our situatedness toward the world is also a situatedness *towards linguistic possibilities*, and not least among our possible actions in any given situation are the sorts of things we might think or say or write. One way to think about how the scope of these possibilities are defined is in terms of language games, the Wittgensteinian notion that we can borrow here to characterize a certain regionality of language: to engage in the world in terms of some particular use of language is not just to make a reference that is isolated from any other use of language, but to enter into the language game(s) to which that usage belongs. Or, in Merleau-Pontian terms, we could see the possibilities for linguistic expression that are opened up by any instance of language use as a dimension of the silent or invisible *langue* that undergirds *parole*, and which is necessary for a given utterance to have meaning – not simply as the whole of language subtending a particular use, but as a certain *region* of language that becomes stimulated into readiness in the use. In other words, the situating power of language entails, as an element of its general situating power, a certain situatedness with regard to language itself, an emplacement with respect to the landscapes of language – metaphorically speaking. (Such emplacement, and its openness on to certain new possibilities for expression, is implicated in what Bachelard describes as the task of the poet: "proceeding phenomenologically to images which have not been experienced, and which life does not prepare, but which the poet creates; of living what has not been lived, and being receptive to an overture of language."[339] The skill of the poet is to heed the solicitations of language in their full situating depth[340]; but it is the skill of the scientist who comes up with a new theory as well, or the comedian who comes up with a new joke, each in their own way – with respect to certain kinds of solicitation and, of course, in terms of particular styles.)

This is integral to how metaphor is able to structure understanding. For when we first use a metaphor to understand something, even if it is simply a case of directly projecting bodily experience into an abstract realm prior to any linguistic formulation of the metaphor, the orientation we adopt in doing so is not isolable; it is embedded in the weave of meaningful

[339] Bachelard (1994), xxx.
[340] Merleau-Ponty notes that according to Apollinaire, "in a poem there are phrases which do not appear to have been *created*, which seem to have *shaped themselves*" (EM, 141).

interactions, the resonances, that inevitably draw us into some relevant language game (which in turn opens on to further potential language games), and through which the various uses that are so embedded mutually provide each other with a meaningful linguistic context. This is why, as noted by both Johnson and Lakoff and Johnson, metaphors consist of a number of entailments that are systematically related to each other. For instance, we might understand matters pertaining to health and physical well-being in terms of the 'body is a machine' metaphor, and this entails, among other things, that the body "consists of distinct, though interconnected parts," "is a functional unity or assembly serving various purposes," "requires an energy source or force to get it operating," and on and on (J, 130). These sorts of expressions could not be brought together as manifestations of a certain coherent way of engaging with the world otherwise than through language, for only in language-imbued experience is such a gathering of disparate elements possible; without these possibilities for *saying*, the coherence of the metaphor, the assimilation of a network of possibilities that defines a certain perspective by which some domain of experience is intelligible, could not be achieved. This is not to say that the metaphor is fundamentally linguistic; as Johnson emphasizes, even if these possibilities are expressed propositionally, as in the example above, the "entailments" involved should be understood "in an extended and enriched sense to include the perceptions, discriminations, interests, values, beliefs, practices, and commitments tied up with the metaphorical understanding" (J, 132). But it does mean that the emplacements that are so produced would not be possible if not for the power of language to flesh them out.

It does not mean, either, that these modes of emplacement are arbitrary. For we have to remember that modes of emplacement are functions not just of our embodied capacity for action, but of the power of place to solicit our interaction as well, and this is every bit as much the case when we are talking about those modes which are opened up for us through metaphor. If we find it useful to use a 'body is a machine' metaphor, this is because doing so allows us to treat certain symptoms; our understanding is not a mode of representing things but is expressed through engagement, and so it is in fruitful interaction with the world that understanding manifests itself. If, as in Johnson's extended example, Hans Selye is able to make a breakthrough in understanding stress by moving from a 'body is a machine' metaphor to a

‘body is a homeostatic organism’ metaphor (J, 127-136), this is because doing so produces a more coherent, more fruitful understanding of the matter at hand. The medical body solicits this oriented understanding, and it does so in large part by way of language.

Resonance and metaphor

What can we say about the nature of metaphor in light of these considerations? The main point, I think, is this: if metaphors structure human understanding, they do so because what is distinctive about this understanding is achieved when resonances leap free from one domain or multiple domains of experience to cross with others and thus form patterns of diffraction that constitute new forms of understanding. *Metaphors are these expressive movements*, movements which are continuations of the expressions of desire that characterize the manner in which sensing organisms are emplaced in the sensible world.

Any organism that perceives is emplaced, which is to say, it perceives (and participates in) resonances according to its situated perspective and according to its interests; it therefore inhabits a world of resonances which are not determined solely by a principle of ceteris paribus spatial proximity. An organism that builds a nest, say, materially alters its environment, and thus creates new resonances, in order to make it more suitable for inhabitation. An organism that uses tools or executes a plan or deceives others is able to engage with resonances through acts of abstraction which involve the crossing of resonances between multiple perspectives.[341] An organism that uses language, by situating itself with regard to its own situatedness, is able to self-consciously direct itself towards the production of new resonances. Lakoff and Johnson make a convincing case that for humans, at least, metaphor pervades understanding, and I have argued that it is to a substantial degree through the situating power of language that metaphor is able to take on this integral role. This does not entail that non-language bearing species can not have access to metaphorical understanding as such; I don’t know whether they can or not. But as we have seen, language is deeply implicated in the ways that metaphor produces

[341] In the case of tool use, for instance, this would involve the adoption of some perspective from which an imagined interaction is perceived. In the case of socially sophisticated interactions like deception, the imagined perspective is that of another individual.

understanding for us, and it is inconceivable that the world could have the depths of significance that it does, nor the incessant and propulsive germination of new meanings and new modes of inhabitation that characterizes our experience of it, if it were not imbued with language – if it were not so rich that it could both provide the material for and solicit such a profusion of metaphors.

Again, to be situated is not just to be in a determinate position with regard to one's milieu; it is rather to be open onto the world according to one's disposition in embodiment and one's indefinite possibilities for interactive engagement. Likewise, and indeed as a continuation of this same phenomenon, any act of language does not have a meaning that is isolable from its embeddedness in further linguistic possibilities; those particular possibilities for action which are linguistic expressions form a kind of silent background for any act of speech, and these possibilities belong to a certain language game (the boundaries of which are themselves without a fixed limit, often shading into other language games). This, then, is the level at which metaphor expresses the movement by which one domain of experience resonates with another in the emergence of understanding: it is a resonance not between a single proposition or speech act and another, but between a manner of being interactively oriented toward the world in some domain and another. So when Selye adopts a 'homeostasis' metaphor for the functioning of the body, he is adopting a new general *bearing* toward the body, in this case one in which an embodied understanding of, among other things, balancing of forces is projected onto that functioning.

Resonance does not just entail the repetition of a certain pattern, though; it entails transformation as well, since it is an expression of patterns across different domains. So when some mode of situated embodiment is expressed in a new domain, it will be in terms of that domain's own solicitations, its own textures which will be palpated by language in a kind of searching for a deepening of resonances, a manner of situated understanding that draws us into a more intimate emplacement in the world – an intimacy that is the insinuation of things into the depths of our experience. An intimacy of understanding that weaves us into the world. In this situating action meaning emerges through places that are limned by language, into which we are carried by a certain solicitous force, a force of inhabitation, an interactive

engagement that emerges out of this new form of emplacement. It is metaphor that carries us there because it is in metaphor that resonances carry across domains in the creation of new understanding. Recall again the discussion from chapter two of Don DeLillo's description of the condition of ''peace." It's not hard to imagine Lakoff and Johnson applying an image schema to this abstract concept concerning, say, stillness or clarity. But DeLillo finds not just stillness but a "tone of repose," not just clarity but "the sunlit ardor of an object deep in drenching noon."[342] These could be regarded, at one level, simply as elaborations of the relevant schemata – just the sort of non-arbitrary openness of image schemata that Lakoff and Johnson countenance. But at another level, they demonstrate the limitation of the notion of image schemata in the first place: for DeLillo is describing what happens when you take the word 'peace' "*out into the streets*."[343] That is, he is using it in a particular situation, and there the word is not simply structured by the given schema; it becomes a whole bearing, a whole logic of global organization, a style of being in the world, arisen from the resonance of the word with a particular situation. It is in this living reality that the word takes on the carnal existence of the idea.

Understanding is thus transfigured through the expressive movement of metaphor, and is, in fact, a process of incessant transfiguration: the new possibilities for emplacement which erupt through these movements lead to the linguistic, cultural and material re-making of the world in a manner that recurs on human understanding to solicit yet further new modes of inhabitation. Some modes of understanding may be covered over in a kind of phylogenetic layering; others may be swept away altogether. There may be ages and conditions under which certain metaphorical transfigurations are especially rich and alive, and others that are characterized by a worn-down ossification to which understanding, like the language with which it is insinuated, is frequently subject. Yet always it remains the case that what we understand of the world, the manner in which it solicits and situates us in our inhabitation, expresses a movement of resonances that brings things together in meaningful relation for us, and brings them into relation with ourselves and others as well.

[342] DeLillo, 827.
[343] Ibid. Italics added.

This movement is not just an inexorable movement from the concrete to the more abstract. As a movement of thought it is internal to the sensible; it is always just a matter of how the sensible is expressed. Understanding may sometimes become oblivious of its grounding in the interaction of body and place, but it never runs free of it, and in this sense, indeed, *all* experience is concrete. And it may be the case, as Johnson notes, that metaphors are typically extended from domains of physical experience to nonphysical or more abstract domains (for example, the extension of the 'force' image schema from fundamental bodily experiences of force to the rules of rational argument).[344] But this is no iron-clad law, and resonances may traject from the abstract to the more concrete as well. [345] This can happen, for instance, when a certain object or event seems to swarm with abstract significances – a resonant movement in which the concrete experience becomes refulgent, though this may frequently be reduced to a matter of mere symbolism, a relation of mere representation which renders the movement of resonance inert in a kind of ossification of understanding.

It is also important to remember that, though the language that is necessary to describe its structure tends towards simplification, these movements of resonance are not just simple movements from one domain to another. For one thing, they often involve the complex interaction of multiple metaphorical projections, which each contribute some dimension to the unity of embodied and emplaced understanding (and it is for this reason, in part, that this is often, if not always, an ambiguous unity, as understanding may be drawn towards different metaphorical emphases). But even more fundamentally, this is not a mere transferral of meaning from one domain to another, but an *interaction* between domains, and is a reciprocal process in the sense that such a term implies: some new locus of understanding is produced in the interstices of prior thought. If Lower Manhattan is described as a 'jungle,' we do not see its

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[344] See, for example, J, 107.

[345] Derrida notes that the sun, the very paragon of the metaphorical, itself has "the capacity to go out of itself; it joins with artificial light, it suffers eclipse and ellipse, has always itself been other: the father, seed, fire, the eye, the egg, and so on, all of them so many further things, providing the measure of good and bad, or clear and obscure metaphor" (Derrida, 53).

Or here's a more quotidian example: if we can understand arguments in terms borrowed from dance, there are also examples of dancing understood in terms of argument – e.g., in the case of krumping or breakdancing battles, in which participants try to show up their "opponents" (a structure that probably derives from the tradition of verbal hip-hop "battles," which is itself, of course, a metaphorical projection of war).

buildings as resembling tropical foliage; we see a richness expanding in our idea of the neighborhood that colors our perception of it – the streets narrow and bend, the shadows of the buildings grow longer as something wild takes root, and the place takes on a more pronounced mood as a holistic environment. The resonances between skyscrapers and tropical forests do not involve the mere repetition of a recurring pattern, they involve the production of new patterns through a process of placial diffraction.

If literature is the art of linguistic expression in the service of situated understanding, maybe another literary example would be helpful. Here are three lines from T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*:

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.[346]

What sort of resonant movements are accomplished in this image of the Thames? You imagine a verdant canopy as a protection, as a domicile, forming a sanctuary, but you imagine it only in its vestige, as something that has collapsed. The scene is of a river absent its sanctuarial form, where its verdure has turned to skeletal spiderings like cracks in gray glass (or so I imagine it). The clutching of the leaf: there is something desperate about this, like the desperation before death, and then the sinking, a suggestion of burial. Eliot's image borrows from our experience of death, not even by mentioning it – not by making an explicit metaphor of it – but by opening up to what is deathly in this scene, what can be understood in it because we understand death; not, of course, because we understand it in any ultimate sense, but because our searching for sense regarding death takes us down certain paths and expands into certain moods for us.

Nor would we understand this connection to death as fully if these were not *fingers* of leaf we saw in their last moments: something resonates between fingers and leaves, and what we see is something mortal, something more human, something curled into a certain brittle form, and aged, because a last autumn leaf that becomes human becomes a *very old* human, a crooked arthritic finger. A "last finger of leaf" is not a leaf that is like a finger, it is something

[346] Eliot, 11.

new that is between leaf and finger, and this new existence draws us into the depths of a certain inhabitation, a belonging to a world in which this sort of new existence is possible. (Each expression is in this way an invitation into a whole world.)

There are absences here as well: absences of hearing, and therefore of people; absences of nymphs. A river without nymphs is logically equivalent to a river without hourglasses, or grazing bactrian camels, or joyriding airmen looping above; but it is something utterly else in its depth. The nymphs are not just absent but *departed*. The river is forsaken. You didn't imagine this scene under a blue sky, did you? You couldn't have. The words wouldn't let you. They establish a mood, an emotional density, a mode of embodiment in our inhabitation of the scene that does not admit of a blue sky.

Consideration of the writing of someone like T. S. Eliot renders it something of a joke to suppose that the meaning of language could be exhausted by propositional analysis, for such writing makes it clear that language bears us into a whole mode of existence. It does this by carrying us into depths, by discerning resonances between domains – between trees and a tent, a resonance that begins, perhaps, with a certain symmetry of parabolic form but that carries us into other crossings between dimensions of experience; or between leaves and fingers, wherein some new vision of mortality is found. And in fact if there is a metaphor that unites these images in the general construction of the scene, it is a metaphor of death – even though death is never mentioned; even though the river is only said to have a tent, even though the leaf is only said to be like a finger. These are metaphors in service of some deeper meaning which is present in the landscapes in which these metaphors resonate with each other – if there is a metaphor of death, it emerges not as a crossing of domains (between fingers and leaves, for example), but in the crossing of such crossings, through which is constituted a whole world that has been drawn up from the wide breadth of our experience.

But I am speaking about this "metaphor of death" as if it were a straightforward equivalence in what Eliot is expressing. This is, in fact, only a shorthand for something far more complex and subtle, something involving coldness and decay and abandonment, among other "abstractions" that press through this image in its concreteness. It is something which can, in fact, only be expressed in the particular language Eliot has used, in the particular play of words

and the composition of their invocations – the play of depths that constitutes an original expression.[347] It is not enough, then, to say that in metaphor one thing is understood in terms of another; rather, in metaphor modes of interaction and patterns of orientation expand out into new domains, and in doing so become something other. They produce new resonances by which we are woven into things: they produce new understandings.

Metaphor and philosophical expression

This account is itself, of course, structured by metaphor, just as is any expression of abstract thought. I've used terms like 'resonance,' 'diffraction,' and 'movement,' among others, to characterize the emplaced dimension of human existence. In doing so I have embedded us in a certain placial logic, in which our orientation allows a particular sort of interaction between ourselves and the conceptual space we inhabit to reveal itself. Hopefully it is clear by now that this metaphorical structure should not be taken as an approximation of or an approach to some fundamental understanding towards which we are directed; it is the structure of the understanding itself.

The account being given here, in other words, is a metaphor for metaphors – or metaphors for metaphors, for in addition to describing metaphor as a species of movement, or transferral, or transformation of patterns of inhabitation from one domain of inhabitation to another, I have seen fit to invoke the *insinuations* of language as well as its *palpations*, not to mention its *layerings* and *sedimentations*; I have described *resonances* as *crossing* domains but also *plunging* into *depths*; and the world as *soliciting* these as a *force* of *inhabitation*.

One might wonder whether this is just a kind of elaborate, grotesquely mixed metaphor. Fortunately, though, Bachelard provides us with the tools to form a rationalization for this mixed metaphorical language. He is quoted by Derrida as observing that "metaphors are not

[347] And of course I have not even mentioned the interplay of these few lines I've highlighted with the rest of *The Waste Land*, not to mention the literary and cultural history in which it is embedded. It would be a fair point, in fact, to say that any analysis of these lines is inadequate in the absence of any reference to these broader contexts. For my present purposes, though, I only mean to show some of the expressive potentiality of language – potential which would only be deepened through a more extensive contextual analysis.

simple idealizations which take off like rockets only to display their insignificance on bursting in the sky, but that on the contrary metaphors summon one another and are more coordinated than sensations… At times some truly diverse images that one had considered to be quite opposed, incongruous and non-cohesive, will come together and fuse into one charming image. The strangest mosaics of Surrealism will suddenly reveal a continuity of meaning…"[348]

Redemption! My mixed metaphors are in fact the product of a "summoning" – not, hopefully, as a raising from the dead, but rather as an operation which I have described here as the product of the solicitations of the language-imbued world, the spawning of metaphors into one another in the constitution of understanding.[349] If experience has *depths* for us, perhaps this dimension allows us to see language as *insinuated* into them; if there is movement through these depths, perhaps it can best be conceived as wave-like, and therefore *resonant* – and maybe the double meaning of 'resonance,' as a property of waves but also of the audible,[350] is inevitable given the role of the sonorously sensible in this medium. Is there even perhaps an invocation of the sea that is lurking behind these various images? A veiled metaphor that is implicated in all these others, a coherence that is suggested by them? Even *Moby Dick* made an appearance in a previous chapter… Perhaps there is a kind of ur-metaphor that coordinates these others? Would a comprehensive metaphorology reveal this coherence?

Derrida, however, gives good reasons for why this should be doubted. He asks, in regard to Bachelard's suggestions regarding the possibility of coordinating a multiplicity of metaphors under "one charming image": "Can we do justice to metaphor without calling into question the semantic (that is mon[o]semic) point of view of metaphor?"[351] For according to Derrida, Bachelard regards a multiplicity of metaphors as "organized in view of 'one and the same image' whose refraction is simply a projective system."[352] Meaning would be gathered into a unity in such a system. This logic, though, leads us back to that fundamental purpose that metaphor has traditionally (if unwittingly) served in philospohy, which Derrida has thematized

[348] Derrida, 67-68. Quote is from Bachelard (1964), 109-110.
[349] This is all in the spirit of generosity towards myself… Others can decide whether any sort of 'understanding' is achieved or not.
[350] Of course sound is a wave, so the two stand in a metonymical relation as well.
[351] Derrida, 68.
[352] Ibid.

as heliotropism – a movement that ultimately takes us back to that ultimate unifying center (in however many guises it presents itself), the Sun:

> Such metaphorology, when it moves into the area of philosophy, is destined always to find the same – the same *physis*, the same sense (sense of being as presence or, *what comes to the same*, as presence or absence), the same circle, the same fire of the same light that is manifest or hidden, the same turning of the sun. When we search for metaphor, what could we find *other* than this turning of the same? For are we not searching for resemblance? And when we try to determine *the dominant* metaphor of a group which interests us because of its capacity to gather things together, then what else should we expect but the metaphor of domination augmented by that power of dissimulation which allows it to escape domination in its turn, what else but God or the Sun?[353]

This is the danger of a metaphorics of metaphor. For if we were to bring a multiplicity of metaphors under a common denomination, if we were to produce a systematic metaphorology, we would be interpreting the diversity of expression in terms of a principle of unification. And bear in mind what we've seen above in this chapter – that metaphor structures understanding – so that the very process of unification that is being sought is itself metaphorical. In committing ourselves to this metaphor, we commit ourselves to a bringing together, as Derrida says, acording to a principle of resemblance, of similarity, so that this gathering by definition suppresses difference; it shucks off what is unique and particular to expressions in the interest of what is common to them (much as the sedimented word threatens to do when it tends towards essentialism and the erosion of particularity in subordinating objects of experience to a generic idea). A philosophy of unity, of sameness, necessarily follows. And we see the verticality of this movement of abstraction from the particular metaphors to the *dominant* one, the one that overarches the other ones, in whose interest the other ones serve. This verticality inevitably rises, as Derrida sees it, towards the Sun, or towards that which performs a heliocentric function.

Is it inevitable, then, that the effort to give an account of metaphor as the principle of understanding (that is, to develop a metaphorics of metaphor) would lead us toward the same universalization and homogenization of the world that philosophy has so often led us towards? I don't think so. It is, rather, the inevitable fate (or at least a likely one) of a metaphorology that

[353] Ibid., 68.

forgets the origin of metaphor in embodied and emplaced experience. Derrida says of the metaphorics of Descartes' *Meditations*, for instance, that it is subordinated "to sense or meaning, to the truth of the philosophical concept, to what is signified in philosophy."[354] Here we find the very moment of forgetfulness: the moment in which the primacy of intellectual sense is taken for granted, in which certainty is found to reside in the domain of maximal abstraction. And it is no surprise that Descartes should wind up here through his efforts to establish knowledge on a ground of absolute certainty, for such absoluteness (not to mention absolution) is to be found only in the purity of abstraction, under that all-encompassing perspective, that purview of understanding, by which all things are illuminated in what Derrida finds to be the ultimate metaphor of the *Meditations*: the *natural light* – this light of the sun, or of God understood metaphorically in terms of the sun, or of reason as the medium of 'enlightened' thought: "As something natural, [this light] has its source in God, in the God whose existence has been put in doubt and then demonstrated *thanks to it*."[355] This is the heliotropism, the "presence disappearing in its own radiance, a hidden source of light, of truth and of meaning, an obliteration of the face of being," to which, according to Derrida, philosophy continually returns.[356] At the root of the philosophical motivation which would find a ground for certainty in the abstraction from all particularity, as well as from all merely metaphorical expression,[357] is a particular metaphor. The particular sort of embodied relation to place which is projected in this metaphorical understanding (a relation which is not unrelated to that involved in the constitution of objective space) is the hidden premise of the *Meditations*, and of the epistemological conclusions that are derived from (but also surreptitiously expressed in) its methodology.

But now that Derrida has pointed it out, and now that we are generally aware of the role of metaphorical projection in constituting meaning, this premise is no longer hidden. We

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[354] Ibid., 69.
[355] Ibid., 69-70.
[356] Ibid., 70.
[357] As Derrida says, "the adoration [of God] here is that of a philosopher, and since the natural light is natural, Descartes does not take what he says to be like what a theologian would say: for a theologian would be content with metaphor. And metaphor must be left to the theologian: 'The author could give a satisfactory explanation, according to his philosophy, of the creation of the world, as described in Genesis… The account of creation there is perhaps metaphorical; it must therefore be left to the theologians…' (*Entretien avec Burman*)" (Derrida, 70).

can see its role in producing a methodology that is not an absolute ground, but is a way of arriving at truth *from a certain perspective*. And in situating ourselves with respect to this perspective, we can see that, though it may be useful for certain purposes, it is hardly justified in its claim of a universal ambit – or more than this, the claim of the very possibility of such an encompassing perspective as one which transcends all particular perspectives, rather than merely expressing its own kind of particularity, is unjustified.

What, then, can we say about the possibilities for taking account of metaphorical understanding? If we can not unify, and thereby gain escape from, that which constitutes understanding, are we destined to an ironic distancing from any philosophical claim in the awareness that it is merely, at root, a metaphorical projection of embodied experience? It is easy to point out that this 'merely' belies a faith in the sort of intellectualism which has been shown to be misplaced. Nonetheless, the question of ironic distancing requires further address, for what it is really asking is: what sort of epistemological ground are we standing on? To what standard can we submit our claims, if there is nothing that transcends them?

In addressing these questions I will take as a hint a comment Derrida makes regarding the movement that is characteristic of metaphor. He writes that "it is because the metaphorical does not reduce syntax, but sets out in syntax its deviations, that it carries itself away, can only be what it is by obliterating itself, endlessly constructs its own destruction."[358] I have a suspicion that a fair and complete analysis of this line would carry *us* away into a more full-bore account of Derridean philosophy of language than I am prepared to give here, which is partly why I am only taking it as a hint. (The other reason is that such an analysis would likely lead us to locate metaphor more fully within language, and perhaps in writing in particular, than we ought to, considering the role of metaphor in pre-linguistic understanding.) But it is an important hint because it leads us to ask *why* metaphor should be self-obliterating, *why* it should construct its own destruction – and why it should be in *syntax* that this is carried out.

The answer, I think, has to do with the solicitations of language. Metaphor does not always begin, as we have seen (though not necessarily in Derrida's account), in language, but it is certainly continued through it, and its meanings are ramified in it. In particular, it creates,

[358] Derrida, 71.

with a kind of fervid incessancy, ways of being situated in the world – ways of opening onto place through one's possibilities for action. And insofar as linguistic expressions are among these possibilities (indeed, they are essential to human action), these expressions branch out at every point from language itself. In this way language goes a long way towards structuring the ramifying channels through which thought courses.[359]

But what do I mean by referring to these 'branchings'? What happens at these nodes? Some language game, which is to say, some domain of understanding, opens up, and we become situated towards things in a new way, according to new metaphorical structures, like coming over a crest from which a new valley opens before us.[360] This is what allows for metaphorical elaboration: it makes sense for us to approach this domain – that is, *it makes sense to speak* – in this way. Because no word has an isolate meaning – because to use any word already embeds us in a whole vocabulary, a whole language game – when we first use the word 'structure' to refer to theories, for instance, we are approaching the new domain not with respect to a single term, but to a whole other domain of experience. If we can think of theories as structures with 'foundations,' for instance, this is because we have a word for that part of a building; the language game extends in this direction, and there is a resonance for us when we apply this word to theories.

As we have seen, these structures always involve a crossing of domains – from the domain of war to that of argument, or from buildings to theories, or from branching channels to language-imbued thought, or whatever the case may be. Some new domain of experience is echoed from the perspective of that other domain with which it resonates, and by which we are able to make sense of it. Since this is a crossing *from some direction*, though – since it is an oriented approach – this resonance remains aspectual, and necessarily an incomplete expression of the new domain.[361] The simple elaboration of the metaphor could not complete this expression, since that would simply render the new domain identical to the source one;

[359] This is not to say that language constitutes thought, as we have seen; it just has a considerable role in the structuring of it.

[360] (perhaps with towns as reticulate nodes along a central river, with tributaries that drain fringing mountain ranges)

[361] By the same token, all expression, strictly speaking, is incomplete.

resonance would collapse into equivalency. The elaborations must be partial: the new domain will solicit certain elaborations but others will produce only confusion.[362] In adapting to this new domain, then, the language game itself takes on new dimensions, the landscape exhibits a new topography, and in this way the metaphor itself becomes a new form of expression. The resonance which emerges through metaphor meets resistance, and this reshapes the meaning of the metaphor, including the possibilities for linguistic expression which it entails. That is to say, the meaning of language – the linguistic depths in which a given expression is embedded – is altered through the movement of metaphor.[363] The meaning of language itself changes through its resonant movement, and insofar as language solicits metaphor to occupy certain domains – i.e., to be taken up in certain language games – these domains will change, in character and in breadth, according to the nature of the resonance. In this way metaphor renders language unstable – or, to put it another way, creative. For to call a theory a 'structure' is to open onto linguistic depths in a different way than to call a building a structure, and just how it opens onto those depths defines what a theory *becomes* when we refer to it as a structure.

Language thus allows for the rich elaboration of metaphor in the resonant movement from one domain of experience to another that constitutes understanding. This is the creation of something new, something towards which we may situate ourselves, or which may be involved in how we situate ourselves toward other things. This in turn can spawn new metaphorical movements. Since the understanding is aspectual and (forever) incomplete, the sorts of experience which are made possible through metaphorical understanding will always allow, and even necessitate, the adoption of further metaphors and the insinuation of further language games into that experience. And here we encounter the sense in which the mixing of metaphors is productive, even indispensable, to understanding. Yet, unlike in Bachelard's account, this is not because the metaphors can be synthesized into a single unifying image, but

[362] Metaphorical expression is in this way a kind of exploration, charting out new landscapes and finding habitable regions and pathways in some places, impassable barriers in others.

[363] This may even extend to the originary domain, as the new domain of experience itself belongs to the universe of things which may be employed in metaphor, thus can redound back upon the originary domain – if theories are structures, then the word 'structure' itself has a new meaning even when it is applied to buildings. Architecture itself becomes theoretical.

precisely because they cannot be – because, rather, domains of experience resonate with each other in different ways and always imply indefinitely many openings onto new domains.

Proust provides a particularly explicit instance. Of the man who writes a book that realizes the "true pristine shape" of life, he writes,

> How happy would he be… the man who had the power to write such a book! What a task awaited him! To give some idea of this task one would have to borrow comparisons from the loftiest and the most varied arts; for this writer – who, moreover, must bring out the opposed facets of each of his characters in order to show its volume – would have to prepare his book with meticulous care, perpetually regrouping his forces like a general conducting an offensive, and he would have also to endure his book like a form of fatigue, to accept it like a discipline, build it up like a church, follow it like a medical regime, vanquish it like an obstacle, win it like a friendship, cosset it like a little child, create it like a new world without neglecting those mysteries whose explanation is to be found probably only in worlds other than our own and the presentiment of which is the thing that moves us most deeply in life and in art.[364]

Utter nonsense, and some seriously slapdash writing – if, that is, it were necessary to synthesize all of these similes into a single image. But writing such a book, such a mammoth task, overflows any single dimension, and can only be suggested by this profusion of metaphors. (And indeed, for a book to express the true "shape of life," wouldn't the task of writing it have to approach the intricacy and depth of life itself? Wouldn't it try for the scale of the Borgesian map that comes to take on the scale and detail of the very territory it aims to represent,[365] even if the attempt to do so could never succeed?) If we are to characterize such a project, then, we are going to have to approach it from a number of perspectives, according to a variety of dispositions, gleaned from the diversity of experiential domains with which that project resonates (which is to say, in its full living texture). And with each new movement in this process, and therefore with each new addition to the structure of our understanding of it, the project itself changes. It is one thing for it to be like a general "perpetually regrouping his forces" in preparation for battle, but another thing for it to *also* be like "cosset[ing]… a little child." What's more, if it is like cosseting a child, then what it means for it be like a general regrouping his forces *itself* changes; perhaps this general becomes less brash, more solemn, more reluctantly determined. So there is an additional sense in which the meaning of the

[364] Proust (1981), 507-8.
[365] See Borges, 90.

metaphor is itself altered in the very process of producing understanding: not only does it become something new in its movement into a new domain, it is altered through its interaction with those other metaphors that are mutually solicited in understanding; the diffractions of meaning are themselves diffracted in the constitution of emplaced understanding.

Is this not to produce a single image, in Bachelard's sense? To follow the metaphor of resonance, is this not like the production of a unique interference pattern in the interaction of diffracting resonances, a pattern with its own characterizable coherence? Not if, as I've argued, this is an open process, always subject to further elaboration of certain metaphors, and the addition or subtraction of others from the structure of understanding. Every interaction in the domain would, in fact, reconstitute the enactive understanding of it; and, as reconstituted, it would then be open to still further new expressions. In this respect, understanding has to be regarded as a process in which the metaphorical meanings by which it is structured tend towards slippage, or spillage – a movement which is solicited to follow the contours of language into new metaphorical possibilities.

This, then, is how metaphor gets carried away, and how it constructs its own destruction: in the very production of understanding it opens up and even necessitates new metaphorical expressions in a process that is in principle never complete. In summoning dispositions and modes of orientation from various experiential domains in the intra-active constitution of understanding, we transfigure the object of our understanding in the very constitution of that understanding. Understanding should therefore be thought of as a process rather than a state, a sort of palpating approach to things, an exploration of possibilities for action in some domain that employs the transfigured modes of inhabitation developed in others. These actions may harden into habit as our understanding becomes relatively fixed, but this just means that such habitual action becomes the background against which new forms of understanding are achieved; and at any rate no understanding becomes fixed beyond any possibility of revision – doubts may arise, and the most fundamental premise may be called into question.

Not much solace for the foundationalist, I suppose. But any foundationalism takes on an impossible task: to adopt a perspective on things from outside of them, a conceit that depends

on treating language as existing at a linguistic level that is distinct from the world; for such an externalist perspective presupposes that the language in which it is expressed belongs to that exteriority from which it describes the world. This is not an original observation. The point I want to make here, though, is that if there is an epistemological ground to be found, it is within the language-imbued world to which we belong. Or rather, we should call into question this very metaphor of 'ground,' as it solicits us to think in terms of solidity, stability, and permanence. If understanding is a process, then maybe a river is a more apt metaphor: maybe we should seek epistemological currents, especially at those places where they are invigorated by new waters from tributary channels, while eschewing the stagnant oxbows that have been cut off from those movements. Maybe we should go along with Wittgenstein, who puts to use the considerable fecundity of this metaphor in *On Certainty*, where he suggests that there is not so much a solid ground for beliefs as there is a "river-bed of thoughts" which "may shift," where there is a distinction "between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other;" and where "the bank of that river consists partly of hard rock, subject to no alteration or only to an imperceptible one, partly of sand, which now in one place now in another gets washed away or deposited."[366] (Though it's notable that, however hard the rock of the river-bed may be, over a very long period of time even the Grand Canyon may form.)

We might become too beholden to the image of the river, though, in particular its adherence to a generally fixed course, determined inexorably by gravity. For there is something in the movement of thought that defies gravity, that is always moving outwards in many places at once. The solicitations of the language-imbued world draw out this incessant re-orientation, a movement that is like the saccadic movement of human visual perception which is solicited by the visible world. (In some ways, it could be thought of as an *extension* of this movement.) If the resonances of things in the perceptual field solicit this movement in concrete perception, the resonances between domains of embodied experience solicit this movement in abstract understanding. The task is not to establish a ground, but to be open to these solicitations, to

[366] Wittgenstein (1972), 15e.

the possibilities for movement between perspectives and between domains, and to the many voices through which these are expressed.

To be open in this way is to adhere to the logoi of place. For the solicitations which draw us in thought are the solicitations of places. This openness resides, in one sense, in the fact that the capacities which we employ in abstract thought are projections of those we have as bodily organisms; and, as expressions of this bodily nature, they are therefore always engaged in emplaced movement, however abstractly those places may be conceived.

But this openness must always accord with our modes of inhabitation of actual places. Abstraction inheres in this inhabitation, even in perception itself (for instance, in the language-imbued nature of perception), and insofar as this is the case, clearly abstract thought abides within the actual. More than this, even: it imposes itself on our modes of inhabitation, in the form of values and judgments, and generally in the sense that the habits which we develop in abstract thought will mold our possibilities for action in the actual world. A logic of solids and territorial demarcation, for instance, based in embodied experience but elaborated in abstraction, might recur on our experience of the world in certain ways, whereas a logic of fluids and permeability will recur on experience in other ways.[367] Yet for all this power it has to shape the forms of our inhabitation, abstract thought must *contend* with place. That is, it has to make sense in terms of this actual inhabitation. Much as Merleau-Ponty speaks of the "perceptual faith" which undergirds even the aeriest philosophical thinking, there must be some meaningful resonance with actual emplaced experience for abstract thought to compel us in any sort of sustained way. Think of the hoity-toitiest system of thought you can: Leibnizian metaphysics, say. There may be nothing in our embodied experience of things that speaks directly of their ultimate reality as immaculately integrated monads. Yet even a system such as this would never have been conceived, and certainly not by a mind like Leibniz's, if it didn't speak to the way that we experience place – if it didn't corroborate some sense we get from our intra-action in the world as sensing organisms. (Perhaps it captures a certain refulgence in the striking fact of things *appearing* to us.) That is not to say that such corroboration is sufficient for truth – not every possible thought is a true one. Or every seductive thought,

[367] See the following chapter for elaboration of this theme.

perhaps we should say. But our interactions with the solicitations of place are the source of such possibilities. Whatever form our understanding may take, it will always be meaningful in terms of our actual experience of the world in this sense. So the solicitations of place provide the condition for thought in the sense that the possibilities for abstract thought are defined by the capacities we develop in our embodied experience of place, as well as in the sense that thought must ultimately return to the world of places to which we belong in embodied inhabitation.

Just as no perception has a meaning absent a placial context and no utterance has a meaning absent the broader context of some language game, so no solicitation of place exists absent some general mode of engagement. In the most basic sense, nothing appears as visible to us without it belonging to the general experience we have in vision; nothing has a distinctive odor but for its belonging to a general olfactory experience. More subtle manifestations of this obtain as well, and these often play out, as we have seen, in metaphorical terms: to engage with a concept in some way is to engage with it against a whole background domain of metaphorically projected experience. This engagement, despite some degree of schematization that has been necessary in its depiction, is never simple: it is a welter of meanings and depths that cross the spectra of experience in the desiring movement of emplaced existence, an *n*-dimensionality that reverberates with certain tones according to the style of approach. To find the meaning in it is to sense its surface as the shimmering skin of deep swells that cascade up from the abyss. What we make of these depths will be determined by how we see this surface, how we touch it, how we enter into it and how we let it pass through us. It depends, then, on a certain kind of movement, a movement that expresses the intra-action of the world in the flesh of sensing, thinking organisms.

Is there a form of movement that comes closest to expressing pure depth, and therefore the greatest wealth of meaning, the richest form of place-making inhabitation? The archetypal example of the idea for Merleau-Ponty is the little phrase – a *musical* expression.[368] Is music not

[368] Yet he is curiously dismissive of music in "Eye and Mind":

> Now art, especially painting, draws upon this fabric of brute meaning which operationalism would prefer to ignore. Art and only art does so in full innocence. From the writer and the philosopher, in contrast, we want opinions and advice. We will not allow them to hold the world suspended. We want them to take a

the fullest expression we have of the deepest affectivity, the deepest desires? Could it be that its movements, its juxtapositions of notes, its whole topography of ascents and descents, of

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> stand; they cannot waive the responsibilities of humans who speak. Music, at the other extreme, is too far on the hither side of the world and the designatable to depict anything but certain schemata of Being – its ebb and flow, its growth, its upheavals, its turbulence. (EM, 123)

Mikel Dufrenne says that "what 'Eye and Mind' says about the visible can also be said of the sonorous and tactile because it is linked to them," for after all, "Synesthesias are the fate of all perception" (Dufrenne (1981), 172). But, as he also notes, the visible (in the sense that is related specifically to the eye) takes on a special prominence in this text. Indeed, it does so to a greater extent than in *The Visible and the Invisible* where visibility serves much more explicitly as synecdoche for sensibility in general. Dufrenne's take: "I would willingly say that if Merleau-Ponty chose to write 'Eye and Mind,' it is simply because he loved painting" (Ibid., 173).

Claude Lévi-Strauss, quoted by Olivier Mongin, makes a different observation: music is treated as "one of Being's purest manifestations" in *The Visible and the Invisible*, yet denied any such significance in "Eye and Mind" because these are two "approaches to the same problem, but they are couched, in one case, in phenomenological terms, and in terms of ontology in the other" (Lévi-Strauss (1971), Quoted in Mangin, 254.). He goes on: "The reasons for the choice of visual perception are clear: people rely essentially on it to assess silent objects, the majority of which at any given moment are beyond our sense of touch." Whereas painters "can instruct us on the intimate nature of that constant and common perception," musical works "break with the naïve experience of pre-objective Being, rather than, like painting, leading toward it" (Mangin, 254-5).

It seems a little odd, though, to deny that Merleau-Ponty's approach in *The Visible and the Invisible* is ontologically directed, considering the focus on ontological concepts like the chiasm and the flesh in that text. Yet it is also strange that Merleau-Ponty adopts this oculocentrism in "Eye and Mind" when the latter was written more or less contemporaneously with *The Visible and the Invisible*. (As Galen Johnson notes, it was actually written between the early and later chapters of *The Visible and the Invisible* (Johnson (1993), 37).)

But Lévi-Strauss's point that vision is the perceptual mode "people rely essentially on… to assess silent objects" is salient. For it is indeed the case that vision is the sense most suited to perceiving what is visible, as opposed to auditory. If that sounds tautological, it is perhaps because a kind of phenomenological question-begging is going on: given that Merleau-Ponty's interest in "Eye and Mind" is painting, he will find other forms of expressioin lacking with regard to that which painting reveals. As painting is a visual medium, this inevitably means that this text, as a first pass at constituting an ontology of the flesh, will tend towards the oculocentric. (There is likely truth to what Dufrenne says – Merleau-Ponty appreciates painting, and insofar as painting serves as the lens through which he views flesh, this leads him to emphasize that aspect of the flesh which is revealed by the perceptual disposition which painting demands.)

However, when *The Visible and the Invisible* turns toward language as intrinsic to carnal existence, it necessarily engages with the sonorous dimension of experience, and this becomes as essential to defining the contours of flesh as is the painter's line in "Eye and Mind." In the passage cited above, that dimension is shunted off to opposite ends of a spectrum which has painting at its heart – at one end, language, in the form of the "opinions and advice" of the writer and philosopher; at the other end, music, as depicting only "schemata of Being." But by the fourth chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible*, as Johnson puts it, Merleau-Ponty can speak "of the reversibility between sonority and listening as a more 'agile' reversibility than touch-touching for it is the crossing-over between flesh and expression, between visible and the invisibilities of speech and thought: 'If I am close enough to the other who speaks in order to hear his breath and feel his effervescence and his fatigue, I almost witness, in him as in myself, the awesome birth of vociferation' (VI, 144)" (Johnson (1993), 44-5). Interestingly, it is when he does so turn to language, and thus to the sonorously sensible, that he *also* finds in music an exemplary case of the carnal existence of the idea. On this reading, it is not, as Lévi-Strauss says, that the two texts approach the problem in different terms – ontological terms in one case, phenomenological terms in the other. It is instead that, when Merleau-Ponty turns toward the inextricably linguistic character of flesh, the sonorously sensible reveals itself to be likewise inextricable from this element. If so, this marks a not inconsiderable (and, as it would turn out, final) turn in Merleau-Ponty's thought.

outward and inward movements, and of their continuation in dance – in movement which is more purely expressive of our embodied existence than any other – could it be that these movements with their innate emotional significance are the origin of metaphor? Could it be that the depth of feeling, when it first burst free of raw bodily sensation, did so in the form of two proximal tones, a low one and a high one perhaps, that absorbed into themselves a movement of feeling? And could it be that this first metaphorical expression cleared the way for language, that further discernment of meaning in the audible? If so, is dance, in which we allow the movement of music to pass through us, and which is so often amplified in community with others – is this our communion with that which comes before language, our most proximate experience of "raw being"? Or is it rather the other side of the sonorously sensible, not originary of but parallel to language? Is the one the expression of a resonant movement that situates us with respect to external places, while the other carries the movement internally, in situating us in terms of moods that penetrate to the core of our flesh? In either case, is the key to understanding language, and the movements of resonance in emplaced thought, to be found in music? I only leave these questions as an open door at the end of this chapter.

Chapter Five: Dispositions in Emplaced Understanding

In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche expresses the imperative that motivates the dominant strain in traditional philosophical practice: "'Be a philosopher, be a mummy, represent monotono-theism by a gravedigger-mimicry! – And away, above all, with the *body*, that pitiable *idee fixe* of the senses! infected with every error of logic there is, refuted, impossible even, notwithstanding it is impudent enough to behave as if it actually existed!'"[369] So does Nietzsche express the notion that philosophy has traditionally turned for truth toward the purported stability, fixity, eternality, and ideality of reason, over and against the impermanent flux and flow of becoming that characterizes corporeal existence.

So far I've argued, of course, that abstract thought, and thus philosophy itself, is an expression of the intra-action of bodies in the world that is expressed from one side in our bodily capacities for action as living organisms, and from the other side in the solicitations of places as the milieus in which meaning is constituted for us. But if thought is an expression of our embodied experiene of place, and if there are indefinitely many ways that we can inhabit places according to our bodily capacities, then the way that thought plays out in our inhabitation of the world will depend on *how* those bodily capacities are employed. In other words, styles of thought will be expressions of styles of embodied engagement in place, and therefore the manner in which we so engage will be inextricable from the paths that thought travels and the destinations it seeks.

I have mentioned here and there that our dispositions in embodiment are significantly implicated in the ways that we understand the concepts of space and place. Now we can expand this notion to see how such dispositions manifest themselves in all manner of abstract thinking. In the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, in particular, we find an explication of the embodied nature of thought that lets us see just how the grounding of thought in various sensory modes has the most profound consequences for where our thinking leads us. In the first part of this chapter, I will recount this explication. I will then explore the resonances

[369] Nietzsche, 45.

between the Deleuzian perspective and Merleau-Ponty's, as well as some of the other ideas that have been discussed here, which will lead in particular to some reflections on wild being and desire.

The embodied nature of thought in Deleuze's philosophy

Deleuze places special emphasis on two sensory orientations toward the world, or modes of bodily existence, in particular: the haptic and the optical. These modes of embodiment are closely connected to two forms of space – the smooth and the striated, respectively – in a manner that is similar to the relation between active embodiment and the solicitations of place that we've been looking at; and these forms of space are bound up with a further pairing: the abstract and the concrete line. The optical disposition, along with the striated space and the concrete line which are mutually implicated with it, are the source of the classical philosophical dichotomization of subject and object, and this dichotomization underlies the sort of representationalist thinking that is, for Deleuze, the failure of thought.

The haptic and the optical dispositions in embodiment

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, and even more prominently in *The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze presents two sensory modes as distinct fundamental dispositions toward space: the haptic and the optical. These are presented in opposition to each other, but not simply as the senses of touch and sight are opposed to each other, for these dispositions are not exclusively bound to particular senses – it is possible to see haptically, for instance. Indeed, these two modes are sometimes described as two forms of seeing, where close-range vision pertains to the haptic and long-distance vision pertains to the optical. These dispositions seem to overflow any particular organ of sense in a kind of synesthetic orientation of the whole organism.[370] In *The*

[370] In more Deleuzian terms, we might say that they expanded across planes of consistency in the orientation of the body without organs, but I am going to try to limit such idiosyncratic terminology as much as possible, hopefully without significantly undermining the substance of the ideas, in order to highlight the affinities between Deleuze's account of spatialized embodiment and that which has been given here.

Logic of Sensation, for instance, Deleuze says of painting that it "*does not treat the eye as a fixed organ*;" it "liberates the eye from its adherence to the organism… the eye becomes virtually the polyvalent indeterminate organ that sees the body without organs (the Figure) as a pure presence. Painting gives us eyes all over: in the ear, in the stomach, in the lungs" (FB, 45). This is haptic seeing: vision which works directly on the nervous system and diffusely on the body as a whole (or on the zones of intensity that comprise the body without organs) and which is not bound to the body of the individual organism but is transversal with respect to it. Optical vision, by contrast, works through the brain, through cognitive processes which project an ideal space. Insofar as the latter still depends on a sensory function and a particular – albeit abstract and representational – perspective, it entails a certain disposition in embodiment, one which is relatively removed from fully-embodied corporeal emplacement. (We've seen, of course, how such a disposition is capable of constituting such an "ideal" (or objective) space through imaginative projection.)

Smoothing and striation

It is best to think of the haptic and the optical, then, not as mere tendencies to favor one sense over the other, but as dispositions towards embodiment which manifest as distinct ways of engaging in place. In particular they are closely bound up with smooth and striated space: the smooth is "both the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space," while the striated "relates to a more distant vision, and a more optical space" (ATP, 493). In fact Deleuze speaks frequently of the haptic and optical dspositions as being *derived* from smooth and striated space, respectively; in terms that I've been using, we can say that the correlative bodily dispositions are solicited by these patterns in place.

And it makes more sense to refer to these as *patterns* rather than *types*, I think, because smooth and striated space only ever exist in dynamic mixture: smooth space is constantly succumbing to striation, while striated space gives way to eruptions of smoothing. They are not opposing states so much as they are dynamic processes which incessantly emerge out of and act upon one another. As such it is better to think of them as movements of smoothing and

striation, rather than fixed categories to one or the other of which various actual places belong. Nonetheless, Deleuze distinguishes smooth and striated space from each other in a number of ways: smooth space is heterogeneous, striated space tends toward homogeneity; the smooth is unbounded, the striated is defined by certain limits; smooth space is the space of the nomad, striated space is that of the state; smooth space is directional, striated space is dimensional; in striated space nodes or points are connected by lines, and in this sense have priority over those lines, whereas in smooth space trajectories take primacy and determine the nodes; and so on. But the main thing to focus on here is the manner in which smooth and striated space relate to the haptic and the optical.

"The first aspect of the haptic, smooth space of close vision," Deleuze writes, "is that its orientations, landmarks, and linkages are in continuous variation; it operates step by step. Examples are the desert, steppe, ice, and sea, local spaces of pure connection" (Ibid.). To engage the world haptically is to operate in smooth space, wherein there are no fixed references, only local and changing ones. The examples given are all barren spaces, but only barren in this sense of lacking fixed references; in another sense they are realms of limitless intricacy – the contours of the ice, the shifting topography of the desert, the swells and currents and odors and colors of the sea form environments of radical complexity, a complexity which recalls that of a fractal line or volume (as fractals themselves express a sort of mathematical smooth space). But this complexity and extreme heterogeneity are only evident when one engages space with close vision. Beyond the favoring of a particular sensory mode, a certain *attitude* in embodiment is necessary, a predisposition to a certain kind of movement which involves delving in and embedding oneself. It is the sort of engagement typical of ambulation – a bodily movement through space which involves a responsiveness to the environment in an immediate and haptic sense, through direct contact, and according to local landmarks which fleetingly punctuate an ever-shifting milieu as you go: a movement that works through the soles of the feet as they grip the earth. The movement of the nomad is paradigmatic, for the nomad (or the multiplicity that constitutes a nomadic band) is always embedded in an ever-changing local absolute. That is, since "locality is not delimited" for the nomad, "the absolute… does not appear at a particular place but becomes a nonlimited locality; the coupling of the

place and the absolute is achieved not in a centered, oriented globalization or universalization but in an infinite succession of local operations" (ATP, 383). You are never "in front of" or before such a local absolute (ATP, 493). Rather, you are *amidst* it much as you are amidst the space you presently and bodily occupy.

In this sense, one is necessarily *among* the things that populate a smooth space: "A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without 'counting' it and can 'be explored only by legwork'" (ATP, 371). In a sense, everything we encounter directly as embodied beings is encountered in smooth space[371] – even the sidewalk in the middle of the city, the "striated space par excellence," (ATP, 481) is a place of haptic engagement for me insofar as I rely on direct contact with the environment and orientation by means of a shifting milieu of landmarks to get around. Recall the sense in which we are "centered" in place neither according to the positionality of our bodies as geometrical foci nor according to "objective" criteria which treats space as determinable from a perspective external to any given situation, but rather according to the heterogeneous topographies and zones of density that constitute place – think of the monument in the plaza, for instance, that centers a scene in which we consider ourselves to be peripheral participants. The same could be said of my immediate interaction with this computer I'm typing on right now, a close and haptic engagement if ever there was one, even if my attention is drawn away from this immediate aspect of experience by the sort of abstract thinking that is necessary to write this chapter.

But there is another way to orient oneself, and this involves a different disposition in embodiment. This disposition is prevalent in processes of striation, which "is defined by the requirements of long-distance vision: constancy of orientation, invariance of distance through an interchange of inertial points of reference, interlinkage by immersion in an ambient milieu, constitution of a central perspective" (ATP, 494). Striated space is experienced optically, as one visually surveys a scene, or envisions one from a bird's-eye view. It is dimensional rather than directional: whereas movement in smooth space involves constant directional orientations relative to local and changing landmarks, movement in striated space occurs within a fixed

[371] This runs parallel to the sense in which we are always concretely emplaced.

system of reference points and delimitations. One of the most abstract and totalizing examples of this, and one of Deleuze's primary examples of striation, is the latitudinal and longitudinal gridding of the world which enmeshes every place in a system of fixed coordinates that are laid out according to a logic which can be thought only through the imaginative projection involved in treating the world from an external perspective, as if one were standing before a globe. To orient by most modern maps, which are drawn from more or less just such an optical perspective, is to orient oneself in striated space.[372]

Whereas the local is absolute in smooth space, in striated space the "absolute is now the horizon or background, in other words, the Encompassing Element without which nothing would be global or englobed. It is against this background that the relative outline or form appears" (ATP, 494). The movement from close vision to long-distance vision involves the transmutation from an ever-shifting non-delimiting edge of a local absolute, wherein no stark delineations emerge to set apart an object from its environment, to a fixed and delimiting ground which "holds [the encompassing element] in immobile equilibrium and makes Form possible" (ATP, 495). That is to say, only in striated space can a delineation emerge which allows for a distinction between object and background; form is a product of striation. (We see by implication here one sense in which striated space may be immanent to the smooth: some element of striation must have been involved even in the very orientation by landmarks that characterizes movement in smooth space, since some delineation of visual form would generally be necessary for those landmarks to be present to us as such.)

This points to another key distinction between smooth and striated space: in smooth space material substance, as that which one encounters haptically, is primary; in striation "forms organize the matter" (ATP, 479), as what is materially encountered is subordinated to conceptual categorization, the surveying at a remove that is the operation of the optical imagination. And so we find Deleuze contrasting "the ideality of striated space [to] the realism

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[372] It is worth noting, though, that no such perspective actually exists; no map projection is truly "realistic," and the lines of sight by which we read a map don't converge. The implied disposition is one by which we flit from one aerial perspective to another instantaneously, though interestingly, a certain kind of "embedded" mapping seems to be emerging, typified by Google's Streetview, which gives us an on-the-ground perspective that is photographically (and in that sense concretely) rather than abstractly expressed, though admittedly still not without a certain representational distancing.

of smooth space" (ATP, 574) – for the imposition of categories, the conceptual sectoring of the world, occurs through striation as a function of the optical disposition, whereas the haptic disposition solicited through smoothing entails an encounter with the world which is unmediated by such categorical delineations. To think in terms of forms, then, is to employ the optical perspective; it is to imagine oneself standing outside of and before the object of one's consideration. Adopting such an external perspective is one of the definitional characteristics of engagement in striated space. So, for instance, the multiplicities which occupy smooth space "do not meet the visual condition of being observable from a point in space external to them; an example of this is the system of sounds, or even of colors, as opposed to Euclidean space," which is striated.[373] To operate in striated space is to leave behind direct contact in a particular place, a local absolute, and rather to adopt an optical stance: the view from nowhere, or the perspective of ideal space that stands outside of any particular place.[374]

The abstract and the concrete line

It isn't that the haptic and the optical *define* smooth and striated space; Deleuze speaks of the spaces as conceptually prior to the dispositions in embodiment: "the smooth and the striated must be defined in themselves before the relative distinctions between haptic and optical, near and distant, can be derived" (ATP, 496). And this subordination runs through yet another dyad, the abstract line and the concrete line[375] (a terminology that will have to be treated as being unrelated, and even in some ways contradictory, to the sense in which I've been using 'abstract' and 'concrete'). Whereas the abstract line is "Gothic," "nomadic," and "the affect of smooth spaces," the concrete line is "rectilinear" and pertains to "organic representation," which is the "feeling that presides over striated space" (ATP, 496-9).

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[373] ATP, 371. Again, smooth space "is a space of contact, of small tactile or manual actions of contact, rather than a visual space like Euclid's striated space" (ATP, 371).
[374] Or, translated into temporal terms, the viewpoint of eternity. (Cf. Nietzsche, 45, on thought that is "*sub specie aeterni*.").
[375] "That haptic-optical, near-distant distinctions must be subordinated to the distinction between the abstract line and the organic line; they must find their principle in a general confrontation of spaces" (ATP, 499).

One way in which abstract and concrete lines draw out the haptic and optical dispositions is particularly relevant. This is the sense in which these lines serve as edges or boundaries in space. The abstract line, or what Deleuze refers to in *The Logic of Sensation* as the line of Gothic art and of "expressionistic abstraction" (FB, 104), does not define a contour: "it is never the outline of anything, either because the line is swept along by the infinite movement, or else because it alone possesses an outline, like a ribbon, as the limit of the movement of the inner mass" (FB, 105). Here the outline only exists insofar as the material substance defines it as its ever-changing limit in a dynamic process of constant and transversal movement. The principle of the abstract line is a "nonorganic vitality," a vital force that does not become bound up in the identity of the organism but instead expresses traits of pure animality or humanity which tend to blur formal distinctions (between individuals or species, for instance) (FB, 104-5). It is nonrectilinear, nomadic, and passes "between points, figures, and contours" (ATP, 496).

By contrast the concrete or organic line defines a more fixed and impermeable boundary by organizing matter and subordinating it to a grid-like system, *in the manner of* Euclidean space. In *The Logic of Sensation* Deleuze speaks of the organic contour which "acts as a mold, in which contact is made to work toward the perfection of the optical form" (FB, 102). This contour acts as a limit which blocks any potential transversal movement; it is a fixed line which contains a mass and in this way defines a form. Deleuze refers to the space in which this contour-drawing manifests as tactile-optical space, and there is a role for the sense of touch here, but only insofar as direct contact is used to verify the contour of the form.[376] We could think of the tactile, then, as the manifestation in the hand of the delimiting function of the optical disposition – the inverse of the subordination of the eye to the hand in the haptic disposition. The effect of this sensory order is the establishment of delineated forms in a

[376] In *The Logic of Sensation*, the optical and the haptic are developed more in terms of a spectrum comprised of various degrees of interaction between the two. Tactile-optical space, for instance, lies somewhere between the optical and the haptic, and can in fact be dismantled from either direction, so to say (see FB, 106); but it clearly involves the subordination of the hand to the eye. None of this is inconsistent with the depiction of the haptic and the optical as they are described in ATP, however, where the smooth and the striated, and by extension the haptic and the optical, are presented as dynamically interacting with each other, even though the explanatory focus remains on the conceptual distinction between the two poles of the spectrum.

striated space. Such forms are the basis for organic representation – that is, representation that excludes difference and is organized around identity, opposition, analogy, and resemblance.[377] Such representation "retains the form as its principle and the finite as its element," and thus fundamentally operates as delimitation.[378]

There is a certain geometrical hierarchy which is characteristic of the rectilinearity of striated space: horizontal and vertical lines are subordinate to the points of the grid, diagonal lines are subordinate to horizontal and vertical lines, and transversal lines are subordinate to diagonals. Under the regime of such a hierarchy lines will form contours, in which case the line "is inherently, formally, representative in itself, even if it does not represent anything;" "[t]he figurative, or imitation and representation, is a consequence, a result of certain characteristics of the line" where it exists under such conditions (ATP, 497). Rectilinear gridding, which is at least implicit in Euclidean space, fixes the line in place independent of the perspective of any possible observer (as the longitudinal and latitudinal position of an object has a fixed value, for instance). And because the line is fixed in this way, it creates blockage; it channels intensities and renders them static, subservient to the line or the organic contour: the laminarization of the flow of intensities. Material substance thus becomes subservient to form, as the line creates a delimitation of matter which persists across any number of perspectives and conditions. The line in Egyptian art has such a delimiting function, for it "is negatively motivated by anxiety in the face of all that passes, flows, or varies, and erects the constancy and eternity of an In-Itself."[379]

The striation of subject and object

The delimiting concrete line entails the optical bodily disposition because the object that is delimited can only appear *before* one. The perceiver must be at a remove to see the delineated

[377] In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze calls these the"four iron collars of representation: identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception" (DR, 262).
[378] DR, 43. Organic representation is contrasted with "orgiastic representation" which "has the ground as its principle and the infinite as its element" (Ibid.).
[379] ATP. 496. Deleuze's thinking on the Egyptian line seems to have moved in a more nuanced direction in *The Logic of Sensation*, where Egyptian art is depicted as originary of both haptic and optical tendencies in Western art.

object in a homogeneous striated space: striated space solicits an engagement from a distance and a discerning of delimitation – qualities, as we have seen, that belong to vision. In this way a particular sort of relation between perceiver and perceived is established, one in which a perceived object stands before a perceiving subject. And insofar as the subject itself comes under scrutiny in this schema, it will be defined by the same sort of delineation that establishes the form of the object; it, too, must be understood as a delimited and impermeable form. Given this relation between the subject and the object, there is necessarily a correspondence between perception and perceived. This correspondence takes on the form of symmetry: there is a mirroring in the subject of the external world which exists in a homogeneous space laid out before her, or surrounding her in a non-immersive sense – the perceiving subject standing apart from but at the same time at the focal center of the perceived world.[380] As Deleuze writes, "The organic body is prolonged by straight lines that attach it to what lies in the distance. Hence the primacy of human beings, or of the face: we are this form of expression itself, simultaneously the supreme organism and the relation of all organisms to metric space in general" (ATP, 498). The organic body is the organism, a delineated form which stands apart as a unitary figure in the homogeneous element of striated space.[381] It is a unity that is in the situation of a surveyor that looks out at the visual field from some external point, taking it in from a distance.[382]

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[380] This schema follows the principle of tracing, which is based on a logic of reproduction, and thus always returns to the same, as against mapping, which constructs expressions of phenomena along new axes, through new connections, in diverse contexts, and (by implication) according to a principle of difference. (See ATP, 12-13)

[381] I like to think of this metaphysical spirit as captured by the traditional museum display technique of the specimen case, which isolates representative members of species without including any reference to their natural habitat, related species, etc. (though they might be organized according to the taxonomical order, which itself recapitulates the isolating delineation of forms of life at the level of species).

[382] In WIP, Deleuze makes occasional reference to the "survol," which is translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell as 'survey,' but which Ronald Bogue translates as 'overflight.' This concept is drawn from Raymond Ruyer, who used it to describe the relation between the self and the visual field. This relation can tend to be misperceived as that between a unitary subject beholding the field of objects from an external perspective. According to the concept of the survol, by contrast, the observer is, in a manner of speaking, immanent to the perception. As Bogue puts it, "there is no difference between perceiving subject and perceived object, between having the perception and being the perception. Contrary to Husserlian phenomenological analyses, consciousness is not consciousness *of* something. Consciousness *is* something" (Bogue, 302). Consciousness so conceived is in a relation of 'survey' or 'overflight' with respect to its content (i.e., the perceived field). This is to say that, even if an optical sensory apparatus is employed, and even if a certain distance is necessary to take in something in the world (as I must be at a certain distance from a table, for instance, to make it out *as a table*), it is a mistake to imagine this perspective

Deleuze uses some of his more derisive language in characterizing the organism: it is the product of a controlling god who creates the organism so as to impose his own hierarchical order on it because he cannot bear the body without organs, the site of the free flow of intensities; the organism is merely "a stratum on the BwO, in other words, a phenomenon of accumulation, coagulation, and sedimentation that… imposes upon it forms, functions, bonds, dominant and hierarchized organizations, organized transcendences. The strata are bonds, pincers" (ATP, 159). The organism is the product of the segmentation – and therefore the striation - of the body without organs; the organic contour is the line that draws the segmentation. In the human subject this segmentation takes on a special significance, for this is the organism which perceives, and so reflects, all the others, and is in this way connected to them by lines of symmetry (the "straight lines that attach it to what lies in the distance"[383]).[384] And in this reflective correspondence, the human subject draws the ontological space in which every organism, and every being, is demarcated and put in its place according to a hierarchical order. In this way striated space compels a certain embodied disposition which implies a metaphysical order, in which subject and object stand as perceiver and perceived in a relation of symmetry, in a world of fixed and determinate entities. This mode of embodied thought is the primary strain in the history of Western philosophy.

It is in this context that representation comes to be the dominant model for thought. Representation exists in the relation between perceiving subject and perceived object. For "the

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as arising from some position or dimension outside of the dimension of what is perceived. The dimension of perceiver and perceived are the same.

This term is employed by Deleuze to characterize the brain: "It is not a brain behind the brain but, first of all, a state of survey without distance, at ground level, a self-survey that no chasm, fold, or hiatus escapes… [it] does not refer to any external point of view [but rather] surveys itself independently of any supplementary dimension, which does not appeal therefore to any transcendence, which has only a single side whatever the number of its dimensions, which remains copresent to all its determinations without proximity or distance" (WIP, 210). The brain, as locus of thought, is therefore without distance from its content; the subject is without distance from its object, or rather, the dichotomization of subject and object results from the imposition of a distance which misconstrues the nature of experience – even as it occurs, of course, within experience. This parallels the sense in which the striated is asymmetrically embedded within the smooth, as discussed below.

[383] This phrase is also presumably a reference to lines of perspective which striate the field of depth of optical space.

[384] The act of creation of the organism is in fact also the creation of the subject: "The judgment of God uproots [the body without organs] from its immanence and makes it an organism, a signifiation, a subject" (ATP, 159).

form of representation first of all expresses the organic life of man as subject" (FB, 102). As I just outlined, the symmetrical correspondence that defines this relation necessarily unfolds in an optical space in which lines of correspondence can be drawn. Note that this conceptualization requires a perspective external to that of either the subject or object: a third point from which we have an encompassing view of both.[385] This is paradigmatically optical, a disposition in embodiment which is entirely divorced from any sort of haptic involvement or direct contact through the nervous system. Instead it involves the brain (and the retina as an extension of the brain) in the construction of ideal space. And the representation *of* the world *by* the subject in this ideal space forms the metaphysical basis for the possibility of knowledge – the accuracy of the representation becomes the epistemological standard. Thought itself, then, becomes a matter of accurate representation.[386]

Furthermore, *any* line drawn in a striated or optical space is "inherently, formally, representative in itself, even if it does not represent anything" (ATP, 497). This is because the subject-object relation of correspondence is instantiated whenever there is a perception from the perspective of the optical disposition in embodiment.[387] For the line that appears in striated optical space necessarily appears *before* one. In apprehending it one takes on the role of perceiving subject, and thereby constitutes the subject-object dyad in which there is a symmetrical relation – a representational relation – between perception and perceived. And as mentioned above, the line in optical space forms an organic contour which delineates the object by interrupting the free flow of intensities. (Indeed, the very notion of *an* object entails the delimitation that separates the object from its field or surrounding milieu (and which

[385] To put this another way, symmetrical correspondence could be thought of as a sort of reproduction, along the lines of tracing, and "[r]eproducing implies the permanence of a fixed point of *view* that is external to what is reproduced: watching the flow from the bank" (ATP, 372).
[386] With regard to the connection between representation and an optical disposition in embodiment, cf. Merleau-Ponty, who writes that "[t]he painter's vision is not a view upon the *outside*, a merely 'physical-optical' relation with the world. The world no longer stands before him through representation; rather, it is the painter to whom the things of the world give birth by a sort of concentration or coming-to-itself of the visible" (EM, 141). Painterly expression is defined precisely by a kind of immersion, and contrasted precisely to an optical disposition that involves standing outside of an object in a system of representation. The parallels are striking enough for one to wonder how directly Deleuze might have been influenced by Merleau-Ponty with respect to these ideas (though of course it is possible that they are both responding to some actual facts about the nature of painting).
[387]This is, again, not to say that the correspondentist relation is constituted whenever there is *vision* – only when vision and the other senses are employed in the manner characteristic of the optical disposition.

delimitation establishes the dominance of form over material substance).) So the line in optical space is always perceived as delimiting and defining a contour, the outline of an object which is perceived within the schema of the subject-object dyad. Even if the delimitation is incomplete or not attached to a concrete body, it is perceptible to the optical disposition only by interrupting flows and thus suggesting an organic or concrete organization. Thus the line is inherently representational "even if it does not represent anything." It is in this way that "rectilinear systems … [maintain] the *organic* domination of a central point with radiating lines, as in reflected or star-shaped figures" (ATP, 498).

The abstract line, on the other hand, is not a contour. It does not constitute a fixed delimitation. Nor is it subject to the organization of a rectilinear system, in which points determine lines and transversals are subordinate. Instead it operates in free movement, always shifting direction and defining nodes which are only subordinate to the line. It operates as a projection of the flow of material substance, not as a delimiting form that creates borders around objects. This nomadic or Gothic line "has the power of expression and not of form… it has repetition as a power, not symmetry as form" and "unleashes the power of a *machinic* force that multiplies its effect and pursues an infinite movement" (Ibid.). The smooth space that is described by the abstract line is experienced through the haptic disposition of embodiment, through direct contact with the nervous system. It does not involve the positing of an ideal optical space which would be experienced through a central organizing mechanism. And it does not necessitate a metaphysical distinction between subject and object. It is therefore not bound to a "symmetrical antithetism," but manifests a power of repetition: the production of burgeoning non-centered multiplicities in a "disjointed polythetism" (Ibid.). As the optical is indicative of representational thinking, the haptic is the mode of embodiment for expressive thought.

The dissymmetry of smoothing and striation and the nature of thought

At this point it may be tempting to read these two modes as comprising a symmetrical antithetism in their own right, or perhaps as serving as two poles of a uniform spectrum. But

this would be too simplistic. As Deleuze says, the smooth and the striated "bring dissymmetrical movements into play" (ATP, 482), and so the haptic and optical should not be taken as simply inverted reflections of one another (to use an optical metaphor). Deleuze is not explicit about what he means by this, but I think that at least an aspect of this dissymmetry can be discerned by looking at the portion of his discussion of the smooth and striated which comes closest to relating those modes of spatialization to the nature of thought itself.

The comment on dissymmetrical movements cited above leads into a discussion of travel in smooth and striated space: "rhizome travel" and "tree travel," respectively (Ibid.). In tree travel, as in striation generally, lines are subordinate to points; trajectories are the means for traversing spaces between resting places. In rhizome travel, points are subordinate to lines; the trajectory, not the destination, is the purpose of the voyage. But location has little to do with the spatial character of a voyage, as one can move in striations through smooth spaces like deserts and seas, or move smoothly or nomadically in cities, the quintessential spaces of striation. For that matter one doesn't even need to move to commence a voyage – indeed, the truest travel in smooth space is the voyage in place. This is nomadic travel – since there is no delimited edge to the space of the nomads, they can't be said to move in relation to any territorial boundary; and, as their movement follows the close-range vision of haptic embodiment, they do not fix their position according to a grid in ideal space. The nomad therefore remains perpetually amidst an ever-changing local absolute. That is, since the nomad moves in an acentered and non-delimited locality, "the absolute… does not appear at a particular place but becomes a nonlimited locality; the coupling of the place and the absolute is achieved not in a centered, oriented globalization or universalization but in an infinite succession of local operations" (ATP, 383). This absolute is "one with becoming itself, with process" (ATP, 494).

Here the account of travel in space merges with an account of thought itself, for "to think is to voyage" and the "voyage in place," the mode of the nomad, "is the name of all intensities" (ATP, 482). Insofar as thought involves the movement of intensities, then, it requires a nomadism or movement in smooth space. But is the flow of intensities essentially constitutive of thought itself, or only of thought insofar as thought is smooth? If the latter is the

case then we could indeed interpret the smooth and striated as symmetrical poles on a spectrum of modes of spacialization of thought. But I think there is in fact reason to regard thought as essentially comprised of a flow of intensitiees, and therefore as *fundamentally* smooth – and this is where the dissymmetry between smooth and striated comes in.

One reason to think this is that the space of thought itself is a sort of local absolute with no fixed edge, and Deleuze's juxtaposition of the voyage in place with the definition of thought as a kind of voyage suggests he has this in mind. But elsewhere he is more explicit about the nature of thought. He writes, for instance, that "[a]ll of thought is a becoming… rather than the attribute of a Subject and the representation of a Whole" (ATP, 380). The local absolute is identified with becoming, and therefore with smooth space and the haptic disposition as well. All of thought, then, is in some sense smooth. And elsewhere he says that "[t]hought is not arborescent" and that the "tree and root inspire a sad image of thought" (ATP, 15-6), and goes on to describe the brain as a rhizomatic structure. The heavy implication (particularly in the associated criticism of psychoanalysis) is that it is wrong to characterize thought in arborescent terms; that its essential character is smooth, even if movements of striation may inevitably erupt from this essentially smooth ground, as it were. So paradoxically the movement of thought must be somehow smooth, and somehow experienced haptically, even when undergoing processes of striation.[388]

How can this paradox be explained? It is helpful to look at the relation of thought to chaos, especially as it is elaborated in *What is Philosophy?* For Deleuze, chaos is something like a background from which thought emerges. It is characterized by "infinite speed" and infinite variability, a sort of radical profusion of "determinations" (WIP, 42) in constant flux wherein a

[388] One other point to make in regards to the characterization of thought as voyage: Deleuze says that "what distinguishes the two kinds of voyage is neither a measurable quantity of movement, nor something that would be only in the mind, but the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being for space" (ATP, 482). So if thinking is a kind of voyage, and voyages entail a manner of being in space, then thought always involves a mode of spatialization. And since spatialization always involves a certain disposition in embodiment, thought necessarily involves such a disposition. It would seem not only that thought, for Deleuze, is fundamentally sensory and embodied, but that embodied thought is characterized fundamentally by its "mode of spatialization," or what I've been calling here its mode of emplacement.

lack of organization or ordering is the rule.[389] In the case of opinions, which can perhaps be thought of as pragmatic principles for action, thought provides an order, a degree of organization of the chaotic which protects us from being overwhelmed by chaos.[390] In the case of developed thinking in philosophy, science and art, thought does more: it preserves the infinite movement that characterizes chaos by delving into it, retrieving it and restoring it in some aspectual configuration – it is preserved on a "secant plane" (WIP, 202). Each of these realms of thought approaches chaos through a kind of attraction to it as that which gives life to thought. A philosophical concept, for instance, is "a chaoid state par excellence; it refers back to a chaos rendered consistent, become Thought, mental chaosmos. And what would thinking be if it did not constantly confront chaos?" (WIP, 208) We can think of chaos, then, as the source of a vital force that is necessary for thought – just as there is a vital force which "draws smooth space" (ATP, 499).

Just as philosophy, science, and art draw vitality from chaos in *What is Philosophy?*, in *A Thousand Plateaus* chaos is the source of milieus and rhythms (ATP, 313). Milieus likewise perform a retrieval and restoration of chaos in a more ordered state, and here the principle of ordering restoration is repetition.[391] The movement of repetition serves to code the milieu, and this must be understood as a relational function, for the code is always in a "state of transcoding or transduction," which "is the manner in which one milieu serves as the basis for another, or conversely is established atop another milieu, dissipates in it or is constituted in it" (Ibid.). Milieus emerge through the action of repetition on chaos, and they emerge as relational entities – no milieu is constituted in isolation, but can only be approached from another milieu, in the play of one coding against another. This play of repetitions, of one code against another, is rhythm, a resonance which is between milieus not just in the sense that it defines their interaction with each other, but also in the sense that it is fundamentally interstitial,

[389] "But," Deleuze writes,"there would not be a little order in ideas if there was not also a little order in things or states of affairs, like an objective antichaos" (WIP, 202). For instance, the recurrence of a certain sensation "at the meeting point of things and thought" (Ibid.) – I can anticipate the sun rising every morning with some assurance because I have experienced a perception of it doing so with regularity throughout my life.

[390] WIP, 202. It may be, though, that for Deleuze opinions don't even rise to the level of thought.

[391] "Every milieu is vibratory, in other words, a block of space-time constituted by the periodic repetition of the component" (ATP, 313).

constituting the chaosmos, the chaos which is not so much rendered coherent (for it does not yet cohere) as it is vitalized or made tangible through processes of transduction. And when rhythm (with melody) becomes expressive, it forms a territory. One way we can think of repetition, then, is as the preorganizational principle by which a vital force is drawn from chaos to animate the milieus out of which develop the realms of anorganic life (i.e., life as understood by Deleuze not as bound to organisms but as movements of intensities across organisms, and across inorganic materials as well).

There are some strong affinities between the process described here and the process of smoothing that compels the haptic disposition. Whereas rhythm moves in interstices, the line in smooth space runs between points rather than to them. Whereas rhythm is always undergoing transcoding, the interaction of multiple milieus, smooth space is characterized by a multiplicity of perspectives. Whereas rhythm is contrasted with meter, which characteristically involves regular repetition and is coded in a "noncommunicating milieu" (ATP, 313), smoothing is contrasted with striation, which creates a delimiting and homogeneous space that is projected from a singular fixed perspective. And rhythm manifests a sort of vital force out of chaos, just as there is a vital force which draws smooth space, as mentioned above.

And there is a further affinity here that is closely related to the function of repetition. Deleuze mentions that smooth space is the space of the clinamen, or "smallest deviation" (ATP, 371). Matter in smooth space moves and changes according to a sort of swerving motion or deviation that is always slightly irregular according to a principle of indeterminacy.[392] This recalls the nature of repetition as described in *Difference and Repetition*, where repetition does not follow a model of copying, reproduction, or representation, but rather is to be understood in relation to difference; each member of a repeating series marks a difference from all the other members according to a principle of variation.[393] When Deleuze says that the milieu is

[392] Meanwhile, in his sole mention of the clinamen in *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze notes that there is something in the movement of declination "which also forms the language of thought" (DR, 184). So, once again, smooth space and thought itself have a common denominator.

[393] This notion of repetition is contrasted with repetition as it is understood through the lens of representational thinking, by which it is seen as "static" rather than "dynamic," "extensive" rather than "intensive," "ordinary" rather than "distinctive and singular," "developed and explicated" rather than "enveloped and in need of interpretation," commensurable rather than incommensurable, symmetrical rather than dissymmetrical,

constituted by repetition, then, he is saying that it is drawn from chaos according to this movement of difference within a series. And this is parallel to the movement of continual variation and directional change – the movement of the clinamen – that occurs in smooth space; while, by extension, the model of repetition in terms of identity as reproductions of the same, along the lines of representation, would correspond to striated space.

I have argued so far that for Deleuze thought is essentially embodied according to a principle of placialization; that the principle in question is smooth space; that thought emerges from a background of chaos; and that this emergence into tangible order itself occurs at least initially according to a movement in repetition that closely parallels the movement characteristic of smooth space. So to return to the question of how thought can be essentially smooth, even when it is given over to movements of striation: I think part of the answer is that thought emerges out of chaos, and that the sort of vital energy that emanates from chaos through this emergence necessarily occurs in smooth space, and therefore compels a haptic disposition in embodiment. This is the condition for thought to be possible at all.

But what about striation and the disposition of embodiment it compels? Doesn't thought leave the smooth behind when it begins to striate space from its optical perch? Only in a sense. As I argued above, striation leads to a representationalist understanding of being and the self as subject. In *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze gives an extended criticism of the representationalist mentality, which seeks to subsume difference, and hence the principle of variation within a series that characterizes repetition, under the "four iron collars of representation: identity in the concept, opposition in the predicate, analogy in judgement and resemblance in perception."[394] The philosophical conception of reason has traditionally been

concerned with accuracy rather than authenticity, and inanimate, whereas Deluzian repetition "carries the secret of our deaths and our lives, of our enchantments and our liberations, the demonic and the divine" (DR, 23). Clearly the affinites between Deleuzian repetition and the smooth, the haptic, the rhizomal, and the expressive, and between repetition as the same and the striated, the optical, the arborescent, and the representational, could be more extensively developed.

[394] DR, 262. Representation is directly opposed to repetition, as in this passage: "The theatre of repetition is opposed to the theatre of representation, just as movement is opposed to the concept and to representation which refers it back to the concept. In the theatre of repetition, we experience pure forces, dynamic lines in space which act without intermediary upon the spirit, and link it directly with nature and history, with a language which speaks before words, gestures which develop before organised bodies, with masks before faces, with spectres and phantoms before characters—the whole apparatus of repetition as a 'terrible power'" (DR, 10). Incidentally, this

founded on these four principles. Plato, of course, had an enormous influence on this philosophical trajectory, in particular, Deleuze notes, by establishing the distinction between the model and the copy as metaphysically fundamental. Difference is expunged from the essential nature of identity as the same and its relation to that which resembles it as the similar: the copy carries the mark of identity, while mere simulacra are characterized by difference and relegated to an inferior status. Precisely what is suppressed by the Platonic system reads like a draft of what gets developed in *A Thousand Plateaus* as the constitutive elements of smooth space: "condemned in the figure of simulacra is the state of free, oceanic differences, of nomadic distributions and crowned anarchy, along with all that malice which challenges both the notion of the model and that of the copy."[395]

Representation is, therefore, "a site of transcendental illusion" in which "thought is covered over by an 'image' made up of postulates which distort both its operation and its genesis." The culmination of these postulates is the "identical thinking subject, which functions as a principle of identity for concepts in general" (DR, 265). Here representation is explicitly connected to reproduction (the model and the copy) and the positing of the human as subject who represents the world, as it is in other Deleuze texts in connection with striation and the optical disposition in embodiment. All of this involves an illusion which covers over the fundamental nature of thought. Striation and smoothing, then, are indeed dissymmetrical movements of thought: whereas thought itself moves in smooth space, in a local absolute that draws a vital force from chaos through rhythmic processes, the failure of thought occurs in striation, through the delimitations[396] of representation.

There is a valorization of smoothing here, a sense that this is what thought ought to aspire to – or rather, what it ought to return to. And there is more than a suggestion that

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follows the framing of metaphysical terms in reference to a particular kind of space: "We have in mind the theatrical space, the emptiness of that space, and the manner in which it is filled and determined by the signs and masks through which the actor plays a role which plays other roles; we think of how repetition is woven from one distinctive point to another, including the differences within itself" (DR, 10).

[395] DR, 265. Deleuze notes, incidentally, that this suppression originally has a moral motivation, though this motivation is subsequently lost.

[396] Delimitation itself forms another aspect of the transcendental illusion. It is connected with opposition, and is set in contrast to the transversal, i.e., "the living depths, the diagonal, [which] is populated by differences without negation" (DR, 266-7).

striation threatens the vitality of thought. But we shouldn't conclude that Deleuze is simply establishing a manichean dichotomy, whereby smoothing is the mark of good thought, and striation of bad thought. The failure of thought just described should be understood as thinking which has become ossified, where the vital force of thought has lost its free movement and been locked into place. But this is not the inexorable outcome of striation, only of striation which has ceased to communicate with the smooth.[397] For striation, and therefore an optical perspective, is necessary for the smooth to be comprehended through the gathering together of its elements.[398] Striation is involved in "subjugating, overcoding, *metricizing* smooth space, in neutralizing it, but also in giving it a milieu of propagation, extension, refraction, renewal, and impulse without which it would perhaps die of its own accord" (ATP, 486). Just as ossification is the fate of striated thought which loses contact with the invigorating influence of the smooth, thought is threatened by dissolution if it never attains some degree of striated organization.[399] So, while the haptic perspective is the source of the raw energy that gives life to thought, it seems necessary to step back and assume an optical perspective if real comprehension is to occur; that is to say, the optical perspective is necessary to give a certain depth to thought – to allow it to gather a domain beyond the local event of becoming. For a pure vitality that goes completely unchanneled cannot be put to use. "Perhaps we must say," says Deleuze, "that all progress is made by and in striated space," whereas "all becoming occurs in smooth space."[400]

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[397] Though striation may cease to communicate with the smooth, thought itself remains always fundamentally smooth, as that which operates in a local absolute – for there is always a movement of thought in which striation is embedded which is in itself smooth; i.e., striation only enters in through a movement of thought, and it is this movement that is fundamentally smooth. (By the same token, I may be engaging in some very "striated" activity – reading latitudes and longitudes on a map, say – but I am always physically connected to my environment in a direct, haptic sense: I hold the map in my hands, maybe flatten it against the hood of my car to protect it against the breeze, etc.) So in a sense it is not that the smooth is ever really left behind; it's that its fundamentally smooth character is forgotten. And this is just what occurs through the transcendental illusion of representation.

[398] In discussing tactile-optical space, Deleuze quotes Maldiney, who writes: "Increasingly freed from the background, [the forms] are increasingly freed up for space, where the gaze receives them and gathers them together" (FB, 102).

[399] This dissolution would perhaps be akin to the "wild destratif[ications] of drug addiction or hallucination, which involve the diffusion of intensities to a degree that exceeds the plane of consistency of the body without organs, and can lead even to the death of the organism (ATP, 160-1). Also: see above on retaining "small rations of subjectivity."

[400] ATP, 486. And the chapter concludes with the warning that "smooth spaces are not in themselves liberatory. But the struggle is changed or displaced in them, and life reconstitutes its stakes, confronts new obstacles, invents new paces, switches adversaries. Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (ATP, 500).

So thought must walk a fine line: striation is necessary to give it volume and scope, but it is also a mode of control which therefore provides the temptation of a secure refuge from the anxiety which can be provoked by the free flow of intensities which constitute becoming in smooth space. Tellingly, Deleuze traces the philosophical inauguration of representationalism in Plato to an originally moral motivation (DR, 265), a story which is reminiscent of Nietzsche's depiction of Socratic philosophy as the imposition of a tyrant of reason on a city which had descended too far into chaos.[401] The sort of reason which Nietzsche (rightly or wrongly) imputes to Socrates is opposed to becoming, opposed to history, and opposed, especially, to the body. But thought is not a refuge from embodiment or, as Deleuze would have it, from the sensations which traverse the body without organs. Rather, it ineluctably involves certain ways of experiencing those sensations. The optical perspective, so long as it remains in vital contact with the haptic, can contribute to the advancement of thought. But when this mode of embodiment is mistaken for a privileged perspective that *transcends* embodied existence – when it claims the mantle of despatialized, detemporalized reason – it leads to the vitiation of thought in the illusion of representation.

Conclusion

Deleuze presents us with an image of thought as essentially spatial (or, in keeping with my terminology, placial) – and it is so specifically in the sense that the characteristics of space, or place, solicit a certain mode of embodiment. Thought, as the inhabitation of place, expresses a haptic disposition in embodiment, which is not so much a disposition that is dominated by the sense of touch as it is an integrated employment of all the senses in the embedded engagement in place. Yet from within this inhabitation of place that is characteristic of thought there may emerge an optical disposition, a subordination of the senses to a long-range vision that is solicited by and colludes with striated space.

Moreover, the disposition in embodiment that is so solicited has profound effects for the possibilities of thought. Striated space, by way of its solicitation of an optical disposition,

[401] Nietzsche, 42-3.

allows for the constitution of the subject-object dichotomy and a representationalist epistemology. Smooth space, in its solicitation of haptic embodiment, allows thought to become expressive in the free flow of intensities. If thought expresses placial interaction, then the nature of that interaction will determine the range of possibilities for thought according to the manner in which bodily capacities are solicited by place, and Deleuze gives us an account of how this might be the case.

At a minimum, this account of thought as emplaced can be taken in the spirit of a proof of principle, if we are convinced that it shows at least that something like the subject-object distinction depends on a certain mode of embodiment in the engagement of place. This doesn't mean we have to take the account of smoothing and striation as an exhaustive survey; Deleuze himself grants that there may be other kinds of space (holey space, for one, which is mentioned in *A Thousand Plateaus* but never fully developed).[402] It is tempting to wonder if Deleuze is being somewhat disingenuous in suggesting there may be indefinitely many types of space to solicit us, though, for there is something iconic in the smooth-striated dyad, which lies especially in their alignment with respective sensory modes. Whether we orient ourselves primarily through vision or touch is a fairly fundamental question about how we engage the world, even allowing for the synesthetic interaction between sensory modes, and the ways in which these modes are imaginatively projected have the deepest implications for the course of thought. There may be indefinitely many kinds of place to solicit us, but the processes of smoothing and striation perhaps capture something integral to the dynamic synesthetic transformations through which we are drawn into the world, and which is expressed in our styles of thought.

Reconciling this interpretation of Deleuze with Merleau-Ponty and the placiality of thought

[402] "Moreover, there are still other kinds of space that should be taken into account, for example, holey space and the way it communicates with the smooth and the striated in different ways" (ATP, 500). Incidentally, this observation immediately follows the admonition not to "multiply models" of domains in which smoothing and striation operate, which might include "a noological model concerned not with thought contents (ideology) but with the form, manner or mode, and function of thought, according to the mental space it draws and from the point of view of a general theory of thought, a thinking of thought" (ATP, 499-500), an admonition which I have obviously ignored.

Yet Deleuze rarely thematizes place as such. Just as he eschews a conception of the body as the locus of sensation or thought in favor of the body without organs, he avoids depicting processes of smoothing and striation as adhering to place. He prefers the term 'space,' even if it is fundamentally heterogeneous (smooth) space; the familiar modern concept of homogeneous space is comprehensively striated, and emerges out of smooth space. And, given his several well-known criticisms of phenomenology, he would hardly countenance the above interpretation if it were presented as self-consciously phenomenological. The question, then, is whether and how a Deleuzian notion of embodied thought can be construed in a manner that is consistent with his criticisms of phenomenology, and in particular his criticism of Merleau-Ponty's "fleshism" (since that has taken on such an important role here). The rest of this chapter will explore this tension, though ultimately the most interesting question is not, perhaps, whether these positions can be reconciled, but simply what a dialogue between the two thinkers might reveal about each. The end result will be an enriched conception of the nature of meaningful interaction with the world.[403]

We first need to take a look at what Deleuze's criticisms of phenomenology are in general. The most fundamental, perhaps, is what he takes to be the opposition of subject and world as exemplary of the failure of thought in representationalism – an opposition characteristic of the metaphysical tradition, and one that is carried on, by his lights, in phenomenology. In *What is Philosophy?*, for instance, he criticizes phenomenology for regarding thought as depending on "man's relation with the world" according to a schema of "a Being in the world" (WIP, 209-10). In maintaining this relation, he says, phenomenology fails to escape the "classical image of thought," which regards "the Whole as the final ground of being or all-encompassing horizon, and the Subject as the principle that converts being into being-for-

[403] Though even in the absence of this dialogue, we might remain indifferent to the ultimate compatibility of these ontologies, preferring instead to point out that all that need be claimed here is that, by borrowing the concepts of smoothing and striation, we can describe at least these possible relations between dispositions in embodiment and the possibilities that are given to thought, without any suggestion that these exhaust the possibilities for such dispositions (indeed, Deleuze suggests strongly that they don't) and resting content that insofar as we accept Deleuze's account, no more is needed to demonstrate that thought is expressed through a spectrum of dispositions in embodiment, however we might choose to classify them.

us" which comprises a "striated mental space" imagined "from the double point of view of Being and the Subject" (ATP, 379). This is surely one reason why he tends to eschew the term 'embodiment' which has tended to be bound up with the image of the subject and the organism – terms which connote autonomy, singularity, and metaphysical diremption along the boundary between perceiver and perceived. This is the antithesis of the Deleuzian conception of consciousness as it is expressed in the body without organs, which consists in "connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities," a collectivity which is the site of assemblage (ATP, 261). The body without organs is transversal with respect to the body of the organism or the subject. Rather than positing a subject as a sort of focal node of experience in consciousness, a Cartesian holdover still retained in much phenomenology (including, according to his own self-criticism, Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception*), we should regard experience in terms of the free flow of intensities and lines of flight, a multiplicity of sensations which we could perhaps regard as passing *through* the individual, as waves pass through a medium, but which do not entail a central perspective of experience nor a sharp distinction between subject and world.

Such a criticism would be pertinent to much of the phenomenological tradition, including Husserl in some respects, and perhaps the earlier Merleau-Ponty as well.[404] But the move away from the transcendental subject in *The Visible and the Invisible* is decisive. The ontology of the flesh seems clearly to contravene the oppositionality of traditional phenomenology.[405] At any rate, this is not the sort of transcendentalism with which Deleuze

[404] The fault here is in "treat]ing the plane of immanence as a field of consciousness," an error of Descartes and Kant along with Husserl: "Immanence is supposed to be immanent to a pure consciousness, to a thinking subject. Kant will call this subject transcendental rather than transcendent, precisely because it is the subject of the field of immanence of all possible experience from which nothing, the external as well as the internal, escapes… Kant discovers the modern way of saving transcendence: this is no longer the transcendence of a Something, or of a One higher than everything (contemplation), but that of a Subject to which the field of immanence is only attributed by belonging to a self that necessarily represents such a subject to itself (reflection). The Greek world that belonged to no one increasingly becomes the property of a Christian consciousness" (WIP, 46).

[405] Jack Reynolds and Jon Roffe point to Merleau-Ponty's approach in *The Visible and the Invisible* as already responsive to such concerns about the nature of the subject: "On Deleuze's view, phenomenology needs to leave behind the subject and ask genetic questions like how is the subject constituted in the given… Again, this can be understood as an attempt to make the phenomenological reduction more radical, but it is also, we argue, something that Merleau-Ponty accomplished in *The Visible and the Invisible*, where he argues, for example, that 'the philosophical question is not posed in us by a pure spectator: it is first a question as to how, upon what

finds fault in the later Merleau-Ponty. Here, Deleuze contends, phenomenology preserves transcendentalism by taking "one more step": "immanence becomes immanent 'to' a transcendental subjectivity… This is what happens in Husserl and many of his successors who discover in the Other or in the Flesh, the mole of the transcendent within immanence itself… In this modern moment we are no longer satisfied with thinking immanence as immanent to a transcendent; *we want to think transcendence within the immanent, and it is from immanence that a breach is expected*" (WIP, 46-7). Later in *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze specifically confronts Merleau-Ponty's "fleshism" as an exemplar of this transcendence within immanence:

> The being of sensation, the bloc of percept and affect, will appear as the unity or reversibility of feeling and felt, their intermingling like hands clasped together: it is the flesh that, at the same time, is freed from the lived body, the perceived world, and the intentionality of one toward the other that is still too tied to experience; whereas flesh gives us the being of sensation and bears the original opinion distinct from the judgement of experience – flesh of the world and flesh of the body that are exchanged as correlates, ideal coincidence. A curious Fleshism inspires this final avatar of phenomenology and plunges it into the mystery of the incarnation. It is both a pious and a sensual notion, a mixture of sensuality and religion, without which, perhaps, flesh could not stand up by itself… The flesh is only the thermometer of a becoming." (WIP, 178)

By invoking the incarnation, Deleuze seems to be implying that the transcendental subject has been sublimated in the flesh, so that, though the concept of the flesh may strive towards an expression of pure immanence, this immanence is ultimately subordinated to a more abstract determination. This could also be what he means by describing the flesh as "only the thermometer of a becoming" – it only represents the idea of immanence, and qua representation it re-institutes that diremption between representation and represented that is the hallmark of the thinking subject.

One thing to remember here, though, is that the flesh is far from a monistic element. It is rather, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, "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" (VI, 139). This returns us to the sense in which the world, according to this ontology, is endowed with ideas, which is to say, with depths of significance that emerge in our active

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ground, the pure spectator is established, from what more profound source he himself draws' (VI 109)" (Reynolds and Roffe, 236).

engagement with things. In emphasizing that this engagement needn't be understood in terms of a subject acting towards an external world, I have referred to this as the intra-action of the world that occurs with the emergence of sensing entities, and which is as much a function of the solicitation of places as it is the capacities for action of such entities. I have argued as well that these depths can best be understood in terms of resonance, a reverberation between things out of which meaning arises, and which entails, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, "a style of being." Wherever there is flesh, there is not simply a "unity of feeling and felt," a phrasing which suggests perhaps that Deleuze regards a certain mirroring relation to be maintained underneath a figure of unity, as if the notion of flesh were only papering over a fundamental subject-object relation which it nonetheless preserves. Nor is it simply that "flesh of the world and flesh of the body… are exchanged as correlates," as if they were ideal reflections of one another. It is rather that every manifestation of the flesh is embedded in an immeasurably intricate milieu, one which is endowed with personal significances for any individual[406]; with cultural significances; and above all with the depths that open up through language as expression that is always particular yet socially constituted, situated yet multiperspectival. It seems rather oversimplifying to treat meaning so construed as a matter of mere correlation between the body and the world. Yet in the block quote above, Deleuze indicates that this mere correlation or "ideal coincidence" is what characterizes "Fleshism" as a transcendence within immanence, and if we reject this as an oversimplification of the concept of flesh, then it becomes difficult to discern a basis for his criticism.

Even so, it might be possible to detect a vestige of a transcendental subject even in the singularity of expression, if we take it to adhere to a focal subject, a kind of alpha point of all perception and thought for a given individual. But here we can remember that one is not tied to their own perspective as an inescapable mooring. For one thing, we may always "displace our look, that is, transfer its limits elsewhere" (VI, 100) – we may (and, in fact, perpetually do) project our perspective beyond ourselves. And even more importantly, insofar as we are linguistic creatures our perspective is already swept up in the perspectives of those with whom

[406] This notion of "personal significance" wouldn't need to be understood in terms of classical subjectivity; it could be taken , if Deleuze likes, as an expression of singular meaning adhering to a certain zone of transversal interactions.

we share language, with those who have taught us how to see and whose styles of being situated are continued through us. By way of language, perspectives thus fundamentally become transversal with respect to subjects. Thus may what I see pass into another, for instance when "this individual green of the meadow under my eyes invades his vision without quitting my own, I recognize in my green his green… it is not I who sees, not he who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us."[407] Furthermore, if we move beyond Merleau-Ponty's explicit arguments, we can also take into consideration the solicitations of place, that aspect of the relation with the world by which the subject is de-centered and drawn into place according to the characteristics and dimensions of place itself. And if, after taking all this into account, it still seems that Merleau-Ponty retains too much of a reified subject in *The Visible and The Invisible*, we might recall Deleuze's own comment in *A Thousand Plateaus* that we not go too far in dismantling the sovereign subject, lest we lose ourselves in wild destratifications, as in the case of the self-annihilating junky.[408]

On the other hand, this suggestion of correspondence between body and world also suggests another of Deleuze's criticisms of phenomenology: namely, that it presupposes an innate meaningfulness, a natural coherence of the being in the world, that is unwarranted. As Jack Reynolds and Jon Roffe phrase the question, "do [Merleau-Ponty's] references to the 'natal bond' that holds between existents reinstate a form of *Urdoxa*, a happy community or 'profound intimacy' of existence that cannot be justified? And secondly, do [his] well-known themes of the intrinsic meaningfulness of experience and the perceptual faith not also presuppose a kind of natural good sense that is more primordial than nonsense, thereby inverting the ontological order of sense that Deleuze argues is the case?"[409]

[407] VI, 142. This anonymity itself constitutes another reason to reject the notion of the vestigially transcendental subject, for what I see is not fundamentally *my* vision; it is a general visibility which I *take up* and in which I am embedded.
[408] "You have to keep enough of the organism for it to reform each dawn; and you have to keep small supplies of significance and subjectification, if only to turn them against their own systems when the circumstances demand it… and you have to keep small rations of subjectivity in sufficient quantity to enable you to respond to the dominant reality. Mimic the strata. You don't reach the BwO, and its plane of consistency, by wildly destratifying" (ATP, 160).
[409] Reynolds and Roffe, 245.

As Reynolds and Roffe point out, Merleau-Ponty does make repeated use of the metaphor of natality, at various points in *The Visible and the Invisible* referring to a "natal bond" or "natal secret," or elsewhere referring to a "pre-established harmony"[410] to describe the relation between body and world. He even refers to "a ray of natural light that illuminates all flesh" (VI, 142), an image appropriated from Descartes that ought to give us pause in light of Derrida's considerations regarding philosophical illumination, as discussed in the previous chapter. Reynolds and Roffe also note, however, that Merleau-Ponty frequently describes the perceptual faith as an "openness upon being."[411] Does this, as they claim, move us away from Urdoxa and towards a univocal ontology such as Deleuze advocates?

Perhaps, though there is an interesting ambiguity in this phrasing, and in this suggestion of openness in general, that leaves the matter a bit unsettled. Merleau-Ponty refers to our relation with the world as an "openness upon the world (*ouverture au monde*)" (VI, 35). What sort of openness is this? The term is ambiguous in more than one sense. There is the ambiguity between sensing and sensed, of course, and thus a bidirectionality entailed by this openness. But there is an etymological ambiguity as well, for the term is related to both 'aperture' and 'overture'; whereas the former is suggestive of a passive opening, like that of the lens of a camera, the latter suggests a more active engagement, something more like a proposal or a gesture. It is clear at least that Merleau-Ponty does not intend this *ouverture* as simply an opening between perceiver and perceived, but rather as something more like the element of experience. See, for instance, his comment in response to Sartre that "[i]t has seemed to us that the task was to describe strictly our relation to the world not as an openness of nothingness upon being, but simply as openness" (VI, 99). Nor can this openness be conceived as a static harmony. We can even say that it operates according to something like a principle of difference: recall the role of *écart* in his ontology, the principle of divergence or deviation by which meaning emerges for us (a theme which I have elaborated in terms of resonance) – hence his comment, for instance, that a "naked color, and in general a visible, is not a chunk of absolutely hard, indivisible being, offered all naked to a vision which could only be total or null,

[410] VI, 32; VI, 136; and VI, 133, respectively.
[411] Reynolds and Roffe, 247.

but is rather a sort of straits between exterior horizons and interior horizons ever gaping open" (VI, 132). And see also what he says of philosophy, which in this respect can be taken as metonymical of our relation to the world in general: "it cannot reconstruct the thing and the world by condensing in them, in the form of implication, everything we have subsequently been able to think and say of them; rather, it remains a question, it interrogates the world and the thing, it revives, repeats or imitates their crystallization before us. For this crystallization which is partly given to us ready-made is in other respects never terminated, and thereby we can see how the world comes about" (VI, 100). Our experience of things is more properly an experience of differences between things. And our interrogation of them creates further differences, expressed as iterative sequences. This difference in repetition is necessary, given the singularity of expression – given, that is, that every encounter with the world is situated, that no idea is transcendent but rather has a carnal existence through its embeddedness in the depths of experience, and therefore every iteration of thought strictly speaking expresses a new understanding.[412] So this relation of openness is one that is at least not a simple harmony. That is, it is not, as a representationalist view might have it, constituted by a set of determinate relations, but is rather a process that unfolds through indeterminate depths, and meaning is thus always contingent on the play of resonances at any given moment and in any given situation – a play in regards to which the individual is not an audience but a spontaneous participant.

Wild Being

Still more can be said about this openness, though, and the respect in which it is no mere Urdoxa. We can see this by attending, in particular, to the role of wild or brute being in the ontology of the flesh. Consider, for instance, these comments on the role of language in the encounter with the world when that encounter goes beyond a merely habitual relation: "if philosophy can speak, it is because language is not only the depository of fixed and acquired

[412] Understanding, though, may in this way undergo processes of decay, as well as development, insofar as meanings are subject to ossification and the branches of ramifying thought may become brittle over time and eventually snap off.

significations, because its cumulative power itself results from a power of anticipation or of prepossession, because one speaks not only of what one knows, so as to set out a display of it – but also of what one does not know, in order to know it – and because language in forming itself expresses, at least laterally, an ontogenesis of which it is a part" (VI, 102). Here again we find language as a mode of participation in the world and, as such, as partially generative of the world in which it participates. This participation therefore cannot be taken as the mere unveiling of a meaningfulness that lies ready in waiting, since the linguistic expression is a necessary condition for the meaning to arise. But at the same time this is not merely a matter of language constituting a state of affairs; there is an *encounter* here, a sort of plunging into the world that is by no means necessarily a harmonious experience. The quote continues:

> But from this it follows that the words most charged with philosophy are not necessarily those that contain what they say, but rather those that most energetically open upon Being, because they more closely convey the life of the whole and make our habitual evidences vibrate until they disjoin. Hence it is a question whether philosophy as reconquest of brute or wild being can be accomplished by the resources of the eloquent language, or whether it would not be necessary for philosophy to use language in a way that takes from it its power of immediate or direct signification in order to equal it with what it wishes all the same to say. (VI, 102-3)

The goal of philosophy should not be a "reconquest" of wild being – it should not be to give direct expression to what lies beyond the perimeter of the expressed, by a kind of expansion of that perimeter through eloquent language. Such an effort would be ill-conceived, starting as it would from the premise that the function of language is direct expression, when in fact all linguistic expression is indirect, or implicative, for any linguistic expression always opens further horizons and the wild being into which language plunges is therefore in principle "unconquerable." Rather, the goal ought to be an *opening* onto the world.[413] And if it were just a matter of giving expression to an Urdoxa, then "eloquent" language would surely suffice; perhaps we could even take eloquence as the standard for canny philosophical disclosure. See also that in its most "energetic" form, this opening does not more totally affirm the way the world is given to us; on the contrary, it breaks apart our habitual modes of existence, causing a disjuncture. And the habits which are interrupted in this energetic openness include those of

[413] Though he refers here to the words "that most energetically open upon Being," recall that this is not a question of an openness of nothingness upon Being, but of openness as such (VI, 99). We can understand him here as saying, then, that the most philosophically-charged words are those which most energetically participate in the world.

language use. If this is not a case of the emergence of sense out of chaos, as Deleuze might like to see, it at least suggests that the openness towards the world which is expressed in perception is fundamentally an openness to an element, a "wild being," that is not defined by its innate meaningfulness; that is, instead, a source of rupture, a challenge to our habitual modes of being, while at the same time it animates us. And only by virtue of this element, this wild being, does sense arise.[414]

This wild being, in short, is that from which the chiasm of the flesh emerges, and the intertwining of ourselves with the world is a tapestry that is spun from this element. Though the case could be made that Merleau-Ponty had not yet sufficiently emphasized the point in this incomplete text, this meaning which thereby emerges, a meaning which is transversal with respect to the individual and the world, need not be meaningful solely in the sense of providing felicitous affordances; it may emerge as hostile, anxiety-producing, or just indifferent to our interests, or to our sentimental desire to see the world as a fundamentally reassuring place – as, in short, a home. In particular, it seems to me, what we encounter in the world as we approach the limits of those domains which are meaningful for us is a sense of excess, of a world that far exceeds us and in which we participate as very much contingent and peripheral elements. Whenever we go beyond those places which we inhabit through habitual practices, we find ourselves spilling onto landscapes, places which exceed our horizon and which we experience precisely *as* exceeding our horizon – that is, places that do not take us as their focal origin, that are not innately scaled to our bodily capacities and the scope of our understanding, that seem to solicit an orientation that is beyond our ken. This may happen as well when we find an alien element within the familiar, an element that implies a hidden landscape resident in the visible one. In short, at the periphery of the familiar (and perhaps sunk within the familiar as its greatest depth) is a latent excess that has the potential to draw us out of our habitual modes of understanding, to throw us into a sort of disorientation. But simply because we may encounter this excess as initially disorienting, does not mean it is beyond the scope of meaning-making. It solicits us as does any other sort of placial experience, and thus continues the

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[414] On sense arising out of wild being, see for instance this comment from the Working Notes: "It is hence finally the massive unity of Being as the encompassing of myself and of the cube, it is the wild, non-refined, 'vertical' Being that makes there be a cube" (VI, 202-3).

interrelation of the perceiving organism within the world (the intra-action of the world) out of which new understandings may emerge.

Dylan Trigg finds a fine example of this chiasmic transversality in the experience of wilderness in Werner Herzog's *Aguirre: The Wrath of God*. This film traces the descent of a band of conquistadors from the Andes down along a South American jungle river. Over the course of the film, the eponymous soldier gathers control of the group, and leads it increasingly towards oblivion through his megalomaniacal ambition. Yet the sense one gets is not so much that of a certain sort of leader taking control of events as it is of the jungle absorbing the travelers into itself, impregnating them with its own wild and murderous spirit. Though they seem at first confident in bearing the totems of civilization into this wilderness, including Agiurre's daughter, a princess of sorts borne on a palanquin by slaves, the logic of these symbols increasingly has no place in this world. The incarnate logic of the jungle increasingly takes over, increasingly exhibits itself as having no place for them, and displaces their pretenses of order and meaning with its own energies. Trigg describes a scene:

> [T]he soldiers are aboard the raft peering into the forest, their eyes scanning the limited horizon: 'Very strange,' notes Herzog with the scene in mind 'how the jungle reacts.' Strange because the jungle gains a sentient quality despite the absence of life.[415] The camera oscillates between the faces of the men and the anonymous face of the forest. Their reaction is one of apprehension, reflecting Klee's sense of being "inwardly submerged, buried" by the forest.[416]

The experience of the jungle becomes one of disjuncture, increasingly the purpose of these men is upset, rendered futile and absurd, especially the singular drive of Aguirre, whose claim of power and control only grows in proportion to the absurdity of that very claim. By the end of the film the crew is nearly all dead or dying, done in by sickness and by the arrows that descend from their origins somewhere in the jungle's invisible depths. Meanwhile a swarm of monkeys has inexplicably overrun the raft; the band of travelers seems to have transmogrified into a

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[415] It is interesting, here, that Trigg describes an "absence of life," when of course what is present is a superabundance of life, life in an almost absurd profusion, and maybe it is even this very quality that constitutes the sublimity of the jungle: it's verdure is overwhelming, it is dense beyond reckoning – so dense, perhaps, that it becomes invisible, impenetrable to the gaze, and hence, as Trigg puts it, absent of life.

[416] Trigg (2011), 5.

multiplicity of humanoid creatures, naked and screeching, as Aguirre prowls amongst them like their delusional king.[417]

This is no place of Urdoxa, no charmed encounter with nature by way of a pre-established harmony.[418] As Trigg puts it, "Herzog appears to be peeling back what Merleau-Ponty terms the 'narcissism of vision' and showing us the wild being that savages the perceptibility of the human body."[419] But see what Merleau-Ponty says of that narcissism of vision (a description that in fact somewhat belies the term): "the vision [the seer] exercises, he also undergoes from the things… [the narcissism is] especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen" (VI, 139). Surely these travelers are "alienated by the phantom" of the jungle. Surely in this emigration, seduction, and captivation we find a transversality in the intra-action of the world that is at least as profound as the mappings of any wasp and orchid. It is through the transversality innate to visibility, to the "narcissism of vision," that we are drawn back into wild being (or that wild being erupts within us), for this being comes before any diremption of things into subject and object. Thus, "[e]verything that we will advance concerning the world must originate not from the habitual world… but from that present world which waits at the gates of

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[417] Scenes of such utter abjection were hardly unknown amongst the Europeans who imposed themselves on the New World. Bill Bryson describes the "starving time" suffered by the English colonists at Jamestown in the winter of 1609-10, during which the population declined by nearly ninety percent, and quotes Sir Thomas Gates, who "arrived to take over as the new governor the following spring, [and] found 'the portes open, the gates from the hinges, the church ruined and unfrequented, empty howses (whose owners untimely death had taken newly from them) rent up and burnt, the living not able, as they pretended, to step into the woodes to gather other fire-wood; and it is true, the Indian as fast killing without as the famine and pestilence within'" (Bryson, 25, quoting from *American Heritage*, April 1963, p. 69).

[418] Here is Herzog's description of nature from his account of the making of Fitzcarraldo, his other great film of jungle hubris, as quoted by Trigg: "Of course there is a lot of misery, but it is the same misery that is all around us. The trees here are in misery, and the birds are in misery. I don't think they sing, they just screech in pain… Taking a close look around us there is some sort of a harmony. There is the harmony of overwhelming and collective murder… There is no harmony in the universe. We have to get acquainted to this idea that there is no real harmony as we have conceived it" (Cronin, 163-4. Quoted in Trigg, 5.). It is worth noting, though, that Herzog's own work belies this rather grim vision. For while Herzog's nature is surely not that of, say, the Hudson school – it is not a refuge, nor a balm, nor merely *scenic* – it is nonetheless beautiful, and a source of awe. More than almost any other artist, Herzog respects nature, and does not merely subordinate it, as Trigg notes, to human interests. There is, despite what Herzog may think, no murder in nature as he envisions it, for that is an anthropomorphism. What there is instead is an unadulterated churn of life and death, and maybe escaping this churn, or creating the illusion of such an escape, is the raison d'etre of civilization.

[419] Trigg (2011), 5.

our life and where we find the means to animate the heritage and, if the occasion arises, to take it up again on our own account" (VI, 157). What we find at these "gates" comes before any habitual modes are taken up, before anything like an Urdoxa can be achieved: "We will not admit a preconstituted world, a logic, except for having seen them arise from our experience of brute being, which is as it were the umbilical cord of our knowledge and the source of meaning for us" (Ibid.). The *source* of meaning – but not a preconstituted world in itself. If our embeddedness in the world is always a movement beyond ourselves, and if this movement is solicited by a world that exceeds us and that is not constituted according to the needs of our consciousness but on its own terms, then, as *Aguirre* shows us, the transversal movement in which we encounter this brute being may well be disruptive, alienating, and even existentially threatening.

The sublimity of the jungle goes unredeemed in the film: the jungle does not merely disrupt the subjectivity of the alien travelers, it sunders it. Yet this is not an inevitable fate. It is perhaps even the hubris of these men, their mistreatment of the jungle in solipsistic terms, as a place to be subjected under the aegis of their sedimented understanding – and not as a place to which they must adapt – that leads to their disintegration. They bear the appurtenances of civilization into this wilderness as if civilization can simply be imposed there, as if the otherness of that environment can simply be subjugated. When the jungle inevitably imposes itself on *them*, they therefore have no means to adapt; the assertion of their being becomes an empty assertion. But imagine an approach to a sublime environment like the jungle that was open to its seductions, that didn't regard it with a long-distance vision but allowed itself to flow in, to occupy it as a smooth space. Such an approach would cede some degree of subjectivity but would be repaid with an expanded existence, which is to say, new possibilities for meaning. Solicitations would emerge out of the sublime excess of the landscape. Indeed, if the sublime is that which exceeds the scope of our habitual understanding, and our absorption or emigration into this sublime element is the transversal movement in which we encounter brute being, then a certain alienation, even a certain non-sense, lies at the basis of meaning, as that out of which meaning emerges. But this alienation in the sublime is a generative alienation, and it lies always in wait at the horizon. Such an attitude wouldn't necessarily vouchsafe a harmonious

inhabitation; wilderness can't be tamed by good intentions alone (and indeed, ultimately the world solicits our demise). But perhaps it would allow the vision necessary to take a more humble approach, even to leave the jungle alone altogether – or leave it to those for whom it actually is a home, whose understanding is proper to it.

This gives us a way to address a certain paradox: that brute being is the source of meaning for us, despite the fact that we only encounter this meaning after having added our own reflections and our own linguistic expressions to it; and that, in fact, we can only conceive of brute being itself by means of such reflection. As Vallega-Neu succinctly puts the question, "How can we hold the natal bond with the world as we think?"[420] As she points out, the key thing is the involvement "of a sort of hyper-reflection (sur-réflexion)" that would take into account the changes which are introduced into the "spectacle" by the reflection itself (VI, 38). Vallega-Neu suggests that this kind of awareness which remains open to the organic bonds by which we are involved in the sensible world while reflecting upon them is the sort of awareness that is employed in the performing arts and perhaps, she speculates, in any genuinely creative moment,[421] a sensibility that is reminiscent of what the Greeks regarded as our relation to the muses. Vallega-Neu does not identify the source of the movements, of body and of thought, that pass through us in such moments. But if we consider such movements in terms of a solicitation from a domain that exceeds our habitual understanding – as unbounded, exceeding us, mysterious and drawing us into its ken – then we can see how thought can be drawn beyond habit in its encounter with the world, even as habitual modes are its only resources for making sense of the world; we can see how it would be possible to speak of the world "not according to the law of the word-meanings inherent in the given language, but with a perhaps difficult effort that uses the significations of words to express, beyond themselves, our mute

[420] Vallega-Neu, 62.
[421] Ibid.. As she writes, "I may find this reflexive awareness in certain moments in dancing or making music where I find myself aware in the event of the dance or the event of music that seems to occur in a strange way beyond my control, events in which I find myself not as an agent but rather as an absorbed as well as perceptive spectator." (Note that Aguirre and his crew were open to their world, but lacked reflective awareness of this openness, wedded as they were to the illusion of agency.) She adds that "Such reflexive awareness occurs in articulations that do not necessarily involve speech. Rather, it remains mostly silent, without words" (Vallega-Neu, 63). Given the account of language as insinuated into language itself that was given in chapter two, though, we could question how independent of language such reflection really is.

contact with the things, when they are not yet things said" (VI, 38). We would "use words not according to their pre-established signification, but *in order to state* this prelogical bond" (Ibid.). The paradox of a language that speaks of our "mute contact with things" is possible because language is not a system of reference; linguistic meaning is not a matter of isomorphic relation, it is a matter of implication, where an utterance opens on to a whole world (less like the gesture of ostension and more like the gestures of a symphony conductor, yet one whose gestures are conjured by the symphony). Most of this meaning remains mute, a muteness that is an expression of the invisibility of the depths of this world. But as this mute presence that summons the linguistic expression, the world is able, by way of our reflection, to "say, finally, what in its silence *it means to say*…" (VI, 39). In this way the world expresses itself through us, place summons our expression, and language and thought are drawn beyond their extant modes in the production of new articulations and new understandings.[422]

Deleuzian desire and the transversality of emplacing movement

One response to Deleuze's criticism of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the flesh, then, would be to argue that it does not take full account of the theme of transversality in the latter – in particular that movement out of the constituted subject which is solicited in wild being, a movement which both precedes and takes us out of habitual action, and which is the basis of knowledge. But, though it turns out that these features of Deleuze's and the later Merleau-Ponty's philosophy are striking in their affinity, there are of course still meaningful differences. For instance, if the subject for Merleau-Ponty is no longer transcendent in *The Visible and the Invisible*, it is still perhaps reified insofar as the act of perception remains the conceptual focus. We are thus invited to adopt a first-person perspective, a phenomenological perspective, even as we acknowledge the reversible (that is, transversal) nature of perception; indeed, this might

[422] To achieve this reflection it must "plunge into the world instead of surveying it, it must descend toward it such as it is instead of working its way back up toward a prior possibility of thinking it" (VI, 38-39). Again we see the strong affinity between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze in their rejection of the perspective of the survey and, here by implication, its association with the ossification of thought. (See also Merleau-Ponty's comment in *Signs* that "The philosophy which lays bare this chiasm of the visible is the exact opposite of a philosophy of God-like survey. It plunges into the perceptible, into time and history, toward their articulations" (S, 21).)

make us wonder if the methodology of phenomenology entails such a perspective and, by this premise in embodiment, as it were, predetermines a certain result. Deleuze, by contrast, invites us to adopt a metaphysical perspective (albeit a phenomenologically-inflected one), which takes us outside of ourselves in consideration of the fundamental nature of things.[423] There are risks in adopting such a perspective, as I have mentioned above – not least that it tends to occlude the significance of place. But in this case there is an advantage as well: where Merleau-Ponty treats transversality as a characteristic of perception, Deleuze treats perception as a manifestation of transversality. By focusing on the latter, and in particular by showing how it manifests as desire, we can ask if Deleuze is able to provide an account of this movement – a *reason* for it – which is lacking in Merleau-Ponty.

The traditional subject is hostile to place. The subject transcends place, subordinating it to an encompassing thought that is directed by an impermeable mind. By contrast, the transversal flow of intensities that characterizes the body without organs, for Deleuze, creates connections between oneself and a milieu which is transformative of the self by the very nature of this connection. Deleuze refers to Carlos Castaneda's search for his own body without organs, "a search… to find the place where one is at ease (*la place oú on est bien*). From a schizoanalytic perspective, the guy has to find where he is at ease, and in what position, if he wants to hang from the ceiling" (DMM, 107). If the subject is made possible by the long-distance optical disposition that enacts a cleavage, a striation of subject and world, then the facilitation of the flow of intensities occurs through a smoothing over of this distinction: it becomes a process of the integration of one's self into a milieu, which is to say, a process of belonging. And then, "[o]nce he's found his place, he no longer lives as a subject," a condition for the initiation of a machinic assemblage (DMM, 108). That is, having found his place, the transformations that characterize the flow of intensities become possible. Or in my terms: he becomes attuned to the solicitations of place; he inhabits his place in a rich and fully living way.

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[423] Citing *The Logic of Sense*, Len Lawlor notes that "[a}s impersonal and non-individuated, the transcendental field, for Deleuze, consists in the 'they' or the 'one' (*l'on*) (LS 178/152)" (Lawlor (1998), 19). An anonymous perspective prevails.

What does it mean to belong, in this sense? Among other things it means to express desire. For Deleuze, desire is not lack, as it is typically conceived; it constitutes its own field of immanence. He writes that there "is, in fact, a joy that is immanent to desire as though desire were filled by itself and its contemplations, a joy that implies no lack or impossibility and is not measured by pleasure since it is what distributes intensities of pleasure and prevents them from being suffused by anxiety, shame, and guilt" (ATP, 155). Deleuzian desire is not, as Dorothea Olkowski points out, a desire for anything in particular, but rather a transversal flow of intensities, and what it does, "unstoppably," is make connections.[424] "Desire," Deleuze writes, "constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flows… But a connection with another machine is always established, along a transverse path, so that one machine interrupts the current of the other or 'sees' its own current interrupted" (AO, 5-6).

What sort of connections are made in the desiring-machines of thought? What sort of flows are initiated, transformed, and broken off? There is a meeting of the habitual practices of bodily existence with the present moment which allows for the possibility that those practices may be transformed into some novel action. Olkowski writes that for Deleuze, "[a]ttentive, reflective perception stops the habitual response of the body and reinterprets the present perceptions from the point of view of memory-images, thereby creating something new," a process of "desiring production."[425] As we just saw, Deleuze describes the search for one's body without organs as a search for a place where one is at ease – or, as I put it, where one is richly attuned to the solicitations of place. So, if desire produces transversal connections in the form of a field of immanence that constitutes the body without organs, and if the search for one's body without organs is a matter of finding one's place, in the sense of being open to certain transversal connections (those between one's self and others, including other animals for

[424] Olkowski, 18. See, for instance, Anti-Oedipus: "Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another. The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: 'and…' 'and then…' This is because there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast – the mouth)." AO, 5.

[425] Olkowski, 18.

instance,[426] and between one's self and one's milieu) such that a particular mode of inhabitation is established, then desire is the active production of placial inhabitation. Or, to put it in my own terms, desire is expressed in the resonances of emplacing movement. I might alter Olkowski's Deleuzian formulation of it in one respect, however: it is not necessarily "attentive, reflective perception" that allows for creative thought – not, at least, if this entails an act of self-conscious reflection. It is rather an openness to the solicitations of place that makes creative thought possible, and as such the achievement of creative thought needn't be the product of self-conscious perception; it may (in some sense, it *must*) come unbidden, in a moment of spontaneous solicitation.[427] The role of productive desire should be thought of not so much as a force that is harnessed by conscious reflection, but as one that floods in wherever barriers are lifted (or breached) and new placial milieus made accessible.

This place-making is not teleologically directed; it is not directed at anything, since desire is not defined by its object – since, rather, it is a flow of intensities that *has* no particular object. It can be thought of instead as an inexorable movement of possibilities for inhabitation, and this, as we have seen, is the expression of resonances which emerge as much from the solicitations of places as from one's bodily capacities. It is, as I have suggested, almost as if imaginative understanding tends toward every possibility, an incessant palpation of new situations by means of habitual modes of understanding that overflow into new domains. It is in this movement that, as Deleuze puts it, "thinking and desiring are the same thing" (DMM, 95).

And we have seen, of course, the mechanism by which these palpations occur: it is metaphor, the leaping of thought from one placial milieu to another. Deleuze doesn't put it in these terms, which is not surprising given the traditional tendency to treat metaphor purely in terms of reference or signification, and thus as an overly determinable form of representation.

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[426] Deleuze tends to place a strong emphasis on transversalities between modes of being – hence the discussions on 'becoming-animal,' 'becoming-woman,' etc. But insofar as these modes produce resonances within individuals that are constitutive of personalities, perhaps it could be said that these personalities (qua multiplicities) become their own modes, as it were. These would in their own right become important sources of transversality as expressed in our own personalities: our modes of inhabitation would involve not just a 'becoming-animal,' but a 'becoming-Jenny' or a 'becoming-Cormac' as well.

[427] Perhaps an openness to such solicitations is what Olkowski has in mind in referring to "reflective perception" and the "moment of hesitation" that is required for it, in which case my only quibble would be with the wording, which seems to suggest a directed consciousness engaged in a purposeful act.

But given a notion of metaphor as the means for constituting embodied and emplaced understanding, as it has been developed here, it would seem like just the thing to account for the transversality of the desiring movement of thought. Consider Deleuze's comment that the schizo (the one who "schizzes" (AO, 39)) continually breaks apart chains and bricks in the flows of desire, thus creating the "mobile bricks" which are the basic unit of "every composition, and also every decomposition"; she "continually works them loose and carries them off in every direction in order to create a new polyvocity that is the code of desire" (AO, 40). I would like to say that in metaphor we have the process of this carrying off, the molding of a new form of understanding out of the materials provided by some antecedent domain. As Olkowski writes of the role of Deleuze's productive desire, "a tool, a habit, an organ destined for one particular function can be wrested from its original use and be reoriented to carry out another function. This is the very meaning of creativity and there is no question but that intelligence is at the very core of such creativity."[428] When the particular tools or habits at hand are modes of embodied and emplaced understanding, metaphor constitutes the transversal movement by which they are "reoriented" for some new purpose.

Thought, then, as a kind of bricolage. And indeed in describing the function of productive desire Deleuze borrows this term from Claude Lévi-Strauss, who defines bricolage as "the possession of a stock of materials or of rules of thumb that are fairly extensive, though more or less a hodgepodge – multiple and at the same time limited; the ability to rearrange fragments continually in new and different patterns of configurations; and as a consequence, an indifference toward the act of producing and toward the product, toward the set of instruments to be used and toward the over-all result to be achieved" (AO, 7). The applicability of this description of the "stock of materials" and "rules of thumb" to metaphor as the transversality of thought across domains is evident, if we conceive these to include the capacities of emplaced bodies, for these capacities are perpetually being rejiggered and transformed, broken into parts and being recombined, in the production of new understanding. So is the applicability of the "ability to rearrange fragments" in creative ways. Meanwhile the last characteristic of Lévi-Strauss' definition – an indifference towards both means and ends in

[428] Olkowski, 20.

the act of production – is consistent with desire not as a lack, but as an immanent field that fulfills itself, and is a reminder that the movement of thought is not regulated by any ultimate purpose, but is rather an inexorable movement of emplacement, a continuation of the intra-action of the world in bodies that defines existence for thinking organisms.

However, this indifference to means and ends shouldn't be taken as indifference to the *processes* of thought. As I argued above, even if thought is essentially characterized by a certain transversality of movement, which I couched in terms of the disposition in embodiment characteristic of smooth space, there is the potential for this movement to become self-thwarting, as the capacities of the body are employed to laminate the movement of thought, to homogenize and ossify it through the solicitations of striated space; likewise, even if thought may use the tools of embodied understanding to open up towards ever further horizons, it may also put these tools to work against itself in the creation of barriers to movement. So even if the movement of thought is fundamentally expressive of desire, this movement is also subject to capture – or, as it is a movement in immanence, perhaps it is better to say that it is subject to self-capture, in which the productive desire turns against itself as a controlling force. And indeed, such barrier-building amounts to the collapse of thought.[429] By contrast, we ought to facilitate productive desire, even in our uncertainty of its outcome: "We must set up units of production, plug in desiring-machines. What takes place in this factory, what this process is, its spasms and its glories, its labors and its joys, still remain unknown."[430]

If we consider this in light of the role of language in the constitution of thought, we rediscover the tension inherent in linguistic expression – between, on the one hand, the power of language to situate us in novel ways and thus to allow for new forms of meaning to emerge

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[429] "Wherever we leave the domain of multiplicities, we once again fall into dualisms, i.e., into the domain of non-thought, we leave the domain of thought as process," (DMM, 95).

[430] AO, 113. But note that this valorization is more restrained in ATP, which acknowledges the potential harm of dissolution that may result from too much deterritorialization, too much absorption of the subject into bodies without organs. Compare that to this nearly revolutionary call at the end of *Anti-Oedipus*: "For the new earth ('In truth, the earth will one day become a place of healing') is not to be found in the neurotic or perverse reterritorializations that arrest the process or assign it goals; it is no more behind than ahead, it coincides with the completion of the process of desiring-production, this process that is always and already complete as it proceeds, and as long as it proceeds. It therefore remains for us to see how, simultaneously, these various tasks of schizoanalysis proceed" (AO, 382).

at any moment; and, on the other hand, to fix meaning in determinate, sedimented forms, a tendency through which is enacted the laminarization of thought.

To return once again to Deleuze's criticism of phenomenology, In *The Logic of Sensation* he contrasts the body without organs and the phenomenological lived body:

> This ground, this rhythmic unity of the senses, can be discovered only by going beyond the organism. The phenomenological hypothesis is perhaps insufficient because it only invokes the lived body. But the lived body is still a paltry thing in comparison with a more profound and almost unlivable Power. We can seek the unity of rhythm only at the point where rhythm itself plunges into chaos, into the night, at the point where the differences of level are perpetually and violently mixed. Beyond the organism, but also at the limit of the lived body, there lies… the body without organs. (FB, 32)

We just saw, however, that the wild being of Merleau-Ponty's later philosophy is a realm of such mixture, and even of some degree of dissolution of the self. What is being suggested here, perhaps, is that we don't simply inhabit places habitually, as we do our homes[431]; we occupy landscapes – in thought, as in our bodies – which solicit us not just towards but across horizons. And again, this is reminiscent of Merleau-Ponty's wild being, which is encountered as that which we find beyond the domain of habitual action, at the "gates" of our life, and which we therefore find only by crossing horizons, by allowing ourselves to be seduced by those landscapes that exceed our antecedent understanding.

But by treating perception not as merely *characterized* by transversality, but as a *species of* transversality, Deleuze allows us to see that it is by nature a sort of movement that exceeds the lived body, that exceeds habits and antecedent modes of bodily orientation. He lets us see that "rhythm," which for these purposes can be thought of as those resonances by which we are integrated into the world,[432] may "[plunge] into chaos" simply because that is the nature of rhythm – that is the nature of belonging to a world that solicits us, seduces us, to move beyond

[431] A limitation, for instance, of Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, which focuses on the inward spaces of the home without seeming often enough to cast its gaze outdoors, and towards the horizon.

[432] This is no doubt a simplification of the concept of rhythm which, as Corry Shores puts it, is "the unpredictable varying of the waves of sensation that affect each bodily domain differently in such a way that the sense data cannot be processed, regularized, recognized, and thereby dephenomenalized" (Shores, 206). I do not mean to claim that the processes being pointed to here are reducible to my idea of resonance, only that they are similar insofar as they are the patterned means by which the transversal relation between self and world is manifest.

our habitual modes of existence. This movement, this spontaneous eruption of a vagabond force, is the movement of desire when it breaks free of habit.

It could be said of Merleau-Ponty's earlier philosophy that, even if he countenances a movement across horizons in the integration of self and world that allows for creative expression, he does not say why such a movement should occur. He does not explain why perception should not remain domiciled in habit, why there instead seems to be a centrifugal force that draws it out of itself, that is perpetually engaged in something like the bricolage of thought. This could not, however, be said of his later philosophy. See what he says in terms of the very nature of the human organism in "Eye and Mind": "A human body is present when, between the see-er and the visible, between touching and touched, between one eye and the other, between hand and hand a kind of crossover occurs, when the spark of the sensing/sensible is lit, when the fire starts to burn that will not cease" as long as there is that body (EM, 125). The union of sensing and sensed, their participation in the same sensibility, is possible only because of the gap, the *écart*, within this sensible – a gap that is crossed by desire, the animating force that lights the world in visibility.[433]

Or even more explicitly, notice in *The Visible and the Invisible*, where, in discussing the phenomenon of seeing other seers, and ultimately of embracing other bodies, he makes one of his most allusive and significant remarks: "the body is lost outside of the world and its goals, fascinated by the unique occupation of floating in Being with another life, of making itself the outside of its inside and the inside of its outside. And henceforth movement, touch, vision, applying themselves to the other and to themselves, return toward their source and, in the patient and silent labor of desire, begin the paradox of expression" (VI, 144). Though this desire is "lost outside of the world and its goals," it is (paradoxically) just this movement towards the other in desire that is the figure for a movement that turns us towards the things of the world: "the reversibility that defines [this flesh that one sees and touches] exists in other fields; it is even incomparably more agile there and capable of weaving relations between bodies that this time will not only enlarge, but will pass definitively beyond the circle of the visible" (Ibid.). And this plunging into the depths of the invisible within the visible, the encounter with the carnal

[433] For discussion of desire and the metaphor of fire in "Eye and Mind," see Johnson, Galen (1994).

existence of ideas, is continued, as we have seen, through language – "those strange movements of the throat and mouth that form the cry and the voice" (Ibid.).

From the silent labor of desire to the cry and the voice. I'm not sure if it can be definitively said whether the movement being described here is logical, metonymical, genealogical, or otherwise. (Perhaps it is what Johnson characterizes as Merleau-Ponty's understanding of the history of cultural expression: an "intensifying, deepening astonishment (wonder) in the face of this 'there is.'… the desire within the difference which is Flesh."[434]) Without deciding the point, and bearing in mind that the work from which Merleau-Ponty's comment is drawn is incomplete, I would only speculate that we can find in it an intimation that the chiasmic folding of the world upon itself is not only expressed in desire, but that desire is the source of this folding as expression. If so, then what Merleau-Ponty is rightly pointing to here is the implication of the other in expression at both ends of this arc – in the primordially erotic nature of the desiring body, as well as in language, by which we are swept up in social existence. It would therefore be the case that our participation in the visible is a participation with others through desire, not simply as a joining of autonomous subjectivities in a common object, but in the sense that visibility emerges *between* ourselves and others, in that gap which is a connection, that chiasm, according to a principle of desire. If so, then not only is desire central to the ontology of the flesh, but that ontology is arguably even more attentive to the foundation of desire in the relation between ourselves and others than is Deleuze.

Conclusion

If Deleuze and the Merleau-Ponty of *The Visible and the Invisible* are not philosophically concordant on every point, it is at least the case that their differences are productive ones. They serve to highlight and strengthen, rather than contradict and dismantle, each other: they present an argument that is a dance rather than a war. For present purposes, the most salient zone of convergence between the two concerns the embodiment and emplacement of thought. By drawing on Merleau-Ponty, we have seen that abstract thought has its basis in our capacities

[434] Johnson (1993), 51.

as embodied beings. By drawing on Deleuze, we have seen some of the ways that the nature of thought depends on those particular bodily capacities: in Deleuzian terms, thought is fundamentally an operation in smooth space which solicits a haptic disposition in embodiment, even as it has a tendency to oscillate towards striation, which favors an optical disposition; and, though such oscillation can be productive, the ossification of thought may occur when it becomes fixed in the optical disposition. This occurs, in particular, when thought becomes representational, as it does in the diremption of subject and object.

The point here is not that Deleuze provides an exhaustive account of the embodiment of thought – he explicitly does not. He does, though, point to a certain axis of such embodiment; or to put it another way, he retrieves certain characteristics of thought as a "secant plane" of embodied and emplaced experience in general.[435] But this is sufficient to demonstrate that our modes of embodied emplacement are implicated in the conclusions at which thought arrives. Or to put it in Merleau-Pontian terms, we can understand thought as expressing certain styles of embodiment, and the possibilities upon which thought opens itself will depend on these styles with which it is expressed.

These styles are, fundamentally, styles of movement – modes of bodily action. The zone of an action is not determined simply by a subject, but by the capacities of the embodied individual that are solicited by their milieu (which Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty each express in different ways[436]). For thinking organisms this movement is an incessant one. In thought we are forever embedded in dynamic processes like smoothing and striation, of the molding and re-molding of the contours of our inhabitation of the world. This pull the world has in drawing

[435] Cf. WIP, 202: "The philosopher, the scientist, and the artist seem to return from the land of the dead. What the philosopher brings back from the chaos are variations that are still infinite but that have become inseparable on the absolute surfaces or in the absolute volumes that lay out a secant [*sécant*] plane of immanence: these are not associations of distinct ideas, but reconnections through a zone of indistinction in a concept."

[436] Deleuze, for instance, gives priority to the soliciting force of smooth and striated space with respect to the dispositions in embodiment with which they are negotiated. Merleau-Ponty, meanwhile, regards the imposition of the visible within vision as an essential characteristic of visibility. We saw this in the context of the discussion of wild being. Note also this comment: "What there is then are… things we could not dream of seeing 'all naked' because the gaze envelops them, clothes them with its own flesh. Whence does it happen that in so doing it leaves them in their place, that the vision we acquire of them seems to us to come from them, and that to be seen is for them but a degradation of their eminent being? What is this talisman of color, this singular virtue of the visible that makes it, held at the end of the gaze, nonetheless much more than a correlative of my vision, such that it imposes my vision upon me as a continuation of its own sovereign existence?" (VI, 131)

us into itself is the force of desire, and it is what drives the emplacing movement of thought. With each iteration of this movement, new resonances are established, and these entail new patterns of diffraction in the wending of the depths of placial existence that constitute experience. There are interesting divergences between the Deleuzian picture of rhythm that is extracted from chaos and the Merleau-Pontian picture of sense as emergent from wild being. But more striking than these differences is the affinity between these visions, a theme in philosophical thought that is transversal with respect to these two thinkers. What this theme suggests, above all, is a way to think about thought: when we understand the limitations of representationalism, we can see that thought expresses a movement of the thinking organism as a participant in the world – a movement of desire that is solicited by place.

Chapter 6: How, Then, Should We Live in Places?

This last chapter is a conclusion of sorts, I suppose, but one that attempts not to look back at what has been said, but to look outwards. It does not seek to derive rules for living from the foregoing. It does, however, seek to bear the disposition that has been developed here, in considering the question: how might we inhabit the world? It directs this question, first, at the places we build for ourselves, in which we most actively make places. And finally, it asks it of the ultimate landscape to which we belong, and in which we have always found ourselves: the natural landscape.

Dwelling in the built environment

By 2010, for the first time in human history, more than half of the world's people lived in cities, and even for those who don't, roads, structures and other elements of the built environment are inextricable from their experience of inhabiting the world. Even when we go out "into nature," we still generally experience it from the windows of a car or a bus or a cabin in the woods. We set up a yurt or pitch a tent: even our experience of nature is primarily an experience of inhabiting built spaces. We tend to think of such environments as establishing enclaves of technologized culture within and against an encompassing nature. But chalk this up to the same dichotomizing logic that separates the mind from the body and the individual from society; and as with those other dichotomies, the distinction is false. To be attentive to place is to realize that to be emplaced in nature in the way that is proper to us, in a human way, is to inhabit our structures and our cities as belonging to nature, as expressions of place. In recognizing this, we allow ourselves to attend to the project of emplacing ourselves in a manner that facilitates this continuity. That is, when our built environments are attentive to place, they do not separate us from nature, but rather allow us to be at home in it.[437]

[437] Thanks are owed to Hugh J. Silverman for guidance on material in this section.

Modernism and displacement

And yet for the better part of a century the world has been engaged in a project of willful inattentiveness to place, and in particular the experience of the emplaced human body, which is at the heart of modernism in architecture and urban design. The modernist project has been remarkably successful at casting into oblivion a vast store of knowledge regarding the properties and function of built places that had served as the foundation of architectural practice at least since the ancient Greeks.

Modernism has been defined in large part by a shift from this sort of logic of place to a temporal logic. As Charles Jencks says, the very basis of modernism has been "the myth of a romantic advance guard setting out before the rest of society to conquer new territory."[438] Central to this myth has been the conception of history as a march of progress, a movement towards some liberated future. Indeed, if modernism is a style of design proper to any place, that place is utopia, which of course is no place at all – or only a place temporally defined, as that which lies at the end of some form of progress, moral, social, or technological. The avant-garde movements were oriented on a temporal axis: against the past, as much as they were towards the future. Filippo Marinetti's "Futurist Manifesto" gives the sense of wanting to obliterate historical memory – it announces "the earliest dawn" on the earth and shrugs off the uselessness of "look[ing] back over our shoulders" when one is on the cusp of the future, while at the same time celebrating speed, the very transcendence of space.[439] The Zeitgeist was captured as well in Adolf Loos' *Ornament and Crime*. One of the founders of modern architecture, Loos lamented that "[t]he rate of cultural development is held back by those that cannot cope with the present," which is to say, the moment of progress – a typical expression of the modernists' impatient rush towards the future.[440] In all cases, the past was something to be overcome – indeed, the concept of overcoming itself is characteristic of the modern, as it

[438] Jencks, 29.
[439] Marinetti, 49-54.
[440] Loos,32.

implies unidirectional change, struggle, advancement, and that denial (of the old, the familiar, or the given) which is necessary for the establishment of a new social or aesthetic vision.

Fredric Jameson argues that one reason for the temporal orientation of the modernist avant-gardes was that they arose in a context in which the past was a potent presence in the landscape of daily life. He refers to Arno Meyer's *Persistence of the Old Regime*, which makes the point that "even at the turn of the last century and the putative heyday of high modernism, only a minute percentage of the social and physical space of the West could be considered either fully modern in technology or production or substantially bourgeois in its class culture."[441] Jameson suggests that the founders of modernism were in fact children of an older age, with a "sensitivity to deep time;" "born in those agricultural villages we still sometimes characterize as medieval or premodern, they developed their vocations in the new urban agglomerations with their radically distinct and 'modern' spaces and temporalities."[442] So when the Futurists were celebrating the steam engine, it was as something abrupt and entirely new, an *anomaly* for populations that were still inhabiting houses and villages that had been built centuries or even millennia before. The past was everywhere, and deeply embedded in the consciousness of those who formed the self-proclaimed advance guards of human progress.[443]

The past, of course, is marked by particularity. The world as we concretely experience it is historical, formed through contingent events and impressed with the markings of individual events. It is tangible, concrete, imperfect, complex, involuted – in other words, the depth of history is present in our concrete experience of place. The future, by contrast, is ideal, abstract, unmarked and unmarred. (It is not a coincidence that the rise of the modern was concurrent with industrialization, which marked the large-scale shift from the production of goods by hand – that is, by an organic body – to production by machines, which had the capacity to render the smooth and uniform objects of abstract thought into concrete reality; the new industrial processes therefore provided not just the means but the model for the realization of modern design.) In inventing the future, then, the avant-gardes were aspiring to an ideal state, not just

[441] Jameson, 699.
[442] Ibid.
[443] The ubiquity of the past also manifested itself in various narratives of nationalist justification, a significant target of modernist critique.

in the sense of its utopian aspirations, but also in the sense that as a product of ideation it could be conceptually perfect – uncompromised by the interventions of conflict and chance. This is apparent to some extent in art, with the modernist movements towards abstract expression and conceptualism, though as productions (usually) of the human body, paintings and sculptures were less amenable to fully shaking off the traces of the particular; even a Rothko canvas is brimming with the expressions of the artist's hand and in these very expressions lies the remarkable affective and even spatial depth of his work).

The manifestation of the abstract conception was more fully realizable in design and architecture, however, where new technologies and industrial production processes allowed a closer approximation to the progressive ideal.[444] By the measure of this ideal, ornamentation would be tantamount to effacement – a corruption of the unblemished destiny of human progress. Thus Loos writes that "the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament, from objects of daily use,"[445] and "[t]hose who measure everything by the past impede the cultural development of nations and of humanity itself."[446] The movement of human progress was, again, along a temporal axis, from a past compromised by indulgence in particularity (regarded as trivial) towards an ideal future. Loos' vision, like that of many of the avant-gardes, was expressed with a near-religious fervor, enraptured as it was with the absolute: "Behold! What makes our period so important is that it is incapable of producing new ornament. We have outgrown ornament, we have struggled through to a state without ornament. Behold, the time is at hand, fulfilment awaits us. Soon the streets of the cities will glow like white walls! Like Zion, the Holy City, the capital of heaven. It is then that fulfilment will have come."[447]

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[444] 'Progressive' in the sense of a vision of human progress, but this tended to be associated with the progressivism of liberal political ideology as well.
[445] Loos, 30.
[446] Ibid., 32.
[447] Ibid., 30. Similarly, Corbusier used some of his most emphatic language in opposing the notion that traditional styles ought to be employed, even in the interest of preserving the character of historical areas: "Such methods are contrary to the great lesson of history. Never has a return to the past been recorded, never has man retraced his steps… To imitate the past slavishly is to condemn ourselves to delusion, to institute the 'false' as a principle … [which] merely results in artificial reconstruction capable only of discrediting the authentic testimonies that we were most moved to preserve" (Le Corbusier (1973), p. 88-89).

Loos was at the center of the development of the ideology of modern architecture which denigrated any elements of design that did not follow from the function of the building. Like Le Corbusier, who famously announced that "[t]he house is a machine for living in,"[448] Loos saw efficiency as the end of design. He wrote that, since ornament is nothing more than "wasted manpower," and therefore wasted capital, it "commits a crime itself by damaging national economy and therefore cultural development."[449] The explicit goal of such an aesthetic approach is utopian, a "Holy City" that will represent the "fulfilment" of human progress. As an abstract ideal, this sort of utopia can only last as long as it is unencumbered by expression of the particular; allow it any accidental properties, such as a relation to a particular place or expression of a unique style, and it descends from the realm of ideas into the world of mere appearances. Unsurprisingly, then, the elements of architectural design that dominated the 20th Century and have increasingly given the modern city its characteristic texture have tended towards indifference to the particularities of place. Local topography, local history, the surrounding urban fabric – all these get swept away in utopian pursuit. To take just one example, Jencks notes that in the context of the dominance of modernist ideology "Marcel Breuer could design his Late-Modern museum for the Whitney in 1966 with little critical awareness of its appalling relation to the neighbourhood… In fact his work, in present-day terms, was the ultimate form of contempt for the existing context."[450]

Similarly contemptuous acts have been scattered around most cities throughout much of the last century; they are the dominant mode of architecture in many of them, or even their principle of organization, as in master-planned modernist cities like Brasilia.[451] City planners adopted similar approaches – Robert Moses' designs for public projects, and especially his plans for freeway construction, designed to promote speed and efficiency at the expense of extant neighborhood ecologies, epitomized the modern approach to the urban environment. Such practices have succeeded all too well: the irony is that the modernists have created urban

[448] Le Corbusier (1986), 4.
[449] Loos, 31-32.
[450] Jencks, 52.
[451] For the city as a whole, as for the individual building, functionalism was the goal: as the 1928 *La Sarraz Declaration* of the *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* stated, "[u]rbanization cannot be conditioned by the claims of pre-existent aestheticism: its essence is of a functional order" (CIAM (1971)).

environments which, in wiping the past clean, have divorced modern humans from that sense of the past which animated the vision of temporal progress in the first place. As Jameson writes: "when the premodern vanishes, when the peasantry shrinks to a picturesque remnant, when suburbs replace the villages and modernity reigns triumphant and homogeneous over all space, then the very sense of an alternate temporality disappears as well, and postmodern generations are dispossessed (without even knowing it) of any differential sense of that deep time the first moderns sought to inscribe in their writing."[452] Modernism, by its very insistence on the project of temporal overcoming, has in some ways caused us to become detached from our history; because of its success our living environments no longer connect us to a deep past, the state of consciousness that originally made the principles of modern design salient and justifiable.

It is not that modernism, in its temporal orientation, has eschewed place; place can never really be eschewed, since it belongs to the structure of experience. All that may happen is that we become oblivious of this structure, even as it continues to shape our possibilities for thought. Modernism is exemplary of this forgetfulness, and exemplary, too, of the ways an emplaced disposition may operate even when the particularity that is implicated by any such disposition is disavowed. Specifically, the utopian temporality of modernism entails what Deleuze might call a long-distance vision. Approach a vision of utopia in your imagination. How close can you get? Close enough to see the grit in the corners? Close enough to feel the emotional welter of fleshy human presence? Then it is no longer a utopia; it is instead a place of depth.

Why should this be so? Consider what it means to have a utopian vision: it is to adopt a disposition towards a place that is fully imaginary, an ideal place, a *perfect* place, conceived as a totality. In these characteristics it is like a concept of classical geometry or mathematics. (It is not a coincidence that Corbusier and Amédée Ozenfant regarded appreciatioin for mathematical law as the highest "aesthetic sensation."[453]) Such figures do not abide the

[452] Jameson, 699.

[453] Ozenfant, Amédée and Le Corbusier. "Purism," 1921, accessed from the web at http://modernistarchitecture.wordpress.com/2011/08/31/le-corbusier-and-amedee-ozenfant%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Cpurism%E2%80%9D-1921/. An "elementary truth" of purism was "that anything of universal value is

intricacies and irregularities of texture. Nor can they interact organically with the human form, which would only detract from their abstract purity – hence the glowing city of "white walls" that has transcended ornament in Loos' vision. The utopian city, like the abstract geometrical form, can only be apprehended visually, which inherently requires distance. This distancing is compounded by a certain horological orientation: as the product of temporal progress, the utopia of the modernist dream lies at a temporal distance, as a beacon of what is to come (though not so distant that it can't serve as a guiding light).

As Anthony Vidler points out, an important aspect of this program was the opening up of "space" which modernist architects generally regarded as a universal element or property: "Space, more even than function, became a limit term for modernity, not least for its connection with time both before and after Einstein. Space moved; it was fluid, open, filled with air and light; its very presence was a rememdy for the impacted environments of the old city: the modern carrier of the Enlightenment image of hygience and liberty;" space was regarded as "a cure for the twin phobias of late nineteenth-century urbanism, agoraphobia and claustrophobia. To open up the city would, in Le Corbusier's terms, and in much post-CIAM[454] rhetoric, rid it of all closed, dirty, dangerous, and unhealthy corners."[455] As Corbusier wrote in CIAM IV's Athens Charter, "space should be generously dispensed… the sensation of space is of a psycho-physiological order, and… the narrowness of streets and the constriction of courtyards create an atmosphere as unhealthy for the body as it is depressing to the mind."[456] Much as the new transportation and communications technologies offered new possibilities for inhabiting a world that was still fundamentally old and rooted in history, the modernist promise of "open space" in the city must have seemed to offer a promise of freedom in an urban context that

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worth more than anything of merely individual value," where geometrical abstractions are explicitly invoked as universal, and any sort of ornament or particular markings are individual. The conceptually abstract is thus elevated above the culturally and historically particular.

[454] CIAM = Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne, the chief organization for promoting modernism in architecture and urbanism.

[455] Vidler, 142-3.

[456] Le Corbusier (1973), 55. The provision of sunshine is another central concern of the Athens Charter which, considering the treatment of space along universalizing Cartesian lines, provides an interesting resonance with Derrida's observations concerning the metaphor of "light" in Cartesian philosophy, and in the philosophical tradition in general, as discussed in chapter four; could it be that light and space are coeval entailments of the optical disposition? They are, after all, the two requirements for vision.

was mostly dark and cramped. Yet this space ended up coming at the expense of place: for its character as universal, and thus as pure, would be sullied by the introduction of any elements of the particular, such as those to which a human body might respond. Such a concept of space, as we've seen, is bound up in an optical disposition, and the modernist treatment of space is a striking example of how time and space collude to suppress place through the imposition of conceptual abstraction, a collusion produced through thought which expresses a long-distance disposition in embodiment.[457]

This disposition is evident as well in the fact that, even as modernist architecture and urbanist design valorize the elimination of ornament and the instantiation of the "purest" conceptually abstract forms, they tend to adhere to a certain aesthetic of geometrical patterning that is often only "visible" from a great height. Kent Bloomer points to Thomas Beeby's observation that "after World War I modernist designers routinely moved away from the notion of 'structure ornamented' to a procedure approaching that of 'ornament constructed,' in which the entire design process would begin within a geometry belonging to an ornamental pattern, such as a repetitive grid, rather than within a more historic or even more pragmatic means of organization."[458] One example given by Beeby is Le Corbusier's city plan of 1922, "which appears from the sky to be an emblem decoratively centered within the space of a diaper pattern."[459] Meanwhile, Corbusier's infamous Plan Voisin for re-making Paris envisioned a repeating series of identical towers set within gridded open spaces; and Ludwig Karl Hilbersheimer's "Highrise City" plan similarly envisioned a regular pattern of geometrically spare buildings set widely apart.

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[457] It is worth noting that the Athens Charter itself avows commitment to concrete embodiment: one of its principles was that "[t]he dimensions of all elements within the urban system can only be governed by human proportions… The natural measurements of man himself must serve as a basis for all the scales that will be consonant with the life and diverse functions of the human being: a scale of distance that will be considered in relation to the natural walking pace of man" (Athens Charter, 95). Yet not only the actual manifestations of modernist urban planning projects, but Corbusier's designs themselves, belied this nominal goal. Either it became subordinated to other interests of the movement (such as efficiency or the aesthetics of "ornament constructed," discussed below) or the hostility of modernist environments to "human proportions" was not clearly foreseen.
[458] Bloomer, 210-211.
[459] Ibid., 211.

While these particular plans went unrealized, the "towers-in-a-park" schema became a hallmark of mid-20th Century urban development in many corners of the world.[460] For instance, as architect Jan Gehl notes in *Urbanized*, Gary Hustwit's film on urban design, Brasilia "was the ultimate modernistic city, built on all the ideas of the modernistic manifests," a city cut whole cloth from the utopian vision. As Gehl continues, "it looks fantastic from the airplane, but if you are down at eye level, on your feet and going from one place to another Brasilia is a- is a disaster. Every distance is too wide. Things are not connected. You have to tramble[461] for endless miles and miles along completely straight paths. Nobody ever started to think about what would it be to be out in Brasilia between all these monuments."[462] Such criticism of 20th Century urban planning as being performed from a great height is common: Amanda Burden, director of New York's Department of City Planning, says of New York's hugely powerful planner Robert Moses that he "planned the city from above."[463] And of Moses' great critic and champion of livable urbanism Jane Jacobs, Ellen Dunham-Jones says, "she began to write about what she thought the planners really weren't seeing and understanding. They were looking at problems from this sort of 30,000 height, and she was really looking at it from the perspective of someone living there on the street."[464]

There is a perspectival absurdity in the idea that a city ought to be conceived from the height of an airplane – people live *in* cities, not above them. Geometrical patterning is not foreign to traditional design, but the modernist impulse to maintain this design in a way that is only visible to birds and airplane passengers is very peculiar. It can only be accounted for if we remember that the imperatives of place are, strictly speaking, never abandoned; they are only forgotten. For the modernist architects and urban designers may have turned away from ornament and the particularities of historical and geographical context for the sake of achieving

[460] The goal, as Corbusier put it, was that "the house will never again be fused to the street by a sidewalk. It will rise in its own surroundings, in which it will enjoy sunshine, clean air, and silence" (Le Corbusier (1973), 57). These are still more or less the zoning guidelines that still prevail in most places in the United States, and in retrospect their contribution to sprawl seems obvious (though ironically, Corbusier considered the suburb an "urbanistic folly").
[461] *Sic*, but a nice accidental coinage.
[462] Hustwit*, Urbanized.*
[463] Ibid.
[464] Ibid..

an abstract conceptual purity, but they nonetheless reconstituted an aesthetic dimension from a different perspective – namely, from the long-distance vision of the bird's-eye view. Indeed, it was just this aestheticism which lay behind their claim to conceptual purity, even when it came at the cost of actual efficiency, the nominal goal of their geometrical designs (note again Beeby's observation, relayed by Bloomer, that the symmetries of modernist design were sometimes pursued at the expense of pragmatic interests). Their conceptualism, in other words, was not an escape, as they might have hoped, from the particularities of place: it was the constitution of a particular disposition in embodiment, literally at another level.[465] In particular, it is a disposition which bears a striking resemblance to that which is entailed by the "objective" perspective, or that which striates space in the formation of the subject-object dualism. (Note Mies van der Rohe's comment that "the authentic approach to architecture should always be the objective."[466]) Unfortunately, when it is applied to the city according to the modernist program, this abstract disposition is inherently incompatible with the perspective of lived experience at street level; to use R. D. Sack's term, place that is subjected to such a program becomes "thinned out."[467]

Compare this to Deleuze's criticisms of the 'survol,'[468] the perspective which establishes a distance between perceiver and perceived; by removing us from our concretely embedded relation to the built environment and ascending to a bird's-eye view, modernism in architecture and urban design almost literally adopts the survol as its natural perspective (perhaps only

[465] The contrast of the adoption of this secular bird's-eye view with traditional cathedral design is striking. For cathedrals (Gothic ones, most exemplifyingly) are profoundly vertical in their orientation, as they express the human relation to God and the heavens; yet they express this from the *human* perspective, as an aspirational or yearning expression that is nonetheless rooted in the ground. The figure of the human is preserved even in the heights of these Cathedrals, for instance in the aedicules in their upper reaches which might be thought to metaphorically house the angels (which are themselves anthropomorphic, of course). It is tempting to wonder whether the secular clearing of the conceptual space that formerly belonged to religion might have been at some level a factor for the emergence of the modernists, who claimed occupancy for themselves in what had erstwhile been the aeries of heavenly beings.
[466] "Frank Lloyd Wright" (1940), cited in Johnson (1947), 195.
[467] Sack, 138. Quoted in Casey (2001), 684. Similarly hostile to the human perspective is urban planning that is primarily concerned with the needs of cars. Cars, for instance, need places to park. Whereas a human body is comfortable in an urban streetscape that resembles an outdoor "room," with 'street-walls' formed by the fronts of street-facing building that are ideally unbroken and of a consistent height that is proportional to the width of the street, autocentric urban environments require parking lots which are hostile in every way to the human need for a sense of placial belonging – the true desolate wastelands of our world.
[468] See chapter 5.

failing to do so explicitly because it denies holding any particular perspective at all). Or compare it to Merleau-Ponty's comment that "there is no essence, no idea, that does not adhere to a domain of history and of geography… like that of nature, the space or time of culture is not surveyable from above" (VI, 115). Modernist urbanism proposes that the simplest, purest idea must be precisely that which is unencumbered by history and geography, nature and culture. Yet it is in just these domains that the depth of any idea resides. To deny them is to deny the richness of experience; and to seek to produce such ideas in the built environment is indistinguishable from a project of producing places of maximal destitution. It is, in other words, a project of dehumanization.[469]

Emplacement in the built environment

How, then, can we understand the built environment, and develop a program for enhancing it, that does not take flight into conceptual overabstraction? To acknowledge our emplacement in the world is a start. In traditional architectural design, this scarcely needed acknowledging; it was simply the premise from which principles of design were derived. In his essay "Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture," the late 19th Century art historian Heinrich Wolfflin argued that these principles followed a certain logic of embodiment – that the classical forms which served as the grammar of architecture since the ancient Greeks, and which were still generally honored in Wolfflin's time, were not matters of arbitrary convention but expressions of our modes of relation with the world as embodied humans. What had sometimes been reduced, in Wolfflin's estimation, to a question of being "pleasing to the eye," was in fact a question of how we relate to structures as upright creatures. As he wrote, "physical forms possess a character only because we ourselves possess a body. If we were purely visual beings, we would always be denied an aesthetic judgment of the physical world. But as human beings with a body that teaches us the nature of gravity, contraction, strength,

[469] Modernism is not *purely* dehumanizing in every case, of course; there is diversity across its conceptual platform, so that even a classically modernist design like that of Minoru Yamasaki's World Trade Center can incorporate gothic arches and minimalist tracery, and Mies van der Rohe's Crown Hall at the Illinois Institute of Technology can recall the proportions of traditional Greek temple design.

and so on, we gather the experience that enables us to identify with the conditions of other forms."[470]

Wolfflin is giving expression here to an idea that is consonant with the fact that we do not stand before the world as cognizing observers, but belong to it as participants. For our manner of understanding structures is not purely conceptual, in the modernist sense; rather, it proceeds from our own experience as fleshy beings with our own mass and weight. As he writes, "we read our own image into all phenomena. We expect everything to possess what we know to be the conditions of our own well-being."[471] We understand the physical world in terms of the categories we share with it; so, for instance, we "have carried loads and experienced pressure and counterpressure, we have collapsed to the ground when we no longer had the strength to resist the downward pull of our own bodies, and that is why we can appreciate the noble serenity of a column and understand the tendency of all matter to spread out formlessly on the ground."[472]

This natural experience of weight, of the downward pull that roots us and that is both condition and constraint for our upright, vertical postures, is expressed in traditional architecture not just in the column, but also, for instance, in the fact that rustication, which emphasizes the massiveness of materials, is nearly always applied to the lower levels of structures. The bottom-heaviness of such design is satisfying to our sense of stability – a sense which is, indeed, not just established visually, but through a kinesthetic sense, involving our own sense of balance, and a sense of movement as well: energies settle in the lower portions of buildings, arches over doors and windows discharge the weight of materials around the apertures so that they protect movement (entrance and egress of our bodies, or even just of our line of sight), while lighter elements involving more active and playful rhythms are possible higher up. In pointing to Louis Sullivan's prescriptions for office building design, Bloomer describes "an expression of taut firmness at the bottom, an expression of efflorescence and

[470] Wolfflin, 151.
[471] Ibid., 152.
[472] Ibid., 151.

ornament at the top," such that "the building in its entirety articulates the metamorphosis of an upward awakening."[473]

Strikingly, modernism increasingly incorporated a sensibility that was almost precisely opposed to this natural experience of weight. The Brutalists, for instance, frequently created looming top-heavy concrete massings that winnowed down to narrow bases; and in general, as Bloomer notes, "the regularized and homogeneous compositions [of modernism] attempted to overcome their own weight and location by rising into the air atop slender columns… The same impulse toward weightlessness moved the articulation of building surfaces in the direction of transparency and reflectivity."[474] It is as if any adherence to the constraint of gravity impinged on the pure conceptualism of modernist ideals. But this makes sense if that conceptualism is in actuality an expression of an almost exclusively optical disposition in embodiment; even the most fundamental and ubiquitous aspects of kinesthetic experience must be rendered inconsequent if the optical regime is to be maintained – kinesthetic meanings must be expunged from the structural design.[475]

For Wolfflin, "[o]ur own bodily organization is the form through which we apprehend everything physical."[476] This apprehension, he claims, is a sort of empathy, and it is self-evident in our relations to others: children can't see someone cry without bursting into tears themselves; people adopt the expressions of strangers around them; a person who is hoarse

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[473] Bloomer, 83. It is ironic that the modernists' cri de coeur that form must follow function derives from Sullivan's declaration that "shape, form, outward expression, design, or whatever we may choose of the tall office building should in the very nature of things follow the functions of the building" (Sullivan, 208. Quoted in Bloomer, 81.). Sullivan's point was that visual functionality could be *enhanced* by ornament, not that any expression that wasn't structurally necessitated ought to be suppressed. (Of course, this principle of suppression was itself, like the large-scale geometric patterning of modernist urban designs, expressed in aesthetic ways, even to the detriment of functionality; for instance, an entrance to a building, which under traditional rubrics ought to be emphasized to facilitate recognition and human interaction, is in modernist architecture often de-emphasized in a way that makes entrance into a building a more difficult, and sometimes even baffling, experience – a minimalist design sense that is nominally committed to functionality ends up actually undermining function.)

[474] Bloomer, 214.

[475] In principle, the transparency and reflectivity of glass could be employed to accentuate the lightness of the upper portions of buildings in such a way as to enhance the gravitational logic of structures (a tactic which the post-modernists would employ in some cases). But in practice modernism tended to use glass to emphasize the uniformity of structures, and thus to treat the natural asymmetries of the up-down axis as all but irrelevant.

[476] The remark calls to mind, once again, Merleau-Ponty's comment that abstract movement involves "constructing upon the geographical surroundings a milieu of behavior and a system of signification that express, on the outside, the internal activity of the subject" (PP, 115).

speaks and we clear our own throats.[477] But it extends as well to our interactions with objects, structures, and everything else in our world. Hence, for instance, an architectural asymmetry "is often experienced as physical pain, as if a limb were missing or injured."[478]

There is thus an anthropomorphism that is essential to the meaning of structural forms – an anthropomorphism that is present whether we will it to be there or not.[479] We read the relation of height to width in a building, for instance, as a relation between a sense of ascent and repose. This kinesthetic sense in turn connotes a whole personality: an upright orientation is vital, active, dignified (as we saw in chapter 4, the relation between physical and moral *upright*ness is not incidental). A horizontally-oriented building, on the other hand, may connote restfulness or calm (or perhaps inertia and sloth – and whether the former sense is evoked or the latter we might chalk up to the quality of the design). As for the perfect square? It "is called bulky, heavy, contented, plain, good-natured, stupid… We can not tell if the body is reclining or standing."[480]

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[477] Wolfflin, 156.

[478] Ibid., 155. So ubiquitous is the desire to find symmetry in things, Wolfflin observes, that in the case of that rare object that on the face of it defies symmetry – the one-handled mug – we unconsciously treat the handle as the "back" of the mug, so that a lateral symmetry is maintained (Wolfflin, 164). Note, however, that too much dissymmetry becomes "tedious;" we seek the movement and excitement of "imbalance" to some degree (Ibid., 173).

[479] This anthropomorphism extends to other objects as well, and even to geographical regions: Yi-Fu Tuan notes that cities give the impression of having a front and a back, and "[m]ost people in the United States probably regard the northeastern seaboard as the nation's front" (Tuan (1977), 42).

[480] Wolfflin, 168. Compare this to Rafael Viñoly's design for 432 Park Avenue, the future temporary tallest building in New York, which according to the architect is based on "the purest geometric form: the square" (Garutti, Francesco. "Rafael Viñoly/432 Park Avenue/New York," *Abitare*, June 2013). The architecture of the building, in fact, "is defined in its entirety by the supporting grid-like structure." This patterning is so comprehensive, in fact, that "[t]here is no variation in the grid which marks the moment of contact between the imposing volume of the building and the ground, and no additional architectural sign appears on the concrete structure to signal the entrance to the building. The body of 432 Park Avenue remains abstract and radical – a pure product of the grid" (Ibid.).

The employment of the concept of 'purity' here is fascinating. What makes the square "the purest geometric form"? Perhaps that it is the least anthropomorphizable; the term certainly harkens back to Ozenfant and Corbusier's purism, which equates purity with geometrical and conceptual abstraction and regards it as the highest aesthetic sensation. The square therefore produces the most minimal expression of desire. It resists most staunchly the transversal movement between self and world by which we encounter the world as intelligible. Viñoly's design seems to be aimed at maximum unintelligibility, such that it will not even signal the entrance to the building; instead its form will remain utterly "abstract." It serves as a rather perfect exemplification of the fact that intelligibility and intellectuality need not be concordant aspects of a design.

The inertness of the form of the rectilinear grid recalls Deleuze's discussion of striated space, which as we saw was associated with the ossification of thought in the forgetfulness of its fundamentally embodied character.

Think of what it means, in this light, to say that a building "faces" the street, or that we stand at the "foot" of the stairs leading up to the entrance, or that, as Juhani Pallasmaa says, "[t]he door handle is the handshake of the building."[481] Structures lend themselves to these metaphors because they reflect us back upon ourselves through a close and profound resonance. A door or window that has a vertical orientation, for instance, frames the upright form of the human body, an effect that may be emphasized through the use of arches or transom windows that extend and emphasize headspace: every aperture is a kind of potential aedicule. The picture windows that became popular in the postwar period, on the other hand, suggest a supine form, and thus bear a sensation of inertness. Or think again of how the freest movement of energies – the rhythmic and organic character of foliated ornamentation, for instance – are natural to the upper portions of buildings in traditional architecture, a reflection of the fact that the most expressive part of the human body is the head[482] (a pattern which, I would add, is recapitulated in the smaller anthropomorphisms of aperture surrounds). If, on the other hand, a design is indifferent with regard to this anthropomorphizing tendency, we may nonetheless read it as "turning its back on us," seeming "cold" or "lifeless," being orientationally "indecisive," as the form of the square is for Wolfflin; that is to say, we imbue the meaning of structures with human characteristics regardless of whether they want us to or not. Whatever these characteristics might be, they solicit us to respond in some particular way, through some mode of embodiment, just as does a person who engages us in a conversation, with their particular tone and body language and so forth. The question of whether a structure

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Striated space blocks the free flow of energies; here we see that this takes the form of the blockage of that movement between body and world by which the world is made intelligible. A building based on the "purity" of geometry does not solicit us *hospitably*. (Compare Wolfflin's point that "we do not experience architectural creations in merely geometric terms but rather as *massive forms*" (Wolfflin, 152); and that "a pyramid with sides rising at an angle of exactly 45 degrees offers us a merely intellectual pleasure. Our organism is indifferent to it, for it reckons simply with the relations of force and gravity and makes its judgment on that basis" (Ibid., 163).) The emphasis on the abstract concept here, which expresses the domination by the optical disposition in embodiment, recapitulates in a structural form the ossification of structural thought which Deleuze saw as charateristic of striation – and the rectlinear grid, the pure geometry of the square, is in some ways the perfect vehicle for carrying this out. In a sense, then, Viñoly's effort is something of an achievement, for it does bring the principles of modernism to a kind of apotheosis.

[481] Pallasmaa, 33.

[482] Wolfflin, 176.

solicits a disposition in us that enhances our sense of bodily well-being is the question of whether that structure is *dignifying*.

Perhaps this gives us an opportunity to reflect once more on the flesh of the world from the Merleau-Pontian perspective. Consider the flesh of buildings: in their weighty mass, their anthropomorphic form, and not least their function as places of human inhabitation, they are continuations of our own flesh into the world. They are organic in this sense, and organic in this specifically human way: as products of thought and language, they express human ideas, the carnal existence of those ideas made manifest in the material world, and made manifest precisely for the sake of our own inhabitation in the world. For this reason, the flesh of architecture expresses perhaps the clearest ideas we have of what it means to belong to the world, to participate in it, to continue into it and to be a continuation of it. As the architect Peter Zumphor puts it, architecture "is a kind of anatomy we are talking about. Really, I mean the word <body> quite literally. It's like our own bodies with their anatomy and things we can't see and skin covering us – that's what architecture means to me and that's how I try to think about it. As a bodily mass, a membrane, a fabric, a kind of covering, cloth, velvet, silk, all around me. The body! Not the idea of the body – the body itself! A body that can touch me."[483] We continue ourselves into the world by means of these prosthetic carapaces. But architecture is also the manner in which the world draws us to inhabit it. And in this meeting of body and world is the possibility of a certain kind of expression, an elevation of the experience of inhabitation or of emplacement *as such*, which we see especially in ornamentation, wherein the ideas that structures express become ebullient: an ebullience that projects not just from the kinesthetic forces that emanate from within us but also from the deepest reservoirs of nature, culture, and history.[484]

Considering the sheer *weight* of structures, their brute presence in the world as massive forms, and the fact that they exist precisely to accommodate embodied human action, it is strange that we should ever think of architecture as primarily a visual form of expression. Yet as Pallasmaa says (and as could have been said even seventy or eighty years ago), "The

[483] Zumphor, 11.
[484] Wolfflin calls ornament the "excessive force of form" (Wolfflin, 179), suggesting a surplus of expressivity.

architecture of our time is turning into the retinal art of the eye."[485] In adopting this purely visual disposition, we are rendering our structures "repulsively flat, sharp-edged, immaterial, unreal." Contrast this with an opticality that complements a haptic sense, as in the use of natural materials like "stone, brick, and wood… [which] allow the gaze to penetrate their surfaces and… enable us to become convinced of the veracity of matter."[486] The textures of these materials are of the natural world, and by virtue of these textures they have a depth that is lacking in concrete and glass: "Natural material expresses its age and history as well as the tale of its birth and human use."[487] These materials take us beyond the visual, beyond the bird's-eye view of the tabletop architectural model and the flat forms of geometrical abstraction, into that synesthesia that characterizes our sense of belonging as participants in the world. As Merleau-Ponty says, "We *see* the depth, the smoothness, the softness, the hardness of objects; Cezanne even claimed that we see their odor. If the painter is to express the world, the arrangement of his colors must bear within this indivisible whole, or else his painting will only hint at things and will not give them in the imperious unity, the presence, the insurpassable plenitude which is for us the definition of the real" (EM, 65).

It is similarly a conceit of the visual sense that we should regard buildings as isolate forms. The meaning of any building emerges out of its relation to its milieu, and the milieu for most buildings is the city. And in cities, buildings interact with other buildings (along with natural features that are never fully absent even in the most urban environments) to produce what is almost invariably called an *urban fabric* – the patterning of a region into a coherent and encompassing domain in which the many places of a city are nested, which is to say, a landscape. If the way to think architecture is through the whole body, then the same can be said of the city as a whole. A purely visual perspective on the city produces an impoverished experience; the city needs to be experienced kinesthetically, it must be able to facilitate exploration by "legwork," to borrow Deleuze's term (and Guy DeBord's intuition).[488] The streets

[485] Pallasmaa, 29.
[486] Ibid.
[487] Pallasmaa, 29.
[488] ATP, 371.

of the city must serve as third places, as Oldenburg calls them: they must serve as outdoor "rooms" in which we feel protected, comfortable, and invited into our surroundings.

Pallasmaa describes the importance of sound in emplacing us in the urban environment as well: "The echo of steps on a paved street has an emotional charge because the sound bouncing off the surrounding walls puts us in direct interaction with space; the sound measures space and makes its scale comprehensible. We stroke the edges of the space with our ears. But, the contemporary city has lost its echo."[489] The city has resonance in a literal sense, a resonance that maps out a topography of containment – not as impervious enclosure, but as place of permeable boundaries and fluid movements. And the city is resonant in a more general sense, in the sense that our experience of place is an opening onto a world of depth, that solicits us through all our senses as fully embodied participants.[490] Or at least the city has the potential to do so, as long as it does not "lose its echo."

<u>Dwelling in nature</u>

To say how we might find our place in the built environment is a start, but there is a deeper question, and a more urgent one. And while it is easy to adopt polemical airs when talking about urban design, before this deeper question I feel considerably more unsure – even though, or perhaps because, it is a question that has been latent, mostly in silence, from the beginning of this project. The question concerns the fact that something is wrong with the way our species has come to live in the world.

We have been rather systematically destroying natural places across the globe, and have generally been doing so at an accelerating rate. It is now understood that a side effect of the technologization of society is the extreme alteration of the planet's climate, which is to say, the deformation, to some degree, of all of its landscapes. A recent report found that the world's total population of vertebrates had declined by over fifty percent from 1970 to 2010. If you have lived to middle age, more than half of the world's wildlife has vanished in your lifetime. It

[489] Pallasmaa, 31.
[490] The city is like food, in engaging all of our senses, and indeed the sights and smells and sounds and tastes of food cooking is central to the life of the street.

seems panglossian to conclude anything from such facts but that the natural world is in the process of being rapidly obliterated. How decadent will our philosophy seem to the future (such as it may be), if it does not become centrally concerned with this fact?

On the other hand, what is there to say? One way to go wrong here would be to try to deduce normative implications from an ontology of the flesh, or from the solicitous nature of place, or whatever the case may be. This typical philosophical gambit gets the direction of causation backwards: our values are not derived from our ontological concepts; those concepts are projections of our values. As Toadvine says, "To use either a scientific or an ontological description as the basis for norms of human behavior is fundamentally to misunderstand the kinds of questions posed by science, ontology, and ethics."[491] There is no elegant solution to the puzzle waiting to be drawn from a pristine ontology by a clever mind. And yet if an ontology is an expression of values, then to work it out is potentially to become more attentive to those values, to what they are and to how they might help us to gain a fuller meaning through the manner in which we inhabit the world. As Toadvine also says, "If our being is an expressive fold of the world's flesh, then this celebration of the perceived is never the attainment of coincidence or stasis, but instead the ever-renewed bringing to voice of what the things of the world strive, in the ferment of their silence, to say."[492] No philosophy can tell us how to listen to the world. But if our ears are open, perhaps it can help to give the world its voice.

So: no tidy resolution to environmental crisis will be proposed here. But maybe I will try to voice one final thought, a rather modest one, which is this: as bleak as the moment may seem, we don't know what might happen. Because what depth is there in the natural world, a world of which we are a possibility? We can't ever know this depth fully, a depth that is the element of our own existence, and so we can't ever know what it might solicit us to become, and the ways nature might become expressive through us. But we can choose to listen to this silence, these resonances that wait for expression, that wait to be borne into thought. A happy outcome is in no way foreordained. But our possibilities for inhabitation, for dwelling in the world, re-work themselves with a propulsive force that can hardly be reckoned. Some

[491] Toadvine, 133.
[492] Ibid., 135.

movement of thought was nascent on some primeval landscape, some possibility erupted from a schism in things to re-articulate everything around. The landscape birthed a thought that overran the landscape in turn, a daunting power unleashed. But this was no lapsarian moment; it was nature become expressive, nature spontaneously re-making itself into a dynamism, a self-exultance from a silence that began to speak itself. We don’t know how it might yet find expression. We are always at the beginning.

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