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DELEUZE, RUYER AND BECOMING-BRAIN: THE MUSIC OF LIFE'S TEMPORALITY

Elizabeth Grosz

The isolation of individuals ought not to deceive us:
something flows on *underneath* individuals—
Nietzsche¹

There is a genealogy that runs from Henri Bergson's account of the relation between matter and the indeterminacy of life that is sharpened, elaborated, and transformed in the work of Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944), Gilbert Simondon (1924–1989) and Raymond Ruyer (1902–1987). This genealogy elaborates man, not as a special kind of being—conscious, rational, self-reflective, world-building—but as a striving animal whose becoming coincides with and develops the openness of matter, capitalizing on and opening out the form-taking qualities of the material universe to direct life internally. It is a line of thought that insists on the temporality and spatiality that produces subjects and objects, a genealogy of the temporality of becoming. This tradition culminates and finds its latest inflection in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Here I want here to look at the time of the genesis of life, the ways in which living beings of all kinds produce themselves. There is something very peculiar about the processes that create new forms of life from existing forms of life and from the ongoing encounters a milieu or environment provokes, something that eludes many scientific and especially biological representations of growth, something that philosophy may help to elucidate in understanding the time of life, even if it moves beyond (while also including) the time of *our* (all-too-human) lives.

Life is not self-subsistent; yet it is self-producing. These are its two limits: life requires both other life and forms of the non-living. It requires a series of techniques that transform what its milieu provides into the forms of *internal* resonance and cohesion that enable it to form itself, to act and to become from within. What are the self-forming capacities of life; and how do these capacities rely on, harness and transform the qualities

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of a milieu made up of events as much as of objects, into the conditions of life and its transformations? What emergent and self-forming properties of materiality enable and intensify the emergent and self-forming properties of living beings?

Uexküll, Simondon and Ruyer offer a new understanding of biology as a process of bodily form-taking that relies on the form-taking qualities of inorganic existence. Life protracts, extends and transforms some the qualities of inorganic matter into its own organic conditions; and in turn, life adds to materiality the conditions of virtuality or becoming—otherwise that the material universe already contains but cannot directly express. It will be my claim here that materiality, bare matter, matter not in its simplified form but before being animated by life, is nevertheless always involved in and invested by *incorporeal forces*, forces of potential sense, forces of virtual significance that living bodies, in elaborating their own ends or finality, affirm and develop.

Matter, through their work, can be understood as *more than* material for it always already contains within its chemical and physical bonds, within its very atomic and sub-atomic structure, the conditions for the eruption of life. Life is a form of finality, a form of goal-directedness and form-taking that is open-ended, in which the future cannot be contained in or inferred from the past. There is a continuity between the inorganic and the organic that enables the organic to emerge—evolutionarily—from the inorganic, a becoming-immaterial or -incorporeal, a becoming-idea of matter itself that foreshadows and anticipates the life that erupts from it. But we can understand this continuity only to the extent that materiality is not reduced to objects alone but also includes events, processes and relations, a materiality conceived beyond any positivism.

Uexküll, Simondon and Ruyer share, among other things, a common series of opponents, those committed to mechanism, reductionism, cognitivism, whether at a genetic, biological or neurological level. Each, in different ways, orients his work through a concept of finalism, a goal-directedness, a design, whether that of the material world or of living things. Each elaborates a paradoxical—at least in terms of dualism—excess of materiality, an excess that enables ideality, meaning, sense, direction, purpose, not to be imposed on matter (by mind) but to be extracted from it. Each addresses a trace, a small film of the ideal as it inheres in the material—Deleuze refers to the incorporeal as a ‘shadow’ or ‘mist’, sense adhering to the surface of events². Life is the open-ended but ordered capitalization of this inherence of the ideal in the material, an inherence severed by Plato and rendered dual by Descartes, where the two terms are now established in two different realms. It is the peculiar bonding or subsistence of the incorporeal in the material that gives it the possibility of extending in indefinitely as many directions as there are events and the forms of life supported by them. The tiniest indeterminacy or excess enables the elaboration of endless possibilities of meaning-something and of meaning-otherwise.

The smallest element of indetermination within matter itself, perhaps its sub-atomic components, or more likely, the string-like oscillations that link the sub-atomic to the molecular world, are the very movements that produce the chemicals that produce objects and, in the long run, living subjects and their modes of collective organization. Uexküll, Simondon and Ruyer are interested, each in his own way, in the open movements of forces, before they have formed into objects and relations, systems or forms of order; each is interested in what their potentials are, in what they make possible, that is, the virtual. In a sense, this is a kind of Umwelt or environment not only for living beings, as Uexküll has convincingly argued, but also for subatomic particles.³ It is from the instability of the relation between cosmos and particle, of Umwelt and living being, of the world and its excesses, that creates the conditions that enable beings to emerge from a pure becoming. Simondon claims that material arrangements and the alignment of various forces in relations of tension provoke invention, generating problems for which certain kinds of order and organization are working solutions.

This is the real, the universe in its unordered givenness, what Simondon calls ‘the preindividual’.⁴ What is given are singularities, specificities, tendencies, forces but not yet modes of ordering and organizing them into systems, levels, dimensions or orders. Chaos. A plethora of events without outline, distinction, discernability. Such matter is precisely not formless, pure unformed matter waiting for the Idea to take on form. Rather matter is multi-formed, overdetermined, indeterminate, for it has the potential or virtuality, the capacity, to take on a

number of forms, not an unlimited capacity, but a capacity by virtue of and limited to its singularities.

The smallest element of indetermination within matter itself, perhaps its sub-atomic components or the string-like oscillations that link the sub-atomic to the molecular world, are the very movements that produce the chemicals that produce objects and, in the long run, living subjects and their modes of organization. These theorists are interested in precisely the openness of forces before they have formed into objects and relations, what their potentials are, and what they make possible, that is, the virtual. It is the instability of the relation between cosmos and particle—and Umwelt and living being—that creates the conditions for the emergence of beings from pure becoming. Events provoke invention, generating problems for which certain kinds of order and organization are working solutions. Life cleaves to matter, elaborating and contracting matter, bringing to life the virtualities within the material in unknown directions. Life emerges as a becoming-concept, a becoming-thought or—as a consciousness, a becoming-brain.⁵

Raymond Ruyer, described by Deleuze as “the latest of Leibniz’s great disciples”⁶, the latest theorist of the monad, is among the lesser-known figures Deleuze uses throughout his writings. It is largely through Deleuze’s use of Ruyer’s work, especially in *What is Philosophy?*, that Ruyer is experiencing something of a new audience interested in his contributions to reconfiguring matter so that it can more adequately understand the self-forming properties of life. This crucial transition and ongoing relation between matter and life remains one of the central questions he addresses and one of the reasons his work may be worth a more detailed exploration.

These self-forming properties are, for Ruyer, perhaps most clearly exhibited in the equipotentiality of the embryo which, without a brain or central nervous system, without limbs or organs, without ‘knowledge’ as such, can create a brain and/ or central nervous, limbs and/ or organs for itself. Perhaps one of Ruyer’s most startling claims is that this equipotentiality also marks the brain, or those functions that operate as a brain, reflexes and instincts, modes of addressing the Umwelt of a living being from within life, all processes of becoming-brain.

As Deleuze claims, taking up Ruyer’s understanding: “the brain’s the hidden side of all circuits, and these can allow the most basic conditioned reflexes to prevail, as well as leaving room for more creative tracings, less ‘probable’ links”⁷. The brain is a site for the transition between the inside and the outside of an organism, a way in which a living being receives information from its Umwelt, but also above all the way in which it acts on an outside: “...the brain’s precisely this boundary of a continuous two-way movement between an Inside and Outside, this membrane between them... I think subjectification, events and brains are more or less the same thing”⁸. There is a becoming-brain in all life to the extent that life is a trajectory in which its outside is more and more closely approximated through the formation of an inside, a resonance, disparation or becoming that orients life more and more to the forces, even the immaterial or incorporeal forces that inhere in matter.

For Deleuze, Ruyer’s work provides us with a new way of understanding life, and the brain itself, as immediate self-proximity,⁹ a direct contact or self-survey (an auto-overflight), a form of self-awareness without distance or a supplementary viewing dimension, which enables us to develop a new understanding of the brain, not as the seat of consciousness, the locus of the mind, or the home of reason, but rather, as a mode of connection, one that is meandering rather than direct, mediated by circuits, capable of generation surprise.¹⁰ Self-survey enables both immediate contact with itself and its ‘components’ without distance, but also the capacity for contact with an outside that opens it up and challenges the being that has such an ‘awareness’.

The brain connects inside and outside, not directly but rhizomatically, unpredictably, creatively, through a disjunction or syncopation. Thinking involves creating new synaptic connections, new circuits, new modes of connection between different forms of action. The brain is not restricted, in the works of Ruyer or Deleuze, to higher orders of life but extends to every form. There is a mode of connection, working through various circuits that indirectly join the inside to the outside in every living thing, a brain-becoming that marks all of life. There are many different brain-becomings, and not all of them require a brain. The more attuned the inside

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and outside, the more melodic or resonant connections and lines flow between them, the less probable behavior becomes, and the more creatively life elaborates itself.

This fundamentally creative capacity of the brain, a capacity to disconnect determinisms and to establish unpredictabilities (basically this is Bergson's understanding of the brain) is no less creative than the organism that creates the brain, the embryo. It is this creative and above all self-creative ability, an ability that is linked to material and biological orders, that marks the embryos of every species.¹¹ The embryo is itself a becoming-brain, a fundamentally inventive capacity for new connections between inside and outside, a pure form of connectedness even if the embryo itself is entirely focused within, on the task of self-production. (This focus on the embryo could easily open up Ruyer's work to a new kind of feminism, one focused on the maternal conditions for the embryo, that is, the embryo's preindividual. The maternal function is itself the provision of space, time, housing and nutrition, taken from and within the maternal body, that enables an embryo to create itself¹².)

Ruyer suggests that the embryo's capacity to form itself and the brain's capacity to think itself are possible only because there is an opening, a sense or direction, within materiality that life capitalizes on and converts to its own interests. For him (and following him, Deleuze), there are many things which have a brain and which are self-forming—not only embryos, but also ideas, bodies, organs, cells, art works, scientific theories, atoms and even photons—all primary beings. Because the living being is defined in relation to its *Umwelt*, its behaviour can be said to have an end or finality, a tune to be performed. This is certainly not an essence or a *telos*, but rather a functionality. Such a functionality could never be possible unless the living being finds in the non-living world, the conditions and forces which enable its self-differentiation from the world.

Taken out of its environment, an animal will do whatever it can to restore its *Umwelt*, to restore the theme its organs perform. Ruyer mentions the anteater, which can only access its prey through its funnel-trap: the food must slide down the length of the funnel for it to be consumable. Its food-tone must be indirect, mediated by the funnel. Its body performs the melody of the ants it consumes, a melody of which it has no consciousness, but which its body acts, a melody in part connected to the poisonous sting of the ants, which the anteater avoids through the use of its funnel.¹³ Each living being is a consummate performer of a melodic line that comes from the world in which it lives. For Ruyer, the knowledge of how to build a nest or migrate across vast continents, instinct, is not mechanical or determined but involves a nuanced interpretation of signs, as Uexküll claimed, as well as the capacity to act in inventive ways with these interpretations and to restore these (bodily) interpretive capacities when there is a disruption. For Ruyer, an animal has a world, an *Umwelt* within which it acts, and which gives its acts value, and enables their performance to serve certain ends.¹⁴ All forms of life share with the smallest components of matter the capacity for a consciousness, for immediate self-awareness and self-constitution. Indeed it is because there are already forms of consciousness at the very level of the atom itself that life is made possible.

For Ruyer, an atom is “not a structure” but “a *structuring activity*”, and when atoms combine to form a molecule, “the connecting and interacting electrons are not localizable”¹⁵. In a sense, the atom and its particles are a consciousness, a being that makes for itself a space and time, unlike molecules, which are structures, made from particular alignments of atoms, the external connections between atoms. A molecule is a secondary being, where the atom, and even its ingredients, are primary beings. The atom is an embryo, a brain, elaborating itself, in immediate self-proximity, literally a kind of elementary consciousness.¹⁶

It is the embryonic nature of the atom, which for Ruyer is primary or true form, form that does not refer to any external viewpoint, and thus is a person, consciousness or subject long before there are human persons, and that conditions the eruption of life, which carries within it in its variety not only the open-ended atom and some of its possible material configurations, but also the plan, score or finality, mode of connection with this material universe that life must accomplish and which is its generic becoming-membrane, becoming-brain. Ruyer affirms that his concept of life comes “directly from microphysics”.¹⁷

In Ruyer's understanding, sub-atomic particles have a primary consciousness, an immediate self-perception or self-survey, an overflight without distance, immediately in touch with itself and its Umwelt, which in the case of the particle, includes not only the other particles comprising the atom but perhaps the entirety of all particles, the universe itself. Like the embryo, the brain or any living thing, sub-atomic particles act their being, perceive themselves, form and maintain themselves. They have true form, that is, self-proximity without an outside position. They do not require an external perception—we know that any external perception, the mere existence of an external viewer transforms the particle's position or speed. Yet they must perceive themselves from within, without perspective. They are the lowest level of the Uexküllian 'person' or Simondonian 'individual' or agent, not because they act but because they also produce the conditions under which their action is possible, and their action is induced from the capacities generated in their self-formation. Life, a sort of life, the smallest opening of indetermination, operates all through the universe in its very constituents. The smallest atom and the most simple cell, participate in life, creating a consciousness without identity.¹⁸

The atom is a mode of becoming-brain, the creation of an interior, a becoming-alive, a kind of consciousness.¹⁹ It is primary being, true form, immediate self-survey, an absolute domain, from which secondary beings—that is, aggregates and populations of primary beings—are formed. Aggregates, crowds, populations, are thus *structures* rather than primary forms, and they are the continuing object of mechanistic sciences. All primary beings, from sub-atomic particles to living beings, are the centers of finalist activity, which is to say that they are beings in absolute self-survey; and they are directed to internal ends or goals. Secondary beings, collections or accumulations of primary being, on the contrary, obey statistical laws and function according to mechanical causality. Primary beings can be understood as conscious of themselves; while secondary beings can only be understood from outside, through numerical calculations. Primary being is thus a center of finalist activity, a unity that cannot be identified with substance or pure materiality, one which requires a metaphysical or trans-versal cutting, an adherence of sense, a form-making that is an ideal director, organizing life or its atomic pre-conditions according to a theme. This means that a subject, whether a personal subject or an impersonal force, is not only in direct contact with an Umwelt, but also with a kind of metabiological thematic realm, the order of mnemonic themes that is trans-spatial, but not Platonic or unchanged, fixed in advance. This metabiological theme is the pattern that the organism transforms through its modes of acting, the transgenerational movement that connects the forms and activities of those within species: "The organism forms itself with risks and perils; it is not formed. ... The living being forms itself directly according to the theme, without the theme having first to become idea-image and represented model"²⁰.

The mnemonic order, of which individuals are only a temporary eruption, is a species-memory that guides embryos in their ongoing formation and that precede and make species possible. This memory cannot be reduced to the genome, which, like the strings of a piano, are the mechanisms by which a musical theme is played rather than the theme itself. The mnemonic theme is trans-spatial, species have forms and activities to actualize, to cohere, to organize, a finality that cannot be regarded as an essence but rather as a theme, a coordination to bind together form and force. The tune each individual plays is not only that organized by its Umwelt, but also that which its organic history, the memory of its species have developed. Each living being not only creates a memory, as Bergson suggests. It is also the *result* of memory, of a mnemonic theme, an extra-material organization of matter: "Memory is not the property of bodies. Bodies, or what appear as "bodies," are the property of memory."²¹

The mnemonic themes that make up the finality of living beings sub-atomic forces, while they cannot be considered unchanging *a priori* themes, are nevertheless trans-spatial and non-temporal. They are not unchanging—on the contrary, they are open to almost infinite modifications and variations or improvisations—but they are not historical or able to be located in a definite space and time. The anteater may have many forms—no two are alike!—but these are all forms of a discernable species pattern whose limits are unknowable. These themes represent an invisible world, a pattern beyond perception, one that indeed makes perception possible, discernable only with higher orders of emergence.

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This is why perception is so significantly different from self-survey. Perception requires an external perspective, and in many cases, it requires actual physical distance, as in the case of seeing and hearing; it addresses objects that can be positioned side-by-side; and it requires a delimitable field within which these objects are positioned. Perception maps the structures of a geometrical space, a space that is infinitely divisible, a space that can only be perspectively addressed. What Ruyer is concerned with is a metaphysical or embryological space that makes up the interior, which requires and can provide no external distance, which is not divisible into parts, and has no edges and is thus not determined in relation to a field.²² Memory, biological or atomic memory, is the invisible, non-localizable melody, a memory that is topological rather than locatable, whose themes enable primary forms to form themselves in space and time according to certain configurations and limits.²³

This unlivable memory of the species, the inaudible themes that make and regulate living bodies, are the directions or orders, the temporality, of formation and functioning that enable the individual members of species to form themselves and once formed, to act, and to do so in the distinctive ways that represent the actions, potentially all of them, of their species. Species act from instincts, memories and indeed values that are real but that precedes any of the individuals who express them. They are not real entities but themes, traces, hauntings from past species that must be improvised on by the actions of living beings. This makes these themes adverbial rather than substantive, something to be acted rather than discovered.²⁴

Ruyer connects the operation of single-celled organisms with that of the embryo or brain: these organisms have no separate organs, no neither hands nor eyes. Yet they are nevertheless able to form 'extremities' or pseudopods, a mouth, stomach and rectum for themselves. Such organisms are able to make themselves the organs they require. Like the embryo, the brain exists as a "dark vision"²⁵, or a "dark consciousness"²⁶. It is a primary consciousness, not of objects, as phenomenology suggests, but of itself in its immediacy. The protozoon is the primary consciousness of organic form, but it is not a consciousness of itself as an object or subject of a certain kind: it exists in a mode of 'self-enjoyment,' incapable of perception and thus a direction to its outside, it is largely directed to its own internal operations. Its consciousness is without a "subject-individual who would be the proprietor of the consciousness"²⁷, a consciousness without proprietor.²⁸ The earliest stage of the embryo or the egg can be understood as a unicellular organism: both the brain of the embryo and the embryo itself act, as they begin, as unicellular organisms that creates their own organs with great focus and with little awareness of their surroundings, totally oriented to their task.²⁹

Beginning as a single-celled organism, the embryo has the peculiar ability, one that no machine has, of producing the differentiations that will create organs and the functions of respiration, nutrition, excretion and reproduction. An embryo 'knows', without a brain, how it must make itself, what form it must follow, what organs it must create. It is a consciousness, but only of how it must act. This embryogenesis is a field of 'absolute self-survey', a field with no edges or borders, requiring no external perspective, no outside eye, a field which precedes the existence of the individual but is the process of making an individual. While the embryo 'has individuality', it is not an individual, a distinct being. It knows only its own emerging absolute surfaces and nothing yet of an external world. It is entirely self-referential, even as its 'self' is not yet distinctly formed. It is a subject, an agent, an increasingly complex collective organization of the body, in the process of creating tiny apprentices that will carry on the labor of bodily production, each organ forming a world within an organism, a self or consciousness within the body: "Each organ is a small organism within an organism, And this is true at all levels—molecular, cellular, tissue, organic, in a literal sense"³⁰.

The embryo is a potential being, whose potentiality is stored not only in the mnemonic themes it re-enacts, it is also the potential for the infinite variation of these themes. As equipotential, the embryo, like the forming brain, is capable for forming itself even if drastic lesions and external interferences interrupt the melody. Equipotentiality implies that the part can stand in for the whole. It is a quality not only of the embryo (and we now understand, of stem cells) but also of the brain: one part can deputize for another. Following Uexküll, Ruyer cites the experiments of Hans Driesch, who cut in half the embryos of sea urchins, producing a full urchin, though of a

smaller size.³¹ These experiments demonstrate that the embryo is not a physical or geometric surface, capable of being divided into separable parts, but a metaphysical surface, an absolute surface that is fully aware of itself and reconstitutes itself, its theme, as much as possible in the event of drastic external interventions or internal disruptions. Ruyer uses Driesch to show the embryo's organic tune even as its development is interrupted. The tune precedes its performance, and the beings-to-become who perform it. The embryo, intent on its own formation, continues this process even in the midst of dramatic interruptions. Even if damaged or wounded, it continues to make itself. Ruyer considers the embryo as an organ that makes organs. Its organs are evoked only through the collective or organic memory that is the theme the embryo plays.³²

All consciousness, from the atom to the unicellular organism to the embryo and the brain, has, for Ruyer, thus two conditions or factors at play: the absolute surface with which it is in direct touch without the need for organs or distance; and the mnemonic theme to be played by the organism as it forms itself. The inventiveness of the organism is its capacity to play out these mnemonic themes within the absolute surface on which it makes itself, utilizing or inducing the movement of self-formation in the direction of these themes, with them as final goal.³³

The difference between the delocalized, equipotential embryo which forms a brain, and the brain that is being formed, is the kind of relation between the inside and the outside that the brain creates. While the embryo occupies an Umwelt, whether this is the womb, a larval home or an egg, it is unaware of this milieu, focusing entirely on its processes of self-formation. As far as it is concerned, like the protozoon, it has no awareness of an exterior. By contrast, the brain operates through an absolute overview, in a perspectiveless immediacy, not only on its own form, but is directed to external forms, forms that have been illuminated and made relevant by sensory or perceptual impingements: "...in our organism there is a special region, the brain, or more precisely the cerebral cortex, where the absolute organic overview is applied not to its own form but to external forms projected onto it by sensory equipment."³⁴

The brain is an embryo that is never complete, never fully grown, an embryo with no individual as its goal, not only in touch with its current forms and its future potential, but also with the external forces that enable it to invent new circuits and pathways between the inside and the outside. The brain, like the embryo, must be in touch with not only its thematic potential but also with the resources to make this potential capable of actualization. The brain is an unfinished embryo: "the brain, in the adult organism, is an area that has remained embryonic". Hence, "the brain is an embryo that has not completed its growth. The embryo is a brain, which begins to organize itself before organizing the external world".³⁵

The brain enables the connections to open up between the organic, internal circuits and external circuits that mark both its behavior as a living being and the milieu or Umwelt in which it resides. It remains in touch with the metabiological themes of the organism, the tunes its body performs, but also with the spatiotemporal activities that it undertakes.³⁶ The brain is thus the conjunction of the embodied being, who lives in a specific place and time, and the thoroughly open directedness of mnemonic or incorporeal themes, the ways in which one cuts through and intervenes into the other. It exists as it were mid-way between material objects and incorporeal themes, inventing ways to connect them, a truly rhizomatic organism within the organism.³⁷

For Deleuze, as for Ruyer, life and matter are not two orders, two forms or organisations of materiality, but rather, two orders of consciousness, two forms of becoming-brain, two modes of connectivity or types of relation. Life is the dilation of the smallest and most contracted forms of material indeterminacy, a mode of form-making and organ-making that insinuates itself into materiality and converts itself into a determinate body, and with this body, into determinate action.

These questions have fascinated Deleuze from his earliest writings, but become the object of direct speculation above all, in *What Is Philosophy?*, and especially in its enigmatic conclusion, "From Chaos to the Brain". In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze is preoccupied with the paradoxical concept of the incorporeal, with a logic of sense that must be distinguished from the logic of things, not to be identified with an inaccessible world of

forms far away from and transcending material objects and their arrangements, but an *incorporeal surface* that coats things and events, that provides them with sense, and opens up the world of the counterfactual, the virtual, to material relations. Sense exists in language, in propositions, but language and propositions are only possible to the extent that sense inheres or subsists in things and their relations, hovering on their edge. The materiality of objects, events and relations does not produce an emergent order of sense, for sense always already inheres in, floats over and covers, things and relations.³⁸ This is why things and their relations, events and their transformations, are expressible, capable of generating ideas, concepts, sensations and representations. It is because things are always more than themselves, having a surfeit of sense, an added dimension of meaningfulness, that life is possible, and orients itself to the interpretation of sense, to the transformation of objects into signals and signs. Sense is what links things and language, what floats between them, making propositions possible, but also enabling meaningful, directed or purposive behavior. There can be no event without the inherence of a sense. Sense is extra-being, a phantasm, a dimension of being-otherwise, the conversion of an alignment of objects into events.³⁹ The incorporeal is the lining of things in their connection with other things that enables them to change, to reorient and reorder themselves with new singularities, new directions. It is the virtual counter-weight to the force of the present.

This inherence of the incorporeal within corporeal alignments, of sense mediating the proposition and the event, occupying the outside of the states of affairs and the inside of the propositions which express them, the thin layer that comes between events and their expression attests to something that is neither thing nor language, which is the condition of their divergence and their connections. Sense or the incorporeal, is the charge of openness or indeterminacy that inheres in events and refuses to allow events to be reduced to the objects and spatio-temporal relations which comprise them. Sense is what enables the animal to see in its *Umwelt* what it requires for its existence, not just objects, but objects which are more than themselves, objects that become meaningful for it.

Deleuze insists on the extra-being of sense, sense not in opposition to matter, but as its very excess. Matter is more than material, for it is always already immersed in sense, the condition of its becoming-other, the condition of its brain-becoming. The material universe coincides with the universe of sense, even if no single sense can adhere to any particular object. The world of materiality is layered by the dimension of sense without any life-form imposing sense on it. Rather, they extract sense, seek signs, and become more and more attuned to material configurations, cleaving to the virtualities that inhere in materiality. Life erupts from matter's particular singularities; but it also converts materiality into a world of objects, entities, things. Matter and life are not dualities, but two tendencies or directions of force, inward and outward, two types of event, one the condition of the other.

In *What is Philosophy?*, Deleuze and Guattari direct themselves to rethinking the brain. If concepts, affects and percepts, the objects of philosophy, art and science respectively—and each primary beings in immediate self-proximity, as Ruyer claims—address chaos and attempt to extract an order or sense from it, then the brain, or various brain-becomings, characterize the relations between life and matter. It is the brain that mediates between the interiority that constitutes all forms life and the outside, chaos, matter plus and as sense, within which life is lived. This is not the brain as an organ, seat of consciousness or the place primarily occupied with ideas that interests Deleuze and Guattari, but rather, the idea of the brain as subject, the brain that thinks, perceives and feels (itself and its milieu). The subject is not defined as that which has a brain; rather, the brain is a subject, one of a number of subjects but nevertheless a special kind of subject that occupies each living being.

Deleuze and Guattari posit the brain as that which becomes subject, a force that connects inside and outside not only through cerebral circuits but above all through its capacity to access the incorporeal and to convert it into concepts, affects and percepts, and to use these forces, captured from chaos that contract and resonate to contain and frame chaos. They make chaos livable by producing the sense-bubbles, thought-bubbles and action-bubbles that life uses to access that fragment or sliver of the world, the *Umwelt*, in which it lives.⁴⁰

They suggest that this brain is precisely the brain as embryo that Ruyer has analyzed. With its synaptic connections and disconnections, its undulations, folds and fissures, the brain is a series of processes that, while it can be viewed as a certain material configuration, a network of neuronal connections, must nevertheless be understood as primary or true form, engagement with itself that exists without any perspective on or perception of itself, connecting the inside of the organism to its outside, the Umwelt. There is no “I” beyond the brain, supervising its activities, directing them from perception to action for the “I” is the activity of connection that is the brain.⁴¹

Like the embryo with both its capacity for equipotentiality and self-survey, the brain is form in itself rather than form perceived, requiring a perceiver behind it or framing it. It has a capacity to disperse itself and yet remain in immediate touch with itself, at absolute speed and with all of itself simultaneously. Like the sub-atomic particle! For Deleuze and Guattari, the brain is not just a property of vertebrates, an acquisition of higher beings in their evolutionary march, but a property of materiality itself that all living beings capitalize on in their different ways. Every concept, affect or percept, that is, every mode of affecting and being affected, every mode of living, is itself a microbrain, a state of self-survey without distance, a mode of matter-idea that knows itself from the inside. They insist that the concept cannot be identified as a brain (“Nor will we say that every concept is a brain”⁴²), but they claim that all concepts, affects and percepts are brain-becomings, forms of self-survey, contractions of the external world in touch with the inside of living forms, something that suffuses all forms of life insofar as they are all the benefactors of this excess of matter within materiality.

Not only are all higher vertebrates engaged in a process of brain-becoming, even plants, rocks, and crystals are part of a process of becoming-brain to the extent that they contract within their boundaries forces that are outside them, and insofar as they constitute a mode of self-survey or immediate proximity. This constitutes a world of things and events, along with living beings, becoming-brain, becoming-thought:⁴³ “Not every organism has a brain, and not all life is organic, but everywhere there are forces that constitute microbrains, or an inorganic life of things.”⁴⁴

Through the quite peculiar yet challenging work of Uexküll, Simondon and Ruyer, Deleuze and Guattari have come to a paradoxical position. They invoke a materiality that now must have an idealist dimension, just as they create a concept of life that is largely inorganic. Matter must be understood outside itself, through the sense, the ideality, that inheres in its most minute operations; and equally, life must be understood as outside itself, even though it must also be understood as that which produces an interiority for itself, for it is only possible and capable of functioning creatively through the indeterminacy and openness of the materiality which sustains and surrounds it. Matter ‘lives’ through the capacity for being-otherwise, that is, for becoming-other, a brain-becoming; and life materializes itself through the inventiveness, the surprise, that it brings back to the world in which it lives, through its extension and expression through matter. Each is a becoming-brain, the drawing together of forces that constitute boundaries, forms of connection and forms of self-transformation. Each is a form of materialism that moves beyond matter and a mode of finality, in which an ideal or a tendency, a direction or goal can be discerned. Each is a becoming-brain in the sense that the brain is the site for the entwined connections between and transformations of the inside and the outside. The brain is the way that the outside folds into an inside, but equally the way in which interiority is folded out into exteriority, the point of transition from the one to the other and thus the condition for the creative connections between them.

ELIZABETH GROSZ is the Jean Fox O’Barr Women’s Studies Professor in Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, Duke University. She worked for many years in the Department of General Philosophy at the University of Sydney before she moved into the Department of Critical and Cultural Studies at Monash University and then to the Women’s and Gender Studies Department at Rutgers University. She is the author of *Chaos, Territory, Art. Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (Columbia University Press, 2008) and has written widely on French Philosophy.

DELEUZE, RUYER AND BECOMING-BRAIN

NOTES

1. Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vantage Books, 1968, 365.
2. Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*. Trans. Mark Lester with Charles Stivale. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, 19–22.
3. See Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*. Trans. Joseph D. O’Neil. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010, for a further elaboration of the concept of Umwelt and its provocations for the attunement of life.
4. See Simondon, 1994; as well as the special issue of *Parrhesia* on Simondon, Vol. 7, 2009.
5. As Deleuze claims, taking up Ruyer’s understanding: “the brain’s the hidden side of all circuits, and these can allow the most basic conditioned reflexes to prevail, as well as leaving room for more creative tracings, less ‘probable’ links.” (Gilles Deleuze. *Negotiations 1972–1990*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997)
6. Gilles Deleuze. *The Fold. Leibniz and the Baroque*. Trans. Tom Conley. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 102.
7. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 61.
8. Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 176.
9. See Paul Bains (2001 and 2002) for an elaboration of this crucial concept.
10. “Our current inspiration doesn’t come from computers but from the microbiology of the brain: the brain’s organized like a rhizome, more like grass than a tree, an uncertain system, with probabilistic, semi-aleatory, quantum mechanisms. It’s not that our thinking starts from what we know about the brain but that any new thought traces uncharted channels directly through its matter, twisting, folding, fissuring it.” (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *What Is Philosophy?* Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchill. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, 149)
11. As E. W. F Tomlin explains, in terms that are remarkably like Deleuze’s:

The consequence of diverting the internal circuit outside the body is the formation of an external circuit. Now this external circuit is circuitous because, however extravagant its passage, it must link up eventually with the internal circuit. Indeed it must be perpetually so linking up. The juncture in question is the brain. The brain, in other words, is that part of the nervous system in which the internal circuit is transformed into an external circuit... Thought, intelligence, or consciousness does not come into being with the brain. It is already in being, if in less complex or sophisticated forms. By changing its direction, the brain serves to continue while augmenting the power of consciousness. To modify a remark of Bergson, the brain is the means whereby the body ‘lives outside itself’.

Living and Knowing. London: Faber and Faber, 1955, 134.

12. See Luce Irigaray’s writing on the placenta in *Je, Tu, Nous: Towards a Culture of Difference*. London: Routledge, (1993).
13. “If the animal is artificially removed [from] its ecological niche, it immediately makes an effort to recover its world. People have taken for reflexes or for mechanical and meaningless tropism what in reality is an animal’s instinctive behavior as it seeks to re-establish its ecological norm. This does not mean, of course, that the animal is clearly aware of this norm but only that its activity has, in fact, an over-all theme. From this point of view, tropisms and reflexes are but products of the laboratory-artificial segmentations of a behavior the meaning of which is immediately apparent if one observes the animal in or near its natural environment, its *Umwelt*, or vital domain.” Ruyer, “The Vital Domain of Animals and the Religious World of Man.” *Diogenes* 5 (June 1957, 36).
14. “Of all Bergson’s theses, none was more criticized than that of the instinct-intuition... it is perfectly clear in any case that any bird that nests or emigrates is a skilled breeder and traveler, for whom the slightest sensorial signs reveal a whole world; it is evident that any bee is a skilful reaper and an even more skilful breeder; that any animal that breeds and hatches demonstrates thus that, in one way or another, it “knows” the embryology of its species and the anatomy and physiology of its partner.
- Of course an animal is not aware of the total meaning of its acts; but such acts would not be possible if the animal’s fragmentary awareness did not go beyond crude observation and if the egg, for instance, merely represented a rounded form for the animal and not “an object to hatch” or “an object to take back to the nest.” The objects of its *Umwelt* are signals, challenging patterns. They are not the mechanical causes of its behavior. An animal does not function; it acts.” (Ruyer, “*The Vital Domain*”, 40).
15. Raymond Ruyer. *La Gèneses des Formes Vivantes*. Paris: Flammarion, 1956, 58.
16. “The new physics of the twentieth century, since Max Planck, has abandoned this idea [of a deterministic, predictable world]. A machine, in general, functions, an atom or particles are not machines whose parts can be localized. Hence these do not function. They are “made” in space and time. A living creature, and similarly a group of living creatures, can function, but only inasmuch as they resemble a machine. But they, too, are “made,” first as seed and embryo, and then in their own resourceful behavior, their actions as such.” Raymond Ruyer, “The Status of the Future and the Invisible World.” Trans. R. Scott Walker. *Diogenes* 2 (1980, 37).

17. "The fundamental paradox, which is the origin of all the others, is that a domain of primary consciousness is in 'absolute survey'—that is to say without any need of an external scanning—that it possesses a kind of *autovision without gaze*. This character has no analogy in classical physics, but it does in microphysics because the domains of consciousness come directly from microphysics, which are already in autosurvey... It is very difficult to admit that a protoplasm, a molecular edifice, an embryo, an organic tissue or a cortex, are conscious of themselves (possess their own form) before becoming, by added modulation, conscious of the form of other beings, and without being obliged to pass by this detour." Ruyer, *Paradoxes de la conscience et limites de l'automatisme*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1966, 167.

18. "There is no reason to deny to our non-cortical cells, even if they have no nervous system, a subjectivity, primary consciousness, self-survey, the *self-enjoyment* of their own form. 'I' don't participate in this *self-enjoyment* because 'I' am specialized in sensory consciousness." Ruyer, *Néo-finalisme*. Paris: PUF, 1952, 104.

19. As Deleuze affirms, the atom, particles of all kinds, bear this primary form, self-enjoyment, which thus ripples from the inorganic world to mark the organic:

Every time that we have attributable individual beings that are not content with mere functioning, but that are endlessly 'being formed', these true forms do not only apply to living organisms, but to physical and chemical particles, to molecules, atoms and photons. Although the inner variety of forms accounts for difference between the organic and the inorganic, the question does not thus concern a matter of vitalism. No matter what, genuine or absolute forms are primary forms, essentially individual and active primary unities, that actualize a virtuality or a potential, and that are in harmony with each other without any one being determined by any other... (Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*, 103)

20. Ruyer, *Genèse*, 261–2.

21. Ruyer Raymond, "The Status of the Future", 37.

"The swimming movements of a fish, a reptile or a swimming mammal are not a series of local reflexes. It has been proven that they depend on a unitary theme of swimming, for this theme of swimming already appears in the embryo, even before the members that execute it are completely formed." (Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 42)

22. "It is a surface seized in all its details, without a third dimension. It is an 'absolute surface', that is not relative to any point of view exterior to itself, which knows itself without observing itself." (Ruyer, *Néo-Finalisme*, 98)

23. "Every authentic form is in time as well as in space. It subsists in time by translating a potential, of itself untemporal, into space. Embryogenesis is mnemonic. The potential is a memory... There is no individualizing entelechy. The life-giving breath is organic memory. If there is a breath, it is more like the action of a theater prompter, which is nothing more than the memory of the species." (Ruyer, *Néo-Finalisme*, 32)

24. "Instinct, memory, values, are real (in the widest sense and excluding etymology) these forms of reality are knowable, they are sources of information, without being "real objects," which may be referred to substantively, located in space, and which emit photons. Their reality is always adverbial. An animal acts instinctively, it is informed by a specific instinctive participation: it never consults something called the "instinct." Man speaks his mother tongue mnemonically, without having to consult his memory as if it were an inner grammar or dictionary. Man acts, thinks, and creates validly, veraciously, aesthetically, without aiming at a "substantive" value (such as Beauty, Goodness, Truth) which would be very awkward and at the same very pedantic, and would risk making his efforts sterile." Raymond Ruyer. "Dialectic Aspects of Belief." Trans. S.J. Greenleaves. *Diogenes* 15:60 (1967, 78).

25. Ruyer, *Néo-Finalisme*, 26.

26. Ruyer, *Néo-Finalisme*, 27.

27. Ruyer, *Néo-Finalisme*, 29.

28. "In the young embryo everything is as yet undifferentiated, as in a unicellular organism: the cells are at the same time capable of reproduction and of self-guidance. In the same way a single cell is entirely its own brain, it is entirely gamete of itself. It is also its own body (in the sense of the whole of the auxiliary organs). The same is true for a young embryo. But an embryo, with the difference of the protozoan, knows how to manufacture itself by making use of itself, of its massive organs of behavior as well as of its massive organs of reproduction, utilizable by those of its own cells that are kept at its disposal for improvisations in 'absolute surface'." (Raymond Ruyer, "The Mystery of Reproduction and the Limits of Automatism." *Diogenes* (December 12 1964, 62).

29. "An egg, an embryo in its initial stage, acts like a unicellular entity. It deforms itself with regard to its overall form: an absolute overview (that is, an overview without a point of external overview, which would be perpendicular to the surface or the volume), this 'paradoxical' overview (paradoxical for us), is the very fact that the unicellular entity or the young embryo is not a point or a series of points, but a delocalized form that is 'seen' (with quotation marks), but which is not seen (without quotation marks)." Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 25.

30. Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 43. Ruyer says: "This subjective "individuality" without subject normally distributes itself into sub-individualities, into a multitude of secondary and tertiary craftsmen who are responsible for forming particular

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organs. The craftsman does not distribute the work. 'He' distributes himself into a multitude of apprentices up to the terminal mosaic in which the specialization of the 'apprentices' is pushed to the point that they seem 'mechanized'. As if the painting crumbled of itself by recruiting thousands of 'tiny craftsmen' to complete the details." Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 31. For further details, see Hans Driesch. *The Science and Philosophy of the Organism*. London: A&C Black, 1929.

32. See also Paul Bains, "Subjectless Subjectivities" in *A Shock to Thought. Expression After Deleuze and Guattari*. Ed. Brian Massumi. London: Routledge, 2002, 111–112; and Bains, *The Primacy of Semiosis. An Ontology of Relations*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

33. "Consciousness, all consciousness—biological, embryonic or cortical—can thus be analyzed into two elements: a 'black' board as an 'absolute surface' or a 'competent' area before an evocative induction—and a 'theme' evoked or evocable, a mnemonic theme or problem theme, arriving from a region 'perpendicular' to this blackboard." Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 27.

34. Ruyer, "The Status of the Future", 25–6.

35. Ruyer, *Génèse*, 73.

36. As one of Ruyer's few Anglophone interpreters, Tomlin explains the notion of the brain as pure connectivity between immediate self-enjoyment and the perception of the outside:

The brain, in other words, is that part of the nervous system in which the internal circuit is transformed into an external circuit...Thought, intelligence, or consciousness does not come into being with the brain. It is already in being, if in less complex or sophisticated forms. By changing its direction, the brain serves to continue while augmenting the power of consciousness. To modify a remark of Bergson, the brain is the means whereby the body 'lives outside itself'...Not merely must we abandon the notion of the brain as the 'origin' or 'seat' of consciousness; we must allow consciousness to exist wherever there is 'life', that is to say, in the simplest organism endowed with dynamic structure. The organism exists insofar as it realizes its form.
(*Living and Knowing*, 134–135)

37. "The recognition of a trans-spatial thematics indissolubly connected to spatio-temporal dimensions, does not mean accepting the old dualism of body and soul...The organism is not a machine *plus* a soul. Organic existence only exists dynamically in an incessant flux that, to put it simply, renews all its molecules. It is constant activity, a permanence of dynamism, and not the permanence of a material reality, informed afterwards by an ideal form." (Ruyer, *Génèse*, 244). For further detail, see Bains, 2002, 101–103 and Bains 2006, 71–4.

38. "Let us consider the complex status of sense or of that which is expressed. On the one hand, it does not exist outside the proposition which expresses it; what is expressed does not exist outside its expression. This is why we cannot say that sense exists, but rather that it inheres or subsists. On the other hand, it does not merge at all with the proposition, for it has an objective which is quite distinct. What is expressed has no resemblance whatsoever to the expression. Sense is indeed attributed, but it is not at all the attribute of a proposition—it is rather the attribute of the thing or state of affairs." (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 21)

39. "[Sense] is exactly the boundary between propositions and things. It is this *aliquid* at once extra-Being and inherence, that is, this minimum of being which befits inferences. It is in this sense that it is an 'event': *on condition that the event is not confused with its spatio-temporal realization in a state of affairs*. We will not ask therefore what is the sense of the event: the event is sense itself. (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, 22)

40. "It is the brain that thinks and not man—the latter being only a cerebral crystallization. We will speak of the brain as Cézanne spoke of the landscape: man absent from, but completely within the brain. Philosophy, art, and science are not the mental objects of an objectified brain [the brain of neurophysiology and chemistry] but the three aspects under which the brain becomes subject, Thought-brain. They are the three planes, the rafts on which the brain plunges into and confronts chaos." (Deleuze and Guattari. *What Is Philosophy?*, 210)

41. "What are the characteristics of this brain, which is no longer defined by connections and secondary integrations? 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 is primary, 'true form' as Ruyer defined it: neither a Gestalt nor a perceived form but a *form in itself* that does not refer to any external point of view, any more than the retina or striated area of the cortex refers to another retina or cortical area: it is an absolute consistent form that 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 remain copresent to all its determinations without proximity or distance, traverses them at infinite speed, without limit-speed, and which makes of them so many inseparable variations of which it confers an equipotentiality without confusion. We have seen that this was the status of the concept as pure event or reality of the virtual." (Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 210)

42. Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 211.

43. "Of course, plants and rocks do not possess a nervous system. But if nerve connections and cerebral integrations presup-

pose a brain-force as faculty of feeling coexistent with the tissues, it is reasonable to suppose also a faculty of feeling that coexists with embryonic tissues and that appears in the Species as a collective brain; or with the vegetal tissues in the 'small species' ." (Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 212)

44. Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 213.

THE BAFFLING “NATURE” OF TIME

John McCumber

Quid autem familiarius et notius in loquendo commemoramus quam tempus? Et intellegimus utique cum id loquimur, intellegimus etiam cum alio loquente id audimus. Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quærat, scio; si quærenti explicare uelim, nescio.

But what in speaking do we refer to more familiarly and knowingly than time? And certainly we understand when we speak of it; we understand also when we hear it spoken of by another. What, then, is time? If no one ask of me, I know; if I wish to explain to him who asks, I know not.¹

Asked what time is, Augustine moves from a condition of knowing to one of bafflement. The bafflement lasts as long as he “wishes” (*uelim*) to explain what time is to the person asking him. Then he reverts to his usual condition of “knowledge” of what time is. There is reason to believe that Augustine is not alone in his bafflement; the ongoing influence of his discussion of time in the *Confessions* suggests that not knowing what time is, when you are asked about it, is something others share with him.

Augustine solves his problem by defining his knowledge of time in terms of “nothing:”

Yet I say with confidence, that I know that if nothing passed away [*nihil praetererit*, nothing would move beyond] there would not be past time; and if nothing were coming [*nihil adveniret*, nothing would arrive], there would not be future time; and if nothing were, there would not be present time.

That “nothing” could move beyond something or arrive somewhere is an enticing thought reminiscent of Heidegger’s *Nichts* which *nichtet*.² But we need not yield to the enticement, because it is counterfactual for Augustine: time is not a “nothing” for him, but a something. Only so can it be the subject of an answer to the

question, what it is. But time is an odd sort of something: a something that escapes us *when we are asked about it*. Not only does time escape us, but it is itself an escaping or transgressing: it is the movement-beyond the present into the past, and the arrival-in-the present from the future.

Augustine's subsequent investigation of the nature of time presumes that these two kinds of escape are separate: that the fact that the nature of time escapes us when we are asked about it is different from the fact that something escapes the present by moving into the past, and escapes the future by arriving in the present. Augustine's perplexity when asked what time is is thus extrinsic to the nature of time. But what if we do not make that presupposition? What if the fact that the nature of time escapes us when we are asked about it informs us about the nature of time itself? What if it were "essential" to the movement of something from the future to the present, and from the present to the past that when asked about it, we suddenly do not know what that movement is? In such a case, would not time constitute itself in our bafflement at being asked what it is? Might time's nature itself be, not something that occasions bafflement, but a sort of bafflement itself?

There is the time we know and speak about; and the time we do not know and are asked about. This suggests that there is something very peculiar about being asked what time is. But maybe we should begin further back. For things in general get peculiar, I suggest, when we are asked any question whatsoever. So let us move to a meta-question, a question about questions: what is it to be asked a question?

This is not the usual meta-question. The word "question" is usually understood actively: a question is something someone *asks*. Indeed, when "question" is used as a verb, it means to ask or pose a question. From this point of view, the obvious meta-question is not, "What is it to be asked a question," but "What is it to ask a question?" Heidegger's discussion of questions at the beginning of *Being and Time* is conducted from this point of view,³ and the tactic did not originate with Heidegger. The Socratic method, after all, is called "Socratic" because he *asks* the questions.

The view that we can't understand the nature of questions by understanding what it is to ask a question, rather than be asked one, places our inquiry comfortably into the ancient Western conceptuality of action and passion, with pride of place given to the former. But what if we reversed course? What if we looked at questions from the point of view of Socrates' interlocutors—of Euthyphro, Gorgias, Charmides, Adeimantus, and the rest? What if we looked at Socratic questioning as a method of being asked questions, rather than of asking them?

What, then, is it to be *asked* a question? I would like to advance, in a phenomenological spirit, three more general characteristics of such a situation.

I. To be asked a question is to be *interrupted*. Since someone else asks the question, it is not my question. To be asked it is to be taken out of whatever states and activities I was in before and deposited into a different situation. This new situation, to be sure, may not be entirely different from my previous one: the question may arise in the course of an ongoing shared inquiry. And I may, on occasion, ask a question of myself. Even in such cases, however, to be asked a question is to be interrupted: I must stop whatever I am doing and answer the question. In being-asked I am moved from one situation to another; and since questions usually do not take long to ask, I am usually moved suddenly.

II. To be asked a question is thus to be interrupted. Augustine, in particular, is interrupted *by another person*. This, I suspect, is the more basic form of being-asked, with being asked a question by oneself as a modification of it. In any case, being asked a question by another person, as Augustine is, is the more important case here. The other person is not merely a questioner. Since asking a question is an intentional act—no one asks a question inadvertently—someone who asks a question has a purpose in asking it. She is seeking something, her question is part of a quest. And her quest may be very different from the question itself. The quest behind the question "have you read Žižek on Spielberg," for example, may in fact have nothing to do with Spielberg or Žižek. The question may simply be an

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effort to find out how culturally up-to-date someone is.

The posing of a question is thus not, for the asker, an interruption. It grows out of some ongoing concern she has—i.e. from her immediate past. She is seeking something by asking her question. Hence, the questioner is more deeply a *quarens*, a seeker.

III. When first asked a question, I never know the answer; because the question interrupts what I was doing, it always takes me a second to find or retrieve a response, and during this time I am in a momentary state of bafflement. Augustine’s bafflement is an extension of this more ordinary kind: it will not go away because the answer, stubbornly, will not come.

To be asked a question thus puts me into a special relationship to past and future. My immediate past is gone, not merely having slipped by as it usually does but in having been *pushed* away by the *quarens*: I cannot continue with what I was doing, because I must now answer her question. It is the past of the *quarens*, her ongoing quest, which now directs my actions. To be asked a question is thus to be forced to substitute one past for another, hers for mine. Instead of carrying forward my own activities and concerns, I am suddenly involved with two pasts at once. And instead of my immediate future being whatever I was about to do next, my future becomes opaque; it now amounts to something I do not know, namely the answer to the question.

As long as Augustine and his interlocutor are *talking* about time, they know what it is. What Augustine subsequently *says* he knows (*dico me scire*) places his view of time on what J. M. E. McTaggart famously calls the “A series:” time as an ordering of events in terms of past, present, and future.⁴ McTaggart contrasts this with the “B-series,” time as an ordering of events in terms merely of before and after. McTaggart argues that neither series can constitute the nature of time. The B-series is not time because it does not allow for change: the relations of “before” and “after” are permanent, so that if event e_1 is before e_2 , it is always before e_2 . The A-series, for its part, accommodates change but is incoherent: past, present, and future are contradictory properties, and to assert all of them of any event e is to contradict oneself. The only way to deny the contradiction would be to say that e does not have these properties at the same time, and in that case the A-series could not be time, because it would presuppose time. Since neither the A-series nor the B-series (I will leave out McTaggart’s hybrid C-series) can be time, McTaggart concludes that time does not exist.

McTaggart’s argument begins from how time “appears to us *prima facie*:”⁵ from our ordinary experience of time. It has generated an enormous literature, as people try to prove that either the A-series or the B-series is (a) real and (b) constitutes time. I will avoid this literature because, in talking about the A-series and the B-series at all, it accepts two of McTaggart’s presuppositions:

I. The A and B series each incorporates necessary features of our ordinary experience of time; otherwise such experience would merely deliver subjective impressions, which might not tell us anything about what McTaggart wants to investigate: the nature of time itself.

II. Time cannot be experienced in some third way; the A-series and the B-series are the only fundamental ways in which we experience time. Otherwise their incompatibility with time would not support the conclusion that it does not exist.

Common to both ways of experiencing time is that time is an ordering of events, which in turn are things with properties (being before and after, in the B-series; being past, present, or future in the A-series). Augustine’s thought experiment, as I have interpreted it, is however outside this framework because it denies (2). In Augustine’s thought experiment, if we may call it that, we are in fact presented with two orderings of past events—that of the *quaerens* and one’s own—and no ordering of future events, for there is no guarantee that my quest for an answer will “lead” anywhere. Indeed and more generally, there is (as we will see below) no guarantee that the future itself will contain any such thing as an “event.”

Augustine's account of being asked about the nature of time makes sense only to us if we are beings who do not necessarily experience time as an ordering of events, which means that we do not always experience time as either an A or a B series.

For McTaggart, "event" is defined minimalistically: an "event" is merely "the contents of any position in time."⁶ McTaggart thus does not take the term in a Deleuzian or Badiouian sense as indicating something which exceeds its conditions; indeed, he does not even specify that the content of any single position in time must differ from those of all other positions, so events need not be unique. But even on this minimal concept of "event," we can ask: what would an eventless future look like?

We can hardly expect to "know" the answer to this in any strict sense, first of all because an eventless future would be without content, and what is without content cannot be captured in any determinate concept: if events form the content of time, an eventless time is empty and so, strictly speaking, inconceivable. Yet that there may be such a future is fairly easy to imagine, if not conceive: it would be the future of the universe at the moment of its total extinction. The eventless future of an individual thing would also be the future at the time of its total extinction. We may doubt the logical coherence of such an image: does not a being which is about to be extinguished have, not an eventless future, but no future at all? The fact remains, however, that Western culture has two traditional names for such an individuated eventless future: "heaven" and hell." In heaven and hell, eternity reigns and nothing changes; the last thing to befall one is one's definitive assignment to one or the other. The Christian image of the future in particular, figures it as eternity, an existence without events.

Kierkegaard's appropriation of his Christian heritage trades upon this connection between eternity (heaven and hell) and the future.⁷ Our future for him is our temporal opening onto eternity, and we are moving toward it across the events of our various lives. Kierkegaard establishes the connection between eternity and the future on the basis of their common inconceivability:

The eternal first signifies the future because the future is the incognito in which the eternal, even though it is incommensurable with time, nevertheless preserves its association with time⁸ (CD 89).

The future is "incognito," and eternity is "incommensurable" with time. That these two unknowns can at once be incommensurable and related is the absurdity which constitutes the core of Christianity for Kierkegaard:

What now is the absurd? The absurd is—that the eternal truth has come into being in time, that god has come into being, has been born, has grown up, and so forth, precisely like any other human being, indistinguishable from other individuals⁹ (Kierkegaard 1941a: 188).

If the future is eternity and so inconceivable, then we cannot conceive it as containing events. Some of this inconceivability of the future was anticipated by Hume; his discovery of the "scandal of induction" leaves open the possibility that the future will be so unlike the past as to contain nothing that we now know of—including, then, things and events.¹⁰ Kierkegaard adds a number of things to this, including the specifically Christian notion that our future is a giant Either/Or, according to which we will go either to someplace inconceivably wonderful or someplace inconceivably terrible, depending on what we do right now—indeed, at every "right now." Every moment is thus crucial—and dreadful. It is this dreadful cruciality which, for Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Dread*, establishes the "present" of Christianity as opposed to the "now" of paganism.

Time for Kierkegaard is most basically, however, just an "infinite vanishing"—the continuous passing away of everything in which "every moment, like the sum of all moments, is a process, a going-by"—i.e., an event¹¹. From this "pagan" point of view, which is McTaggart's (it holds in both the "A" and "B" series), any given moment is simply the point so far reached on the ever-extending time line. It is only when I realize that the given moment is the moment in which I must commit myself to Christianity (or not do so) that the moment becomes a present:

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The moment [i.e. the Øjeblikket, what the Germans will call the *Augenblick*] is that ambiguity in which time and eternity touch each other, and with this the concept of temporality is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time¹².

If we subtract from Kierkegaard’s account of time what is specifically Christian in it—the part about going definitively either to heaven or to hell, with no other options and no subsequent changes (which would be events)—we are left with just the view that the future is, as Hume thought, wholly unknowable. But in contrast to Hume, whose interest in the future here is purely theoretical, the future for Kierkegaard is something to which we are ineluctably underway. It is thus of great—indeed, paramount—practical significance.

The view that the future is *wholly* unknown is, I take it, an ingredient in our experience of time, and not only when we are asked about it. For to *know* that the future contains things and events would require us to have experience of the future—and that we have not had, or ever will. The future is then a sort of Kantian thing-in-itself—but one which is coming at us, from only a nanosecond away. And just as we can, for Kant, take things we know—categories—and, by subtracting the conditions of sensibility from them, come up with “noumenal” inhabitants of this unknowable realm (cf. CJ 175), so we can tell ourselves that the future will contain events and things similar to those we already know: we can make predictions, i.e. *talk* about the future. In this way we can come up with the McTaggartian notion of time as a single ordering of events that extends from the past through the present to the future. Such a future is somewhat more reassuring than the empty dreadful future that Kierkegaard has uncovered; but we can no more *know* that it will come about than we can know a thing-in-itself.

When we *talk* about the future, we have to see it as containing the sort of thing we can talk about: content, i.e. events. When we *are asked* about time, or about anything, this linguistic presupposition falls away and we are left in a state of *Angst* before an empty future: not, to be sure, in Kierkegaardian fear and trembling before eternity, but merely Augustinian anxiety about whether we will be able to answer the question we have been asked.

Being-asked about time, or indeed about anything, also brings me before a past which is not *an* order of events. For when I am asked a question, I experience not one but two pasts: mine and that of the *quaerens*. If these two orders of events were the same, the question would not pose an interruption to me, but would follow naturally on what I was doing before it was asked. Different pasts therefore go with different people, leading them to do and undergo different things in the present; everyone has what I will call her “personal past.” The question then arises of whether or not these personal pasts are experienced as components of a single larger series containing all past events. If so, then there is such a thing as “the” past; if not, there is merely a plurality of personal pasts.

This question is easily associated with the Leibniz/Newton controversy over the metaphysical “substantiality” of time: is time a single thing unrolling on its own, as Newton claimed, or is it merely what Leibniz called “the successive order of things?”¹³ A personal past would be one (of many) successive orders of things (or, we may say, events); a single larger ordering would place us in the vicinity of Newton.

We are not speaking metaphysically here, however, but of time as we experience it. And here, even Newton agrees: we commonly experience time relationally, and indeed as a plurality of pasts:

Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequable) measure of duration by the means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time ...¹⁴

“Absolute, true and mathematical time” differs from “relative, apparent and common time.” Even for Newton, the latter is what we commonly measure, and as “apparent and common” is what we usually experience. Indeed, as Kant observed, it is impossible for us to experience time as a single order of events, i.e. of all events, because

we cannot experience all events.¹⁵ Absolute, true and mathematical time, Newtonian time, is a thing-in-itself.

In the realm of experience, in other words, we are all relationists. What we experience as the past is some particular “succession of things” (or events), beginning in the past and ending in the present. Personal pasts, in particular, are important because our present circumstances not only follow after them but usually result from them. Not only are some of the things with which I must cope right now the results of events in the past, but knowing which is important. If the drizzle of the moment is following on a violent storm, the rain is probably ending and I probably do not need my raincoat; if it following bright sunshine, I had better take the raincoat with me.¹⁶

But there is more to it. In the case of the personal past, the present with which it normally ends is our present; but we also, for example in being-asked, experience pasts which end in someone else’s present. My personal past differs from that of the *quaerens* in that it contains different events. What distinguishes an event that is part of my personal past from one which is not?

Not merely that I remember it, or even that it happened to me. First, as suggested above, my own personal past may well contain events that I cannot remember. My birth, for example, is part of my personal past—its results are still with me today—but I do not remember it. The birth in my case was rather dramatic, as it happens, because it was during World War II. Doctors were hard to find and my parents had to drive to a nearby military base, a delay which almost caused my demise. So World War II is also in my personal past, which goes beyond what I can remember to include not only events which I cannot remember, but events which occurred before I was born, yet which had effects on me today.

Some of these events, indeed, lie centuries in the past: the death of Socrates, which inspired me to go into philosophy, is one of them. Part of my present professional activity is determined by the fact that that death occurred in the way that it did, and that it occurred so long ago yet is still remembered. So my personal past is not merely the set of things that have happened to me in the past, or even the subset of these that I actually can remember. It is rather the set of those events with whose results I must, today, cope, whether they reside in my own personal psychology or in the social and environmental worlds in which I live. The personal past is thus very extensive.

Another feature of personal pasts comes to the fore when we realize that my own personal past is not always the past that matters most to me. The example of being-asked, once again, shows this. When I am asked a question, my own recent personal past is, as I have noted, displaced in favor of the personal past of the *quaerens*: the question grows from her concerns, not mine, and I must step outside my own ongoing projects to answer it. Of course, her question results in my attempts to answer it and so immediately becomes an event in *my* past; and along with it come whatever events in her life prompted her to ask the question. These events may be wholly unknown to me and may have had no effect whatsoever on me until she posed her question. But when she does that they become events with the results of which I must now cope, and those events thus join my personal past.

Events in someone else’s past can thus become events in my past: personal pasts are not only extensive but expansive. They can merge, as they do when I am asked a question. This leads us to another important feature of personal pasts: they are not only highly expansive but highly unstable; long ago events are continually joining my personal past. That personal pasts of different people can merge with one another in this way is very clear in the immigrant experience: someone who emigrates to a new country takes over the history of that country. I have ancestors, for example, who died on both sides of the American Civil War. The heritage of slavery in the United States is clearly part of my personal past; it helped make me what I am. Indeed, it was the aftermath of the Civil War which led my great-grandfather to leave the South and raise his family in Illinois, where his daughter met my grandfather: without American slavery, I would not exist, and I must cope with its effects every day. But so also must my wife, who immigrated to the United States in 1979. She has no ancestral connection to the Civil War, but she must also cope with its effects, and on a day-to-day level she must cope

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with them very much as I do. This holds generally, as I argued in my *Reshaping Reason*,¹⁷ for anyone who joins any group: they must then cope with the ongoing results of the history of that group. To recognize this is for them to take *responsibility* for that history.

This leads to another dimension of personal pasts—a moral one. The meaning of the phrase “must cope with” above is obscure,¹⁸ for the word “must” may express either obligation or compulsion. I am compelled, in my daily life in Los Angeles, to cope with the fact that English is its official language but is spoken at home by only 42% of the population, a virtual tie with Spanish. But that I must also, in my daily professional life, cope with ongoing results of the death of Socrates is my choice, an obligation that I have assumed: most people, including many philosophers, do not see their profession that way. Which sense of “must” is in play at a given time is often unclear, and usually a matter of degree. Am I *compelled*, in my daily life in the United States, to cope with its history of racial oppression? Or is that something I am obligated, and so must choose, to do? I would say the former; but there are plenty of people, and by no means are very many of them recent immigrants, who maintain that American racial oppression is something in the past which has no bearing on American life today. In their view, it is not something they must cope with or something they are obligated to cope with, but a matter of choice. And if they choose not to cope, then American racial oppression is not admitted into their personal pasts at all. Though I think they are wrong, the point is that the events themselves give them leeway to think this way.

This leeway is important, for it obviously makes a great difference in the way I cope with the results of my personal past whether I accept or deny certain events as belonging to it. Again, the distinction between one’s personal past and what we might call one’s accepted personal past is not hard-and-fast: Americans who do not admit their country’s history of racial oppression into their personal pasts are coping with it all the same—by denial.

I hope to capture this movement from latent to accepted personal past by saying that my personal past is not a given order of events (be it a McTaggartian A-series or a B-series), but an *ordering* of events which has produced me and for which I am sometimes free to assume or not assume responsibility. The events of my personal past are, often, not things I ever did or chose; but when I accept them into my personal past I assume responsibility for them, in the sense that I undertake to cope with their results. And that acceptance, when it happens, results from a choice. The construction of an accepted personal past is thus, to some degree, a *moral* enterprise. Sometimes the ordering is more independent of me, so that past events shape themselves into the production of a present reality with which I must cope. Other times I have more leeway to see the past as obliging me to cope with its results. In every case, however, I experience the past in fundamentally Leibnizian terms, as a “succession of things.”

There are many such successions, and the most important one to me is obviously the one which is my own personal past, the succession of events which has resulted in my present situation. As the experience of being-asked indicates, this sequence is itself unstable: events may be added into it. When someone asks me a question, things that have happened to her become things with which I must cope in answering her question; they become part of my personal past as well.

This all lands us, not in Kierkegaard, but in his greatest foe: Hegel. Not the Hegel against whom Kierkegaard and so many others have so long inveighed, but the Hegel uncovered by scholars since World War II and highlighted by the new critical edition being done by the Hegel-Archiv in Bochum. This is a Hegel who did not think he had achieved a final statement of anything, but who revised even his *Logic* in the most basic of ways. If Hegel’s *Logic*, the part of his system most removed from nature and history and so the part with the strongest claim to *a priori* status, can change, so certainly can the rest of it.¹⁹

This Hegel is evident where Hegel most clearly discusses the constitution of the past—in his *Philosophy of History*. There, he explicitly disavows any claim to tell history as it really was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*). The

facts of history present a “slaughter bench” which has no claim at all to exhibit the progress of reason. And yet we cannot stop there:

Without rhetorical exaggeration, a simple, truthful account of the miseries that have overwhelmed the noblest of nations and politics and the finest exemplars of private virtue forms a most fearful picture and excites emotions of the profoundest and most hopeless sadness, counterbalanced by no consoling result. We can endure it and strengthen ourselves against it by thinking that this is the way it had to be—fate; nothing can be done. And [so] we draw back into the vitality of the present, into our aims and interests of the moment; we retreat, in short, into...selfishness (*Selbstsucht*).²⁰

This melancholic quietism and selfishness are at bottom a refusal of responsibility: there is nothing we can do, all is fate. This is not, however, the only way in which Hegel thinks we can experience the past:

But in that we contemplate history as the slaughter bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been sacrificed, a question necessarily arises: for what, to what final cause (*Endzweck*), have these monstrous sacrifices been made?²¹

The “necessity” Hegel refers to is hypothetical: *if* we are going to refuse the fatalistic quietism of our selfishness, *then* we must ask that question. We do not have to do so. We can remain in the irresponsible vitality of our selfish present. Not doing so means accepting past events and ordering them into a story which, if only provisional, transcends them enough to give us courage and hope without forgetting or denying them, and thereby to enable our time “to find itself, come to itself and intuit itself as concrete actuality.”²² Hegel’s approach to history thus arises from a decision, a decision not to let the grim facts of the past excuse us from the responsibility to accept them as events with whose results we philosophers must cope.

It is my contention that history done in Hegel’s “philosophical” way is a paradigm for the way we should construct our personal pasts—with attention to the comprehensiveness and narrative clarity of our story supervening upon an honest and complete presentation of the facts and maintaining an equally honest sense of the provisionality of the conclusions.

But what about something I have been conspicuously avoiding: answering Augustine’s question? Can we say in positive terms just what time is? Have the preceding considerations advanced us even a single step toward that goal, or even shown that it is a proper goal?

It would be astonishing if we had an answer, but I think we have made some progress—at least enough to see what roads are open. Once we have admitted Hegel and Kierkegaard into the game, a panoply of other thinkers stands ready to help us. Marxian dialectics, Foucauldian and Nietzschean genealogy, and Heideggerian “history of being” provide tools for understanding and constructing pasts; Sartrean nihilism, Beauvoiran disclosure of being, and Derridean deconstruction show us how to articulate new futures. And Deleuze’s complex account shows us ways in which these approaches can be non-reductively thought together.²³

But I will confine myself here to the general claim that there are standards for how we should deal with the past and the future—for the past and future are, in part, products of our doing. This idea is nothing new; the very word “time,” like “tense,” is allied to the Greek *temnein*, to take a cut, and it is we who do that—when we separate an hour, a year, or a season off from what went before and will come after and call it a “time.” But, if I have been right here, we do more than that, and time has, not merely tenses, but rubrics: sets of directives which treat the past as the set of possible connections, and the future as the set of necessary ruptures. So considered, time is not merely an abstract container or event-series, but a fertile, and perhaps inexhaustible, field for phenomenological, dialectical, and deconstructive investigation.

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But this is only time as we experience it. What about time itself, which as a series of events turns out to be about as far removed as anything could be from the terrifying emptiness of the future and the depressing savagery of the past? What is the relation between time as we experience it and time as scientists, logicians, and metaphysicians (such as McTaggart) say it is?

It has become conventional to reserve the name “temporality” to our experience of time, while reserving the name “time” to what is explored by physics, explorations which remain keyed to the idea of time as a series of events. But the two are not, of course, entirely separate. We can begin to understand their relation with this “Augustinian” suggestion: in order for us to talk about past and future, we must populate them with content. (*et intellegimus utique cum id loquimur, intellegimus etiam cum alio loquente id audimus*).²⁴ We must then see them, in McTaggart’s usage, as orders of events. But when we do that, we suppress two facts about our experience of time, facts which are highlighted in Augustine’s account of being-asked: that the future is intrinsically less knowable than the present and the past, and that the past is not only relational but personal, and so unstable and malleable.

If we are empiricists, what scientific, logical, and metaphysical theories of time have to explain is our experience of it. If the view of time as an event-series falsifies that experience, then it cannot explain it; theories based on that view may, at best, be explaining *something*; but they cannot explain temporality. The considerations in the preceding paragraph suggest, in fact, that we should reverse the order of explanation: the account of temporality which I have just given can explain how theories of time arise, namely through our efforts to convert time as we experience it (“temporality”) into something we can talk about—into a series of events, things with properties (“time”). The concept of an event-series is, for sure, more comfortable for us than the kind of thing I have discussed here. Future events can be predicted, so the Kierkegaardian terror recedes; and past events cannot be changed, so our Hegelian responsibility attenuates.

But it isn’t the job of philosophers to be guided by something other than their own comfort?

JOHN MCCUMBER is Professor in the Department of Germanic Languages at University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of many books including *Time and Philosophy* (Acumen 2011); *Metaphysics and Oppression: Heidegger’s Challenge to Western Philosophy* (Indiana, 1999, winner of a Choice book award); *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era* (Northwestern, 2000); and *Reshaping Reason: Toward a New Philosophy* (Indiana, 2005; also winner of a Choice book award).

NOTES

1. Augustine of Hippo, *Confessiones* lib xi, cap xiv, sec 17 (ca. 400 CE)
2. Cf. Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" in Heidegger, *Basic Writings*. Trans. David Farrell Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977, 95–112.
3. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John MacQuarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962, 24–28.
4. J. M. E. McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time," in *The Philosophy of Time*. Eds Robin Le Poidevin and Murray McBeath. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, 23–34.
5. McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time", 24.
6. McTaggart, loc cit.
7. On this reading of Kierkegaard cf. my *Time and Philosophy*, Durham: Acumen, 2011, 77–96.
8. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*. Trans. Reidar Thomte. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1980, 89.
9. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Scientific Postscripts*. Trans. David Swenson and Walter Lowrie. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1941, 188.
10. "Let the course of things be allowed hitherto ever so regular; that alone, without some new argument or inference, proves not that, for the future it will remain so:" David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" in Hume, *Enquiries*. Ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon, 1894, 38.
11. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 85–6.
12. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, 86.
13. *The Leibniz/Clark Correspondence*, ed. H. G. Alexander. Manchester University Press 1956, 152.
14. Newton In *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* Quoted at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Absolute_time_and_space#cite_note-Newton-0 accessed 26 Oct 2011.
15. Cf. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965 "B" edition, 454–457.
16. Among the various pasts I experience, my own obviously plays a special role—not because I know it directly, for the vagaries of memory ensure that I do not; but, in part anyway, because the easiest and ordinary way of measuring relative durations of all kinds is by the events in one's own life. The Suez Crisis happened in 1956, but when I remember it I date it first to my childhood; the fall of the Berlin Wall happened in my middle years. In this way, we relate even world-historical events to the sequence of events which—usually—matters the most to us, that of our own lives. One use of my "personal past," then, is to measure time in this way.
17. John McCumber, *Reshaping Reason*. Bloomington, IN; Indiana University Press, 2005.
18. Not much progress is likely to be made in clarifying its second word, "cope," because pretty much anything we do counts as coping with results of the past in one way or another. Simply to utter a thought, for example, requires me to exploit, and thus cope with the results of the incredibly long and complex history that produced the language in which I utter it. Brushing my teeth requires me to cope with some results of evolution itself.
19. For a detailed account of this Hegel see Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
20. G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History*. Trans. Robert S. Hartman. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963.
21. Hegel, *Reason in History*, 27; translation altered.
22. Hegel, *Reason in History*, 31; translation altered. This does *not* mean imposing some arbitrary goal, such as the governmental structures of Hegel's Prussia onto past events as their necessary outcome.
23. Cf. James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Philosophy of Time: A Critical Introduction and Guide*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
24. "And certainly we understand when we speak of it; we understand also when we hear it spoken of by another."

HEIDEGGER AND HEGEL: THE TIME OF LIFE & THE TIME OF LIFE-PHILOSOPHY

Ingo Farin

In this paper I analyze Hegel's concept of life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Heidegger's critical comments regarding this concept of life in his 1930/31 Lecture Course on *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. I claim that Heidegger's lecture course shows his continued fascination with life, despite his official distance to Dilthey and the then contemporary life-philosophy. I argue that one of the fundamental tenets of life-philosophy, the opposition of "life" to "reason," still motivates Heidegger's critique of Hegel's supposedly logocentric concept of life. I begin the paper with a brief review of Heidegger's life-philosophical starting point after World War One (Section I) and, drawing on Hans Jonas, suggest some meta-reflections on the reasons behind the renewed interest in "life" in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century (Section II). After a sketch of Hegel's concept of life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Section III), I then turn to Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1930/31 (Section IV), in particular Hegel's conception of the correlation of life and time.

I

Much of modern life-philosophy¹ addresses the polarity between life and reason. Nietzsche and Bergson are powerful examples that come to mind. Even the less iconoclastic and more academic life-philosophers Dilthey and Scheler, as well as Simmel, entertain a very similar perspective. Life-philosophy of this sort is primarily *protest philosophy*. It contests the predominance of instrumental rationality; it challenges the crippling confines of theoretism; and it rejects the reduction of the concept of being to what is scientifically measured and/or useful as raw material. The life-philosophical charge is that for all the gains in terms of scientific and technological dominance over nature, life at the centre has been lost sight of. The rational world has become

an “iron cage” which threatens the very life it was meant to sustain. The life-philosophical sentiment is nicely summed up by Tolstoy in *War and Peace*: “If we allow that human life can be ruled by reason, the possibility of life is destroyed.”²

But “life” is not only a “principle” that is opposed to the logocentric obsession with reason. For some life-philosophers at least, “life” is also the object of a fierce and tragic love affair. Just before his so-called “Other Dancing Song” Zarathustra has a mysterious encounter with “Life.” Having looked straight into Life’s “golden night-eyes,” Zarathustra confesses “then life was dearer to me than all my wisdom ever was.”³ We find the same passion for life, albeit in a very different, i.e., Christian, idiom in Tolstoy. Having seen the gruesome scenes in burnt-down Moscow, Pierre exclaims:

Life is everything. Life is God. Everything changes and moves and that movement is God. And while there is life there is joy in consciousness of the divine. To love life is to love God. Harder and more blessed than all else is to love this life in one’s suffering, in innocent sufferings.⁴

This enthusiasm for life, however tampered by human humility, whether theistically colored or not, constitutes the background sentiment for much of life-philosophy in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Bergson’s “*élan vital*” is perhaps one of the great philosophical manifestations of this fascination with the pulse of life in the early twentieth century. The mystical longing “to be one with the generative force of life” by way of the return to the original wellspring of life in the inner self in pure duration—nothing less than the flow of time itself—governs Bergson’s entire work.⁵

We can see some of this fascination with life even in early Heidegger, who, in his correspondence with Elizabeth Blochmann towards the end of World War One, in unmistakably Bergsonian fashion, admires her “true *élan vital*” and dreams of overcoming the rationally flattened-out world in the evidence of “total intuition,” and, in a letter from “the battlefield,” amidst the senseless production of death, confesses his “lust for life.”⁶ Heidegger’s postwar attempts at a “science of life”⁷ or “life research” [“*Lebensforschung*”]⁸ are really attempts to put this experience into words and philosophical concepts. When in 1919 he stipulates: “The aim of phenomenology” is “the investigation of life as such,”⁹ he consciously marries phenomenology (and its reduction of objectivity to the subjectivity of life and lived experience) with Dilthey’s hermeneutics of life.¹⁰ The life of lived experience as the original ground of everything is the intersection that allows Heidegger to merge the projects of Dilthey and Husserl in a new philosophy of life. Dilthey famously writes that life is a basic fact behind which we cannot go.

Life is the basic fact which must fashion the point of departure for philosophy. It is that which is known from within, that behind which it is impossible to go. Life cannot be summoned before the tribunal of reason.¹¹

We find almost exactly the same position in early Heidegger’s stipulation of the “primacy” of life, which he opposes to the neo-Kantian “primacy of theory.” Heidegger writes:

Primacy of factual life.

Factual life in its facticity, its wealth of relation, is what is closest to us: we are it.

To charge it as burdened by presuppositions runs counter to its real meaning, as this charge is possible only on the basis of a *standpoint*. However, one takes up a standpoint from out of life, its facticity.¹²

Heidegger’s absolute reference point here is *factual* life, not just life. This indicates that, unlike Dilthey, he is unwilling to consider “life” an “object” for scientific generalization, as if it were available from a standpoint outside “life.” Nevertheless, like Dilthey, Heidegger is quite clear that the unsurpassable starting point in life requires philosophy to articulate, before all else, what life is, “how” it is lived, and “who” lives it. There is no reference to some free-floating absolute reason above and beyond life.¹³ Nor is there, on the other hand, an

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appeal to the “mystery” of life or some vague “feelings” of the ineffable. Instead, Heidegger wants to find and understand the language and the concepts in which life expresses itself.

If one, phenomenologically and intuitively, takes up a position in life as such, life’s motivations and tendencies, then there is the possibility to understand life as such. Then, too, appears the *absolute intelligibility* of life as such. Life is *not* irrational. (This has got nothing to do with rationalism!!) Phenomenological intuition as lived experience of lived experience, the understanding of life, is hermeneutical intuition (as rendering intelligible, bestowing sense). The immanent historicity of life as such constitutes the hermeneutical intuition.¹⁴

Thus there can be no question that after World War One Heidegger started out as a life-philosopher, intent on articulating the lived reality of life as a basis for all philosophizing. But it is important to specify where exactly Heidegger stands within the burgeoning field of life philosophy. He rejects the view that “life” is irrational and not amenable to philosophical and conceptual clarification, resisting the glorification or search of a mystical union with life (Nietzsche, Bergson). Instead, following in the footsteps of Dilthey and Simmel, Heidegger attempts a conceptual, albeit not an objectivist or naturalist, philosophy of life, with the intention to lift life into the light of full intelligibility. Heidegger pursues this within Husserl’s phenomenological reduction of objectivity to its source in “lived experience,” which is, of course, another word for life.

II

Although early Heidegger throws himself with characteristic verve into life-philosophy, trying to shape it in terms of the Diltheyan-Husserlian strategy of a “hermeneutical phenomenology,” he never stops to reflect on the particular hermeneutical situation where all of a sudden “life” is such a prominent concept, despite the fact that, with few exceptions, it was apparently overlooked in the long tradition of Western philosophy. We can find a possible hint in Hans Jonas, who studied under Heidegger in the 1920s. Jonas has suggested that in the beginning of human self-understanding death was not intelligible at all and that “being” was “the same as being alive.”¹⁵ Teeming with life, the entire world was seen as alive itself. In this context, the experience of death was the paradox which gave rise to ancestor-worship and religion. Death was the unintelligible exception to the abundance and ubiquity of life; it did not fit in the apparently living cosmos. This changed with the Renaissance. Jonas writes: “Modern thought, beginning with the Renaissance, finds itself in the exact opposite theoretical situation: The natural and intelligible is death, problematic is life.”¹⁶ Matter is lifeless, and matter is that which is knowable to the highest degree. Thus, the lifeless becomes the cornerstone of modern self-interpretation of being as such. As Jonas puts it, “not only with respect to relative quantity, but also in regard to ontological truth, non-life becomes the rule, life the enigmatic exception in physical being.”¹⁷ Since the Renaissance, then, the “ontology of death” ruled supreme in modern self-understanding.¹⁸ The subjective turn in Descartes and the discovery of “the mind” did not fundamentally change this situation. Quite to the contrary, with the ascendancy of ontological dualism, “life” was not only expelled from “matter” or “extension,” but it also failed to find its home in the cogito. In fact, the cogito only intends life as something other than itself, as an object to be thought, not as something that is lived from within, and least of all as something which consciousness itself *is*. In short, the expropriation of life in the natural sciences has its complement in the expulsion of life from the cogito. As Jonas puts it, “pure consciousness is just as little alive as pure matter, which stands over against consciousness.”¹⁹

I would suggest that life-philosophy stems from the instinctive unwillingness to accept the modern paradigm that makes the lifeless the foundation of everything. Life-philosophy in this sense *protests* the supremacy of the “ontology of death” that dominates the self-understanding in philosophy and science since the Renaissance. Life becomes the un-thought and un-thinkable, falling through the cracks of scientific and philosophical concepts, while in truth only “life” supports any intelligibility whatsoever. Thus modern life-philosophy is not only an intellectual protest, but also a rescue operation, trying to rescue “life” itself, to call life back to itself. It is likely that the catastrophic production of violent death by means of modern technology during World

War One greatly facilitated renewed interest into the strange forgetfulness of “life” at the heart of science and philosophy since the Renaissance.²⁰

While early Heidegger clearly embraces something of this general life-philosophical sentiment and indeed steadfastly defends the aspirations of life-philosophy against the criticism of the neo-Kantians,²¹ he nevertheless eventually cuts his former ties to life-philosophy by the time he writes *Being and Time*. The concepts of being and *Dasein* become paramount, pushing aside the earlier concerns with “life.”²² The forgetfulness of being becomes more important than the forgetfulness of life. However, in his 1930/31 lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Heidegger returns to the concept of life again. A brief recapitulation of Hegel’s concept of life in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is necessary to understand Heidegger’s interpretation.

III

Having run through the shapes of sense-certainty, perception, and the understanding of force, all of which are forms of unreflective object-consciousness, Hegel argues that consciousness finally grasps itself as that for which things appear and thus becomes self-consciousness. With that, Hegel comments, we have “entered into the native realm of truth.”²³ Self-consciousness comes about as a reflection “out of the being of the sensuous and perceived world and is essentially the return from out of *otherness*.”²⁴ That does not mean that otherness is ignored. “The whole breadth of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time only as related to [...] the unity of self-consciousness with itself.”²⁵ In other words, consciousness becomes self-consciousness vis-à-vis appearances, which, however, have no being outside their appearing to self-consciousness. What is opposed to self-consciousness as other, the *appearing* thing, has no independent being, as all *being* is vested in self-consciousness alone.

Next, Hegel argues that self-consciousness relates itself to the opposed appearance by way of appropriating it, or, what is the same, by desire, *Begierde*. Hegel writes: “But this opposition between its appearance [what appears to it] and its truth [as appearing for self-consciousness] has only this truth for its essence, namely, the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This unity must become essential to self-consciousness, which is to say, self-consciousness is *desire* itself.”²⁶ What is opposed to self-consciousness is there to be desired, consumed, and appropriated by self-consciousness. Thus self-consciousness establishes itself as the truth of the appearing thing. Already in the section on sense-certainty Hegel noted that animals, much better than empiricist or analytic philosophers, demonstrate the truth about sensuous things, namely by devouring them. Hegel writes:

They [the animals] prove themselves to be the most deeply initiated in such wisdom, for they do not stand still in the face of sensuous things, as if those things existed in themselves. Despairing of the reality of those things, and in the total certainty of the nullity of those things, they, without any further ado, simply help themselves to them and devour them. Just like the animals, all of nature celebrates these revealed mysteries which teach the truth about sensuous things.²⁷

Desire is the conscious act of self-consciousness by which it takes possession of the apparent reality around it. Desire is just the first step of the transcendence of consciousness in which it goes beyond itself towards objects and takes them *as* objects for *its* projects. Desire is already practical consciousness. But it is also precisely marked as life. As life knowing itself, desire is related to life not knowing itself. Put differently, as living *organism*, self-consciousness opposes itself to the environment and organic and inorganic nature, from which it lives. By taking nourishment it gains satisfaction from what appears to it. Desirous and self-conscious, life encounters not lifeless matter, a present-at-hand thing, least of all some brute extended something, but something living in its environment, something alive, which sustains its life.

What self-consciousness distinguishes from itself *as existing* [...] has in it, insofar as it is posited as existing, not merely the modes of sense-certainty and perception. It is being which is reflected into itself, and the object of immediate desire is something *living*.²⁸

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It goes without saying that the object of desire is not something over which self-consciousness has simply control, despite the fact that it exists as appearance for self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is not creative. Hegel notes:

As self-sufficient as consciousness is, its object is *in-itself* equally self-sufficient. Self-consciousness, which is utterly *for itself* and which immediately marks its object with the character of the negative, that is, which is initially *desire*, will thus learn even more so from experience about this object's self-sufficiency.²⁹

Nevertheless, as self-consciousness the world is no longer an ensemble of objects, merely present-at-hand and silent. Nor is there an immutable essence to things which theoretical understanding could grasp. As Terry Pinkard puts it, as self-consciousness “we classify, describe, and explain the world in terms of what best makes sense to us given what it is we want to do and accomplish.”³⁰ That is to say, self-consciousness assumes its place at home, in a world shaped by it according to its design for a living, and not for the purpose of gaining some a priori knowledge, abstracted from the purposes of living. Or, in the words of Jean Hyppolite, the world that is revealed by self-consciousness is “the human world as a whole and the surrounding world as a human world.”³¹ That is to say, when self-consciousness recognizes that the only desire by which it can find *itself* in the *other* is the desire to be acknowledged by other self-consciousness, it eventually enters the *ethical* life within the historical world shared by other self-consciousness. Put differently, “self-consciousness” situates itself “within a determinate historical community with its standards for what counts as authoritative for belief and action.”³²

A moment's reflection shows that the world described here, as mediated by self-consciousness, is not so different from what Husserl and Heidegger describe as the *life-world* or *surrounding world*. But in contrast to these philosophers, Hegel's “life-world” is indeed the world of a *life*, namely the world of the living self-conscious *organism*, i.e., self-consciousness as desirous, as *needing* the world in which it lives. This life is inconceivable without the world “in” which it lives, that is, without an environment in which and from which it lives. In Hegel, self-consciousness is very clearly modelled on organic life (and its insertion within a world that maintains it). The structure of self-consciousness repeats what is characteristic of organic life on a higher level.³³ Now, the question could be raised whether Heidegger's concept of “being-in” is at bottom a close relative to Hegel's living self-consciousness—and beyond that to organic life as the key for *Dasein*. Of course, Heidegger would be wary of the latter view for fear of creeping biologism and/or naturalism. Regarding the first point, however, it stands to reason that Heidegger's conception of “being in” is *de facto* analogous to Hegel's conception of self-consciousness as desire within a world. Furthermore, just as Hegel rejects Kant's wordless, disembodied transcendental ego as the starting point for philosophy, so early Heidegger rejects the neo-Kantian attempts to ground “theoretical knowledge” by recourse to the “theory of knowledge” or epistemology.³⁴ Like Hegel, Heidegger thinks that “theory” can only be explicated from the basis of life, the embodied mind in the world “in” which it exists, or what Heidegger calls the “experience of the envining world,” namely “within” it.³⁵ Life without world does not make any sense whatsoever.³⁶

But to resume our outline of Hegel's concept of life, it is important to note that Hegel operates with two basic characteristics: (1) life is an infinite, continuous process or cycle, and (2) generative life “exists” by way of finite shapes or individual members only; they constitute the discrete or self-sufficient way stations by which alone life has its, in each case, individual finite reality and thus opposes itself to the continuity of life, precisely in the service of that continuity. Hegel holds that life cannot be subsumed under a generic concept of being or existence. Life confronts us with a new meaning of being altogether.

The meaning of “Being” is no longer that of the *abstraction of being*, nor is it that of their [the members] pure essentiality, the *abstraction of universality*; rather, their being is that simple fluid substance of the pure movement within itself. However, the *distinction* among these members *with respect to each other* consists, *as distinction*, in no other *determinateness* at all other than that of the determinateness of the moments of infinity, that is, of the pure movement itself.³⁷

There is no life above and beyond the real, individual, discrete organism, the particular, *factual* articulation of life if you will, and there is no particular organism or articulation apart from the continuity of generative life from which the organism arises and into which it sinks back at death. The birth of the child is the death of her parents. Already in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* Hegel writes: “The life of spirit is not a life afraid of death and austere saving itself from ruin; rather, it bears death calmly, and in death, it sustains itself.”³⁸ Obviously, this is predicated on the infinite continuity of life, sustained by the coming and going of individual and particular forms of life. Death is part of life. Life is predicated on death.

According to Hegel, the continuous movement of generative life by way of the never-ending line of finite, individual shapes is nothing other than time. The being-sense of life as the sequence of successive individuals, the ongoing self-differentiation of life, is time.

Its [life’s] cycle resolves itself into the following moments. The *essence* is infinity as the *sublation* of all distinctions, the pure movement rotating on its own axis, its own being at rest as absolutely restless infinity. It is to be characterized as *self-sufficiency* itself, into which the distinctions of the movement have been dissolved. Moreover, it is to be characterized as the simple essence of time.³⁹

Time, then, is the genuine being-sense of life. It is interesting to note that Georg Simmel, in his 1918 book, entitled *Lebensanschauung*, in which he closely follows Hegel’s outline of life (in particular, the thesis of the continuity of life by way of the finite, temporary forms of life, without, however, mentioning Hegel once), also takes “time” as “the point of departure” for the explication of “life.”⁴⁰

The being-sense of life is time. This is true for Hegel, as well as Simmel, and with regard to *Dasein*’s sense of being Heidegger makes that claim in *Being and Time*. We know from Gadamer that Heidegger spoke “with admiration of the late writings of Georg Simmel,” and that Heidegger’s early life-philosophical attempts are much influenced by Simmel’s last book, *Lebensanschauung*.⁴¹ To the extent that Heidegger’s life-philosophical phase in 1920s is influenced by Simmel, it is fair to say that, however unacknowledged at that time, it also continues Hegelian motives.⁴²

IV

In his lectures on *The Phenomenology of Spirit* in Winter Semester 1930/31, Heidegger acknowledges that, in his chapter on life, Hegel attempts nothing other than the formulation of “a new meaning of being,”⁴³ this side of the positivist construal of existence as something merely present-at-hand.⁴⁴ In particular, Heidegger emphasizes Hegel’s attempt to describe the being of self-consciousness or life as manifesting a being-sense *sui generis*. Commenting on Hegel’s concept of life, Heidegger writes: “Life means the being which produces itself from out of itself and maintains itself in its movement.”⁴⁵ This is pretty close to what Heidegger in other writings calls *phusis*, which is, of course, Heidegger’s name for being. And it is in keeping with this that Heidegger, in his 1930/31 lecture course on Hegel, also refers to Aristotle’s concept of life as “self-nutrition and growth and decay” as the likely hermeneutical background for Hegel’s concept of life.⁴⁶ Moreover, Heidegger emphasizes that for Hegel “life” is the characteristic of true being; it is not a region of beings,⁴⁷ for it is through the life of self-consciousness that we have appearances to begin with—namely for life. So, “life” must not be confused with a biological category, especially when we talk about self-conscious life or the life of *Dasein*. Moreover, Heidegger does also acknowledge that for Hegel, time or temporality *is* the essence of self-conscious life.⁴⁸

Although Heidegger is by no means uncritically following Hegel—as we shall see in more detail below—the observant reader of the text can easily make out Heidegger’s great respect for Hegel’s conception of life as a being *sui generis*. There is even a sense as if Heidegger recalled his own earlier attempts at a life-philosophical foundation of philosophy in the early 1920s. It should also be noted that in his book *Hegel’s Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, Herbert Marcuse, who for some time in the late 1920s had worked together with Heidegger—the exact nature of that cooperation is still unclear—homes in on Hegel’s new orientation of

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the meaning of being gleaned from the “being-sense of life,” arguing in particular that the being-sense of life informs the concept of historicity in Hegel and even in Dilthey, and—by implication—even Heidegger.⁴⁹ Marcuse’s very positive appropriation of Hegel realizes a possibility that is actually quite close to early Heidegger’s own thought in the years after World War One.

For as we have seen above, the concept of life and its being-sense *sui generis* is the central point of Heidegger’s work in the immediate post-war period. As he puts it in the first post-war lecture, the “aim of phenomenology is: the investigation of life as such.”⁵⁰ Just as Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* focuses on life or living self-consciousness as the point of difference to the transcendentalism in Kant and in particular Fichte, so early Heidegger calls for an immersion in life and its world, prior to all objectification and theorization, in order to articulate the structures of life from within. Indeed, it is quite conspicuous that in his early lecture courses Heidegger goes out of his way to exempt Hegel from the charge of “panlogism” and construction,⁵¹ in effect suggesting that “the ultimate aspirations” of Hegel’s philosophy can be realized in “modern phenomenology” only.⁵² It is no wonder, then, that for early Heidegger, Hegel’s philosophy constitutes one of the “greatest manifestations” of the idea of philosophy, being a significant model for the future.⁵³ In fact, in his efforts to open up phenomenology to history—and that always means historical *life*—early Heidegger sees in Hegel a kind of ally.⁵⁴ Indeed, Heidegger once refers to Hegel’s early writings on Christianity as a breakthrough to historical life.⁵⁵ And yet early Heidegger never directly subjects Hegel’s concept of life, whether in the *Early Writings* or in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, or the *Logic* to a detailed criticism.

However, when in 1930/31 Heidegger does address Hegel’s concept of life in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, he no longer needs Hegel as an ally to inject history into phenomenology or to rescue life from its philosophical detractors, because, first, Husserl had already excommunicated Heidegger from the church of phenomenology and Heidegger had given up attempts to re-define and shape the understanding of phenomenology in his own terms, and, secondly, since the publication of *Being and Time*, questions were raised about Heidegger’s proximity to Hegel, potentially threatening to undercut Heidegger’s claims to originality. Thus in 1930/31 Heidegger would no longer want to explore potential commonalities between his and Hegel’s project, let alone Husserl’s phenomenology. Instead, he attempts to distance himself from Hegel and Husserl, continuing a line of interpretation already begun in *Being and Time*.

First, in contrast to his earlier attempts to defend Hegel against the charge of “panlogism,” Heidegger now holds that Hegel simply takes over the traditional view that being is completely accessible to and fully revealed by *logos*.⁵⁶ In the end, being is related to knowledge and consciousness, or what Hegel calls the concept.⁵⁷ Moreover, being is “logical” in the sense that all one-sidedness and strife is “dialectically” overcome. For absolute knowledge, being itself is reconciled [*versöhnt*] or redeemed [*erlöst*].⁵⁸ Heidegger holds that it is in light of this redemption that Hegel understands the being of beings. The “logic” of being is “theo-logical” in this supposition of a final redemption. This is what Heidegger calls “the onto-theo-logy” or “the idealism” of Hegel’s doctrine of being.⁵⁹ Like Adorno and Horkheimer, Heidegger is highly allergic to philosophical attempts at what he considers sugar-coating the bad realities of life. (He doesn’t call it “ideology,” but the “One” or the “They.”)

Second, Heidegger claims that because Hegel understands “life”—the being of beings—in onto-theo-logical terms, the infinity (of time) attributed to life is the infinity of redeemed being, disclosed in absolute knowledge. According to Heidegger, Hegel’s concept of redemption or redeemed “being,” controls, as it were, “the essence of time,”⁶⁰ the time of life. Accordingly, time unfolds itself as infinite, in accordance with the infinity of being, such that time is derived from the prior onto-theo-logical concept of infinite being.⁶¹ That is to say, in Hegel, time is by no means “the original essence of being,” which is of course Heidegger’s own view in *Being and Time*.⁶² Thus Heidegger can draw the line between the onto-theo-logical tradition with Hegel as the last representative and his new “onto-chrony,” as he calls it, which understands being from out of the horizon of time, but not infinite time.⁶³

Third, underlying all this intellectual sparring is Heidegger's contestation that being (or life) is not infinite, but rather, finite. "Being is finitude" ["*Sein ist Endlichkeit*"].⁶⁴ This thesis marks the point where Heidegger breaks with the idealism and the redemptive onto-theo-logical conception of being (or life) in Hegel. This thesis of the finitude of being or life is meant to shake off the hold of logocentrism over time, liberating time or life to itself. As Heidegger is wont to point out, his main work is called "Being and Time," not "Being and Logos." Indeed, Heidegger suggests that if being is rooted in time, this side of logocentrism, the philosophy of being can then no longer be "science" or *Wissenschaft*.⁶⁵ Time devours everything. Nothing is immune to the passing of time. With this last point, however, we have come full circle with the earlier mentioned shape of protest life-philosophy in the nineteenth century, which defined itself in opposition to the perceived predominance of *ratio* or "reason" over "life." For although Heidegger discards his youthful enthusiasm for "life" as the basic phenomenon of philosophy, and goes "ontological" so to speak, he nevertheless keeps and reformulates the fundamentally life-philosophical opposition to reason and *ratio*. It is because of this that Heidegger rejects Hegel's idea of integrating life (and the life of self-consciousness) within the parameters of time-transcendent reason, absolute knowledge, or spirit.

Throughout the lecture course of 1930/31 Heidegger argues that if one rejects Hegelian logicism about the infinity of time (and the infinity of life), the only reasonable alternative is that of the "finitude" of time (and the finitude of life).⁶⁶ Heidegger makes the same point, incidentally again with reference to Hegel, in his 1929 Inaugural Lecture "What is Metaphysics," stating that "in its essence being itself is finite."⁶⁷ In the context of his Hegel interpretation, Heidegger's thesis of the "finitude" of life, *Dasein*, and being looks much more like a dogmatic reversal of Hegel than a carefully argued proposition. However, even if we take into account the much more elaborate account in *Being and Time*, there is the following fundamental problem. While one may reasonably hold that individual *Dasein* is finite, precisely because it is part of an encompassing whole relative to which it can be finite (having a beginning and ending relative to that which encompasses and transcends it), one wonders how one can establish conclusively that life or being *as such* is finite altogether. It is not even clear what it means to say that being (or life) is finite *as such*. Since absolute beginnings and endings are difficult to think, it seems to follow that we cannot even conceive of something as "finite" outside a reference to that which transcends it. For instance, Simmel, in his already mentioned book *Lebensanschauung*, observes that life is lived within its particular limits, but in such a way that self-conscious life is always transcending these limits. Bounded by the present moment, life transcends itself into the past and future. This self-transcendence or "transcendence in immanence" opens up the time for living.⁶⁸ As much as death is a limit, life *lives* this limit—by *transcending* it. In Simmel's formula: "life" as such is always "more life" and "more than life."⁶⁹ For Simmel, this formula refers to the vertical and horizontal transcendence of life. Self-conscious life accomplishes "more than life" through the fixation of (relative) time-transcendent meaning (cultural significations that transcend the "here and now"). By its very nature, meaning "overshoots" the momentary situation, even if meaning originates in it. Moreover, self-conscious life is always part of an overarching continuity of generative life, intrinsically related to past as well as future generations. But that means that the "finitude" of life is precisely integrated in that which also transcends it; that is, life is self-transcendence.

In fact, one may claim that this is exactly what Heidegger means by ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*. But this implies that we must think finitude and self-transcendence together. In fact, Heidegger's own account of the *Augenblick* makes it the transcendent moment or limit in which, through our action, we join together the past and future, not only giving them a direction and meaning, but also writing us into history (our own history as well as worldly history), thus leaving behind a trace and testimony that is (relative) time-transcendent, inasmuch as it is not restricted to the "here and now." Momentous decisions, which are taken in the *Augenblick* at crucial junctures, are fraught with so much weight precisely because they select one particular future trajectory that determines who we are and what kind of world we wish to live in—beyond the simple here and now. Hans Jonas speaks of the "time" that is held in "suspense" before the momentous decision or the decisive action is carried out.⁷⁰ It defines that single *Augenblick* between "eternity" and "time" where we decide our own fate, where we decide not only who we will be and how we will possibly fare, but also how we will be remembered in the future by subsequent generations.⁷¹ The *Augenblick* singularizes, concentrates, and finitizes—through the

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relation it established beyond itself.

Indeed, Heidegger himself sees the time-transcendent moment or *Augenblick* in relation to eternity.⁷² In his interpretation of Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same, Heidegger holds that "the eternal" [*die Ewigkeit*] will "be decided only in your *moments* [*Augenblicken*] and there alone, namely on the basis of what you yourself hold concerning beings, and what sort of stance you take in their midst, and what you demand of yourself and what you can wish to accomplish."⁷³ This is not an isolated statement, for a few chapters later Heidegger explicitly states (unmistakably in his own voice): "To think eternity requires: to think the moment, that is to say, to transpose oneself into the moment lived in virtue of [fully] being oneself [*Augenblick des Selbstsein*]."⁷⁴ Through the decision taken in the *Augenblick* we take responsibility for the deeds and the world in which we live, and that implies a commitment far beyond the occurrent moment and the finite, factual here and now.

To conclude, in line with his rejection of Hegel's logocentric conception of absolute knowledge and the concomitant notion of the already logically comprehended infinity of time (redeemed and reconciled), Heidegger emphasizes the "finitude" of time, *Dasein*, and being itself. This latter notion, however, must not be conceived as if Heidegger wanted to suggest an absolute ending or beginning of time, as if "finite" time came to a halt at some point. The transcendent *Augenblick* which enables time to be is intrinsically part of the ecstatic temporality of *Dasein*; it is directed towards the always outstanding future (beyond the finite life-time of the individual *Dasein*).

INGO FARIN has been teaching philosophy at the University of Tasmania since 2008. He has translated (together with James, G. Hart) Husserl's *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Springer, 2006) and (together with Alex Skinner) Heidegger's *The Concept of Time* (Continuum, 2011). He has edited (with Michael Bowler) *The Hermeneutic Heidegger* (Northwestern University Press, forthcoming).

NOTES

1. There is of course the Romantic Life-Philosophy in the eighteenth century, and Hegel, Schelling, Hölderlin, and Novalis all knew a notion of “absolute life.” The “second wave” or “modern” life-philosophy in a pregnant sense includes post-Idealist philosophers such Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Bergson, Scheler, Dilthey, and Simmel, as well as early Heidegger (as we shall see below). More recently, Michel Henry has revived the interest in life-philosophy on a phenomenological basis. For an account of “life-philosophy” with a special interest in Greek and Medieval philosophy, see Eugene Thacker, *After Life*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 2010.
2. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, Norton Critical Edition. Trans. Maude. New York, Cornell University: 1996, 999.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York, Penguin Books: 1978, 227.
4. *War and Peace*, 941.
5. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*. Trans. Arthur Mitchell. Lanham, University Press of America: 1983, 166.
6. Martin Heidegger, Elisabeth Blochmann: Briefwechsel. Ed. Joachim W. Storck. Marbach am Neckar, Deutsches Literaturarchiv: 1989, 14, 15, 12.
7. Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 58. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 1993, 55 and 79.
8. *Grundprobleme*, 160.
9. Martin Heidegger, *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 56/57. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 1999, 220.
10. For a very recent account of Dilthey’s life philosophy, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition*. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2011, 354–358.
11. Wilhelm Dilthey, *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt*, Gesammelte Werke, Vol. 7. Stuttgart, Teubner: 1927, 359.
12. *Grundprobleme*, 173.
13. Reason and science are embedded in “life.” This view still informs Heidegger’s position in *Being and Time*, where he holds that science must be seen as a particular practice of *Dasein*, sharing with *Dasein* the particular kind of being it has. See, *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 2. Frankfurt, Klostermann: 1977, 16.
14. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 219.
15. Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Leben: Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie*. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp: 1977, 25.
16. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 28.
17. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 28.
18. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 35.
19. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 42.
20. For a more recent life-philosophical critique of modernity, see Michel Henry, *Barbarism*, Transl. Scott Davidson. London, Continuum: 2012.
21. Martin Heidegger, *Phänomenologie der Anschauung und des Ausdrucks*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 59. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 2007, 164.
22. Heidegger writes: “Life is its own kind of being, but essentially only accessible by way of *Dasein*. The ontology of life is carried out by way of a privative interpretation which determines that which must exist in order that there can be also something like nothing-more-than life. Life is neither purely present-at-hand nor *Dasein*. And *Dasein* is not something that one can ontologically determine by grasping it as life—(somehow ontologically indeterminate) plus something else on top of this.” *Sein und Zeit*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 2. Frankfurt, Klostermann: 1977, 67.
23. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*. Hamburg, Felix Meiner: 1952, 134.
24. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 134.
25. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 134.
26. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.
27. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 87.
28. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.
29. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 135.
30. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1994, 49.
31. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Samuel Cherkov & John Heckman. Evanston, Northwestern University Press: 1974, 159/60.
32. *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 48.
33. See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Second Revised Edition. Trans. revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. New York, Continuum: 1994, 252.
34. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 96.
35. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 88.
36. Already in 1919/20 Heidegger states: “The manifold, then, which lies within the horizon of life, as it accompanies the

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continuously flowing life in each of us, [is this]: our *surrounding world*—the land, regions, cities, and deserts, our *with-world*—parents, siblings, acquaintances, superiors, teachers, pupils, civil servants, foreigners, the man there with his crutch, the lady over there with her elegant hat, the little girl with her doll, our *self-world*—inasmuch as all this is encountered by me, giving my life its personal rhythm. We live in this surrounding-, with-, and self-world (the world ‘about’ in general). Our life is our world—and rarely in such a way that we [merely] look onto it, but always, even if totally inconspicuous, and hidden, in such a fashion that we are ‘in on it,’ ‘captivated,’ ‘repelled,’ ‘enjoying it,’ ‘renouncing it.’ ‘We always are in on an encounter.’ Our life is the world in which we live [...]. And our life is *only* as life insofar as it lives in a world.” Martin Heidegger, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie (1919/20)*. Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 58. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 1993, 33/34.

37. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 169.

38. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 29.

39. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 136.

40. Georg Simmel, *Lebensanschauung: Vier metaphysische Kapitel*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 16. Frankfurt, Suhrkamp: 1999, 218.

41. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 242/43 (note 138).

42. One of the best accounts of Hegel and the early Heidegger can be found in Thomas Schwarz Wentzer, “Hegel’s Challenge to the Early Heidegger,” in *Metaphysics, Facticity, Interpretation*, Eds. Dan Zahavi, Sara Heinämaa, and Hans Ruin. Dordrecht, Kluwer: 2003, 217–239. A useful discussion about the vast literature on Hegel and Heidegger can be found in Robert Sinnerbrink, “Sein und Geist: Heidegger’s Confrontation with Hegel’s Phenomenology,” in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, 3:2–3 (2007, 132–152).

43. Martin Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 32. Frankfurt, Klostermann: 1997, 198.

44. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 190. See also note 22 above.

45. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 198.

46. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 206.

47. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 207.

48. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 211.

49. Herbert Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit*. Frankfurt, Vittorio Klostermann: 1968, 7, also see 363–368.

50. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 220.

51. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 135.

52. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 12.

53. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 1.

54. *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, 246 and *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 134.

55. *Zur Bestimmung der Philosophie*, 134.

56. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 141.

57. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 17.

58. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 141.

59. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 141 and 204.

60. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 209.

61. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 211 and 209.

62. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 211.

63. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 144.

64. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 145.

65. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 18.

66. *Hegel’s Phänomenologie*, 106.

67. “Was ist Metaphysik?” in Martin Heidegger, *Wegmarken*, Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 9. Frankfurt am Main, Klostermann: 2004, 120.

68. *Lebensanschauung*, 224.

69. *Lebensanschauung*, 229.

70. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 384.

71. *Das Prinzip Leben*, 385.

72. William McNeill, *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*. Albany, State University of New York Press: 1999, 229/230.

73. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. I. Pfullingen, Neske: 1998, 356.

74. *Nietzsche*, 401.

THE FUTURE OF THE FUTURE: KOYRÉ, KOJÈVE, AND MALABOU SPECULATE ON HEGELIAN TIME

Rory Jeffs

... will there and can there be a future after the supposed end of history.... beyond 'absolute knowledge'?

— Jacques Derrida¹

The relationship between Hegel's speculative idealist philosophy and time has a long and complicated history. Since his death in 1831, Hegel's name has inspired a range of interpretations and speculations about what his philosophy entails. In 1946, the Russian-born French Hegelian Alexandre Kojève speculated:

[I]t may be that, in fact the future of the world, and therefore the meaning of the present and the significance of the past, depend, in the final analysis, on the way in which the Hegelian writings are interpreted today.²

Half a century later as we entered the twenty-first century, Catherine Malabou speculated that the future *of* Hegel depended on how we read the future *in* Hegel's philosophy.³ And more recently, Slavoj Žižek in his own typically speculative manner, claimed that even after decades of anti-Hegelian sentiment and a wilful forgetting of Hegel, "Hegel's century will be the twenty-first."⁴ On the surface, such statements seem to place undue importance on Hegel and may confirm the conventional suspicion of him as an all-encompassing philosopher. However, there is also the implication that the future itself, or to loosely paraphrase Malabou, "the future of the future" is what is at stake. Hegel's value then would be to act as a guide to working out and potentially saving the time of the future itself from insignificance, repetition, or a "levelling down".⁵ Žižek may have also intimated something, that Hegel's time, or future, is yet-to-come—which raises the question of what could have delayed Hegel's true arrival? I will examine in this article one possible response to such a question that

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concerns how the riddle of Hegelian temporality plagued the twentieth-century French reading of Hegel. French Hegelianism has a reputation for its creative and “idiomatic” use of Hegel’s philosophy, and this has been both its strength and its weakness.⁶ From the 1930s onwards though, the French reading of Hegel had difficulty with fully comprehending the nature and role of the Hegelian System. As a result, it was often avoided, or turned into a strategic target and foil for anti-Hegelianism—with Hegel projected as a totalitarian thinker and enemy of difference and existence itself. I will argue that one element that played a part in cultivating this rejection is the issue of temporality and its place within such a System. This issue comes down to not only whether there is a future-oriented temporality (i.e. futurity) latent within Hegel’s System, but as Malabou demonstrates, how Hegel’s System calls on us to continually engage with it. This article selectively focuses on the writings of Alexandre Koyré, Alexandre Kojève, and Catherine Malabou, who, despite their differences, bring to the fore the importance of the question of Hegelian temporality, and as a result, directly pursue this question of the future *in* Hegel’s philosophy—and what effect it has on the future *of* Hegel. One of the key problems discussed in this article is the dualistic hermeneutic taken to Hegel’s work by Koyré and Kojève—who both distinguish the writings of the early Jena-period Hegel with their primacy of the future from the later Hegel of the *Encyclopaedia* with its assumed primacy of the past. The article will end with a discussion of Malabou’s interpretation and test whether it brings a productive traversal of the troubling implications exposed by Koyré’s and Kojève’s reading of Hegel.

The influence of Heidegger’s phenomenological approach to temporality and his critique of Hegel linger heavily in the background of Koyré, Kojève’s and Malabou’s analyses and cannot be underestimated. Heidegger’s briefly discussed, but effective identification of Hegel’s concept of time with homogenous time served as one of the threads in the overall critique of Hegel throughout the twentieth century. Heidegger’s key engagement with Hegel’s work resides in Section 82 of *Being and Time*, from where it has, as Jacques Derrida discusses, gathered “universal currency” and imparted the suspicion that in Hegel, the “future itself is finished!”⁷ Heidegger claimed Hegel had cast “little light... on the source of time,” because he remained trapped by a “vulgar” metaphysical conception of time predicated on a series of discrete “nows”—the future in this case, being merely a not-yet “now”.⁸ Heidegger considered then Hegel no more sophisticated than Aristotle on this question of temporality, only differing in that he brought this determination of “nows” to completion.⁹ The source of much of Heidegger’s critique of Hegel’s concept of temporality is drawn from the ‘Mechanics’ section of the *Encyclopaedia* version of the *Philosophy of Nature*, where Hegel had said there is no “stable” difference between past and future in nature.¹⁰ Heidegger’s own phenomenological account of the “ek-static” structure of time differs in that as a “being-toward-death”, *Dasein* experiences a concrete sense of its own finitude and is exposed to what Heidegger calls “primordial time”. The sense of a future is inseparable from the sense of our own mortality. We do not anticipate the future passively as a “now” that is not-yet actual, but resolutely as that which is “coming [*Kunft*]”. Hence, I would argue Heidegger’s own existential analytic of time articulates itself thus: “*The primary meaning of existence is the future*”.¹¹ From this point of view, Heidegger ends up arguing: “‘Spirit’ does not first fall into time,” as assumed by Hegel, “but it *exists as* the primordial *temporalizing* of temporality.”¹² During his 1930–31 lectures on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Heidegger reinforced his line, arguing “Hegel occasionally speaks about having been [i.e. the past], but never about the future”. Accordingly, the “past” in the Hegelian framework becomes “the decisive character of time.” For these reasons, Heidegger says that Hegel bids “farewell to time” in favour of knowing the “immutable” being, and as a result, deals with the problem of finitude as an “incidental” moment in the dialectic.¹³ It is in this post-Heideggerian context that Koyré and Kojève approached the issue of Hegel and temporality. They were the first “Hegelians” in France to respond to Heidegger’s philosophy in a direct way, acknowledging the greatness and originality of *Being and Time*—but also raising the prospect that there was a more concrete sense of futurity in Hegel’s philosophy that bore resemblance to Heidegger’s.

THE “PRIMACY OF THE FUTURE”: KOYRÉ’S DISCOVERY OF THE YOUNG HEGEL

Koyré and Kojève were two Russian émigrés who arrived in Paris in the 1920s via the phenomenological

heartland of Weimer Republic Germany. Koyré had been trained under Edmund Husserl at Göttingen, and Kojève by Karl Jaspers at Heidelberg. For his part, Koyré had been a key player in igniting the French Hegel Renaissance along with Jean Wahl in the late 1920s. Neo-Kantianism and Bergsonism dominated the French *académie* during this time, but for Koyré, they were “not able to answer the burning questions of the day.”¹⁴ Koyré found Hegel to be a more “concrete” philosopher, but believed that in order to bring him back after a hundred-year “exile” from French scholarship; one would have to merge him with the phenomenological tradition marked out of Heidegger and Husserl. To do so though, he would have to class Hegel as the progenitor of the phenomenological method itself in spite of Heidegger’s own misgivings and the distance he created between himself and Hegel.¹⁵

The event that gave impetus to Koyré’s project of reinventing Hegel was the publication of the Jena manuscripts, first by Georg Lasson in 1923, then by Johannes Hoffmeister in the early 1930s.¹⁶ Along with the publication of Herman Nohl’s edition of Hegel’s *Early Theological Writings* in 1907, the posthumously published Jena manuscripts were a breakthrough for Hegelian scholarship in that they revealed the man behind the system and Hegel’s “philosophical apprenticeship”. Koyré thought these manuscripts would help scholars get past the difficult and opaque language of the later writings. Koyré’s main article on Hegel and temporality was ‘Hegel à Jena’, which was in part a summary of his own 1932–33 Course on ‘The Religious Philosophy of Hegel’ at École pratique des hautes études.¹⁷ Koyré proposed that Hegel dealt with phenomenological and historical problems during his formative Jena period (1801–06), and his “ultimate ambition was to dialectically unite rest with movement and to connect time to eternity by his notion of timeless becoming [*devenir intemporel*].”¹⁸ He considered Hegel’s path of thought during these years could be encapsulated by the phrase, “*Geist ist Zeit*”, which Hegel had written in a marginal note to one of the incomplete manuscripts of the period.¹⁹ A major part of Koyré’s article is based on a translation, commentary, and comparison of two versions of Hegel’s Jena Philosophy of Nature—in the *Jenenser Logic* (1804–05) and the *Jenenser Realphilosophie II* (1805–06).²⁰ What Koyré finds uniquely distinctive in these Jena manuscripts is something rather “esoteric” lies within them, that Hegel proposes a radically phenomenological account of time as the “restlessness [*Unruhe*]” of the infinite Spirit and at the heart of being itself. Koyré singles out Hegel’s use of the word “*Unruhe*”, translating it with “*inquiétude*”, and argues that it is Hegel’s “most profound metaphysical intuition” and signifies his “greatest originality”.²¹

Hegel’s philosophy of time sketched in the Jena Manuscripts for Koyré equates to a philosophy of man. And in a foreshadowing of Kojève’s later lectures on Hegel, notes the “*Phenomenology of Spirit* properly understood is an anthropology.”²² Repeating one of Heidegger’s phrases from *Being and Time*, Koyré says it is rather with the young Hegel’s “original” use of “*Unruhe*” that introduces the essential temporalising structure and paraphrases one of Hegel 1804–05 passages as: “The future is therefore the truth of the present”.²³ But Koyré’s interpretation also shows how Hegel differentiates this human experience of time from the natural time of duration determined by life and death—that is, a subsistent “now [*Jetzt*]”, or the “*nunc aeternitatis*” where everything is already realised. Human time gives content and direction to that spatial “now” by negating the present, and altering the past.²⁴ Koyré says:

Hegelian time is, above all, a *human* time, *the time of man* itself, of this strange being that “is what is not and not what it is”, the being who denies himself in what he is in favour [*profit*] of what he is not, or not yet, the being who, starting from the present, negates it, attempting to realise himself in the future, who lives for the future... and who ceases being the day when there is no longer a future²⁵

This means for Koyré that “the Hegelian man is ‘Faustian.’” Even though this model of human temporality based on the movement of “*Unruhe*” makes intelligible the dialectic of time as an interaction between the future, present and past, infinity and finitude, but it also leads to a continual striving and pursuit for what is not here and now. For Hegel, such a kind of existence had tragic implications in the sense of leading to a life that is ultimately without satisfaction.²⁶ But for there to be historicity and the possibility of historical consciousness, whereby there is a concrete sense of the future, Koyré argues there must be this sense of restlessness in this

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negation of the present. However, Koyré recognises the limits of such an interpretation of Hegelian temporality and its over-emphasis, once he closely reads the 1805–06 lectures in *Jenenser Realphilosophie II*—where Hegel’s “System” begins imposing itself and the “rest” point of the present takes primacy. As he interprets it, Koyré sees that after 1805 Hegel began presenting time as derivative from space. Philip Grier has commented on Koyré’s interpretation, and observes that in Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia* version of the *Philosophy of Nature* (1830) this idea of a dualism between spirit and nature (time and space) no longer stands, and that from 1805 onwards, the earlier rich speculations concerning the priority of the future over the present and past begin to disappear.²⁷ Koyré cannot redeem Hegel’s concept of time presented in the later *Encyclopaedia*, because for him, it is a “time that is paralysed... [and hence] is no longer time”, “[t]his time, in effect, is *space*.”²⁸ Koyré thus confirms at least the sentiment of Heidegger’s critique of Hegel’s concept of time, but only as it was presented in its systematic form in the *Encyclopaedia*, where there seems to be no primordial sense of time as directed towards a future horizon.

Koyré refrained from postulating a dialectical solution to the problem of reconciliation between time and eternity, wherein the future could still hold its primacy, or at the least, a dynamic interaction with the past. In his last paragraph of ‘Hegel à Jena’, he illustrates the problem in way that would linger over the French reading of Hegel for decades to come:

... the dialectical character of time alone makes possible a philosophy of history, but at the same time the temporal character of the dialectic makes it impossible... The philosophy of history—and in that respect the philosophy of Hegel as a whole—the “system”—could only be a possibility if history has come to an end, if it has no more future; only if time can stop.

It is possible that Hegel believed in it [i.e. the end of time]. *It is even possible* that he believed not only that it was the essential condition for the system... but also that this essential condition had *already* been realized, that history had effectively ended, and therefore it was precisely because of that [reason] that he could—[or] had been able to—complete it.²⁹

Given there seems to be an irresolvable tension in Hegel’s thought between a dialectic of time (let us say, a philosophy of the future) riddled by uncertainty and a philosophy of history that demands universal judgment and closure, Koyré personally thinks such an end of time synthesis is “unforeseeable [*imprévisible*]”, and the System consequently, “eternally unfinished”. For him, in order for Spirit to “make the past present” as Absolute Knowledge, “it can only do so with the help of the future”, hence, an aporia emerges. Although he avoids speculating on a possible solution that could maintain a dynamic dialectic of the past and the future within a philosophical system, Koyré tends to simply accept the premise of the Hegelian-Heideggerian phenomenology of time. In fact, he repeatedly claims in the article Hegel’s philosophy is at its core primarily concerned with time rather than history and Absolute Knowledge, and furthermore, that “the Hegelian ‘system’ is dead, and really dead [*bien mort*]”.³⁰ Yet as Bruce Baugh and Joseph Flay argue, Koyré ends up “historicizing being” and affirming a “spurious infinite” with “no final term” so as to avoid the falling into a static system, even despite him recognising the essential importance of the System for Hegel’s philosophy as a whole.³¹ Grier on the other hand, finds the crucial point to be that “the end of history is a precondition for the system only given Koyré’s reading of the discarded ‘1802’ [1804–05] passage on time as if they were a crucial element of Hegel’s mature thought.”³² That is, Koyré assumes that Hegel had to “stop time”—for Absolute Knowledge could not co-exist with any uncertain future within it, for that would deny it the very premise of an Absolute standpoint. For Koyré, it was in a way the failure of the System that it could not solve this contradiction if the essence of time and the dialectic was an infinite and restless movement toward the future. Therefore, the task was left to his successor at the École Pratique des hautes études, Alexander Kojève, to resolve this issue, but as we will see, he did so by not questioning the Hegelian dualism Koyré had demarcated before him.

THE END OF THE FUTURE: KOJÈVE’S RESOLUTION

As Koyré left Paris for the University of Cairo in the summer of 1933, he offered Kojève the job of leading

his Hegel Course at the École Pratique. Often overlooked is the continuity between Koyré's Course and Kojève's. For example, Kojève said that he saw his lectures as an "extension" of Koyré's, and admitted to using Koyré's method of interpretation", most notably the "revelatory" comments on time, as the basis for his creative interpretation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.³³ Unlike Koyré though, Kojève suspects then a paradoxical solution to understanding world history through a future-driven dialectic that comes to *complete* end. Kojève adheres to the Koyré line that a primacy of the future is integral to the movement of the dialectic of Spirit and human consciousness and progress, but goes further, by separating the two accounts of time in Hegel more so than Koyré had done. The time discussed in the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Nature* is simply treated by Kojève as non-dialectical—a process without end and teleology. Transposing Koyré's analysis to the *Phenomenology*, he also claims the Hegelian account of time in this text relates to a human experience of time. However, for Kojève, the appearance of human time is not due to the "*inquiétude*" of being or an infinite restlessness that comes to emerge from through human beings. Instead, Kojève tackles the appearance of negativity along with Heidegger's "angst" as emerging rather from a *symptom* of a desire for recognition from another *human* being. Kojève's solution to the future-time problem though demands that human beings can no longer act as temporal beings once they mutually recognise each other as equals. In other words, there will be no need for more "future" projects to negate the present, when the state of world becomes universal and homogenous (i.e. "classless") and governed according to principles of equal recognition and justice for all citizens. Missing from Koyré's account of Hegelian time then was this shared form of historicity—the future as a *collective* "project" toward realising mutual recognition.

Kojève's method of attaining and demonstrating this controversial end of history/end of time conclusion operates via a series of radical revisions and breaks from the Hegelian text that arguably isolates the importance of the later encyclopaedic works. In the context of the issue of the end of time, *three strategic "corrections" stand out*. The first one is a critique of Hegel's dialectical monism (i.e. his conflation of natural and historical time). The second correction is Kojève's interpretation of Hegelian "Concept [*Begriff*]" as "human" time. And the third is his idiosyncratic presentation of Absolute Spirit at the stage of Absolute Knowledge as embodied in the form of a "Book."³⁴ For Kojève, an ontological dualism between nature and humanity is necessary to correct Hegel's monism and present his work as anthropology that can account for the non-natural aspects of the human world. Kojève argues that space *ontologically precedes* time, just as homogeneity precedes heterogeneity, and nature, man—simply because for Kojève negation itself is not primordial but secondary to Being (*Sein*). From this starting point, Kojève is quick to differentiate two temporalities—the biological and cosmological time analysed by natural scientists, mathematicians and physicists, and phenomenological or anthropological time—the "human" time of the future.³⁵ Hegel critiqued the sciences, in particular Newtonian physics, because he thought they were bound to a "spurious infinite" of the Understanding (*Verstand*), a "vain unrest of advancing beyond the limit to infinity", but only finding a new limit each time it advances.³⁶ Kojève though thinks with the advent of quantum physics in the early twentieth century through Heisenberg and Bohr that the sciences have become aware of their own limits, and further, philosophy has to concede that it too cannot explain the physical world of nature, especially in terms of an infinite spirit or dialectical totality.³⁷ Unlike Koyré, Kojève seems to side with a systematic Hegelianism that is (to use a neologism) anthropologised—thinking he could unite his two times with an Absolute Concept and updated Hegelian System to articulate it—yet this in fact, remained an unfinished "project" for him after the War.³⁸ He tended to believe that temporality and historicity could have no "objective-reality" if they were purely phenomenological possibilities and speculations of an eternally restless subject or individualised *Dasein*. To show how the phenomenon of time emerges out of social interaction, Kojève's emphasises the struggle for recognition and its resulting master-slave dialectic. Through human beings risking their life for recognition of the other, the appearance of negation and time came to be as well as a second "historical" reality—but such an spontaneous emergence of time could be intelligible retrospectively as being an "error" or break rather than the sublation of nature—and we will discuss later how Malabou revises the meaning of what Kojève's means by "error" in terms of a teleological "accident". Therefore, for Kojève, there is no primordial time of the future in nature or being as such as Koyré assumed; it is only thanks to the "error" of negation in the human being's confrontation with death through an "other" that time and our awareness of finitude even emerged in the first place. Time then is a socialised or inter-subjective

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phenomenon. And as he says, this means:

Man is dialectical or historical (= free) movement revealing Being through Discourse only because he lives in the function of the *future*, which presents itself to him in the form of a *project* or as a ‘goal’ (*Zweck*) to be realized through action [sic] negative of the given, and because he is not himself real as Man except to the extent that he creates himself through such action as a work (*Werk*).³⁹

Whilst Heidegger says there is only *Dasein* when there is a futural project happening that signifies being is an “issue” for it; with Kojève, the presence of *Dasein* presupposes a prior struggle for recognition. Hence, in Kojève’s terms, Hegel’s is the “[t]ime of conscious and voluntary action” of human beings towards realising future “projects”.⁴⁰ We have a future as long as we can negate and transform the natural world or our given surroundings through labour or struggle and produce something “new” (non-natural) from them. To do so, requires, at the extreme, risking our lives and security, or labouring and developing a new “second” nature whose meaning can only be understood in terms of a socially constructed world shared with other human subjects. Kojève suggests that this anthropological time only appears or functions as a negation of an ontological homogeneity that underlines the human and social world and which exists prior to it and is essentially indifferent to it. Time then is not as *absolute* or infinite as Koyré had made it out to be. As it has to find support in an historical dialectic and give itself determinate form in our objective environment rather than relate to itself abstractly.

Following on from his “correction” of a dual ontology, Kojève makes another important adjustment to the Hegelian text, emphasising that the “Concept [*Begriff*] is Time”.⁴¹ Kojève cites two passages from the *Phenomenology* he thinks demonstrate the importance of such an equation of thought and time. The first one from the preface to the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel writes, “[a]s for Time... it is the empirically existing Concept itself.” Indeed, Kojève argues this quote sums up “Hegel’s *whole* philosophy”.⁴² The second quote is from the last chapter of the *Phenomenology* (‘Absolute Knowing’): “Time is the Concept itself, which is there.”⁴³ And as Malabou notes herself, it was this last line in fact, that with the help of Heidegger “signed the death sentence” of Hegel.⁴⁴ Kojève’s lectures at length on the problem of eternity and time to show how Hegel’s Absolute Knowledge serves as an entry point into “the last moment of Time”, which he says, is a “moment without a *Future*”.⁴⁵ That is, time not in the proper historical sense, but as he will later add, cyclical or eternal time, and annotate in his footnote on the post-historical condition, “the eternal present”. It is at this point that Kojève must have believed he solved Koyré’s paradox of time and eternity in Hegel’s philosophy—but at what price? Once we accepted the circularity of the System of Knowledge and the identity of time and the Concept, then there appears to be no further projects on the horizon, but only a deeper understanding of the past. What Kojève conceals in this interpretation of Hegelian Absolute Knowledge is the ambiguity and instability of the temporal remainder that lies *after* this “appearance” of the assumed “last moment of Time”. In other words, he is simply silent about the prospect of future human activity and socio-political realisation of Wisdom *after* Hegel. If there were no such further possibilities, it is impossible to comprehend why any philosophy (let alone political action) could make sense after Hegel, and for that matter, Kojève’s interpretation—and any possibility for the “empirical-existence” of Self-Consciousness or Spirit.⁴⁶

Despite what may seem like a breach of common sense, Kojève in his last lectures in the Hegel Course ploughs on with his speculative vision stating, that “[i]n order to live in the Concept... it is necessary to live *outside* of Time in the *eternal* circle.”⁴⁷ Yet he still has to explain how this historical or linear form of temporality directed towards the future can simply disappear and become irrelevant to how we experience and interpret the world. Time, as Hegel even says, will only be “annulled” once the Spirit has comprehended its “pure Concept”.⁴⁸ Therefore, as long as we have an “empty intuition” of historical time as something *opposed to* natural-biological time or transcendental time, we cannot strictly make the Concept equivalent to time. And as John Burbidge remarks with allusion to the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel was never adamant about a strong connection between the concept and time that would neutralise the negativity and historicity of Spirit. For Burbidge, “the time is the concept as it is intuited rather than comprehended”.⁴⁹ Hegel does say in the *Philosophy of Nature*, which

Heidegger cited, that the Concept is not *in* time or temporal, but that which has “the power over time”—i.e. the power to comprehend it (“*begreifen*”).⁵⁰ For Kojève and Heidegger, it seems such a power requires the mastering of time and finitude by an eternal Spirit (*Geist*). Kojève’s way of resolving this dilemma of what happens after the realisation of Absolute Knowledge, and assumedly time comprehended, is to argue for a *third* “update” of the meaning of the System, by way of presenting the “Book” as the “empirical existence” of Spirit. The “Book” is loosely applied by Kojève to include the *Phenomenology*, the *Logic*, and the whole Hegelian Encyclopaedia; as well what he claims will be their endless commentary. The issue Kojève has to solve though is how will the “Book” *no longer* be re-temporalised, and how will it not be dependent on or destroyed by the actions of living and dying mortals who experience time toward an uncertain future? As Kojève explains it, “[t]he Time in which it [Book] lasts [*dure*] is thus natural or cosmic, but not historical or human. Certainly the Book, in order to be a Book and not just bound and stained paper must be read and understood by men.”⁵¹ What is confounding in this particular interpretation is that Kojève attempts to explain both the eternity of Absolute Knowledge in the form of the “Book” and the finitude and material existence of the human beings who read and re-write it as somehow co-existing on the same ontologically homogenous plane. But as he lets slip in another passage, finitude makes something of a comeback, as he admits, “I am only this Book to the extent that I write and publish it, in other words to the extent that it is still a future (or a project).”⁵²

In such passages, Kojève seems to be really subtracting the essential inscrutability of the future that Heidegger revealed in *Being and Time* as confronting *Dasein*—and ended up holding sway in Koyré’s understanding of futurity. The new model of future (if we can still call it that) to be experienced by mutually-recognised citizens, is one that will exclude the possibility of radical transcendence, because it is assumed such citizens will accept their finitude and mortality without the restlessness that made time first possible. Once understood as a circular process, the repetition of writing and re-reading the “Book” becomes a cyclical movement, where there is “no true Future” in the abstract or transcendent sense that will introduce radical alterity or break with the past. And for Kojève, this means essentially that it is then no different from “the biological Time of Aristotle.”⁵³ The problem though with Kojève’s revaluation of Hegelian time is that the dual ontology he has worked with to get to the end of time conclusion ends up confirming in essence Heidegger’s initial critique—that Hegel’s concept of time from the Absolute standpoint was no less a metaphysics of presence than Aristotle’s. From this standpoint, the future of the human being in such an end-time scenario becomes trivialised or an afterthought. Kojève is either conspicuously silent or when he does make some kind of comment is contradictory on the shape of spirit at the end of history. Does the ontological difference between nature and spirit simply collapse? The so-called “disappearance of man” that Kojève speculates on is really death of a human and historical “Subject” that had the power of negativity over the external world, which he adds, will potentially be displaced by technology. There is an ambiguity over whether there is no more philosophical “reason” for humanity to change or negate the world and itself for a new future reality, or no actual ontological “possibility”. I would argue that Kojève’s pessimistic (even if given with his typical sense of wry irony) speculations of an end of time are misleading and remain ambiguous over what really lies on the horizon. For they remain inextricably determined by Koyré’s contrast between dialectic of time with its uncertain future and a philosophy of history that has everything sublated as pure past. Kojève’s “solution” then is essentially the other side of this dualism. Hence, why Baugh says the difference between Koyré and Kojève’s responses to it is of “little consequence.”⁵⁴ But such a dualism and its resulting impasse led Kojève to annotate further in his well-cited 1962 footnote to the *Introduction*, and speculate from his personal observation of the “Japanese way of life”, with its cultural practice of snobbery for instance, implied there could be a continuation of negation in a “formal” mode as a way to resist “reanimalization” and the trappings of an “eternal present.” In order to remain human in this formal sense, he proposes, “it is necessary [*doit*] to remain a ‘Subject *opposed* to the Object’,” and as Derrida notes, given Kojève’s general lack of specificity, this implies some form of “promise” that “it is necessary [that there be] a future.”⁵⁵ Like Koyré in one respect, Kojève at least showed some concern for the potential end of time scenario, and sought to save a formal sense of futurity, even if he could not foresee further significant *historical* changes on the horizon.

BACK TO THE FUTURE: MALABOU'S PLASTICISATION OF HEGELIAN TIME

Given that this was the Hegelian framework with which Koyré and Kojève initiated the French reading of Hegel, I think it is important to bring Catherine Malabou into this kind of discussion of the future in Hegel. By looking at it from a different angle, Malabou has offered us a welcomed relief to the problem that has arguably stuck with the French reading throughout the twentieth century. She seeks to avoid the “impasse” that Koyré and Kojève took the question of the Hegelian future into, which she describes as a “non-dialectical contradiction”—a contradiction that cannot reach any genuine resolution. Malabou argues that “the project they represent, as significant as it is, does not give us the means to respond to the question of the future of Hegel.” I note Malabou says here “the future of” rather the “future in” Hegel.” Although Koyré and Kojève found a neglected aspect of the future *in* Hegel's Jena manuscripts—they “could only grant the future a priority over the other moments of time by suspending at once all future yet to come.”⁵⁶ The challenge for Malabou then is to overcome the dualism between the “pan-tragicist” and “pan-logicist” readings that have plagued French Hegelianism since Koyré and Kojève, or what she calls herself the Hegelian “schizology”, which she traces back to Heidegger.⁵⁷ Where Koyré and Kojève failed to suture such divisions within Hegel's thought, Malabou attempts to make way for a dialectical middle ground between varying tendencies, and as she has recently explained her methodology, to find “a way to respond to the deconstruction and destruction of Hegelianism” that does not concede *all* points to Hegel's opponents.⁵⁸ It makes sense then that since her first book, *The Future of Hegel*, Malabou's work has so far navigated the connections between Hegel, Heidegger, and Derrida. In her more recent book, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*, she situates her thought “at the crossroads of two negative logics” that emerge from these three thinkers: “dialectical negativity” and “deconstructive negativity.”⁵⁹ Therefore, despite Koyré and Kojève's own revolutionary efforts at restoring Hegel's legacy, Malabou asserts that the future *in* (and *of*) Hegel's work “remains to be demonstrated and discovered.” When it comes to the question of time, Hegel has always been assumed as guilty as charged—for “[if we agree with] Heidegger, that Hegel never speaks about the future amounts to saying that Hegel does not have a future.” She contests this either-or scenario, and goes further than Koyré and Kojève in claiming that Hegel *does* have a future and identifies such a future temporality within the framework of the System itself—where it had been declared dead, rather prematurely.

Although Malabou rarely refers to Kojève, she begins her analysis with his adequation of Absolute Knowledge and the “end of time”—and asks, “[b]ut can there be any temporality which corresponds to this ‘end of time’ except time's stasis in the congealed form of a *perpetual present*?”⁶⁰ It is admirable that she begins with such a confronting question, and does not revert to Hegel's Jena work and expound on the “*inquiétude*” of Spirit, but actually looks directly into the much-denigrated System and finds something she considers uniquely dialectical: namely, “plasticity.” Interestingly, Malabou treats the *Encyclopaedia* as the “ultimate expression of Hegelian thought”, and his discussion of time therein as the point in which Hegel *questions* rather the recapitulates to the ordinary conception of time. She cites from the very same passages of the ‘Mechanics’ in the *Philosophy of Nature* that Heidegger, Koyré, and Kojève do. She interprets Hegel's meaning in such passages to be that “time itself is not what it is”—and rather than as an Aristotelian series, Hegel is really addressing time in such passages as a synthetic unity in the Kantian sense.⁶¹ Presenting the concept of plasticity in a Hegelian context helps Malabou reach a new definition of the future, distinct from the conventional definition of it as a “*moment of time*”, or another “now.” Malabou observes that Hegel's work actually imparts to the reader to go beyond ordinary concepts of time and even live in two times at once. As she rightly reminds us, Absolute Knowledge is the synthesis of two temporalities, the Greek and the Christian. Kojève speculated at the end of his Hegel Course that the “Christian” time of the future would be re-absorbed by the Greek cyclical time at the stage of Absolute Knowledge. Malabou does not accept the conclusion that such an end of history would mean the end of time in its future sense, because for her, it “does not mark the end of all sudden and new appearances.”⁶² Kojève's rather blunt presentation of the end of history disavows the element of surprise that lies in waiting after Hegel at the Absolute standpoint. Yet Kojève would, like Hegel himself, concede in private after the Hegel Course that he could not “play the prophet” surely implies his account of an end of time as the end of uncertainty was a speculative proposition that the future would simply repeat the same dialectical logic of the

past.⁶³

Malabou begins her analysis at this critical juncture, and attempts to get beyond the non-dialectical contradiction inherited from Koyré and Kojève. She says one reason why such a contradiction appeared was Hegel did not clearly reconcile enough the two meanings of the future in his System:

... on the one hand, a chronological future, whose dynamic is the foundation of all historical development, and, on the other hand, a future as the logical “happening” of the concept, i.e. the concept in “the act-of-coming-to-itself (*Zu-sich-selbst-kommen*).”⁶⁴

Malabou’s inclusion of this second part of the Hegelian synthesis of time will be important for her theory of plasticity, as well distinguishing her understanding of Absolute Knowledge from the Kojevian and Koyrean interpretations of it as an enclosed “repetition” of an “eternal present”. Malabou also seeks to test the Hegelian dialectic itself, by seeing if she can put it to work through her theory of plasticity without the aid of historical negation. Plasticity has often been assumed to relate only “to the field of art”—namely, architecture and sculpture—the arts of form-making.⁶⁵ But Hegel in *Lectures on Aesthetics* also describes “plasticity” in relation to historical “self-made” individuals such as Pericles and Plato who had “plastic and universal yet individual character”.⁶⁶ Malabou cleverly adapts Hegel’s two concepts of plasticity in the *Aesthetics*, and adds a third, in “philosophical plasticity”—which is exemplified by the “philosophic attitude” and the transition from the “predicative proposition” to the “speculative [dialectical] proposition”. Hence, she raises one of Hegel’s little known concepts to the level of the Absolute and changing the function of Hegel’s philosophy in turn. For Malabou this plastic art of speculative dialectic requires the “activity-of-form,” that is, the power to “give-form” and “receive form”. Following Hegel’s lead, she does not believe in the possibility of radical transcendence or alterity, “the other of form but [rather] the *other form*.” For this reason, she thinks plasticity allows for the experience of an “alterity without transcendence”.⁶⁷ Perhaps more importantly, given the implication of Kojève’s post-historical “cage”, plasticity could be a way to help us *think* of a “way out” where there appears to be no way out by reshaping the “cage” itself.⁶⁸

To help explain this new sense of the future in *and* of Hegel via plasticity, Malabou uses the syntagm, “*voir venir*,” translated as “to see (what is) coming”. She explains that this phrase implies, “*at one and the same time*, the state of ‘being sure what is coming’ and of ‘not knowing what is coming’.”⁶⁹ “To see (what is) coming” is the ultimate “plastic concept”, because it involves simultaneously the interplay of form-giving and form-receiving. But it also means, as Derrida notes, that the future has the dual aspect of being determined according to teleological necessity, yet at the same time, experienced as an aleatory accident or “absolute surprise”.⁷⁰ Therefore, Malabou is reflexively stretching the meaning of Hegelian Absolute Knowledge away from the hegemonic view of it is as closure, and invigorating it with a sense of philosophical encounter. Malabou explains “*voir venir*” as her own “idiomatic” interpretation of the “anticipatory structure” in the dialectical composition of time in Hegel. Furthermore, she distances plasticity from any Heideggerian temporal uncertainty, “[t]he future is not the absolute invisible, a subject of pure transcendence... nor is the future the absolutely visible... it frustrates any anticipation by its precipitation, its power to surprise.” In other words, we project ourselves into the future by “see[ing] without seeing” and “await[ing] without waiting”.⁷¹ But how *plastic* is the future in the sense of being a “surprise”? How open-ended is this form of Absolute Knowledge? Malabou refrains from asserting the movement of “*voir venir*” as a transcendental condition—separate from what it organises or *a priori*. This is why Malabou treats plasticity “strategically” rather than “thematically” for it is not something “external to the System”—to systematic thinking as such.⁷² Malabou’s strategy remains Hegelian in that it demands that we see necessity where we would be inclined to want to see contingency and discontinuity. Žižek recently reminded us that the common critique against Hegel in the twentieth century has been of the totalitarian thinker who justifies historical violence, and of “converting nonsense into sense, chaos into new order.” Žižek claims such a critique “has a grain of truth,” yet such extreme and contingent events of the last century actually call for such a Hegelian reading, which arguably Kojève had himself attempted to convey also with respect to revolutionary violence in the USSR.⁷³ Malabou herself is not as explicit as Žižek

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in her words, or perhaps as reductive as Kojève in her intention, but her use of the metaphor of the “atom bomb (*Plastikbombe*)” to illustrate the level of “surprise” plasticity brings and its potential destruction offers us insight into the speculative demand involved in the process she is outlining.⁷⁴ Here Malabou recognizes the need for the systemising of events, and thus, she distance herself from the anti-Hegelian strategy of subverting such systematic thinking altogether—but the System she is positing is one that can never fully closes itself, or fixes its form for all eternity. In Malabou’s own words: “one never learns Hegel once and for all.” Here, she follows Bernard Bourgeois’ summation that the Absolute is “actualised in the final, concrete identity of the book’s reading”—a reading is always a personal engagement rather than a repetition of the text—and therefore, “to re-read the *Encyclopaedia* is to rewrite it.”⁷⁵

Whether Malabou’s plastic model of philosophy really differs from Kojève’s model of the “Book” depends on how we interpret the nature and impact of speculative philosophy itself. In ways, she has made the Hegelian enterprise more “supple” and humanly mortal and fragile than Kojève’s paradigm of the “Book”.⁷⁶ With Malabou, the act of reading Hegel demands the rewriting, rather than simply repeating some doctrine, or “updating” it. What she finds missing in the French Hegelian reading hitherto is a revaluation of Hegel’s use of *Aufhebung* (sublation) as a “plastic operation” of speculative thought. Malabou finds the problem has been that no one in the French Hegelian tradition has put into practice an *Aufhebung* of the *Aufhebung*—the sublation of what has become via Hegelian interpretation itself the reification of sublation (i.e. end of time, end of history, the “Book”, etc.), where it is perceived as closure, re-appropriation, and the consummation of meaning.⁷⁷ But also, the Absolute requires as she cites Hegel, a “letting-go” or “abrogation” (“*aufgeben*”) of the self, by way of consciousness giving up its antithetical stance to the world once it “grasps itself as Absolute Spirit”. Interestingly, Kojève alludes to this process when he announced the “disappearance of man”—but as we noted earlier, was ambiguous over what it really meant.⁷⁸ Malabou therefore continues the Hegelian idea that was carried through by Kojève of the subject-object unity, yet is able to differentiate what this speculative identity may entail from her predecessors. She does so by encouraging us to think of the *Aufhebung* as “[f]ar from enforcing a violent stoppage of the dialectic progress,” à la Kojève and Koyré’s “dialectical-suppression”, but rather implying “its metamorphosis”, one always “susceptible to [further] transformation.”⁷⁹ If one were to fix the movement of Absolute Knowledge as purely reflective and retrospective and thus a closed circle, “there is no way to escape from the vicious circle”, where such a moment would either be an arbitrary intervention or question of chance. Such a closed circle account of Absolute Knowledge is no different to the classical standpoint of substance ontology—involving an immediate relationship with the world and things where one fails to be surprised. I would propose that Malabou might be overlooking the deeper reasons for Kojève and Koyré’s projection of a “closed circle” account of Absolute Knowledge that were not influenced directly by Heidegger. For instance, Kojève comes to this conclusion of the closed circle after comprehensively traversing the history of Western metaphysics (Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger) and its treatment of the relation between time and eternity. His main point that Hegel resolves the aporias afflicting the history of Western philosophy by accounting for its own historical genesis and subjectivity remains true with Malabou’s rendering of the System as more plastic, reflexive and synthetic compared to previous philosophy. But I think there is more than a battle here over how to interpret the metaphor of the circle of Hegel’s Absolute Knowledge.⁸⁰ Although, Kojève’s post-war writings remained open to historical contingencies and continued to address and explain geo-political changes around the world, he did not really see in such contingencies any real “surprise” that breached a Hegelian logic, but rather an unfolding whose structure he could subsume under the categories of universality and homogeneity and the principle of mutual recognition.

Key to Malabou’s way of distancing herself from Kojève’s problematic of producing an enclosing discourse is her “plastic” understanding of post-Hegelian hermeneutics. For Kojève (as cited at the beginning of the article), Hegelian hermeneutics had a political significance. As one was not a neutral commentator when one engaged in Hegel’s writings, one’s interpretation would always uncover one’s general ideological disposition, whether as a “Left” (radical) or “Right” (conservative) Hegelian, or even “anti” Hegelian (liberal “relativist”). For Malabou, the differences in Hegelian interpretations are due primarily to the plasticity constitutive of the act of reading itself—the multiplicity of form-giving and receiving, which Hegel’s work in particular lends itself to in

spades. Hence, why Malabou takes Hegel's phrase to "philosophise in one's idiom" seriously—for this is what ensures the plasticity of Absolute Knowledge. From the act of reading and interpreting in one's idiom is like accessing the universal through one's particularity.⁸¹ For Malabou, there is no superior or meta-"idiom", or for that matter, a final "objective-reality" that could settle an interpretative discussion. Plasticity stands in then for the real base structure of society, unlike Kojève's Marxist-influenced model of action and work, where "verbal" dialectics of interpretation were considered its super-structure. Therefore, Malabou potentially exposes the process of plasticity to the fate of an open-ended "spurious infinite", where the "excess of the future over the future" can never fully sublated or mastered, and that no amount of objective-reality or assumed harmonious state of social relations could overcome the plasticity of Spirit.⁸² On this point, the only basis Malabou provides from the Hegelian text is in the 1831 preface to the *Science of Logic* concerning "plastic discourse".⁸³ This idiomatic hermeneutic highlighted by Malabou is made possible by Hegel's view that there is no superior language for speculative philosophy as every language participates in it. Without this clause, Malabou is aware of the objection that such a model of reading may be "nothing but simple repetition, with no invention at all"—that Kojève himself risked suggesting due to his post-historical model of pure stasis.⁸⁴ Furthermore, without perhaps knowing it, Malabou is heeding Kojève's wager, more so than he had—that new "active" and engaged readings will decide Hegel's future, but not in the sense of *once and for all* or without "surprise". Important to Malabou's concept of plasticity is its openness to criticisms and its continual re-invention. This is the point where her idea of the future differentiates from the others in that she reflexively discusses plasticity in a way that risks its own transformation. Jean-Paul Martinon argues that Malabou's concept of plasticity cannot be grasped with a strict method of critique or even commentary, but only "*set it in another context*" by "testing" it so to speak, and seeing if it is "*truly plastic*".⁸⁵ Plasticity is not simply reducible to a single method or strategy of reading or acting, be it normative, or deconstructive.

I think Malabou has noted something philosophically important about the future—the formal aspect of it—it is dependent upon this act of "giving form" to what is coming. Philosophy itself is a dialogue of giving form to thought (*Denkformen*) and receiving it and re-forming, and so on.⁸⁶ Philosophical readings create "new meanings" of propositions by the simple production of new propositions in return. To ask whether Hegel really intended such a meaning and implication of plasticity in his work might miss the point of Malabou's strategy here—it seems she believes this is the only way to save Hegel and the future in its dialectical sense from the Heideggerian and deconstructive counter-strategies. Her strategy is not to save the future in Heidegger's self-understanding of it as perhaps Koyré arguably tried, nor follow Kojève attempt to disprove that "*history refuted Hegelianism*", but tarry with the forces unleashed by Heideggerian "*destruktion*" and after the linguistic turn, Derridean deconstruction, and to propose that they have not "refuted" the core of Hegelian plasticity. However, despite its initial advantages, there is a problem with taking this path toward a Hegelian plasticity too far. Although, Malabou questions the "arbitrary exegesis" that anything goes with interpretation and tries to differentiate plasticity from elasticity, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what makes a *good* "plastic" (speculative) reading here, especially when knowing or presupposing a "meta"-plastic form is barred. There is a sense in her analysis that the content and context involved in interpretations is secondary to the plastic and transformative process of the form received and returned. With Kojève's analysis, there was at least, before his late period, a view that one should not interpret or read Hegel out of "purely literary interest", but that one's reading of Hegel should determine the basis of a form of praxis or ideological struggle that could directly influence and change our political-social relations, by way of creating new "objectivations" of mutual recognition.⁸⁷ But for Malabou, the value of reading Hegel seems to chiefly lie in making possible the eternal return of the "gift" of plasticity itself, rather than as Kojève would have it, in realising or giving universal objectivity to one's interpretation and political ideal via collective action. The implication would be to maintain a plurality of meaning continues and arguably make Kojève's "future of the world" an unending process and end in-itself.

Malabou's theory of plasticity serves to save both a sense of finitude and teleology to Hegel's thinking of the future, yet she does so in a way that implies no form of thought or life is immune enough to its own radical transformation. It is not entirely clear then whether she has saved plasticity from exposure to indeterminacy, or Derrida's own "*relève*" of a "Hegelianism without reserve".⁸⁸ It is of arguable significance that in her writings

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published after *The Future of Hegel*, she has turned toward a more materialist theory of plasticity based in the biological and neurological sphere, rather than in relations between labour and capital. Whether this strategy signifies a retreat or reluctance in dealing with the specificity involved and difficulty of changing the social and political forms of mediation is open to debate. Nevertheless, Malabou considers her project one that concerns pursuing the revolutionary potential of plasticity. However, plasticity is still presented as a double-edge sword, which Malabou is to her credit aware of—where the assumed Hegelian “Sunday of Life” that brings plasticity to the surface, risks the “peril of” leaving us still in the shadow of Kojève’s post-historical condition that struck figures before her from Georges Bataille to Giorgio Agamben. As she ends her book, she reflects on this issue of risk in the plastic (post-Hegelian) age:

[T]he major problem of our time is in fact the arrival of *free time*. *Technological* simplification, the shortening of distances ... bring about a state where there is nothing more to do. The most sterile aspect of the future lies in unemployment, both economic and metaphysical, which it promises. But this promise is also a promise of novelty, a promise that there are forms of life which must be invented.⁸⁹

The issue of whether the emergence of “free time” in modernity converts into new political tasks or humanised “projects” was one Kojève briefly ruminated on just after the War, and noted its philosophical importance for both Aristotle and Marx.⁹⁰ But does plasticity really deliver socio-historical changes that enhance the freedom of modern life in the public realm via public institutions or practices? How can Malabou transition from the plasticity in Hegel’s work with its remnant of future temporality to a specific form of politics or resistance that attempts to give the future a new and more singular direction as well as form? One concern is how it insures itself against de-politicisation or being assimilated into the self-making industries of late capitalism. But it is Malabou’s chapter on Hegel’s anthropology, drawn from the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Mind* rather than Koyré and Kojève’s resource the *Phenomenology*, which holds an important place in her overall theory of plasticity and connecting to the real everyday lives of people. For it is in her interpretation of Hegel’s later anthropology that she is better able to relate plasticity to concrete aspects of a human condition. Here the analysis focuses on the re-duplication of “habit” as the human being’s capacity for *bildung*, or formation of a “second nature” that distinguishes it from the another object in the natural world.⁹¹ Whilst Kojève considered the question of humanity’s emergence from nature to be “undeducible” in naturalistic terms, Malabou presents a more robust materialist anthropology than Kojève’s rather “spiritual” dialectic of anthropogenesis, which ended up in anthropological formalism and symbolic re-enactment of negation. Unlike his late gesture of formal negation as a way out of biological reductionism(s) the “timeless” future may bring, Malabou believes life after Hegel is not a repetition of the same, nor a process of “reanimalization” or simple re-naturalisation, but a life exemplified by a free and self-conscious life of habit. She has in mind here habits that enable the “mechanism of self-feeling”—the reduplication of human negativity (“non-biological desire”) in symbolic yet plastic practices and projects, which with Aristotelian inspiration involve the “work of the art of the soul.” Life understood in terms of plasticity is neither a passive animalistic life of consumption, nor an active life of a “sovereign” subject detached from the natural world without need of substitution. Plasticity negotiates the interaction between the symbolic and the natural worlds. Malabou argues, “what is exemplary in man is less human-ness than his status as an *insistent accident*.” Humans are like “plastic individuals,” giving presence to a singularity that converts accidents or improvisations into “an *essence a posteriori*.”⁹² The contingent becomes essential—the “accident” of our evolutionary development our unique strength. Following the existential terms that preoccupied Koyré and Kojève, Malabou reappraises the view that for Hegel human beings have no fixed or eternal substance—the Hegelian human is one concerned with habit-creation. This revaluation of habit provides a way of understanding the need to keep the “speculative clock alive” and the sense of time as future-directed (“*voir venir*”). For without the activities our capacity for habit render and shape in us, we could “not know how to tell time” or really be alive and know ourselves with a strong sense of finitude, and the work of Spirit throughout history would risk becoming undone.⁹³ Even though this aspect of Malabou’s consideration of plasticity in everyday life is significant, how one preserves the practice and culture of habit from being reduced to “technological simplification” and losing its vitality still poses a challenge to the dialectic of plasticity.

Besides these considerations, Malabou's *The Future of Hegel* has at least opened up the debate on what the future means in Hegel, and not let post-war schisms undermine it or foreclose its discussion. The value of her book lies not just in its risk of giving Hegel *another* chance, but also freeing the very conditions of Hegelian temporality from the simple terms of negation and otherness that were arguably over-emphasised by Koyré and Kojève. But as for the applications of a Hegelian plasticity in a socio-historical context, further discussion or "testing" is needed over the possible implications. Not to say Malabou's analysis *could not* be transposed into political, social, or ethical theory—but the way in which plasticity would be adopted in such a case I think would be arguably more complex than the connections she has shown between plasticity and philosophy and reading. Malabou herself has considered the issue of the application of plasticity since the publication of *The Future of Hegel* and delved into the field of neuroscience to discuss plasticity in more detail—noting in her observations that Hegel's System is not essentially different from the systems of neurobiology. In part, this recent part of her work again raises the significance of the dynamic role of the biological element in the re-duplication of our "second" (humanised and temporal) nature. Yet it is still difficult to know how plasticity can actually resist the logic of late capitalism given that one could argue it reflects the process of capital and commodification rather than being distorted by it. In her book on neuroscience, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* Malabou recognises the pitfalls of a "neuronal ideology of flexibility," which she knows enough not to mistake for a political basis for resistance. But she remains committed to distinguishing plasticity from flexibility and elasticity, by arguing that it holds a tension and turbulence that can resist change as well as will it, and for this reason, provide an "emancipatory political understanding".⁹⁴ She has, I would argue, made her speculative wager on neurology to help plasticity overcome both the stalemates of traditional Hegelianism(s) and their deconstruction—but one wonders if it will deliver in actuality the revolutionary potential she seeks. Žižek is one commentator who has kept an eye on the political implications of plasticity. Awakened by the possibility of a dialectical union between materialism and neuroscience, Žižek poses an important response to Malabou and with it the "cognitivist Hegel" reading:

... in terms of plasticity, do we mean by this merely a capacity for infinite accommodation to the needs and conditions given in advance by our environs—in which we can get the infinitely adaptable "protean self"—or do we mean a Self capable of "negativity," of resisting and subverting the pressures of its environs, of breaking out of "self-maintenance" whose ideal is to maintain one's homeostasis.⁹⁵

Even if Malabou rejects the dichotomy between reductionist arguments of natural science and anti-reductionist ones from philosophy, she may still be speculating and investing too much in the brain and presupposing there is an untapped immanent excess there or dialectical potential that awaits its own release.⁹⁶ As Derrida would say there is an essential "Undecidability" in the framework of Malabou's speculative *oeuvre*, which for better or worse, resists anticipating its own implications.⁹⁷ She frames the whole question of the future as one involves a risk of thinking and being open to possibility and transformation. Although she circumvents the "impasse" of the end of time confronted by Koyré and Kojève, it is another question whether a theory of plasticity is enough to reinvigorate the historical or political meaning of the future to the point of compelling us to take the risk of projecting ourselves into it through action. What this implies is that the speculation of the future in and of Hegel needs to continue—but transitioning from the question of *that* there is a future to *what* do we want the future to be, and *how* will it be realised.

RORY JEFFS is a PhD candidate in philosophy at Deakin University. His thesis is a critical examination of the work and legacy of the Russian-born French Hegelian philosopher Alexandre Kojève, and its philosophical and political reception in the work of Georges Bataille, Leo Strauss, and Carl Schmitt.

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NOTES

1. Jacques Derrida, "Preface: A Time for Farewells Heidegger (read by) Hegel (read by) Malabou." Trans. Joseph D. Cohen, in Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, viii.
2. Alexandre Kojève, "Hegel, Marx and Christianity (1946)." Trans. Hilail Gildin. *Interpretation* 1 (Summer 1970), 41. Hereafter as *HMC*.
3. Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic*. Trans. Lisabeth During. New York: Routledge, 2005, 1. Hereafter as *FH*. Originally published in French in 1996 as *L'Avenir de Hegel*.
4. Slavoj Žižek, "Preface: Hegel's Century" *Hegel and Infinity: Religion, Politics, and the Dialectic*. Eds. Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, Creston Davis. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, xi.
5. See Malabou, *FH*, 4. What she actually writes is: "If we fail to be aware that the idea of the future has, as it were, a 'future', then we would be ourselves guilty of 'levelling down' that very future and, in a sense lagging behind it."
6. See Derrida, "Preface", xi. See also Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 2003.
7. See Derrida, "Preface", xviii–xix. Derrida also says Heidegger simply reinforced this critique in the 1930–31 lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, xx. It is also worth considering Heidegger's other writings on Hegel, such as *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. See also the post-war essays and seminars, "Hegel's Concept of Experience" *Off The Beaten Track*. Ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 86–156; and "The Onto-Theological Constitution of Metaphysics" *Identity and Difference*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper & Row, 1969, 42–74.
8. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, § 82, 483. Hereafter as *BT*. Heidegger paraphrases Hegel as saying, "[t]he being of time is the 'now' [*Jetzt*]"'. Yet Hegel differentiates between the "now" and "present", as he says, "the vanishing of the differences [present, future and past] into singularity is the present as "*Now* [*Jetzt*]"', whilst the "true Present [*Gegen-wart*]" is eternity," which does not exclude time, but is the unity of past-present-future, which is not a "flowing stream", see G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, §259, 37–39, and § 238 [Zusatz], 35. Of note is that Hegel had used the word "*Jetzt*" in the dialectic of Sense Certainty, see *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, §102–07, 62–64. Koyré also discusses distinctions see endnote 23 below.
9. See Aristotle, *Aristotle's Physics*. Trans. Hippocrates G. Apostle. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1969. Book IV: 10–14.
10. Heidegger, *BT*, 483. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature* § 259, 37. The 'Mechanics' section is from §253–71 (28–84).
11. See Heidegger, *BT* § 65, 373–76.
12. See Heidegger, *BT*, 486. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 801, 487.
13. See Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 82 and 38–39. The "farewell to time" quote is cited in Malabou, *FH*, 4.
14. Alexandre Koyré, "Present Trends of French Philosophical Thought." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59:3 (July 1998, 534).
15. In his lecture series on the *Phenomenology*, Heidegger critiqued the connections his colleague at Marburg, Nicolai Hartmann, had made between Husserl and Hegel's phenomenological methods as "misleading". See Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 21, 28–29. Cf. Hartmann, "Hegel et le Problème de la Dialectique du Réel." Trans. R. L. Klee. *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* 38:3 (Juillet-Septembre 1931, 307). Both Koyré and Kojève acknowledged Hartmann's connection and would interpret Hegel as a phenomenologist in the Husserlian and Heideggerian sense. The "exile" reference relates to Koyré's analysis of Hegel's (non)reception in France in his 1931 conference paper, "Rapport sur l'état des études hégéliennes en France" *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971, 225–252.
16. Hegel, *Jenenser Logik, Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie*. Ed. Lasson. Leipzig, 1923 [1804–05 Lectures]; *Jenenser Realphilosophie I*. Ed. Hoffmeister. Leipzig, 1932 [1803–04 Lectures], *Jenenser Realphilosophie II*. Ed. Hoffmeister. Leipzig, 1931 [1805–06 Lectures].
17. Alexandre Koyré, "Hegel à Iéna [1934]" *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique*, 147–190. Hereafter as *HI*. All translations from this text as well as other texts by Koyré will be my own. See also, Koyré, *De la mystique à la science: Cours, conférences et documents: 1922–62*. Ed. Pietro Redondi. Paris: Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. 1986, 25, 41–42. Koyré wrote in the course *annuaire* for the 1932–33 semester that he used Hegel's *Theological Writings* and the Lasson editions of the *Jenenser Logik* and *Jenenser Realphilosophie*.
18. Koyré, "Note sur la langue et la terminologie hégéliennes" *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique*, 212–13. All translations from this text are my own. Koyré links this "timeless becoming" to the influence of Jacob Boehme and Nicolas De Cusa on Hegel, and questions John McTaggart's interpretation of it to mean a "timeless state" in *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*.
19. Picking out one marginal note from the incomplete 1803–04 lectures, Koyré cites Hegel (from the *Jenenser Realphiloso-*

phie I): “spirit is time, *Geist ist Zeit*.” Koyré adds, “Hoffmeister proposes the correction: spirit is in time, *Geist ist IN DER Zeit*.” Yet he does not follow Hoffmeister’s correction and is adamant that “[t]he Hegelian Spirit is time.” Koyré, *HI*, 179. In the 1938–39 semester of his Hegel Course, Kojève analyses the same note, and says: “In the Jena Lectures, Hegel had said: ‘*Geist ist Zeit*’: ‘Spirit is Time’. Here [in the *Phenomenology*], he says: “*Der Geist erscheint in der Zeit*”; “Spirit appears in Time”. Has he changed his opinion? I don’t think so. It is, according to me, a simple terminological difference.” See Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel: leçons sur La phénoménologie de l’esprit, professées de 1933 à 1939 à l’École des hautes-études*. Ed. Raymond Queneau. Paris: Gallimard. TEL Edition, 1968, 386. Hereafter as *ILH*. All translations from this text and other cited texts from Kojève in French are my own. I will also be citing from the English translation: *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*. Trans. James H. Nichols Jr. Ed. Allan Bloom. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1980. Hereafter as *IRH*. See also Hyppolite’s 1938 article, “The Concept of Life and Consciousness in Hegel’s Jena Philosophy” *Studies on Marx and Hegel*. Trans. John O’Neill. New York and London: Basic Books, 1969, 13. Hyppolite connects Hegel’s marginal note to the *Phenomenology*. It is worth noting too that Heidegger in his reading of the Jena-period of Hegel refers only to the Lasson’s 1923 publication and claims “[i]n the *Jena Logic* [1804–05]... the analysis of time in the *Encyclopaedia* has been developed in all its essential parts.” See Heidegger, *BT*, fn. xxx, 500. See also Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 77–78.

20. See Koyré, *HI*, 165–73 (trans. *Jena Logic*) and 180–87 (trans. *Jena Realphilosophie II*). Koyré incorrectly claims that Hegel wrote the *Jena Logic* manuscripts in 1802, citing the 1915 Ehrenberg edition, which had been re-edited by Lasson. *HI*, 152, fn.4. The real dates being during the 1804–05 lectures as pointed out by Philip Grier. See “The End of History and The Return of History” *Hegel: Myths and Legends*. Ed. Jon Stewart. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996, 186. The correct dates for the manuscripts were never confirmed until Heinz Kimmerle wrote up a detailed chronology in 1967; see “Zur Chronologie von Hegels Jenaer Schriften.” *Hegel-Studien* 4 (1967, 125–176). It is worth noting too that Heidegger in his reading of the Jena-period of Hegel refers only to the same Lasson edition as Koyré and claims “[i]n the *Jena Logic* [1804–05]... the analysis of time in the *Encyclopaedia* has been developed in all its essential parts.” See Heidegger *BT*, 500, n. xxx. See also, Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 77–78.

21. Koyré, *HI*, 162, fn. 3; see also 166, 177 and 187 (for the “esoteric” reference). Interestingly, Herbert Marcuse interprets these same Jena manuscripts featuring the word “*Unruhe*” in terms of the movement of “life” (qua historicity), not time. See Herbert Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*. Trans. Seyla Benhabib. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987, 60, 219–227. In contrast to Koyré, Marcuse sees continuity between Hegel’s use of “life” in the Frankfurt *Systemfragment* (See *Early Theological Writings*. Trans. T.M. Knox, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, 309–320) and the Jena Manuscripts, which for him, builds up a tension with the later *Logic*. See also Hyppolite, “The Concept of Life and Consciousness in Hegel’s Jena Philosophy,” 3–21. Of note too is that Jean-Luc Nancy uses “*inquiétude*” for “*Unruhe*” in the title and subject of his book *The Restlessness of the Negative*. Trans. Jason Smith and Steven Miller, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002. The translator noting its sense in French has more of an “affective inflection”, 114–15.

22. Koyré, *HI*, 163. See also 179, fn.1.

23. See Koyré, *HI*, 170. Koyré underlines Hegel’s distinction between “*Gegen-wart*” (the present) and “*Jetzt*” (“*maintenant*”—in English—“the now”). He says in a footnote that the time of nature is “*Jetzt*”—that is, an “abstract eternity” rather than the concrete eternity of the “*l’instant*”, which is a “living and *inquiète* unity” or, “what, with Hegel, we call the “present” [*présent*].” See *HI*, 175–177. See also Derrida’s discussion of these two German terms in Hegel and Heidegger and the issue concerning “the metaphysics of presence [*maintenance*]”. Derrida had noted that in §259 of the *Philosophy of Nature* Hegel’s discussion of the “present” both “confirm and challenge” the Heideggerian interpretation. See “*Ousia and Grammē*: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*” *Margins of Philosophy*. Trans. Alan Bass, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982, 33–67.

24. See *HI*, 160, fn. 1. Kojève presents Koyré’s analysis of the structure of Hegelian temporality this way: “future → past → present (→ future)”. *IRH*, 134.

25. *HI*, 177. Koyré describes Heidegger’s *Dasein* in similar terms, see “L’évolution philosophique de Martin Heidegger” *Études d’histoire de la pensée philosophique*, 279–80.

26. *HI*, 177. cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology* § 361–62, 218.

27. Grier, “The End of History and The Return of History”, 187–88. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, 29, 34.

28. Koyré, *HI*, 178. Koyré compares this kind of time to Bergson’s just as Heidegger did in *Being and Time* (500–01, n. xxx). Koyré also adds more importantly that Hegel’s distinction between “now” and “present” had been abandoned in the 1805–6 manuscripts (183).

29. Koyré, *HI*, 189. My emphases. Cf. Koyré, “Note”, 215. Koyré though had difficulty interpreting whether Hegel meant human beings were essentially within eternity or within time. Koyré argues, “one is, of course, within them both, for time alone allows the realization of dialectical development since alone, being negation and death, it is also the source of movement and life.” Marcuse and Hyppolite also perceived Absolute Knowledge as a “timeless” and ahistorical form of knowledge, with Hyppolite claiming not to perceive any “clear solution to these problems” of how it interacts with time itself. See Marcuse, *Hegel’s Ontology*, 227; Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. Samuel

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Cherniak and John Heckman. Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974, 596. See also, Hannah Arendt, *The Life of Mind: Volume II, Willing*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic, 1978, 39–51. Arendt considers Koyré's essay "brilliant" and argues, "Hegel's ultimate failure to reconcile the two mental activities, willing and thinking, with their opposing time concepts, seems to me evident, but he himself would have disagreed."

30. Koyré, *HI*, 153.

31. See Baugh, *French Hegel*, 27. Joseph Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1984, 406. On the "spurious infinite", see endnote 36 below. Koyré had said to neglect the necessity of the System and focus exclusively on the less-systematic ideas of Hegel's youth would be pursuing "the image of the young romantic Hegel". And by "neglecting the works of mature age... you would run a great risk: to misunderstand and misinterpret the 'Hegelian' Hegel, that of the *Logic*. More precisely: the fact of focusing on the work of youth already implies, *ipso facto*, a disregard [*mésestimé*] and ignorance [*méconnaissance*] of the *Logic*." *HI*, 149–51.

32. Grier, "The End of History and the Return of History," 189. See endnote 20 above on the issue of the date cited.

33. See Kojève, *ILH*, 57. Furthermore, Kojève says that if he had not read Heidegger, he would not have really understood Hegel's *Phenomenology*. *IRH*, 259, fn. 41. Kojève acknowledges the influence of Koyré and Heidegger in *Le Concept, Le Temps et le Discours: Introduction au système du savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990, 32–33; *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne I*. Paris: Gallimard, 1968, 165, n.3.

34. Kojève refers to ontological dualism as "correcting" Hegel's "error" of dialectical monism in the *Introduction*. Kojève, *IRH*, 212–15. Kojève also refers to many other corrections as part of his planned "update [*mise à jour*]" of the Hegelian System. For example, his interpretation of the "desire of desire" in terms of the struggle for pure prestige, and presenting Hegel as a "realist" rather than an idealist in the Fichtean tradition. Realism for Kojève meant the "real" natural world was not reducible to dialectical knowledge per se, as the dialectic was limited to the results of the "interaction" between nature and man, and hence, presupposes an independent reality. See *IRH*, 152–53.

35. See Kojève, *IRH*, 134, fn. 21. Kojève often makes the nature-human distinction, but he does outline also differences between "cosmological" or "physical" time, which bears the primacy of "presence [*Gegenwart*]", and the structure of "biological" time, which contains a primacy of the past.

36. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*. Trans. A.V. Miller. New York: Amherst Books, 1969, 142. On the difference between "spurious infinity" and its "true" or "affirmative infinity", see *Science of Logic*, 137–50. For Hegel's critique of Newton, see *Philosophy of Nature*, 66–77.

37. See Kojève, *IRH*, 177–78, fn. 2. Before his Hegel Course, Kojève had submitted a dissertation on quantum physics to the Sorbonne in 1932. See *L'idée du déterminisme dans la physique classique et dans la physique modern*. Paris: Librairie générale française, 1990. The dissertation argued that quantum mechanics proved the impossibility of the model of classical determinism as it is outlined by Laplace's theorem that held if there was an "Intelligence" which could know the location and motion of every object in the universe one could know everything about the Universe and know all future motion.

38. See Kojève, *Le Concept, Le Temps et le Discours: Introduction au système du savoir*. This was the first part of his "introduction" to the System, adding four more volumes that also comprised this "introduction", see *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, 3 Vols, Gallimard, Paris, 1968–73; *Kant*, Gallimard, Paris 1973. One part of this post-War "*mise à jour*" of the Hegelian System included a planned philosophy of nature called "energo-logy" which would correct Hegel's and incorporate in it the implications of quantum mechanics.

39. Kojève, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel (1947)" *G.W.F. Hegel: Critical Assessment Volume II: Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Readings: From British Hegelianism to the Frankfurt School*. Trans. Joseph J. Carpino. Ed. Robert Stern. London and New York: Routledge, 1993, 315.

40. Kojève, *IRH*, 136–37, fn. 25. One of Kojève's examples of a "project" is Julius Caesar crossing the Rubicon as an act of civil war, where Caesar's "*past* distinguishes it [the act] from a simple 'dream' or 'utopia'". See also Kojève's 1942 manuscript *La notion de l'autorité*—which continues the association of a future-oriented temporality with the idea of a "project", in this instance forming the basis of the authority of leaders and revolutionaries. See *La notion de l'autorité*. Ed. François Terré, Paris: Gallimard, 2004, 72–76, 126, 144–45.

41. For Hegel, "that which is genuinely permanent and substantial in the complexity and contingency of appearance and fleeting manifestation, is the notion [*Begriff*] of the thing, the immanent universal . . . the universal which is the thought itself". Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 36–37 [n.b. Miller translation]. Kojève describes the concept as "the complete system of concepts, the 'idea of ideas,' or the Idea". Kojève, *IRH*, 101.

42. Kojève, *IRH*, 131–32. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology* § 46, 27. Hegel's sentence is: "As for time, which it is to be presumed would constitute, as the counterpart of space, the material of the other part of pure mathematics, it is the existent Notion [*Begriff*] itself."

43. Hegel, *Phenomenology* § 801, 487. The German: "*Die Zeit ist der Begriff Selbst, der da ist*". Kojève cites the German and then translates it. He adds, "it must be understood that in writing this strange sentence, Hegel weighed his words carefully." Kojève, *IRH*, 101. Koyré also emphasizes both of these Hegel quotes. See Koyré, *HI*, 185, and "Note", 216–220.

44. Malabou, *FH*, 1. Cf. Heidegger, *BT*, 485. Kojève though thinks Heidegger also realises that the "Concept=Time", and

footnotes that this new understanding of time “needs to be *developed*, to be *realized*; for I personally believe that this has not yet been done.” Kojève, *IRH*, 102, fn.1.

45. Kojève, *IRH*, 148.

46. See Michael S. Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth Century France*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988, 143–44.

47. Kojève, *IRH*, 107. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology* § 802, 488.

48. See Hegel, *Phenomenology* § 801, 487.

49. John W. Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 1992, 80.

50. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature* § 258, “Remark”, 35. Interestingly, Hegel goes onto to say that the notion of eternity (that Kojève believes we fall back into) should not be grasped “as existing, as it were, outside of time”. Cf. Heidegger, *BT*, 485.

51. Kojève, *ILH*, 385. See also, 388–89, fn.1. All Kojève’s passages on the “Book” are not included in the English translation of the *Introduction*. To illustrate how this form of “post-historical” reading is nothing unique, Kojève says, “Paul’s future which has not yet read the Book is Peter’s past who has already read it”. (385).

52. Kojève, *ILH*, 388, fn. Cf. Kojève, *HMC*, 36, 39.

53. Kojève, *ILH*, 393–394. Cf. Malabou, *FH*, 3. “From this standpoint, everything that occurs can only be the indicated of what has already come to pass; everything still in the future is simply a potential return to itself.” Malabou closely reads Hegel’s relation to Aristotle, but in a way that differs from Kojève.

54. Baugh, *French Hegel*, 27.

55. See Kojève, *IRH*, 159–62, Revised fn. [n.b. Nichols translates “*doit*” as “must”]; also at *ILH*, 437. Kojève’s footnote written in 1962 was a revision of his earlier (circa 1946) footnote that viewed that the “American way of life” represented the “post-historical” condition, and now turns to “the Japanese way of life” as far more post-historical, with its practices of snobbery, and formal cultural activities that represent “formal negations” without historical content. Derrida closely reads into this revision, scrutinising Kojève’s strange use of the word “*doit*”, which he finds signifies as indicating for Kojève that “there is some promise and there is some historicity as future-to-come.” Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994, 92. Derrida’s reading brings attention also to the changing nature of Kojève’s speculative “sketches [*esquisses*]” of the “universal and homogenous State” he says will emerge at the end of history (e.g. from a Socialist Empire to the European Union).

56. Malabou, *FH*, 6.

57. See Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*. Trans. Carolyn Shread. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, 23, and also 87, fn. 11. She even says in this text, reflecting on *The Future of Hegel* that in Kojève, Koyré, and Hyppolite’s readings of Hegel, “a figure of Heidegger [is] speaking under a pseudonym.”

58. See Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 9. See also Justin Clemens, “The Age of Plastic: Or, Catherine Malabou on the Futures Market.” *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 6:1 (2010, 154–157). Interestingly, Jean-Paul Martinon suggests Malabou may be continuing Derrida’s reading of Hegel, but taking it in a direction away from relativism. See Martinon, *On Futurity*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 31.

59. Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 5.

60. Malabou, *FH*, 4.

61. Malabou, *FH*, 14. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §258, 34. As cited earlier, Koyré used this quote from Hegel to describe only “human” time. See also Derrida, “*Ousia and Gramme*”, 44.

62. Malabou, *FH*, 133. See also *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 32–33.

63. See Kojève, “Letter to [Carl] Schmitt, 11/VII/55.” *Interpretation* 29:1 (Fall 2001, 103). Cf. Hegel, *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Trans. T.M. Knox. Revised. Ed. Stephen Houlgate. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 15–16.

64. Malabou, *FH*, 6.

65. Malabou, *FH*, 8. Plasticity derives from the Greek word “*plessein*” (“to model” or “mould”) and in its modern sense implies things “susceptible to change”. Malabou also draws comparisons of plasticity to human beings, namely children, who are “plastic”. Sculpture provides a useful analogy for Malabou, as it involves the transformation of an object into a form which cannot be changed back to its original state. Kojève did not use the word plasticity per se, but did argue human beings “mould” themselves through work and education. See Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*. Ed. Bryan Paul-Frost. Trans. Bryan-Paul Frost and Robert Howse. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, 432 and also §65, 398–413.

66. See Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art, Volume II*. Trans. T.M. Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, 719 [Section II]. Sculpture was listed by Hegel himself as “the genuinely plastic” art “par excellence” (709, 722). Malabou also cites Hegel’s ‘Preface’ to the *Phenomenology* as another occasion where he uses the word “*plastisch*”, *FH*, 11; *Phenomenology of Spirit* §64, 39. It should be noted that Jean-Luc Nancy had also discussed Hegel’s use of plasticity. See *The Speculative Remark: One of Hegel’s Bon Mots*. Trans. Céline Surprenant. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2002, Ch.1.

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67. Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 50, 66. Cf. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*. Trans. William Wallace and A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, §377 [Zusatz] and § 384 [Zusatz]. For Hegel, the Absolute has no Absolute Other.
68. See Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 65–66. For the “[iron] cage” reference to Kojève, see Roth, *Knowing and History*, 139.
69. Malabou, *FH*, 13. Translator Lisabeth During explains the parenthesis as “marking the reserve inherent in the waiting.” In *FH*, xlix. Cf. Martinon, *On Futurity*, 44. In standard French, “*voir venir*” means to wait, to observe how events are developing, and also, to be able see where someone is going with something or some point.
70. Derrida, “Preface,” xiii.
71. Malabou, *FH*, 13, 18.
72. Malabou, *FH*, 17–18. She explains it in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing* as “the form of the dialectic without its meta-physical understanding.” 53.
73. Žižek, “Preface: Hegel’s Century,” xi. Cf. Kojève, *IRH*, 159–61, fn. [revised]; also *ILH*, 145–60.
74. See Malabou, *FH*, 4, 134, 187. The explosiveness of plasticity is very important for Malabou, as it explains not only the fragility of form, but capacity of plasticity to explode “whole centuries of discourse”.
75. Bernard Bourgeois cited by Malabou, *FH*, 185. This also recalls Derrida’s comment: “We will never be finished with the reading or rereading of Hegel... [as] it is something more than the circular closure of its representation.” Derrida, *Positions*. Trans. A. Bass, London: Continuum, 2004, 65.
76. See Malabou, “You Be My Body for Me: Body, Shape, and Plasticity” *A Companion to Hegel*. Ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur. Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011, 615. Malabou says, “[i]n the end, Kojève asserts that the genuine spirit’s body is the ‘book’ that the ‘wise man’ (in Absolute Knowledge) has been able to write”.
77. See Malabou, *FH*, 144–46. Malabou uses Derrida’s translation of *Aufhebung* as “*relève*” to capture its three-fold meaning. See *Margins of Philosophy*, 121. In his Hegel Course, Kojève used more stronger words such as “‘*suppression-dialectique*’”, but reflected later that “[u]nfortunately, any translation of this common German word cannot render its triple meaning, which signifies at once suppression or annulation, conservation and elevation or sublimation. This is why I am obliged to replace it by an artificial and technical term, composed elsewhere, as ‘dialectical-suppression’ for example.” See *Essai d’une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, 80–81. Cf. Koyré, “Note”, 209, 223–24. Heidegger, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 28. For Hegel’s own explanation of the *Aufhebung*, see *Science of Logic* ‘Remark,’ 106–08.
78. See Malabou, *FH*, 156–57; Hegel, *Phenomenology* §33, 20. Cf. Kojève, *IRH*, 157–58, fn.5, and 168. Malabou translates “*aufgeben*” as “*dessaisissement*”, the latter of which has connotations of relinquishment or withdrawing a case from court. For Kojève, Hegel’s use of “*aufgeben*” meant: Absolute Knowledge “is selfless (*selbst-los*)—that is, inhuman. In it, the Subject (Thought, Concept, and so on) coincides with the *Object*.” And consequently, this means the “necessary abandonment of *Individuality*.”
79. Malabou, *FH*, 144–45. Cf. “You Be My Body for Me”, 624. Malabou says, “The anonymous self of Spirit emerges [at Absolute Knowledge], which gives up forever its own struggling essence. The abandonment will never give way to a reattachment. Neither a book [à la Kojève] nor a sovereign [à la Bataille], this new form of self without inwardness, without externality, is subjected neither to anyone nor to anything. It is not even attached to itself.”
80. Malabou accepts a closed immanent totality, but she frames it as one that is “plastic”. See “A Conversation with Catherine Malabou,” *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory* 9:1 (Winter 2008, 1–13). 10. Žižek also re-interprets the closed circle with the metaphor of the Möbius Band (“inner eight”). See *For They Do Not Know What They Do*. London and New York: Verso. Second Edition, 2008, 218–19. It should be noted that Hegel insisted on the “circularity” of his System, which corresponded to a “true infinity” rather than the line of the “infinite progress”. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 71, 149 and 842.
81. Malabou, *FH*, 13, see also 168. Malabou does not cite the source of this quote from Hegel (“philosophize in one’s idiom”), although she refers to Hegel’s passages on philosophical language in the *Science of Logic* (32). Malabou also refers to “ventriloquism” as another idiomatic strategy used by Kojève, Derrida, Bataille, and Butler in their readings of Hegel, in “You Be My Body”, 616–17.
82. Malabou, *FH*, 6. cf. Kojève, *HMC*, 34 and 41.
83. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 40 and 42.
84. Malabou, *FH*, 189. Cf. Kojève, *ILH*, 393.
85. Martinon, *On Futurity*, 32, 36. Hence, Martinon approaches Malabou’s book with the “*idiomatic plastic test*” of translating plasticity into English and finding a new idiom (34–35). His example is using the word “*sollen*” in terms of “*voir venir*” to mean “what ought to come”. (54)
86. Philosophy’s form is ambiguous as Malabou explains, and unlike, faith and art, “philosophy does not have its own object... it is unable to put its own content *in front* of itself, to bring itself face to face with its own content.” *FH*, 138, also 137, 151. Even though Hegel critiques philosophers who disavow “determinate universality” (i.e. form), he still realizes in the *Science of Logic*, that “the process of *determining what the absolute is* has a negative outcome, and the absolute itself

appears only as the negation of all predicates and as the void. But since equally it must be pronounced to be the position of all predicates, it appears as the most formal contradiction.” *Science of Logic*, 530. Cf. Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 55—where Malabou refers to an “antiform ideology” being prevalent in aesthetic theory.

87. See Kojève, *HMC*, 40–41. See Roth, *Knowing and History*, 144–45, who discusses this side of Kojève’s thought before his later period.

88. See Derrida, “From Restricted Economy to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve.” In *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Alan Bass. Oxon: Routledge Classics, 1978, 317–350. See also Bruno Bosteels, “Hegel in America”. In *Hegel and Infinity: Religion, Politics, and the Dialectic*, 76–78. Bosteels critiques the “finitist Hegel” epitomised for him by Nancy’s reading, but arguably also present in Malabou’s analysis too.

89. Malabou, *FH*, p. 192. Cf. Bataille, “Letter to X, Lecturer on Hegel,” in *The Bataille Reader*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, 296–301; also, Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*. Trans. Kevin Attell. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 2001.

90. See Kojève, “Outline of a Doctrine of French Policy”. Trans. Erik De Vries. *Policy Review* 126, (August–September 2004, 3–40). Kojève wrote this document as a memorandum sent to General de Gaulle in 1945 on how to reconstruct France after the War. Afterwards, Kojève worked for the French Ministry of Economic Affairs and remained there until his death in 1968. He was also one of the chief architects of the European Common Market in 1957.

91. See Malabou, *FH*, 21–76. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, 25–152. Malabou does argue that a human beings second nature is not a sublation, but a “re-duplication” of nature, and uses the analogy of a “mirror stage” of spirit and “virtuality”. *FH*, 26, 55.

92. Malabou, *FH*, 73.

93. Malabou, *FH*, 75–76. Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind* §410, 140–47. See also Hegel, *Philosophy of Right* §151 (Addition), 159–60. Of note is Malabou’s use of Aristotle’s theory of potentiality (*dunamis*) to illustrate Hegel’s argument on habit as representing “the possibility of future time which runs ahead of presence (*entelechy*)”. *FH*, 50. Cf. Kojève, *Outline of a Phenomenology of Right*, §65, 398–413. Kojève describes family life, education and cultural rites and habits as humanity “in potentiality”, but he still distinguishes this from humanity “in actuality” represented by the historical negativity which involves struggle and labour and the status of the “post-historical” citizen.

94. See Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* Trans. Sebastian Rand. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, 12, 15, 53. Malabou asks: “What should we do so that our consciousness of the brain does not purely and simply coincide with the spirit of capitalism?” She adds that we need first to distinguish plasticity from its “mistaken cognate” flexibility, and computer and mechanical models of the brain. Later explaining in the book, “[i]t must be acknowledged that neuronal liberation has not liberated us.” (67).

95. Žižek. *The Parallax View*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2006, 209–10.

96. See Malabou, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, 69, 80.

97. See Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 22. Malabou writes: “The plasticity of *The Future of Hegel* therefore lies in wait of its future.”

THE PULSE OF *CHRONOS*: HISTORICAL TIME, THE ETERNAL AND TIMELESSNESS IN THE PLATONIC GATHERING¹

Toula Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos

After a long and complex discussion in *The Republic*,² Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus come to agree that justice demands a certain differentiation of roles within society's co-existing and mutually informing groups. For, according to Socrates, "in our state one man was to do one job, the job he was naturally most suited for" and so "justice is keeping what is properly one's own and doing one's own job".³ The just polis must therefore consist of clearly defined classes, which are differentiated by reference to their members' natural occupations, whether as producers, auxiliaries or rulers of the city. Socrates is quick to point out that in the well-integrated gathering this principle of justice applies, not to individual jobs as such within any one class, but to the differentiated roles fulfilled by each of the classes:

Interference by the three classes with each other's job, and interchange of jobs between them [...] does the greatest harm to our state, and we are entirely justified in calling it the worst of evils.⁴

Although the wellbeing of the polis as a whole would not suffer decisively were a carpenter to swap jobs with a farmer, such an exchange would be disastrous if it took place across classes.

As well as participating in an indispensable system of differentiated roles within one of the productive, auxiliary or ruling classes, the members of the just polis also experience this social order as a unified whole. Unlike the immediate, unreflective unity of the first polis that Socrates and his friends discuss, a polis that characteristically lacks organization in accordance with the principle of justice, in the just polis unity is a conscious achievement.⁵ It is therefore perpetually dependent upon the ability of the city to expand and deepen its collective powers for self-integration. The gathering that fully embodies justice is thus a teleological entity for which integration is an explicit aim shared by the members of all three classes.⁶

Granted the friends of Socrates reach agreement on this account of justice, as far as the being of the polis is concerned, along with the discussants, one might have expected their conversation to have reached its proper conclusion. After all, at this point in the discussion, their complex quest for the highest knowledge culminates in the identification of the structure of the just society, a structure that in turn determines the being of justice for the individual. This, of course, was the initial aim of their epic quest. Early in their discussion the participants had considered whether the just individual lives a happier life than the unjust and they had agreed that to understand what the just individual is they should first determine the nature of the just society.⁷ Now justice has been shown to be a single principle, which is equally manifested in the city as a whole and in the member of society as a unique individual. Indeed, this dual manifestation belongs to justice itself in so far as both forms of embodiment of the principle belong to the gathering. In the light of their agreement on the principle of justice and bearing in mind their initial purpose, one might have expected the discussants to proceed to an exploration of the relationship between justice and happiness. Of course, as we know, they do go on to address other important issues, including the status of women, marriage, family and the rules of war. But, significantly, any discussion of these issues presupposes that fundamental knowledge of the principle of justice has already been achieved and so nothing more needs to be said at this level.

For Glaucon and Adeimantus this is indeed the prevailing impression, until later when the discussion turns to the question of the possibility of actually realizing the just polis, that is, of establishing Kallipolis.⁸ At this point, in response to the question of how the ideal city might become a reality, Socrates takes the opportunity, rather suddenly and with some reluctance, to introduce the idea that the philosopher has a political role to play in establishing the just polis. Having described its features, Socrates confronts the double-sided issue concerning the actuality of the ideal polis, namely “*that* it can exist and *how* it can exist”⁹, by positioning the philosopher in a unique relationship to the rest of Kallipolis’ potential citizens:

The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of states, or indeed [...] of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands.¹⁰

How does Socrates justify this reference to the founding/leadership role of the philosopher?¹¹ One way is to focus on potential citizens’ self-interest in recognizing philosophers’ unique potential. Jacob Howland has recently defended Socrates’ attempt to make out the claim that genuine philosophers are best suited to rule due to a peculiar combination of intellect and temperament.¹² According to Howland’s reading of Socrates’ position, as a result of their studies, philosophers are well prepared for understanding the relationship between social order and the common good and, given their love of wisdom, they would not be inclined to use public power to further their own interests. But, Howland concedes, leadership involves navigating difficult and ever-changing circumstances for which Socrates’ philosophers are not trained and so it does not follow that “philosophers *as such* possess the true art of piloting the ship of state”. Still, Howland concludes, philosophers are fast learners, so “no one would be better suited to govern than those [...] Socrates] calls philosophers”.¹³

Interestingly, in both his reading and defence of Socrates’ rationale for attributing the role of Kallipolis’ founder/ruler to the philosopher, Howland highlights the potential *usefulness* of the philosopher but the instrumental reasoning which he invokes leads to a dead end when he turns to the question of the likelihood of philosophers actually taking a leadership role in establishing and sustaining the just order. For within such terms the question of the transition, from a state of knowledge of the form of justice to one of actualizing it, is reduced to a matter of whether the philosopher is in a position either to persuade or to force the non-philosophers to concede power. The answer is, of course, that the potential citizens of Kallipolis would have no self-interested reasons for recognizing the philosopher’s political authority and the genuine philosopher would have no justifiable grounds for forcing them to accept his rule.¹⁴ Howland does note that Socrates identifies the genuine philosopher, as distinct from those who may engage in philosophical discussions, by reference to a unique capacity to discern the being of the supreme good, but he does not explore the full significance of this way of distinguishing the

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philosopher.¹⁵ Let us return then to examine Socrates' words.

Socrates does indeed explain that the philosopher/founder of Kallipolis must be concerned with "the highest form of knowledge, which should be peculiarly his own". To this his companions react with surprise: "The highest? But is there anything higher than justice and the other qualities we discussed?" Socrates' reply is, of course, one of the most radical in the history of philosophy: "the highest form of knowledge is knowledge of the form of the good, from which things that are just and so on derive their usefulness and value".¹⁶ For present purposes, the significant point is not so much what Socrates means by the claim that knowledge of the good is the highest possible, but that in the process of making the claim he invokes a certain distinction that ultimately makes possible the earthly realization of the class differentiated just society. The distinction in question is that between the philosopher-ruler as the friend of knowledge—for whom awareness of the good is peculiarly his own—and the non-philosophers, members of the city, acting as the friends of the philosopher.

We want to argue that the founding role of the philosopher is itself justified by appeal to the philosopher's peculiar power to exercise a kind of awareness that is more radical than knowledge of the principle of justice. If the differentiation between the philosopher and his friends is directly grounded on the good then it is not knowledge of the forms as such but the kind of awareness that makes possible the reception of this knowledge that distinguishes the philosopher. This awareness not only grounds the differentiation of roles between the philosopher and his friends, but it ultimately grounds the knowing, both of the principle of justice and its actualization, which knowing belongs peculiarly to the philosopher.

At the same time, a full appreciation of the philosopher as founder and ruler of Kallipolis calls for an understanding of how *both sides* of this differentiation between the philosopher and his friends contribute to the activation of the fundamental awareness. In order to transform the pure knowing of justice into a vision to be realized and, ultimately, into the realized vision of the earthly Kallipolis, both the descending philosopher, the philosopher who returns from dwelling in the light of the immeasurable good, and the citizens of the imperfect polis must recognize and enact this distinction from the outset. This is indeed a surprising move. Not only does Socrates propose that there is a kind of "knowing", associated with awareness of the supreme good that is in fact higher than the knowledge of the eternal form of justice, but by drawing attention to the political significance of this kind of awareness he also directly links this higher awareness to a supposedly inferior expression of the ideal of justice, namely to its copy, the form's earthly realization. Even though it is the good that grounds and sustains the form of justice in the realm of eternity, the awareness of this cosmic fact and its significance is not integral to the form of the just city itself. More specifically, according to the story Socrates advances, there is no philosopher dwelling in the eternal city of justice who functions as the ruler and the supreme gatherer of its citizens thanks to his unique relation to the perfectly dignified good. Perhaps such mediated relating to the good would not accord with the infinite worthiness of the form of justice. Perhaps, it is the perfect being of the form in its totality that infinitely, that is, immediately receives the goodness of the good without need for the mediating knowing of the philosopher. This is a question we explore elsewhere.¹⁷ Here the important point is that awareness of the good is taken to relate, not to the being of the ideal polis, but to the realization and perpetuation of the finite polis in historical time. In other words, it is taken to relate to the polis that might somehow come into existence as that which partakes in the ideal, through the philosopher's knowing, and therefore as having been generated as its copy.

Socrates' insistence that the philosopher is the proper ruler of the earthly city of justice and his way of relating awareness of the good to the possibility of the city's actualization are surprising but not the only surprises in *The Republic*. Certain other, no less radical ideas follow from such radical proposals. Once we enter the realm of finitude we are confronted with major shifts in the focus of the dialogue that at once take us deeper and deeper into the strange land of the copy and raise questions as to the conditions that make it possible and feasible. In what follows we will argue that in order to uncover and make sense of these largely unexplored shifts we must have regard to what we can call the pulsating movement of *chronos*. More specifically, we shall try to show how the flow of movement from timelessness to historical time and the eternal forms operates to

generate and order certain key moves in *The Republic* from the elaboration of the principle of justice to the conditions of its earthly realization.

Together with Glaucon and Adeimantus, we overcome our initial surprise with Socrates' insistence on the philosopher's founding role, as soon as we realize that, major though it is, the importance Socrates assigns to the philosopher's awareness of the good for the enactment of the polis of justice is only one concern. Of themselves, the philosopher's unique relation to the good and his exclusive knowledge of the form of justice are not sufficient to enable him to establish the earthly polis. In order for the knowledge of the eternal form of justice to be transformed into a realizable ideal, one also requires access to the proper place and agent of such transformation. More specifically, precisely because, for Socrates, the task here is to clarify the meaning and process of realizing Kallipolis on earth, he must identify where, how and, more importantly, *for whom*, Kallipolis becomes an issue at all, as a goal to be recognized and realized. Who are the potential bearers of this task? Where would they come from? How would they come to recognize themselves as the visionaries who appreciate the philosopher's divine nature and unique role?

On one level the answer is rather obvious if, as we suggested above, the friends of the philosopher are aware of their irreducible difference from the philosopher. Glaucon and Adeimantus reveal their awareness of this difference when discussing with Socrates the difference between those who call themselves philosophers and the philosopher proper who, along with appropriate education and maturity, "must combine in his nature good memory, readiness to learn, breadth of vision and grace, and be a friend of truth, justice, courage and self-control".¹⁸ Moreover, this discussion leads to the observation that once fully informed of the true meaning and character of the genuine philosopher, the wider public too will come to recognize this difference since all will agree that "no state can find happiness unless the artists designing it use a divine pattern", a pattern to which only the philosopher has access.¹⁹ As the agents of transformation, those capable of transforming the ideal into a realizable goal, the friends of the philosopher would therefore function as the *topos*, the proper place and, therefore, as the justice, so to speak, of the knowledge of the philosopher, which knowledge is transformed into vision only through the appropriate dwelling of its bearer in the *topos* of the appropriate friendship, namely that which is offered to him by his friends. But if this is indeed the case, then such an answer can only serve as the beginning of a response to the abovementioned questions. For it points in the direction of a path to be traversed but does not offer us the path itself. We are still left with the question of who precisely the friends of the philosopher might be. Is it even possible for them to appear and welcome him? If it were possible, what would such welcoming mean and how would it relate to the given order of their imperfect city?

We want to suggest that the agent responsible for the opening of such a place of receiving the philosopher as the ruler is none other than the collective that violently rebels against the order of ignorance. The intensity of such a rebellion is radical enough to transform the philosopher's knowledge of justice into a vision belonging to those who are committed to realizing justice precisely because and in so far as they receive the philosopher in their dual capacity as actual citizens of their imperfect city and as potential citizens of Kallipolis. As the power to relate knowledge with rebellious violence and vision, this collective act of welcoming seeks to gather and re-gather by destroying the given order of imperfection and creating the copy of the perfect polis. A fundamental presupposition for the actualization of Kallipolis then is this transformation of knowledge into vision through violence, a transformation that requires an absolute commitment at the levels of the collective and of the individual.

To summarize: the shifts identified above—from the eternal polis of justice to the justice associated with the realization of the just polis, from the philosopher-ruler to his revolutionary friends who welcome him, and from pure knowledge to knowledge as vision—are brought about, not merely because the philosopher is the best qualified for the job of ruling, the proper ruler as a matter of fact. Rather he becomes the hero of the enactment of the just city only when, like the eternal just city itself, he is *offered* a place for dwelling. In the philosopher's case the offer must come from the rebellious welcoming of what is in essence the anonymous collective of the friends of the philosopher qua citizens of the imperfect city who thus emerge as willing to receive him.

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What can the further investigation of the subtleties contained within this relationship reveal about the pulsating movement of *chronos* and its relationship to the eternal forms, historical time and timelessness?

We have suggested that bringing about the earthly Kallipolis, initially calls for a collective act of radical purification on the part of the friends of the philosopher. This is a kenotic act involving the members of the imperfect city, an act that would involve the participants in an ecstatic and destructive leap that has the power to take them beyond the political order of ignorance. Here is a reminder of how Socrates invokes this moment:

The first thing our artists must do [...] is to wipe the slate of human society and human habits clean. For our philosophic artists differ at once from all others in being unwilling to start work on an individual or a city, or draw out laws, until they are given, or have made themselves, a clean canvas.²⁰

In order to make themselves genuinely receptive to the philosopher's pure gift of gathering them and giving them form as gathered, the members of the rebellious collective must first transcend their ephemeral specificity as citizens of existing cities, and as bearers of specific biographies. They must move beyond the realm of the given city, the world of familiarity and predictability, in order to encounter, for the first time, the human gathering as an intensified field of finitude that is in a state of lovingly receiving the divine philosopher who brings the eternal. In this collective affair of the gathering of finite beings in historical time, their being together *touches* the limit of its finitude; it is thus liberated and becomes the strange and totally unfamiliar power of receiving eternal goodness; without any conceptual determination, the gathering is this simple erotic power.

It is as received in the above sense that the philosopher would "wipe the slate of human society and human habits clean." Notice here the metaphorical emphasis on the hand and its movement. The hand has the power to receive and give, but also to destroy. In being willing to make themselves or be made "a clean canvas", at one and the same time, the members of the imperfect city will transform themselves into destroyers of the existing forms of social and individual order, and into the potential bearers of new forms brought to them from elsewhere.

The enactment of the intense and auto-violent simplicity of the eroticism of the indeterminate gathering towards the lover of knowledge is the unleashing of a force from within the given and well-established field of ignorance, a force that is simultaneously the absolute destroyer and the only restorer of historical order. The members of the gathering are thus involved in a leap from the state of being the ignorant mass of cities that eternalize the historical, in so far as they treat the corruption of human nature as the defining feature of humanity as such, to a state of historicizing the eternal form of justice. They thus create a past of rejection and they open a future of elation. The "clean canvas" the philosopher needs is an erupting agent that disrupts and reverses the flow of historical time by transforming it into the time of the non-historical, the time of the eternal forms. Those who revolutionize their individual and collective being, by rendering visible their communal presencing as the plane of the "clean canvas" are an arrow in time that points in two directions: the past as the field of violently rejecting the imperfection of their own ignorant cities, and the future of a humanity of enlightened justice liberated from evil and self-harm. The rebellious gathering claims both these directions exclusively and unconditionally. As gathered in this plane of the "clean canvas" then, the members of the indeterminate gathering find themselves caught in their collective presence as both the ultimate dark force of destroying the idolatry of historical time and the ultimate finite power of receiving the light of the eternal, a presence in which violence separates the finite from the eternal.

It is only through this initial and revolutionary act of gathering, with its purifying and visionary dimensions, that those gathered pursue the question of justice as the principle and the practice of the gathering-we that Kallipolis is ultimately to be.²¹ The important points to emphasize here are, firstly, that the enactment of this elementally violent and visionary gathering, which expands as "a clean canvas" or plane of reception, involves zero depth, given that it is not determined by any past or future attachments whatsoever. Secondly, the participants who are gathered together are not internally distinguished from one another. They gather disruptively and ecstatically,

not as classes or in their capacity as members of their respective social groups, but *as gathered* in a radically equal and creatively indeterminate way. No matter how hard they might look around them or inside themselves, they can only sense their collective unguided body as a pure receptivity hovering over their abandoned cities. Indeed, receiving the unique one, the philosopher, by being this receiving is for the gathering participants the most intense gathering of their own erotic uniqueness. They thus form an indeterminate collective through their willingness to receive the philosopher's embrace the embrace of the one who, as we already noted, as well as bearing the knowledge of the form of justice, is distinguished as the bearer of the awareness of the supreme good. It is through this embracing that the indeterminate gathering of justice emerges and becomes present. As such its participants claim their proper place as members of the visionary collective and take up the challenge of establishing Kallipolis.

What motivates the cataclysmic violence that gives rise to the indeterminate gathering of the friends of the philosopher and to their power to embrace the question of the gathering and of their ultimate reception of the eternal form of the gathering? What enables the members of the indeterminate gathering of justice to address this primordial concern as a collective? If this elemental gathering is indeed indeterminate in the sense of the empty field of negation sketched above, then how can the question of becoming determinate be their fundamental concern? After all, their knowing seems initially to be a radical not-knowing and their being seems to have nothing to do with being just. Could not the fact of their having been posited as a "clean canvas" mean that, rather than being led to the enlightenment characterizing the receiving gathering, the members of the indeterminate gathering are thrown into a kind of destructive ignorance, which not only is more radical than that characterizing imperfect cities, but also renders them unable to identify any politically realizable ideal whatsoever?

Socrates implies that the members of the gathering are intrinsically receptive to the philosopher through whom they have access to the good given that, unlike their response to other values, "no one is satisfied to have something that only *appears* to be good".²² To this extent the friends of the philosopher are disposed to being enlightened. But we should add here that they are in a position to aim at achieving the state of knowing the form of justice and, relatedly, of knowing themselves to be the exclusive bearers of the preconditions for actualizing such visionary knowing, in so far as they encounter themselves *as the just ones* in the sense of already being in a state of primordial justice, a state that determines their proper place and role *as gathered*. This state is the justice of justice, so to speak, or the imperative of justice that precedes the justice explicitly elaborated in *The Republic* as the class-differentiated system. The imperative of justice must characterize the indeterminate gathering and hence the differentiation between the revolutionary philosopher and his revolutionary friends, who are philosophical to this extent though not philosophers. In other words, the friends of the philosopher are ready to receive the form of justice as a vision to be realized only in so far as they already find themselves in a visionary state of justice, that is, in a state of being visionary receivers of the philosopher as their accomplished gatherer and of themselves as gathered around him indeterminately or elementally. This elemental role differentiation between the philosopher and his friends is the gathering's entry point; it is the gathering's very power to gather itself. This is what accounts for the indeterminately welcoming gathering's power to be visionary.

Moreover, the welcoming in question must be understood as invoking a kind of gathering that is both radically original and originating. It is original in rendering the philosopher visible as the unique one, the only one in a position to gather in order for the gathering as such to occur out of the state of non-knowing, the nothingness of ignorance, and without appeal to anything other than the act of gathering one's friends who in turn welcome him purely as gathered. The gathering's welcoming gathers the philosopher as its own gatherer by simultaneously gathering itself as the gathering of those who welcome the philosopher. In order then to establish the just city, its potential citizens must first ecstatically emerge from the given order of their imperfect city and gather around the philosopher who they recognize as bearer of the supreme good. In doing so they thereby elevate themselves to the ones who receive the philosopher as their supreme ruler.

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In its receiving and as this receiving, the gathering of the potential citizens of Kallipolis is absolutely alone, consumed, so to speak, by its love for the enlightened one. This is the state of gathering before the gathering, before the enactment of the just polis as the class differentiated gathering in accordance with the ideal that *The Republic* explicitly elaborates. It therefore precedes any formed gathering as such. It is the primordial and elemental gathering saturated by the “fever” of its welcoming of the philosopher, which is at the same time a primordial self-welcoming.

So in addition to historicizing the eternal form of justice, on another level the welcoming gathering is itself an *original act of timeless welcoming*, that is, a welcoming beyond time. In welcoming the philosopher the gathering also embraces its own welcoming state as the original act of the emergence of the gathering. We have already suggested that the indeterminate gathering’s welcoming is characterized by the simple intensity that is completely innocent and free of any instrumental orientation and that this contrasts to relations within the existing cities where, being oblivious to the foundational role of the philosopher-gatherer (and, relatedly, being overwhelmed by their given order), the existing cities of ignorance have failed to acknowledge this primordial gathering as the proper *topos* of their own emerging and dwelling and as the ultimate origin of the just city. In contrast, the indeterminate gathering embraces its gathering being as a timeless welcoming given that it is this simplicity of the bond of gathering that makes possible the philosopher’s emergence in his completeness, as the welcomed gathering bearer of the good. Such welcoming is no less *timelessly originating* in so far as the project of enacting Kallipolis presupposes this welcoming as a timeless opening to and of such a project. The aim of gathering to be formed in accordance with the ideal of the gathering of justice can only be the singular, visionary and supreme aim of those who, being already gathered, are in the mode of unceasingly gathering through their recognition of the philosopher’s awareness of the timeless good. The gathered ones are thus in a position to aim to gather in so far as this aiming activity is informed by their timeless willingness to gather around the philosopher-ruler.

Let us highlight three points in connection with the original and originating character of the welcoming gathering. Firstly, being original and originating in the above sense, the welcoming gathering is a timeless opening and a timeless closing; it is at once complete fulfillment and complete *steresis*; it is arrival and destination. But if this is indeed what defines the being of Kallipolis’ potential citizens and, in so far as this being already embodies justice in the sense of the vision without yet knowing justice, then the members of the welcoming gathering are called upon, not only unconditionally but *knowingly* to participate in the ideal of justice, which the philosopher-gatherer brings to them. Being already in a state of justice, and hence being already gathered as the primordial gathering referred to above, they constitute the gathering whose members are called upon to conform to the ideal of justice and of themselves as the bearers of such ideal’s earthly realization. The indeterminate gathering is given the imperative to gather precisely because and in so far as one is already gathered and hence is itself this mission. The gathering thus encounters itself as the *topos* of activation and of receiving of the command to self-knowledge.

It follows from this that, in embracing the call to know justice, the question grounded on the fundamental differentiation of roles between the gatherer (philosopher-ruler) and the indeterminately gathered (friends of the philosopher-ruler), the primordial gathering of justice at once confronts (the question of the reception of) the command to “know thyself”. This is the command to re-gather, to create being through the act of knowing and embodying the eternal form of the gathering. This is how the spark of the possibility of self-knowledge can transform the collective body of ignorance into a fire that destroys the darkness engulfing its members by simultaneously shedding light on the horizon of the coming gathering of Kallipolis.

Secondly, if it is indeed the case that, in receiving the command to know, the members of the indeterminate gathering can collectively become agents of radical self-knowledge, given their state of ignorance they must also receive the command, so to speak, to be aware of themselves as *no more than* receivers of the command. Moreover, although they receive the command to self-knowledge through their collective being, they do so in their individual uniqueness and as this uniqueness. Consequently, they emerge and encounter themselves as

timelessly committed both to *being as gathered* in the indeterminate gathering, and thus as having left behind them their own state of ignorance in an act of violent re-birth, and to *becoming as gathered* in the Kallipolis to come. This is indeed what happens since their primordial state of justice is also their primordial state of collective awareness of individually receiving the command as the presupposition for actually receiving the appropriate knowledge of the ideal of justice. As this receiving the gathering moves from being amnesic to being anamnestic, since by gathering indeterminately it recalls, for itself, itself as the pure urge for gathering. Thus the historicizing of the eternal presupposes that the agents of transformation are also in a state of indeterminacy, which in relating to the good via the philosopher is also timeless in the sense of being beyond the time of the eternal forms.²³

This brings us to our third point. Note the role the philosopher plays in connection with the gathering's reception of the command for self-knowledge. Since it is the gathering's encounter with the philosopher that compels the former to gather ecstatically in the first place, it is *as gathered around the philosopher* that the members of the revolutionary gathering receive the command. As the one around whom they gather, the philosopher is thus the bearer both of the command to know and of the knowledge of the ideal of justice. Due to his relation to the immeasurable good the very presence of the philosopher is the activation of the command itself, a presence that also functions as the timeless opening in which the philosopher-ruler emerges as the messenger of justice.

So the members of the indeterminate gathering are timelessly commanded to know themselves as what they are through what they are, namely, as gathered exclusively as the friends of the philosopher and as thus distinguished from the philosopher. This differentiation then is fundamental in transforming the being of the members of the indeterminate gathering into a state of pure receiving of the command and this receiving in turn presupposes and posits the philosopher, not only as the bearer of the ultimate knowledge of the ideal of justice but, also as the enabling power of their pure willing to function as the "clean canvas" on which to establish Kallipolis.

We have argued thus far that the differentiation of roles between the philosopher-gatherer and his gathered friends is the most elemental expression of justice before justice. It is the most elemental because it is grounded on the philosopher as receiver of the supreme good, which is in turn the necessary precondition for receiving the command to know and the corresponding knowledge of the form of justice. Accordingly, this primordial state of receiving is a receiving without knowing. That is, a receiving of the command to know presupposes being in a state of awareness that is beyond knowing. This state of awareness beyond knowing distinguishes the philosopher as the one who gathers exclusively and without thereby becoming one with the gathering. The bearer of the supreme good is in this sense beyond the gathering at the same time as being the gathering's enabling power. The gathered ones in turn serve as the mutually enabling power of the gathering in the light of their own receiving of the philosopher but, as we have argued, as a pure welcoming this receiving presupposes, not the awareness belonging to the philosopher, but the corresponding awareness of the philosopher as the bearer of the supreme good. Without the philosopher, the immeasurable one who is beyond the gathering, the gathered are unable to enact their self-knowledge. Ultimately they fulfill their philosophical being as receivers of the command to know through what the philosopher brings, namely knowledge of the form of justice, precisely because they are nothing but enlightened *receivers* in this most radical sense of a receiving that is no less grounded on the supreme good.

From the above it follows that although it is out of the indeterminate simplicity of the gathering-we that Kallipolis will emerge if it is to do so at all, still in this movement from the indeterminate to the formed gathering the indeterminate gathering takes priority in a dual sense. It is prior in the sense that it is presupposed by the formed gathering but it is also prior in the more fundamental sense that Kallipolis perpetually springs from the indeterminate gathering given that the latter's simplicity manifests the primordial awareness of the philosopher's role as bearer of the supreme good and hence of the role of the good in establishing the just polis. In other words, since the fundamental differentiation between the philosopher and the friends of the philosopher acts as the field of awareness whose value derives from its link via the philosopher to the good, this differentiation also ultimately grounds the class differentiated form of justice as well as the ongoing

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commitment of Kallipolis' citizens to the embodiment of this form.

Indeed, Kallipolis' continued actuality, and not just its initial founding, must be perpetually informed by the primordial (non-knowing) awareness of the good associated with the primordial gathering of the friends of the philosopher in the *topos* that the philosopher's divine nature supplies to them. This is why the philosopher must become the ruler of the gathered city on an ongoing basis. He preserves the justness of the just polis through his relationship to the good and his knowledge of the divine form of justice. This relationship must therefore inform and be informed by the differentiation between the philosopher and all subsequent members of Kallipolis, albeit in the intensity of their radical and ecstatic being as the friends of the philosopher.

But this means that the formed gathering of justice must also perpetually fall back into its indeterminate state, given that it receives the idea of justice only in so far as it is an unceasing receiving. Accordingly, the indeterminate gathering does not just give rise to and sustain the state of determinate form but it must also pull the gathering back into itself in acknowledgement of its origin and for the purpose of renewal. Through this movement the established order is renewed and the prior, indeterminate gathering, is posited as a new beginning. Determinate form is thus created not by overcoming the indeterminate as such but by allowing it to deepen itself. Determinate form serves to intensify the indeterminate just as the indeterminate intensifies the determinate.

Moreover, because of the foundational role of their welcoming, it is Kallipolis' citizens who have the power to draw Kallipolis back, so to speak, to the primordial state of the indeterminate gathering in the requisite perpetual act of renewal. The earthly city of justice must perpetually return to its origin through the pure gathering of its citizens around the philosopher. It must perpetually move through *the primordial awareness of its citizens*—manifested in their receiving of the philosopher's embrace—from the class differentiated being of the formed gathering of justice to the primordial state of the justice of the gathering.

From the above analysis it follows that the just city's mode of being is the pulsating movement from the indeterminate to the determinate and from the determinate to the indeterminate. Kallipolis, the earthly city of justice, must be pulsating or else it is nothing at all. This is why in Plato's city of justice the philosopher must rule. Through his access to the eternal idea of justice, the philosopher preserves the order of justice and through his presence he reminds the citizens that this order is perpetually received by their indeterminate gathering. Accordingly, the philosopher is not just the bearer of the supreme good along with the knowledge of the form of justice and the preconditions for its actualization. He is also the one whose very presence reveals to the formed gathering the indeterminacy of the indeterminate thus making it possible for them to gather and re-gather indeterminately. The presence of the philosopher as the ruler of the city enables the formed gathering perpetually to return to the primordial state of indeterminacy out of which the order of justice springs through the transformation of knowledge into vision. The pulsating movement of chronos, the interplay of timelessness with historical time and the eternal, thus supplies an explanation of Socrates' insistence on the philosopher's role as ruler.

TOULA NICOLACOPOULOS and GEORGE VASSILACOPOULOS are lecturers in Philosophy at La Trobe University. They research and publish in the areas of European and political philosophy, and critical race and whiteness theory.

NOTES

1. We presented an earlier version of this paper at “The Time(s) of Our Lives” Australasian Society of Continental Philosophy Conference, La Trobe University, December 2011, and would like to thank the participants for their comments and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for supporting the conference. We are also grateful to the anonymous reviewer for very generous and insightful comments and suggestions for improvement of this paper.
2. Plato, *The Republic*. Trans. Desmond Lee. New York: Penguin Books, 1987.
3. Plato, *The Republic*, 433b and 433e.
4. Plato, *The Republic*, 434b–d.
5. Plato, *The Republic*, 369b–372d.
6. This suggestion is supported by Socrates’ observations that the purpose of founding the just polis concerns the unity of the community. Thus, for example, the promotion of happiness relates not to that of any particular class but to that of the community as a whole (Plato, *The Republic*, 420b) and the standard by which to determine the size of the polis is itself the unity of the polis so that it may be “allowed to grow so long as growth is compatible with unity but no further” (Plato, *The Republic*, 420b). We thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to these passages.
7. Plato, *The Republic*, 352e–354b; 368d–369b.
8. Plato, *The Republic*, 471e.
9. Plato, *The Republic*, 471e.
10. Plato, *The Republic*, 473c–e.
11. On this question see C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato’s Republic*. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006, 191–194; Stanley Rosen, *Plato’s Republic: A Study*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005.
12. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic* and the Politics of Convalescence,” *American Dialectic* 1:1 (2010), 1–17 at 9.
13. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic*”, 10–11.
14. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic*”, 11–14.
15. Jacob Howland, “Plato’s *Republic*”, 9.
16. Plato, *The Republic*, 505b.
17. *The Rebellious Gathering: Philosophy and Revolution in Plato’s Republic*, manuscript in progress. In this larger work we must also address another question that we leave open for present purposes, namely whether Plato’s argument requires that the philosopher is as a matter of fact the bearer of the supreme good and, if so, what follows from this, or whether it suffices that his fellow citizens merely recognize him as such, given that he is the instigator of the search for knowledge of the supreme good. We thank the anonymous reviewer of our paper for raising our attention to this issue.
18. Plato, *The Republic*, 487a.
19. Plato, *The Republic*, 500e.
20. Plato, *The Republic*, 501b.
21. For an elaboration of the significance of the gathering-we as a collective, see George Vassilacopoulos, “Gathering and Dispersing: The Absolute Spirit in Hegel’s Philosophy” in *The Spirit of the Age: Hegel and the Fate of Thinking*. Eds. Paul Ashton, Toulou Nicolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos. Melbourne: repress, 2008, 292.
22. Plato, *The Republic*, 505d. We are grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to this point.
23. Here bear in mind that the good as such is beyond the eternal, for as Socrates says (Plato, *The Republic*, 509b), it is beyond the being and knowing of eternal forms.

TIME, PHILOSOPHY, AND CHRONOPATHOLOGIES

Jack Reynolds

This essay is an elaboration on some central themes and arguments from my recent book, *Chronopathologies: Time and Politics in Deleuze, Derrida, Phenomenology and Analytic Philosophy* (Rowman and Littlefield 2012). There is hence an element of generality to this essay that the book itself is better able to justify. But a short programmatic piece has its own virtues, especially for those of us who are time poor (which is pretty much everyone in contemporary academia). Moreover, it adds a dimension to the above book by more explicitly situating it in relation to what is an emerging view in some recent scholarship (such as John McCumber, Len Lawlor, David Hoy, and before this Liz Grosz) that time is central to the identity of continental philosophy, as well as considering some of the work that in different ways contests this kind of interpretation of the identity of continental philosophy (e.g. Simon Glendinning, and, tacitly, Paul Redding). In continuing to side with the former over the latter, I will also develop my argument that time is one of the most significant factors in the divided house that I think contemporary philosophy remains, and I conclude by offering a series of negative prescriptions regarding how we might better avoid particular chronopathologies, or time-sicknesses, that are endemic to these philosophical trajectories, and that are also present (to greater and lesser degrees) in the majority of individual philosophers standardly labeled analytic and continental. To the extent that such sicknesses are at least partly inevitable, akin to a transcendental illusion, this paper consists in a call to be more attentive to this tendency, and to the methodological, metaphilosophical, and ethico-political consequences that follow from them.

CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY: REFLECTIONS ON TIME AND THE POLITICS OF A NAME

Let me start off with the idea of continental philosophy, before turning to analytic philosophy, thus reversing, apparently anachronistically, a certain fairly influential story. On this story, there is the revolution of analytic

philosophy, a revolution whose identity depends upon distinguishing itself from what it is not, othering all of the philosophical work that is happening on the other side of the *chunnel* and thereby imposing a spurious unity on something it has called continental philosophy. Of course, that story is not simply false, and nor is it false that the idea of continental philosophy is partly a creation from North America in the early 1960s. One of the first published uses of the direct contrast, analytic and continental, appeared in 1962 in an American Philosophy Association Presidential address by Maurice Mandelbaum¹, and it appears that the ‘continental’ umbrella term was frequently used in the USA and other English-speaking countries to tie together teaching in many disparate and different areas that were apparently only negatively related—i.e. they shared in common not being within the canon of analytic philosophy (hence the connection between continental philosophy and pluralist societies since that time in the USA)². If that was all there was to be said about the matter, the notion of continental philosophy would be equivalent to a racial cliché, a stereotype bestowed by those not born on the continent, and which ignores the diversity in question. Of course, while it is true that French, German, and other European-based philosophers did not call themselves continental philosophers, and no doubt did not conceive of the philosophical terrain in the way that many do today, more needs to be said before it can be concluded that there was not a meaningful philosophical tradition that came to be thus labeled, albeit also transformed by being so labeled.

Of course, if we try to pinpoint anything philosophically that is claimed to be distinctive of continental philosophy, we are confronted with some significant difficulties. As Simon Glendinning argues in *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*: “there is simply no category that would begin to cover the diversity of work produced by thinkers as methodologically and thematically opposed as those who are held within the continental one”, and “the unity of analytic philosophy is a unity of inclusion, continental philosophy of exclusion... and has no methodological, thematic or stylistic basis at all, broad, loose, or otherwise”³. Given the difficulties with offering any adequate philosophical account of what continental philosophy is (i.e. any declaration that it is essentially this or that will be vulnerable to innumerable counter-examples), must those of us who practise what we continue to unreflectively call continental philosophy either be deflationists (there is just good philosophy), or perhaps take Ludwig Wittgenstein’s advice from the *Tractatus* and say something like “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent”? Many books on the subject of continental philosophy are largely surveys of what is canonically taken to be the field, a survey of the ideas of the “usual suspects” with the odd reference to lineage and the sense in which many continental philosophers are responding to each other, as well as the history of philosophy in general. This doesn’t do much philosophically with the idea of continental philosophy, except to reinforce its contemporary usage and inheritance, and, of course, such chains of connection may be almost entirely contingent. Such a practice of tracing hence leaves aside the question of whether any kind of philosophical account can be given of the identity of continental philosophy in a non-reductive and non-backward looking way.

I have previously replied to Glendinning’s important challenge, suggesting that a family resemblance account of methodologies may allow one to attribute a genuine philosophical identity to continental philosophy without falling foul of either essentialism (which ignores the diversity of the tradition in question and is vulnerable to many counter-examples) or deflationism.⁴ Such a view must be, in principle, open to the possibility that our divided house will cease to be so divided, as well as to the possibility that it will split in other ways, perhaps with more ‘types’ or with the central dividing line being seen as rather differently structured, such as with the strongly naturalist analytic philosophy that dominates the USA being opposed to a non-naturalism, or at least a non-reductivism, that characterizes large swathes of analytic philosophy in the UK but also includes most “continental” philosophers.⁵ James Chase and I offer contingent reasons for not being optimistic on either score in our book *Analytic versus Continental*,⁶ but here I seek to elaborate on my earlier response to Glendinning that focused on time and method, albeit by paying more concern in the second half of this essay to the connection between time and politics, but also time and value, and time and normativity. I suggest that a concern with the conjunction of these themes is a central feature of continental philosophy as practised in the twentieth century, but one that started with Kant and reactions to Kant, especially Hegel and the temporalizing of philosophy that his work inaugurates.

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If it is true that continental philosophy has a central preoccupation with time and historicity, then defining it with any given essence, property, attribute, or invariant method, would be peculiarly self-refuting, and we need only think of the persistent reinventions of dialectics, transcendental reasoning, and phenomenology, to cite but three methodological trajectories associated with continental philosophy. All such methods affirm what Mark Sacks calls “situated thought”⁷—which we might gloss here as a thought that attempts to take its own time(s) into account—and this means that these methods themselves are constantly being reinvented and renegotiated, perhaps in the kind of manner that Merleau-Ponty envisages for phenomenology, in his famous ‘Preface’ to *Phenomenology of Perception*. Indeed, likewise in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty contrasts “hyper-dialectical” thinking with what he calls an embalmed dialectic, which would be a repeatable or programmatic dialectic, akin to a scientific experiment that assumes it is uncontaminated by the vicissitudes of the inquiring subject, and is likewise neutral in regard to the particular singularities of the object under examination. This variability of method is sometimes thought to constitute an objection to the many ways of doing philosophy labeled continental. After all, it seems to suggest that there can be no research program, no paradigm to invoke Neil Levy’s analysis of the ‘divide’ along these Kuhnian lines⁸, precisely because there is no common method.⁹ Of course, such objections betray an understanding of philosophy that is antithetical to this tradition, and they also remain sore points for analytic philosophy itself, for whom metaphilosophy has not been a strong suit, as Timothy Williamson concedes in *The Philosophy of Philosophy* when he remarks that analytic practice is sometimes not backed up by a well-developed understanding of the legitimate scope of analytic methods.¹⁰

On the other hand, we can exaggerate the point about continental philosophy being akin to a Kuhnian pre-science stage, where there is incessant dispute about foundations and a thousand flowers bloom. In contrast to such an account, there are some overlapping methodological concerns evident in hermeneutics, genealogy, transcendental reasoning, psychoanalysis, and critical philosophy, and between many of the famous and canonical figures associated with continental philosophy. In particular, while there is no agreement in continental philosophy as to the precise nature of the relationship between what David Hoy calls the time of our lives and the time of the universe (the “objective” time of physicists)¹¹, let alone on the metaphysical significance of the past, present and future, etc., there is arguably a methodological agreement of sorts amongst the vast majority of continental philosophers: that is, that starting with the supposition of the ultimate truth of objective time is the wrong way to go (perhaps excepting Quentin Meillassoux).¹² Of course, starting with the supposition of the ultimate truth of objective time standardly means starting with time itself as having an unchanging nature, and so begs the overall question of whether philosophy should be thoroughly temporalized. As such, for most if not all continental philosophers, it is typically held that such a methodological starting point means that the *time* of our lives (and perhaps the *place* of our lives, since it is both the ‘here’ and ‘now’ which do not seem to be found in nature) will not be able to be adequately reconstructed, but it is maintained that if we adopt the reverse procedure, and start from the temporality of our lives, we can adequately explain objective time. Heidegger certainly argues that we cannot understand objective time without first examining *Dasein*’s existential time¹³, and such a move is not dissimilar to that made by Henri Bergson and various more recent thinkers, whatever the concrete differences in their actual accounts of temporality. Moreover, in different ways, all of the phenomenologists and poststructuralists seek to avoid a conception of time that we might associate with common sense and the natural attitude (e.g. time is a series of instants that is readily measured by clocks), and none have a deferential relation to science in which the truth about time is the physicist’s conception, and philosophical account of the times of our lives are relegated to the domain of the merely subjective or psychological, and hence (typically) claimed not to be of genuine philosophical import. So we see here the manner in which the various method(s) of continental philosophy are linked to time.

Quite a few contemporary philosophers have recently pointed to the importance of time to the identity of continental philosophy. Three recent books stemming from the USA all make temporality central to their arguments and claim (I think correctly) to serve as introductions to continental philosophy: Len Lawlor’s *Early Twentieth Century Continental Philosophy* (2012); David Hoy’s *The Time of Our Lives* (2009); and John McCumber’s *Time and Philosophy: A History of Continental Thought* (2011). Moreover, they focus on some

quite different philosophers, and it is not clear that there is any great continental philosopher who could not be considered within the remit of their positions. While the work of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Lacan is not considered in detail in any of these books, both might have been brought within their foci on time, albeit with the focus less on time-consciousness than on the elements of time that resist being comprehended by consciousness in Levinas' case, a sentiment that is extended by Derrida. Certainly in *Time and the Other* and subsequent texts, Levinas said many new and influential things about time in his engagement with Heidegger and affirmed an ethical dimension that had always been central to the continental tradition, but which he developed in new directions¹⁴. But to consider what these three recent books do focus on, Lawlor's book devotes chapters to Bergson, Freud and Merleau-Ponty, something that neither Hoy nor McCumber do. McCumber's longer book dwells more deeply than Lawlor or Hoy's on the nineteenth century, as well as upon Sartre and de Beauvoir, and the tradition of critical theory. Hoy also focuses upon the latter, but is unique in giving sustained attention to the work of Slavoj Žižek and Walter Benjamin, for whom the 'world' is time and history rather more than a totality of objects or perceptual appearances. In his final two chapters, McCumber explores the work of Badiou, Ranciere, Butler and Agamben in their relation to this tradition of continental philosophy, thus considering at least one philosopher—Badiou—sometimes proclaimed to be post-continental¹⁵. All three books substantially treat the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, and Foucault, albeit focusing on different texts of each of these thinkers.

McCumber's central claim in *Time and Philosophy* is the following: "Continental philosophers accept two principles deeply foreign to traditional philosophy: a) that everything philosophy can talk about at all is in time, and b) that philosophers must be faithful to this at all times"¹⁶. He treats analytic philosophy as being but the latest guise of traditional philosophy—the "same old tradition in different dress"—thus downplaying some of this tradition's claims to herald a genuine revolution, the origin myth associated with, and proffered by, Bertrand Russell in particular. We will come back to this, but if we accept McCumber's characterization of continental philosophy, the contrast with analytic philosophers seems quite distinct, with these two features of continental philosophy's "temporal turn" involving a manner of proceeding that is distinct from some (perhaps many) of the norms and methods of analytic philosophy. We might think, for example, of the linguistic turn and the manner in which analysis is often thought to reveal underlying structures that are ahistorical,¹⁷ as well as the insistence on defining truth as independent of any and all justifications (and hence historical processes of justification), and also, perhaps, the more general analytic concern with argument and rationality in which deductively formalized arguments constitutes a regulative ideal of sorts for philosophical practice, and which might be contrasted with "non-argumento-centric" modes of doing philosophy.¹⁸ Hence the common charge regarding the alleged atemporality and ahistoricity of analytic philosophy. And we know that Quine advocated paying no attention to the history of philosophy and Gilbert Harman reputedly had a note on his door at Harvard University that proclaimed: "JUST SAY NO TO THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY".

While this is perhaps not an affliction that characterizes the majority of analytic philosophers today, as Robert Brandom protests on the opening page of *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, atemporal tendencies in analytic philosophy certainly remain, even if we find this divide running through the middle of the movement—this is what Peter Strawson calls the Homeric struggle—rather than between it and the continental tradition. However, despite this complication, it also seems to me that the less atemporal methods in analytic philosophy (that is, those methods that give pretheoretic opinion, intuitions, folk psychology, or common sense a central role) typically instantiate a temporal presentism of sorts that is also significantly different from much of what takes place in continental philosophy. By presentism I mean philosophies that accord some reasonable weighting (albeit fallible) to common sense, starting intuitions or what the folk think, and this includes those that use techniques of reflective equilibrium to attempt to match theoretical principles with basic opinions in particular cases. This is roughly the coherentist, or best-fit, approach to philosophy.

While poststructuralist philosophers like Derrida accuse phenomenologists of being committed to a prioritizing of the living-present, or focusing on that about time which makes our experiences unified and coherent, and as being invested in a more general metaphysics of presence, even if such charges are true there are still some

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radical differences between this form of a metaphysics of presence and either side of the Homeric struggle in analytic philosophy. For example, unlike the presentist tendencies in contemporary analytic philosophy, phenomenology remains dubious about the philosophical status of appeals to intuition, pre-theoretic opinions, and common sense. Indeed, this is precisely what any phenomenological reduction must first bracket.

It is for this reason that Len Lawlor claims, in *Early Twentieth Century Continental Philosophy*, that notwithstanding the contestation in regard to understandings of the phenomenological reduction, some form of reduction obtains for all continental philosophy: “the idea of transcendental philosophy means that continental philosophy is inseparable from the phenomenological method of the reduction or the epoché”.¹⁹ For those familiar with the Kantian Copernican revolution, the point behind Lawlor’s invocation of the transcendental is not to ascertain invariant or atemporal structures of the human mind. Rather, the critical dimension of Kant’s work is retained, as well as the search for conditions for particular experiences, but this is supplemented by an account of the temporal fluidity of such structures, and hence also lends itself to hermeneutic, genealogical, deconstructive, and other such approaches. As such, the bracketing that Lawlor refers to may be of common sense (i.e. of present opinion), or what Husserl called the natural attitude. Certainly part of the point of doing a critical philosophy is to seek to inhabit a philosophical space that is not merely a coherentist weighing up of disparate knowledge claims, say, but aims to subject reason—and the activity of philosophy itself—to interrogation. *Doxa* is hence meant to be suspended, or, to phrase it more positively, thinking begins with *paradoxa* as Lawlor puts it, and the point is typically not to solve or dissolve a paradox but to explore its ramifications, something that is generally not true of many parts of analytic philosophy, where the opinions and intuitions of the folk are often thought to be a decent starting point from which to build philosophical considerations and where the aim is typically to solve paradoxes. Chapter 3 in my *Chronopathologies* explores the Deleuzian critique of good and common sense, and exhibits the reliance of many analytic methods (such as thought experiments, and the influential post-Rawlsian technique of reflective equilibrium) upon such features of thought. In the context of the metaphysics of time, this emphasis upon the indispensability of some kind of reduction means that it is not that continental philosophers must by default be considered what J. M. McTaggart called A theorists of time, just because they raise methodological issues with any prioritization of ‘objective’ time, such as is encapsulated by McTaggart’s B series. Rather, the point of any reduction is to attempt to examine the conditions for this way of conceiving of (and indeed experiencing) a temporal series.

I will come back to this, but of the four “formulas” that Lawlor associates with continental philosophy, the second and the fourth are those that relate most closely to the idea of a “temporal turn”. His second formula, expressed pithily, is that for continental philosophy, thinking happens in the moment, with the added claim that thinking has typically been construed in either presentist or atemporal terms. As such, for him, thinking has not yet taken the temporality of the moment seriously, at least not prior to the continental tradition as he describes it. For Lawlor, the moment is also experienced as a question with a twofold temporal dimension to it: what happened; what is going to happen? As he puts it elsewhere, this means there is a kind of anachronism at the heart of experience. There is a sense in which we are temporally “out of joint”: always too late, after the event and trying to come to terms with it like the Owl of Minerva flying at dusk; or too early, anxiously ahead of ourselves and projecting into the future. Another way of putting Lawlor’s point is that thinking, if such a thing occurs, happens in experiences which involve a disorientation in time, a being out of joint, an experience of powerlessness. As he puts it in concluding his book:

Every experience contains an aspect of lateness and an aspect of earliness. Every experience is the experience of awaiting-forgetting. It seems as though I am late for the origin since it seems already to have disappeared; it seems as though I am early for the end since it seems still to come. Every experience then is not quite on time or in the right place. Experience, the experience exposed only by deconstruction, is “out of joint.” Being “out of joint,” commanding in ways that are irreconcilable, the experience is one of powerlessness, but, more explicitly, it is one of violence and injustice. It is precisely this “out of jointness” of the relation that raises *further questions*.²⁰

Lawlor's fourth formula is, for him, tightly related to the temporality of the moment and experience *per se*. All continental philosophy is at least minimally ethico-political, for Lawlor, in that "thinking consists in responding to the imperative to render justice"²¹, responding to this being out joint that is characteristic of the moment, and this must include navigating these dimensions of lateness and earliness. This might include addressing (both theoretically and practically) considerations such as how we carry the past that we are responsible for, and how we are open to the radical difference of the future. We will come back to the relation between time and justice later, but Lawlor sums up this central aspect of continental philosophy in the following way:

The last formula for continental philosophy—continental philosophy consists in the movement from time to justice and politics, the movement from the question to responsibility and ethics—I think that this formula most distinguishes continental philosophy from any other sort of philosophy. The connection, the small step, between transcendental issues and ethical or political issues, between abstract concepts and the concrete, is the distinguishing mark of continental philosophy.²²

This is common ground with McCumber, who links his reflections on time with the posing of a question, both in his essay in this volume and also in *Time and Philosophy*.

I have discussed some of the central features of David Hoy's *The Time of our Lives* in framing this essay in terms of the contrast he draws between the time of our lives and the time of the universe, but in a recent review in *Notre Dame Journal of Philosophical Review*, Levi Bryant also nicely summarizes Hoy's book in the following terms:

If one were to cite one set of issues that distinguishes the Continental philosophy of the last century from prior philosophy, a red thread uniting movements as disparate as Frankfurt school critical theory, German and French phenomenology, and French post-structuralism, it would be no exaggeration to cite the focus of these philosophical movements on issues revolving around time and temporality... what was new in the Continental thought of the last century was a sense that questions of time and temporality lay at the heart of questions of ontology, epistemology, philosophy of mind, ethics, and political theory.²³

Hoy's book has been criticized, including by Bryant himself in the above review, for not being realist enough due to its allegiance to this distinction between the time of our lives and objective time, but also by Charles Bambach for focusing on time-consciousness rather than the sense in which the past and the future should not ultimately be conceived of along egological terms (i.e. in terms of time-consciousness), but rather as dispersed into the diachrony of the Other. This helps to indicate the contested field of contemporary continental philosophy, but it does not reject the thesis of this paper that time—or better, temporality—is central to this field.

Without attempting to further summarize these impressive texts or do justice to the precise details of their arguments about the centrality of time, they (like me) are faced with a challenge. Perhaps we are all "chickening out" as Simon Glendinning says others on this topic have done—such as Simon Critchley and Robert Pippin²⁴—shying away from the uncomfortable conclusion that there is no such philosophical tradition beyond that which is being performatively invented through this very act of naming. Glendinning suggests that practitioners of continental philosophy both do, and should, feel uneasy about this. Even if this quasi-psychological claim were true, which would be hard to show, a feeling of uneasiness is not evidence of fictitious falsifying. On the contrary, as many historians would also attest, making a single tradition (or narrative) out of a number of given facts is a creative act, requiring groupings and exclusions as well as thematic interpretations. Nonetheless, it is worth drawing attention to two recent criticisms of my postulation of a distinctive continental "temporal turn" here, since if these objections are sound, they also apply (to greater or lesser extents) to these other books and this kind of position in general.

TIME, PHILOSOPHY, AND CHRONOPATHOLOGIES

For his part, Paul Redding was recently kind enough to offer a thoughtful review of my co-authored book (with James Chase), *Analytic versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy*, in an earlier issue of *Parrhesia*. His review focuses primarily on the chapter of our book that develops some of these claims regarding time. Redding maintains that philosophy was temporal until analytic philosophy. As such, he suggests that perhaps we should talk about analytic philosophy's "atemporal turn" and instead see continental philosophy as continuous with the practice of much of the history of philosophy. In the context of a discussion of the standard A and B series differentiation in analytic metaphysics of time since McTaggart, Redding suggests:

[B]ut continental philosophers seem attracted to the A-series. Chase and Reynolds treat this as the "temporal turn" of continental philosophy, but to describe this as resulting from a "temporal turn" is to regard the analytic embrace of the "B-series" as something like a default position. Might not the difference be equally described as the result of analytic philosophy having taken an "atemporal turn"? And if so, we might ask, what were the historical conditions and consequences of this turn?²⁵

Before I respond, it is necessary to provide some background. McTaggart illuminated two ways in which positions in time can be ordered. His A-series of time represented a psychological experience of succession that roughly corresponds to what the phenomenologist might call the natural attitude in regard to time, with certain events being futural, coming to be present, and then moving into the past and the even further past. All of these temporal designations are relative to a given present, from which certain events are seen to be in the future and others in the past. To put this another way, for the A-series, positions in time are orderable according to their possession of properties like being two days future, being present, being one day past, etc. But McTaggart also suggested that positions in time can also be ordered by two-place relations like two days earlier than, one day earlier than, simultaneous with, etc. This B-series of time—of before, now and after—involves a succession that maintains permanent relations among events, and suggests that temporally tensed sentences (like "I will finish this talk within the allocated time") are not required.²⁶

Against Redding's characterization, however, I don't think that continental philosophers are simply unaware proponents of the A-series, nor that the B-series should be a default position, as we explicitly note in *Analytic versus Continental*. Allow me to quote the relevant passage from the chapter in question:

Can we even situate the "continental" perspectives that we have considered in terms of the debate between two views on the nature of temporal reality—presentism and eternalism—that have dominated analytic philosophy? Both seem to fail to capture what is at stake in continental reflections on time, whether at the beginning of the twentieth century or the end. Continental philosophers since Heidegger want to dispute the philosophical priority of the present, as most of the analytic eternalist camp does, but also to insist (unlike eternalists) on temporal becoming, on ontological distinctions between past, present and future, as well as between time and space. This conjunction of claims has no obvious equivalent in analytic philosophy, perhaps because it is not readily compatible with physics. Of course, there are some analytic philosophers who feel that the eternalism and presentism alternatives are unduly restrictive, including those who maintain that the debate is merely verbal because each side is using the word "real" in a different sense: one untensed and the other tensed. Nonetheless, perhaps owing to the analytic tilt on developing inferential connections so dialogue and communal progress can be made, much of the debate revolves around evaluating the pros and cons of two (or at most three) main accounts of time: presentism, eternalism and, to a lesser extent, the "growing universe" theory. None of these frameworks resemble in either methods or conclusions the kind of positions and arguments proffered by Deleuze and Derrida, or for that matter by Husserl and Bergson. Consider, for example, the commonly espoused (old) B-series claim that (i) the semantics of "past", "present" and "future" can be explicated entirely, without loss of meaning, in terms of relations to the time of utterance (for instance, to say "the 1950s are past" is to say no more than "the 1950s are earlier than the time of utterance"), and (ii) the idea that there is such a thing as the

passage of time arises entirely from an incorrect understanding of such semantic matters. This idea that the past might become part of an omni-temporal space-time block, rather than retain its own significance, is, we think, precisely what the notion of an immemorial past (Derrida), or a virtual past (Bergson and Deleuze), would deny.²⁷

John McCumber's work helps to provide some further reasons for resisting Redding's implication that continental philosophers are essentially A theorists about time on McTaggart's schema. He suggests that proponents of *both* the A and B series have at least the following two central presuppositions:

1. The A and B series both incorporate necessary features of our experience of time; otherwise the experience of them would merely deliver subjective impressions, which might not tell us anything about what McTaggart wants to investigate: the nature of time itself.
2. We experience time as an ordering of events, which in turn are things with properties (being before and after; being past, present, or future).

McCumber suggests that much continental philosophy (but also the work of Augustine and others) invalidates (1) by denying (2): we do not necessarily experience time as an ordering of events, which means that we do not always experience time as either an A or a B series. Phenomenological analyses can show this, whether they invoke experiences like boredom, reminiscence, listening to a melody, etc. As such, the A series is closer to the natural attitude towards time rather than something continental philosophers (with the reduction that Lawlor maintains is omnipresent in some form or another) explicitly, or even tacitly, subscribe to. Towards the end of his essay in this issue of *Parrhesia*, McCumber adds:

In order for us to talk about past and future, we must populate them with content: we must see them as successive orders of things ... But when we do that, we suppress two facts about our experience of time, facts which are highlighted in the experience of being-asked: that the future is intrinsically less knowable than the present and the past, and that the past is not only relational but personal, and so unstable and malleable. What scientific, logical, and metaphysical theories of time have to capture is our experience of it. If the view of time as an event-series falsifies that experience, then those theories can at best be capturing something else.

Notwithstanding this disagreement regarding whether continental philosophers who are interested in the time(s) of our lives (and their conditions) should be seen as roughly proponents of McTaggart's A series, Redding's overall objection still has some force. On his account, Chase and I are making the mistake of taking analytic philosophy as a norm, and then concluding continental philosophy is not like that, but there are, as Glendinning has pointed out, many ways to not be analytic, and not being analytic doesn't suffice to establish any meaningful philosophical identity to the idea of continental philosophy.

Moreover, Redding rightly points out that the dominance of the B series within analytic philosophy itself depended on certain prior conditions, namely the timeless view of the proposition, which is something that occurs only at the end of nineteenth century following developments in logic, whereas in earlier periods (e.g. medieval, Aristotelean) neither the proposition nor logic in general was conceived of in quite such a timeless manner. Redding is correct that this is something that Chase and I don't dwell on in sufficient detail in *Analytic versus Continental*, although it is worth pointing out that we do examine these kind of background conditions in the chapter on transcendental reasoning. Moreover, as is also maintained in that chapter, the connection between the temporal turn and transcendental reasoning is very tight indeed.

Redding goes on to comment of the B series' dominance in early analytic philosophy:

These were important intellectual achievements, but that such a picture of time bound up with these

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projects should be thought of as *the default conception* for trying to think about *everything else* can seem odd indeed. From the ensuing intellectual perspective of mainstream analytic philosophy, continental philosophers like Heidegger have looked like they were obsessed with an odd picture of time, but it may have *just been the old one*, and perhaps a more *appropriate* one for thinking about a whole range of phenomena *other than* the very particular issues with which analytic philosophy in its early decades had been concerned.²⁸

These are salient reminders, but must we conclude that continental philosophy is just traditional philosophy in a new dress with Redding, or should we agree with McCumber, who at one point makes the reverse claim that analytic philosophy is traditional philosophy in a new dress, the materials of which were provided by the resources of post-Fregean logic? Another way of posing this issue might be to ask whether or not continental philosophy and traditional philosophy are continuous or not? This is a distinction that Hans-Johann Glock insists upon in *What Is Analytic Philosophy?*²⁹, but Redding's position at least implies that they are continuous. McCumber, on the other hand, accepts that there is a 'turn' (with Kant, and more particularly with reactions to Kant and especially Hegel), although he also concludes the book by referencing Plato and begins it with ruminations on Augustine.

My sympathies are more with McCumber's position, especially if this is an either-or issue, but perhaps we are better served maintaining that there is a temporal turn that inaugurates continental philosophy, and an atemporal turn at the heart of early analytic philosophy. While not univocal, both trajectories persist as a significant force today, with the continental temporal turn roughly beginning with Hegel (and different enough from much of the rest of the history of philosophy to mark the beginning of a tradition), the analytic atemporal turn (later supplemented by a methodological presentism, as suggested above) beginning around the start of the twentieth century with Moore and Russell's philosophical uses of Fregean logic. Certainly it seems unlikely to me that Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, etc., would have accepted the two precepts that McCumber attributes to continental philosophy. If this is plausible, it suggests that the discontinuity between continental philosophy and traditional philosophy is reasonably significant, and it is likewise difficult to dispute that Kant's methodological investment in transcendental reasoning also marks a significant transformation—perhaps even a Copernican revolution—from what had gone before.

Glendinning, however, makes some points closely related to Redding in reply to an essay of mine on his book, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*. He thinks that there is an interpretative decision made here, and one that is rather blinkered. He puts his point thus:

It may well be that poststructuralists and this new wave have ploughed the furrow of a temporal turn that distinguishes it from most analytic philosophy today, and I explicitly accept in the book that confining the title to the new wave is a *coherent and understandable strategy*. However, with respect to the post-Kantian line of thinkers who are undoubted contributors to the texts that make up the primary works of Continental philosophy, we should not regard that strategic arrogation as showing up the unity or even 'quasi-unity' of a distinctive Continental tradition.³⁰

Contrary to Glendinning, I think that reading such post-Kantian figures in relation to a temporal turn is not merely a strategic appropriation of these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts; we can see clear evidence of these claims in the texts of the vast majority of the usual suspects, which is not to deny that any positing of a tradition also involves a creative act. Indeed, McCumber's book, in particular, valuably details the temporal foci of Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, and Nietzsche, in the nineteenth century in a way that I have not myself done. While Glendinning is probably correct that such an interpretation is conducted with the benefit of hindsight and involves a relationship to these texts and thinkers that is irremediably altered by concerns that became more prevalent in the twentieth century, this seems to me to be hermeneutically inevitable—otherwise we run the risk of adopting, or trying to adopt, a view from 'nowhen' on the history of philosophy, something that most continental philosophers would abhor—and this fact does not automatically invalidate the thesis itself. Indeed,

if it did we really would have no knowledge of the past at all.

TIME, METAPHILOSOPHY, AND THE ETHICO-POLITICAL

I gave a version of this talk at the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in 2011 and Samir Haddad noted that he accepted the argument about the centrality of time to continental philosophy as I had presented it, but not the connection variously made between time and ethics, time and politics, time and normativity. In what follows I endeavor to make this clearer than it was in its original instantiation, although there will be some imprecision on account of the expanded ways in which ethico-political concerns are typically treated by continental philosophers, a style that Gregg Lambert calls *une grande politique*.³¹ Hopefully, however, the preceding discussion has begun to show that if continental philosophy is oriented around time, it is not that it is oriented around time as an explicit topic, such as the metaphysics of whether time is real or not. Rather, the concern with time is primarily methodological and metaphilosophical, but it is also ethico-political too, in the sense that it is claimed to be how one ought to do philosophy, but also in that it is typically maintained that we can glean some fundamental insights—albeit not universally prescribed actions that would purport to hold atemporally—into how one ought to live in relation to temporal experience and its conditions. Has this dimension of continental philosophy been part of the history of philosophy? To some extent, yes, since philosophy has traditionally been a form of coming to terms with one's own mortality/temporality, as well as a place for practical advice and techniques regarding how to deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. Arguably, it is the concern with metaphilosophy and time, or what we might call the connection between transcendental philosophy and normativity, rather than (simply) with how to practically deal with say the transience of time and death that is distinctive of the continental tradition, but there is not typically a strict separation drawn between such matters.

Without being able to do more than provide a snapshot of this here, I think that continental philosophers invariably invoke time when it comes to thematizing the ethico-political and normativity more generally, and this often depends on forms of transcendental philosophy and temporal orders of priority. This is partly due to the vast influence of Heidegger, including his direct association in *Being and Time* of “vulgar” or ordinary time (that is, time understood as fundamentally what is tracked by clocks) and inauthenticity (see § 81), notwithstanding his protestations that this is not a moral distinction. Roughly speaking, for Heidegger, an inauthentic mode of being-in-the-world is one without temporal unity and an authentic mode of being-in-the-world has temporal unity, a thesis that is subsequently contested by Levinas, Derrida, and Deleuze (as well as others) despite their indebtedness to some other aspects of Heidegger's philosophy of time. But Heidegger didn't come from nowhere in this respect. Other continental philosophers associated time and normativity (time and value) in the nineteenth century, and Derrida and Deleuze, for example, have continued to so. While Hegel is an obvious case, arguing that the task of philosophy ought to be to grasp one's own time in thought, we might also think of Friedrich Nietzsche's revaluation of values in which time is central. Nietzsche argues, for example, that all *ressentiment* is resentment of the present (the “now”) and claimed in *Ecce Homo* that the notion of the eternal return of the same was his greatest idea, along with the associated idea of *amor fati*: become what one is. We might also consider Karl Marx, whose rich and varied analyses of the relation between certain modes of production and time (e.g. time-as-measure) remains influential. Søren Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is primarily concerned with the manner in which the genuinely religious life involves a contradiction between temporal existence and eternity, as well as the manner in which the choice, or leap of faith, occurs at an instant in which time (lived time) and eternity are envisaged to intersect. Likewise, Kierkegaard has Johannes De Silentio declare at one point in *Fear and Trembling*: “temporality, finitude, that is what it is all about”³² and Schelling's *The Ages of the World* is all about time, prefiguring substantial aspects of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

Indeed, in different ways this normative dimension of time is also something that Lawlor, McCumber, and to a lesser extent Hoy, emphasize in their recent books on continental philosophy. Recall, for example, the two metaphilosophical principles that McCumber begins and ends his book with: a) everything is in time, and b)

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philosophy must never allow itself to forget this (390). McCumber concedes that we are in a bit of trouble if we understand these principles in traditional ontological terms (it seems self-refuting to say that all things are in time, since what of the putative eternal validity of this statement itself?), or epistemologically, since how could such a claim be proved? He says it is instead a practical counsel of “philosophical prudence” (391). Lawlor also invokes considerations to do with philosophical prudence that are also meant to allude to ways of responding ethically. Lawlor says:

We must become something other than the worst violence... Perhaps... it amounts to this: If we cannot stop the violence of repetition on the event, we can let it happen; if we cannot stop the violence of the event on repetition, we can let it happen. This letting happen means that we have the ability—the power maybe—to be unable. We are able to obey the law of repetition (we must always await the repetition in each event, obligated thereby to forget each event); we are able to obey the law of singularization (we must always forget all the repetitions of events, obligated thereby to wait for another event). Is this obedience a listening to the murmur of the outside? Is this obedience a welcoming of all the events across the border that divides while binding, welcoming all repetitions across the threshold that binds while dividing? Maybe this obedience would do the least violence. Nothing is certain... In this reaction of the least violence, we have opened the border of who we are to others, to all the others that haunt us from the past (they keep coming back to us) and to all the others that wait for us in the future (they keep coming toward us).³³

This kind of reflection, as Lawlor acknowledges, is indebted to the generation of ‘*les incorruptibles*’, Hélène Cixous’ somewhat quaint characterization of her contemporaries in France—Deleuze, Derrida, and Foucault in particular. It is not restricted to this generation, however, and draws on a tradition of continental philosophy that extends back to the various philosophers Lawlor considers—Bergson, Merleau-Ponty, etc.—and also further into the nineteenth century as McCumber shows.

This desire to contextualize ethico-political problems historically, and to treat how one experiences time as central to the good life (however that is understood), has various consequences. It means that continental philosophers rarely invoke rule-following accounts of ethics and politics. Very few, for example, would concur with Brad Hooker, Elinor Mason and Dale Miller, who in their introduction to *Morality, Rules and Consequences: A Critical Reader*, argue that the task of ethical theory is to come up with a code of rules or principles, that would, ideally, (a) allow a decision procedure for determining right action in a particular case, and that (b) could be stated in such terms that any non-virtuous person could understand it and apply it correctly.³⁴ Rather, they are instead typically engaged in forms of ethico-political reflection that are closer to virtue ethics, in that the focus is not typically on the consequences of particular acts, nor even their motivating intentions (in the sense of what one deliberately and consciously aimed to accomplish by a given act), but on character and patterns of action over periods of time. With Nietzsche, for example, one key question is: could we wish for our whole life, with everything that happens in it, to occur again without difference? Moreover, Nietzsche dismisses utilitarianism as an ethics for children and mediocre Englishmen³⁵ and it is significant that no well-known continental philosopher has ever, as far as I can discern, subscribed to utilitarianism and it has rarely even been discussed seriously.

As would be apparent, I think there is something philosophically vital to this trajectory. For many analytic philosophers, however, this interest in how one ought to respond to the time(s) of their lives, and the social and political dimensions of this question, makes their continental counterparts look like they are doing something other than philosophy. What, an analytic interlocutor might ask, is the relation between metaphilosophy—questions concerning the value of and how one ought to do philosophy, i.e. temporally—and considerations to do with the good life, norms, and ethico-political matters in general? Is there any relation at all? Many analytic philosophers would dispute this and theoretical reflections on the conjunction of such matters would be claimed to be something more like para-politics, as Hilary Putnam suggests—that is, a politicized philosophy that sees itself primarily in social and political terms.³⁶ Indeed, analytic philosophers have been worried about

this trajectory in continental philosophy since Bertrand Russell and many others of that period maintained that German Idealism had philosophically overreached itself in such a manner that it led, fairly directly in their somewhat scurrilous views, to Fascism and Hitler.

Of course, the ostensible neutrality of analytic philosophy regarding the social and political possibilities of philosophy³⁷—in contrast to the simultaneously critical and utopic aspirations of much continental philosophy since Hegel and Marx—is not as neutral as it might appear. That is because this neutrality is deemed not only to be metaphilosophically prudent, but also socio-politically desirable, since it is implied that the alternative is a sophistic discourse that is threatening not only philosophically, but also to the social order. As such, many analytic philosophers are not actually neutral about the connection between metaphilosophy and socio-political matters. On the contrary, even in recent times well-respected philosophers like Jonathan Cohen and Nicholas Rescher have aligned analytic philosophy's norm of clarity of argument with the spirit of democracy and evince a moral element to them. Cohen's *The Dialogue of Reason*, for example, argues that there is a close connection between analytic method, democracy and non-totalitarian stances; it is implied that the lack of such a method threatens to presage evil, philosophical or otherwise³⁸. This, of course, simply echoes the formative thoughts that were proffered by Russell and many others, as the idea of a 'divide' between ways of doing philosophy began to be entrenched in the early twentieth century.

But to return to the central issue of the connection between time and normativity throughout much continental philosophy, it might be maintained (especially when viewed from outside by an analytic philosopher) that this history of continental philosophy appears to be a history of failures. After all, none of the attempted elucidations of normative matters from salient temporal features of experience are entirely convincing, and all such attempts are contested by other continental philosophers, as we have seen even in the brief discussions entered into here. Perhaps the conclusion we should reach, then, is that this is not the way to do philosophy, and that if philosophy is done some other way then these risks—essentially the risk of sophistry, the risk of being fragmented and without a research program—might be avoided. To put it another way, if the history of continental philosophy shows that claims to transcendental priority concerning time are typically accompanied by illegitimate (in the sense that they cannot establish their necessity) normative moves, whether in Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, Deleuze, etc., one response to this might be to consign transcendental philosophy and/or temporalizing philosophy to the dustbin of history. But, again, that would presuppose a very different conception of philosophy in which there is a set of neutral methods that might immunize philosophy against the risk of failure, or at least against failure of this kind. And it might be fairly protested that nothing like this has yet come about, despite the progressivist optimism that undergirds the practice of analytic philosophy. On the contrary, from the outside analytic philosophy also appears to be a history of failures. Both Richard Rorty and Robert Paul Wolff have noted that after World War II, analytic philosophers still expected to wrap up the task of solving or dissolving all traditional philosophical problems in a few years, yet not a single one of its problems has gone away: think of the existence of God, free will, the nature of truth and reference etc.³⁹ Even today, Michael Dummett is prepared to bet that the analytic methods will solve (at least to the satisfaction of this academic community) the problem of the existence of God within two generations: he thinks in the affirmative.⁴⁰

From my own perspective, however, the best solution is not to give transcendental/temporalizing philosophy up, since the consequence seems to be an impoverished account of time and politics that is itself partial and dogmatic in various different ways. In particular, such philosophies cannot offer an "ontology of the present" as Foucault puts it, a "genealogy of ourselves"⁴¹, and instead seems committed to an intellectual view that Simone de Beauvoir describes as the curator of the given world.⁴² Indeed, to the extent that a philosophical trajectory tends to oscillate between atemporality and temporal presentism it will be limited, especially in ethico-political terms, where much of what we desire, wish for, are fearful of, is irremediably temporal. Indeed, it is to threaten to give philosophy no role in regard to the time(s) of our lives.

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In his earlier book, *Reshaping Reason*, McCumber's last chapter focuses on the ethical dimensions of methodological issues and gives what is essentially an ethical argument for a form of methodological pluralism concerning time. McCumber contends that the temporal conditions of the possibility of experience show us that we need to be pluralists about reason and knowledge. For him, knowledge is an affair of the present-tense only. It is inferential thinking. But narrative thinking pays more attention to the past, and demarcation focuses on the future. Demarcation is said to mean opening up a gap, as a way of bringing about a future. As he pithily puts it, "demarcation without narrative is empty; inference without narrative is blind; narrative without demarcation is reactionary; narrative without inference is fiction".⁴³ It would be clear, already, that he associates inference with analytic philosophy, and the other two tendencies predominantly with parts of continental philosophy. Moreover, the past and the future have an ethical flavor that is missing from the present-tense (immemorial time for Levinas, the future "to come" for Derrida), and to restrict a philosophical account to any single one of these times is to have a restricted philosophy, perhaps even a myopic or chronopathological one.

In *Time and Philosophy*, McCumber also includes a revealing quote from Quine to help make apparent the manner in which a metaphilosophical privileging of one or the other of these times enables a dismissal of other times, in this case demarcation and narrative, and thus verges on a form of theoretical fundamentalism. He sees Quinean talk of ridding ordinary language of its temporal elements as part of an "old tradition" for which true reality is located in an atemporal domain. Those who don't do this are wrong-headed, and Quine adds, that "if one pursues philosophy in a scientific spirit as a quest for truth, then tolerance of wrong-headed philosophy is as unreasonable as tolerance of astrology would be on the part of the astrophysicist, and as unethical as tolerance of Unitarianism would be on the part of hell-fire fundamentalists".⁴⁴ This is a strong comparison for Quine to draw. It suggests that there is a fear of losing something that is loved, in this case the atemporal ambitions for philosophy to disclose truths that do not depend upon subjective times or historical contingencies, and that his fear of losing what he loves precludes any ecumenical tolerance or consideration of the varieties of so-called lived-time, for example, or the essential finitude involved in structures of lived-time. Indeed, we might note in passing that following the French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel's lecture on death, the British ordinary language philosopher J. L. Austin, himself dying of cancer at the time, reputedly stood up and said, "we all know we have to die, but why do we have to sing songs about it?"⁴⁵

But again, my point is not that Quine and Austin are somehow irremediably bad, and Marcel (let alone Heidegger) are by contrast good, embracing both metaphilosophically and ethically a richer expanse of times. Indeed, we know that Heidegger, at least, has a very strong dismissal of ordinary time and clock-time (and presentist structures in general), in *Being and Time*, one that arguably cannot be sustained, and there are other questions about his enduring nostalgia for the pre-Socratics. Philosophically, it is arguable that he made temporal mistakes; politically, of course, he did too. Likewise, other continental philosophers may not practice what they preach regarding the various dimensions of the time(s) of our lives. While I do think that the continental tradition gives us some essential insights into the relations between time and normativity, and highlights the kind of violence that neglect of particular aspects of time can do, that doesn't mean that they are thus immune from these errors, from their own time sicknesses. Hegel, for example, emphasizes the past but gave very little philosophical reflection to the future. By contrast, there is also a prophetic futurity about many of the philosophers associated with poststructuralism that does not deny the importance of the inheritance of a past, but which I argue in *Chronopathologies* does result in a philosophical—and also ethical—denigration of the living-present and its temporal conditions. The attempt to articulate conditions for present experience and present identity tends towards a prophetic futurity and a philosophy of difference that involves, more or less directly, a denunciation of good sense, calculation, and the structures of time alleged to sustain them. As such, my point is that there are chronopathologies within both analytic and continental philosophy, and that these respective time-sicknesses do currently split in separate directions and form a constellation around that we call analytic and continental philosophy (perhaps so-called speculative realism will change that, but that remains to be seen).

To see this, it is helpful to borrow some terms from Martin Hagglund, who discusses the manner in which

chronophilia (love of an aspect of time), and chronophobia (fear of the loss of that time) depend upon one another: psychoanalytically speaking we only fear the loss of that which we love, or at least what we would prefer to not lose.⁴⁶ We might say, risking a strong generalization, that continental philosophy loves exploring certain dimensions of time (the times of our lives, but also the times that are the conditions for our lives and/or render lived-time unstable and open it to the new and different), and, fearful of the naturalist/physicalist/objectivist rejection of such times, claims that these are not the proper object of philosophical reflection. Indeed, I think that transcendental philosophy can (but in its better forms does not) serve an inoculating or immunizing function, preserving a proper domain to which one might safely abscond from mere empirical or ontic temporal considerations. Analytic philosophy, on the other hand, loves the time of the universe and the view from nowhen, or alternatively it tends to trust heavily in present intuitions and coherence building techniques, and is fearful of the loss of such times in historicism, contextualism, relativism, etc., and argues that these are merely subjective and psychological rather than objective. It is also arguably fearful of that dimension of the future (which we might even call its essence) which cannot be predicted or modeled, and which Derrida in *Of Grammatology* calls its monstrosity. This monstrosity may be dangerous for continental philosophers, but it is also the only chance for interruption to the imperialism of the same (this is the worst, for them). When Deleuze and Guattari invoke the need for resistance to the present, in relation to the people to come, it is clear enough that this has an ethico-political dimension. When Levinas emphasizes that importance of the immemorial past, or Derrida discusses the ‘to come’, these kinds of reflections are both meant to refer to structures of our experience, transcendental laws of the times of our lives we might say, and they also have a normative element too.

It seems that there is a certain kind of chronopathology—that is, theoretical myopia about time—that can afflict both traditions and which has a metaphilosophical dimension, as well as an ethico-political and normative dimension. Allow me to draw together some of the main claims I have made about analytic philosophy which bear this out. We have seen evidence of a chronopathology prevailing in analytic philosophy: an atemporality in some cases (e.g. utilitarianism, four-dimensionalism, etc.), a presentism in other cases (we have to start from somewhere: e.g. the intuitions of the “folk”). In addition, in political philosophy there is also a general preoccupation with distributive justice and rule-following prescriptions that remains anathema to most forms of continental ethico-political reflection. This chronopathology is also ensconced in some of the core philosophical methods of analytic philosophy more generally: analysis aims to reveal underlying structures (sometimes logical) that are timeless; truth is defined as independent of all justification (and hence historical processes); thought experiments are “intuition pumps” that call on pre-theoretic opinion and then structure debates by serving as placeholders; the deferential relationship to the best findings of the sciences indexed to the present (hence an expert presentism, which requires perennial updating); the *prima facie* credence given to common sense (a non-expert presentism); as well as the general prevalence of coherentist devices like reflective equilibrium which take seriously both pre-theoretic opinion and the findings of the various expert domains. Of course, to suggest that this amounts to a time sickness might seem to beg the question by assuming that such views are false, and it might be fairly protested that nothing quite so strong has been established. But my weaker claim here is simply that the methods and metaphilosophical understanding of the role of the philosopher are temporally limited and partial. I would also add, however, that any claims to them being exhaustive seem especially weak in regard to ethico-political reflection. Indeed, I have suggested that the motivation and impetus for change, for example, generally requires both a more utopian (future-oriented) and a more critical and genealogical (past-oriented) dimension.

If I am right about the general contours of this position, this suggests that a rapprochement is desirable. Philosophy needs to be able to adequately come to terms with what Hoy calls the *time* of our lives—I prefer to pluralize this to the *times* of our lives—and yet the poststructuralism of Deleuze and Derrida has an excessive emphasis on times (and methods) that resist the present while simultaneously at work within the present, and analytic philosophy tends to have a deficiency of such methods generally being either atemporal or presentist. Whether any such rapprochement is genuinely possible (for philosophical reasons, as much as socio-political ones) remains less clear given that some fundamental metaphilosophical and normative orders of priority make

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it difficult for the twain to meet. This is due to norms like methodological empiricism and respect for common sense in analytic philosophy, and the continental “temporal turn” with its association with a hermeneutics of suspicion and transcendental philosophy. Hence we are confronted by an aporia: while each tradition needs the other, each is also precluded from that very dialogue to the extent that they take these norms seriously, especially in regard to the divergent methodological and topical significance given to time, which is a blind spot at the heart of both analytic and continental philosophy, what we might call an enabling and disabling condition. The aporetic challenge for our time(s) is hence to do what we as philosophers find almost impossible to do: engage in a genuine conversation with our respective others, whether they be analytic, continental, phenomenological, or poststructuralist. To put it more Socratically, we need to know that we do not know, which as with the Greek use of aporia, ought to inspire us to find out more. Such a desire is a precondition for any postanalytic and metacontinental future to emerge.⁴⁷

JACK REYNOLDS is Associate Professor and Head in the Philosophy Department at La Trobe University. He is the co-editor of a number of books, including most recently *Continuum Companion to Existentialism* (2011), and is the author of four books: *Chronopathologies: The Politics of Time in Deleuze, Derrida, Analytic Philosophy and Phenomenology* (Lexington Books 2011), *Analytic Versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy* (Acumen 2010, with James Chase), *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida: Intertwining Embodiment and Alterity* (Ohio 2004), *Understanding Existentialism* (Acumen 2006). He is currently doing research on inter-subjectivity and the perception of others, drawing on the phenomenological tradition as well as findings in developmental psychology and the cognitive sciences.

NOTES

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1. M. Mandelbaum, "Philosophy, Science, and Sense Perception", *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 36 (1962, 50–20).
2. In 1961, the University of Melbourne conducted some weekly seminars under the heading of recent continental philosophy, with Professor Boyce Gibson doing a talk entitled "British versus continental philosophy". Thanks to Tim Oakley for passing on to me the published proceedings of this series.
3. S. Glendinning, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, 115, 29.
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. Anscombe. London: Blackwell, 1953, see § 65–6, especially the famous discussion regarding the definition for a game—no necessary and sufficient condition definition seems to suffice—and the rope that has a unity despite no single thread persisting throughout the whole rope. For more on this, see my paper, "Continental Philosophy and Chickening Out", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 2009, but also Glendinning's reply in this same issue and his recent article in *Southern Journal of Philosophy* (2012).
5. This is what Michael Dummett suggests in *The Nature and Future of Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010, 150. See also, T. Pinkard, "Analytics, Continentals, and Modern Skepticism", *Monist* 82: 2 (1999, 213).
6. J. Chase and J. Reynolds, *Analytic versus Continental: Arguments on the Methods and Value of Philosophy*. Durham, UK: Acumen, 2010. Most of my reflections proffered here have benefitted from debates with James Chase in writing this book.
7. M. Sacks, "The Nature of Transcendental Arguments", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13:4 (2005, 444).
8. Neil Levy, "Analytic and Continental: Explaining the Differences", *Metaphilosophy* 34:3 (2003, 284–304). Levy looks at their divergent research practices (with some reflection on their respective methodologies) by way of an analogy with Thomas Kuhn's account of scientific methodology. For Levy, analytic philosophy is paradigmatic, and functions in the manner of a normal science (with research clusters, methodological canons, technical training, and so on), whereas continental philosophy exhibits the features of what Kuhn called prescience (lack of agreement on methods, no unifying work, etc).
9. Daniel Dennett, referring to phenomenology, famously says that the "first person science of consciousness is a discipline with no methods, no data, no results, no future, no promise. It will remain a fantasy". See D. Dennett, "The Fantasy of First-Person Science", <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/chalmersdeb3dft.htm>, but also Steven Crowell's essay, which anticipates Dennett's view, "Is There a Phenomenological Research Program?", *Synthese* 131 (2002, 419–444).
10. T. Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008, ix.
11. David Hoy, *The Time of Our Lives: A Critical History of Temporality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.
12. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*. Trans. Ray Brassier. London: Continuum, 2008. Meillassoux contends that many continental philosophers are "correlationists" to either a weak or a strong degree (depending, roughly, on the extent to which their inheritance is Kantian and Hegelian), and so cannot adequately account for the reality of ancestral claims regarding "arche-fossils" (including in physics, biology, etc.) that pre-dated human subjects.
13. Hoy, *The Time of Our Lives*, 22.
14. Charles Bambach makes this point in an article that doubles as a review of David Hoy's book. See C. Bambach, "The Time of the Self and the Time of the Other", *History and Theory* 50:2 (2011, 254–269). In Levinasian spirit, he wants to situate the problem of time more firmly in relation to an ethics of the other.
15. J. Mullarkey, *Postcontinental Philosophy*. London: Continuum, 2006.
16. J. McCumber, *Time and Philosophy: A History of Continental Thought*. Durham UK: Acumen, 2011, 7.
17. David Cooper, "Nietzsche and the Analytic Ambition", *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 26:1 (2003, 2).
18. In this respect, see Simon Glendinning, "Argument All the Way Down: The Demanding Discipline of Non-Argumento-Centric Modes of Philosophy", in *Postanalytic and Metacontinental: Crossing Philosophical Divides*. Eds Jack Reynolds, James Chase, James Williams and Edwin Mares. London: Continuum, 2010, 71–84.
19. L. Lawlor, *Early Twentieth Century Philosophy*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2012, 7.
20. Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, 207.
21. Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, 10–11.
22. Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, 11.
23. L. Bryant, "Review of David Hoy, *The Time of Our Lives*", *Notre Dame Journal of Philosophical Review*. <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24162-the-time-of-our-lives-a-critical-history-of-temporality/>
24. Glendinning, *The Idea of Continental Philosophy*, 94.
25. P. Redding, "Review of James Chase and Jack Reynolds, *Analytic versus Continental*", *Parrhesia: A Critical Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2011, 201).

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26. McTaggart, "The Unreality of Time", *The Philosophy of Time*. Ed. R. Le Poidevin and M. MacBeath. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993, 23–34. This gloss here comes from Chase and Reynolds, *Analytic Versus Continental*.
27. Chase and Reynolds, *Analytic versus Continental*, 198–9.
28. Redding, 201–2.
29. H-J. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy?* Cambridge: CUP, 2008.
30. S. Glendinning, "Reply to Reynolds", *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17:2 (2009, 273–80).
31. G. Lambert, "Une Grande Politique, or the New Philosophy of Right?", *Critical Horizons* 4:2 (2003, 177–97).
32. S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: New Jersey, 1983, 49. Thanks to Jeff Hanson for this reference.
33. Lawlor, *Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy*, 208.
34. Brad Hooker, Elinor Mason, and Dale Miller, eds. *Morality, Rules and Consequences: A Critical Reader*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000, 1.
35. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966, § 253.
36. Hilary Putnam, *Renewing Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1992, 197.
37. We also know that the appearance of socio-political neutrality can be politically expedient. In such a vein, John McCumber argues in *Time in the Ditch* that the rise and success of the ostensibly politically neutral analytic philosophy in the US in the McCarthy era is more than a coincidence (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).
38. J. Cohen, *The Dialogue of Reason: An Analysis of Analytical Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
39. Thanks to the anonymous referee for pointing this out.
40. Dummett, *The Nature and Future of Philosophy*, 151.
41. M. Foucault, "The Art of Telling the Truth", in *Critique and Power*. Ed. M. Kelly, trans. Alan Sheridan. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994, 147–8.
42. S. De Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Trans. B. Frechtman. New York: Kensington Publishing, 1976, 91.
43. McCumber, *Reshaping Reason*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007, 102.
44. McCumber, *Time and Philosophy*, 6.
45. Gabriel Marcel, as cited in Geoffrey Scarre, *Death*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007, 65.
46. M. Hagglund, "Chronolibidinal Reading: Deconstruction and Psychoanalysis," *Living On: Of Martin Hägglund*, Special Issue of *CR: The New Centennial Review* 9.1 (Spring 2009, 1–43).
47. John McCumber also makes a related point in *Reshaping Reason* (cf. 33).

THE ETERNAL RETURN OF THE SAME: NIETZSCHE'S 'VALUE-FREE' REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES

David Rowe

There are many, often conflicting, interpretations of Nietzsche's aims and intentions. I think this sometimes has to do with the emphasis philosophers put on different aspects of his philosophy. For example, one who emphasizes Nietzsche's call for creativity may find oneself in conflict with those who emphasize his determinism. Then there are those who attempt to broach the issue in a way that 'accommodates' both sides by, perhaps, appealing to some underlying thesis or (as is often done) pointing to Nietzschean rhetoric or hyperbole as the problem.

In this paper I am going to say something that I hope will have repercussions for those who attribute a certain value system to Nietzsche, whether it be virtue ethics, subjective realism, or whatever. I will not be conversing directly with these particular interpreters of Nietzsche, however, as my aim lies in highlighting the extent to which we should interpret Nietzsche's work as being nihilistic. I will argue that one should interpret Nietzsche as a nihilist and in light of this one must withhold attributing any particular value system to him. This is not to say that he didn't have a value system—because he did. It is to say that insofar as attributing a value system to Nietzsche implies that he was expounding particular values for us to *follow*, e.g. the community as a whole, or even parts of the community, we must withhold the attribution of a value system to him.

I will show that Nietzsche's interpretation of nihilism is bound up with his cyclical view of time, or what he calls the eternal recurrence of the same. Intuitively, nihilism and the eternal recurrence seem to go hand in hand: the former denies any meaningful values and the latter, being the thesis that all recurs, seems to *preclude* there being any absolute values. The entwining of the eternal recurrence and nihilism appears throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*¹ and plays a vital role in both the internal logic and overcoming of nihilism—something which was present within Nietzsche since August 1881, where he 'experienced' the eternal recurrence near Surlei, beside

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a huge pyramidal boulder²—an event that was first incorporated into his philosophy in the second-to-last section of the fourth book in *The Gay Science*³.

My presentation of this will take the following form. Firstly, I will say some remarks about Nietzsche's attitude toward (and acceptance of) nihilism. I then give a reading of a long fragment, which appears in Nietzsche's later notebooks, that provides great insight into Nietzsche's conception of nihilism and the role the doctrine of the eternal recurrence plays within this conception. I compare this reading of the eternal recurrence with Löwith and Klossowski's reading of the same, before attempting to place Nietzsche as a 'thorough-going nihilist'.⁴

Nietzsche's thoughts on nihilism receive only sporadic mention in writings published during his lifetime. His most vivid ideas relating to this topic are found in *The Will to Power*⁵, compiled by Elizabeth Forster-Nietzsche and Peter Gast after Nietzsche's death. But there is evidence that Nietzsche had, at least at some point, plans to publish some of these ideas.⁶⁷ I present four fragments from his later writings (between the years 1887 and 1888) to provide some sort of understanding of Nietzsche's relation to nihilism.

Here is Nietzsche:

Nihilism as a normal condition

*Nihilism: the goal is lacking; an answer to the 'Why?' is lacking. What does nihilism mean?—That the highest values are devaluated*⁸

This means, first, nihilism is a *normal* condition for us to be in at this particular time in history (at least in 1887 when Nietzsche wrote this, but, plausibly, also now). Second, it says that our so-called *highest values* have been devaluated: whereas they once held value *for us*, they no longer hold this value. Accordingly, there is now no purpose, no meaning, no goal, no "ideal of happiness", "ideal of morality" or "ideal of man": in reality, these things are *lacking*.⁹ It is this loss of meaning that has become the normal condition for us.

My claim is that everything Nietzsche says must be understood under the veil of nihilism. This may appear unusual to some, for the position the nihilist is traditionally seen to take is that there are *no* meaningful values.¹⁰ But Nietzsche is usually thought of as espousing *at least* the values of the *ubermensch*, the will to power and the eternal recurrence.¹¹ Moreover, Nietzsche appears to distance himself from the meaninglessness associated with the nihilist, claiming that he has left it behind, that it is 'outside himself':

[I am] a soothsayer-bird spirit who *looks back* when relating what will come; as the first perfect nihilist of Europe who, however, has even now lived through the whole of nihilism, to the end, leaving it behind, outside himself¹²

But these sorts of remarks need to be tempered by those such as the following:

It is only late that one musters the courage for what one really knows. That I have hitherto been a thorough-going nihilist, I have admitted to myself only recently... When one moves toward a goal it seems impossible that 'goal-lessness as such' is the principle of our faith¹³

Here, plausibly, he is saying that he *is* a nihilist: a 'thorough-going' one. But we can reconcile these two passages if we concentrate on the apparent contradictoriness of the above quote: that "goal-lessness as such" is "our" goal. The goal, I will claim, is a revaluation of all values. But this should not be understood as aiming at a particular goal—of humanity or whatever. It is to aim at "goal-lessness as such". So his 'perfection' of nihilism only aims at "goal-lessness as such"—it is *not* a creation of new values. I will elaborate by making sense of the following quote:

Nihilism... [is not] merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy—This is, if you will, illogical;—It is the condition of strong spirits and wills, and these do not find it possible to stop with the No of ‘judgment’: their nature demands the No of the deed¹⁴

Nietzsche is often thought of as encompassing two projects: a destruction of current values and a construction of new ones.¹⁵ But here he is saying that *everything* must be destroyed. The contradiction becomes apparent if we think about the subject matter: values. To destroy one set of values seems to presuppose another set from which one does the destroying. But Nietzsche is denying even this. I will attempt to make this sound more plausible.

There is a three-part answer to this objection from implausibility.¹⁶ The first part of the resolution comes by acknowledging that he is ‘moving up a level’, so to speak. I think Nietzsche is concerned with what the values presuppose. In another note he claims: “the categories ‘aim,’ ‘unity,’ ‘being’ [or truth] which we used to project some value into the world—we *pull out* again; so the world looks *valueless*.”¹⁷ So the values we are destroying are the ones that occupy one of these three categories: aim, unity, being. But this is only part of the solution. The other two parts go hand in hand. One of them is Nietzsche’s so-called Perspectivism. Metaphorically, Nietzsche jumps between perspectives, from which he attacks existent values, but then withdraws from these perspectives before a value-system can be attributed to him. The second part is to realize that a *doing* no, does not imply a doing, or saying, *yes even to something else*. I will return to this point, specifically, in the final section of this paper.

Deleuze notes two senses of nihilism in Nietzsche. The first sense is “its primary and basic sense” as signifying “the value of nil taken on by life.”¹⁸ The second sense is nihilism in its “colloquial sense”, which signifies a reaction against the supersensible world and higher values.¹⁹ In short, these different forms of nihilism have different starting points. The first starts from a particular view about the aims and goals of life, the second starts from some pre-established values. I will argue that Nietzsche starts from this second sense of nihilism and, with the help of the doctrine of the eternal recurrence, justifies nihilism in the first sense.

It may be helpful to give a typology of nihilism, as it appears in Nietzsche. There seem to be three: Negative, Reactive and Radical, the latter of which divides into two types: passive and active. This understanding of Nietzsche’s view on nihilism is perhaps closest to Deleuze’s,²⁰ but differs from other readings in two ways: by incorporating the reactive stage and excluding the notion of complete nihilism.²¹ This is not without precedent: first, reactive nihilism is needed to understand the transition from a world of higher values to radical nihilism; second, complete nihilism, rather than being a *type* of nihilism, is the *end* of nihilism. What it does show, however, is that Nietzsche thinks there is an end to the process—one that will come about as a “necessary consequence of the ideals entertained hitherto.”²²²³

I will now present the manner in which Nietzsche sees this internal logic at work. It is worth comparing what I say with the schematic diagram in Figure A.

The fragment under discussion appears in his later notebooks. It *starts* by considering the “Christian moral hypothesis.”²⁴ It is important to note that this is a form of nihilism, namely negative nihilism, or what Deleuze has called nihilism in “its primary and basic sense” as signifying “the value of nil taken on by life.” But the nihilistic nature of these values is not of concern to Nietzsche at present. Rather, he is concerned with nihilism in its ‘colloquial’, not ‘primary’ sense.

He firstly considers the Christian moral hypothesis’ advantages: to save man from nature; “it endowed man with an absolute *value*”; it provided a sense of freedom and supplied evil with meaning; it provided man with “adequate knowledge precisely of what is most important.”²⁵ For Nietzsche, the postulation of these higher values is “the great *antidote* to practical and theoretical *nihilism*.”²⁶ Basically, it was a “*means of preservation*” and insulated man from total despair of “his smallness and contingency in the flux of becoming and passing

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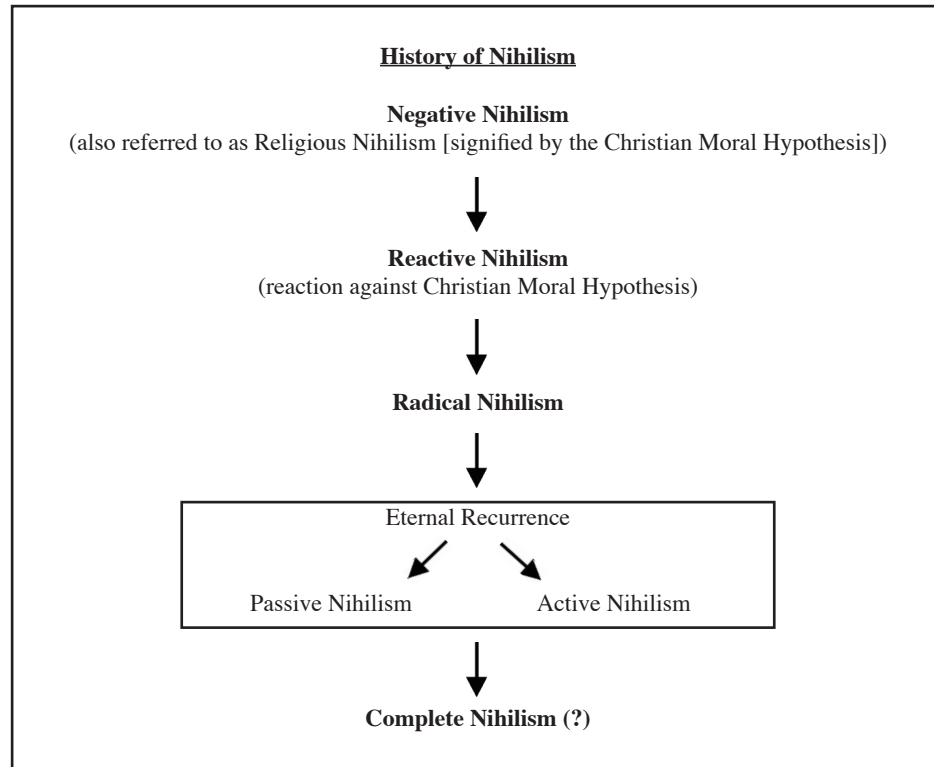


Figure A

away.”²⁷ Another way to say this is that it provided a rift between an ‘apparent’ world, where man was basically insignificant, and a ‘true’ one, which was a world of our higher values.²⁸

Nietzsche claims that one of the forces that this Christian morality cultivated was truthfulness. Truth, however, according to Nietzsche, turns *against* morality: it “discovers its *teleology*, the *partiality* of its viewpoint.”²⁹ This idea is confirmed in the later chapters of *Ecce Homo*, where he says:

Have I been understood? ... The self-overcoming of morality from out of truthfulness, the self-overcoming of moralists into their opposite—*into me* [*viz.* the immoralist *par excellence*]³⁰

It’s a sticky question over what Nietzsche’s view about truth is, or whether he even had a single (or consistent) view about it. But we can make some headway if we divide the question ‘what is truth for Nietzsche?’ into two parts. One way to think about this question is to ask what Nietzsche thinks is the correct view about truth. The other way to think about this question is to ask what general conditions Nietzsche thinks something must meet for us (meaning a society or the whole of humanity) to classify it as true. It is in this second way that we can consider Nietzsche’s use of ‘truthfulness’ and how it was cultivated by Christian morality.

At the most general level Nietzsche thought that what we classify as true is what is suitable to our conditions of life.³¹ He says “[t]he criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power,”³² but that it is also a kind of “contentment”, requiring the “smallest expenditure of spiritual force.”³³ So it is only that which we are

able to endure that we classify as true. In this way, Nietzsche considers the conditions of truth as some sort of non-perspectival part of reality as false, and that what is counted as true is dependent on (1) the conditions of our survival and (2) only that in which we have the power to endure.

This helps considerably in discerning the transition to the second type of nihilism: Reactive nihilism. The Christian moral hypothesis provided us with the resources for discerning true and false, but at this stage we were not strong enough to challenge what the Christian moral hypothesis *determined* was true and false. Nietzsche is thinking about ‘needs’, implanted in us, on which depend the value we attribute to life; in particular: unity, purpose and being (truth).³⁴ It was only at a later stage, when we progressed in our strength, that we no longer needed the protection of the Christian moral hypothesis. It is at this stage that the conditions of our survival outstrip what the Christian moral hypothesis discerns as true. In other words, we no longer need the ‘safety’ of unity, purpose and being (truth). But this, according to Nietzsche, results in a turbid antagonism: “*not esteeming what we know and no longer being permitted to esteem what we would like to pretend to ourselves.*”³⁵

If the Christian moral hypothesis was the antidote for a kind of nihilism in respect to the meaninglessness of life, the undermining of this morality through our strength in overcoming its falsities should at once absolve the Christian moral hypothesis *and* its foundation (for we are now strong enough to encounter the meaninglessness of life ‘head on’). However, such is not the case, for as the Christian interpretation was “regarded as *the* interpretation, there now seems to be no meaning at all in existence, everything seems to be *in vain*.”³⁶ It is this ‘in vain’ that encompasses man in virtue of the loss of all meaning in life. There is now no goal, no purpose, no meaning in evil, no intrinsic value in man. The old interpretation—the Christian moral interpretation—has been shown to be false, but there is nothing to replace it. This results in a kind of nihilism that throws its hands up and confesses that all is ‘in vain’. This is Reactive nihilism.

But this is only a transitory stage to a much more severe form of nihilism: Radical nihilism.³⁷ This comes about, according to Nietzsche, through “the *most paralyzing* thought,” which is to come to the *realization* that our values aim only at a pseudo purpose—for there is no aim or purpose—yet one has no power to prevent oneself from being lured into this false sense of security.³⁸ So it is not *only* the ‘in vain’ that is prevalent here (although this plays a big part); it is the reflexivity that is important: our coming to realize the pointlessness or meaninglessness of our situation and not being able to do anything about it.

The doctrine of the eternal recurrence is instrumental in the move from Reactive nihilism to Radical nihilism. Nietzsche introduces us to the eternal recurrence in Section 6 of the fragment under discussion:³⁹

Let us think this thought in its most terrible form: existence as it is, without meaning or goal, but inevitably recurring, without any finale into nothingness: eternal recurrence⁴⁰

The eternal recurrence was most famously introduced by Nietzsche in the second-to-last section of book four in *Gay Science*. Here, he tells (or, actually, recounts his experience in Sils Maria in 1881) of a demon who says:

This life as you now live it and have lived it you will have to live once again and innumerable times again; and there will be nothing new in it, but every great pain and every joy and every thought and every sigh and everything unspeakably small or great in your life must return to you, all in the same succession and sequence⁴¹

What I take this to be saying is that our life, and all the lives before us in history, have occurred many times before, and will recur many times more. But we will have no knowledge of this recurrence: everything we do will have a feeling of uniqueness, yet this apparent feeling is false—we have done everything before and we will do everything once again *in exactly the same way* and *in exactly the same sequence*. Nietzsche takes the demon to provide a challenge, where one of two options are available:

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[either] throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus... [or] answer him 'You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine'⁴²

It is the requirement to choose one of these two options that splits radical nihilism into two forms. For Nietzsche, (radical) nihilism requires disambiguation:

Nihilism. It is ambiguous:

A. Nihilism as a sign of increased power of the spirit: as active nihilism.

B. Nihilism as decline and recession of the power of the spirit: as passive nihilism⁴³

It is one's answer to the demon that determines which disambiguation one gives to nihilism. Throwing oneself down and gnashing one's teeth is a rejection of the demon's 'truth' and an instantiation of passive nihilism. Accepting the demon's tale is an instantiation of active nihilism. This active nihilism, however, *remains* nihilistic:

Nihilism [*viz.* active or passive nihilism] represents a pathological *intermediate state* (what is pathological is the tremendous generalization, the inference *that there is no meaning at all*): whether because the productive forces are not yet strong enough or because decadence is still hesitating and has not yet invented the resources it needs⁴⁴

The intermediate state is the state of withholding assent from any particular goal, while denying all meaning. So this disambiguation of radical nihilism, *viz.* into active nihilism, remains nihilistic: new values, new goals and new meanings are not yet created, which can only be done at the final stage of nihilism (which I will not be discussing): complete nihilism. I will argue that Nietzsche inhabited the active stage of nihilism.

I introduced the eternal recurrence as a cyclical view of time, but it is evident from what Nietzsche says, and many interpreters after him, that there are (at least) two meanings of the eternal recurrence.⁴⁵ Under one disambiguation it is a cosmological thesis, which is intended to make sense of the idea that time is infinite and matter is finite by claiming that every possible combination of matter will recur infinite times. This has also been called the scientific or metaphysical thesis. Under the other disambiguation it is a kind of thought experiment. This has been called the anthropological or psychological thesis. It is thought to be equivalent to an ethical imperative, analogous to Kant's categorical imperative. It provides a burden upon one in that it requires one's (psychological) acceptance of the following condition for every action: "live in every moment so that you *could* will that moment back again over and over" for, according to the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine, you *will* live that moment over and over regardless.⁴⁶

Consider, first, the eternal recurrence as a scientific thesis. Paolo D'Iorio has argued, quite convincingly, that Nietzsche intended the eternal recurrence to be a scientific doctrine.⁴⁷ D'Iorio cites 19th-century philosophers who influenced Nietzsche: Otto Caspari and Johann Carl Friedrich Zöllner, who argued for an organicist and pan-psychical conception of the universe.⁴⁸ It was in this way that these philosophers proposed that the universe can avoid a state of rest, or end-state, and thus recur eternally.

There are some clues that Nietzsche is considering the same problem. He claims that the eternal recurrence is "the *most scientific* of all possible hypothesis."⁴⁹ And in the next line he highlights that he is reacting to the very same problem his predecessors were: "[w]e deny final goals: if existence had one, it could not fail to have been reached."⁵⁰⁵¹ In cashing this out, Nietzsche's predecessors appealed to a pantheistic (e.g. an organicist or pan-psychical) conception of the universe. But this is awkward for Nietzsche, because he has disavowed the existence of such an hypothesis by rebuking the Christian moral hypothesis.⁵²

So it is of no surprise that Nietzsche seeks an opposite, or contrast, to pantheism [*ein Gegensatz zum Pantheismus angestrebt wird*] in the next section. Nietzsche finds this contrast in the will to power. He claims that we may

affirm the process “if something within that process were *achieved* at every moment of it—and always the same thing.”⁵³ According to Nietzsche, what this ‘fundamental trait’ is is the will to power.⁵⁴ For Nietzsche, it is this will that is attempting to achieve power at every moment.

Nietzsche then considers the psychological effects of the eternal recurrence as scientific doctrine. This is to consider the eternal recurrence as a psychological or anthropological thesis. We start with Nietzsche’s claim that one’s “welcom[ing] triumphantly every moment of general existence” depends on one’s fundamental trait being aligned with the fundamental trait of life.⁵⁵ Considering morality in respect to the fundamental trait of life, he contends that morality was used as a *protection against* the rulers’ fundamental trait: their will to power. But if “the oppressed man’s” faith in morality was a protection against his oppressor’s will to power, then the man of morality would realize that he has no higher rank than his oppressors. This, according to Nietzsche, would mean that man would enter “the phase of hopeless desperation.”⁵⁷

This helps explain why loss of faith in the Christian religion did not mean an acceptance of what the Christian values were supposed to be an antidote for. The reason is that after the Christian religious point of view overcame itself, there was still a need for the ‘comfort’ of certain moral values, to provide an order of rank that is based on moral evaluations. But, at the same time, there is a certain mistrust in these values. It is only when this mistrust becomes a crisis that we move from the reactive stage of nihilism to a form of radical nihilism.

It is Nietzsche’s contention that Buddhism and Christianity are nihilistic religions, but that Buddhism is a more completed nihilism.⁵⁸ In particular, Buddhism has reached the passive stage of nihilism, whereas the Christian religion stands at the verge of reactive and passive nihilism.⁵⁹ This passive nihilism is what Nietzsche calls the will to nothingness. It is to will one’s own ruination. So, by definition, it is *against* life. In the words of Deleuze, it is nihilism in “its primary and basic sense” as signifying “the value of nil taken on by life.”⁶⁰ Nietzsche says:

they... themselves *want* to have *power* by *forcing* the powerful to become their executioners. This is the European form of Buddhism, *doing No* after all existence has lost its ‘meaning’⁶¹

It is worth considering this in some detail; for it is in this that we can see Nietzsche’s justification of negative nihilism—which was a nihilism of *life*—from a nihilism that takes values as its starting point. This is important. In the fragment under discussion, Nietzsche *started* from a world of higher values. It turned out—and, according to Nietzsche, this is based on empirical fact—that these values were a falsification of the world. This resulted in the reactive stage of nihilism, which culminates into radical nihilism. If Nietzsche is right in translating man back into nature and that everything is essentially the will to power, then man will attempt to gain power in any way he can. It will turn out, according to Nietzsche, that those who believe in (or hide behind) (pseudo) Christian values are of a lower rank *outside all existing social orders*. But in this case the believer in (pseudo) Christian values will be overpowered by their non-believing contemporaries, i.e. those of a higher rank *outside all existing social orders*. Thus, the (pseudo) Christian’s struggle will turn inwards and he will “prefer to will *nothingness* rather than *not* will.”⁶² This is what Nietzsche has dubbed the will to nothingness. But, as I have said, this is a devaluation of life itself, or nihilism in its primary sense. Thus, from a supersensible world of higher values we have eventuated in a devaluation of life *from these higher values themselves*. We might say, along with Brian Leiter, that it is the *causal power* of these values themselves that is called into question.⁶³ Thus, the claim that whatever is the source of these higher values is nihilistic (in its primary sense) appears to be empirically justified.

This, *viz.* passive nihilism, is to take the first option Nietzsche’s demon provoked: throwing oneself down and gnashing one’s teeth. The second option of embracing the demon’s ‘truth’ and praising him as a god is much more optimistic. In light of this, Nietzsche sees this passive stage of nihilism as holding “relative prosperity”; for he thinks these conditions are ripe for a more healthy nihilism: *active* nihilism.⁶⁴ On the eternal recurrence as a psychological doctrine he says this:

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The *value of such a crisis* is that it *cleanses*... it crowds related elements together and has them bring about each other's destruction... bringing to light the weaker... and thus initiating *an order of rank among forces*... outside all existing social orders⁶⁵

The idea here is that the acknowledgement of the eternal recurrence will have a dramatic effect on individuals. It will work in such a way, Nietzsche thinks, that the strong will accept it and the weak will falter in its midst. This is his (positive) evaluation of the situation:

In this process, who will prove to be the *strongest*? The most moderate, those who have no *need* of extreme articles of faith, who not only concede but even love a good deal of contingency and nonsense, who can think of man with a considerable moderation of his value and not therefore become small and weak: the richest in health, who are equal to the most misfortunes and therefore less afraid of misfortunes—men who *are sure of their power* and who represent with conscious pride the strength man has achieved⁶⁶

But how this is supposed to work is really not very clear. The problem here is best brought out with respect to Löwith⁶⁷, for we can see Klossowski⁶⁸ responding to the apparent contradictions Löwith brings to the fore.

In his *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same* (originally published in German in 1935 (the second edition in 1956)), Löwith provides an excellent attempt to understand Nietzsche's doctrine of the Eternal Recurrence, and its place within nihilism. In his deep study into Nietzsche's conception of the eternal recurrence, Löwith reveals a contradiction between the cosmological reading and the anthropological reading. He argues that Nietzsche could only free himself from this contradiction if he were to succeed in "flying beyond all going, going over, and going under, into the innocence of heaven"⁶⁹—the biblical reference is not accidental, here. The only resolution, Löwith thinks, was for Nietzsche to become God: Dionysus *and* the Crucified.⁷⁰

The tension between the cosmological and the anthropological reading of the eternal recurrence is deep. The cosmological reading holds (rightly or wrongly) that time and all the events of the world repeat in exactly the same way and exactly the same sequence.⁷¹ Man, being a part of nature, enjoins this recurrence. Hence, it makes no difference what one decides to do because one has already so decided, or will so decide. Whatever one man has done he will do again and again. Moreover, his actions, being one of nature, play back into nature and help determine the trajectory of the world, but at the same time are *determined by* the trajectory of the world. Löwith spells out this contradiction: "I myself have for eternities conditioned the fatality of *all* existence and its eternal recurrence, and I myself am only *one* conditioned fatality in the whole of the cycle of the natural world"; and again in moral terms: "I am responsible for everything's being there and being as it is, and there is no being that would be responsible for its being as it is and its being there."⁷²

Löwith's insistence to go 'outside' or 'go over' the contradiction to 'solve' it is mistaken, however. This becomes evident when considering the following example. Consider these two sentences, as being told to a child:

Mother: You can go to school *only if* you do *not* use red paint

Teacher: You can go to school only if you use red paint

And what constitutes the child's freedom:

Freedom: You have the freedom to choose whether or not you go to school

Assuming, for the sake of the example, that there is only one possible school to which the child can go, it would seem that while Mother provides the child with freedom to choose it is only a false freedom, for Teacher says the negation of this. What is interesting here, however, is that while neither Teacher nor Mother negate Freedom (the child still has the freedom to *choose*)—and neither is self-contradictory—the triad—Freedom, Teacher,

Mother—is inconsistent: the child can do as Mother says if and only if she *cannot* do what Teacher says, and vice-versa. Thus, insofar as Freedom consists solely in being given the *choice* of whether to go to school or not there is a contradiction between Teacher and Mother: Teacher and Mother only contradict each other on the assumption of Freedom. So while there is a contradiction between the triad, any two of the three are compatible with each other.

One might push the point further, however. One might say, for instance, that Mother and Teacher provide a *logical* contradiction for the child, as they say that she can and cannot go to school; for the child can only go to school if she doesn't use red paint, yet she can go to school only if she *does* use red paint. There is one prevailing option, however, which prevents the contradiction from being logical, and that is for the child to 'opt out' by not going to school. This might be understood as a "flying beyond all going, going over, and going under, into the innocence of heaven." This is what I understand to be constitutive of Löwith's contradiction.

But there is a way to deflate the situation that does not bring in the heavenly bodies. Following David Lewis, we can exploit the equivocal nature of 'can'.⁷³ In one sense of 'can' I can speak Finnish—I have the correct vocal chords, larynx, etc. to pronounce the words, I have the mental capacity to understand the logic of the language, and so on—but in another sense of 'can' it is *not* correct to say I can speak Finnish: in the sense that I do not know one word of this foreign language. So, according to one set of background conditions, it is perfectly true that I can speak Finnish, but according to another, more inclusive, set of conditions I *cannot*.

If this is right, a similar story can be told of the child. According to one set of background conditions she *can* go to school; namely, according to Mother and Freedom, but according to the more inclusive set of background conditions, which includes Teacher, she *cannot*. So while the child's freedom is curtailed, the 'illusion' of freedom is not (when relativized to a certain set of background conditions). Moreover, this has been done *without* going beyond the constraints of our finitude.

The analogy with the Nietzschean point is that in both instances (the child's and the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine) freedom is curtailed, yet the apparent contradiction can be overcome by *not* going outside the constraints of our finitude, but by exploiting the equivocal nature of 'can'. The point here is that one must *act* to bring about the actual present from its mere possibility. It is not as if the present actualizes itself; it must be *brought about* from what has gone on before it: the natural-historic world, including human actions. Thus, in the only sense that acting is possible for us, we must be able to act.

But our ability to act does nought in respect to ascertaining that there are any values. Moreover, it now appears that Nietzsche's ambition for a revaluation of all values becomes redundant, due to the conflict between the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine and the eternal recurrence as anthropological doctrine. The problem is that the eternal recurrence as an ethical imperative is superfluous, for it is true that one must act in such a way that their actions are repeated inevitably, *but also that* one will do *and has done* these particular actions many times before. So if Nietzsche is right about particular values rising and falling in value in history, they will rise and fall innumerable times more. Thus, all is superfluous; all is 'in vain!'

We might turn to Klossowski here, who encounters this problem. Klossowski does not downplay the tension, calling the anthropological doctrine of the eternal recurrence an "experimental instrument", which constitutes a "conspiracy" against life (as we know it) by those strong enough to wield it.⁷⁴ The idea here is that the strong use the anthropological doctrine of the eternal recurrence to elucidate the meaninglessness of life, and it is through this meaninglessness that they are able to set goals for humankind.

But using the doctrine of the eternal recurrence as an experimental doctrine appears to undermine its very authenticity. This is because it is through the very meaninglessness of life, according to the truth of the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine, that the strong are able to give mankind a goal by creating values of the *ubermensch*. But for the strong to imbue values back into the world would require exactly the repudiation of

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the *truth* of the eternal recurrence (as cosmological doctrine). For it is only through the falsity of the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine that values could be re-embedded in the world. Suppose that the eternal recurrence as cosmological doctrine is false: it is a simulacra. But as the existence of the *ubermensch* depends on the truth of the cosmological doctrine, the *ubermensch*, too, must be a *simulacra*.

I read Klossowski as resolving this tension in the following way.⁷⁵ First, we uphold that the (cosmological doctrine of the) eternal recurrence *is* true. But second, we deny that there are any stable (immutable, categorical) identities or values. What is the case is that the world and its inhabitants are constantly in flux, embroiled in a vicious circle without beginning or end.⁷⁶ The values we obtain and lose are due to experiments undertaken by the strong. It is with these values that the masses may navigate the world and create meaning. But the world is only one of chaotic flux.⁷⁷ So it is essentially meaningless in its fluidity.⁷⁸

I think this is an initial step in the right direction. It seems to aim at “goal-lessness as such”, for all the values that are created are transitory and essentially meaningless. If Nietzsche is to see himself as one of these legislators of value, then this will be an acceptable position to place him in and still make “goal-lessness as such” the principle of his faith. But I think we can go further. I claim that Nietzsche is no such legislator of values, but is an active nihilist.

One of the problems with the Christian moral hypothesis is that it claims absoluteness: “I am morality, and nothing is morality besides me!”⁷⁹ Moreover, it purports to be *above* actuality in the sense that it postulates a world of higher values above the world of appearances. It was insofar as the Christian moral hypothesis appealed to this extra-sensory realm that, upon its downfall, we find ourselves in the nihilism of today. On this idea of a supreme morality, Nietzsche says:

[T]hat what is right for one *cannot* by any means therefore be right for another, that the demand for *one* morality for all is detrimental to precisely the higher men, in short that there exists an *order of rank* between man and man, consequently also between morality and morality⁸⁰

He thinks that there should be a different ‘morality’, depending on one’s rank order:

My philosophy aims at an ordering of rank: not at an individualistic morality. The ideas of the herd should rule in the herd—but not reach out beyond it: the leaders of the herd require a fundamentally different valuation for their own actions, as do the independent, or the “beasts of prey,” etc.⁸¹

The thought then goes that Nietzsche provides one such valuation with his notions of, e.g., the will to power, the eternal recurrence and the *ubermensch*. But what he says here cannot be understood in isolation. In particular, and by Nietzsche’s own lights, what he says must be understood as a particular *perspective*. When Nietzsche says “[e]very naturalism in morality—which is to say: every *healthy* morality—is governed by an instinct of life,”⁸² he is not, on pain of begging the question, saying that his particular naturalism is *the* scales on which ‘morality’ must be measured. He is only saying that his view is one view of many. Nietzsche is most clear on this perspectival view of truth in the following passage:

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be⁸³

What I am saying, then, is that we can build on Klossowski’s claim that the world is essentially meaningless, with Nietzsche’s claim that there is no absolute perspective, to reveal a Nietzsche who is not a *legislator* of values—not one who has a *completed nihilism*—but one who is a radical nihilist, in particular an *active* nihilist. This is one who *destroys* current values, but it does not mean that any particular values are resurrected in their place. To do so would be to assume *the* perspective on life.

But neither does a doing no imply a doing, or saying, yes *even to something else*. The trap we fall into is a natural one to fall into. By seeing Nietzsche taking on a particular perspective to criticize current values we assume that he inhabits this perspective insofar as he is a proponent for some (opposing) value. But this is to assume a duality that is not there. This is, for Nietzsche, a mistaken view of agency, where the doer is separated from the deed.⁸⁴ For Nietzsche, there are *only* deeds. So doing no *exhausts* what it is Nietzsche is doing in his critical moments. As he says:

It is only as creators that we can annihilate!—But let us not forget this: it suffices to create new names and valuations and probabilities, in order in the long run to create new ‘things’⁸⁵

Thus, he is only a *precursor* to the creation of new ‘things’. He, himself—as a nihilist—is in no position to propound a certain set of values. As Ansell-Pearson puts it:

What Nietzsche seeks to do as a thinker, I believe, is to *prepare* us for change. He shows that humanity has a history, that it has been (de-) formed in a particular way, and that the end of the Christian moral interpretation of the world offers the possibility of another beginning. It becomes possible to navigate new seas since the *horizon* is now ‘free’ again⁸⁶

But we still have this nagging feeling that this *cannot* be right. *Surely* Nietzsche *is* propounding a set of values for us to follow; *surely* he sees himself as a *legislator* of value. But there is a response to this in Nietzsche, himself. The problem here is with our *belief* that a doing no implies a doing or saying yes to something else. The source of this belief is our belief in antithetical values.⁸⁷ According to Nietzsche, this is a prejudice of metaphysicians, of which the first chapter in *Beyond Good and Evil* is dedicated.

I have not the room to adequately defend such a claim. What I want to suggest is that it is this continuing belief in antithetical values that may underlie our prejudice that a doing no does, in some way, imply a saying yes to something else. Let me provide a simple example. Suppose I were to disagree with a sign on a beach that said ‘no swimming’. Actually, I don’t care about swimming (I prefer to stay dry), but my grist is with the politics behind the erection of this sign. My active protest consists in my swimming. In this situation, I say, the *deed* of my doing no was swimming, but this does not imply that I think there should be swimming allowed at this beach, nor that I think others should follow me (perhaps I think swimming is extremely treacherous at this beach). As I have said, this was not my intention: I could not care less about swimming; I just don’t like the political stance. Hence, I seem to have been doing no without saying yes to anything else; for it is my *deed* that *exhausts* what it is that I am doing.

Sure enough, I have my own set of values, here. But I am not asking others to follow me in accepting my values; I am attempting to get others to *question* the value of the values that they intuitively accept. This is what I am doing in my deed. The same, I claim, is true of Nietzsche. While he makes different evaluative claims, it is not disciples that he wants—people to take up his particular valuations—but he wants to provide a ‘perspectival revolution’.

What I am saying here is nothing new; Nietzsche said it before me. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra says to his disciples that “[o]ne repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil. And why, then, should you not pluck at my laurels?”⁸⁸ Earlier, in *Daybreak*, Nietzsche warns of not questioning the wisdom of great men.⁸⁹ And in a revealing passage in *Beyond Good and Evil*, regarding his doctrine of the will to power, he says “[g]ranted this too is only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to raise this objection?—well, so much the better.”⁹⁰ So it is not Nietzsche’s aim to introduce a new value system as such, but to provide different perspectives. It is a *challenging* of current values, but not a construction of new ones. It is only Nietzsche as active nihilist that can play this role, or so I have claimed.

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I have claimed that Nietzsche is best seen as a thorough-going nihilist. While he mentions ‘complete nihilism’ once in an unpublished note, he did not (at least on my reading) assume that the task was fully done. Instead, he is best seen as attempting to adjure a complete destruction of current values. To do this he necessarily takes a particular perspective, but, importantly, this perspective has no privileged place in respect to the values he advances. I have argued that it is through radical nihilism, and Nietzsche’s particular disambiguation of this type of nihilism, that he is able to complete such a destruction.

I cannot say much more about what Nietzsche’s project was, but for an attempt consider the following conditional claim. If the world has no intrinsic values, yet we are essentially valuing beings, then it is a very real question as to what our values should be. But this is only to inhabit the reactive stage of nihilism, albeit in an idealistic sense, i.e. where the intrinsicness of *all* our values has been put into question. It is when this void becomes perceptible that this lack of value becomes a problem and starts to feed back on itself. This is the passive stage of nihilism. But it is only when this stage is reached that a more positive form of nihilism can grow: active nihilism. Under the guise of active nihilism, values are destroyed, rather than being allowed to fester and become internalized. In this sense it cleanses. It is not a creation of new values, but a destruction of old. It provides a new perspective and opens up new horizons.⁹¹ If Nietzsche is, as he claims to be, a thorough-going nihilist, it is *this* position that we must see him in. This is the true ‘goal-lessness as such’ that is the principle of his faith.⁹²

DAVID ROWE is currently undertaking a PhD at La Trobe University. His dissertation constructs a Nietzschean opponent to contemporary analytic metaethics. He has an article forthcoming in the International Journal of Philosophical Studies, titled *Nietzsche’s ‘anti-Naturalism’ in ‘The Four Great Errors’*.

NOTES

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1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 1969.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Ecce Homo" *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1967, §1, 295.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Trans. Thomas Common. 2nd ed. New York: Dover Publications, 2006.
4. As was pointed out to me by an anonymous referee for this journal, an interesting comparison with this articulation of Nietzsche's nihilism may be found in recent scholarship by Stanley Rosen and Lawrence Lampert. Unfortunately, constraints of space disallow me to discuss these authors in any depth. I provide the following as a short (less than satisfactory) exposition on the general trajectory of their position. See, e.g., Lawrence Lampert, "Nietzsche, the History of Philosophy, and Esotericism," *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 9/10(1995); Lawrence Lampert, "Nietzsche's Challenge to Philosophy in the Thought of Leo Strauss," *The Review of Metaphysics* 58, no. 3 (2005); Lawrence Lampert, *Nietzsche and Modern Times: A Study of Bacon, Descartes and Nietzsche*. London: Yale University Press, 1993; Stanley Rosen, "Nietzsche's Double Rhetoric: Which Nihilism?" *Nietzsche, Nihilism and the Philosophy of the Future*. Ed. Jeffrey Metzger. London: Continuum, 2009; Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*. London: Yale University Press, 1969; Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment: Nietzsche's Zarathustra*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. These authors acknowledge a distinction between the *esoteric* and *exoteric* in Nietzsche. Esotericism is widely denounced because of its deceitfulness: it communicates especially to only the select few, using language which conforms to current usage to hide its intended message. Exotericism, on the other hand, attempts to communicate concepts that are widely accepted by the mass population. The latter's message is on its face, so to speak, whereas the former is done 'behind closed doors.' Lampert has convincingly shown that Nietzsche was only too aware of this distinction (See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 2003, §30, 61–62, for an explicit reference to this distinction.) But, according to these writers, Nietzsche collapses the distinction within his own writings, revealing both an esoteric and exoteric teaching. The exoteric teaching, or the teaching for the masses, is orchestrated through 'noble lies', which are designed by the strong (Nietzsche) to provide mankind with certain goals and values in life. The esoteric teaching, on the other hand, holds that life is essentially chaos and lacks any meaning. Thus, Nietzsche's esoteric teaching is directed to the few (the philosophers), who are then forced to inhabit different perspectives on life to provide meaning to the many (the masses) through 'noble lies'. But all these perspectives are essentially meaningless and are only different expressions of the will to power. The remaining issue is whether Nietzsche is able to escape this nihilism, or whether his philosophy is essentially nihilistic. (See Rosen, "Nietzsche's Double Rhetoric: Which Nihilism." for the claim that Nietzsche's philosophy is essentially nihilistic.)
5. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*. Ed. Rüdiger Bittner, trans. Kate Sturge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. §2 [131], 84–87; Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals." *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*. New York: Vintage Books, 1967. §III, 27, 159–160.
7. Montinari (Mazzino Montinari, *Reading Nietzsche*. Trans. Greg Whitlock. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. Ch. 8) has shown that Nietzsche later abandoned plans to write the book where this material was originally destined: *The Will to Power*. Instead, Nietzsche put all material intended for inclusion in this book into *Antichrist* and *Twilight of the Idols*. This does not nullify the importance of this *Nachlass* material, however, insofar as it *elaborates* on the parts which were included for publication. While I have not shown how this *Nachlass* material relates to his published work at every point, I think it will not be seen to stray too far from Nietzsche's (authorised) teachings (a fruitful comparison can be found in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (esp. §27) and *Antichrist* (esp. first part of the book).
8. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §9[35], 146; See also, Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §2, 9 and the notes added by Kaufmann.
9. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Twilight of the Idols." *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. London: Penguin Books, 1990, "The Four Great Errors" §8, 65.
10. I applaud those who embrace Nietzsche as a nihilist, such as Ansell-Pearson who claims that Nietzsche is a 'perfect nihilist.' Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. It is exactly this emphasis on Nietzsche as a nihilist that I want to stress in this paper.
11. Ashley Woodward, *Nihilism in Postmodernity*. Aurora, Colorado: The Davies Group, Publishers, 2009, 40.
12. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. §3, 3.
13. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. §25, 18.
14. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. §24, 18.
15. Sometimes this is said explicitly: "the task of revaluation has two distinct components, destruction on the one hand, and construction on the other" (E. E. Sleisin, *Nietzsche's Revaluation of Values: A Study in Strategies*. Urbana and Chicago:

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- University of Illinois Press, 1994, 151). Other times it is mentioned in different terminology, e.g. “critical and constructive program” (Christine Daigle, “Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics... Virtue Politics?” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 32 (2006, 4–6)), which is sometimes associated with virtue ethics (see Daigle, “Nietzsche: Virtue Ethics... Virtue Politics?”, 4). But this dualistic nature of Nietzsche’s excursion on values is generally acknowledged, if only implicitly. Some examples, which are by no means exhaustive, are: Thomas H Brobjer, “Nietzsche’s Affirmative Morality: And Ethics of Virtue.” *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 26 (2003); Frank Cameron, *Nietzsche and the ‘Problem’ of Morality*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002, esp. Ch. 5; Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*. London: Routledge, 2002, 136–55; Charles R. Pigden, “Nihilism, Nietzsche and the Doppelgänger Problem.” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 10:5 (2007).
16. The ‘objection from implausibility’ relates to Nietzsche’s destroying of values. His seemingly contradictory use of ‘nihilism’, in the quoted passages, can be accounted for by noting that he is using the term in slightly different ways. A part of the intention of this paper is to disambiguate Nietzsche’s use of this term.
17. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, §12(A), 12–13.
18. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, 147.
19. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 147–48.
20. Deleuze claims there are three types of nihilism that can be found in Nietzsche “[u]p until the last man”: negative, reactive and passive. (Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152.) Deleuze’s, and my, use of ‘negative nihilism’ and ‘reactive nihilism’ signify the same thing. But Deleuze has only signified one half of what I have, following White, called ‘radical nihilism.’ (Alan White, “Nietzschean Nihilism: A Typology.” *International Studies in Philosophy* XIX, 2 (1987).) It may be the case that Deleuze considers active nihilism, but he doesn’t specifically put it under this name, and it is not clear that he would consider it nihilistic *per se* (see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 171–75.)
21. The term ‘complete nihilism’ appears to be used only once in Nietzsche’s entire work (Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §28, 19.) (cf. Byron Williston, “‘Complete Nihilism’ In Nietzsche.” *Philosophy Today* 45:4 (2001), n. 43), but he does seem to refer to this idea in at least one other place (Nietzsche, “On the Genealogy of Morals “, II, §24, 95–96.), where he uses the term ‘antinihilist’ (cf. White, “Nietzschean Nihilism: A Typology”, 34.).
22. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §28, 19, and Preface §2, 3.
23. It is this idea that seems to illicit the following comment from Deleuze: “[Nietzsche thinks] nihilism is not an event in history but the motor of the history of man as universal history.” (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152.)
24. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 1, 116.
25. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 1, 116.
26. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 1, 116.
27. See, also, Nietzsche, “On the Genealogy of Morals “, §I, 13, 44–46.
28. Cf. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “How the ‘Real World’ at Last Became a Myth”.
29. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 2, 116–17.
30. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, “Why I am a Destiny”, §3, 327–28.
31. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §533, 289–90.
32. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §534, 290.
33. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §537, 291.
34. Cf. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §12(A), 12–13.
35. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 2, 117.
36. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 4, 117.
37. See, also, Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §3, 9.
38. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 5, 117.
39. However, introducing the eternal recurrence here is not an accidental or chance occurrence: the eternal recurrence and nihilism appear together in many other places in the Nietzschean corpus. (For a good example of this see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “Of the Vision and The Riddle”. There is also a good discussion of this passage in D’Iorio (Paolo D’Iorio, “The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation.” *The Agonist: A Nietzsche Circle Journal* IV, I, Spring (2011, 8–11)).
40. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 6, 118.
41. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §341, 152.
42. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §341, 152.
43. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §22, 17; see also Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §9[35], 146.
44. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §9[35], 146; see also Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §13, 14.
45. A third interpretation is offered by Deleuze, who claims that the eternal recurrence is the return of *difference*. (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*.) However, I think we should dismiss Deleuze’s reading, as D’Iorio has convincingly shown: Deleuze’s reading is based on a vast array of mistakes (including translation errors and deliberate manipulation of the text) (see D’Iorio, “The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation”, 1–5, esp. n7).
46. Karl Löwith, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*. Trans. J. Harvey Lomas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 85; see also Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 68.

47. Among other evidence D'Iorio cites for the claim that Nietzsche intended this doctrine to be a scientific one, D'Iorio includes a part of a letter Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast on August 14th, 1882: "I've kept about a quarter of the original material [relating to the eternal recurrence] (for a scientific treatise)." (D'Iorio, "The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation", n. 26). See also, Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 94.
48. D'Iorio, "The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation", 21.
49. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], §6, 118, italics in the original.
50. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], §6, 118.
51. This sentiment rehashes a pivotal step in 19th-century philosophers who used Schopenhauer's argument of infinity *a parte ante* to argue for the eternal recurrence as a cosmological theory (cf. D'Iorio, "The Eternal Return: Genesis and Interpretation", 21).
52. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §108–9, 81–82.
53. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 7, 118.
54. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §36, 66–67.
55. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 8, 118.
56. This is a generalisation from an observation about Spinoza: "Spinoza attained an affirmative stance... insofar as every moment has a logical necessity: and with this fundamental instinct for logic he felt a sense of triumph about the world's being constituted thus." (Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 7, 118.)
57. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 9, 119.
58. Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Anti-Christ." *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, §20–23, 141–45.
59. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 152, n. 4.
60. Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 147.
61. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 12, 120.
62. Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", III, §1, 97.
63. Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 177–79.
64. In fact, he claims that it would have "scholarly presuppositions" (comparable with Buddha's conception of causality (karma). Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* §5[71], 13, 120.
65. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 14, 120–21.
66. Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, §5[71], 15, 121.
67. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*.
68. Pierre Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Trans. Daniel W. Smith. London: Athlone Press, 1997.
69. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 192.
70. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 10.
71. Deleuze seems to be an exception, see n. 44 in this paper.
72. Löwith, *Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, 191–92.
73. David Lewis, "The Paradoxes of Time Travel." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 13(1976).
74. Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 164–71.
75. See Klossowski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, 170.
76. Cf. "This long lane behind us: it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane ahead of us—that is another eternity." (Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the Vision and the Riddle", §2, 178.)
77. See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 109, 81: "The general character of the world is... in all eternity chaos; not by the absence of necessity, but in the sense of the absence of order, structure, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever else our aesthetic humanities are called."
78. Note that this goes beyond saying that it is due to the transitory nature of values that they are essentially meaningless. (This would be to assume that these values must be essential or eternal to be meaningful, which is nihilistic.) Rather, it states the *impossibility* of any values.
79. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §202, 125.
80. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §228, 158.
81. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* §287, 162.
82. Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Morality as Anti-Nature", §4, 55.
83. Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", III, §12, 119.
84. Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals", I, §13, 44–46; Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Four Great Errors", §3, 59–61.

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85. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §58, 52.

86. Ansell-Pearson, *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist*, 205.

87. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §2, 33–34.

88. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, §3, 103.

89. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, §542, 214.

90. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* §22, 53.

91. This reference—as was Ansell-Pearson’s, in the quote above—to Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* §124, 90.

92. An earlier version of this paper was first presented at the 2011 Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy conference, “The Time of Our Lives.” I would like to thank the convenors of this conference for the opportunity to present this paper, and for all those who attended the presentation. I would also like to thank Jack Reynolds for many helpful comments and discussions relating to this paper. Finally, I thank an anonymous referee from this journal for alerting me to the insightful contributions Rosen and Lampert have made to this subject.

THE END OF TIME

Ashley Woodward

When a philosopher announces a discourse on time, one can expect the worst.

Jean-François Lyotard¹

0. According to some recent and contemporary philosophers, we are no longer having the time of our lives.² What this means is that a certain way of understanding time—time on the scale of human life—has been displaced by recent developments. Most significantly, in the last several decades science has opened up vast vistas of previously unimagined time, the “deep” or “cosmic” time of the earth’s archaic past and of the universe’s future, with the suggestion that, in any meaningful sense, time will end in a trillion, trillion, trillion years from now, with the heat death of the universe. “The end of time” of my title envelops these two senses; the end of cosmic time, and the end of human time brought about by the revelation of the former. But my question here turns this movement back around to the question of human beings and their lives, and asks about the import of cosmic time for the meaningfulness of human lives: how does the revelation of cosmic time, and its inevitable end, impact on existential meaning?

For some prominent twentieth-century philosophers, notably those working in the phenomenological tradition, no such problem arises: existential significance may be restricted to the world of everyday perception, and thus the “time of our lives” isolated from scientific developments. Referencing Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot argues this point succinctly:

[I]t is essential to realize that our way of perceiving the world in everyday life is not radically affected by scientific conceptions. For all of us—even for the astronomer, when he goes home at night—the sun rises and sets, and the earth is immobile. ... The analyses of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty thus

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let us see that the Copernican revolution, of which so much is made in philosophy handbooks, upset only the theoretical discourse of the learned *about* the world, but did not at all change the habitual, day-to-day perception we have *of* the world.³

One philosopher who has resisted this phenomenological line of defence is Jean-François Lyotard.⁴ Lyotard fruitfully explores the problem of the meaning of cosmic time for human life in a number of essays in the 1980s and 1990s through the fable of the “solar catastrophe”—the death of our sun several billion years from now. I want here to engage this fable, and also the works of several commentators who have previously engaged it—notably Keith Ansell Pearson and Ray Brassier—in order to shed light on the general problem itself. Ansell Pearson brings these issues in contact with transhumanism, and critiques the postmodern fable told by the transhumanists from the perspectives of Nietzsche and of modern science, as still too anthropomorphic (negentropy and complexity are still expressions of human, all too human values). Brassier wants to accede entirely to science and to nihilism, seeing it as a vector of creativity and intelligibility rather than as a threat to values which need preserving.

1. This is the fable Lyotard narrates:

Our sun will expend its fuel in roughly five billion years, and the resulting nuclear reactions of its death-throes will incinerate the earth.⁵ By then, it will be all over for human beings, unless we find a way to exodus from the earth and to survive in the conditions prevalent in other parts of the cosmos. Lyotard suggests that this problem is the most important and pressing one facing us today, and it is what drives the process we call “development.” Everything happening in the sciences and in cutting-edge technologies is aimed towards preparing us for extraterrestrial survival:

logic, econometrics and monetary theory, information theory, the physics of conductors, astrophysics and astronautics, genetic and dietetic biology and medicine, catastrophe theory, chaos theory, military strategy and ballistics, sports technology, systems theory, linguistics and potential literature.⁶

A couple of decades later, we can update Lyotard a little in terms of what are widely regarded as the most cutting-edge sciences and technologies today: genetic engineering, nanotechnologies, quantum computing, robotics, prosthetics, cognitive enhancement, artificial life, and so on—and who knows what currently unimagined technics might be invented in the next five billion years?

All these technologies are aimed, Lyotard suggests, towards remodeling the human body so that it may survive in the conditions of the cosmos. And what will the result be? What will “the human” have become, such that it will be capable of an extraterrestrial existence? This is something that the fable does not tell us. But taking into account the likelihood of a radical transformation, Lyotard prefers to pose the problem of survival not for the human as such, but for “the Brain and its Human.” And this, more broadly, because the brain is the most complex matter we know of in the cosmos, and the hero of the story is not the human as such—which in fact is threatened with disappearance through such a radical transformation—but complex processes. The fable of solar catastrophe Lyotard tells presents the crisis not as one of the survival of the human, but rather at the deeper level of the energy in the universe and its organization.

Energy is distributed in the cosmos such that disorganization is more probable than organization. But it happens, against the odds, that some energy forms into organized systems. Closed systems will quickly dissipate their energy and collapse, reverting back to the more probable state of disorganization: this is described by the second law of thermodynamics, and called *entropy*. But open systems—systems capable of exploiting energy from outside their organized structure—are much more stable and can preserve themselves for much longer. Increasing complexity of the organized system allows for greater capacity for the exploitation of external energy, and prolonged preservation of the organization itself. The tendency towards organization in energy is termed *negentropy* (or “negative entropy”). Norbert Wiener, the founding father of cybernetics, describes the

drama of energy in the universe as follows:

We are swimming upstream against a great torrent of disorganization, which tends to reduce everything to the heat death of equilibrium and sameness ... This heat death in physics has a counterpart in the ethics of Kierkegaard, who pointed out that we live in a chaotic moral universe. In this, our main obligation is to establish arbitrary enclaves of order and system ... Like the Red Queen, we cannot stay where we are without running as fast as we can.⁷

Weiner's image of us "running as fast as we can" captures well the accelerating pace of development, and places it on the level where Lyotard presents it: the drama of the organization and disorganization of energy in the cosmos. Ultimately, the hero of the fable is the negentropic system. Contingently, this is the human brain, since it is the most complex system in the known universe. Lyotard presents some of the main stages of increasing complexity in the historical adventure of negentropic forces in the cosmos:

Life: on our planet, approximately four billion years ago, the complex and improbable systems called living cells synthesized themselves out of molecular systems.

Scissiparity: the reproduction of single-celled organisms through division into two parts almost identical to the original.

Sexual reproduction: the ontogenesis of living organisms proceeds from the aleatory combination of two separate genetic codes, allowing for greater differentiation of organisms and greater probability of survival of the species (more efficient processing of energy).

Humankind: selected through evolutionary processes which favor the survival of the best-adapted (most complex, negentropic) systems. Lyotard writes that "[t]his was an extremely unlikely system—... as unlikely as it is for a four-legged creature to stand up on the soles of its rear paws."⁸

Symbolic language: dramatically increases complexity through being *recursive* (it has the ability to recombine its elements infinitely while still making sense) and *self-referential* (being able to take itself as its object; symbolic language thus bestowed its user, the human system, with memory and critique, allowing it to deliberately modify itself and improve its performance).

The Neolithic and Industrial Revolutions: these two revolutions marked increases in efficiency in the way humans lived together in communities, allowing the exploitation of new energy sources, and the greater preservation of the negentropic human system.

Liberal democracies: the emergence, by the same processes of natural selection which govern the natural world, of the most efficient form of social organization. Liberal democracies, in allowing a great deal of openness and flexibility in the social organization itself, allow the most efficient way of exploiting energies and ensuring the preservation and increasing complexity of the collective human system. This system proved to be much more efficient at exploiting energy than closed systems with fixed social hierarchies.⁹

The process, of which these have been some of the most remarkable stages, is called "progress." The only thing which looks like it might now be a threat to this progress is the death of the sun in five billion years. Against this inevitable eventuality (the sun is a closed system, and its lifespan a law of physics), the human system engages in "development," preparing itself—or whatever it will be by the time it is ready to leave the earth—for existence in the cosmos. According to Lyotard, we have no right to assume that what will have survived will be human, or will even be "alive" in any sense in which we currently understand these terms. We can therefore only properly call it "the negentropic system."

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2. What is Lyotard doing in recounting this strange narrative of solar catastrophe? His fable regarding the death of the sun has frequently enough been commented on, but has rarely been well understood.¹⁰ Most commentators discuss only the brilliant and ambiguous essay “Can Thought Go On Without a Body?” but Lyotard in fact discusses this fable in numerous essays written in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹¹ Lyotard remains most well-known for his claim regarding the end of metanarratives, and a common enough response to his solar fable has been the confused suspicion that he is unwittingly presenting us with another metanarrative, so soon after proclaiming their obsolescence. But in fact wit (and perhaps too much, which explains his readers’ confusion) is on Lyotard’s side here. He addresses this issue directly (in an essay which many seem not to have read), and gives a number of reasons why the fable is *not* a metanarrative.

What is a metanarrative? It is a “grand story” told to justify research and development, and to give meaning to human life and all of its projects and activities. For Lyotard, metanarratives are characterized by a certain understanding of time, which he calls “historicity” (according to him, a modern invention, of which the ancients were ignorant). Grand narratives are built around a metaphysics of the subject: they tell of a subject alienated from an originary, utopian wholeness, afflicted with a lack, and they present a *telos*, a denouement of the narrative in which the subject’s lack is overcome and the originary wholeness restored. Modern historicity is thus an eschatology: it construes the end of time as a *redemption*. According to Lyotard, modern historicity has its origins in the Christianity of Paul and Augustine, but also manifests itself through the grand narratives of the Enlightenment (such as Marxism and Hegelianism), which construe the essential project of Humanity as one of progress and emancipation. Though often secularized, the Enlightenment metanarratives maintain an eschatological structure and a modern historicity: the individual subject of the soul affected by sin is transformed into the collective subject of Humanity, affected by ignorance, and the *telos* of redemption is no longer salvation through Christ but the emancipation of the human race through the full development of reason.

According to Lyotard, the fable of solar catastrophe is, of course, a narrative, but it is not a *metanarrative* in the same sense as those to which he claims we have become incredulous, because it presents none of the traits of modern historicity.¹² And this for the following reasons:

1. It is thoroughly *materialist*. It is a physical history about energy, and matter as states of energy. Humanity is presented as a complex material system; consciousness as an effect of language; and language itself as a highly complex material system.¹³
2. The time of this narrative is *diachrony* (not historicity). Temporal succession is based on the partitioning of regular physical movements, and not on the time of consciousness, in which past and future are synchronous with a “present” (such a time, according to the fable, is possible only for systems capable of symbolic language usage).
3. The fable does not have a *telos* of emancipation.¹⁴ It *does* project an end, which is the survival (the salvation) of a highly complex negentropic system, “a kind of super-brain”¹⁵ from the fiery hells of solar incineration. But this end is not inscribed in the “hermeneutic circle” through which it would mirror an origin, the reclaiming of a lost state of grace. Instead, Lyotard presents this end as simply a development from insensible matter, “the effect of a ‘cybernetic loop’ regulated toward growth.”¹⁶
4. The future presented is not an object of *hope*. We cannot hope for the perfection of Humanity as the subject of history. The Human will be sacrificed for complexity. What it is that will be saved from solar catastrophe (if anything is), we can only dimly imagine.

Finally, Lyotard makes perhaps the most important point, implied by some of the above:

5. The hero of the story is not a *subject*. Rather, it is simply *energy*, and specifically, that tendency towards organization in transformations of energy known as negentropy. As such, the fable has nothing to do with the emancipation of Humanity as the subject of history, and even underlies the current bankruptcy of such a project (since current “development” is already oriented towards the inhuman horizon of extraterrestrial survival).¹⁷

Moreover, contrary to some confused commentators, Lyotard certainly does not endorse the story of solar death he tells, nor does he present it as a “fact.” It is, precisely, a “fable,” and it is what the section title of the book *Postmodern Fables* in which its most extended presentation appears designates it: a “system fantasy.”¹⁸ That is, it is a fable, or fantasy, told by what Lyotard often simply calls “the system,” by which he means the contemporary technoscientific and capitalist system of “development.” In the essay “The Wall, The Gulf, and the Sun,” which contains an earlier version of “A Postmodern Fable,” the fable itself is put in the mouth of the system: it begins, “The system said: . . .” It is not presented as factual, and Lyotard says that it does not require belief, nor is even expected to be believed.¹⁹ Although it draws on science and the stories sometimes accredited by scientists, Lyotard notes that if they are asked, the scientists are clear that it is no more than a hypothesis.²⁰ Lyotard suggests that it is a fable which circulates as a rumor.²¹ He also insists that it is a *metaphysical* story, by which he means (in a broadly empiricist sense) that there is no evidence to verify it, and that it fails to criticize the presuppositions implied by the terms of its own argument.²² It is not a metaphysics of the subject, but a metaphysics of energy. And he asserts that there is no more evidence for the existence of “energy” than there is for the existence of a subject.²³

3. Given all these ironic, sceptical, and critical caveats, then, why does Lyotard have recourse to the fable in so many places; what philosophical *work* does he want it to do? I want to suggest that the story of solar death is, according to Lyotard, the form that the metanarrative—the dream of emancipation—takes on in the postmodern era, that is, the era defined by the end of metanarratives.

It has frequently been commented with respect to Lyotard’s well-known thesis on the end of metanarratives that he spoke too soon.²⁴ However, it is plausible to suggest that we may understand Lyotard’s claim in a similar fashion to Nietzsche’s proclamation of the death of God (with which it has important similarities): Nietzsche noted that the dead God’s shadow would continue to haunt us a long while yet before it can be fully vanquished²⁵, and the same might be said of metanarratives. Lyotard’s postmodern fable of solar death is presented as the “shadow” of a metanarrative: it is “the great narrative that the world persists in telling itself after the great narratives have obviously failed”²⁶; “the unavowed dream that the postmodern world dreams about itself.”²⁷ It bears both important similarities and important differences in relation to a metanarrative, and for this reason we might be justified in using the ungainly term of “post-metanarrative” in order to describe it.

In several places at least, Lyotard’s opposition to the values expressed in the fable—its limitations and undesirability as a narrative of legitimation—is clear. He suggests that “in his darker moments” he imagines the human project of emancipation as merely the effect of the inhuman drama of negentropy struggling against entropy.²⁸ What’s wrong with the fable, then? Ethically and politically: the drive towards development is governed by the principle of efficiency (or performativity, as Lyotard calls it), and what matters is only the optimum way of transforming energy such that organization is preserved and entropy kept at bay. In terms of the overall performance of the human negentropic system, it would seem to be maximized if inefficient systems are eliminated. The fable thus suggests that according to some natural right liberal democracies have achieved their own legitimacy, while—Lyotard suggests—the entire Third World, as a poorly performing system, might be eliminated.²⁹ As Stephen J. Gould notes, natural selection is actually a kind of natural “decimation”—“killing off nine so that the best tenth might survive.”³⁰ If we accede to a legitimation discourse based on natural selection, then we accede to the decimation of the human population.

Moreover, Lyotard suggests some “existential” reasons for a critical reaction to the fable: the understanding of human life as simply a part of the drama of complexity risks eliminating those things which currently make human life valuable and worthwhile. As Lyotard says, we do not know if what leaves the earth in the great exodus before the sun’s final death throes will be capable of truly thinking, of feeling, or will even be “alive” in any recognizable sense. Yet Lyotard does not oppose the inhuman threat of development with the humanism of phenomenology, hermeneutics, or existentialism; of the subject, consciousness, the lifeworld, and so on. Instead, he opposes it with an alternative conception of the inhuman, which draws on Freudian psychoanalysis and on movements in the arts such as cubism. What he values, and fears will be eliminated by development,

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are what he sees (in a psychoanalytic sense) as the conditions of thought and art: sexual difference, suffering, and childhood.³¹ Lyotard insists that we should not decide in advance what artificial bodies might be capable of, but rather simply insist on what they *must* be capable of if what is valuable in the current version of the Brain and Its Human is not to be fully betrayed. Lyotard speaks of thought and art as another kind of complexity, and defends it in the name of another kind of “inhuman.” In short, he seeks *resistance* to the fable, understood as an explanation for our contemporary nihilism, i.e. what’s wrong with the current socio-political-existential condition. He explains his use of the fable as a *strategy*, and one which deliberately presents the enemy as strongly as possible in order to present the strongest possible resistance.³² (Even if things are really as dire as this, we might still resist ...)

Crucially for our interests here, Lyotard argues that the “time implied in the story no longer has a human shape.”³³ In recounting this fable as an “explanation” for the contemporary condition, Lyotard is giving us at least one reason for the end of “human” time: *the end of metanarratives means the end of historicity as the modern imaginary of time, and the opening of our understanding of time onto a horizon (the death of the sun) which seems to destroy humanism (the image of man as the source and limit of meaning and value)*. The fable of the solar catastrophe rips our existential reflections from a rootedness in the earth (à la Husserl, Heidegger) and submits them to an alien takeover by inhuman forces. Yet Lyotard, despite his ironic and subtle critiques of this fable, and his gestures towards inhuman resistance, leaves the question of *how* we ought to respond to it largely in question. He presents it as something which asks to be reflected on.

4. If Lyotard is trying to present the (post-)metanarrative which governs contemporary life, why does he choose what might appear to many to be such a strange story, perhaps little more than a bizarre science fiction? In fact, such a story is presented by others, who (unlike Lyotard) ask us to take it seriously. First, Charles Jencks, the preeminent theorist of architectural postmodernism, presents such a story precisely *as* a persistent metanarrative (and quite explicitly against Lyotard and others who proclaimed their bankruptcy) in the final chapter of his book *What Is Postmodernism?*³⁴ Jencks agrees with Lyotard and others that both religious and Enlightenment metanarratives have lost much of their currency (their power to be believed), but suggests that the cosmological story of the universe might be a credible metanarrative for contemporary times. He writes that:

It certainly would replace humanism—man the measure of all things —with the larger picture in which the cosmos is the measure of all things. It could possibly give direction, orientation and meaning to human activity, but not result in a reductive anthropocentrism.³⁵

Drawing on Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry’s *The Universe Story, From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era*,³⁶ Jencks states that there is a kind of teleological or purposeful growth in the tendency of matter to self-organize, and the story of the universe recounts “the tendency of all material systems to develop towards greater complexity.”³⁷ This tendency is expressed first through “crystallized evolution”—the formation of stars and planets as a result of the interactions of the four fundamental forces of the universe (gravity, electromagnetic force, the strong and weak nuclear forces)—and then also through the “natural evolution” of organic life.

For Jencks, despite the catastrophic decimations Gould notes (see above), the universe story is an optimistic one, in which the universe progresses insofar as it creates ever-greater complexity, feeling, sensitivity, mental power and organization.³⁸ Moreover, Jencks asserts that while scientists themselves might not see it, the universe story is “spiritual,”

[b]ecause the universe is a single, unbroken, creative event which is still unfolding with human beings as essential parts of its story; because it inevitably produces surprising, humorous creations of beauty; because its laws are mysteriously complex and finely tuned; because it is so enjoyable and because there is strong evidence that, given enough time, it must produce culture.³⁹

In support of his vision, Jencks cites Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, the complexity scientists at the Santa Fe Institute, supporters of the cosmological anthropic principle, scientists such as Freeman Dyson, Paul Davies, and Fred Hoyle, and evolutionists such as Allan Wilson.⁴⁰ Jencks draws on this last to emphasize the important role the brain plays in evolution (as does Lyotard's fable). He asserts that the tendency of complex adaptive systems (CAS) to learn and create is a "spiritual quest."⁴¹ Moreover, Jencks criticizes philosophers such as Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Sartre, and Derrida for over-emphasizing contingency and our alienation from the universe, and for refusing to acknowledge the beautiful emergent cosmic order.⁴²

In sum, what Jencks recounts is the story of cosmogenesis: the generative nature of nature.⁴³ For him it is a teleological or purposive narrative, where the purpose is the production of complexity, understood not only in inhuman terms as ordered systems for the efficient transformation of energy, but as necessarily and inevitably producing human beings, consciousness, culture, creativity, and beauty. While it displaces humanism by asserting that the human being is no longer the measure of all things, it does give human beings, and the things we have traditionally valued, a home in nature. Because of this, and because of the supposedly superior plausibility of this narrative over the religious and modernist ones (to paraphrase Lyotard, Jencks is suggesting that the universe story is a metanarrative towards which we may still be credulous), for Jencks, this metanarrative is a story "that can orient a global civilization."⁴⁴

From a Lyotardian perspective, Jencks's "new metanarrative" begs for critique. First, it is simply not presented with compelling intellectual rigor. It is as though Jencks has applied a principle of double coding, a kind of pastiche, to concepts—anything can be mixed with anything else, regardless of apparent lack of fit.⁴⁵ For example, he asserts that the initial conditions of the universe—from which what is commonly called the "Big Bang" emerged—might be called "the Mind of God" or "the Platonic World of the Forms," and that it contained "the laws of justice, harmony, balance, aesthetics."⁴⁶ From a philosophical perspective, such unlikely claims need a great deal more argumentative support than Jencks gives them. Perhaps most significantly, however, Jencks's "universe story" seems to contain a version of the Hegelian apologetics to which Lyotard refuses to accede: for Jencks, the universe is justified by its production of complexity, despite the decimation of life required for such a production (just as for Hegel all the evil in the world is justified by the dialectical motor of history⁴⁷). For Lyotard, an ethical sensitivity demands that we not accept such an apologetics; to do so is to justify the existence of evil, and to risk perpetuating it. (Jencks in fact presents this apologetics in banal bad taste, appealing to his readers not to let nature's "undeniable nasty part" distract us from the beauty to be heard in the sounds of birds and dolphins.⁴⁸) Ironically, perhaps, Jencks' dangerously blithe presentation of a new metanarrative helps us to understand the significance and force of Lyotard's critical engagement with the post-metanarrative of the fable of solar catastrophe.

5. Second, a story similar to Lyotard's fable is evident in some forms of transhumanism. Although Lyotard never indicates precisely where he derived the ideas presented in the fable, one possibility is that he picked them up while working in California in the 1980s (he held posts at the University of California, Irvine and San Diego), a time and place during which the loose collection of ideas collectively known as transhumanism began to coalesce. A landmark in this coalescence was the publication, in 1990, of Ed Regis's satirical volume recounting the way-out ideas of various fringe scientists in the California area, *Great Mambo Chicken and the Transhuman Condition*.⁴⁹ Ansell Pearson's discussion of Lyotard in his essay collection *Viroid Life: Reflections on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition* calls attention to the similarities between Lyotard's fable and transhumanism. Broadly speaking, the key idea of transhumanism is the desirability of transcending the human condition through the development and application of new technologies. This includes, but is not limited to, the artificial enhancements and transformations of the human body by technological means which Lyotard discusses in his fable. One significant branch of transhumanism, known as "extropianism," presents an evaluative structure based on energetic concepts, similar to the one Lyotard recounts: "extropy" designates the opposite of entropy (it is thus an alternative term for negentropy), and extropian transhumanism seeks to use technology to promote "extropian principles."⁵⁰ Transhumanists are overtly concerned with life extension and survival, the most extreme expression of which is the "Omega Point" cosmology proposed by Frank J. Tipler.

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Tipler argues that intelligent life will eventually colonize the cosmos, use elementary particles as information-processors, and run a simulation which will effectively resurrect the dead by emulating all the possible alternate universes since the Big Bang. Tipler identifies this “Omega Point” with God and the Christian conception of Heaven, since he sees most of the traditional criteria for such as being fulfilled in this way.⁵¹

Like so many others, Ansell Pearson unfortunately misreads Lyotard by taking him too literally (a misreading for which Lyotard’s texts, with their subtle irony, must take at least a little responsibility), and misses the critical dimension. Let us get the details of this misreading out of the way first, in order better to concentrate on the positive contributions Ansell Pearson offers to the problems we are considering here. After briefly recounting Lyotard’s fable of the escape of the negentropic system from the solar catastrophe as presented in the essay “Time Today,” Ansell Pearson complains that

[i]n the case of Lyotard’s thinking on time today, the monstrous logic of capitalism is granted a logic of autonomy which in reality it does not enjoy. His presentation of the inhuman time of our neg-entropic destiny results in an abstract and ahistorical opposition between a pure ethicism on the one hand and the unstoppable—because cosmic—accumulation process on the other. Is this not to be seduced by capital’s own desire to construct itself as the transcendental ground of all change and innovation?⁵²

And further:

The real problem with Lyotard’s fantastical account is that it ascribes to capital a vitalism and a teleology. He thus ends up, ironically, offering us the kind of meta-narrative which he had sought to show in the earlier essay on the postmodern condition was now discredited. Grand narratives concerning a neg-entropic future end up being complicit with the image that the system of control likes to project of itself, that is, portraying advanced technological life as if it were simply a mere continuation of natural history.⁵³

We need only recall Lyotard’s description of the fable as precisely that, and as motivated by a strategy for making the enemy appear as strong as possible in order to critique it as strongly as possible, in order to see where Ansell Pearson goes wrong here. (Moreover, Lyotard can hardly be guilty of unknowing complicity with the image the system of control likes to project of itself when he presents the fable explicitly *as* the image the system projects of itself.) The far greater interest of Ansell Pearson’s otherwise brilliant collection of essays, however, concerns his critiques of the discourse of transhumanism, which we can read as usefully applicable to Lyotard’s fable (despite his misinterpretations). As such, Ansell Pearson provides a way of interpreting the fable according to the value-structure which it embodies, and also a certain way of resisting this value structure (a way which is far more literally and factually oriented than Lyotard’s ironic and suggestive strategies).

Throughout the essays in *Viroid Life*, Ansell Pearson delivers a scathing critique of transhumanism, conducted on two primary fronts: on one, he deploys Nietzsche’s critique of anthropomorphic thinking to find deep-seated anthropocentrism in the discourses which proclaim the transcendence of the human; on the other, he effectively attacks the supposedly scientific basis of transhumanist discourse by exposing many of its main contentions as factually outdated or simply false on the basis of contemporary science. Both of these lines of argument might be applied to Lyotard’s fable.

6. In contrast to Lyotard, Ansell Pearson asserts that the transhumanist discourses of evolution as increasing negentropy and complexity *are* a new form of metanarrative, and this because they project anthropocentric biases onto supposedly natural processes, giving human life meaning in the context of the natural universe. Where Lyotard sees the erasure of the figure of the human in the valorization of negentropy, Ansell Pearson sees a deeper and more hidden inscription of the human in the supposedly inhuman. Transhumanist discourse is a metanarrative because it remains teleological, citing complex organization as the purposiveness of the

universe itself, and giving meaning to human life as an essential part of the development of this goal (even if “the human” as such is destined to transcend itself). According to Ansell Pearson, “[t]he new grand narratives are as anthropomorphic as hell.”⁵⁴ What is most anthropomorphic in this metanarrative is the very ascription of *purpose* to the universe, which is—from a Nietzschean perspective—an anthropocentric conceit, finding no basis in fact, but rather existing because of the deep-seated human *desire* for purpose and tendency to interpret the world in purposive terms.

Ansell Pearson further argues that transhumanism is an expression of the ascetic ideal (that is, it preserves the religious values Nietzsche criticized and sought to overcome).⁵⁵ The ascetic ideal cannot affirm suffering in life, and hence devalues life in its wholeness, projecting a better world elsewhere. Transhumanism preserves and reflects the ascetic ideal insofar as it seeks to leave the corporeal and earthly conditions of human existence and become “pure mind” in the form of informational abstraction. Moreover, we may understand transhumanism as a manifestation of the ascetic ideal insofar as it denies the value and legitimacy of entropic processes, of degeneration, deregulation, disorder, and death, seeing value only in order, preservation, and growth. For Nietzsche, this structure of values can be effective in preserving life, but it maintains the will to power at a low level, hampering its creativity and flourishing. Transhumanism reflects and perpetuates those Christian and Platonic values which, according to Nietzsche, preserve life at the cost of mutilating and destroying what is most valuable *in* life, its capacity for creative transformation.

The narrative of the adventure of negentropy is pernicious because it provides a supposedly naturalist ground for what are really just human, all-too-human values, insulating them from much needed critique and interrogation. As Ansell Pearson characterizes it, transhumanism in its most popular form is the new “Platonism for the people” (a characterization Nietzsche once famously applied to Christianity).⁵⁶ Ansell Pearson also notes, here following Lyotard, that this discourse also functions as an apologetics for capitalism and imperialism, by claiming that the liberal democracies to which they have become wedded are the “chosen” (and hence, solely legitimate) forms of social and political organization of the natural forces of the universe.⁵⁷

Moreover, Ansell Pearson calls into question the factual legitimacy of the supposedly scientific claims on which transhumanism founds itself. First, he questions that the story of the development of life in the universe can plausibly be read as a kind of necessary, progressive development. Transhumanists tend to assert that the production of complex systems such as that of human beings was somehow inevitable: while only a stage within the cosmic drama, we appear as a *necessary* stage, within an arc of gradually increasing complex systems. Ansell Pearson calls this gradualist, progressivist interpretation of the history of the universe into question by citing scientific works which suggest, to the contrary, that cosmic history is in fact a highly contingent series of events, displaying nothing of gradualness, progress, or inevitability. For example, the geophysicist Stuart Ross Taylor suggests that if the asteroid thought to be responsible for the extinction of the dinosaurs had missed colliding with the earth in its path through space, human life would likely never have evolved in its current form.⁵⁸

7. Moreover, and perhaps *most* tellingly, Ansell Pearson points out that the idea that nature “selects” in such a way that it progressively develops complexity is not upheld by current science.⁵⁹ The idea that the “arrow of complexity” drives evolution is a Lamarckian (hence, pre-Darwinian) idea, which is not supported by Darwin or by more recent biology. Significantly, as anyone who has anything more than a popular, superficial grasp of Darwinian evolutionary theory ought to know, Darwin effectively eliminated teleology from natural processes by demonstrating how complex systems *could* arise through blind and arbitrary processes of natural selection operating over vast expanses of time. However, evolution does not *select* complexity; some simple organisms survive much better than complex ones in certain environments, and in fact evolution can have a difficult time explaining complexity when simple systems often seem better-adapted for survival.⁶⁰ Moreover, evolution does not consist in a progressive adaptation of an organism to its environment, since environmental factors are also constantly in flux.

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Finally, Ansell Pearson indicates that the work of Ilya Prigogine—popularized in his book with Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos*⁶¹—enables us to question the supposed antagonism of entropy and negentropy which forms the matrix of the transhumanist fable. The work on dissipative structures by Prigogine and Stengers shows that entropy and negentropy are not antagonists, but “partners in crime”: in dissipative systems, entropic processes can contribute to the formation of complex adaptive systems. According to Prigogine’s research, then, entropy is not simply the enemy of organization; the two processes admit of a complex interweaving.⁶²

8. What Ansell Pearson’s discussion of transhumanism interrogates is the attempt to recuperate traditional structures of meaning—religious and modern—within the context of new scientific developments. In terms of time, what this effectively means is that *transhumanism tries to make cosmic time conform to the basic structural model of modern, eschatological temporality*. It does so by ascribing purposiveness to natural processes, identifying the subject of history with negentropic complexity, and projecting the redemption of this complexity through its eventual salvation from the entropic forces of the universe. Entropy is easily and loosely identified with original sin, originary lack, or the basic *problem* of existence from which existence needs to be redeemed, and this redemption is understood as the development of negentropy to the point at which it is able to save and preserve itself from the menace of entropy. Just as much as any religious narrative, the fable can be understood as promising salvation from death. In this way, transhumanism can be seen as a discourse which tries to show how our present sense of what gives meaning and value to human life can survive the death of our bodies and the evolutionary take-over of the flesh by metal and silicon.

In short, what Ansell Pearson effectively demonstrates is that, despite Lyotard’s insistence that the fable itself is not a metanarrative, and that it calls into question the human, *it can be and is* understood by many as a metanarrative, suffused with anthropocentric bias. Thus, a humanism, based in human, all-too-human values, stubbornly persists in the face of the thought of the end of time. The problem with trying to save meaning by anthropomorphising cosmic time into eschatological historicity is two-fold: first, it preserves values which we might be better off without, and second, it is already implausible and will forever be fighting a rear-guard action, since it depends upon (and is all too ready to indulge in) an illegitimate “fudging” of scientific facts. However, Ansell Pearson also shows a way of resisting this dangerous persistence of humanism through both Nietzschean value-critique and appeals to science itself in order to demystify the pseudo-scientific post-metanarrative, restoring to us our *properly* inhuman, or posthuman, future(s).

9. Ray Brassier takes up Lyotard’s fable in the essay “Solar Catastrophe: Lyotard, Freud, and the Death Drive”⁶³ and in the final chapter of his book *Nihil Unbound*⁶⁴ (which is a reworked version of the essay, contextualized within the overall argument of the book). Brassier in a sense takes up Lyotard’s fable in the opposite direction to Ansell Pearson, radicalizing its inhuman potential and mobilizing it in service to the destruction of the “manifest image” of the human. This manifest image—as contrasted with the scientific image, a distinction introduced by Wilfrid Sellars—is the image of human beings as they have typically perceived themselves up to now, possessing psychological attributes such as “beliefs,” “desires,” and “intentions.” This image views human beings as *persons*, as loci of rational agency, and fulfils a normative role insofar as it grounds our view of human activities as purposive and meaningful. In other words, the manifest image is the “humanist” image of the human. The scientific image, by contrast, views human beings simply as complex physical systems. While Sellars wants to recognize both images as essential, Brassier wants to destroy the former in light of the latter.⁶⁵

Through Brassier (and significantly, via Meillassoux), we see that the displacement effectuated by the discovery of cosmic time has the potential to destroy both the manifest image of the human, and the very metatheory of meaning which has supported discourses on human meaning and value since Kant (“correlationism,” and phenomenology in particular). Rather than decry such an eventuality under the name of nihilism, as so many have done, Brassier asserts the legitimacy of nihilism and pushes it to the limit. For Brassier, “the disenchantment of the world deserves to be celebrated as an achievement of intellectual maturity, not bewailed as an intellectual impoverishment.”⁶⁶ Brassier understands nihilism primarily as “the unavoidable corollary of the realist conviction that there is a mind-independent reality, which, despite the presumptions of human

narcissism, is indifferent to our existence and oblivious to the ‘values’ and ‘meanings’ which we would drape over it in order to make it more hospitable.”⁶⁷ Brassier asserts (following Nietzsche) that the interests of thought and of life are not necessarily in concert, but, in contrast to Nietzsche, unambiguously takes the side of thought, and expresses contempt for attempts to take the side of life:

Philosophy would do well to desist from issuing any further injunctions about the need to re-establish the meaningfulness of existence, the purposefulness of life, or mend the shattered concord between man and nature. It should strive to be more than a sop to the pathetic twinge of human self-esteem. Nihilism is not an existential quandary but a speculative opportunity.⁶⁸

10. Brassier attacks the humanist attempt to defend the lifeworld against the encroachments of positivism and naturalism in twentieth-century philosophy by way of Quentin Meillassoux’s attack on correlationism in *After Finitude*. Meillassoux explains correlationism as follows:

By ‘correlation’ we mean the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other. We will henceforth call *correlationism* any current of thought which maintains the unsurpassable character of the correlation so defined.⁶⁹

Meillassoux identifies the origins of correlationism primarily in the Kantian attempt to disqualify dogmatic metaphysics. Kant introduced a new sense of objectivity, whereby it no longer indexed extra-subjectivity, but rather intersubjective agreement (that is, agreement of subjects within the correlation, rather than reference to what lies outside it).⁷⁰ Correlationism, he asserts, is the dominant characteristic of all post-critical philosophy (which according to him is most contemporary philosophy, the most significant currents of which have been phenomenology—which identifies consciousness as the medium of correlation—and various currents of analytic philosophy—which identify language as the medium.)⁷¹ By mounting an argument against correlation, Meillassoux seeks to restore the privileges of speculative metaphysics, which claims to think things in themselves, outside the correlation. Meillassoux is thus an appropriate resource for Brassier’s valorization of nihilism as “speculative realism,” the assertion that we can think mind-independent reality. Furthermore, however, he shows how an extension of Meillassoux’s work on the significance of “deep time” effectively destroys the correlationist theory of meaning which has upheld the manifest image of man, with its humanist meanings and values, in nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophy, the most prominent representative of which is phenomenology. But let us begin with Meillassoux’s argument against correlationism.

This proceeds by way of the “deep time” of the age of the earth confirmed in the 1930s.⁷² He defines the key terms of his argument here as follows:

– I will call ‘ancestral’ any reality anterior to the emergence of the human species – or even anterior to every organized form of life on earth.

– I will call ‘arche-fossil’ or ‘fossil-matter’ not just materials indicating the traces of past life, according to the familiar sense of the term ‘fossil,’ but materials indicating the existence of an ancestral reality or event; one that is anterior to terrestrial life. An *arche*-fossil thus designates the material support on the basis of which the experiments that yield estimates of ancestral phenomena proceed—for example, an isotope whose rate of radioactive decay we know, or the luminous emission of a star that informs us as to the date of its formation.⁷³

According to Meillassoux, the revelation of ancestrality (the “deep time” of the past) by the arche-fossil presents a problem for the correlationist because what it tells of is a time before the emergence of the correlation (that is, before the emergence of human thought), and is thus something which cannot be contained *within* the correlation as such. For the correlationist, the correlation itself is the condition of the intelligibility of any

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knowledge claim; claims which fall outside the correlation are to be dismissed as dogmatic metaphysics. The correlationist must therefore modify the (naïve realist) claims of the scientist by adding to any claims about ancestrality the epistemic caveat “*for us*” (that is, any claims supposedly about a time before the correlation emerged must be reformulated *within* the correlation, and retrojected onto the past). Yet for Meillassoux, this will not do. To see what is wrong with this correlationist move, all we need to do is to ask (phrasing the general question by way of a specific example): “*what is it that happened 4.56 billion years ago?* Did the accretion of the earth happen, *yes or no?*”⁷⁴

Meillassoux suggests that the correlationist is likely to say both *yes and no*; yes in the sense that science gives us objective facts (objective understood as intersubjectively verifiable), and no in the sense that ancestral events could not possibly have actually taken place in the way science describes (because, the correlationist must insist, they are described from within, and thus conditioned by, the correlation, but what they describe was prior to the correlation and thus not itself conditioned by it). For the correlationist, what science describes as ancestral has no possible object and is a *non-sense* (since objectivity and sense are themselves held to only make sense from within the correlation). Meillassoux suggests that the correlationist will split the scientific claim into two senses: a superficial, naïve realist sense which the scientist herself might believe, and the more profound philosophical, correlationist sense. Yet Meillassoux insists that this precarious partitioning is unacceptable. He explains: “if ancestral statements derived their value solely from the current universality of their verification they would be completely devoid of interest for the scientists who take the trouble to validate them.”⁷⁵ Thus, the correlationist attempt to compromise with the scientist’s ancestral claim evacuates any relevance and meaning from the claim, which (according to Meillassoux) needs to be literal and realist if it is to have any scientific value. Therefore, Meillassoux insists, “[t]here is no possible compromise between the correlation and the arche-fossil: once one has acknowledged one, one has thereby disqualified the other.”⁷⁶ Thus if Meillassoux is correct, the scientific revelation of the deep time of the earth invalidates correlationism, including the existential-phenomenological framework of human meaning.

11. Yet Brassier thinks that Meillassoux’s argument from the arche-fossil is not on its own strong enough to refute correlationism. In short, he contends that the argument from anteriority can too easily be appropriated by the correlationist, since—however unhappy scientists may be with this, and despite Meillassoux’s inadequate rejoinders—the correlationist can always say that it is possible to *think* being before the correlation existed, so that anterior being is postulated as being *for us*.⁷⁷ In order to expand the argument against correlationism so that it has a properly devastating force, Brassier points to a time we *cannot think*: this, he believes, is the future extinction of the human race. It is here that he has recourse to Lyotard’s fable of “solar catastrophe.” He writes that “[w]hat defies correlation is the thought that [and here he quotes Lyotard:] ‘after the sun’s death, there will be no thought left to know its death took place.’”⁷⁸ While Lyotard contemplates the possibility that thought might survive solar death, Brassier asserts that this is irrelevant, since in any case it will not survive the heat death of the universe in one trillion, trillion, trillion (10^{1728}) years from now, when entropic forces in the universe will have made the formation of matter impossible, and we will have reached the end of space-time as we know it.⁷⁹ At the end of time, Brassier proposes, there will be an insurmountable external limit to thought. He calls this limit *extinction*.⁸⁰

Extinction, for Brassier, is not the death of a biological species, but something which *levels* the supposed transcendence of human beings (consciousness or *Dasein*) as the locus of correlation, by reducing it to the level of natural phenomena. The key point for Brassier here is that—unlike ancestrality—the thought of extinction, taken as an object, transforms *thought itself* into an object. He writes:

Extinction turns thinking inside out, objectifying it as a perishable thing in the world like any other (and no longer the imperishable condition of perishing). This is an externalization that cannot be appropriated by thought ... because it indexes the autonomy of the object in its capacity to transform thought itself into a thing.⁸¹

Whenever in time the extinction of thought will occur, Brassier contends, it has a transcendental status, in the sense that it is *as if it has already happened*. And this is precisely because of the leveling effect he points to: the very fact that we know thought will suffer the catastrophe of extinction, whenever it will occur, shows that thought itself *never is* anything more than another perishable object. As Brassier phrases it, the inevitable fact of extinction means that *everything is already dead*. Again he quotes Lyotard:

Everything's dead already if this infinite reserve from which you now draw energy to defer answers, if in short thought as quest, dies out with the sun.⁸²

This, then, is why Lyotard's solar death gives a stronger argument against correlationism than Meillassoux's arche-fossil: ancestrality says there is a time before thought, but leaves the correlation more-or-less intact, just limited in its scope. But according to Brassier, the inevitability of future extinction is more than an empirical fact, it has transcendental scope; it ruins the privilege of thought and cedes it to the object. In short, Brassier argues that there is a much more radical disjunction between the time of *extinction* and the space-time of correlation than between *ancestrality* and the space-time of correlation. While the later can be reduced to and incorporated within chronology, and can become a relatively unproblematic thought *for us*, the former cannot be reduced to chronology or to a thought that can be grasped *for us*. This argument hinges on time, because transcendence is bounded by human time, and leveled by cosmic time.

12. In order to construe thought as something which can go beyond correlationism (and thus be capable of realist speculation), and to give an account of what motivates such thought, Brassier has recourse to a reading of Freud's death drive, and an interpretation of Lyotard's solar catastrophe in terms of this. He explains the points that interest him in Freud's explanation of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*⁸³ as follows. Freud arrives at the hypothesis of the death drive by posing the question of traumatic repetition: why are people driven to a psychic repetition (for example, in dreams) of traumatic experiences? His answer is that such repetitions are an attempt to retroactively protect the organism from the trauma itself, by generating the degree of anxiety required to bind the excess energy released by the traumatic event. A traumatic event is one for which the organism is not prepared; it introduces into the psychic apparatus an excess of energy which it does not have the resources to bind, to incorporate into its psychic economy. Traumatic repetition is thus an attempt to bind this excess energy so that it ceases to trouble and destabilize the psychic apparatus.

Second, Brassier highlights and develops Freud's speculative suggestions regarding the origins of organic life in the same essay. According to Freud, the birth of organic life is dependent on, and coincides with, the death of outer layers of the organism which are thereby able to act as filters, protecting the organism from excess bombardment by exogenous stimuli. Organic individuation is thus dependent on, and generated by, a kind of death. Brassier argues that it is the originary split between the organic and inorganic, indexed on the death of the external part of the organism, which makes this possible, and which constitutes a kind of "aboriginal trauma" on which any other traumatic repetition is based. What thought does, essentially, is attempt to bind death, to come to terms with death itself, understood as the inorganic origin of the organic. This, then, is the death drive: the process by which thought attempts to bind, invest, come to terms with, death itself. On this reading, thought is the product of the traumatic trace of the inorganic in the organic; it is motivated by the attempt to bind the aboriginal death synchronous with the birth of the organism.⁸⁴

Next, Brassier transposes Freud's death drive to the solar/cosmic register. According to him, Lyotard's solar catastrophe is an analog to the aboriginal trauma of death as the death of part of the organism in organic individuation. Brassier, through his reading of Freud, suggests that philosophy's task is to "bind" (invest, cathect) extinction, understood as aboriginal trauma. According to Brassier, thought can successfully bind the trauma of extinction by *becoming* death; that is, by effectuating an "identity-without-synthesis" with the object. The possibility of this is explained with recourse to François Laruelle's "non-philosophy," a new form of transcendental reasoning which solves the problem of access for Brassier's speculative realism (the details of which would take us too far afield of the present discussion to enter into here).⁸⁵ The death drive understood

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in this sense is what gives Brassier's nihilist project its motive force. Following but displacing Nietzsche, he revalues the will to know *as* the will to nothingness, asserting its primacy over the will to life-affirmation. In effect, Brassier aligns thought with death and nothingness, and champions it over life, value, and meaning.

13. Brassier argues that attack on correlationism destroys the position from which many of the most influential twentieth-century responses to nihilism have proceeded: in particular phenomenology and existentialism, but arguably also the philosophies of the linguistic turn, including at least some forms of poststructuralism. And more generally, a quite broad form of humanism, in which human thought and language in general (and not just the consciousness of the individual) receive a privileged place. This is so because correlationism gives a special status to the human as the locus in which *all* meaning becomes operative: it responds to the nihilistic encroachment of the sciences by arguing that even scientific knowledge is a secondary derivative of the primary givenness of the correlation as such. Briefly put, correlationism provides an argumentative framework in which it can seemingly be shown that human meaning trumps scientific discourse.⁸⁶ Brassier wants to show that this argumentative framework collapses, and the order of trumping is reversed. For Nietzsche, the nihilism of contemporary natural science is expressed in that fact that "[s]ince Copernicus man has been rolling from the centre toward X."⁸⁷ For Brassier, this X might be understood as the in-itself which Kant also designated as an X, because, he believed, we could not know it.⁸⁸ Brassier's nihilism means that the destruction of the manifest image of man ("we" roll further from "Man" *as* centre) gets us closer to an adequate thinking of the X. At the same time, the more adequately we think the X, the further we roll into our nihilism, away from our familiar horizon of meanings and values. For Brassier, this price is worth paying for the gain thought makes in rational intelligibility.⁸⁹

14. To return, in conclusion, to Lyotard. First, Lyotard's ironic, fabling, writerly response to the "post-metanarratives" of development as physical eschatology might appear to be a much less effective rejoinder than Ansell Pearson's direct debunking on the basis of hard science. Yet, there is a very deliberate strategy at work here, one which we may see as analogous to Lyotard's treatment of Holocaust deniers (in particular, Robert Faurisson). In the latter case, Lyotard resists the usual move of most historians simply to stake the claims of historical evidence for the reality of the Holocaust against the deniers, since he does not believe that any appeal to historical evidence captures what it is about the Holocaust which needs to be acknowledged and remembered: not its reality as a historical event, but the unthinkable magnitude of its very *wrongness*.⁹⁰ Similarly, in critiquing the post-metanarrative, it is not the scientific veracity or otherwise which Lyotard sees as being at stake. Rather, the stake concerns the values it embodies, and their political and existential implications. Lyotard's strategy is thus in line with his general agreement with the critique of metaphysics (following Kant, Heidegger, and Adorno, among others), and with the fact/value distinction (most famously proposed by Hume). Lyotard seeks to critically engage with a metaphysical story which claims to ground values (as we have seen, this claim is explicitly made by Jencks) from a perspective which rejects the possibility of any such grounding. Thus, he does not seek to simply challenge the factual bases of the (meta)physical story, but rather to draw out the value-implications of such a story and try to show that they lead to undesirable consequences, ones which would likely not be endorsed by most promulgators of the post-metanarrative themselves.

Ansell Pearson's admirable method of scientific refutation certainly has its power and its uses, but it maintains the problematic in its present position. In order to respond, the transhumanists (and others) need simply update their science. Whether or not the latest scientific developments can be reconciled with "historicity" is largely a matter of interpretation. As the example of Jencks shows, there is a great deal of flexibility possible here, and there is every reason to believe that, with enough interpretive ingenuity, almost any new scientific development could be incorporated within such a framework. Lyotard's strategy, while more subtle and elusive, has the advantage of shifting the ground of the debate. If successful, such a shift should make us realise the necessity of thinking values on their own terms, in separation from physical and metaphysical discourses, while increasing our critical awareness of any and all attempts to ground values in such a way.

We may summarise the various other perspectives we have reviewed here in the following way: Jencks and

the transhumanists try to resolve the crisis for the meaning of human existence announced by the end of time by trying to collapse the new image of existence into the old structures of meaning, while Brassier wants to eradicate the old structures of meaning entirely for the sake of the new image of existence. Lyotard, however, offers a third way: he insists on the intractability and incommensurability of both categories, of meaning and existence. On the side of existence, Lyotard departs from Jencks, the transhumanists, and those who think cosmic time can be reconciled with human historicity, as well as those such as Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and Hadot who believe that it can be bracketed as irrelevant to the human construction of meaning. For Lyotard, contemporary science needs to be taken seriously, and has a real gravitational force which pulls contemporary thought from its orbit around the manifest image of the human. However, on the side of meaning, Lyotard would likely have objected to Brassier's nihilism (as he did against positivist reductions of meaning to science) that it illegitimately levels all forms of reason to a single conception (the will to *knowledge*, or as Lyotard would put it, the cognitive genre). One of the key elements of Lyotard's thought is the defence of a kind of rational pluralism, in which modes of thought such as the ethical and the aesthetic are defended in their own specificity, as heterogenous to, and incommensurable with, the cognitive.⁹¹

A Lyotardian strategy, then, would be *to insist on the abyss between meaning and existence*,⁹² to hold them as incommensurable, to allow thought a space where it has responsibility only to itself and not to life (a *speculative* space), as well as a space where life has responsibility to itself and not to thought: yet not to strictly police their boundaries, keeping them hermetically isolated, but to attempt to think them together *as incommensurable*: this is what Lyotard calls "judgment." Judgment is a way of thinking in which we acknowledge that we have no recourse to a common measure between the things we judge (which would give us a criterion upon which to base our judgment).⁹³ Despite its largely Kantian origin, judgment need not be a thought which reduces everything to correlation, but rather one which seeks to think the implications of the inside and the outside of the correlation for each other, refusing any common measure which would *reduce* the one side to the other. Judgment is a way to think both the manifest and the scientific images of man, to allow them to oscillate, without the teleology of either modernist historicity or the eliminativist program, but rather with an (at least) equal concern to develop what the revelation of the scientific image of man, and of cosmic time, means *for us*, such that although radically displaced, the time of our lives is not, for all that, quite over yet.

ASHLEY WOODWARD is a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Dundee, and a member of the Melbourne School of Continental Philosophy and an editor of *Parrhesia*. His publications include *Nihilism in Postmodernity: Lyotard, Baudrillard, Vattimo* (The Davies Group, 2009) and *Understanding Nietzscheanism* (Acumen, 2011).

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NOTES

1. Jean-François Lyotard, "Emma: Between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis" Trans. Michael Sanders (with Richard Brons and Norah Martin) in *Lyotard: Philosophy, Politics, and the Sublime*. Ed. Hugh J. Silverman. New York: Routledge, 2002, 30.
2. This paper, in an earlier version, was first presented at the 2011 Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy conference, "The Time of Our Lives."
3. Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*. Ed. Arnold I. Davidson. Trans. Michael Chase. Oxford UK and Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1995, 253. Hadot references Edmund Husserl, "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature" Trans. Frederick Kersten in *Husserl: Shorter Works*. Ed. Peter McCormick and Frederick A. Elliston. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Donald A. Landes. New York: Routledge, 2012.
4. Whether or not science does in fact leave everyday perception intact is an issue I will leave to one side here in order to focus on some different issues concerning time and meaning Lyotard develops. However, we may note in passing that Lyotard does not agree with Hadot's assessment. For further discussion of this issue, see my essay "Nihilism and the Sublime in Lyotard," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 16: 2 (2011, 51–71); especially the section "The crisis of perception: the sublime as nihilism," 56–60.
5. Lyotard always gives the figure as 4.5 billion years, but current science puts it at 5 billion. Lyotard also suggests that the sun will explode and the earth will be engulfed in a nova ("A Postmodern Fable," p. 83). In fact, the sun does not have enough mass to go nova, and when, in 5 billion years, it no longer has enough fuel to continue its fusion reaction of hydrogen into helium, it will expand and become a red giant, before contracting to become a white dwarf. However, the fate of the Earth remains the same: it will be incinerated as it is engulfed by the expanding photosphere. While there has been some speculation that the Earth might survive because the reduction of the sun's mass will allow it to enter a wider orbit, recent research has shown that this will still not prevent the Earth from being engulfed. See K.-P. Shröder and Robert Cannon Smith, "Distant Future of the Sun and Earth Revisited," *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* 386.1 (May 2008, 155–163), in particular, section 4.3 'Doomsday confirmed,' 160–161. However, Shröder and Smith do note the possibility (suggested by D.G. Korycansky, G., Laughlin and F.C. Adams, "Astronomical Engineering: A Strategy for Modifying Planetary Orbits," *Astrophysics and Space Science* 275 (2001, 349–366), of a potential method of saving the earth or at least extending its lifespan by increasing its orbit with the aid of the gravitational effects of arranged encounters with an appropriate asteroidal body. Interestingly, Shröder and Smith note that such a scheme "would have the advantage of improving conditions for the whole biosphere, whereas any scheme for interplanetary 'life rafts' that could move slowly outwards to maintain habitable conditions would, on cost and energy grounds, necessarily be confined to a small fraction of the human population—with all the political problems that would produce—plus perhaps a tiny proportion of other species" (161).
6. Jean-François Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable" in *Postmodern Fables*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, 91.
7. Norbert Wiener, *I Am a Mathematician: The Later Life of a Prodigy*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964, 324.
8. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 87–8.
9. See Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 85–90.
10. See, for example, Stuart Sim, *Lyotard and the Inhuman*. Duxford: Icon, 2001; Keith Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life: Perspectives on Nietzsche and the Transhuman Condition*. London: Routledge, 1997; Neil Badmington, *Posthumanism*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000; Gil Germain, *Spirits in the Material World: The Challenge of Technology*. Lanham: Lexington, 2009.
11. Lyotard, "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?" in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991. Lyotard's most extensive discussion of the fable is the essay "A Postmodern Fable," but see also "Time Today" in *The Inhuman*, "The Wall, the Gulf, and the Sun: A Fable"; "The Grip (*Mainmise*)" and "*Oikos*" in *Jean-François Lyotard: Political Writings*. Trans. Bill Readings and Kevin Paul. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993; "The Survivor" in *Toward the Postmodern*. Ed. Robert Harvey and Mark S. Roberts. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1993; and "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis" in *Critical Architecture and Contemporary Culture*. Ed. W.J. Lillyman, M.F. Moriarty, and D.J. Neuman. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.
12. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 98.
13. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 98.
14. This is Lyotard's claim in the essay "A Postmodern Fable." Elsewhere, in the essay "The Grip," he presents this point in a far more nuanced way, suggesting that the fable proceeds from and is an extension of the desire for emancipation, but crosses a threshold beyond which emacipation no longer makes sense, precisely because the value of development (the means) takes precedence over, and ends up destroying, the end (the meaning of the "human" which was to be emancipated). See "The Grip" in *Jean-François Lyotard: Political Writings*.

15. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 98.
16. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 99.
17. "The hero is not a subject. The word energy says nothing, except that there is some force. ... it knows nothing and does not *want* any of it. It obeys blind, local laws and chance." (Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable," 93).
18. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable".
19. Lyotard, "The Grip," 152; Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," 192.
20. Lyotard, "*Oikos*," 101.
21. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," 192.
22. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," 194.
23. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," 194.
24. See for example Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 3–4.
25. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Ed. Bernard Williams. Trans. Josephine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 108.
26. Lyotard, "The Wall, the Gulf, the System" in *Postmodern Fables*, 81–2.
27. Lyotard, "The Wall, the Gulf, the System" in *Postmodern Fables*, 81.
28. Lyotard, "The Grip," 151.
29. Lyotard, "*Oikos*," 99; "Time Today," 76–77.
30. Stephen J. Gould, *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1990, as cited and explained by Charles Jencks in *What Is Post-Modernism?* 4th ed. West Sussex: Academy Editions, 1996, 71.
31. See for example Lyotard, "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?," 16–23; Lyotard, "*Oikos*," 106–7.
32. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," 195.
33. Lyotard, "A Postmodern Fable on Postmodernity, or: In the Megalopolis," 194.
34. Lyotard and Jencks, as two of the most prominent theorists of the postmodern, commented occasionally on each other's works, primarily in order to distinguish their positions, each from the other. Jencks's "new meta-narrative" discussed here explicitly distinguishes his position from Lyotard's. Lyotard, for his part, in one place notes "Jencks's 'postmodernism' in architecture, which the reader will do me the favour of not confusing with what I have called 'the postmodern condition.'" ("Representation, Presentation, Unpresentable" in *The Inhuman*, 127.) As far as I am able to determine, Lyotard discusses the "post-metanarrative" before Jencks does, his first presentations appearing in 1987 with the essays "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?" and "Time Today." While Jencks' book *What Is Postmodernism?* is based on lectures first delivered in 1985, its four editions undergo significant revision (so much so that Jencks says he is tempted to coin a new term for what seems to him to be a new genre, and suggests "transitext," "metamorphibook," "rescription" or "evolutome," (Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 8), and the chapter on the "new metanarrative" is still absent from the 2nd edition, published in 1987. However, in the fourth edition (1996), there is no evidence in Jencks's discussion that he was aware that Lyotard had already critiqued just such a "new metanarrative" based on cosmology.
35. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 71.
36. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry. *The Universe Story, From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Ecozoic Era*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992.
37. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 71.
38. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 71.
39. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 72.
40. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 72–3.
41. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 73.
42. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 73.
43. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 77.
44. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 77.
45. Jencks's "double coding," a key idea of his theory of Post-Modern architecture, combines two heterogenous approaches—typically modern techniques and traditional or local building—in a single construction, irrespective of their lack of stylistic fit. Among other things, the approach is aimed at addressing the divide, which so beset modernist architecture, between the visions of professional architects and the needs and tastes of the public who use their buildings. See *What Is Postmodernism?*, 29–30.

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46. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 75.
47. See for example Richard J. Bernstein's discussion of Hegel in chapter 2 of his book *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002).
48. Jencks, *What Is Post-Modernism?*, 76.
49. Ed Regis. *Great Mambo Chicken and the Transhuman Condition*. New York: Perseus, 1990.
50. See Max More, "Principles of Extropy: An Evolving Framework of Values and Standards for Continuously Improving the Human Condition." Version 3.11. *Extropy Institute*: <http://www.extropy.org/principles.htm>. One of the many meanings given to extropy in this manifesto is this: "Extropy means seeking more intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness, an open-ended lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to continuing development."
51. Frank J. Tipler, *The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God, and the Resurrection of the Dead*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
52. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 171.
53. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 172.
54. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 170.
55. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 25.
56. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 172.
57. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 170–74.
58. Stuart Ross Taylor, *Solar System Evolution: A New Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 294. Cited in Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 185.
59. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 171.
60. Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 171.
61. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. London: Flamingo, 1985.
62. See Ansell Pearson, *Viroid Life*, 185.
63. Ray Brassier, "Solar Catastrophe: Lyotard, Freud, and the Death Drive." *Philosophy Today* 47: 4 (Winter 2003), 421–430.
64. Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
65. See Wilfrid Sellars, "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man" in *Science, Perception and Reality*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963; and Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 3–6.
66. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, xi.
67. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, xi.
68. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, xi.
69. Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Trans. Ray Brassier. London and New York: Continuum, 2008, § 5.
70. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 4.
71. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 6.
72. The earth is roughly 4.5 billion years old, as established largely through work in the radiometric dating of rock by Arthur Holmes. A report published by the National Research Council of the US National Academy of sciences and co-authored by Holmes, published in 1931, provided detailed and convincing data and saw the general acceptance of this geochronological dating by the scientific community. See Schuchert, Knof, Kovarik, Holmes, and Brown, *Physics of the Earth IV: The Age of the Earth*. National Research Council. Report of the National Academy of Sciences (1931).
73. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 10.
74. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 16.
75. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 17.
76. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 17.
77. Brassier's argument against Meillassoux here is in fact a complex one, drawing on several arguments suggested by others. One key strand of this argument, in a little more detail, is as follows. Brassier notes that Meillassoux's appeal to anteriority hangs on the scientific (Einstein-Minkowski) empirical conception of space-time, and the way this space-time coordinates the past, present, and future in what Brassier calls "chronology." However, Brassier notes, a simple change in the framework which determines chronology would suffice to dissolve the alleged incommensurability between ancestral and anthropomorphic time, thereby bridging the conceptual abyss which is supposed to separate anteriority from spatiotemporal distance (*Nihil Unbound*, 59).
- Meillassoux admits that it is simply an empirical, contingent fact that ancestral time preceded manifestation (the world as it appears within the correlation), and he is also committed to the idea that the coordination of space-time which establishes such a chronology *might* change, since this is a corollary of his "principle of factuality," or the assertion of absolute contingency, which is a further key argument of *After Finitude* (see chapter 3). In short, Brassier argues that while Meillassoux's argument takes place in a *logical* register, it necessarily hinges on an *empirical* contingency (*Nihil Unbound*, 58). Brassier wants something more: an argument with a robustly transcendental scope.
78. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 229. Lyotard, "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?", 9.

79. Brassier properly notes that this “end” of time will be asymptotic (“Solar Catastrophe,” 428): the breakdown of all matter, leaving only photons dancing in a cold, chaotic void, will end space-time as we know it (with any capacity to support life), but the universe in this minimal state will continue to expand indefinitely. Brassier references Sten F. Odenwald, *Patterns in the Void: Why Nothing Is Important*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2002, 163; and L. Krauss and G. Starkman, “Life, The Universe, and Nothing: Life and Death in an Ever Expanding Universe,” *The Astrophysical Journal* 531: 1 (2000), 22–30. In 2011, the Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to Saul Perlmutter, Brian P. Schmidt, and Adam G. Riess for the discovery of the accelerating expansion of the universe through the observation of supernovae, a discovery which supports the hypothesis of “heat death.” However, this thesis on the end of time is not uncontested. A recent scientific paper suggests that time will end in 5 billion years, roughly synchronous with the death of our sun. This hypothesis draws on the calculation of probabilities associated with the theory of a “multiverse” cosmology. See Raphael Bousso, Ben Freivogel, Stefan Leichenauer, and Vladimir Rosenhaus, “Eternal Inflation Predicts that Time will End,” *Physical Review D*, 83: 2 (2011). (The authors state clearly that “[w]e do not know whether our conclusion is empirically correct. What we have shown is that it follows logically from a certain set of assumptions” (14).)

80. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 228–9.

81. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 229.

82. Lyotard, “Can Thought Go On Without a Body?,” 9. Quoted in Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 223.

83. Sigmund Freud, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol. XVIII. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. London: Hogarth Press, 1955.

84. See Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 234–38.

85. The Laruellean component of Brassier’s argument regarding extinction is outlined extremely briefly in the closing paragraph of the “Solar Catastrophe” essay, with no attempt to explain the many technical terms introduced, and likely leaving the reader unfamiliar with Laruelle baffled. The explanation of this argument is more forthcoming in *Nihil Unbound*. See chapter 5, “Being Nothing,” and chapter 7, “The Truth of Extinction,” 229–30.

86. This characterization requires the caveat that “human meaning” is being used in such a broad sense here (simply as contrasted with scientific discourse) that it encompasses many perspectives—such as those of Heidegger and of structuralism—which portray themselves as challenging humanism. For example, for all Heidegger’s decentring of *Dasein* and stressing of Being in his later works, *Dasein* remains that *to which* Being discloses itself and the world. (For an argument that Heidegger remains a humanist, see Wolfgang Iser, “The Human – Over and Over Again.” Trans. Jim Scott in *Weakening Philosophy: Essays in Honour of Gianni Vattimo*. Ed. Santiago Zabala. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007. It is this very broad sense that Brassier is concerned with.

87. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*. Ed. Walter Kaufmann. Trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage, 1967, § 1.5.

88. More precisely, it is the transcendental object (the thing “behind” appearances which appears) which Kant designates with an X, but he sometimes uses this term synonymously with the thing-in-itself, precisely because they are both unknowable as such (since they can be thought, but cannot be an object of experience). See “Transcendental object” in Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*. Malden: Blackwell, 1995, 401.

89. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 238.

90. See Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988 and Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*. Trans. A. Michel and M. Roberts. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990. See also my discussion of this issue in “Testimony and the Affect-phrase” in *Rereading Jean-François Lyotard*. Ed. Heidi Bickis and Rob Shields. Surrey: Ashgate, forthcoming.

91. This argument is developed at length in *The Differend*, but for a brief summary of Lyotard’s views, see “Dispatch Concerning the Confusion of Reasons” in *The Postmodern Explained to Children*. Ed. Julian Pefanis and Morgan Thomas. Sydney: Power Publications, 1992. In this essay he summarises a number of the key points in his position which I have mentioned here, by indicating what he sees as “the stake confronting philosophical thought today. We must follow metaphysics in its fall, as Adorno said, but without lapsing into the current mood of positivist pragmatism which, beneath its liberal exterior, is no less hegemonic than dogmatism. We must trace a line of resistance to both of them. We must counter-attack the confusions without forming a new ‘front.’ For the time being, the defence of reasons is conducted by ‘micrologies.’” (77)

92. This insistence is evident, for example, in Lyotard’s essay “Sublime Aesthetic of the Contract Killer” in *The Assassination of Experience by Painting – Monory*. Ed. Sarah Wilson. London: Black Dog, 1998.

93. See, for example, Lyotard, *Enthusiasm: The Kantian Critique of History*. Trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele. Stanford, California, 2009. See especially chapter 2, “The Archipelago.”

REVIEW

SEAN BOWDEN, *THE PRIORITY OF EVENTS: DELEUZE'S THE LOGIC OF SENSE* (EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2011)

Jon Roffe

The synoptic approach to Deleuze—arguably the dominant strand of Deleuze scholarship—has cast a great deal of welcome light on what is and remains one of the more complex *oeuvres* in recent European philosophy. However, it has also obscured a great many shifts, small and large, that characterize Deleuze's work, leading to the rather widespread impression that each of his books interlocks seamlessly with one other.

Nowhere has this approach cost as much in terms of comprehension as in the case of *The Logic of Sense*. Written in the same period as *Difference and Repetition*, and published the year after in 1969, it is idiosyncratic in a number of ways, and its central claims play out at significant distance from many of Deleuze's other works.

Alongside the manner in which it splits away from the unified Deleuze produced on the basis of the synoptic approach, *The Logic of Sense* presents a particular challenge when considered in the more immediate context of his works in the sixties, particularly the *opus magnum* *Difference and Repetition*. It is difficult to avoid the impression of an analogue of a distortion of the visual field at the conceptual level when putting these two volumes next to one another. At points, they are in entire agreement, using the same terminology in the same fashion, and with the same broad goals. At others, one can come close to feeling that the two books must have been written by a different thinker altogether.

A third factor again is also arguably in play in the poor grasp of *The Logic of Sense* that currently prevails. It is not simply the fact that it presents us with the most thorough-going structuralist and psychoanalytically-inflected moment in Deleuze's thought that has turned away readers, who sometimes claim (admittedly, supported by later remarks made by Deleuze himself) that the 'true' Deleuzian philosophy would only arise

once he had been woken from his dogmatic slumbers by Guattari. To an important extent, this way of framing things has offered an alibi, a respectable excuse for not reading what is without a doubt one of—if not the most—difficult of Deleuze’s texts, both conceptually and stylistically.

If I begin with these points, it is to highlight the significance of Sean Bowden’s contribution to Deleuze scholarship as a whole in the publication of *The Priority of Events: Deleuze’s The Logic of Sense*. Not only does the book cover in impressive detail major facets of the book’s argumentation, it will provide the starting point for readers in the future who wish to engage with the staggering and elaborate, not to say baroque, metaphysical system presented in *The Logic of Sense*. Bowden has not just exposed the ultimate inadequacy of the synoptic approach—he has provided one of the important means to go beyond it towards a more nuanced and informed approach to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze.



As its title indicates, Bowden’s book is an explication of a single main claim, one that it asserts—entirely correctly in my view—is the spinal column of *The Logic of Sense*. This is the claim that events are the ontological primitives from which everything else arises; in other words, it concerns “the ontological priority of events over substances.” (1) Bowden’s method for elucidating this claim, its status and its role in the structure of *The Logic of Sense* is to engage in a kind of conceptual archeology. That is, he devotes chapters to six thinkers or bodies of work, present in *The Logic of Sense* and from the point of view of this central argument: the Stoics, Leibniz, Albert Lautman and Gilbert Simondon, structuralism, and psychoanalysis. This list already provides an insight into the seriousness of Bowden’s book, since all five of these points of reference have, to increasing degrees as one passes through the list, been overlooked in receptions of Deleuze’s work generally (that is, in the synoptic approach) and in relation to *The Logic of Sense*. It is perhaps the final member of this set, psychoanalysis, that has been worst attended to, a point I will return to in what follows.

Each of these chapters elaborates one piece of the puzzle that constitutes Deleuze’s evental ontology. Moreover, they are organized in a series that broadly follows the logic of Deleuze’s own argumentation in *The Logic of Sense*. *The Priority of Events* thus gives the sense that Deleuze’s project in this book is organized around a progressive line of argument, despite the notion that each of the series—what Deleuze calls ‘chapters’ in this book, thus beginning a life-long experiment with ways of thinking about the constitution of books that continues in *A Thousand Plateaus* (plateaus) and *Francis Bacon* (rubrics)—can be connected up, rhizomatically, with any of the others.

Bowden begins by considering the contribution of the Stoics to Deleuze’s project, the first moment. It is in Stoic metaphysics that two key distinctions are to be found that lay at the heart of *The Logic of Sense*: between bodies and the incorporeal attributes that pertain to them (ie., events), and between the orthodox tertiary structure of language function (denotation, manifestation, and signification) and sense, as the locus around which this tertiary structure revolves. Here, Bowden is particularly good at embedding Deleuze’s analysis within the broader field of scholarship on the Stoics, but also at indicating the point at which Deleuze breaks, without much by way indication, with the Stoic position. While he is explicit about what he sees as the illegitimate use of propositional logic with respect to the event in the Stoics (LS 200), what Bowden also shows is that the Stoics fail, for Deleuze, to entirely free the event from the matrix of being qua substance, in the form of the all-encompassing figure of Zeus.

Bowden turns, in the second chapter, to consider the Leibnizian contribution to Deleuze’s argument. While the importance of Leibniz for Deleuze has, in recent years, been increasingly recognized, there is no question that there is more to be said on this front, and Bowden makes an important contribution to that effort here, not only with respect to the argument of *The Logic of Sense* itself, but by marking the way that Deleuze’s Leibniz is integrally connected to a variety of more recent neo- and quasi-Leibnizian thinkers, primarily Gilbert Simondon. In keeping with Deleuze’s repeated assessment of Leibniz as a thinker of the event, the core of

the theoretical edifice in *The Logic of Sense* is certainly Leibnizian. Not only, as Bowden so clearly shows, does Deleuze draw a large number of his operative concepts in this regard from Leibniz (impossibility, the significance of the calculus and its correlative concept of singularity, the expressive notion of the individual and the related notion of logical genesis in particular), the ways in which he will depart from Leibniz are along paths already implicit in his work.

The third and fourth chapters deal, respectively, with the contributions made by Lautman's particular brand of mathematical Platonism and Simondon's dynamic account of individuation, on the one hand, and structuralism on the other.

While references to Lautman and Simondon are rare in *The Logic of Sense* (as they are throughout Deleuze's work), Bowden is certainly right to highlight their contribution to the argument Deleuze is mounting. In both cases, what is provided is a means to open the doors that Leibniz closes due to theological exigencies. They are thus key precursors for Deleuze's form of neo-Leibnizianism. Lautman's work, both on the nature of the differential calculus and on the nature of mathematics as such, provides Deleuze with the means to extend the insights of the calculus into the disjunctive territory of the metaphysical surface, by conceiving of singularities as virtual problems. These in turn will be identified with events by Deleuze. In Simondon, Deleuze finds a way of expanding the Leibnizian notion of the individual. As Bowden shows, this is done by conceiving individualization as a concrete and dynamic intensive process, one which presupposes a transcendental field (Simondon's regime of pre-individuality). Thus Simondon's potential energy meets up with Lautman's notion of ideal problem as characteristic of the pre-individual structure—a further decisive set of specifications of the Stoic-Leibnizian conception of the regime of events.

Given the widespread—ill-defined and over-simplistic—characterization of Deleuze as a post-structuralist, the second of these chapters is a welcome corrective. By reading Deleuze's signal 1967 article "How do we recognize structuralism?" alongside *The Logic of Sense*, Bowden demonstrates the importance of structuralism for Deleuze, albeit (as always) from his own deeply philosophical point of view. Reading this chapter, I was struck by the paucity of considerations of this connection¹, given the richness of the connections that it opens up. In the context of the argument of *The Logic of Sense*, the invocation of structuralism serves to further enrich Deleuze's analysis by bringing to bear a range of conceptual and terminological tools that speak directly to the non-dualistic split between the structure of the event and its ongoing actualization in bodies. It also arguably provides a number of the points of contact with Lacan that will be decisive in the last and longest chapters in Deleuze's argument. Particularly strong in this chapter is Bowden's discussion of Jakobson's structural linguistics. Leaving aside the extremely clear character of the summary on its own terms, as an illustration of Deleuze's project in *The Logic of Sense* it is particularly well-chosen. This is the case, on the one hand, because the nature of language is obviously one of Deleuze's central concerns here (a claim that can only also be made, and here with caveats, of *A Thousand Plateaus* among Deleuze's other works). On the other hand, because the structuralism essay makes such heavy use of a variety of structuralist thinkers, Bowden's analysis makes it easy to situate Deleuze's own position with respect to this range of others with great facility.

While each of Bowden's chapters demonstrates the same sober, directed mastery of the source material in question, the closing chapter on psychoanalysis stands out for its significance. This is primarily the case, as I have already noted, because of the generally impoverished understanding of the role of Lacan and Klein in Deleuze's work up to and including *Anti-Oedipus*. However, it is also the case that the discussion of the dynamic genesis of sense which occupies the closing chapters of *The Logic of Sense* is the most compressed treatment of complicated theoretical terrain that Deleuze presents anywhere in his work—work known in general for its difficulty. Bowden's discussion of these chapters is thus worthy of praise on its own terms.

As Bowden clearly articulates, there is a paradoxical torsion in Deleuze's broadest line of argument in *The Logic of Sense*. If, in the end, events are the fundamental ontological category for Deleuze, then any structural features in being must themselves have an evental character. However, the structure in question is the structural

reality of events, both as the effects of the interactions of particular bodies, and as such. The problem is striking: how to account for the event of the evental structure? In *Difference and Repetition*, and in related terms, Deleuze will assert that there is no opposition between structure and genesis. *The Logic of Sense* is the text in which Deleuze will provide a line of argument that genuinely resolves the apparent opposition, through an account of the genesis of structure. In turn, then, what Bowden provides is not just a clear summary of difficult and poorly understood material, but also a clear summary of a decisive moment in Deleuze's philosophical architecture.

This apparent impasse is overcome by accounting for the genesis of the evental structure (the metaphysical surface) in terms of the psychosexual development of the speaking subject. What is particularly impressive about this last and longest chapter of Bowden's book is the way that it manages to present, at least in outline, what we might call Deleuze's metapsychology (as Bowden notes, Deleuze is not interested in the clinical practice of psychoanalysis in *The Logic of Sense* [186]). It is a decidedly monstrous account, to be sure, assembled from parts of Freud, Klein and Lacan's position, sometimes only after being reversed or turned inside out in relation to their original functioning. For example, while Deleuze leans heavily on Klein's theory of part-objects, he plays on an implicit contradiction between the notions of good object and part object in her work in order to do so. And, while this would seem to lead in the direction of Lacan's theory of *l'objet petit a* and its role in the symbolic order, Deleuze's reading of Klein directly contradicts Lacan's (insofar as it sides with Klein on the pre-symbolic position of the part-objects [186]). At the same time, Deleuze's theory of the good object is drawn from the Lacanian notion of the *imago* (see here Bowden's excellent summary of Deleuze's theory of the good object, 200-5).

Given that this example is drawn only from Bowden's account of the first of four stages in the dynamic genesis of sense, it is easy to see how convoluted the chicanes of Deleuze's position is; again, it is to Bowden's credit to have done such a good job mapping this territory.



As a written work, *The Priority of Events* is extremely clear and very well structured. The chapters pursue the single line of argument of the book while at the same time repeating and ramifying its orientation—which is just to say that it is animated by an exceptionally well-conceived purpose, and structured accordingly. By remaining very close to both the text of Deleuze's book, and a number of the commentators that he draws upon in *The Logic of Sense*, Bowden's position never seems less than well-founded. At the same time, the aforementioned baroque character of *The Logic of Sense*—not to mention Deleuze's active indifference to distinguishing his position from those he is addressing (see 3-4)—confronts even the most careful and detailed study with pages so oblique and compressed (Bowden rather kindly calls them “condensed” [83] or “dense” [191]) that they can only be teased out by taking, sometimes significant, interpretive risks. Here, Bowden follows something like Deleuze's own approach, namely by introducing other thinkers at these obscure points in order to unfold a projected line of argument too condensed to be expounded on its own terms—perhaps it could be called a method of adjunction.

The most important case of this to my mind is the crucial, if brief, introduction of Donald Davidson's notion of triangulation, in order to tease out the Deleuzian-Leibnizian position on the relationship between predication and personhood (75-7). Like Deleuze's own adjunctive moves, the connection Bowden draws here holds out a great deal of promise for a range of new conceptual developments, particularly with respect to the role of intersubjectivity (a vexed notion throughout Deleuze's work that appears in a number of ways) and the status of knowledge (Deleuze seems, at best, only tangentially interested in epistemological questions).



One can always demand more from commentaries on great books of philosophy, and the higher the quality of

this commentary work, the more the desire for a total account weighs on its reader. It would be easy to claim that Bowden could have shone a light into other corners of this labyrinthine book for our benefit—those parts that deal, for example, with Husserlian phenomenology, the role of Nietzsche and Plato in the analysis, or the twinned figures of Antonin Artaud and Lewis Carroll (see, however, the first page of the book for Bowden's reasons for excluding them from detailed consideration).

As for my own uncharitable, unwarranted demands: I was most struck by a double absence in Bowden's study. The first concerns the absence of any extended consideration of the ethical facet of *The Logic of Sense*. Indeed, it is here that we find the most explicit, concentrated and powerful formulation of ethics anywhere in Deleuze's work, and proof that there is more on this front in Deleuzian thought than any simplified Nietzschean-Spinozan concern for an increase in the power to act. While this ethical element of the book is briefly parsed with respect to the Stoics (42-5), no attention is given to the rather more dramatic form in which Deleuze presents his ethics of the event in later parts of *The Logic of Sense* (in particular in the twentieth, twenty-first and twenty-second series). Given, though, that Bowden's goal is to present an account of Deleuze's argument for the priority of events, that is, an ontological project, it would be particularly unfair to demand this of his book.

The other aspect of *The Logic of Sense* that is left unattended here is less a figure or theme than a certain pervasive mood. Throughout his work but centrally in *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze often remarks on the force of the famous opening lines of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Crack Up*: "'Of course, all life is a process of breaking down ...' Few phrases resonate in our heads with such a hammer blow ..." (LS 154) For my part, few phrases in *The Logic of Sense*, or, indeed in Deleuze's work as a whole, resonate so strongly as this text from the "Porcelain and Volcano" series:

'Crack' remains a word as long as the body is not compromised by it, as long as the liver and the brain, the organs, do not present the lines in accordance with which the future is told, and which themselves foretell the future. If one asks why health does not suffice, why the crack is desirable, it is perhaps because only by means of the crack and at its edges thought occurs, that anything that is good and great in humanity enters and exits through it, in people ready to destroy themselves—better death than the health which we are given.

(LS 160)

It seems to me that *The Logic of Sense*, not despite but in part because of its emphasis on humor, is Deleuze's great tragic text, charged with the affective character that marks the cusp between death and the affirmation of death as an event. This tonality is what marries Artaud's ferocity with the cupidity of Carroll, and runs through the series of this logic of sense like that fire Deleuze detects in the scholia of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Beneath the systematic exposition of a philosophy of the event runs the quicksilver of that difficult affirmation, *amor fati*. The lack of a trace of this tonality is the other thing that I noticed missing in Bowden's *The Priority of Events*.

But this exceptional study hardly deserves such miserly responses. Instead, Bowden's excellent book deserves to be read and re-read: surely the greatest praise for any book, and praise rarely justly bestowed on a book of scholarship. It is certainly warranted here.

JON ROFFE is a MacKenzie Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Melbourne, and an editor of *Parrhesia*. He is the editor and author of a number of books, most recently *Badiou's Deleuze* (Acumen, 2011) and *Muttering for the Sake of Stars* (Surplus, 2012).

NOTE

1. One important exception exists, to my mind, namely James Williams' *Understanding Poststructuralism*, which devotes a whole chapter to this unfortunately overlooked feature of Deleuze's work. Moreover, Williams also presents what is to my knowledge the only meaningful elaboration of Deleuze as a post-structuralist thinker in this context.

REVIEW

JON ROFFE, *BADIOU'S DELEUZE* (ACUMEN, 2011)

James Williams

I cannot easily resist the guilty pleasure of lingering on a bad review of a good book. If the reviewer also manages to be unwittingly comical while secreting bile, then so much the better. There are few more effective antidotes to life among knaves than witnessing their tumbles. So I was delighted to read Bruno Besana's recent review of Jon Roffe's *Badiou's Deleuze* in *Notre Dame Philosophical Review*¹ just before the deadline for this piece. For the connoisseur, his review is the epitome of the genre, stealthily stirring curdled praise into poisonous dismissal.

My private enjoyment was perhaps tickled best by the curious expression 'analytic fury' used to describe Roffe's style of interpretation. There is of course no fury at all in *Badiou's Deleuze*. Instead, Roffe's careful analysis of Badiou's text in terms of arguments, grounds and implications is labeled as fury solely because it is rigorous, thorough, critical, and based on close analysis of textual evidence. It is only fury if sustained critical analysis that arrives at conclusions we disagree with is somehow seen as extreme. As we shall see, the disproportionate violence is in Besana's reaction to the conclusions, not in Roffe's means to arrive at them.

An affective portrait is perhaps justified when dealing with, say, the relentless pursuit of a whale, but less so when the chase involves a philosophical study of statements and their original sources. Roffe succeeds in giving us the most detailed account of Badiou's many readings of Deleuze, from his more sketchy comments, early and late, to his book-length study in *Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*. The critical edge to this account comes from the cross-examination of Badiou's versions of Deleuze's philosophy alongside the original texts. It is certainly a cautious and painstaking undertaking, the result of many years' investigation, but it is about as furious as a retired vicar pruning roses on a pleasant autumn evening.

Besana adds other strange qualifications around the use of analysis in Roffe's book. Roffe is said to give us a 'deluge' of textual evidence in a 'ferocious' text. For Besana this flood of proof is obviously not fair game for an academic work. Like 'analytic fury', the 'deluge of evidence' is in fact a three-sided sign when deployed by Besana. It designates Roffe's commitment to detailed analysis: something of a compliment. It portrays this virtue as somehow twisted and ill-intentioned: something of an insult. Finally, since there is no fury and little rain in the book, it allows a glimpse of the reviewer's poorly concealed dislike: a comic moment. When combined the three aspects seep into one another. Close analysis becomes suspect and tendentious. The suspicion then justifies the reviewer's dislike. Fortunately, once the trick is revealed, that judgment is shown to be baseless.

In Amis and Amis's classic guide to the inimical review² many basic moves are outlined as the foundations for a successful destruction of a good book. I want to focus on the first and most basic move. It is essential, they say, never to meet the target book on its own ground, while giving the impression of the exact contrary. Like agile musketeers, reviewers must accomplish the difficult pass of moving the action to a site better-suited to their skills and true intentions while maintaining the image of the upright and noble swordsman loyally keeping to the chosen field and its rules.

So how does Besana switch from academic study to fiction? His method is to attribute aims and statements to Roffe that are never stated in his book. This is partly achieved by slippage between single and double quotation marks. A quick reading of the following passages from Besana's review might lead us to believe that Roffe's book is explicitly about Badiou's 'mistakes', 'correct' readings of Deleuze, and Badiou's status as 'sloppy thinker': 'what a 'correct' reading of Deleuze supposedly is'; 'reasons that lead Badiou to such 'mistakes''; and the creation of 'Badiou, the sloppy thinker'. None of these are quotations from Roffe, though, since his original passages are only given in double-quotation marks in Besana's text.

Besana's single quotation marks are in fact only indicators of emphasis. They do not signify direct attribution but are rather underscored invention. The picture of Badiou as sloppy thinker, of an author seeking the only correct reading of Deleuze and of an uncovering of mistakes is strictly Besana's and requires scare quotes exactly because it has no basis in evidence. The slip from correspondence to fiction allows him to combine outrage and a set of tough conclusions about the failure of Roffe's work: 'The point is that this book displays a set of perspectival distortions that make a fictional character of Badiou, at least as strange as the fictional character that Badiou makes of Deleuze.'

The problem is that both characters are manufactured by Besana. Roffe's book has nothing to do with the *figures* of Deleuze or Badiou. It is instead a close study of their *texts* which seeks to track a series of claims, arguments and sources in order to examine a set of conclusions. It would be quite possible to anonymise those texts (candidate A and candidate B) and Roffe's assessments would still hold true. This is not the case for Besana, since he is involved in a much more tendentious form of debate around mythical figures and within a ruthless politics of purification: 'These books are the ones against which we should unleash the most violent, deadly force of polemics, in a fashion analogous to a revolutionary process which—as Badiou states—can only proceed through the construction of a real novelty by identifying and “exterminating” internal adversaries, rather than focusing on external enemies.' Though it is amusing to uncover Besana's devices, it is chilling to witness such naked politicking and inappropriate choice of words.

Roffe's book is exemplary in its scholarship. For instance, unlike many recent works on Deleuze and on Badiou, it has extensive footnotes charting most of the secondary literature in a critical and balanced manner. Roffe justifies each of his claims with careful referencing. He notes differences in possible interpretations and discusses contrasting views. Critical counter-positions and flaws in his own arguments are also given plenty of space. Roffe follows multiple claims and evolving arguments over periods and books, interviews and articles, and within each text. Where there are doubts about his readings, these are raised and addressed. At present, *Badiou's Deleuze* is therefore the definitive account of the statements and arguments at play in the encounter

between the two thinkers. It might displease some that he demonstrates that statements made in Badiou's work find little support in Deleuze's writings. The onus is on them to show where Roffe draws the wrong conclusions. They should do so on the basis of evidence rather than chimera.

JAMES WILLIAMS is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dundee.

NOTES

1. Bruno Besana, *Jon Roffe's Badiou's Deleuze*. Notre Dame Journal of Philosophical Review, 2012:08:12, <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/32607-badiou-s-deleuze-2/>
2. Amis and Amis, *The Dagger Is Mightier Than the Sword*. Rotherhithe: Brutus Press, 1972.