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Preface

This text offers a view – or, perhaps, just an impossible attempt to formulate a view – of the world arising from nothingness not in any process of objective causation and dependencies, but as a consequence of the constitutive feature of life, the ability to differentiate. Referring to it loosely as existential perception might suggest a murmur of *esse est percipi*. But the fact that differentiation must start from something – namely, something undifferentiated – allows to maintain the view of the ultimate objectivity which is not reducible to the vagaries of casual perceptions. The world is not reduced to the subjective experience, yet its structure is relative to the epistemic equipment of the species.

Although occasionally some arguments may appear, the aim is not to convince the reader, let alone, prove anything. If one finds the presented perspective worthwhile, arguments are not necessary, while if one does not, they are never sufficient. The sole aim is to propose a general view of the existential development which is not based on any current scientific concepts but which could show the possibility of forming such concepts, giving them appropriate place in experience. Inquiring thus, apparently, only into the conditions of the experience of the world, we arrive in fact at the basic structure of the experienced world. This structure develops from the indistinct nothingness of the existential origin, through its subsequent differentiation, to the sharp consciousness of the objective world. Incidentally, this process reflects the stages of Neoplatonic emanations. Although no interpretation of classical texts is attempted here, one can hardly resist the impression of a genuine affinity, if not with the specific constructs and declared spirit of Neoplatonism, so with its underlying intuitions and logic. That the proclaimed objectivism of Neoplatonism should not prevent us from recognizing its genuinely anthropomorphic, not to say existential, character, may be taken as an implicit thesis which accompanies this text, without being explicitly argued for.

“In my opinion, to sum it all up, all things that are, are differentiated from the same thing and are the same thing” Diogenes of Apollonia, DK 64B2

Part I

In the beginning ...

1 there was Nothing

If there were nothing to distinguish, there would be nothing distinguished. 1. But something to distinguish is not any ready distinction waiting for being noticed. It is the indistinct, which is thus the ultimate presupposition of distinctions. Being indistinct, it is one, the ultimate One.

A something is always something distinguished. To be is to be distinguished, 2. so the undifferentiated One can be called nothingness. Distinction is what brings something out of nothing.

Every distinction carries the tension between its two aspects: the pure distinction, the mere fact of distinctness, referring it always back to its indistinct origin, and the distinguished content – we can say: the that and the what. But in the primordial distinctions, these two aspects are not yet dissociated.

The first distinction, separating something directly from the One, confronts 3. it with the indistinct and only with the indistinct. This first ontological event is birth and the separated being is an existence. Confrontation is the tension between the born existence and the indistinct.

This confrontation involves immediately further distinguishing, bringing something more out of nothing. Existence is the need and the power of distinguishing. The primordial tension of confrontation, the primordial thirst, results from the fact that existence *is* by being distinguished from the One but its being consists in distinguishing. We might say, its that is the confrontation with the One, not being alone, while its what is the constant circumscription of the boundaries of things, limiting the unlimited, distinguishing the indistinct, and thus removing itself from the One. This

primordial tension at the border between the indistinct One and the world of many, ensuing from birth, defines existence.

4. This tension is not yet any opposition between subject and object. It is only the first, and hence the deepest, germ from which this opposition will develop. Birth establishes confrontation – not with something but with the indistinct One. Confrontation is not an opposition but facing a limit and facing a limit is the same as self-awareness. Self-awareness is awareness of everything one is not, the two are inseparable aspects of one nexus. Self-awareness is awareness of Something (else). Likewise reflexive self-consciousness, the latest form of this confrontation, is consciousness of a particular external object, since consciousness amounts exactly to the awareness of not being that object.¹
5. Existence is thus what makes One be. In-itself, the indistinct is not. But once a distinction found place, the One becomes distinguished from everything which is differentiated. It remains undiminished and unaffected, forever indistinct, above or between the arising distinctions which are not made *in* it but *from* it. But leaving it, they also make it be, distinguish it from their multitude as their ultimate limit. It thus becomes possible to say that One is by not-being, or that it is Being that is not or else non-being that is. But even if playing such word games, we always understand the One as the indistinct which is distinguished against everything differentiated, which is above even this very distinction. Saying that it is not refers to its indistinctness, and saying that it is, to its difference from the existential differentiation.²
6. If somebody wanted to ask about some actually existing cause of One's differentiation, how and why does the One differentiate, we would say that, for the first, we are not offering any explanations. Why? How? – these are questions of common sense and science and we leave them to such agents seeking explanations. The One can be viewed as the indistinct which spawns existence. This definition, however, does not explain anything but merely summarizes what we have said. One does not differentiate, it remains in-

¹So, perhaps, if existence in this primordial state could speak, it would speak in the first person. But it can not speak yet because the primordial distinctions are not precise enough. In particular, the border between the indistinct and the distinguished is not drawn sharply enough to imply a dissociation between the subject and external object. Still, although absent as any epistemic self-reflection, the tension is present as the ontological distinction between the differentiated and the indistinct. Such self-awareness, confrontation with transcendence, with everything one is not, is coextensional with life.

²Saying that existence makes One be, we are not saying that existence creates the world which emerges only with its birth. We are only saying that existence is needed to make One, which is by not-being, into One which is, or else that a particular *experience* of the world is relative to a particular existence. World's "objectivity" is, too, a distinction which existence has to encounter. We will see how it is founded in the One and its withdrawal behind the horizon of all distinctions.

distinct and unaffected by the existential differentiation. It is only existence which differentiates and what it differentiates is not the One but its confrontation with the One. Our starting point is not the One in-itself, but the event of birth. The One is one pole of this event and the existence the other.

2 ... there was only Chaos, the Abyss

Existence is the need and power of distinguishing. We postulate birth as 7. the first distinction, but its primacy concerns only the order of founding, not the order of time. In time, there is no that without what and every birth is accompanied by a host of other, primordial distinctions.

From birth on, all distinctions are relative to the existence. Relativity is not 8. subjectivity but means only that every distinction is made from something by some existence. Distinctions, so to speak, populate the distance *between* the existence and the indistinct. When these two poles become dissociated, they will give rise to two further aspects of every distinction, in addition to those from §2. Distinction is a creation in so far as it presupposes the existence making it, and it is a discovery in so far as it is made from the indistinct. Relativity, this in-between, is the nexus from which the subjective and objective aspect will be dissociated at the level of actuality.

Primordial distinction is not subjective also in a stronger sense: there is no subject of such an event. Looking “from outside”, one might say that the subject is the very existence. But we are exactly trying not to look “from outside”. Such an outside look, conflating subject with existence, would also force identification of subjectivity with relativity. But subject is only the most actual modification of existence and we will encounter it in due time. *In illo tempore*, the only tension is between the indistinct and the differentiated, between nothingness and that which begins to be.

Primordial distinction does not amount to distinguishing x from y , but to 9. circumscribing a limit within which some x may appear. One may think about distinction as a line cutting the indistinct plane in two. But a more appropriate picture is a vague circle, which too cuts the plane in two, but which also sets a limit, confines some content within its boundary. Primordial distinction of x emerges not against another y but against the indistinct background – it limits some content against the unlimited. Distinctions x and y are not related to each other, for relation assumes distinct elements, and the primordial distinctions introduce only the first boundaries of such elements. They are surrounded by other distinctions but this surrounding does not involve any horizontal relations. Their being involves only vertical anchoring in the One, they are still enmeshed in the virtuality of their origin. They are many but this many is not a variety of independent and interrelated

elements. It is One-many, a differentiated analogue of the indistinct unity which remains their immediate horizon, their only counterpart.

10. The primordial distinctions are not of specific, particular things. They are vague and imprecise. One content is not separated from another by any sharp border. Being distinguished, it *is*, it has some form of identity. But it is not any precise, definite self-identity, which would require opposition to other elements of a similar nature. We do not remember anything from the first months of our lives not because we have forgotten anything but because there is nothing specific to remember. Yet, the primordial distinctions of this phase form the basis of the character which will underlie all our later relations to the world. They are primordial nexuses from which more particular elements will be distinguished only later on. And in a nexus, no oppositions or sharp borders obtain. It is a unity where various aspects, different as they may later become, are, in Plotinus word's, opposites that still are not opposed. They, so to speak, flow into each other, not in the temporal sense but in the sense of overflowing any borders, which would be needed to establish some definite entities. They are like waves or stripes of a rainbow – mutually distinct, but without precise lines separating one from another.

This rainbow fills the whole heaven, the waves cover the whole sea. There is no such thing as the first distinction, followed by the second, the third, etc. Such a sequencing, involving their mutual relations, would assume distinctions as already given. Here, there is only the transition from the indistinct to the unlimited multitude of primordial distinctions.

Mutually distinct but unrelated, enmeshed in the original unity but already dispersing it, the primordial distinctions form the second hypostasis, the chaos. It is one and unitary because its immediate surrounding is the indistinct One. But it is already differentiated and so it is One-many.

11. Although in one sense there is now only chaos, nothingness does not disappear behind it. It has never appeared, so it cannot disappear either. But it is and it remains present as the indistinct background, or limit, of the emerging differentiation. The tension between the differentiated and the indistinct is not an opposition of dissociated poles. Chaos is still One or, perhaps, participates in One. But this One begun *to be*: as chaos, by being differentiated, and as the indistinct limit raised above and untouched by this differentiation.
12. This is a general principle which will be observed at all stages. Earlier hypostases give the origin but not the place to the later ones. Limit (of a lower hypostasis) is not simply the horizon beyond which one might proceed if only one walked far enough. It is the background, an element of a different, vertical order, staying above the lower hypostasis. It remains always present: (i) as the ontological origin from which the later hypostasis has arisen, (ii)

as the ontological background on which the later one always rests and, consequently, (iii) as the epistemic precondition of the later one and (iv) as the goal of its thirst and the direction of its striving.

At the level of chaos, we should not speak about thirst or striving, which suggest some subjective feelings or activities. Here, the tension is still only the simple fact of every distinction being anchored directly in the indistinct. But as One remains behind chaos and all subsequent hypostases, its presence will influence also the lowest levels of being, nourishing the thirst of the subject and motivating its acts.

New hypostasis remains thus always anchored in the earlier one, establishing 13. only a new level of being, that is, a new, more sharply differentiated confrontation with the indistinct. It arises by differentiation of some elements which are present at most as aspects of a unitary nexus at the earlier hypostasis. Chaos is the first, differentiated analogue of the One. The chaotic distinctions without mutual relations do not give yet any ground for the experience of time; they emerge as simultaneous. This simultaneity of distinctions, their atemporal co-presence, is the rudimentary spatiality.

The primordial distinctions do not refer to each other but emerge in this 14. spatiality, so to speak, next to each other. Mutuality of distinctions means that every distinction excludes all others. This exclusion is not any specific relation but simple negation: x differs from y as much as from z , simply, by not being the Rest, not being not- x . This is the form of rudimentary reference which every distinction carries to its background. Although the background can be thus thought as differentiated, it is still only not- x , it remains still in its virtual indistinctness. This reference harbours the potential of later, more specific cross-references. But at the moment no structure of a sign, of one thing pointing to another, is present. What of the primordial distinctions are only the first germs of differentiated beings. Consequently, there is not only no difference between subject and object but also none between the thing and its appearance. What emerges is what is and it is as it emerges. The tension between every distinction and the indistinct reminds, however, of a structure of a sign. We refer to it as the virtual signification.

It would be thus too early to speak about truth in any sense presupposing 15. the distinction between the thing and its appearance. But one might speak about truth of the primordial distinctions in the sense of the absence of any such distinction. Distinctions between contents of a given level will be called horizontal. The truth of primordial distinctions amounts to the lack of such horizontal distinctions, in particular, of the distinction between the appearing and the appearance. But as we have the vertical distinction between the chaos and the One, their vertical untruth might be taken as the fact that, being differentiated, they cannot possibly capture the indistinct.

This is another general principle. Subsequent hypostasis, arising by dif-

ferentiating some aspects of earlier nexuses, can never capture the earlier one in its own terms. It can only approximate it. In epistemic terms, this means the impossibility of capturing the original by means of any more specific image, of reducing the prior unity to any totality of lower elements. In ontological terms, however, this means that being of the lower level is founded in something which, transcending it, remains most intimately present.

16. Self-awareness, this germ of subjectivity becomes differentiated, too, though it is not yet any multitude of self-conscious acts. It is only the confrontation with the pure limit of the One which becomes now a confrontation with the chaotic multitude. And who is thus confronted? In a sense it is, as it always will be, the unique and unitary existence. But this uniqueness and unity of existence rests exclusively in its birth from the One. Now, One becomes – or rather gives rise to – chaos but it does so only through the existential differentiation. The two are not dissociated yet and the existential differentiation is the same as the chaos emerging from the One. (This is only another way of saying that primordial distinctions are true, having no horizontal counterparts, and false, leaving their origin.) The confrontation is thus of the One, which became chaos, with the One which remains the indistinct origin. It is the same confrontation as in §4, now refined as the confrontation of the existential differentiation with its indistinct horizon. It happens, as everything else, “within” the horizon of the One, just like all subsequent differentiation will happen surrounded by the horizon of chaos.

3 ... was the Word

17. No definite entities emerge with chaos since there are no definite borders within it. Primordial distinctions arise only against the One and not against each other. If we were to speak here about x differing from y , it could be only in the sense that x simply excludes everything it is not, in particular, y . This difference between x and everything else, the virtual signification which every distinction carries to the Rest, is the only form of mutual relation between various contents of chaos.

The next level is marked by the emergence of more specific relations between various contents, which both condition and are conditioned by their more precise circumscription. Just like x is not the Rest, it is not any other y which inhabits this, now differentiated, Rest. x points indiscriminately to this Rest, but as the Rest becomes more precisely differentiated, x may start pointing more definitely to an y than to some other z .

18. 4-month-old babies were habituated to a rod which moved back and forth behind an occluder, so that only the top and the bottom of the rod was visible, Figure I.1.A. On subsequent trials the babies were shown two test

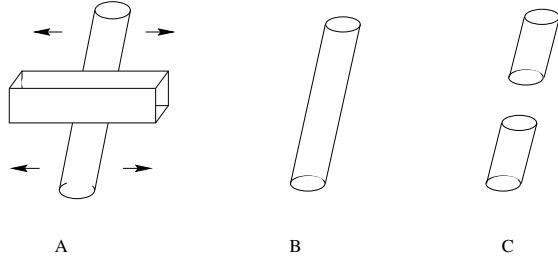


Figure I.1: Object completion

displays without the occluder: one, *B*, being a complete rod, the other, *C*, being the top and the bottom parts, with a gap where the occluder had been. The babies spent more time looking at the two rod pieces. Babies younger than 4-months, however, perceive the complete rod as novel. One is willing to interpret it in the obvious way. For younger babies two pieces of an occluded rod in common motion are just two separate pieces pointing nowhere else except to everything they are not. One, complete rod is then a surprise. For the 4-month-old infants, on the other hand, they do point to each other, so that two unoccluded separate pieces appear surprising. The original common motion of an occluded rod leads to object completion – perception of one moving object, which itself is not given in its entirety.

Actually given *x* points towards a specific not-actual *y*. This pointing refines 19. the signification which any primordial distinction carries to (its) Rest. For the first, the Rest is now differentiated into mutually distinct contents. And, most significantly, the given *x* is not only distinguished but actually appears. It appears against the background of other distinctions which are not given in the same way. In the example, the unoccluded pieces of the rod are sensed, while one rod is perceived or, as phenomenologists might say, filled in, *gemeint*. One rod is recognized, appears by the juxtaposition of the immediately given and something not so given, its *gemeint* completion.

The fundamental distinction, constitutive for the current level, is between that which is actual and all that is not. This distinction emerges through the relations which one element carries to various, but not all, other elements. Actuality is the horizon within the chaotic manifold where some contents are recognized, obtaining thus a special place. They are “closer” than others, they are here-and-now. To appear is to enter the horizon of actuality. But the appearing contents are not dissociated from those staying behind the horizon. The rod is, in fact, not given completely. It enters the horizon of actuality only by means of some of its aspects. One rod appears as the common motion of the unoccluded pieces or, which here still amounts to

the same, two pieces appear as one rod. Every appearance has these two aspects of the immediately given and of that which accompanies or completes it beyond the givens. We could say: the mere appearance is a sign of the appearing whole.

20. Appearing, which is thus always appearing-as, is the primary structure of a sign. But the sign does not yet appear *as* a sign. Therefore, saying that one rod appears through two pieces and that two pieces appear as one rod is still the same. The appearance and the appearing are already differentiated but are not yet dissociated. There is no experienced distance between them and they remain still in one nexus, which only begins to carry the tension between the actual and the non-actual, the appearance and the appearing.
21. Non-actual is everything falling outside the horizon of actuality. It is not merely a totality of distinctions which happen to be not-actual. Some not-actual contents, which remain “close” enough to the actual ones, can be still present as relatively sharply delineated. This “closeness” is what makes one rod *actually* appear through the common motion of two unoccluded pieces. Other contents dissolve gradually in the concentric circles of diminishing sharpness meeting, eventually, the horizon of chaos. In this way, chaos acquires the rudimentary structure, centered around the horizon of actuality, which we call experience.

Just like indistinct is inaccessible through the distinctions of chaos, so chaos is experientially inaccessible since experience is exactly the structure imposed in chaos. But it remains present as the limit of experience, as the background against which and the origin from which the hypostasis of experience emerges.

22. The tension between actuality and non-actual is the tension between the character of a designated place, possessed by the former, and the differentiated but unstructured character of the latter. Actuality, here-and-now is not yet any temporal nor spatial location. But as a designated place, it carries the spatio-temporal character of a locality, of being surrounded (by non-actual), from which time and space will emerge.

So far, its designated character consists only in circumscribing the horizon of appearances. It is the place where things appear from the chaotic *materia prima*.³ The limit which non-actual sets around actuality gives the latter its discernibly bounded scope. This scope may be impossible to determine in objective terms but, relying on the intuitive understanding of the word, we would not call actual anything of a significant spatio-temporal

³As usual, one should not dissociate various aspects entering the description. It is not to be understood objectively, as if things resided elsewhere and entered the horizon of actuality only by accident. Actuality, appearance and the appearing are aspects of one nexus and neither functions without the others. Objective being of the appearing things is a different matter to which we will return in the next section.

extension. What appears “fits” into the limited horizon of actuality and the usual examples will be of particular things like a rod, a table, a piece of chalk. This “small size” of the appearing things reflects the narrowness of the horizon of actuality. Its even further narrowing to immediacy is marked by the emerging distinction between the appearance and the appearing. Two sensed pieces and one appearing rod are no longer the same – the former are immediately given while the latter is only actually appearing. This narrowing amounts to the increased precision of the drawn distinctions. The most precise ones are those which can be drawn by a single act in the immediate vicinity – without any distance separating the distinction from the distinguished. A precise distinction or concept is one which can be thus captured in the immediacy of a single act without leaving anything outside.

This increased precision is the same as the increased sharpness of the distinction between the immediately given and the not so given but, at most, only *gemeint*. This distinction between the immediate and the actual, between the appearance and the appearing, has been also called the distinction between the actual and the not-actual. The terminological confusion is to some extent intended because all these aspects arise from the nexus of actuality. In particular, the not-actual is of the same character as the actual – it only is not given *now*, is not immediate. 23.

As aspects of the horizon of actuality, they contribute to the more definite circumscription of this site of actual appearances and its opposition to everything lying outside of it, the non-actual. Narrowing the non-actual contents to the actual appearances involves also emergence of a subject, that is, its more definite dissociation from the appearing contents. An object, captured and enclosed within the horizon of actuality, becomes more remote from its background. We might say, the distance separating the two becomes longer, though this is only a figure of speech indicating the sharpness of the distinction. As the eventual background is the existential limit of the indistinct, the object becomes thus more remote from the existence. This increased distance is the same as the increased tension of awareness and self-awareness. We can start speaking now about consciousness of specific objects and the associated self-consciousness. Consciousness is actuality brought to the sufficient level of dissociation from the non-actual, it is the distance separating actuality from non-actual. It is an aspect of the identification of sufficiently precise objects which appear in separate acts. Consciousness is actual through and through, it encounters always and only an actual object of which it is conscious. But such an encounter is nothing else than the immediate self-consciousness, the consciousness of the actual appearance not being the same as the appearing, of the act not coinciding with its object, of the object slipping out of the actual grasp and receding into the transcendence beyond the horizon of immediacy. Self-consciousness

is a further refinement of self-awareness, of confrontation with something one is not. Now, this something has become a specific object. By the same token, the opposite pole becomes only a specific act of consciousness. The separation of subject and object has entered the stage. Their further refinement will be followed under the next heading.

4 Reflection

24. There is only a small step from the separation of actuality and non-actuality described above to their full dissociation. Dissociation is the stage of distinction at which the distinguished aspects appear as independent. An object acquires such an independence when it is not only identified but when it is, so to speak, cut out of its background and given 'on its own'.

Walking around in a house, you are aware of its space, different rooms, colour of the walls, various pieces of furniture. But all these, although distinct and recognised are, so to speak, meshed into a continuous whole of the experience. And then you catch yourself staring at one piece of furniture. You stare at this cupboard and as you do it, it loses its earlier character of being just an aspect, identified yet in a sense indifferent, of the whole room. Being in the focus, it gains importance of being on its own. Sure, its surroundings, the whole room, the whole house are still present, but the cupboard has been pulled out of the room and is experienced in a new way. It has been doubled: you experience the fact of its being merged with the background, of being there and – simultaneously – you re-cognise its particular status of a dissociated entity, which your reflection found there (in its form, perspective, colour, solidity, what not...), but found there only through its own act of dissociation. The two are the same but also the latter repeats the former, is the continuity of the former represented in the discontinuity of a single act. Reflection comes always 'too late', it comes always after its object. This after does not express any temporal order but merely the fact that representation repeats the experienced object by drawing a contour around it, which does not merely distinguishes but also dissociates it from the surrounding experience.

25. Thus it is not a repetition in the usual sense of recurrence of the same for the second time. Yet, repetition as recurrence is founded on the possibilities opened up by the primordial reflective repetition. The latter is not confronted by the problem of "how do I know that this is really a repetition of *the same thing*?" Starting with the ready made things, with the objects dissociated by reflective experience, the possibility of repetition presents a mystery. And one need not go as far as the possibly infinite series of repetitions – a single repetition, recurrence of *one and the same* thing only *twice*, is already something mysteriously ideal. This mystery of sameness along

the temporal line is but an example of the problem of identity when one tries to account for it starting with the dissociated actualities as the primary items. It is, in fact, the same problem as one faces whenever representation is assumed to be some ‘internal image’ of an external object. Although no temporality is involved here, there are dissociated items: the object and its image. The questions about the relation between the two, about the sense in which one is an image *of* the other, remain perplexing when dissociated aspects are taken as the primary elements.

The original repetition is not any ontic double but merely a sharp contour 26. drawn around recognised contents. It dissociates from the differentiated experience its particular aspect, *an* experience. This event does not involve two independent entities but two different perspectives on one and the same. In particular, it happens within the horizon of actuality and so there is, as yet, no way to talk about ‘second time’. The primordial after is not temporal. Neither there is any duplication of things – it is the same experienced simultaneously from two angles, from two different levels. We can visualise it marking the recognised content by the darker area in the flow of experience and the actual sign by the line carving the actual representation, Figure I.2. Representation in the more common sense is but a sharpened,

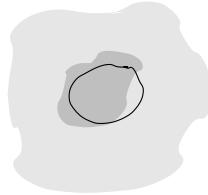


Figure I.2: Recognition and representation

more explicit, version of this primordial representation. It is built from dissociated elements and, in particular, presupposes something *of which* it is a representation as already given, that is, dissociated. To be represented, this something must be already more or less definitely dissociated from other objects and, in particular, from its representation. Our representation is the event of this primal dissociation. Thus dissociated units found then also the possibility (in fact, the need) of representation in the more common sense, of one dissociated thing by another, in short, of abstract signs.

Such signs emerge along with the reflective dissociation. They are not merely 27. signs which are merged in experience with the signified objects. They do not only function as signs but are also given *as* signs. The difference between the repeating and the repeated, between the sign and the signified belongs to their appearance.

The act of reflection dissociates this cupboard from the rest of experience as an independent object. It singles out a unit which fills the horizon of actuality with the exclusion of everything else. The special status of the object is not only its actuality, as was the case already at the previous level, but its independence from the Rest. Dissociation is, so to speak, tearing it out of experience. This gives its object the character of an entity independent from other entities.

The independence of reflected object has also another aspect. The object of reflection has already been experienced and recognised, while now it appears as independent also from experience. The more intensely I try to grasp the cupboard by my attentive look, the more it loses its real presence and gives place to the domination of the reflective attention, becomes a *mere* representation. It comes from the background of experience which reflection dissociates into a totality of other objects, so that the actual object is no longer anchored in the flow of experience but becomes merely related to other, dissociated elements. This modification of experience turns the actual object into an element merely related to others and, at the same time, its actual appearance into a dissociated sign which is merely related to its object in an equally external and almost artificial fashion. Dissociation of experience into experiences is, at the same time, dissociation of every object from its actual appearance. In a *mere* representation the actual sign is no longer only an aspect of the actual object but becomes itself an independent object, only related to the object it represents. The object no longer coincides with the sign through which it appears and the sign, the drawn contour, appears *as a sign*, as a *mere* sign. If representation ever coincides with the recognition, it happens only with the most immediate contents captured precisely within the horizon of actuality, for which one used to look among sensations or clear and distinct ideas. But in so far as it is a sign, it always indicates the background transcending its immediacy and in so far as it does it *as a sign*, it makes clear also the distance separating it from its object, their non-coincidence. This non-coincidence is the other dimension of dissociation involved in representation.

The original representation, dissociating the actual object from non-actual, carves *an* experience from experience, endowing the object with independence from the background *and* from its sign. This double dissociation – of something from the background and, at the same time, from its appearance – refines that from §23 and characterizes the reflective representation as distinct from earlier recognitions and distinctions. We will refer to it as externalisation. Reflection externalises: it is not only aware of a distinct object but is aware of it *primarily as distinct*. The sharp contour, dissociating the object from the surrounding, dissociates it also from its appearance. This double dissociation is the constitutive feature of reflective representation.

4.1 Subject – object

The experience of externality is a new discovery founding the whole hypothesis of reflective being. Even if one wanted to claim that such a non-coincidence happens from the very first distinctions, the new aspect of reflection is that now it may be not only postulated on the basis of objectivistic assumptions, but that it is actually *experienced*.²⁸

The second aspect of externalisation, dissociation of an object from its appearance, gives rise to the opposition between subject and object. The actual appearance marks the subjective pole of the event and the externalised content its objective pole. The recession of the appearing beyond the appearance towards the horizon of experience and distinctions is the trace of the objectivity of this objective pole. This may require a few more words.

Externality of objects is not, of course, to be taken in any spatial sense. It means only their experienced remoteness, which is the vertical distance from their origin. It has nothing to do with objectivity. A minute sensation of pain is also external in this sense. It is not mine, it happens at a particular point of my body and stays located there even in the reaction triggered by the peripheral nervous system. By its narrow minuteness, it is not mine – I only feel it, but it is alien, external.

Thus, an actual – and even more, an immediate – appearance is external. Many of such appearances would be called subjective. For subject is the signifying pole of an act, the mere *fact* of the sign appearing *as* a sign. Whenever a sharp contour around an experienced content is drawn, the sign appears as distinct from its content. This sharp contour is the subjective contribution to experience. The actual subject is the place, or better, the event of this contribution to non-coincidence.

Subject thus understood is not any substantial entity. It is only the actuality: of sensation, of an act of *cogito* – not any sentient being performing such acts. It is the ultimate, most minute actualisation of awareness, its narrowing to the horizon of immediacy which reflects the corresponding narrowing of the objective pole to the graspable, immediate contents.

So far, externality might seem to coincide with subjectivity but it does not because also objective appearances are external. Any particular object, any content inscribed fully within the horizon of actuality appears, by this very token, as external. Things appear external because they can be grasped, not because they can not. The fact of their *incomplete* inscription reflects their anchoring beyond the horizon of actual appearances, their slipping out of the horizon of actuality. This amounts to their objectivity. Perception of one rod through the common motion of two unoccluded pieces, gives its appearance an objective character. As Husserl observed, the mark of objectivity is the mere fact of not being reducible to actual appearance, of hiding something²⁹.

beyond it.

Saying that an object appears fully inscribed within the horizon of actuality and, at the same time, that it appears incompletely may seem contradictory. Full inscription can be taken in two different senses. On the one hand, it can mean that the object is reduced to its mere appearance, to its immediate sign, and this is the meaning we would usually associate with this phrase. As such it excludes any incompleteness and objectivity. But, more generally, by full inscription we mean that not only the actual appearance is external but that so is also the object itself, namely, that its sides slipping out of the horizon of appearance have also external character. For instance, the back side of a house seen from the front is not anything essentially different from the front which one is beholding. We confirm the correctness of our perception of the house by walking around and *actually* seeing its back side, seeing that it is not merely a movie decoration but, indeed, has walls on the sides and on the back. An external object is what, appearing incompletely, can be thus completed by further actual observations or analyses. Its appearance within the horizon of immediacy amounts to its externality, while its potentially actual aspects hidden, for the moment, behind this horizon – its objectivity. The object as a whole is external in so far as its objectivity, its actually hidden aspects, are reducible to external appearances. An external object appears thus fully, with all sides being reducible to actual appearances, and yet incompletely, because not all its sides are actually given.

Let us note that ‘slipping out of the horizon of actuality’ is not always the same as simply hiding other not-actual sides, sides which although are not actual now, can be such at some other time. The designation “not-actual” refers only to such aspects, while “non-actual” comprises all aspects falling outside the horizon of actuality. The latter contains, along with the former, also aspects which never can be made actual in any way. For there are things which can not possibly be completed by any series of acts and observations. Reflection over love, friendship, God, the world, does not leave any reasonable hope that the missing aspects could ever be determined yielding a complete notion of the thing. The object of such a reflection does not only happen accidentally to slip out of the actual representation, but appears as slipping essentially out of any possible representation. Its missing aspects are not parts which might be actually observed if only we walked far enough. They are, so to speak, of a different order. This is the way of appearance of objects which are not just external and transcendent only horizontally, or quantitatively, but which transcend the subjective actuality vertically, qualitatively. They are never experienced as external for their actual manifestation is always recognised *as* manifestation only, *as* only a possible actual sign of something which is essentially greater than any actual appearance. They are present in experience but, belonging to a higher hypostasis, can

never be captured by the lower representations. When we think them, we can only grasp their various aspects and form ever new, complex, conceptual totalities. But their unity eludes reflective representations. Such objects (which are not objects) are internal, not in the sense of being mere representations (which they are not), but in the sense of being intimately personal, of not being externalizable by objective representation as complexes of visible features. In this sense, internal objects, transcending not only accidentally but essentially the horizon of subjective appearances and actions, can be taken as genuinely objective.

The opposition subject–object has thus two aspects. The first is the horizontal relation between two actual elements: the actually given appearance and the sides which, although not-actual now, can be actual at another time. Subjectivity holds its actual sign ‘fixed’ and sees it only *as* an appearance of this or that object. When speaking about subject, we usually refer to this aspect. The second one anchors subject in the deeper layers of its being confronting it with vertically transcendent objects. Here, it is the internal object which is ‘fixed’ and only appears *as*, or through, the actual sign. 30.

The former establishes the horizontal, or merely quantitative, transcendence of an object. It refers the actual signs to others which are equally actual, though not actual now. As such, its limit is only potential, and one can hardly find any correlate of the feeling of such a transcendence as long as one takes actuality as the only primitive notion: the limit of possibilities is not actually given. But the awareness of such a horizontal limit is only a reflection of self-awareness, of the vertical transcendence. It is present, that is, it is experienced, though only as transcending actuality. An internal object is not only a potential limit of actual completions, but is experienced as present, yet residing beyond its actual appearance. This transcendence is not any ideal limit of mere progression of actual appearances, but an aspect accompanying every such appearance. It is present as the invisible origin of the actual manifestation which transcends the externality of actual appearances.

The limit, or the beginning, of such essential non-actuality, of presence which never appears, is the One. The objectivity of an appearance amounts to its anchoring in non-actuality, terminating the trace which leads eventually to the One. Objectivity of external objects, transcendence of their not-actual sides beyond the horizon of actuality, is only a reflection of this internal objectivity, of the unity prior to the reflective dissociations. Ultimately, it is the One which founds objectivity, this indefinable feeling which forever refuses any attempts to reduce reality to mere appearances. The One itself never appears, is never actually given, yet it is the origin of all actuality. Forever hiding beyond every actual appearance, it is the objectivity which precedes everything objective.

4.2 Language

31. The distance between the reflective appearance and the appearing object, their relative independence, amounts to the inherent inadequacy of reflective representations. They cannot possibly grasp the internal objects of higher hypostases and can grasp the external ones only by laborious and complex elaborations. This inherent inadequacy founds the possibility of cognitive mistakes, mismatch between the subjective conceptions and the “outside world”, as well as various subjective aberrations. Likewise, reflective sign, appearing *as* a sign, that is, accompanied by the awareness of its inadequacy, founds the possibility of misuse, like all kinds of lies and deceptions. At the same time, this dissociation carries also the potential of creative freedom, phantasy, planning and symbolic manipulation. It is only because signs are dissociated from what they signify, that they can function in a relative independence from the “world”. Only because they can be inadequate, they can also enrich actual situations with elements which, although present, are not actually given.
32. The dissociation of sign and signified is well visible in the ‘as’ structure, pertaining to every appearance, §20. Seeing something *as* something is a relation and, as such, founded in the prior dissociation. Seeing *x* as *y* is possible only because *x* and *y*, being dissociated, can be put into a mutual relation. Primarily, ‘as’ is a reflection of a variety of aspects of one nexus. Although we now see *x* as *y*, on other occasions we could also see it as *z*. One can view love *as* sacrifice and *as* liberation and *as...*; friendship *as* obligation and *as* gratification and *as...* It is no coincidence that all such aspects, contrary as they might be, are joined by “and” – they are only possible manifestations of a unitary nexus which remains the same behind its distinct manifestations.

In more mundane examples, one can see a duck-rabbit drawing *as* a duck or *as* a rabbit, one can see the drawing  *as* a glass cube or *as* a solid angle or *as* a wire frame or... We notice the difference: various ‘as’ are now joined by “or” for, indeed, one cannot see it as *both* a glass cube *and* a solid angle. In the previous example, the nexus friendship could be seen *as* various specific manifestations. Here the situation is inverted. It is the actual sign, the drawing, which remains fixed and can be seen *as* (representing) various things. Sign as a sign, having acquired independence from its function and meaning, has become itself an object. It has become dissociated from its signification and can now represent different objects, depending only on *as what* one sees it.⁴ The extreme cases of such a dissociation are pure

⁴We do not, of course, postulate any ontological category of signs in-themselves. Any particular can function as a sign and the fact that it does is not conditioned by its inherent properties but merely by the context and relation to other elements. In one context

formalisms, like inference systems in mathematical logic. Symbolic manipulation is governed here exclusively by the syntactic rules independent from possible meanings and arbitrary interpretations are admitted, as long as they respect the rules of manipulation.

This difference, between one nexus appearing as various actualisations versus 33. one sign representing various objects, signals the new status and independence acquired by abstract signs. The correlated sedimentation of some residual distinctions in the literal meaning of abstract signs, amounts then to the emergence of the system of language. As such a system, abstract signs acquire a new stability which becomes relatively independent from the stability of the distinctions of experience. This independence is reflected in the distinction between the literal meaning of a word, the mere kernel of meaning, sedimented and carried independently of its actual usage, and the actual or contextual meaning, which is the set of distinctions (and identifications are also distinctions) effected in an actual situation by the use of the word. The indeterminacy of words' meanings is a reflection of the inherent inadequacy of the precise, reflective signs. There are no precise borders separating the meanings of many words because the respective distinctions may not be drawn precisely. Moreover, just like distinctions occur only in a system so do words. "Tree" means tree only when "bush" means bush and "trunk" means trunk. This indeterminacy finds also expression in the distinction literal-contextual. Attempts to define the literal meanings may yield better or worse dictionaries, but never exhaust the potential of applications. For this meaning is never finally determined and contextual usage, resting on the literal meaning, contributes not only to its sedimentation but also transformation.

We should not confuse the creative power of distinctions and signs with the 34. power of language, but we should not deny the latter any possible power either.

The power of primordial distinctions is the same as their inherent truth. They do not know any difference between what is distinguished and the way it is distinguished, between the thing and appearance. Their creative power consists in bringing forth the first elements of beings and is completely different from any power language might have over experience. A rose called by any other name is still a rose. A primordial distinction, on the other hand, brings forth only what it distinguishes and what it distinguishes can be brought forth only by this distinction. As the first seeds in the indistinct soil, the primordial distinctions cannot fail to "tell the truth", for they tell

smoke is the sign of fire, in another, fire signals the expected smoke. We only notice the dissociation of actuality into two aspects, both characterised functionally rather than substantially: the one being immediately given but functioning merely as an announcement of another, which is not so given.

the very first things, from which the difference between the said and the spoken of, between untruth and truth will only develop. This is the way in which Adam enlivens things and animals, and God gives men souls – by naming them. This is also the way in which first distinctions are articulated by a child. Acquisition of the first language(s) proceeds along with the process of differentiation in which no difference is given between the word and the signified content. Both emerge simultaneously and words are not merely attached to earlier distinguished things but are the signs through which things appear for the first time. “Mom” can mean ‘Help!', ‘I like it', ‘mother', and a host of other things which reason prevents us from guessing – the nexus of supportive presence has not yet been dissociated but is already distinguished from others. “Like daddy” can mean ‘I love my daddy', while “Like ice” ‘Now, I would like an ice-cream' but the two kinds of ‘liking' can still be in the same nexus which is only vaguely distinguished from others. The often funny and confused language usage by a child seems to reflect, at least up to some stage, the corresponding confusion in the distinctions structuring the child's world.

35. Not less importantly, the structure of the language suggests and deeply influences the structure of the world into which a child grows. Growing up into a language which has only one word for, say, both “pain” and “suffering”, one would probably tend to identify the two and, in any case, reflective establishment of the distinction would take much longer time and might appear as a deep discovery. If eighteen or so Hebrew words for different shades of purity get translated by the same Greek word “*katharos*”, then the meaning of the Old Testament must undergo some changes. The mechanism of such an influence can be exemplified by some differences between languages.

Slavic languages provide almost unlimited possibilities for modifying the nouns by means of suffixes – not only to form chains of diminutives, but also to indicate features and impressions of things, as if stretching and comprising the stem, which in many other languages would require unbearable series of adjectives.⁵ Most nouns can be turned, or dissolved, by such means into adjectives. The ontology, the collection of identities, seems to dissolve in a landscape of grades, variations and qualities without any definite and final substances. In Germanic languages, the opposite operation is much more frequent and standardized: one forms nouns from adjectives (the suffix -ness in English, -heit in German). This suggests a more substance-oriented ontology. Moreover, a language like German, where the etymological connections between words are still very tight, but variations less flexible, where the formation of compound words (in particular, of nouns, practically absent in

⁵In Polish, for instance, “ptak” is a bird, “ptaszek” a small bird, “ptaszyna” an even smaller one, “ptasior” is a rather large and ugly, possibly dangerous bird, “ptaszydlo” is a particularly repulsive “ptasior”, etc.

Slavic languages) seems to reflect the structure of entities, will suggest ontology of structured hierarchies and systematic relations of basic entities, and by the same token, emphasize the division between the natural and the rational, between the given and the constructed. A language like English, finally, a mere collection of words from multilingual sources, which provide great flexibility, but where expressions of very closely related phenomena remain often etymologically and morphologically unrelated, will suggest ontology of minute, mutually independent elements. The identities are instinctively established here in terms of dissociated atoms, as unrelated as the respective words.

More specifically consider, for example, the word for ‘reality’. For the first, its very presence in a language indicates a distinction (underlying every word) between that which falls within its designation and that which does not. Its lack in a language would suggest a fundamentally different approach to the things which do not fall into two distinct categories of real and unreal. Given its presence, we are asking about its folk-etymology, that is, associations which subconsciously accompany its usage. We are not asking for any genuine etymology. It is the superficial, pseudo-etymological or even merely phonetic associations, rather than the true etymology, which may influence a child long before it might start studying linguistics.

English “reality” gives hardly any associations. One could certainly think of Latin origins from “res” but these are too advanced considerations for us. It is but another word, as unrelated to “house” as to “thing” or “activity”. The conceptual correlate, something like the definition of reality in Merriam-Webster dictionary: “something that is neither derivative nor dependent but exists necessarily”, reflects some philosophical view but not any deeper linguistic connections.

German “Wirklichkeit” is an entirely different matter. It is bound to be associated, unconsciously and often consciously, with “Wirkung”, “wirken”, etc. “Wirklichkeit” is something that acts, works, is efficacious, it is a power rather than a thing or a state. “The world of the real is a world in which this acts on that, changes it and again experiences reactions itself and is changed by them. [...] Something entirely and in every respect inactive would be unreal and non-existent for us.”⁶ Spoken by a true philosopher of language.

Polish “rzeczywistość” brings immediately associations with “rzeczy” – “things”. The suffix “-istość” has no inherent meaning, but is used to form nouns and may easily lead a layman to something like “istność”/“istnienie” – “being”/“existence”. Thus, ‘reality’ seems to be the state or order of things, something given rather than acting, and acting only in the way ‘being’ acts – by simply being.

Could we not dare to look here for some grounds of the differences not only 36.

⁶G. Frege, *The thought: a logical inquiry*.

between the national characters but also between the philosophical schools dominating the spheres of different language groups? Just as it was argued that Aristotle's ontology, if not whole metaphysics, was firmly grounded in the structure of the Greek language, so English suggests empirical atomism, German – the tension between the given and the constructed, French – equal precision of the material and the spiritual, Polish – the dissolution of the ontological in the existential.⁷ Each language has its mood and quality, not to say metaphysics, which, to some extent, can be traced to its grammar, morphology and etymology. Vague and abstract distinctions will be usually drawn across different, though hardly disjoint, semantic fields. Some languages are richer than some others, providing more flexible, varied or succinct forms of expression. But in spite of all such differences (reflected also in the indeterminacy of translation), different human languages have approximately the same differentiating and unifying power. In general, the distinctions expressible in one language can be reflected (even if sometimes only clumsily) in another. After all, and in spite of indeterminacy, translation is possible, and so is communication between persons with vastly different lingual backgrounds.

37. The claim that language contributes to the ways in which we experience the world can hardly be denied. But claiming that it determines all our experience would be like claiming that the lack of names for many colours and their shades makes also experiencing their actual differences impossible. The identities and distinctions sedimented in language express roughly the average relevance and the cultural background. They are passed as pragmatic guidelines, but they *never determine* the range of the possible experiences of identity and difference. Although language provides means of solidifying distinctions, contributing thus implicit assumptions to culture and even philosophy, its contribution is only statistical and determines at most the average common-sense. Language represents only the mass mind. It is founded in the distinctions and identities which are established prior to their linguistic sedimentation, which are more fundamental and wider than all signs, not only the linguistic ones.⁸

⁷Curiously enough, structures of the Hopi language described in B. L. Whorf, *An American Indian model of the universe*, represent striking analogies, one could say, linguistic equivalents of some central aspects of our philosophy.

⁸Quotations used merely as particularly accurate formulations of the presented thoughts are not marked in the text, but can be found in the list at the end. The just noted relation between language and the mass mind, for instance, originates from B. L. Whorf, *The relationship of habitual thought and behavior to language*. It may be worth emphasizing here that we are not maintaining Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (mis)interpreted as linguistic determinism. We only acknowledge the deep and hidden import of language, its possible influence, which is the more determining, the fewer languages a person knows and the less reflected he is.

The structure of the world we live in is the structure of distinctions we make 38. from the indistinct. But this is not the same as the structure of language which comprises only some dissociated, abstract signs. The indeterminacy of their contextual meanings reflects language's intimate involvement in experience, where new and passing distinctions may motivate creative and unconventional use of words. This, too, is language's power but the power it draws *from* experience, by submitting to it. The power of language *over* experience is due to its autonomy and independent stability and can be likened to the power of an institution over an individual. As such an institution, providing the means of drawing distinctions and organising their chaos, the first language contributes to the creation of the world. It comes to a child as naturally as the world does, for learning it is learning the world, is the emergence of the world for the first time. Growing into a language, we are guided by it in distinguishing things according to the literal meanings sedimented in its vocabulary and to the ways of its usage.

This power is as real and as limited as a power of an institution over an individual. It is the greater, the more conformist and lazy the person is. But it is never absolute. All distinctions originate beyond the horizon of actuality, and the power of the dissociated signs over them reflects only the degree of limitations to the subjective dimension of existence. This is the power of stopping the flow – whether of vague, internal objects, of unclear intuitions or of whimsical, external wishes – by freezing its aspects in the dissociated immediacy of a sign. Representation draws a sharp contour around its object, a word makes it more definite and stable. Describing and naming things, we pull them out of the flux of experience, lending them definiteness and stability of the words. An insignificant whim may quickly disappear but when noticed, reflected as *this* and named “whim”, it changes the status, becomes something of importance, something doomed to be remembered, if not in person, then under the stable sign of its name. In addition, naming a thing can also lend it some features belonging to the literal meaning of the word which may be hidden or even absent from the experience. It can modify the experience adjusting it to the associations dictated by the language.

Granting all such power to the language, we will not confuse it with the 39. power of distinctions which can be drawn independently from it. Imprisoning distinctions in their descriptions stops the flow but only at the lowest hypostasis of the actual, reflective being. At the higher levels, distinctions still flow and flow into each other, no matter by what names the subject captures them in a system of dissociated signs. The flow is not, of course, temporal. The higher hypostasis, the more constant its contents. And just like every higher nexus can appear *as* different actual manifestations, so the unchangeable eternity of the origin has no unique, proper linguistic expres-

sion. Every actuality is its sign. The only question is whether we see the actual sign merely as an abstract sign of some other actuality or also as a living sign of eternity.

40. The statement that the power of language reflects the degree of limitation to the subjective aspect of existence may provoke immediate objections. For language is inter-subjective, it transcends subject's privacy. The institution simile signals also this inter-subjective aspect. The use of language is always personal but its literal meanings reside in inter-subjective structures. Inter-subjectivity, however, is still subjectivity, only multiplied. Seeing a tree when feeling dizzy, you can see it distinctly but dizziness makes you wonder: perhaps it is only a hallucination? So you ask the accompanying person and his confirmation makes you more confident that the tree indeed is 'there'. As Davidson says, it takes two to triangulate, and this analogy to the three-dimensional vision attempts to reduce objectivity to inter-subjectivity. But *both* of you could be dizzy and hallucinating. If no objectivity were given to every one of you, such a consensus would never establish it. For objectivity is there already from the beginning and only its indefinable sense makes one wonder if what one is seeing actually is 'there'. No triangulation could place this wonder into one's head. At most, it could make one wonder if the other person also sees the same tree one is seeing.

Inter-subjectivity does not account for objectivity. Two subjective appearances, whether for one or for two subjects, remain subjective. What may transcend the subjective actuality is the relation between these two appearances, the fact that they are appearances of the same thing. This signals transcendence beyond the actual appearance and, as we have seen, marks the objectivity of external thing. Multiplicity of subjects does not add anything to this structure. If a single subject were not able to see distinct signs as appearances of the same object, more subjects would not endow him with this capacity either. Inter-subjectivity may cure solipsism but not subjectivity.

The power of language reflects the limitation to the subjective dimension of existence in the simple sense that the abstract signs are exactly the subjective means of relating to things. Even if such signs carry with them an element of external objectivity, this still does not cure subjectivity. For external object is only the sum of subjective appearances and, although marking the horizontal transcendence, still leaves the subject reduced to its actuality. It is only when language humbly refers to things it cannot capture and is used as a mere expression of truths transcending the words, in short, only when it is a servant of its higher hypostasis, that it can make present also the genuine, internal objectivity. This, however, is not any inherent feature of the language but of the way in which it can be used.

41. Language's genuine power is thus only the power to serve, to try to express

things it cannot capture. Its power *over* experience can be considered illusory, in so far as it is only the power to view an experience in a particular way, *as* this rather than *as* that. But since every appearance is an appearance-as, does not this mean that language indeed gives power over appearances? To a large extent, it does. But is the power over appearances full power? Only if all that is are appearances. All we have said so far suggests that such a reduction is inadmissible. We consider all things to be relative to existence, but not to the actual appearances, let alone language. Although language contributes to structuring of experience, it does so only at the lowest level of reflective dissociations, of mere appearances. Now, one can claim that a thought, which one tried to express, was not the same as the expressed one, or was not even a thought before it was expressed. But it was certainly something specific, something recognisable enough to give its linguistic formulation the sense of being a *right* expression, matching *just that* one was trying to express. Experience is structured also above language. Granting to the language the exaggerated power seems to rest on confusing it with the power of signs and distinctions which are not linguistic.

Even with respect to appearances the power of language is not complete, 42. but here it meets the only power we do have. For reflective narrowing, dissociation and precise circumscription of objects is what brings them under our control. Stopping the flow, grasping an object and isolating it from the surrounding, in short, externalising it, we gain power over it. Actuality is also the horizon of manipulation.⁹ Naming can be seen as a symbol of this aspect, suggesting in what sense Solomon had the power over all the spirits by knowing their names and in what way a magician may believe to possess the power over things by knowing the right formulae. But also without relying on such disputable examples, we can recognise control as an aspect of actualisation and externalisation. Knowledge, this paradigm of externalisation, is power. For externalisation amounts to precise isolation of the thing which becomes the more subject to our power, the more independent it is from its surroundings and the more precisely its relations to other dissociated objects are grasped. This is the trivial power over pieces of chalk and chairs which we can arrange according to our wishes. This, too, is the power with which our will can ignore localised, external pain, making it virtually absent. Our power diminishes as the objects become more complex, but can still be exercised to the degree we can reduce them to totalities of external features and relations. No such power can be exercised over any deeper feelings like, for instance, internal (dis)satisfaction with life or prolonged suffering, which

⁹The Latin etymology of “manipulation” reflects the fact of being graspable, fitting into the hand, *manus*, and being underlied the authority of one’s commands, like a handful of soldiers, *maniple*. Let us also remind that actuality, act and their associates enter the philosophical discourse as the translations of Aristotle’s *energeia*, ‘being at work’, which indicates factual exercise of power as opposed to its mere potential.

are not reducible to totalities of external aspects. Consequently, they cannot be manipulated at will. To change them, our efforts are necessary but hardly sufficient, for if they change then only by external help, perhaps, a touch of grace, which can be helped but never determined.

4.3 Time and space

43. The spatio-temporality from §22 involved merely the distinction between actuality and non-actuality. Reflective dissociation of these two aspects gives rise to the experience of time and space. Simultaneity of actual appearances finds their spatiality while their objectivity, sliding outside the horizon of actuality, their temporality.

4.3.1. Time

44. Reflection comes always ‘too late’, it represents something which has already been recognised in the flux of experience, §24. And as any act involves its whole structure, no additional step is needed to establish the experience of after – it is the distance separating the representing sign from what it represents. It does not matter if, objectively speaking, this distance takes no time (whatever that could mean). It is there, in the structure of the reflective experience and hence also in the experience itself: reflection repeats what it reflects, doubles it, and this basic repetition, with the impassability of the distance separating the sign from the signified, is the same as the primordial after.

This reflective after is not that of one actuality coming after another. We are still within the scope of the horizon of actuality, where the first after finds its place. One can view it as the horizon of Husserlian retentions, *primäre, frische Erinnerungen* and protentions, *anschauliche Erwartungen*. The withdrawal of the just-perceived into the immediate past amounts to the impossibility of actually grasping and retaining the object in the unity of the reflective act. But Husserl’s descriptions address only the flow of intentional contents, while our after is an aspect of the emergence of such contents. It is the trace of the nexus of recognition which has been dissociated into the external content and the subjective sign. After is the distance separating the latter from the former. It is experienced simultaneously with the dissociated poles, all elements of the relation after are experienced simultaneously within the horizon of actuality. But this simultaneity is disturbed because its content has already withdrawn into the background and has been doubled by reflective representation. It has thus already, always already, been there and reflective dissociation arrives always after it.

45. Externality is the feature of dissociated actualities which become, so to speak,

pulled out of experience. After is the reflective self-awareness, awareness of having arrived at the scene after its object. It expresses only the change of level, the impassability of the distance separating reflection from experience which never has been, and never will be, reduced to reflective actuality. As such, experience is for reflection the pure past. It is present to reflection not as its object, but as the horizon from which reflection arose. Emphasizing ‘purity’ in the expression “pure past” serves avoiding its confusion with a collection of other, though now past, actualities. Experience is not any totality of experiences. It is what precedes experiences and makes them possible. Preceding the dissociation into experiences, it also precedes time understood as a succession, in particular, the possibility of past experiences, of actualities which are not actual now but were so some other time. Past, thought as a past actuality, is founded upon the experienced duration and the transition from this experience to reflection. This foundation remains around reflection as the pure past, which alone makes it possible for actual experiences to recede into past and turn into past actualities.

Reflective after establishes thus the dimension of the past, but what about 46. the future? The future is not so different from the past. After, connecting the actual object to experience, is asymmetric and is experienced as such. It is impassable. After means not only the distance separating the reflective sign from the experience but primarily its impassability – reflection can never re-capture the experience, because it always comes *post factum*. This asymmetry, this reflective thirst after its object and object’s appearance from the pure past, gives the time arrow its direction. Actuality, this strange crest of the time series, appears as the point into which all experience converges, to use Bergson’s image, as the tip of the cone of the whole past.

The rest is uniformity by analogy. The actuality of reflection comes after the past which, by the same token, came before the now of reflection. After is asymmetric: 1) objects are experienced through the actual signs of reflection which involves them in the relation after, but 2) after is the same relation as before – reflection coming after x means the same as x coming before reflection. 3) In this sense, reflection is the future of its, always past, object. More abstractly, 4) future – and it is the future of reflection! – is just what is after the actual reflection. Future is to the actual sign, what this sign is to what it signifies. Just like now of reflection is after what it has captured, future is after now of the reflection. It is a point of reflection over the actual experience.

This future is, of course, indeterminate, unlike the past after which reflection relates to a particular, definite experience. Past is something actually reflected and in this lies its definite, determined character. Reflective future, established by mere analogy, has only the character of potentiality, of a possible reflection. It can be found in the immediacy of an act in the

form of protention, *anschauliche Erwartung*, which presents (an aspect of) the object in some definite (e.g., expected) form augmented, however, with a sign of indeterminacy, the possibility of unfulfillment, or else protention which anticipates the immediate action, like the electric potential which can be measured over the entire scalp a fraction of a second before a finger movement which one has already decided to perform. The more remote future becomes only the more indeterminate and, eventually, can only be composed of abstract images. Such a remoteness, whether in future or in the past, involves a new element, the objective time.

47. ***The objective time***

The horizon of appearance is the horizon of actuality. Consequently, object's transcendence beyond the subjectivity of appearance, founding its objectivity, is the same as its transcendence beyond the actuality, founding its temporality. Object enters the horizon of actuality from beyond. The character of objectivity carried by this beyond, this Rest, is the same as its character of pure past. Temporality is thus objective in the sense of contributing the aspect of objectivity, transcendence beyond actuality, to the experienced objects. But it isn't yet the objective time dissociated from subjectivity and its apprehension of things. It is only a difference between the actual experience and pure past. It is not even an experience of time, understood as a succession of nows. Such experience arises from it as the reflective hypostasis acquires primacy over earlier ones. New hypostasis affects all contents and, in particular, moulds also the experience of vertically transcendent elements in terms of horizontal transcendence. Internal objects are viewed in terms of external appearances, while the horizon of experience becomes merely a totality of dissociated experiences. Likewise, the pure past and future become merely totalities of actualities which come before, respectively, after the current one. Past becomes the indefinite recession of one's memories and future the general sense of openness of one's life. This succession is not yet linear time but past and future become thus collections of dissociated actualities.

48. Such temporality pertains to any being which has reached the level of discerning independent objects. A dog bringing a ball and looking expectingly into one's eyes, waiting for the ball to be thrown away is, too, involved into temporality, just as it is when looking in the bushes for the ball just thrown.

It is still time of an experience, still temporality with a designated actuality, 'the present now' of here-and-now. To arrive at objective time, we first observe a significant dichotomy which was well described by Husserl as two kinds of time consciousness: the consciousness of time as it unfolds in the actual experience along the axis of retentions and protentions, and another, *uneigentliches Zeitbewußtsein*, which relates to the time of remote past and of lifeless recollections. The former stands against the inauthen-

tic representation of time, of infinite time and time relations which are not recognised in experience. An actual object or event retires into the past, dissolving gradually in the horizon, that is, *disappearing beyond* the horizon of actuality. Once that happens, we can no longer make it actually alive; we can only reproduce it, as if recalling it from beyond the grave. This broken continuity makes the two kinds of experiences so fundamentally different that one might legitimately ask what makes them both experiences of the same time? What does the time of retentional actuality have to do with the time of remote recollections? And, then, what does the latter, which is still time of experience, have to do with the objective time, thought as linear and even infinite ordering of world's stages?

For a phenomenologist, fetching all evidence exclusively from the actuality of phenomena, the unity of such disparate time experiences can only be an empty intention. For us, the question is not how to establish a unity from the dissociated actualities but, on the contrary, how the dissociated elements arise from a prior unitary nexus. We have just seen how dissociation of experience into experiences turns pure past and future into totalities of past and future actualities. The vertical transcendence, being inaccessible to lower representations, founds the experience of unboundedness. In horizontal terms, this becomes first an unlimited horizon. Even if, in objective terms, one's life is understood as finite, it has no experiential limit. Nobody actually experiences one's birth, while one's death is the constant not-yet. The life spans the distance between these two limits without ever reaching any of them. This experiential unboundedness, expressed in horizontal terms, stretches time indefinitely into past and future.

Although the time experience stretches thus beyond the actual retentions and 49. protentions towards remote recollections and abstract expectations, this time is still subjectively localised, centered around the here-and-now, which has become now. The objective time – the ‘time of the world’ – requires yet more specific dissociation, a further abstraction. The relation after has already been dissociated from its context of the actual representation and begun connecting arbitrary objects, dissociated actualities. The final step amounts to removing the designated actuality which is *my* actuality. Purely objective time emerges as a consequence of abstracting oneself away, of dissociating the experienced time from the experiencing existence.

This happens with positing the totality of external objects as the actual object, ‘the world’. Although such a complex object is only an ideal reflective construction and, according to relativity theory, even an impossibility, positing it as an object is quite natural. For the intuition of the unity of the world is founded in the unity of experience prior to its dissociation into objects and experiences. The world as an object is, like every object, thought as actual and this yields the now of the world. The relation after applied now

to this object – the whole world – leads to the time of the world. The objective time, the abstract time of the abstract world-object, is characterised by this paradoxical removal of the existence which is the site of actuality and, at the same time, retaining some abstract now of the world-object. The unboundedness, expressed now horizontally, yields the potential infinity of actualities, the infinity of time.

Its linearity is also a consequence of dissociation. Temporality of experience is not linear. It is arranged rather like a multi-layered surrounding centering in the focal point of actuality, the tip of the cone of the past, and opened toward the future which has as many dimensions as possibilities. Experience unfolds surrounded by transcendence, by the presence of the pure past and by the open possibilities of the future. One's temporality is interwoven into the temporality of all things and other people. But if something is considered as an independent whole, as an isolated object, if we, so to speak, suspend the transcendence, then there is nothing which can bring in the variation of multiple futures. The future of an isolated object may still be indeterminate but it is unique. There may be internal changes of this object, but not a multiplicity of other, alternative objects and their time paths. Such an abstract now – actuality of an isolated object – has only one, unique before and only one, unique after: these are just states of the isolated object which can only be in one state at a time. In case of the ‘world time’, what is posited as an independent object is the ideal totality of objects. ‘Outside’ the world, there is nothing, emptiness. Removing thus all transcendence, the time of this isolated world-object becomes linear.

As the final step, after positing the totality of objects as one world and endowing it with its own now, one can perform the final dissociation, the ultimate abstraction with respect to time. The objective time, being independent from any particular things and being the time of everything, is no longer conditioned by anything. It is itself the condition of things appearing in time. In other words, it becomes empty. It took quite some time before European thought arrived at the idea of empty time in-itself, flowing independently from any things and events. It appears as the ultimate abstraction and, as it seems, even modern science does not need it any more, and so we will not be occupied with it at all.

4.3.2. Space

50. Reflection encounters objects at a distance, with the accompanying self-consciousness. The primordial after is the impassability of this distance. But as we noted, in objective terms, this does not necessarily involve any passage of time. It only provides the first element founding the experience of time. As a mere distinctness, after could be even described as in-front-of. The external object appears in-front-of reflection, as distinct. This in-front-of

does not carry the character of impassability but merely of the difference, of simultaneous presence of object and its reflection. Dissociation of the aspect of after from this distance amounts, at the same time, to the dissociation of this complementary aspect of simultaneity. Time, stretching the here-and-now along the dimension before-after, leaves between them the static simultaneity of the contracting now. Now is not temporal but, as simultaneity of actual appearances, spatial. Here-and-now becomes thus dissociated into two elements: the now, squeezed between the temporal before and after, and the here, which is the same now but seen only as simultaneity. There is thus a complementary duality: things have the spatial aspect to the extent they are seen as simultaneous, and the temporal aspect to the extent they appear after each other. The final separation of space from time happens when this complementary duality gets dissociated and we begin to conceive things separately either as simultaneous or as ordered along the before-after.

Experiential spatiality, centered around the actual here, has infinitely many 51. dimensions: any object marks a possible dimension (if one prefers, a direction for a course of action). Indexicals like below, above, in front, behind, etc., are already further abstractions. They emerge in the primitive world-view, related to a multitude of aspects like social organisation or religious system. For instance, the tribe of North American Indians, Zuñis, arranged all natural objects, and even abstractions, in a system of seven regions of space: north, south, east, west, zenith, nadir and center. Everything in the universe had its place in one of these seven static regions, each having also certain colour and clans belonging to it.

The objective space arises now in an analogous process to the one from 52. §§47.ff. Firstly, spatiality becomes extended beyond the horizon of actuality and becomes the spatiality of (arbitrary) objects. The non-actuality, dissociated into a totality of external objects, becomes ‘the whole world’ which, as simultaneous, becomes the space. Its objectivity amounts to its stretching beyond this actual here, but it is still centered around it. Objective space arises by the removal of this designated place. Just as actual now gave the place to the abstract now, the snapshot of the whole world at a given time, so the dissociation of the actual here allows its application to the totality of the world, yielding the objective space.

Since this abstract here comprises everything, it does not stand in any relation to other places, it is a sole, isolated unit. (The questions creating the first antinomy, like “What is outside the space?”, are most naturally asked, indicating precisely that the ‘objective here’ arises from the ‘subjective’ one, from a situated and *limited*, actual place.) This lack of ‘outside’, of any transcendence, is just the opposite side of the emptiness of objective space. Just like the objective time of the world-object becomes the mere linear succession void of any objects, so the objective space becomes the empty

simultaneity.¹⁰

53. But if this replacement of the designated, actual here by the abstract one of the world-object yields the objective space, where is extensionality? This, after all, is a constitutive feature of spatial objects. The answer is: extension is what we have termed simultaneity. It is not something that *explains* the possibility of spatial co-existence – it *is* this very simultaneity. One more distinction must be noticed to obtain spatial extension. Just like a distinction is what is being distinguished, a dissociated object is a limit of distinctions, is the boundary separating it from the surrounding. An extended, spatial object is one in which these boundaries are themselves cut from the object, are distinctions made within (around) the object itself. The extension of an object is the very simultaneity of its boundaries (left, right, lower, upper, etc. In the same way a temporal object appears as extended when the limits of its time span are dissociated and posited in abstract simultaneity as points on the time line.) Spatial distance is just another way of saying extensionality. It only depends on which boundaries are considered. With respect to an independent object, the simultaneity of its aspects is extensionality; with respect to a collection of different objects, their simultaneity is the distance between them.

There is, of course, a difference between a simultaneity of two objects in space and the simultaneity of, say, two items of a mathematical definition. The difference consists in that objects in space have an identifiable boundary which can be dissociated from them. Other things simply *are* their boundaries. A mathematical item, say, the commutativity property, $x + y = y + x$, does not have a contour, it is its own contour, is exactly the distinctions it makes. Objects which do not reside in the objective space (or in the objec-

¹⁰The implication from the emptiness of ‘outside’ to the emptiness of ‘inside’ is not, of course, physical or logical. But it is of fundamental significance. Here, we see only its sterile, almost formal version. It does not apply to any single objects but only to their posited totalities, the ultimate containers. ‘Everything’, thought as the totality of all objects, excludes the possibility of any more objects ‘outside’ – ‘outside’ there can be only emptiness. But this emptiness surrounding such an ‘everything’ has the contagious effect on what it embraces, it spreads to the ‘inside’. Therefore, single objects ‘within’ space must appear as separated by void, while objects or events thought in the totality of time are, likewise, separated only by its emptiness, its ‘pure flow’ (which is as hard to imagine as it is to avoid). In short, that which is supposed to fill the space between the dissociated objects is that which surrounds their totality, the ultimate background or limit. Empty space, the space *between* the entities residing in it, is ‘filled’ with that which limits it (like ether did in the XIX-th century.) This dependence reflects only the fact that, starting with mere objects, some bits and pieces conceived as the ultimate building blocks, construction can at most arrive at their collections and arrangements but is never able to ‘fill’ the emptiness between them, which is only another expression of their dissociation. A more fundamental version of this dependence was encountered in section 1 as the confrontation with transcendence conditioning the contents of one’s being and its character of being one’s own. Its lack would remove any character of mineness from a solipsistic subject.

tive, spatialised time), have the property of being their own contour: either like mathematical items which coincide with their own definitions, or like unsharply delineated emotions, ideas, nexuses which, having no precise definitions, are exactly the distinctions they draw. To the extent they appear simultaneously, like warmth accompanied by a noise, or like the commutativity axiom accompanied by that of idempotency, their mutual difference carries the character of primordial spatiality. But they themselves are not spatially extended. For the constitutive feature of such extension is the difference between a sharp contour and the object itself. Say, the table in front of you has an identifiable contour which separates it from the surrounding space and other objects around. But the table is not its contour. Of course, there are also spatial objects which do not have such a sharp contour. But when we see such objects, we already have the experience of objective space and we blame their unsharpness on our ‘subjective’ inaccuracy. An objective view of space would postulate that even the stripes of a rainbow conform to this claim, since their interpenetration is *only* our approximate perception of a multitude of particles which all have exact boundaries in the objective space.¹¹

4.4 Objective or constituted?

Unlike Kantian forms of intuition, our time and space are only aspects of 54. the emergence of objects, not the conditions of their possibility. They are not any *a priori* forms imposed by our mind on some things in-themselves possessing, perhaps, their own kind of space and time or, perhaps, no time nor space at all. Objects appear only in time but also time emerges only as an aspect of objective appearances. Furthermore, the objectivity of time and space belongs to their very nature – they are forms of transcending the horizon of subjective appearance by the appearing object. Dissociating object from subject, or appearance from the appearing, gives the possibility of opposing also the subjective time of appearances and the objective time of the objects. This, however, is only a final dissociation, not any primary opposition of distinct elements.

Consequently, we have not reduced the objective time and space to their 55.

¹¹ One notices that our objective time and space do not comply with the current scientific accounts. Such compliance is not our aim. We are considering the emergence of objective representations and their existential rôle, not the possible objectivistic constructions of the world in-itself. We also leave other aspects, which one might possibly postulate for the objective time and space, aside. For instance, homogeneity of time and space is just the possibly unlimited application of once abstracted relations, of before-after for time and of simultaneous distinctness for space. No list ever completes the possible distinctions of a nexus or of an object. Reflection can approximate the reality of experience but not capture it in complete descriptions.

subjective constitution, nor other way around. Yet, one might object, the whole process of distinguishing and dissociating, the gradual emergence of time and space, happen already within objective time. The emergence of the experience of time seems to presuppose objective time.

The problem with such an objective time, like with any objectivity independent of any contact with existence, is its gradual dissolution – eventually, in the indistinct. Questions about what, possibly, might reside beyond any experience, what and how might possibly be distinct beyond any distinguishing, may lead to valuable scientific speculations but are of no relevance to our inquiry. One considers, for instance, the space-time of relativity theory as more ‘objective’ than the Newtonian empty containers. This, however, is so only because the former takes into account a wider scope of experiences than does the latter. One would rather not claim that any has reached some final truth about the ‘objective time in-itself’. Both are, as scientific results, and as reflective constructions in general, merely approximations. And they do not approximate any ‘objective truth in-itself’, but only the totality of experiences taken into account at a given historical moment. The ultimate objectivisation would like to abolish all relative distinctions. But as all distinctions are relative to the distinguishing existence, such an abolition would lead to the indistinct – a highly non-objective, not to mention non-scientific, thing.

Certainly, once you die, other people will keep experiencing the world, time and space in approximately the same way. But speaking about time or space without *any* existence, is to project distinctions into the indistinct, to presuppose the differentiating existence in the very moment of claiming its irrelevance. Experience of objective time not so much presupposes objective time as brings it forth, just like every distinction brings forth whatever it distinguishes. Like every other experience, it is *both* a discovery *and* a creation: a creation because it is relative to the *mode* of the distinguishing existence, and a discovery because it reveals the way such an existence does, or even is bound to, experience the world, to confront the indistinct. Just as the aspect of discovery keeps for ever the hammer of some indefinable objectivity over all sorts of subjectivistic reductions, so the aspect of creation keeps some shadow of ineradicable subjectivity above all attempts at pure objectivity. We have described the emergence of the experience of objective time. Now, every experience is an experience of experiencing. One would like here to say “is also”, but we would rather say “is only”! Existence does not differentiate the indistinct but its own confrontation with it. We discover objective time but this discovery is conditioned by the structure of our being which brings the original nothingness and chaos to the level of actual reflective dissociations. This discovery is conditioned by an element of creativity, of existential relativity. What we discover is always only our view and perception of the world, our ways of distinguishing the indistinct.

Consequently, we do not meet the problem of the time of transcendental constitution, the problem according to which time it is supposed to take place. Is it a time itself constituted by an atemporal subject? Or is the transcendental subject itself temporal? We do not meet this problem because we do not oppose the subjective experience or constitution of time to the objective time in-itself. We experience only our way of experiencing and objectivities are also elements of experience. They have a special status of entities capable of potentially other appearances than those which have entered our experience. But anything more specific than indistinct, appearing as objective, does so relatively to our experience, to the very fact of appearing. The experience of time is naturally interwoven into the objective time because they are not experienced as two different times. The latter is only an abstraction and extrapolation of the former. The temporal experience, when arriving at the experience of the objective time, finds itself already not only in the prior temporality but also 'in' this, newly discovered, objective time. The two are but two views of the same, existential and objective, internal and external. The order of founding, once the objective time has been discovered, is seen as evolving in this objective time, because what has been constituted is not some time in-itself but our objective representation of temporal experiencing.

Now, as objective time arises from the ultimate dissociation and abstraction, it has been repeatedly accused of being inauthentic, spatialised, degenerate. We follow Bergson in viewing it as an objectified image of the existential temporality. But we would not, for this reason, consider the one authentic and the other not, the one *eigentliche* and the other not, the one legitimate and genuine while the other only a result of inauthentic mode of existence or thinking. We only observe the difference in the matter of experience, the difference between the lived existential temporality and the dead time of the objective world. The latter is an aspect of reflective experience of dissociated objects and objective world. The identities of objects stretching beyond the horizon of actuality, as well as the totality of the 'world', make more sophisticated reflective experience possible. Creative discovery of the objective time extends the horizon of our reflective experience beyond the mere lived actuality, beyond the unity of a single act which reaches its end in the moment it leaves its origin. Human relations to the world and life are not exhausted by the contents of immediate experiences, by the actually given, retentionally present and protentionally expected. Restricting them to such actualities amounts to a reduction, perhaps, to the level of animal experience of time which, true and genuine as it certainly is, does not probably reach the long term memories and abstract recollections of forgotten past. This reduction, like every other, is a diminution. The objective time and world provide powerful means of inquiry and control. Their legitimacy

can be questioned only in cases of misuse. Viewed existentially, they are the reminders of the original unity, its traces retained in the midst of reflective dissociations.

57. This existential foundation of (the experience of) time resolves the problem of the “unreal”, in the sense of momentaneous and atemporal, character of transcendental constitution. All conditions of possibility of the actual appearance are given there in the immediacy of one act. Put differently, the transcendental subject is atemporal not so much because it transcends time but because it resides in a minute now, a dissociated moment of a single act.

We, too, claim the presence of all earlier hypostases in every dissociated moment. But its dissociation is the point of arrival, not of the departure. The earlier hypostases surround the act as vertically transcendent aspects which anchor the subject beyond the horizon of actuality. Subject is only the most actual modification of the unity of existence which stretches beyond actuality. It is only because multiplicity of actualities results from the splitting of experience and, eventually, of the chaotic and indistinct nexus, that one actuality can be related to, and experienced as continuous with, the past ones. The experienced unity precedes the experience of time. Eventually, it is the unity of existence in its primordial confrontation with the One. This unity is atemporal being lifted above time experience and facing only the eternity, the presence of the origin. It is not existence which is atemporal but only its deepest aspect, the fact that, above all distinctions and time, it faces eternity.

This eternal aspect finds the possibility of time experience. For as has often been observed, time, experienced as change, presupposes something unchangeable or, at least, something remaining unchanged in the flow of changes. Various candidates for such unchangeable substances were proposed and rejected. But even if found and accepted, they could not solve the dilemma. For the problem of change is the problem of perception of change. It is not enough to have a substantial point and its changing accidents, for it could at most give an objective representation of time. The flow of time, however, requires *registration* of changes, requires these changes to be *referred to* some unchanging point. Such registration and references are the shadows of the subject, or rather existence, underlying all considerations of time. We describe changes of cosmos which preceded and will follow human life. But such descriptions of temporal processes beyond existence are made with the perceiving existence present, as if a proxy. We describe them as they would appear to us if we were there. Their possible truth and accuracy are founded in the objectivity of time. But their possibility presupposes the temporal perspective, the existence which experiences the flow of changes. This experience is possible only because it is anchored in the point of eternity, in the unchangeable origin.

4.4.1. Objectivistic attitude

As objectivisation – the emergence of the objective world, time and space – 58. involves dissociation of the external contents from their internal origin, we obtain a new, objectivistic perspective. Quite naturally, it can be set against the perspective asking primarily about the existential origin and relevance. The latter does not offer much ground for objective considerations, but it neither excludes nor contradicts them, merely illuminating the emergence and place of objectivity in experience. The objective perspective, on the other hand, is of little use in existential considerations, never managing to account for the specificity of the place every existence occupies in experience, nor for the traces gathering the multiplicity of dissociated things in the unity of existence. It finds the objectivistic inquiries, whose field has unlimited horizontal scope (potential infinity of possible objects) but is vertically limited to the actual objects of only minimal existential relevance.

As we travel by carriage, the speed with which various things pass by is 59. inversely proportional to our distance from them: the close ones pass by very quickly, while those which are so far away as to be almost indiscernible seem to remain motionless. New impressions and things emerge from beyond the horizon but what remains constant is the simple fact of this inverse proportionality, the presence of the horizon. To claim that beyond the horizon there are the same kinds of things as those closest to us is right only if one has already placed oneself there. Such a placement, founding the objective perspective, is however a displacement. It falsifies the character of the experience which, emerging from the most intimate center of one's being, retains the trace of the immovable horizon, of the absolute origin. Pretending that there is no designated place and urging to view things as if one were simultaneously at all places, it simply deprives one of *the* place to which it always tries and never manages to return.

In a sense, reflection does something inappropriate. It violates the order of things by dissociating them from the Rest, positing as independent entities and bringing under its control. And this possibility to treat something as a dissociated object, surrounded only by other such objects, is the universal mark of reflective hypostasis. Everything can be turned into an external object and approached with the discriminating accuracy of a magnifying glass. We do not oppose its importance and usefulness. But when this universal possibility is taken for the universal reality, when the fact that everything can be dissociated as an external object is taken as the truth that everything is such an object, we encounter objectivistic illusion. It reduces the whole existential structure to the level of objective reflection.

Our central term, nexus, is not a term of reflective explanations. It does not 60. provide sufficient reasons nor efficient causes. It is the term of existential ori-

gin, indicating only that some things belong together, not in a mere ‘togetherness’ of dissociated entities, but in the most intimate, germinal closeness. When dissociated by subsequent reflection, this unity withdraws beyond the horizon of actuality leaving only various traces, observed by reflection as relations and connections between dissociated elements. And thus for the reflective intellect, the unity is only a postulate, an act of faith, a vague sense of the horizon, a mere ‘belonging together’ of dissociated items. The derogatory view of such a mere ‘belonging together’ is quite understandable when one’s aim is an explanation. But it reaches deeper than any explanations. Nexus is the term of origin, if one likes, of an archaic understanding which recognizes the unity prior to actual dissociations and reflective control. Keeping them in their primordial vagueness, as opposites that still are not opposed, it signals that precision and dissociation deprives the elements of their original concreteness, that is, of existential relevance.

61. Useless as such a mode of thinking may be for explaining things, it retains an aspect completely absent from explanations: concreteness. Although common language will hardly distinguish the two, concreteness is almost the opposite of precision. Precision grasps, concreteness opens. Precision requires narrowing of the horizon of attention to the most immediate and minute in order to draw the borders in a sharp way. Precision amounts to excluding, cutting off (*praescindere*) everything that slips out of the narrow horizon of immediate control. This exclusion, allowing to determine unambiguously what falls within and what outside the border, is what is precise about, for instance, a concept. Its ideal limit is a point and mathematics its ideal image.

But mathematics is also abstract – not because it is not precise but because it is not concrete. Concreteness is the feature of a content which, although limited, is not definitely cut from its origin, which is still connected by various traces to deeper aspects of experience. Unlike precision it does not require univocal exactness. Typically, it will involve something undetermined which slips out of the reflective grasp and must be left to the mere awareness, the mere acceptance. It is possible to understand something, deeply, intimately, without grasping it rationally, for instance, music. This deep intimacy – and understanding – is what makes musical experience very concrete. The phrase *je ne sais quoi* (‘I do not know what’, ‘a certain something’) expresses quite accurately the Rest, the impossibility of grasping this ‘certain something’ by any precise definition. We cannot speak precisely about suffering, love, hope, damnation. Yet, these are the most concrete elements of experience. They are such because they penetrate to the depth of existence, because every actuality marked by them cannot pretend to be dissociated from the sources which, vague as they are, fill it with the traces of the most concrete presence.

Objectivistic illusion marks the opposite end, taking reflectively dissociated objects for the only reality and mistaking precision for concreteness. Legitimate within its actual scope, when applied unrestricted to non-external objects and deeper aspects of experience, it leads to apparently unsolvable conflicts.

4.4.2. Antinomies of reflection

Dissociation of objects marks the reflective level and distinguishes it from 62. the earlier hypostases. Distinctions of the earlier stages are not accessible to equally precise treatment. Yet reflection, especially when underlied objectivistic illusion, perfects its function not only by bringing more and more objects under its dominion but also by attempting to capture higher nexuses in precise terms of its dissociations. Such attempts lead to conflicts of objective reason. Most generally, they concern the identity of an object, its exact limits. We summarize briefly the emergence of objects before giving some examples.

Reflective objects, being the first represented ones, are the last in the order of founding. They are encountered always already within the horizon of experience, surrounded by chaos and the limit of indistinctness. Put differently, we experience the world before we experience anything specific within it. Within the world we draw the borders and terminate distinctions at places which are relative to our experience. Most of such borders can be common to most people, but the only thing which is truly common is that the distinctions must terminate somewhere. We express this by saying that object is a limit of distinctions.

This means, in particular, that it is only relative and is experienced as such, its limits are suspended but not final. They are relative to the horizon of experience, to the drawn distinctions. With the exception of purely conceptual or normative definitions, all objective limits can be refined and augmented with more objective characteristics. One can play interminable games of eidetic variations excluding some and looking for other aspects belonging ‘essentially’ to an object. If one stops, it is hardly because no further search could be envisioned, but because it seems fruitless. The actual limit of distinctions is a border drawn between everything which has been excluded and everything which “falls within”. We express this by saying that an object is (the opposite side of) everything it is not.

In the limit of a search for the ultimate ‘substance’ lies the shadow of a bare point. It resists dissolution since it represents the substantial residuum, the unity constituted by the fact that distinctions must terminate somewhere. But at the same time, as none of the actual contents seem necessary for the object to be itself, it becomes more and more bare, approaching

eventually the mere, contentless point.

63. Consequently, just as there is nothing antinomous about the table being what it is, so any attempt to grasp its limits precisely and unambiguously, opens the unlimited field of possible adjustments and improvements. If I remove one of its legs, is it still the same table? If I remove two? If I gradually replace, one by one, all its pieces by new copies? Pragmatic irrelevance of such questions does not change the fact that, when pushed to the extremes, they make reflection acutely aware of the kind of metaphysical arbitrariness of its basic givens. We know the limit of distinctions constituting this table. But what we so know is not as precise and univocal as reflection would like. Attempts to explicitly spell out the precise limits of most things simply fail. One can blame it on the difficulties with the explication of tacit knowledge and postpone final answers to the future when the eventual atoms of physical universe are discovered. Until then, one must acknowledge that no such final limits are given.

Even more obvious is the failure of precise circumscription of any internal object, say, any feeling. Is it determined or free? Both and neither: it is not completely without reason but in most cases no reason seems sufficient. Did it have a beginning or not? Both and neither: it must have started because it had not been always present, but it did not start at any definite moment. Is it one thing or many? Both and neither: it is this feeling and not that, but it also comprises other feelings, more specific moods, moments, perceptions.

Reflection lacks any fixed, metaphysical basis from which it could start constructing the world. The search for the ultimate atoms is its perpetual goal and limit. But it can be pursued only with the inherently inadequate signs which never capture the objects exactly. This inadequacy, when combined with the objectivistic illusion, yields the basic antinomy of reflection: objects which reflection posits as precisely and exactly identifiable, slip out of the actual grasp the more, the more precisely reflection tries to grasp them. This tension of reflective subjectivity never matching the ‘objective essence’ of things, of representation never matching completely the recognitions, of the dissociated multiplicity never summing up to the desired unity, is the pattern of all reflective being. But when the relative precision of actual objects is posited as the absolute ontological norm and sought in the unities transcending actuality, it becomes the pattern of all antinomies. For precision requires multiplicity of dissociated elements and yields at most a totality, while unities arise from nexuses prior to their differentiation.¹²

64. What we view as an antinomy conforms to the general schema of Kantian

¹²We do not deny that many totalities possess some specific principles giving them non-arbitrary character. But such principles act only *a posteriori*, connecting already dissociated elements. They operate at the same level of dissociation and thus do not yield unities in our sense of the word.

irresolvable conflicts of reason resulting from an application of the categories of experience beyond its limits. The main difference concerns the notion of experience which in our case is not limited to the rational structuring of sensuous data but extends to all distinctions. These form the unity – not, however, due to any internal principle or coherence but simply due to the confrontation with the One. The unity of distinctions is their indistinct limit. The ultimate antinomy arises when this fundamental unity is treated as one of the distinctions, when reflection attempts to express the One in terms of its differentiated experience and even of its dissociated experiences. Impossibility of such a project is, indeed, the antinomy of reflection. Descriptions of the One as indistinct, nothingness, etc., and, at the same time, as the origin appear antinomous when the One is taken as an entity existing in-itself and giving rise to the objective world in the course of some objective process. Our exposition does not attempt to characterise the One as it is in-itself. The One is only the pole of existential confrontation. Its presence, as the limit of distinctions, does not posit any antinomy for existence but is its defining element. It does not result in any existential antinomy as long as existence is not reduced to the mere multiplicity of distinctions, not to mention, to an objective totality.

Another difference from Kant consists in that we do not have to go as far as the ultimate totalities (of the world, of dependency or origination chains, etc.) to encounter antinomies. Certainly, the problems of identifying limits of things become the clearer, the less actual and limited things are considered. But as suggested by the examples of a table and a feeling, antinomies appear as soon as the question “what is this thing *really*, what constitutes its substantial unity?” is attempted answered with the scientific precision. For things are only limits of distinctions which are suspended at a given place for relative and not any absolute, metaphysical reasons. These are usually very good reasons, sufficient to view a given thing as a unity. But their relativity means that all objective explanations can only motivate or justify – but never force – us to suspend the distinctions at exactly this place.¹³

Just like the indistinct One giving rise to all differentiation can be put as the first antinomy, since it addresses the absolute origin, the last one concerns the lowest hypostasis of dissociated objects and is that of things-in-themselves. Kant notices that thing-in-itself, this transcendental object throughout all our knowledge is always one and the same, yet he uses frequently the name in plural form. Their multiplicity can not possibly arise due to any multiplicity of the empirical instances of the concept which excludes

¹³“Thing” in this paragraph refers to anything, not only a substance. We are not reducing all antinomies to that of divisibility of substance. We are reducing them to the attempts to explicate a unity in terms of an objective totality.

any relation to experience. Yet, it is what can alone confer upon all our empirical concepts in general relation to an object, that is, objective reality. Things-in-themselves are the limiting case of substances which earlier tried to account for the unity in the variety and transiency of experience. As such substantial residua, things-in-themselves defy all experience of fluctuation and transience. But defying all experience, they must lie beyond it. What, then, might distinguish one thing-in-itself from another? Certainly, not any experience. Nothing can justify their multiplicity except that they are just extrapolations from experienced multiplicity of things. The units above the multiplicity, unexperienced yet definite, indistinguishable yet distinct.

There is hardly anything in Kant's Critiques which would justify a multiplicity of things-in-themselves. The concept is always one and the same and the whole Kantian exposition might be carried without much (if any) changes if we allowed only one such thing – inaccessible to the categories of understanding because entirely indistinct and, at the same time, the only source of objectivity. As we see, this is only a variation on the first antinomy of the indistinct One and differentiated many.

5 The origin of mathematics

Closing these considerations of the origins, let us observe their significance for the origin of mathematics. This may be taken as a mere digression, because we are interested in a unified picture of existence, not in philosophy of any particular region of being, let alone, of (any particular) science. Still science, in its most noble element, as the search for truth, can be taken as a form of the fundamental thirst founded in the awareness of the insufficiency of visibility; curiosity or fascination, confusion or boredom, bafflement and even despair, are other examples of the same thirst, which underlies the whole existence. We investigate the modes of both the continuity and the tension between the actual contents and their transcendent origins; the continuity and tension without which dissociated actualities dissolve in emptiness devoid of meaning and reality.

Scientific activity can be an expression of such a continuity or tension, but questions about the actual scientific contents, the actual results of objectivistic reductions, do not have much to do here. Yet, this digression has its reason. Firstly, the placement of science in the totality of existence is certainly of some importance. Then, among sciences, mathematics has always occupied a particular position. Indeed, to such an extent that most other sciences try desperately to approach mathematical standards. Good reasons for the prominence of mathematics can be discerned at the level of abstraction at which we are moving. One shouldn't probably go as far as to say that the beauty and purity of mathematics have, in themselves, existen-

tial import. But they are reflections of the spiritual dimension of existence in the degree unmatched by any other science. The *a priori* character of mathematical objects and constructions makes one suspect, if not clearly recognise, the transcendent origin of mathematical truths.

One mathematical theory can postulate complex mathematical objects vastly different from those postulated by another such theory. But to the extent they are both *mathematical* they address, eventually, basic mathematical objects and therefore, can be related to each other. The question does not concern the detailed choices but the fundamental issue: what are the ultimate objects of mathematics and what, if any, is their relation to extra-mathematical reality? 67.

In every science one finds the hard seed of pre-scientific reality and beautiful flowers of scientific imagination. The former, the origin, is rooted in our intuition and experience. As the virtual origin it neither contains all possible details of future results nor determines the ways in which science can develop. It only precedes any such development, lies beyond and before it, and lends its basic notions some intuitive content which may appeal even to the uninitiated laymen.

Origin may be likened to an inspiration but it is not a foundation. In fact, laying down a foundation marks a definitive break with the origin. It amounts to internalising the original intuitions in terms of a language which from now on will develop according to its own standards. We do not want to review the arguments between formalists, Platonists, intuitionists, etc. We do not even want to see the differences between classical and non-classical mathematics, between geometry, arithmetics, algebra, topology, etc. Such distinctions involve one into mathematical arguments. The question about origin is, on the contrary, the question about what makes all these branches into branches of one and the same science, what makes the results of Pythagoras, Fibonacci, Viete, Riemann, Cantor equally mathematical.

Quine's statement that a (mathematical) theory commits one to the ontology determined by the range of bound variables, is certainly very clear and convincing. Indeed, the entities a theory describes are those which can witness to the truth of the existential statements – “there exists an x such that...”. Any particular, not only mathematical theory has to specify such entities. But our point is very different and amounts to the claim that any mathematical theory addresses, eventually, only one kind of entities. Quine's ontology – the range of bound variables – is entirely objectivistic. The theory represents there epistemological apparatus which deals with particular entities, that is, a particular ontology. One is concerned exclusively with the objects explicitly treated by the theory, and these are objects defined already *within* a mathematical world. As such, one does not at all address the issue of origin but at most of foundation and, in fact, a much more specific issue

of differences between the local ontologies of various theories or formalisms. Asking about the origin of mathematics we will not be concerned with such issues at all; we are not asking what objects can possibly be constructed mathematically but, on the contrary, what primary objects give rise to the mathematical constructions as such. The origin of such objects can be found at the very first stages of differentiation, in the sphere where ontology has not yet got dissociated from epistemology.

5.1 What is a point?

68. “A point is that which has no part,”¹⁴ the residual unity “beyond which there cannot be anything less.”¹⁵ Intuition of a point is the same as the intuition of a substance, the residual site of object’s self-identity. It is like the least something which still is, the least something from which nothing can be removed without removing the thing (that is, the point) itself. Evanescence site of pure immediacy...

Now, it might seem that to come from actually given objects to mathematical points there is a need for abstraction, since an actual object is always a particular thing with all its properties, while point is only the residual site with no properties whatsoever. It might seem that a point results from a process of abstraction in which we obtain from each object a more and more bloodless phantom. Finally we thus obtain from each object a something wholly deprived of content; But the something obtained from one object is different from the something obtained from another object – though it is not easy to say how... It might indeed seem so, but only when we assume that objects are the only original givens and that their givenness is a primitive, simple immediacy. Then, indeed, anything lacking in some actual content seems to arise from the actual givens only by abstraction.

69. But objects are not the original givens. On the contrary, objects are abstractions from the concreteness of experience, results of an interplay of distinctions within the horizon of actuality. Consequently, the process of founding does not proceed from objects towards their “bloodless phantoms”, for these phantoms are there, are given along with the objects themselves. An appearance of an object is equivalent with the narrowing of the horizon of actuality to immediacy which dissociates the original distinctions from their background. The apparent independence of objects, not only from the subject but also from each other, the fact that “something obtained from one object is different from the something obtained from another object,” is the result of this isolation.

What precedes, in the order of founding, appearance not only of objects

¹⁴Euclid, *The Elements*. I, Def.1

¹⁵Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*. I:5/13

but of anything whatsoever is distinction. And as in any experience, its whole structure, its whole foundation is also experienced in the immediate self-consciousness: distinguishing particular contents we also experience (usually, not thematically) the very fact of distinguishing.

Furthermore, even if there are no rigid distinctions, that is, no sharp boundaries distinguishing precisely and univocally one content from another, the fact of their distinctness is given sharply and precisely. Just as one can be uncertain where one stripe of a rainbow ends and another begins, so one is certain that they are different stripes, that each has, if not a sharp boundary, then in any case some kernel which is distinct from the kernel of another stripe. The mere, yet quite fundamental, fact of distinguishing, with the immediate awareness of definite distinctness, is a pure distinction. It has the same character as the pure precision of givenness of an object, its mere 'being there', in the immediacy of reflection that it is. In short, intuition of a point is the same as the intuition of a pure distinction.¹⁶

Consequently, no abstraction is needed to arrive at a point, we have a direct awareness of mathematical form as an archetypal structure. It is a structure present in any apprehension of an object, an aspect of every actual experience and as such is itself experienced.

A point, pure distinction, is an aspect of every experience and emerges from 70. there only as a result of reflective isolation – it is not a mere construction, an empty conceptual abstraction. Abstraction may be needed to posit a point as an actual object, to reflectively isolate this aspect of an experience and to start studying geometry. Taking a point in this way, as an object of reflection, the thesis concluding the last paragraph can be specialized to the claim that a point is a representation of the fact of distinguishing, of pure distinction.

Pure distinctness can be characterised as the fact that points are mutually indistinguishable yet distinct, they are distinctions without content, differences without reasons: like Kantian things-in-themselves, the posited ultimate 'substances' or, more concretely, as the absolute beginnings, identical in so far as the mere fact of beginning is concerned, yet distinct by virtue

¹⁶'Intuition' should not be taken here in a thetic sense, as an 'intuition of...', positing some object '...'. It is an aspect of immediate experience, a non-reflective, non-positional self-consciousness of the structure of the actual experience. Such an intuition, a 'point-awareness' is the same as the 'pure distinction-awareness'. This identification may seem to go counter our quite different images of the two: point is imagined as a mere dot ·, while distinction as a line | splitting the space in two. But these are only pictures. We could bring them closer, for instance, if we imagined distinction as a circle o (still splitting the space in two). Since no distinction is rigid, the exact circumference of the circle is blurred. But this does not make the fact of it being made less clear – the fact which we could imagine as the point at the center of the circle. So understood, pure distinction reminds thus of the Neoplatonic monad responsible (albeit always in a very unclear way) for the generation of actual numbers.

of the absoluteness of true beginning. Pure distinctions, the fundamental objects of mathematics, are inherited from experience – mathematics is the science of pure distinctions.

5.2 Numbers – multiplicity of distinctions

71. Introducing us to the notions of number and counting the teacher started to put apples – one after another – on the table. “We have one apple. What happens if I put another apple? Well, now we have two apples. And if I put yet another one? Well,...” Did not your teacher do a similar thing?

What should happen if he run out of apples? What should happen if he suddenly pulled out a pear and put it on the table after a series of apples? Can you imagine the confusion? An apple, yet another apple, more apples, a patter begins to emerge and, suddenly, a pear!! Not that the kids would for ever lose the chance of acquiring the concept of number but how much extra work for the teacher! How would he proceed to explain now that the fact that a pear is not an apple does not matter at all? How to explain that a pear is simply yet another object – a fruit, perhaps – distinct from all previous ones? An apple is so much an apple that the sixth apple put on the table is the same as the fifth one – except that it is the sixth. A pear after the fifth apple would not be the sixth – it is too different from the apples. It would be the first pear rather than the sixth fruit. The difference of content would come into the way of explaining the pure distinction of number.

We do usually count apples separately from pears. And if we count both we say we are counting fruits. Thus Frege says that number is the extension of a concept because as soon as we count different objects together we seem to subsume them under some common, more general concept. In fact, we do not ask “How many are Caesar and Pompey and London and Edinburgh?” In fact, we do not – but we can! And counting cities is not different from counting cities and persons, counting fruits is not different from counting fruits and houses and the nasty persons one met last week. Do we then subsume them under a more general concept? What concept? Looking for one, we arrive eventually at a ‘mere something’, a point, a pure distinction.

Number does not express a property of any concept, but rather the unlimited ability to ignore any properties, any conceptual differences of content. It precedes all concepts. Eventually, we count somethings, indeed, points or, to use a synonym, mere objects. The word “object” expresses exactly this pure self-identity, empty identity of a noumenal x which is itself merely because it is not anything else. Frege’s bloodless phantom is an object – a hardly imaginable site of the ultimate identity of the thing he started with.

If one wanted to object that apples on the table are not meant as an analogy of pure distinction because they have different positions, appear on the table at different times, and so on, that is, because they fall within the exten-

sion of a concept where other differences are needed to distinguish between the objects, then we would only repeat the question: why do the teachers not count fruits but only apples? The objection does not change their procedure which is: make the difference as small as physically possible, make the objects so similar that removing this last amount of difference would erase the distinction itself. If one feels a need for it, one might define the empirical analogue of a pure distinction as such a smallest possible difference (whatever that might mean). Numerical difference, unlike the difference of content, corresponds exactly to pure distinction.

But we still have some road to travel before we arrive at numbers. For the present, we only have the numerical difference. Now, no distinction occurs alone, there is nothing like ‘the first distinction’, only a transition from the undifferentiated one to the gradually increasing manifold of distinctions. The horizon of actuality, which is like a snapshot of experience, contains always a multiplicity of distinctions. Viewing these as pure distinctions, that is, focusing only on this aspect of actual experience which determines the mere distinctness of actual contents, yields the intuition of proper multiplicity, that is multiplicity of pure distinctions. Each actual experience is also an experience of such a multiplicity. This is well reflected in the most primitive, unary notation for numbers, which merely marks the distinctions: I, II, III, ... or even better •, ••, •••, ...

Multiplicity as mere distinctness of the actual contents, as the immediate self-consciousness of pure distinctions, is the experiential origin of a set. It is not yet a number which brings us already closer to a possible foundation. What makes a number into a number is not any mystical quality but its relation to other numbers and an elaboration of such relations is already a matter of mathematical reflection. Let us only sketch the most elementary beginning which follows from the origin, from the experience of pure distinctions and their multiplicities.

A primitive shepherd, who not only cannot count, but does not even have a slightest idea of a number, had probably proceeded something like that: to check if all his sheep return in the evening from the pasture, he let them out in the morning one by one, marking each leaving sheep as a cut on a stick. In the evening, he let them in one by one, marking each entering sheep on the same stick, with another cut across one of the morning cuts. If every morning mark is matched by one evening mark, everything is fine. If, however, some morning marks remain unmatched, some sheep are missing.

The shepherd performs the most natural, if not the only possible, operation on two actual multiplicities – he relates them by associating points in one with those in the other. He does it in a particular way serving his particular purpose: he matches each evening mark with only one, but always distinct, morning mark – he establishes an injective relation (indeed, a

function) from evening marks to morning marks. If this happens to be also surjective (every morning mark gets matched by one evening mark), then the conclusion is that the multiplicities of sheep in the morning and in the evening are equal – there is the same number of sheep. If the function is not surjective (some morning marks remain unmatched), the number of returning sheep is less than the number of sheep which left in the morning. This is the well-known set-theoretical definition of ordering of cardinal numbers.

Such an operation is performed not so much on the actual objects (sheep, marks), as on their collections viewed as mere multiplicities of pure distinctions. Indeed, to pose the problem in the first place, to have the possibility of even asking the question about *all* sheep returning, the shepherd had to recognise that the relevant aspect is the *multiplicity* of *distinct* sheep. But any multiplicity is proper – even if one uses some particular, objective tokens, it is always multiplicity of pure distinctions.

The set-theoretical construction of cardinal numbers (as representatives of classes of equinumerous sets) is already more than their reflective experience. The number 2 does not emerge exclusively as an abstraction from different collections containing exactly 2 elements. What would be the basis for such a generalisation? It would have to be the notion of ‘the same number of elements’ in different collections, as set-theory says, of a bijective correspondence. But such a correspondence presupposes that one has already abstracted away all differences of content, that all such differences *already are ignored*. The shepherd could not form the idea of representing the sheep by the marks on his stick, if he did not already have the notion of the proper multiplicity of sheep. The marks on the stick *represent* something – this something is not sheep but their multiplicity.¹⁷

¹⁷This suggests our attitude towards accounts like Husserl’s *The origin of geometry*, which is not phenomenology of mathematics but of socio-historical emergence of geometry. All such accounts repeat the idea from Herodotus’ *Histories*, II:109, that the art of geometry had its origin in the challenge presented by the Nile to the Egyptians, and only later became an abstract science. But although the origin, and the original foundation of mathematics in particular, exists only through the actual manifestations (and one might add, its empirical history), it is in no way dependent on, let alone reducible to, such manifestations. In a way of ontological argument, if pure distinctions were not given originally, if relations of pure distinctions were not available to us *a priori*, we would never be able to form an idea of, say, a circle. A circle, an ideal circle is determined and given *only* by a center, a point, and a radius, that is, *equinumerous multiplicities* separating each point of the circumference from the center. It could never arise as an abstraction from experiences, or as a repeatable correlate of acts, in short, as a perfected *Limesgestalt* of imperfect circles, no matter how often encountered in nature. (What would determine the direction of such a generalisation, of such a “conceivable perfecting ‘again and again’...”? Husserlian ‘repeatability’ may be, perhaps, taken as a characterisation of ideality, but it is only a characterisation founded upon this ideality and not other way around.) We could, perhaps, by accident come across and use flat objects which rotate and roll, but we would never invent a wheel. Because wheel is not a generalisation of round objects. It is a circle, an ideal circle (even if in practice it is not) which could not be even thought without the

It shouldn't be necessary to go any further, since we already have the basis 73. for a number system: multiplicities of pure distinctions (various 'numbers') and the basics of an ordering relation between them. The rest is left for the creative imagination of mathematicians. A number system (apparently used by Pirahã Indians in South America) consisting of three numbers only – one, two, many – contains already all essential features. The mathematics one can do with such a system is rather poor but it is *mathematics*, it is a number system. Although it remains still in a virtual form close to the experiential origin, it expresses already the essential intuitions on which also more advanced number systems are based.

5.3 Infinity

A point is a reflection of pure distinction, the pure immediacy, while number, 74. initially as a mere multiplicity, is the corresponding representation of simultaneity in terms of pure distinctions. Comparison of multiplicities, not to mention the total ordering relation, are more advanced constructions which bring us already close to a possible foundation. Just like a point is a purely actual, immediate experience, this intuition of a number, of multiplicity, is consummated fully within the horizon of actuality. Even if sheep enter the farm over some period of time, no time is involved in the fact of having a given multiplicity of them.

Now, just like distinctions do not come alone, so the numbers do not appear separately. There is no recognition of a number, say 5, without *all* other numbers being given around it. Just like distinctions emerge in the midst of chaos, so numbers emerge in the midst of infinity.

Just like transcendence is an aspect accompanying every actuality, so infinity is an equipollent aspect of multiplicity itself. It is not some late and advanced addition to the simple intuition of finite number. For instance, it is not only a consequence of, say, positional number notation, where generation of ever greater numbers is a matter of a mechanical principle. In the system with the three numbers only, 'one', 'two' and 'many', the last one does play the role of arbitrarily large number, it comprises everything which is 'more than two'. In the Roman number system, instead of 'two' one had 'thousand'; names for numbers greater than thousand were compound expressions of which the highest component was 'thousand'. Roman notation for numbers made it hard, or rather simply impossible, to write arbitrarily large numbers. But it would not be plausible to conclude from this that Romans did not have the idea of an infinity of numbers, although the precision of this idea might leave much to be desired. The problem was observed already by some Romans, as exemplified in M. Capella, *Arithmetica*, where the ambitions of

relations of number and equality of multiplicities.

arithmetic are expressly limited to low numbers, preferably below 9000. But even such a limitation concerned only the correctness of calculation and not the universe of numbers. The question “Is there the biggest number?” is almost as natural as “Is there any limit to the distinctions we make?” or, perhaps, “Is the world infinite?”.

75. It may seem that the basic intuition of infinity comes in the form of potentiality, with perhaps the most obvious experiential counterpart being unbounded multiplicity of complexes surrounding every actuality. It is easy to imagine that there is more than what one can, at any time, see here and now. One actuality can always become next one; one can always add 1 to whatever is there already. We never arrive at anything final but, instead, obtain (or rather posit) a shadowy regulative idea, the possibility of indefinite progression, which in this case amounts to unboundedness, i.e., potential infinity. Various forms of rationalism used to be less reductionistic than empiricism, showing more liking for actual infinity. It is present *a priori*, and present in full, or no idea of infinity is ever reached in any way.

Now, we do not intend to review the history of the conflict of actual vs. potential infinity, because most of the involved arguments can be easily dismissed once we have the precise concepts of infinity and cardinality. Indeed, philosophers seem to be less occupied with infinity since mathematicians got the control over the concept. We know that infinity is irreducible to progress (actual infinity irreducible to potential one), and those who do not like it may simply refuse to deal with infinity at all but not claim any reduction.¹⁸ Technically, this irreducibility is reflected by the need for axioms of infinity – in set theory, the axiom “There exists an infinite set”, but also in Euclid, the axiom “Any line can be prolonged indefinitely.” In the case of continuum, any use of progression is known as, at best, a way of approximating the actual results.

But we do not intend any review. The crucial point is that although the concepts and understanding of infinity have reached a very sophisticated stage, they have been discussed for millennia – perhaps, in a confused manner, but on the purely intuitive basis. No matter the concepts, one has always taken recourse to something like infinity. Even the mere unboundedness of indefinite progression is already an idea of actual infinity in disguise – it is infinity reduced by the epistemological scepticism to actuality. The fact that from a finite set of observations we nevertheless make the spring to the potentially infinite indicates, in a manner of the ontological proof, that the infinite is there already. All the emphasis one has to put on “potentially”

¹⁸One can obtain some sub-branches of mathematics, but these are only sub-branches. Intuitionism is a strong example, but likewise Hilbert’s program of finitary verification, and then also the theory of computability are expressions of this potent idea of the early XX-th century’s *Zeitgeist* of finitude and discretisation.

(while the unfortunate word “infinite” refuses to disappear), like all too insistent a need to deny something, suggests presence which one will only in extreme be willing to label “unreal”.

Potential infinity is only a conceptual reduction of actual infinity to the epistemic horizon of actuality. But infinity, the actual infinity itself, is founded in the chaos above experience and in the eventual transcendence of nothingness. This experience, or rather, this aspect of every experience, the chaos viewed as chaos of pure distinctions, is what founds the immediate intuition of the ‘largest possible’ multiplicity, of the ‘totality of everything’, maximum beyond which there can be nothing greater.

The experiential foundation knows nexuses but not necessarily all the distinctions which are so dear to later reflection. The Greek *apeiron* can be and is translated *either* as infinite *or* as indefinite *or* as unlimited. (One might be tempted to admit also the translation as unfinished suggesting, as Greeks would certainly like, incompleteness and some unreadiness of the infinite.) Speaking about the *foundation* of the idea of infinity, we must mean *all* these and, meaning *all*, we must mean *none*, since all such distinctions are later than their common origin. Infinity, in particular discrete, countable infinity is the final actualisation, an actual expression of the transcendence which has become a mere totality of actualities. It is the horizontal projection of the unlimited/ubounded/infinite, which are only so many representations of the indistinct ‘everything’. Potential infinity arises as a still further reflection which insists on the primacy, perhaps even the only ‘reality’, of the actually given contents.

A reflection of the original *apeiron*, as the chaos which underlies every experience, will be present in one way or another in every original mathematical intuition. Its mathematical counterpart will vary depending on the level of sophistication of the mathematical apparatus. It may be ‘3’, or ‘more than 3’, ‘many’ or ‘infinity’. The most recent version seems to be the ‘totality of all mathematical objects’. Having tamed infinities, Cantor retained the intuition that the universe of *all* such objects can not possibly be a mathematical object, which was a premonition of future problems. The paradoxes of the set of all sets can now be rendered mathematically manageable, essentially, by limiting the language so that ‘totality of everything’ can not be addressed. But whether represented within or expelled from the formal system, the totality haunts us and keeps pointing to the same intuition of the eventual transcendence, of the indistinct limit of distinctions, reminding, along the lines of the first antinomy, that the limit of the world does not belong to the world.

The presence of infinity can be better seen on the example of geometry. We 77. started with the intuition of a point which was equated with the (intuition, respectively representation of) pure distinction. But points do not appear

alone. Even if point's counterpart is residual objectivity, the 'mere being' in the immediacy of the reflection that it is, such a reflection is also immediately aware of the transcendent horizon surrounding its actuality – positing a point, it posits an actual multiplicity of points. Sure, we can reflectively dissociate an act of imagining a point, from an act imagining a multiplicity of points. But this is only reflective dissociation. A point appears always 'surrounded' by a background, even if this be only a black, undifferentiated something – shall we say, space? – against which the point is imagined.¹⁹ Points emerge only from such an undifferentiated background, which can be here taken as meaning continuous. Points represent a discretisation of continuity, a continuity transcending the points of distinctions, that is, of an actually infinite continuity. But while the primordial infinity of this continuous background is actual infinity, so the multiplicity of points gives rise to potential infinity: no matter how many points are (imagined, posited, thought to be) there, there is always a possibility of 'extracting' more points from the undifferentiated background. Once we have a point, we have not only a multiplicity, but an infinity of points. For an actual point (whether imagined or drawn) is only a sign of a point which 'already was there', it merely marks the focus of our attention. Imagining a plane and 'putting' a point on (or rather, 'extracting' a point from) it, the important thing is not *where* we put it but that it can be put *anywhere*. This is, in one, actual infinity and continuity (not in the technical sense), the pure heterogeneity of chaos in the immediate neighbourhood of indistinct continuity.

Geometry gives, with its points and planes, the primordial intuition of continuity, the first image of one-many as the duality of continuous-discrete or, as Brouwer put it, two-oneness. After the distinctions have occurred, it becomes perplexing to decide whether continuum consists of parts or not, whether things are infinitely divisible or not, whether infinite series can sum up to finite magnitudes and whether Achilles will ever catch up with the tortoise – whether One is a chaos of many or else whether chaotic many is really One.

78. The differences between geometry (which starts with infinity of pure distinctions, discrete points on a continuous background and, shortly after, with the axiom of actual infinity) and arithmetics (which starts with multiplicities of pure distinctions, for which potential infinity is a theorem, and which only after long labour arrives at the continuum of real numbers), interesting as they might be, are not essential for us, because they involve us already into a consideration of foundations, if not of mathematics itself. Like the distinctions of actual vs. potential infinity, infinity vs. unboundedness, infinite time

¹⁹This space might be taken as an *a priori* form of intuition, the background from which the distinctions emerge, and not as the mere simultaneity of primordial distinctions, spatiality from I:§13.

vs. infinite space, etc., it only witnesses to the multiplicity of possible ways of reflecting the origin, possible ways of actually relating pure distinctions to each other and to the indistinct background from which they emerge.

Summarising...

A priori

79.

The given account may remind of Kantian *a priori* forms providing conditions of possibility of experience. Distinction is an event of every experience and, with it, pure distinction its *a priori* condition. This, however, is only an analogy of form, in that pure distinctions play similar role to *a priori* forms which are not thematical contents of experience but necessary aspects underlying all experiences. Unlike Kantian forms, they are themselves experienced in the immediacy of self-consciousness. Beyond this mere fact of distinctness, they do not provide any more specific form to experience, in particular, the temporal and spatial dimension are much lower aspects of actual experience. The main difference, if we were to speak about *a priori* conditions of experience, would concern the fact that pure distinctions are not independent from experience but, on the contrary, are present only through particular experiences and are themselves experienced. They mark the mere fact of being of every distinguished content, constituting this deepest aspect to every experience. In this sense, mathematics is the science of pure being.

Even if mathematical concepts have developed, evolved and proliferated over its long history, there is something which makes Phytagorean and modern mathematics *equally* mathematics. This primal ground, reflecting its origin, has proved immutable unlike in any other science. Learning physics we never hear about the Ionic philosophy of nature or Aristotelian principles. But learning mathematics we still go through the theorems of Thales, Phytagoras, Euclid. Even if we go as far back as Egyptian engineering or Chaldean astrology we still find sound *mathematical*, not pre-mathematical calculations. As the contributions to the mathematical knowledge they are as valid, relevant and *mathematical* as the theorems of Gauss, Banach, Skolem. Thus, unlike other sciences which have either gone through the processes of essential changes before reaching their modern form or else appeared only very recently, the character of fundamental mathematical objects has remained unchanged since the very beginning.

This does not, perhaps, prove anything but it indicates that even the most primitive and underdeveloped mathematics is *equally* mathematics as its most advanced forms. It may have different foundations, it may pursue this rather than that branch of inquiry, but it cannot dissociate itself from its origin without ceasing to be mathematics. Mathematics of other intelligent beings might be very different from ours. But to the extent it is mathematics, it would rest on the same, *a priori* origin and, as such, could not contain

theorems contradicting the theorems of our mathematics.

80. **Abstraction**

All other sciences emerge as a consequence of extracting from the whole human experience some restricted domain – of specific objects or problems. The notions of such a domain may then undergo a gradual abstraction which eventually yields quite abstract entities with which most advanced sciences are occupied. The abstract character of a science is always the end result, never the beginning. But this schema obviously does not work for mathematics. Its original objects have not changed since its beginning. And if we try to elucidate the basic notions of point, number and the like by a reference to the process of abstraction we would have to explain also what made our remote ancestors so intensely interested in just this line of extreme abstraction and made them ignore more or less all others. Why did Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks carry out this line of abstraction to its very extreme while in all other areas stopped at a very elementary level? Perhaps, simply because nobody had to abstract himself toward the notion of a multiplicity by disregarding more and more properties of actual objects. If the *experience* of pure distinction lies both in the background of our being *and* at the origin of mathematics, then there is no need to make our ancestors so mystically different from us, because there is no need for abstraction at all.

Abstraction lies only in positing the original intuition of pure distinction as an object of independent study, in turning this intuition into an explicit representation, if you like, in turning from the origin towards a foundation. Study of mathematics may be difficult and abstract. But it does not mean that its fundamental objects are abstractions extracted from or even unrelated to experience.

81. **Synthetic and universal**

Mathematics is not only *a priori* but also synthetic – it applies to experience, in fact, to every experience, simply because it addresses elements present in every experience. Distinction, chaos and actuality are constant aspects of all our experience, knowledge and activity. All experience is self-conscious and so with any distinction there is associated the awareness of the fact of distinctness, of pure distinction. Similarly, with the actuality of an experience there is given a multiplicity of pure distinctions and with chaos – their infinity. These intuitions, even if not represented explicitly in mathematical or other concepts, accompany all our experience.

But this universal applicability amounts also to a reduction. Mathematics is applicable to an experience only to the extent we view it through the glasses of pure distinctions. Mathematics applied to engineering, to sociology, even to psychology is always the same mathematics and it says equally much (or little) about each area – it says only that much as can be expressed in terms of pure distinctions. Counting houses is no different from counting

sheep, nor from counting sheep and apples and friends, because counting is always only counting of multiplicities, of points, of pure distinctions. We can apply mathematics to any experience only to the extent we are willing to disregard all possible differences of content and consider only differences of number. The synthetic character of mathematical enterprise is really the same as its *a priori* character – the fact that experience is an experience only to the extent it is differentiated.

Hence mathematics is synthetic and truly universal: not because it can say something about the content of every experience but because it does not say anything about such a content – only that each content must be distinguished. As usual, the price for generality is the loss of concreteness.

Necessary vs. universal

82.

It might seem that universality accounts also for necessity, that, as Kant meant, the two are inseparable. But they are both separable and very different.

Universality will say “something is always valid”, necessity “something can not be otherwise”. The former is quite a natural concept. If it is empirical, then it is exactly what makes it natural. To some extent everybody makes generalisations and arrives at some universal formulations. Now, one may say “all ashtrays in this room are green” but we should not confuse the syntactic form (the mere presence of the universal quantifier) with universality. Universality involves generality and is concerned with the totality of the world. That we always distinguish, that so it is, is a universal statement. But such “so it is” is not sufficient for necessity because necessity is concerned not only with the actual world but with all possible worlds. It cannot merely say what is always the case in the world, it also has to exclude its opposite from all possible worlds. Only by confusing the universal quantification over the objects within the world with the universal quantification over possible worlds, can one confuse universality with necessity.

Since universality is concerned with the actual world and necessity with all possibilities, the former does not imply the latter.

Necessity is thought *de re* – it is a property of objects, relations and states of affairs. Saying “this statement is necessary” we mean “what it claims holds with necessity”. It is the behaviour of objects or some state of affairs which is characterised as necessary. As the paradigmatic example one has always posited the causal relation which holds necessarily between x and y if an occurrence of x is a *sufficient* reason for the occurrence of y . After Hume’s criticism it seemed impossible to maintain this idea of necessity which was first relegated to the categories of pure reason and, eventually, to the sphere of purely linguistic phenomena. In this tradition, it is the analyticity of judgments which is supposed to account for all possible necessity – of judgments, of course. If such judgments existed they would be necessary by being void

of all real content, by being true for purely linguistic reasons of mere meaning of terms. We could agree that necessity implies removal of the actual content but not that it is a purely linguistic phenomenon. It is related to our understanding but not as if this required language and opposed experience. It is related to all the actual objects but only to the extent these are reduced to the ideal immediacy, eventually, to the contentless pure distinctions.

83. Universality involves not only “for all x ” but also a kind of generality, totality of the world. Necessity, concerned with all possible worlds, would thus imply universality. But this is only a superficial, formal implication. Necessity does not require any generality. “In the experiment which started at the Ridiculous Labs, CA, USA, on the 26th February, at 14:03':52":18”, the generated positron had to turn left, the electron had to make a U-turn and, colliding, they had to annihilate.” Without making any claims to the physical plausibility of this statement – it says that something was necessary. It says that no matter what, given the above conditions things could not have happened otherwise. But one could hardly call it a universal statement. Replacing “the generated positron” with “any positron which might have been generated at this point” would only change the syntax giving at most a resemblance of generality.

It is only by designating more and more specific conditions, by isolating a situation or an object and excluding the possibility of interference from the unpredictable surroundings that we arrive at the laws which we consider necessary. If the result above is claimed to hold with necessity *only* because there is a general law saying that any positron and any electron will necessarily annihilate under the given conditions, then it is just another level of the same – isolating and narrowing conditions to specify sufficient reasons for some effect. The “any” may give an impression of generality but it is only an impression. This apparent generality merely hides the highly particular definitions of electron, positron, their specific properties, in addition to the ‘given conditions’, to the ‘other things being equal’ which underlies every claim to necessity.

The way to necessity goes via increased precision and specialisation, i.e., in the opposite direction than the way to universality. The more content, the less necessity. The richer the perception of a situation, the more possibilities it unveils, the less tractable and the more difficult to control it becomes. And hence the attempts to design a grand theory of everything, to subsume the whole world under the rule of necessary laws impoverish the world. Certainly, some parts of the world can be reduced to simple entities which are prone to the descriptions in terms of the necessary. (Such descriptions seem always to conjure the possibility of control.) But the dangerous impoverishment occurs when the drive is uninhibited, when it tries to defeat everything escaping

control. Only disappearance of content makes perfect necessity possible.

The obvious attempt to obtain necessity seems thus to look for judgments 84. with no content. Tautologies and contradictions were suggested but then one should, perhaps, include also meaningless statements having no content. Besides, even the non-contradiction principle is not necessary unless one assumes appropriate reduction of the domain of discourse. This reduction goes in the direction of immediacy and ends with mathematics. The alternative (to the analytical necessity of empty statements) is to remove all content from the considered objects, leaving only the ultimate minimum of precise alternatives: 'yes' or 'no', a pure distinction. Necessity amounts to removing possibilities and the limit of this process is when only one possibility remains. But to be able to exclude possibilities with full obviousness and precision, these must be first precisely given. Necessity of mathematical results is only another side of their ultimate precision and is based exclusively on the character of the fundamental objects – the ultimately reduced, most immediate, entirely contentless pure distinctions, devoid of any interfering context. The source of this necessity is the resulting pure bivalence, the ultimate *tertium non datur*, the absolute character of negation which, viewed within pure immediacy allows two and only two alternatives, being or not-being, yes or no.²⁰

Principles of bivalence and contravalence emerge from the level of immediacy, and now we encounter also necessity as arising from this nexus. It springs from the idea that things can not possibly be different, the idea having its site in the residual point of 'now', where there is only what there is, ultimately dissociated from the surroundings and thus as unavoidable and necessary as it is arbitrary and spontaneous. The site of necessity is immediacy and attempts to extend it beyond this narrow horizon fail rather miserably, as already Hume has shown. In particular, they must first reduce the objects of interest to the residual points, and such a reduction is seldom satisfactory. Furthermore, most imaginable alternatives, i.e., most possible worlds are completely irrelevant, existentially uninteresting, and this is what makes necessity an 'unnatural', almost inhuman property. The implausibility of claiming that a specific thing, a particular event or relation could not *possibly* be otherwise, is also the reason for the almost instinctive rejection – at least by the common sense – of all sophisticated arguments produced in favour of determinism.

²⁰The fundamental role of bivalence in mathematics does not, of course, imply that, for instance, either continuum hypothesis or its negation must follow from ZF(C) or that, in general, given a mathematical context every possible question must have a unique answer. Such undetermined questions arise in more advanced contexts, but not with respect to the original objects with which we are dealing here and which comprise only natural numbers and basic geometrical intuitions. Already fractions, not to mention real numbers, represent advanced constructions going far beyond the origin.

Mathematical truths may be tautologies, but they are not empty tautologies. Perhaps, one could develop an apparatus making $1 \neq 2$ an empty statement. It seems, however, hard to imagine how one could even start doing this without the prior distinction between one \bullet and another \bullet , without the experience (not an experience!) of \neq . Mathematical propositions tell us the story of the objects they describe. Their necessity follows not from their emptiness but from the emptiness of these objects. It does not hide in any formal properties of the proof techniques or particular axiomatisations. All such techniques have equally necessary character because they all have to conform to the standards of immediate univocity set up by their objects. The fact that a mathematical theorem is either true or false mimics only the contentless duality of the pure distinction. It is the ultimate poverty of mathematical objects which accounts for their necessity.

85. There are degrees of approximation to pure immediacy, that is, degrees of abstraction from the concrete content, and hence degrees of necessity – objects may be more or less abstract, depending on how close they come to the level of immediacy. Consider the increase of the ‘real’ content in passing from mathematics to physics, then to biology, from biology to history, from sociology to literature. This increase is clearly accompanied by the decreasing degree of necessary determinations or, if you allow, by the increase of freedom. It is no coincidence that the scientific and philosophical attempts to establish a system of necessary laws end up with abstract statements. But the statements are abstract not because they are empty tautologies – they are abstract because they had to dispense with most of the concrete content of the described objects. The search for the infallible laws leads sciences to construe their objects in a more and more simple and elementary fashion because necessity requires precision, that is, approximation to immediacy, reduction of the concrete content. It is always as tempting to postulate necessity – in form of sufficient reasons, binding explanations, inviolable laws of nature or reason... – as it is hard to justify such postulates. For to justify them one has to reduce everything to some form of mathematics. Not only natural sciences but also economy, sociology, even psychology display the symptoms of the mathematical disease. The mathematical point, the vanishing (or rather the barely appearing) indication of something-being-there, the shadow of the ultimate atom is the ghost haunting the knights of necessity. But trying to Pythagorise and philosophise by mathematics alone ends, if not in the labyrinths of numerology, then at a philosophical desert, which is as great as it is empty.

“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”
Gen. XXVIII:12

Part II

Between Heaven and Earth

The order of ontological founding, of the gradual actualisation of the original 1. virtuality, of something emerging out of nothing through the differentiation from the indistinct has led us to the level of reflective experiences, of the dissociated objects appearing within the familiar horizon of actuality. It is not possible to go any further. Dissociated objects, particular items appearing as mutually independent, can not be further distinguished. Sure, more objects and specific distinctions can always be found, but not any new level of more definite ‘distinctness’. The ultimate atomization, dissociation into a multiplicity of independent entities, marks the qualitative end of the process of differentiation. We now reverse the direction and consider the ways in which the ontological hierarchy is reflected in experience or how reflection may organise the world – not only of its dissociated objects but of its whole experience. We will thus proceed with the categories of reflection, with dissociated limits of distinctions, and move in the direction opposite to the order of ontological founding. Although the way up and the way down is one and the same, it looks and feels very different when walked up and down. We will follow the objectivistic way bottom-up avoiding, of course, the objectivistic attitude and its illusory self-sufficiency.

As the earlier hypostases gather underneath the differentiated contents of 2. actual experiences and permeate them with the invisible Rest, they are also experienced – not as actual objects but as layers which surround any such object, as aspects of every actual experience. The levels of any experience correspond roughly to the subsequent hypostases of being:

- immediacy is like the ideal limit of spatio-temporality, impossible and unavoidable companion of reflective narrowing;
- the horizon of actuality circumscribes the limits of the appearances and givens, the most familiar objects;
- the level of mineness encircles the limits of my world and my whole

life, contributing the personal aspect to every actual experience;

- invisibles are the ever present aspects which are never exhausted by the actual experiences.

The scope of temporal reference can serve as a guiding factor distinguishing these aspects of any experience: from the ideal timeless point, pure immediacy of an isolated object, through the finite and limited scope of actual, complex givens, then the finite but unlimited time of one's whole life, to the – again timeless, but now living – eternity, the immovable presence of the origin. Using this as the basis of distinction, let us nevertheless remember that these differences are only indications of the whole nexuses of aspects which distinguish various levels. We will address the following:

1. the character of the signs, or the way of actual appearance, specific for the contents of a given level;
2. the correlate of the experience – its ‘objective pole’, the character of its contents;
3. the character of the ‘subjective pole’; ¹
4. the form of transcendence pertaining to the contents of the given level; there are two different aspects which, together, constitute the character of transcendence:
 - (a) the horizontal transcendence of the correlate, of the ‘objective pole’ of an experience at a given level; as a variation of horizontal transcendence, one will usually consider the merely quantitative transcendence of other correlates with respect to the actual one
 - (b) the vertical, or qualitative transcendence, which contains the non-actual aspects of the experience at the current level, pointing toward the higher one.

1 Immediacy

3. Experientially, immediacy can be taken as a shortest possible time span in which we can still experience, feel, sense – discern – something. We are not asking about its objective duration which, upon reflection, dissolves in the ideal limit of immediacy, the point of pure ‘now’. But we can meaningfully, if only roughly, ask about what remains as the possible experience. It might be, perhaps, a single sensation, a punctual, localised, feeling of pain, pricking, heat, hearing a noise. It might be also perception of a simple thing, perhaps,

¹The points 2 and 3 approach the usual dissociation of object and subject only at the lowest level. They could be better called “origin” and “reflection”, if we had not reserved these words for other purposes.

a single thought appearing instantaneously in our imagination. It might also be all such aspects together in one moment. Immediate experience is that which has no time to be mediated. What is so experienced may vary, in particular, with the level of attention we pay to things but it will never last two hours, it will be always comprised in a tiny instant of time. We will devote a few paragraphs to its experiential basis but most of the section will be concerned with the status of the reflectively posited, ideal and infinitesimal limits.

1.1 Original signs

The original sign of such an immediate experience is not announcing anything, or better, it is announcing itself and only itself. Whether it is ‘subjective’ or ‘objective’, whether it is sensed pain, heard noise, felt dread, perceived object, imagined thought, it is a sign which fully coincides with the signified. It has been cut out from the horizon of experience and, in this sense, reflected. But attentive reflection has not yet had time to carry out its representing explication. When I get burned by a glowing spark thrown out from the fire, I do not experience a sensation *and* a spark, it is the spark which hurts me as I cry out “Ah, *it* burns!” ‘It’ is equally the spark and the place of my body where it burns. The sign and what it possibly signifies may be, perhaps, distinguished by subsequent reflection, but they coincide in the immediate experience. There is no intentionality and the experience has the form of a pure ‘state’ with a definite quality (pain, warmth, meekness, etc.)

Such an immediate sign coincides also with the reaction, if any. Pain caused by a burning spark is nothing else than the immediate reaction of withdrawal which, typically, is taken care of by the peripheral nervous system. Similarly, a pleasant sensation is nothing else than the response of my body to its attraction. (This may become reflectively realised first when the pleasant stimulus withdraws and I have to attempt to approach it but, originally, there is no distinction between the pleasant stimulus, its attractive force and the reaction of ‘approaching’ or ‘preserving’ it.)

Such reactions are reflexes, elementary reflections, involving an extreme narrowing of the focus to this particular, isolated point. Consequently, there is no personal subject of such an event. Sure, it is I who experience the pain, but in its immediacy it is not even relative to *my* body, but merely to a particular sense, organ or point of the body which, so to speak, only happens to be mine. The experience itself does not involve myself and a more reflective act is needed to refer it to a subject. As long as I do not perform it, I remain dissolved in the immediacy of reflexes, which are mine but which only *post factum* appear *as* mine.

1.2 Reflective signs

5. Reflective signs are original signs appearing *as* mine or, what amounts to the same, appearing *as* signs. Reflexes, the signs of immediate contents, are reflections in our primordial sense of narrowing the horizon of attention to the limit of immediacy. But they appear *as* such signs only on a subsequent reflection, one might say, in a reflection of the second-order directed at something already reflected. Such an attentive reflection amounts, in general, only to drawing still sharper contours, to isolating the objects in a more definite way. Reflective signs are the reflections of the original signs which, appearing now in reflective dissociation, appear *as* signs.

The very possibility of speaking about original signs is based on their having being thus reflected. We could say that the original signs are products of reflection which isolates just these signs from the rest of experience. Consequently, there might be nothing to add, since the original signs are only reflectively isolated signs and the reflective signs are only the former posited as explicit objects. Whatever we might say about original signs is already the work of reflection. However, like every reflection, it brings a new element: the doubling. The reflected sign and its reflection do not coincide, the former appears as the original and the latter as its representation. Reflection isolates the original signs as signs which do not need such an isolation, it isolates them as functioning independently from being reflected. What distinguishes reflective signs from the original ones is the universal feature of reflection: the desire for mimesis, the attempt to reconstruct the reflected, even when – or, perhaps, especially when – the latter is only a product of reflection.

Thus, the object of a reflective sign is the original sign, and the split occurs between these two. But reflection always forgets itself and here it means that it identifies itself with the sign it is reflecting. After all, as it only draws a contour around the experienced sign, the two are the same.² Nevertheless, the doubling is also experienced and the split is now posited as occurring between the original sign and its object. This is only an example of the general workings of reflection which finds the subject-object split in any model of itself it might possibly construct or in any thing with which it might possibly identify itself.

6. The question analogous to that asked in §3 would be now: what can such an attentive reflection focus on in a ‘shortest possible moment’, or better, what kind of reflection would make its object, not only its sign, closest to itself?

²For instance, I am reflecting now on an earlier experienced sensation – the subject of both is the same I. The fact that the sensation and its reflection are two distinct events which are perhaps anchored in the unity, but only one stretching beyond the immediacy of the subject, is ignored by such a reasoning. It takes the temporal unity of a person for granted and conflates it with the unity of the immediate subject.

It would not be directed to any “large” thing like Prague or the world, nor to any vague generality like the meaning of life or love. It would be directed to an immediate object like the table in front of one or a sensation. But as the attempted coincidence in the thing’s minuteness makes it impossible to capture any definite content (which slips out of the horizon narrowed to the infinitesimal immediacy), such a reflection does not contemplate how this object is, what it is like, etc. It becomes the mere registration ‘that it is’.

We can sometimes experience the astonishing fact that this something in front of us *is*, that it at all *is*. Existentialists made such experiences into a nauseous feeling of unbearable, meaningless presence but it may also be quite a detached and full of gratitude realisation ‘that it is’ while it might not be. The question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” expresses also such a reflection, the amazement at the mere *fact* of this something being at all. Such an amazement is the same in front of a table – which at all is – and in the face of a sensation – which at all takes place. The experience simply reveals content’s naked givenness, the mere fact ‘that it is’.

The whole ‘metaphysics of actuality’ has here its concrete, experiential basis. The independent being of an object arises from reflection ‘that it is’. Its givenness – immediate proximity, the fact ‘that it is’ – echos the feature which such reflection shares with the original signs – the full consummation within the experientially unextended immediacy. Yet, although reflection does not have time to reflect over any distance, it is already doubled. Its object appears in total dissociation, the strangeness of its being at all is the strangeness of its being here ‘on its own’, of its being so strangely alone against – and before – the reflective act. The reflective sign, revealing object’s externality, does not any more coincide with this object. Its constitutive feature is the experienced distance separating the thing from its representation, the object from the act or, we can now add, the original sign from the reflective one.

1.3 Substances and particulars

An object, appearing in the reflection ‘that it is’, appears as a dissociated 7. ‘this’, as a complete indivisible being. Although it is a limit of distinctions with some content, reflective narrowing to the minute immediacy reduces it to a dimensionless residuum and empties it of all content, merely suggesting its ‘being there’. It reduces the thing to the mere indication of something, an independent ‘being there’, a point.

The intuitions of Leucippus and Democritus in this respect can hardly be overestimated. The Greek “*atomon*” means indivisible, and the speculative theory of atomism is a deep tribute paid to the immediate experience ‘that it is’. Such an independent, indivisible thing, a mere indication of ‘being there’ stripped of all accidents, gives rise to the idea of an actual substan-

tial being. So idealised notion of a ‘substance’ is certainly not satisfying to the empirically oriented mind and what follows is the search for such substantial points in experience. Whether these are identified with ‘subjective’ sensations, perceptions, clear and precise ideas, or with ‘objective’ things like atoms, elementary particles, quarks or strings are secondary distinctions. They all move within the horizon of immediacy under the evanescent shadow of the ultimate simple, that bounding point which exists without all parts, a minimum of nature.

8. Various traditional criteria for being a substance are gathered in this ideal limit of a point, reflecting the features of a limit of distinctions solidified as a positive entity. Let’s mention only a few examples.

Dissociation of the object from experience gives rise to its complete independence and self-sufficiency, its existence ‘on its own’. As I attentively dissociate a thing or a sensation from its context and posit it as an object of reflection, it loses its concreteness and appears as a depersonalised external entity, whether an independent substance or an atomic impression. This independent atomicity results from the reflective dissociation attempting to capture the thing as it is in-itself, ‘on its own’.

A related aspect of sedimenting dissociated distinctions as a positive limit or, eventually, of positing an ideal point as a measure of reality, concerns temporality. On the one hand, point gains the place in the, by now objective, time as the ultimate ‘now’. An object posited as a point becomes itself timeless, it resides in the purified ‘now’ which has become dissociated from other such ‘nows’. A substance, abstracted in this way from time, appears as an unchangeable being. It appears so not by any analogy, not because it is actually permanent or because we have extrapolated to it observations of something relatively constant, but because it has been literally pulled out of time, confined to a timeless point of a pure ‘now’. The idea of the unchangeability of a particular substance is founded in this confinement, not in extrapolation from some more or less constant, empirical objects. Its ‘eternity’ does not rise above time, it only ignores it.

Another aspect of the independence and determinacy of an isolated substance is its perfectly clear presence (or absence). It is given here-and-now or it is not, and each alternative appears with perfectly unambiguous precision. This gives rise to the idea(l) of the ‘given’: precisely circumscribed and univocally present (or absent) in the immediate vicinity. Whether it is taken as a definite and unambiguous atom of knowledge – sense datum or clear and distinct idea, or else as an objective atom – a precise minimum of nature, is of secondary importance. The hunt for the infallible, certain knowledge is a companion of the hunt for the ultimate atoms. Both emerge from the idealisation of immediate experiences, from the narrowing of the

horizon of actuality to the idealised immediacy of a point.

Paradoxically, but also very naturally, a point posited as the residuum of precision and infallible knowledge is also the limit of any distinctions, that is, of comprehensibility. In-itself it is unknowable, not because it hides some ultimate content but, on the contrary, because it does not hide anything which could be distinguished, and hence known. Positing the points of the ultimate substances, one posits also the unknowable things-in-themselves.

The eventual dissolution of any substance, as its supposedly accidental properties are being removed, and the ensuing impossibility of an unambiguous and universal determination of any substantial form, is a standard objection against this notion. Rejecting the idea of a substance, which is always the idea of a substance-in-itself, releases us also from considering the supposed things-in-themselves.

Particular things of our experience are not any metaphysical substances. A thing is a cut from experience and a particular thing of daily experience is such a cut terminated and signified within the horizon of actuality. It is a limit of distinctions, suspended at a particular border for reasons which do not follow from the nature of things-in-themselves but from the way in which our confrontation with the One unfolds.³ A thing is a border, *the sum* of all that it excludes, the limit of distinctions from all that *it is not*. This is the whole positive essence, or substantial form, of anything. Knowing one is the same as knowing the other and just as in many contexts it is most purposeful to draw this border around every single stone, in some it may be better to draw it around the whole heap. In this sense, everything indeed reflects the whole universe, every word means something specific only in the context of all other words, microcosmos of every particular reflects the whole macrocosmos. This is also what makes it possible to dissolve (or as one says today, “deconstruct”) any issue, any concept, any theoretical construction – in short, any identity – in the unlimited field of correlations, more specific

³That means, the reasons are of pragmatical rather than objective or metaphysical nature. What's wrong with the (in)famous heap of stones? What does it lack to be a respectable 'substance'? An inherent principle of organisation? A genuine unity? A substantial form? What does not lack all that? If it turns out that it was set up on purpose as a signpost, will it acquire some of these aspects? And if not then, perhaps, when it turns out that it was not merely a signpost, but even its exact form and the number of stones had specific meaning? What are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? – What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – “Simple” means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense ‘composite’? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the ‘simple parts of a chair’. But it makes a lot of sense to speak about chairs and, in other contexts, about parts from which they are made by a carpenter or else about chemical or atomic structure of the materials from which they are made. The limit of distinctions, ‘thinghood’ of anything, depends on the context of one's activity.

determinations and exclusions.

10. One may still object against these elements of negative theology brought to the level of daily trivialities. After all, we do think in positive terms. Standing in front of a house nobody thinks an infinite series of not-... No, but distinguishing is much more than thinking, not to mention reflective attention. We certainly distinguish this house from what surrounds it, this is what makes us see this house at all. Learning the concept of a group, nobody thinks an infinite series of not-..., no, one thinks perhaps a monoid and adds a few axioms. That is, new distinctions are introduced within some given context, whether the context of actual situation, the context of discourse, the context of mathematical investigations – in every case, within the context of some ‘positive’ determinations.

The first thing to observe here is that all the examples (mentioned here and usually mentioned elsewhere) concern reflective distinguishing, that is, distinguishing which starts with something given. This something given is usually a collection of more minute entities composing a complex. But in a deeper, more philosophical reflection, it is some ‘positive’ background to which some more ‘positive’ attributes are added, it is a genus to which one adds *differentia specifca* or a species to which one adds material accidents to obtain this particular. But where does this ‘positive’ background come from? It is *already* distinguished from other ‘positive’ backgrounds, the ‘positive’ backgrounds mutually limit each other. Well, perhaps, but one may still claim that there is something inherently ‘positive’ which accounts for this mutual limitation. We can agree to this in so far as the limitation is not (always) arbitrary, it is a creation as much as a discovery reflecting, at the level of actuality, the subjective abilities as much as the objective content. But this objective content, which carries the ‘positive’ character, is only the border drawn against other contents. It contains as much ‘positive’ as ‘negative’ element and focusing on the former is only the simple matter of efficiency.

Having n distinctions which, in general, divide the space independently from each other, we obtain up to 2^n distinct sub-spaces, each one given by a combination of positive or negative (‘inside’ or ‘outside’) value for each of n distinctions.⁴ (If we denote distinctions by d_1, d_2, \dots, d_n , and the ‘outside’, respectively ‘inside’, of d by d^- , respectively d^+ , then a sub-space s corresponds to a choice $d_1^{s1} d_2^{s2} \dots d_n^{sn}$ where each si is either + or -.) A new distinction will give 2^{n+1} sub-spaces, i.e., every new distinction amounts to the exponential increase in their total number. Thus if we were to identify every particular thing by the set of *all* distinctions separating it from all the rest of the world, we would be exposed to this exponential growth which

⁴Limiting, for the sake of simplicity, the example to binary distinctions. Admitting distinctions with up to k contraries, we only replace the basis 2 with k .

would quickly put a limit to our finite abilities. But assume that we now want to make a distinction d which is relevant only relatively to one – call it s – of all the 2^n sub-spaces. (E.g., we only want to distinguish blue from yellow, that is, our current s is the sub-space of colors.) In principle, it would require a new level of 2^{n+1} possibilities from which only two are of interest: those *within* s which lie ‘outside’ or ‘inside’ of the new d . Stopping the distinctions at some point amounts to forgetting the chain leading to it and merely solidifying the border, drawing it with a thick pen for future reference. Having fixed s , perhaps giving it a name, perhaps associating with it something more than that, in short, turning it into a ‘positive’ entity, we can now identify the new possibilities as sd^+ , respectively sd^- , instead of the whole sequences $d_1^{s1}d_2^{s2}\dots d_n^{sn}d^+$, respectively $d_1^{s1}d_2^{s2}\dots d_n^{sn}d^-$. Explaining to somebody what “yellow” means, we do not start by saying that it is not a body, nor the taste of lemon, nor the view from Mount Everest, nor... We start by saying that it is a color – this limits immediately the horizon of attention to the relevant sub-space. Having a solidified border – that is, simply forgetting the chain of negations which constitute it – reduces the burden of explicitly handling further distinctions which are to appear *within* these sub-spaces. The ‘positive’ determinations allow one to forget the – enormous and typically reflectively unknown – number of distinctions which, although present, would only disturb dealing with the actual object confusing the context with a multitude of irrelevancies. Nevertheless, the mutuality of distinctions, the full series of exclusions behind every ‘positive’ determination, can always be invoked – sometimes, to draw attention to the overlooked aspects of importance and, sometimes, to make an intellectual figure disturbing the otherwise smooth communication.

1.4 Subject

The idealizing reduction of things to objective, ‘substantial’ points affects 11. an analogous reduction on the side of the subject. The immediate subject is no real entity but merely an act, as described in I:4.1. Historically, a lot of time and reflective effort has been needed to fetch the subject out of the cave where it was put along with the subjectivity, sophistry and the like offenders of objectivistic seriousness. Once it arose, the idealistic subject of the transcendental constitution became the only protagonist of the whole process, furnished only with the external matter of sensations. The latter was, if not indistinct, then completely unstructured and in this respect played the role similar to our indistinct. It was, however, sensuously differentiated and this restricted the scope of the whole development to the pure immediacy. The transcendental subject is not responsible for distinguishing the indistinct. It is only responsible for constructing the organized experience out of the differentiated matter of sensations. This limitation to immediacy is reflected in

the whole transcendental constitution being as instantaneous as it is timeless. Consequently, the subject, dissociated from the unity of the existence, loses its ontological foundation and becomes a mere act. It operates always in the ideal immediacy of an unextended ‘now’, its object appears in the immediacy of a single act which, carrying the burden of the constitution of the whole world, becomes as complicated as it is instantaneous. Contents appearing at a point dissociated from its surroundings, appear as arbitrary or, whenever one wants to effect more positive connotations, as spontaneous. The spontaneity of the immediate subject is just the other side of the arbitrariness of the object emerging – no matter through how intricate meanders of transcendental constitution – *ex nihilo*, not even in the actuality of here-and-now, but in the ideal limit of pure and timeless immediacy. Subject or, equivalently in this tradition, consciousness – whether Descartes’ cogito, Kant’s ‘I think’, Fichte’s Ego, Husserl’s transcendental consciousness or Sartre’s for-itself – is actual through and through, is an instantaneous – and by the same token, or rather *only in this sense*, spontaneous – act of constitution of an object. Spontaneity of this act of endowing with form is, as we just said, only another side of the arbitrariness of the appearing content. Both aspects, dissociated from the surrounding background of experience, have no ontological anchoring. For this reason, in all deeper instances of this tradition, the subject is only a momentaneous act, never a (real, temporal) being. Its spontaneous nature may appear appealing, but only as long as one forgets that it might equally well be called “whimsical”.

1.5 Transcendence

12. Reflection ‘that it is’ experiences the transcendence of its object primarily as its externality. We could almost say that it is nothing else than such an experience of externality, that externality is the universal content of every reflection which merely notices ‘that it is’. This is even the case with the burning spark. Although the sign, object and reflex coincide temporarily, the very narrowing of the horizon of the event and reaction amounts to externalisation. It is not me, it only affects me; it does not involve me, only a part of my body. Externalisation amounts to this abstract minuteness which constitutes the sense of being somehow foreign, not quite mine, external. It has nothing to do with space, though the aspect of spatiality enters this relation as simultaneity, in that the external object is experienced simultaneously and *as* simultaneous with the subject of the experience.

This simultaneity, however, has all the ambiguity of different levels. It is indeed co-extensional with the horizon of actuality, but it also harbours the reflective act which, narrowing this horizon to immediacy, arrives after its contents. This dissonance between the immediacy of the given sign and object’s temporal sliding in the reflective after is exactly the experience of

externality.

We have also pointed out the character of double dissociation involved in 13. externality, I:§27. On the one hand, externality is an aspect of consciousness encountering its object as distinct from itself, which amounts to the same as self-consciousness. But the sharp distinctness of the object from consciousness is but another side of its dissociation from the background, from its origin. An object, imprisoned within the horizon of immediacy, has been dissociated from everything else. Its independence, its being entirely ‘on its own’ is, on the one hand, the apparently constitutive feature of its ‘substantiality’ and, on the other hand, its fundamental lack, its abstract unreality. The strangeness of an object appearing in the reflection ‘that it is’, the strangeness of its being at all is the strangeness of its being here on its own, of its being so strangely alone. The virtual signification is particularly strongly felt along with the external objects – their externality is the ultimate sign terminating the trace of signification. The same unreality affects the immediate subject. Dissociated from its ontological foundation, it has no real being, it is only an isolated act, as spontaneous and arbitrary as its object.

This unreality, present in the immediate experience and felt by the reflective attitude towards it, is the vertical aspect of transcendence involved here. An object dissociated from its surroundings, a pure ‘substance’, appears as a spontaneous (arbitrary) fact ‘that it is’ – as intriguing as meaningless. Not only has it no reason to be so and not otherwise – it has no reason to be at all. The existentialistic nausea is a natural reaction, but not the only possible. For it may be also grasped with a grateful fascination or detached thankfulness: it is – but it might not be! The latter is possible because it already involves more than the pure immediacy of the act and its given, because it already witnesses to the anchoring of the immediacy in the wider context of actuality, to the vertical dimension of transcendence.

2 Actuality

Actual experiences correspond most closely to what is commonly understood by experiences. Their temporal span is not ideal limit of immediacy but some relatively short, yet not extensionless, time. Their objects are not any idealised entities but complex situations, their signs – not any minute reflexes but recognisable impressions and explicable concepts.

2.1 Complexes

Entering a room for the first time, gives often at once a specific impression 14. of its character. It can not be defined but can often be communicated as

ugly, cosy, warm, cold, dark, pleasant... After a few moments, the room's experience changes in that one becomes more attentive to its various aspects and parts. One notices the arrangement of furniture, the colors, the fracture of the walls etc. At the same time, the room itself recedes in the background, one no longer perceives the room but this window, this corner, this armchair. If, however, suddenly asked "How do you like this room?" one can again posit it as one unit. Describing now its elements and their interplay, one address *the actual object*, this room, but addresses it as a complex. It is both a unity and a multiplicity. Trying to grasp the whole room, one will easily fail. Trying to embrace simultaneously all its details in one act, one can, at best, summarise them in a general impression. Very often, the very same impression one had on entering the room. But one also knows that this original impression is only an abbreviation, that the room's unity is a complex totality. The room exemplifies what is typically considered an object of experience. Actual experiences involve not just residual objects but complexes, unitary objects which are internally differentiated totalities.

15. No such complexes are more fundamental than others. Before a child sees that a chair can be moved away from the table, the two can be experienced as one complex: one, because they are *together* dissociated from the background, and complex because itself internally differentiated. A picture hanging on the wall is not part of the wall, nor something on it. To begin with, there is neither a picture nor a wall but a totality of one complex. Once we have learned that chairs and tables come separately and that picture may be taken off the wall, we live with the immediate consciousness of these complexes whenever we encounter them. But this is the end rather than the beginning of the story.

A variety of distinctions becomes one complex when it is cut out of experience as both differentiated beyond the actual givens and yet posited as one totality within the horizon of actuality through a unifying, actual sign. Complexes are like objects which emerge not due to any metaphysical 'substantial form', but due to their particular relation to the horizon of actuality. Their constitutive feature is that, being grasped within the horizon of actuality, they are recognised as units, but units which are totalities presenting themselves, so to speak, incompletely. Although given actually through a unifying sign, they are not fully actual, they always carry some recognised distinctions which slip out of the horizon of the actually given.

16. The first, in the order of founding, experience on entering the room is not of furniture, walls, pictures etc. but of '...', of the unity of the actual experience. One does not look attentively into each corner, contemplate the ceiling, the floor, in order to finally conclude "Yeah, it is this room". At first, it is '...', a new actuality emerging from the background of experience, one might say, from the background from which one entered the room. Only in

terms of the reflectively dissociated ‘substantial parts’, this new actuality seems to be added to the preceding series of actualities. And thinking in such terms, trying to specify the objective features which constitute this new actuality, one looks for the more and more specific atoms which might account for the discontinuity of attentive reflection. But experientially, it is not added to the previous experiences but, on the contrary, subtracted from the background, dissociated from the continuity of experience.

The correlate of the reflection ‘that it is’ was called “object”. Its specific feature is that, appearing within the immediate limit of the horizon of actuality, its experience coincides with its sign: the sign, that is, the fact of simply being. Complexes are, ‘objectively’, the same things. But in addition to being experienced as objects, involving merely the unity of a residual being, their experience involves also multiplicity, totality of various elements. The experience of complexes involves therefore not only their objective unity but also the experience of their being complex, even if not of their full complexity.

2.2 The signs

The signs of complexes refer thus not only to the immediate givens but also to the aspects which, at the moment of experience, are not given within the horizon of actuality – and are experienced as such. The unity of a complex is experienced independently from the potential, reflectively constructed unity of the objective contents. Even if a chair may seem to possess more unity than a heap of stones, the unity of both is the same unity of a single act drawing the border around the internally differentiated contents. The unity of a complex is differentiated. It is a multiplicity of simultaneous elements which is experienced along with their unity. In this sense, every actuality, every situation, involves a complex, a unity of multiplicity. The differences between various signs of complexes concern primarily whether they focus on the aspect of unity or multiplicity. The original signs do the former and the reflective ones the latter.

2.2.1. Original signs

Arriving to the city center, I park my car and enter a cafe. I am enjoying 17. the perspective of a quite hour over a cup of coffee and a good book. The coffee I get is not exactly the best, but it is not enough to spoil the mood. Unexpectedly, I see a friend approaching my table. He asks how long I have been here, how I arrived here, where I parked my car. At this moment I realise that I locked the keys in the car. Oohh! The mood of the expected quietude disappears suddenly and I am getting upset. What makes me so? Not the keys locked in the car because, in themselves, they are not relevant to the sense of quiet enjoyment. It is the whole complex of the situation,

the anticipated trouble, the money I have to pay, the spoiled hour at the cafe. The simple fact of locked keys is certainly the focal point but getting upset unveils much more than this simple fact. The impression unveils the significance of the simple fact, its placement in a broader, complex context of related facts and consequences.

Calm voice of my friend, reassuring me that it is no big problem, we just call this and that number, wait outside smoking a cigarette and they will come and open the car, helps a lot. One could say, he only rationalises away my impression. Indeed, but how? By bringing in points of view, possible solutions and, not least, his calm attitude, which all together modify the complex. He changes my mood by modifying the totality of the (aspects relevant for the) situation.

18. The original signs of actuality are all kinds of such moods and impressions.⁵ They are direct and original in the sense that they can be experienced without the respective complex being at all given and are usually experienced without all the aspects of the respective complex being given. They often appear as premonitions announcing the respective complexes. One can be frightened without knowing exactly what is frightening one, one can be in a bad mood without knowing exactly why.

Even if some complex is present, the border between it and its impression can be very vague. In the evening we are sitting with some friends around a table in a pub having an enjoyable conversation about nothing. After some time the neighbour who was sitting on his own joins in. There is some intense curiosity in his eyes, as if slight irritability in the way they search through the whole place. But he seems to be doing quite well in joining and even modifying the conversation. After a few questions and answers he focuses on something particular one of us said and follows it up with more and more detailed questions. “So what did you really mean by that?” ... Hmmm. “Was it this or that? But then, you see, you would have to say that...” His acuteness seems a bit uneasy, perhaps, impolite and too detailed but, so far, there is nothing directly wrong with it. And nothing wrong happens later on, either. After leaving the place, all of us have the same impression of the guy with a somewhat inquisitive attitude, as if afraid of unveiling his own meanings; interrogative, perhaps not quite a Porfiry Petrovich but still a bit like a detective. It is impossible to say at which point this impression started to make itself felt. Was it when he started to ask the questions? When he joined our conversation? Was it already his fidgety look? It is equally impossible to say to what precisely this impression refers. We could mention a lot of small examples, things he said, ways he looked but it is not the mere sum of such minute particulars. “The detective” does not mean any

⁵One might say, for instance, that moods are lasting impressions or draw other distinctions but we will not differentiate here any further.

of his particular, 'objectively given' features. It means the general impression he created, reflecting in the unitary sign the totality of such features. There may be far from here to any judgment of the person, but the impression has already painted a whole, even if incomplete, picture.

We can thus list three characteristic features of the original signs of actuality. They announce complexes lending them their unity. They comprise a totality of a complex, a situation or an object, into a unity of one sign, a distinctive mood or impression. An impression is always a simple predicate substituted by an operation of the mind for a highly complicated predicate. This unification is the fundamental function of the original signs of complexes. 19.

Another common feature of the above examples is that the given mood allows a certain variation of more minute impressions, perceptions and immediate sensations. One can experience the same mood in different situations. The original signs of actuality can incarnate in a variety of lower forms. Every one knows how when a painful thing has to be undergone in the near future, the vague feeling that it is impending penetrates all our thought with uneasiness and subtly vitiates our mood even when it does not control our attention; it keeps us from being at rest, at home in the given present. A more pervasive mood, like that induced by the pending expectation, allows for modifications of more minute moods and, in particular, for a large variation in the sensations, perceptions, thoughts and other immediate signs. But it penetrates this variation with the constancy of a unifying sign.

Consequently, moods have a less reactive character than immediate signs. They are to some extent independent from the variation of the external elements, are not fully determined by them. A joyful vigor or pending expectation announces the significance of some complex and could be viewed as caused by something. But, in practice, this cause is often impossible to determine precisely because it is not any single element but their interplay, complex. Complexes have a very wide meaning: a table, a room, a situation, two weeks in Prague, inquisitiveness of a person, are all examples of complexes, of things which are differentiated into variety of aspects but which, nevertheless, appear as totalities, as focal points of all the involved differences. Mood can be seen as the interplay of these differences or else as that which gathers the interplay of *just these* differences in a unifying sign. It is not relative to any single of them. It admits inclusion of further elements and their variation until, eventually, it wanes giving place to a new mood.

2.2.2. Reflective signs

Reflection of a complex no longer stops at the mere observation 'that it is' 20. but notices that it is so-and-so. It goes beyond the positing of something that

merely is and, differentiating the unity of an object, surrounds it with the dissociated accidents, predicates, properties. Eventually, reflection creates lists, lists of properties, aspects, features, and then tries to reconstruct the unity of the complex out of the totality of these scattered parts. We call these reflective signs of complexes “concepts” and “thoughts”.⁶

Concepts are externalised impressions, explications of the unity of complexes as totalities of more specific determinations. Discussing the detective or the locked keys, one will collect a whole series of the important aspects. There may be a difference between ‘the detective’ taken as such a concept and as an impression, but it does not concern their objective correlate, only the mode of its presentation. The concept of this detective may be very vague. Yet, in so far as it is explicated, it is a concept, a list of features gathered around the unity of his person.

21. ***Unity and multiplicity***

Just as an impression is always a simple sign substituted for a highly complicated predicate, so a concept substitutes a complicated predicate for a simple original sign.⁷ Impressions, as the signs of unity, precede in the order of founding concepts which only explicate the involved complexity. A person can recognise ‘BC’ without understanding what ‘B’ and ‘C’ are. Take ‘B’ to be ‘brown’ and ‘C’ to be ‘cat’. A child growing up with only ‘BC’s, but with no separate ‘B’s or ‘C’s, might learn to distinguish ‘BC’s from ‘ZY’s, even have a word “bc”, without ever getting the idea of dissociating ‘B’ from ‘C’. But meeting ‘BD’ (a brown dog?), can give rise to separate recognitions – even dissociation – of ‘B’ and ‘C’. As long as ‘B’ and ‘C’ appear only in ‘BC’ they may be recognised but are not (necessarily) dissociated. What happened with ‘BC’, can now happen to ‘B’ and ‘C’, which remain ‘primitive’ only as long as further distinctions are not drawn.

Arguing at what point the original impression BC becomes a concept is certainly possible but would be pretty artificial. As impressions involve also internal differentiation, the transition between the two is only a matter of degree.

22. The difference between them may be easier to observe once, starting from the reflective dissociations, new units arise from multiplicities of particular experiences. Gathering dissociated totalities into conceptual unities is the

⁶ As we have earlier conflated distinction as the act of distinguishing and as the distinguished content, we now conflate a thought and the concept. By this, we imply only their originary, not universal identity. Although their distinctness is significant for the subjective thinking, we focus rather on the fact that the two arise from the same nexus which later forms an insoluble association between an act of thought and the thought content.

⁷ The Latin *conceptus* reflects well the tension between the unity of the origin/embryo (retained in the English “conception”) and the multiplicity which it gathers and stores as in a container.

primary work of reflection. Yet, although this is typical for construction of advanced concepts, it applies equally to impressions.

Entering a room, one need not get immediately any specific impression. One can have none and get one first after being in this room for a while, after having discovered different aspects and objects collected there which, together, build up a unified impression of the whole. Looking for a way in a foreign city, one can be forced to stop at each cross and ask for directions, to consult the city's plan, etc. Eventually, one finds the way. The next day one may still have difficulties but the intermissions won't be that frequent. After a few times one knows the way 'by heart', one has it as a one entity, given as a unity, not with all its details but with the clarity of the single sign: "I know the way." One has 'built a totality'. Sure, to begin with one might have had a mere idea of this way from the hotel to the restaurant but now one has an experience of it. Whether it is a "concept" or an "impression" depends on where exactly one wants to draw the precise borders. We do not want to draw such borders and only notice that concepts and impressions mark only the opposite directions on the same, continuous line.

One might want to say that "I know the way" expresses neither a concept nor an impression but an intuition: a unitary grasp of a complex which relates immediately to the object, and is single. An example illustrating the generality of such intuition, and of a concept emerging after the experiences of its parts, is provided by explicit thinking, like that involved in understanding a mathematical definition. To begin with, one has to work one's way through the notation, then through the other concepts applied, then their interrelations, finally, its implications and relations to other definitions. Then one may understand it but it is not the same as 'getting it'. To 'get it', one has to grasp the whole in one act – of intuition – which gives an impression of certainty that, even if one does not know all potential implications and applications of the definition, one knows *how* it possibly can be used, that is, where it can not be used. 'Getting it' is an impression of several things falling on their place, accompanying acquisition of a concept.

Thus understood, intuition might be taken as the common element of unity involved both in the experienced impressions and in understanding of concepts. In its technical, philosophical meaning it relates primarily to the conceptual understanding signifying its unitary pole gathering the multiplicity of the differentiated contents. In the more popular meaning, it comes closer to the impressions which provide only a hunch suggesting a vague, yet not arbitrary, direction for further elaboration.

Since starting with the dissociated elements, the unity is not any prior but 24. at most a goal, all reflective efforts are guided by the search for a unifying intuition. The whole tradition of epistemology and theory of knowledge is marked by various attempts to obtain unities from the 'given atoms'.

Abstraction (of higher concepts from particular instances), induction (of general laws from special cases), deduction (of elaborate consequences from simple axioms), construction (of complex structures from atomic data) – all assume some simple and dissociated givens and try to construct from them structured unities.

But as, supposedly, the only givens are the dissociated objects, the searched for unities never seem sufficient for reflection. Gathering any series of properties, we do form a concept. Its unity, however, does not necessarily reflect any inherent interrelations of the involved properties but only the unity of the act of positing. Neither possible deeper motivations of this act, nor any particular features pertaining to its result remove from it the aura of a voluntary *fiat*. In many cases the unity can be reduced to more specific aspects, like coherence, consistency, purposefulness. Yet the need for such a variety of aspects to account for the variety of unities, as well as many cases where none of them is discernible, suggest an almost arbitrary character of what counts as a unity. A single stone is a unity and so is a heap of stones. Unity is accidental, or primitive, in the sense that it amounts to drawing in the matter of experience limits which are not determined by any metaphysical, substantial unities. The actual unity of a concept can be dictated by the context of its formation or use. But metaphysically it has no necessity about it, it is a primitive event of suspending distinctions at a particular border. It resides, so to speak, at a higher level than the unified elements. It has more of the character of a felt impression than of an explicit concept, of an existential experience than of an objective fact. It is therefore always dubious for reflection which, occupied with the ‘objective reality’, keeps only dissolving it into more and more minute entities. For the intellect, the unity remains only a postulate, an act of faith.

25. *Concepts vs. impressions*

Focus of a concept is the interplay of distinct elements, focus of an impression is their unity. And so, psychologically, the two are incommensurate: at any actual moment, it is either a concept or an impression but never both. If, involved in a situation, one tries to observe the arising impressions, they become polluted and falsified. One can not reflectively catch, not to mention, control oneself, in the moment of getting an impression. Trying something like that, dissolves any actual impression, makes it withdraw behind the imposed reflective contour. Likewise, proceeding with a conceptual analysis, one can not pay attention to the impressions which, possibly, accompany it in the background.

Yet, although the two can not be reflectively given simultaneously, so every complex, containing the element of both unity and multiplicity, elicits both modes of apprehension. On the one hand, we know the possibility of talking one out of an impression, like the friend’s arguments which calm me

down. Also, a unified impression, like a vague intuition, carries already the possible results of decomposition into a series of thoughts. Even if it does not contain them explicitly so, once the relevant complex has been dissected, we find in the analysed results the reasons of the original impression. (Also, trying to describe an impression, we are under its guidance in the choice of words, recognising easily whenever we use an inappropriate one.) On the other hand, every reflective sign, every thought has a mood, it creates an associated impression which reflects the unity implied by the thought. Every concept in our conscious mind has its own psychic associations. While such associations may vary in intensity (according to the relative importance of the concept to our whole personality, or according to the other ideas and even complexes to which it is associated), they are capable of changing the 'normal' character of that concept. Every system of thought has a mood, every philosophy has, besides its system of concepts and ideas, a general mood which hangs like a cloud above and flavours its more specific aspects. And just like the understanding of the situation with the locked car keys influences its impression, so one's understanding of a philosophical system influences its mood, the shape and the density of the cloud.⁸

Moods and impressions are considered as subjective, only privately mine, 26 while concepts as objective or, at least, public and shared. As most claims within this dualism, this one is of little interest and sounds as plausible, as it is misleading.

For the first, subjectivity of impressions is not different from the subjectivity of concepts and understanding. Just as different persons may have different impressions of a given complex, they may have different concepts of it. A person with an obsessive fear of revealing his privacy might experience our detective as a persecutor, while one with a purely social interests as an annoying snob. The concept of 'the detective' formed by each person will gather perhaps different aspects of the detective, but all these aspects may be equally objective. In each case we are dealing with the character of the confrontation involving both the subjective and the objective element. Having different emotions in a given situation is just like having different understanding of this situation. Incapacity of some persons to share the

⁸This mood is like the sign of the typical experience underlying the given philosophy (provided that it has character – for as Nietzsche says: only if one has character one also has one's typical experience which recurs again and again.) Say, for example, the mood of Heidegger: gnostic thirst for the hidden truth and resentment over its absence among common men in the lower world; the mood of Nietzsche: unrewarded intensity turning into violent despair, heroic scream lost in the darkness; the mood of Spinoza: noble man need not judge others, but nobility of particular acts originates from the unity with the world; the mood of Wittgenstein was accurately described as empirical mysticism or, perhaps, mystification of empiricism; etc., etc. Finding such superficial and general characteristics insufficient does not change the fact that one recognises their origin, one understands the mood.

emotions of others witnesses to their subjectivity as much as the incapacity of some persons to understand the concepts understood by others witnesses to the subjectivity of concepts.

27. Subjectivity of impressions may be taken as referring to their vagueness, impossibility to identify precisely their content, what they exactly are. The explicit list of dissociated elements involved in a concept, on the other hand, makes their identification and interplay plainly visible. This is reflected in the view of the subjectivity of impressions as their privacy, incommunicability. The unified sign of an impression cannot be dissolved into more precise components without changing the impression. Its fleeting vagueness, reflecting so much the given complex as the background of the person experiencing it, can not be transferred outside the borders of the subject. Concepts, on the contrary, can be shared and publicly communicated.

For the first, impressions are not dissociated from the objective and inter-subjective world, locked within the isolated subjectivity. Even if each of us paid attention to somewhat distinct aspects, we all got the impression of a detective. One would like to claim that this is not a common impression but only some approximate common denominator, perhaps, some objective fact, leading to the impression each of us had in his privacy. But this assumes what it is supposed to justify, namely, that our impressions are some dissociated entities or events, with some sharp borders separating them from each other; that each of us had such a precise impression and that 'the detective' is only their common part. Now, certainly, each of us might have had slightly distinct impression. But 'the detective' is not abstracted from them. On the contrary, the impression each of us had was something which only further specialized the impression of 'the detective'. Each of us can trace his particular impression to the nexus which he, like everybody else, experienced and which we agree to call "the detective". This impression is something genuinely shared by all of us and, consequently, genuinely communicable.

28. Having just admitted that each of us might have had his own, specific version of the shared impression 'detective', we might seem forced to admit that the former are genuinely private. But they are no different from 'the detective'. Every limit of distinctions can be refined and it can be refined in various ways. It is only the question of how specific distinctions we want to communicate. If your impression was of an annoying snob and mine of a persecutor, there is nothing which could, in principle, prevent us from communicating these more specific impressions to each other. Such a communication would have to turn rather personal and intimate. Here we encounter a clear difference from the concepts. The latter are not opposite of impressions in that they are communicable, but in that they are *easily and impersonally* communicable. The objective explication of the elements involved in a concept, their externalisation, serves the purpose of being accessible to an intelligence and

education of the appropriate level – not to particular personalities. Communication of feelings and impressions, on the other hand, presupposes some personal community.

But one might still object. The impression I had was *this particular* feeling, *this* very specific and unique event which could not possibly belong to anybody else. We can, perhaps, communicate the meanings and significance underlying our impressions but we can not share the specificity and uniqueness of actually feeling them. My view of the city is not your view of the same city. I cannot communicate to you exactly and precisely all minute sensations and impressions affecting me when beholding a view. But it is not because they are not communicable to others but because they are inexpressible. I can not communicate them even to myself. Their occurrence is recognised but their specificity and particularity remain below the threshold of attentive, conscious distinguishing. Thus, we do not share them, they remain private. Underneath all communicable impressions, there is a sphere of subjective privacy. It is not expressible and hence, verbally or conceptually, as inaccessible to others as to me. But it is there, it marks something which is mine and only mine.

This private mineness amounts to the minutely dissociated immediacy. Surely, my view of the city is not your view, my sensation of pain is not your sensation of pain. In so far as it is a view of the city it is communicable – but its infinitesimal uniqueness is not. But then also the retinal image in one's left eye is different from the retinal image in the right eye. No two of such ultimately private, minute impressions can have anything in common. Simply because their dissociation breaks any connection between them, because it amounts to the simple fact that one occurred at one point and another at another. The ultimate subjectivity results from such a ultimate narrowing to the limit of immediacy, from viewing the experience as moments of minute impressions – as dissociated from each other as one pure 'now' is dissociated from another. Consequently, the uniqueness of feeling the actual impression can not be shared with other people just like it can not be shared with, that is, repeated in, any following actuality. Its uniqueness, its dissociation within this immediacy is what, by this very token, makes it non-transferable to any other immediacy. Feeling *exactly the same* as another person, or expecting another person to feel *exactly the same* as I am feeling, are futile projects of overcoming the sense of alienated subjectivism. But it is equally hopeless to try to find for the second time *exactly the same* feeling one had before. It fails by necessity, by its very nature, since it places the site of one's being in the minuteness of an immediate act which is dissociated from other people in exactly the same way as from other immediate acts.

As described in I:4.1, subject is only the signifying pole of a single act. The idea of a private, alienated subjectivity arises when this aspect of every

act becomes substantialised. Positing it as an entity, namely, as an entity whose being is exhausted by performing such discontinuous acts, makes its (temporal) unity thoroughly ideal. For such a subject, no sharing, whether with others or with itself, is possible because any unity can be only arbitrary and nominal – not only the unity with others, say, by shared impressions, but also unity of this very subject, of its one immediacy stretching towards and continuously affecting another one.

This is another example of objectivistic attitude, I:4.4.1, which can be now seen to be the same as the subjectivistic attitude. It is motivated by the wish to escape subjectivity. Looking for non-subjective ways of identifying and verifying facts, it finds the criterion of precision. But precision is obtained only by dissociation, by narrowing the focus to the most immediately given. The most immediate, however, being most dissociated, is also the most subjective. Its subjectivity consists in not being transferable anywhere ‘outside’ this immediacy, neither to other people nor to another immediacy. And so, the objectivistic attitude is always accompanied by the whim of the ultimate privacy, alienated subjectivity. Its mistake lies in the belief in the finally dissociated, ultimate atoms, in viewing the immediacy of a dissociated moment as the only point of contact with reality, forgetting that it is only a splinter of the unitary experience.

30. *Understanding*

Summarising, we can say that impressions, just like concepts, are not ‘internal’ events of private and incommunicable subjectivity, but reflections of the confrontation of the actual subject with complex objectivity. Both draw and mark limits of distinctions. Conceptual distinctions may require more precision and explicitness than vague distinctions of impressions. But in both cases these are not (in any case, not always) arbitrary distinctions relative only to subjective wishes. In this respect, the precision of conceptual distinctions is more voluntary, more relative to the subjective actuality than are impressions. We only seldom recognise precise limits. Their sharpness, imposed on the recognitions of experience by attentive reflection, is a more definitely subjective contribution than vagueness of impressions. That this subjectivity of a concept is usually inter-subjective does not change the fact that it is often accompanied by an aura of voluntariness, not to say, of an imposition by the subject, completely absent from impressions.

Both concepts and impressions are modes of understanding, for understanding is recognition of limits. Understanding Prague is to know, roughly, where it ends and ceases to be Prague. Only objectivistic reduction would try to equate it with the knowledge of geography or administrative borders. To know Prague involves knowing what makes Prague different from, say, Paris. Likewise, to understand irritation, not in the sense of understanding its causes but what it is, is to know, roughly, where irritation ceases (or

begins) to be one. Recognising these limits – which, initially, may be simply experiencing irritation – one understands what it is. In the same way, to understand the mathematical concept of a group is to be able to recognise what is a group and what is not, to distinguish it from other mathematical (and non-mathematical) entities, from a monoid, from a field. In each case, it is a wider context which conditions the understanding of an impression or a concept – generally, of a sign. One understands the sign x when one knows what it refers to. Yes, but what it refers to is not (primarily) any positive and determinate essence but the limits of its application, the limits which mark where the complex x begins (and ceases) to be x .

Consequently, understanding is relative to the context in which the thing is considered because this context influences the boundaries of the thing. If the only other concept one has is that of a monoid, the understanding of group may be very poor. (Yet, it will be understanding! A group is distinguished from a monoid.) If one is able to relate the group to a large variety of other concepts, the understanding will be respectively deeper, in that a group will be distinguished from more things/concepts with which it otherwise might be confused.

One should notice here an entirely implicit mechanism of excluding some 31. obviously irrelevant contexts. One won't try to relate the mathematical groups to cows, last weekend's trip, one's mother. Although implicit, this is equally essential aspect of understanding since it, too, tells something about the limits of the thing. A great challenge of teaching, for example, consists in being able to explicitly delimit the object under consideration against the horizon of unrelated issues which, typically, intrude on the apprehension of the object. Poor understanding will often violate exactly such implicit limits which for a more advanced understanding are not worth mentioning.

Laughter provides another good example of the involvement of every thing into implicit contexts from which understanding must delimit it. Many jokes work by violating the assumptions of such implicit contexts and dissolving the stiff form of habit and rule in the flow of the possible, yet unexpected, associations. Laughter brings such implicitly and often dogmatically assumed elements to the front and in this consists its often powerful and destructive function – it abolishes the positive and determinate character of the 'given'. The function of positive determinations assigned to various limits of distinctions is exactly to exclude possibilities which are irrelevant and disturbing, §10. Laughter breaks these barriers. Its working is the more negative and threatening, the more stiffened form and the more dogmatic prejudices one admits into one's attitude. For then laughter is a painful reminder of their relativity, of the experienced flow from which they had emerged and which keeps surrounding them. Inflexibility and rigidity of a character, whether personal or national, which feels threatened as soon as

some rule is violated, is the same as the lack of wit and humor.

32. ***Essences***

We have devoted quite some space to the equiprimordial epistemic status of impressions and concepts – both reveal limits, and thus mark understanding of complexes. But we have not denied their difference which concerns mainly the explicit character of the totality of aspects involved in a concept versus its at most implicit presence in a unified impression. This difference has marked the philosophical explications which, driven by the ideal of explicitness and precision, assigned a much higher status and devoted much more attention to the precision of concepts than to the vagueness of impressions. Concepts, in their dissociated and impersonal precision, have always seemed to offer a more ‘objective’ grasp of reality than vague and ‘subjective’ impressions.

We have downplayed this opposition, emphasizing the objective correlate of impressions and equating thoughts and concepts. One would, however, like to consider them distinct. Thought seems to be a subjective act of which a concept is the objective correlate. However, as a correlate of an act, it retains a subjective aspect. The ‘truly objective’ must lie even behind that. It is that which a concept reveals or captures, is the genuine structure of the actual object, its essence.

33.

The idea of essence arises almost naturally once being, the fact ‘that it is’, is delegated to the limit of an extensionless and incomprehensible simplicity of a point. Appearing objects are not mere points, so there must be also some positive objective content, some distinctions which could justify distinguishing one thing from another. The ideal points reject to cease being multidimensional complexes, and this rejection is handled by dissociating being from its character, the existential from the intelligible, the mere fact of being, *esse*, from that which makes a being what it is, *quo est*, in short, that from what, being from essence.

Any pragmatic limit of distinctions allows further distinctions. As an object appears in different ways, its identity survives a lot of changes. So unless we identify its what with its mere that, there must be also some specific contents, some constant what hiding behind the varied appearances. The essence of each thing is what it is said to be *propter se*, the essence is precisely what something is. The essence captures, well, the essential and it does it in a unique and precise way, it captures the ultimate truth about what it means to be this thing: each thing itself, then, and its essence are one and the same. We will not spend time on tracing the modulations of the idea of essence and its relations to substances, forms, common natures, complete notions and other themes which surrounded it in its long history. We only notice its role. The essential, objective what should be grasped with the same immediate certainty as the ultimate that, it should be captured in the immediacy of a

single act. Therefore there is an essence only of those things whose formula is a definition. Definition is the formula of the essence. Essences correspond thus only to the intelligible substances and, eventually, to the intelligibility of substances. (The original Greek *ousia* can be, and in various contexts is, translated as either substance or essence.) We see here the same equation of the epistemological and the ontological dimension, of what a thing is in-itself and of how it is defined, as in our equation of thought and concept. The difference is only that while our equation indicates the primary unity, which becomes dissociated along the subjective and objective lines, the present equation starts with objective essences dissociated from their conceptual reflections and sees their coincidence in the act of a successful definition. It is a difference of order but not of content.

In the order starting with the dissociated subject and object, essences are what makes the coincidence possible. They (are to) make the immediate access to the precisely given, yet complex, possible. The goal, if not the achievement, of essences is to reduce a complex to something which can be given adequately within the ideal limit of immediacy. An essence, whether with Aristotle, Descartes or Husserl, is a graspable unit which can be made actual in a single act of intuition, comprehension, perception, understanding, or whatever variation of a reflective act one chose as the paradigm. Essences (are to) give metaphysical rigidity and precision to the distinctions of experience, (are to) turn distinctions into precise, rigid distinctions. And precision is but another word for immediate ‘givenness’. The essence is the reflective hope of immediacy.

Thus concept, or definition, supposedly grasps the supposed essence. If 34. one had managed to display at least one convincing essence, one might, perhaps, also manage to arrive at some acceptable concept of a concept. No such thing seems to be available but, fortunately, cognitive scientists took over the quarrels. Since terminating the distinctions at *some* limit is unavoidable, somebody will always think worthwhile to ask what the essence of, say, a chair, might be. Typically it has four legs, but it may have only one, or none but rockers instead. One may try to define it functionally, as “something to sit on”, but then anything one can sit on becomes a chair, for instance a table. One need not deny sincere ingenuity of many attempts to specify the most purposeful ways of defining things. But one should not confuse the normative, whether forensic or only administrative, character of such endeavours with any ontological foundation, not to mention existential relevance.

The time has arrived to give up the myths of essences and *Wesenschau*, which are carried over, as some point of honour, from generation to generation. For it is clear that even Husserl himself never gained *Wesenschau* so that he would not have to re-consider and re-work it again, not to disqualify

it but to force it to express something that it originally did not express. The fact that nobody ever managed to demonstrate unchangeable essence of anything, reflects the secondary character of concepts as compared to the original signs and, above all, the merely auxiliary character of positive, essential determinations. It reflects also the accidental character of most totalities – no complex is more fundamental than others and there is no necessity for a complex to be so rather than otherwise – primordially, it is but a cut from experience. The boundaries of things are, more often than not, vague enough to defy precise definition but also clear enough to admit understanding.

We might perhaps say that the essence of a thing is the totality of what distinguishes it from other things. Perhaps to grasp the supposed essence is the same as to know the thing's limits. Perhaps, though then we have changed the traditional sense of the word “essence”. In particular, no such final essences obtain since every distinction allows further distinctions and, moreover, what distinguishes a thing from others depends on what others are taken into account.

35. But have we not gone a bit too far? Does not the concept of a group, in its strict mathematical sense, have a precise essence? It is a precise concept with an unambiguous definition. But this only shows that if we start with some precisely defined concepts (here, of a binary operation, associativity, inverse, etc.), we can arrive at new ones. We do not deny the reflective creativity in concept formation and the precision of its results, provided precision of the starting concepts. This extends far beyond mathematics. Have you never met an intellectual who is not able to relate to the world otherwise than through the exact concepts and definitions he has acquired? His insistence on precision is understandable, but also a bit obsessive. His knowledge may be impressive but still this omniscience is as pitiable as his conceptual omnipotence.

The power of conceptualisation, like of reflection in general, concerns only the actuality of signs. Its domain comprises only precisely defined complexes – things reduced to their intelligible essences. But although most things and concepts are vague enough to make the inquiry into their more precise definitions possible, it does not mean that they actually hide any essence behind their appearances. The concept of a group does not have any essence – it only has a precise definition. Note, however, that dismissal of essences does nothing to the concepts themselves. We can still give partial, more or less adequate, descriptions of experienced things, classes of things, kinds of things. The cuts in the experience are there as they have always been, and so are their conceptual signs, with the power to manipulate and control their appearances within the horizon of actuality.

36. **Universals**

We were trying to point out the analogies, rather than the differences,

between moods and concepts: they have the same temporal scope; addressing complexes, they move in the tension between the unity of a sign and the multiplicity of the aspects and properties of the complex; we have emphasized the communicability of moods, if not an irresolvable association so at least complementarity of concepts and moods, and the fact that not only impressions, but also concepts come in various degrees of precision. Eventually, the difference between the two concerns the tendency and degree: concepts dissociate striving for mathematical precision, while moods keep the complexes in a vague – but clear – unity.

This, however, is hardly the whole difference! Isn't it so that concepts are (composed of) universals and by the universal we mean that which is predictable of the individuals, that which is common, since that is called universal which is such as to belong to more than one thing. Moreover, it is that which can be *known* about particular, it is implicit in the clearly known particular. Impressions, on the other hand, are particular and unique, and certainly not known with the precision with which universals constituting concepts can be known.

This isn't exactly so. An impression, say, of fear, is not the same as a particular fearful experience. It appears in many experiences. One might claim that what reappears in various such experiences is a universal fear, while an impression of fear is only its particular, always unique and individual, experience. This is then probably only a matter of language. One should not confuse an impression with its actual experience, just like one should not confuse a concept with a particular instance of its application.

The worrying element of such reappearing universals is their sameness. Does one experience *the same* fear in various situations and if so, what makes it the same? With concepts the situation seems easier. We have only one concept of a group, uniquely and well defined. But here one might also worry, as Wittgenstein did, about the legitimacy of claiming that in all particular situations we know that we are applying the same concept. How do we know that? Before addressing this issue, let us first describe the context in which it appears as a problem. The answer will arise from the following discussion.

The problem arises for reflective dissociation viewing the world as a totality of 37. separate particulars: atomic, substantial entities, each existing on its own. In this context any connection between the dissociated entities is at best secondary and at worst unreal. These two positions with respect to universals – considering them either as secondary abstractions from particulars or as nominal unrealities – seem the only possible, once we assume the ontology of particular substances. In either case, one assumes that it is impossible to abstract universals from the singular without previous knowledge of the singular.

! Concepts are abstract and universal. Universal, that is, they may have

many particular instances, be encountered in different experiences.

- ? Recalling §9, I wouldn't be so comfortable with the status of particulars but let go. Is 'Prague' a universal? When I go around, I see this building and that corner, from the Old Town Square I do not see *Vyšehrad* and from below of *Vyšehrad* I do not see *Hradčany*.
- ! Still, it is a particular thing, only "too big" to be seen all at once.
- ? It is too big and at each of these places I see a part of 'Prague', I have a different perspective, a different actual experience of Prague, something which, with enough of bad will, can be called "a particular instance" of 'Prague'.
- ! No, you see different parts of a big city, you do not see *the same* universal exemplified in various particular places.
- ? OK, what I see of the 'horse' in this horse is exactly the same as what I see of it in another horse. But what I see of 'this chair' now is *the same* as what I saw of it yesterday. And do not tell me that it does not count because 'this chair' is a particular.
- ! It counts because you may have several distinct exemplifications of the same universal *simultaneously* and, furthermore, you may *always encounter more*. With this chair you cannot do the former – nor the latter if I burn it.
- ? What about 'all my grannie's chairs'? It looks more like a universal than like a particular. But they all are here – she has never had more than these four. And, besides, she is dead, so you will never get new ones. If it is "my grannie" who annoys you here, then what about the dinosaurs? We have rather run out of the possible new instances.
- ! Forget new instances; a universal is universal even if no instances exist.
- ? Have you turned extreme realist in this matter? But tell me first what they are.
- ! Take "abstract" – a universal is not an independent being, it is always only an aspect abstracted from particulars.
- ? You have just said that it need no particular instances... So, after all, the 'chair' (or the 'dinosaur') is not universal?
- ! It is, but it is what is common to many chairs, what can be predicated equally of many particulars.
- ? By "common" you mean, probably, something like a stereotype, a paradigmatic instance, or just the essence – but we know that these won't quite do. But who are these particulars? And isn't 'Prague' the same at this particular *Vyšehrad* and at this particular *Hradčany*?
- ! It is, but 'Prague' is not *predicated* about them.

? Really? One does predicate “praski” about this particular *Hrad*. But even if one didn’t. So it would be just a matter of how we use the language? If I say “This city is exactly like Prague while that one is not.” will it do?

! No. First you use “Prague” as a name of a particular city; then you use it as a ...

? Predicate? A concept? Then, does it mean that I can pick any particular (reference) and turn it into a (predicable) concept? And what is the difference, except for the purely grammatical one, between “Prague” used in the first and in the second way?

! Predicating ‘Prague’ of another city, you are really predicating some universal which is implicit in Prague and which you also find in this other city.

? Perhaps, but then one should tell me what universal it is. As far as my experience is concerned, Prague has a very specific character and atmosphere, indistinguishable from its uniqueness, which can hardly be characterised better than “Prague-like” and which can be in various forms or degrees found at other places.

etc., etc., ...

Certainly, universals can be abstracted from reflectively dissociated particulars. Reflective thinking develops from the ontology of dissociated and externalised objects, and equally dissociated points of time. But when reflection encounters something completely new and unexpected, when it ‘adds’ a new and some old instances, performing the abstraction of, say, ‘Prague’ or the common nature ‘cup’, these have already been distinguished as unities before and above this reflective act. The reflectively new and unexpected emerges from some trace of experience, of which reflection only finds the final results.

What do we encounter the first time we see a cup (assuming this to happen very early in life)? ‘This cup’, ‘a cup’ or ‘cup’? Probably all, for there is as yet no reason to draw any such distinctions. Having all means that we have none, neither particular nor universal, just cup or, better, a special ‘something’. Identical cup, encountered for the second time, is not added to the earlier ‘cup’ – it is subtracted from it. In this subtraction, the universal ‘cup’ and the two particular instances, ‘this cup’ and ‘that cup’, become dissociated from their prior nexus, the first ‘something’. Every new cup is not added to earlier experience but is distinguished from it. And it is distinguished from the same trace on which the first cup has so far marked the final point.⁹ Eventually, everything emerges from the One and the same indistinct, everything is one before it becomes two. A reflective note taken

⁹If one asked whether the fifth cup is distinguished from the first cup, from the fourth

of a new cup and its association with an earlier one is only a conscious or subconscious reflection of the process which has already dissociated the two from the same trace. Of course, once such dissociations have been established and sedimented, new instances of ‘cup’ can be encountered, that is, universals can start appearing as common features of separate instances. But it is the unity of experience which founds the continuity of the experiences of the particulars, enabling us to form reflective associations and abstractions.

39. Dissociation of the first cup into a universal ‘cup’ and ‘this cup’ illustrates the general pattern. Encountering a new ‘this’ may be an actual experience. And it may pass without any further consequences, leaving ‘this’ as a mere particular encountered only once. But often ‘this’ will acquire a status of a nexus when, for instance as in the cup example, new aspects arise from it. In the same manner, Prague can be an abstract entity, merely the capital of Czech Republic, and remain so for one’s whole life. But it can also become a nexus of unity, from which, on a visit, one dissociates *praski Hrad* and *Vyšehrad* and other places and impressions. One can experience the same irritation on different occasions, one can recognise the feeling one is having now as the same one had before. This looks indeed like a kind of ‘private language’. The worrying phrase is, again, “the same”. But it is worrying only if one views this moment of irritation as completely dissociated from any earlier such moment. We are, however, not talking about any essences reappearing as new particulars nor any universals appearing in new instantiations at dissociated points of time. We are talking about cuts from the continuity of experience, eventually, from the indistinct One. The ‘words’ of the ‘private language’ are only vague nexuses, appearing for the first time and, hence, not yet dissociated into precisely identifiable items. A new instance of irritation does not appear *ex nihilo* to get re-cognised and connected to some old and merely remembered instance. (It can seem so when viewed in the dissociated terms of attentive reflection.) It enters the horizon of actuality through the levels of gradual actualisation: from the indistinct, through the chaos to experience and, then, through some nexus to this actual experience. The nexuses on this trace constitute its ‘relatedness’ to the whole field of other experiences. Various actual experiences emerge as instances of the same because they arise from the same nexus and pass through the same traces on their way toward actualisation. Identity behind distinct instances of irritation, just as of ‘cup’, ‘Prague’ and, eventually, of the very sense of experiencing, is constituted *before* they get actually instantiated in particular moments. This is all we can answer to the question

one or, perhaps, from the already established universal ‘cup’, we would have to say: from all. Neither the process nor its traces are linear. Even more: the universal ‘cupness’ is influenced by the experiences of new cups which, being distinguished from it, can also modify it. New actualities arise from the traces of virtual nexuses but also influence the limits and forms of these nexuses.

“How can one be certain that it is the same irritation as before?” The two emerge from the same prior nexus and are indistinguishable in their actual appearances. The only relevant difference concerns distinct actualisations at distinct moments or places.

This indistinguishability might be accused of being merely pragmatic, for all 40 merely practical purposes, while, in-themselves, distinct occurrences might be really occurrences of distinct things. But such an accusation assumes that each occurrence is something in-itself, is a dissociated element whose connection to other such elements needs an argument – it starts from the ontology or epistemology of dissociated particulars. In our onto-epistemology of gradual differentiation, identities are only sedimented limits of distinctions and things which, for all practical purposes, are indistinguishable, remain the same. On the way to the actual appearance, there is a hierarchy of stages, gradual narrowing of distinctions from the indistinct. Universals mark (some of) the distinctions drawn above the actual experiences. Universals exemplify the non-actual things of experience, the cuts through the experience exceeding the horizon of actuality.

As particulars are determined by being graspable within the horizon of actuality, universals are non-particulars. Insisting on the exclusive, or at least primary, reality of the particulars, universals appear ontologically suspect. But the relations between actuality and non-actuality are much more intimate than between particular substances and universals. The difference, even the difference in nature between them notwithstanding, there is no sharp border separating the actual and non-actual contents. Both are distinctions and hence *are*. Immediacy is the terminus of the distinctions originating beyond its horizon, in non-actuality. Non-actual cuts are possible stations of differentiation which allow further distinctions providing, as one says, ‘particular instances’. The primary difference is that between the possibility of an experienced completeness, of being given within the horizon of actuality versus the experience of the factual (or even essential) non-actuality. With respect to the horizon of actuality, the whole Prague, Europe, fear, irritation, my life are as much outside of it as the traditional universals. All that can appear within this horizon are their actual signs, dissociated ‘particular instances’.

As described in 1.3, the status of particular substances is not so obvious as 41 common-sense would like to believe. The problem of universals originates from the assumption that there are some definite particulars, some basic substances – independent, simple and indecomposable – and, moreover, that such particulars are the only genuine objects of experience; in short, from the reduction of experience to the totality of dissociated actualities. This reduction is inseparable from a less plausible one, namely, that of experience into some isolated points, ‘nows’, succeeding each other. Consequently,

the problem of the unity of a universal in its dissociated actual instances, is virtually the same as that of the unity of a particular (substance) across dissociated actualities of time. The question: what makes different occurrences of ‘blue’ or ‘chair’ instances *of the same* universal ‘blue’ or essence ‘chair’, is not different from the question: what accounts for the fact that the chair I am seeing now is *the same as* the one I left here yesterday (or what is one in the experiences of Prague.) Actual experiences and particulars captured within the horizon of actuality are interwoven into the continuous texture of experience, are only its actual reflections. Encountering ‘a new instance of a universal’ may be a new actual experience. But this is not ‘added’ to the rest of experience as a new item to a collection. It is subtracted, for it emerges as an actual experience *from* experience. The ‘sameness’ of two such actual instances is a consequence of their emergence from the same nexus. Only when dissociated while, at the same time, experienced as the same, they seem to call for an explication of what connects them. This reflectively perplexing ‘being experienced as the same’ is what marks their emergence from the same nexus, their origin in a unity which is not yet dissociated, and hence remains reflectively inaccessible.¹⁰

Once we have drawn a limit around Prague, it has become one entity and we can have thousands experiences of Prague, all exemplifying this particular city, in the same way as one chair exemplifies ‘chair’ or, perhaps, another chair. Certainly, the one is the sign, the word “Prague”, “chair”. But these are not mere empty words. They help sedimenting the cuts from experience which, stretching beyond the narrow scope of any particular here-and-now, draw borders beyond the horizon of actuality. The ‘oneness’ may have no accurate verbal definition, nobody can tell precisely where Prague begins and where it ends, what precisely fear or irritation *really* is. Just like nobody can tell precisely what makes a wave or a chair. Although we can recognise particular instances of all such concepts in actual experiences, we have no ultimately precise grasp of their universality. Simply because in so far as they are non-actual, they transcend the horizon of immediacy which is the only place of precise, unambiguous determinations.

Universals, and non-actual cuts in general, witness thus to the unity of

¹⁰Recall from I:§59 that nexus is a term of experiential origin, not of objective explanation. It is impossible to specify objectively what might be a nexus and what not. It is not even possible to specify objectively in every case what aspects are involved in a given nexus. Both nexuses and their aspects are relative to the course of individual experience. It is not this ‘objective cup’ which is a nexus, it is only its first experience. Although in many cases some consensus can be reached, individual background can always lead to idiosyncratic, often creative, associations which reveal anchoring of given particulars in nexuses which are not common to all. Trivial examples are all situations in which several persons try to agree on precise boundaries of vague notions. There is seldom a final and detailed agreement on what precisely might count as annoying, just, respectable, even if we share a generally clear understanding of nexuses corresponding to such notions.

experiences and found the experiences of particulars. Trying to get rid of the former, one ends up dissolving also the latter, because particulars are only the actual limits of distinctions which cut experience also above the horizon of actuality. An actual experience of a particular always involves some non-actual, or universal, layers.

The view considering actual particulars as the primordial substances is conditioned by the prior reflective dissociation. The abstracting activity of concept construction starts from such entities, grasped by the singular acts of reflection. The conflict between nominalism (denying any reality to universals) and conceptualism (viewing them as conceptual abstractions) is played on the ground of this ontology of particulars. It concerns the question whether particulars contain any reality beyond their particularity or 'substantiality'. As such, both these views are opposed to the earlier realism which was willing to assign to the universals independent reality. Our universals come closely to this last view allowing them to exist before and independently from any particular instances. Since to be is to be distinguished, universals are somethings. They are cuts through experience which are not limited to any particular actuality but stretch always beyond its horizon. Furthermore, every cut is unique: what it cuts out is not cut out by any other cut. A cut is just what it cuts. And thus, every universal is unique, has its specific identity. But granting that, we should remember not to dissociate different levels of experience. Once the horizon of actuality is established, no non-actuality exists without and independently from it. This leaves some space for conceptualism, acknowledging the reality of particulars, their influence on the borders of universals and the possibility of abstracting new ones. But abstraction is only a secondary, reflective process which accounts neither for the identity or universality of universals, nor for their ontological status.

2.3 Ego, body, action, control

The kind of complexes one is able to relate to, their character and degree 43. of complexity are relative to one's skills to differentiate and connect various aspect of one totality. Unlike bare objects, complexes are not relative to one's mere presence, but to one's shrewdness, intelligence, skills; also to one's capacity of compassion and sympathy, of relating to and understanding other's way of thinking and acting.

What is a complex for one person need not be so for another. Having more or less the same organs of perception and similar capacities for discrimination, we typically agree on the status of single things and objects. But many of these things may not even exist in the world of a bat, whose perception mechanisms will doom irrelevant, i.e., leave unrecognised, many things we distinguish. A dog's smell will differentiate situations which, for us,

remain indistinct. Different humans have different abilities of forming and connecting complexes which differences are only to some extent smoothed by functioning in a linguistic community where words establish much of the inter-subjective agreement on a host of distinctions. This applies for skills at all levels. For a professor of algebra, rings are quite different things from groups. A student may, to begin with, have problems with grasping the differences. An illiterate may not even understand that one is talking about anything meaningful. In short, the complexity of the world one lives and acts in, the complexity of the complexes one relates to is the reflection of the complex of one's features, skills and abilities which we call "ego".

44. Ego is the aspect of a person which can be reduced to actual expressions and described in actual terms. It reminds of Jung's 'persona' as opposed to 'person', in so far as 'persona' is a totality of externalised properties, one's 'face' as it appears in external comparisons with others. The inquisitive attitude of the guy from the pub who became 'the detective' reflects primarily his ego. Ego is the first object encountered by the teenager's form of self-reflection, occupied with one's being so-and-so. "I have too round face", "I have too thin hair", "I won't wear this – what would others think?" Such worries are interwoven into slightly more fundamental ones, marking the crisis of adolescence, which, however, carry the same egotic character: "I am not as good as he is", "I am insensitive", "I am stupid".

Such characteristics and self-characteristics, genuine and honest as they may happen to be, consist of objectified attributes which get attached to their noumenal subject as some external properties. Ego, we could say, is oneself viewed from 'outside', with other's eyes. But even when others are not invoked, ego is still 'outside' oneself: every predicate involves, at least implicitly, a comparison. My insensitivity emerges only in comparison with sensitivity of others. This relativity marks externality of ego's qualities. Even if they intend some deeper aspects of oneself, remaining relative and actually identifiable elements of the ego complex, they never reach to the 'innermost being' of one's person. Ego is only the sum of such characteristics, it signifies a complex of actual properties, features, abilities. It constitutes the subjective pole of actual experiences of complexes.

45. Besides skills and qualities, the fundamental aspect of ego is body. The original signs of actuality are often relative to the body. "It is nice" does not refer the feeling to a particular organ (even if it emerges there) but to the whole body which "feels nice". On the other hand, it is not relative to the I. Even if one might say "I feel nice", it is only a feeling one *has*, not something one *is*. In the same way, everybody *has* his ego and not *is* his ego.

Body, although most intimately mine, appears for reflection foreign, as external as all the contents of the ego – mine, yet impersonal. Intense pre-occupation with body marks often egotic personality or culture. Such a pre-

occupation, looking in the body for a most incontrovertible and visible sign of oneself, is never satisfied because body retains this impersonal character. One *has* body, not *is* it.

More generally, all the original signs of actuality, remaining at the level of external ego, carry such an impersonal element. 'The detective', although clearly a personal element, does not touch the 'innermost being' of the person. It remains somehow external feature. Moods and impressions can be, most abstractly, referred to an impersonal feeling of vitality, of life. Their variety reflects modifications of this feeling. It is not so much *my* life, as life in general, even if it is actually my experience. The mood of vigor and vital strength is the feeling of '*my life*' rather than of '*my life*'. Vital feelings signal flow or ebb, increase or decrease of life energy. This life energy only, so to speak, accidentally happens to be seated and felt in one's body.

Body marks the horizon of actuality. It anchors one in the actuality and, 46. circumscribing its horizon, determines also the horizon of one's action. These two horizons can be taken as the same. Action is the event of actuality. It is not merely an act, an immediate reflex or other minute movement – of body or mind – consummated in a single moment. Action unfolds in the entirety of the horizon of actuality, it addresses several actual elements. From the point of view of attentive reflection one might say that action consists of a series of acts but we would rather say the opposite: an act is an aspect of an action (unless it is an entirely spontaneous, that is mad, outburst unrelated to anything in its vicinity).

A single object is a correlate of an act and so is a sign of a complex. A complex itself, however, is correlate of an action, one can manipulate it, act upon it for a specific purpose, one can think and reason about it, assemble or disassemble it, in short, bring it under one's control. Objects are under one's control only to the degree to which they are parts of complexes. Object itself, as a purely immediate given of consciousness, and considered only as such, appears in a somehow impulsive fashion, §13. It emerges for no apparent reason, *ex nihilo*, and offers consciousness only the immediate alternative: yes-no, take-avoid, accept-reject. Although object serves as a paradigm of the controllable, taken in itself, it is not. It becomes so only in the broader context of visibility when, as a complex, it is underlined some action.

The active element of actuality has two aspects which are related to its original and reflective sign and mark their, perhaps most significant, difference. 47. Just like sensations, limited to the immediacy, involve the responsive attitude choosing between the bare alternative of pleasant-unpleasant, yes-no, so impressions and moods signal a response. Their unifying role, presenting us with a totality rather than its parts, involves at the same time a reaction. Impressions are not indifferent but mark always some spontaneous valuation. Fear, irritation, satisfaction disclose some value perceived in the actual

situation and, as we observed, they can disclose this value even if its carrier remains undisclosed. This value, comprising a complex under one response, contributes significantly to the unifying function of impressions.

Concepts, unlike impressions, lack this reactive aspect. Emphasizing the complexity of the complexes, they increase their dissociation, their isolation and, consequently, indifference. At the same time, however, the resulting externalisation of distinct aspects offers the possibility of manipulation and control. Concepts involve more precise differentiation of components and their relations than do the impressions. Unambiguous precision – the mark of instantaneous immediacy – dissociating the object, founds the possibility of its control. The crudest form of control, brutal physical force, conforms to this claim in that it can only be exercised on the actual objects in the immediate reach.

But control of an immediate object is very limited. A cup is in my complete power only in that I can simply grasp or smash it. Likewise, lower emotional phenomena like sensual lust or even pain, can be to a high degree controlled by the will, that is, by reflection. Often a mere change of focus can eliminate them. But if I want to change the painting on the cup or equip it with an additional handle, its mere presence and my primitive power will not suffice. It requires analysis of the involved complex, its dissociation into constituent elements and manipulation of their arrangements. More advanced control is made possible by the dissociating and manipulating potential of reason. This dissociation is exactly the conceptual aspect, lacking in moods and impressions. Thus, control provides finally the dimension along which impressions can be placed at the opposite end to concepts. Eventually, also control of reason over emotions amounts to approaching a complex through its complexity rather than unity, to dissolving the overpowering unity of an emotion in the interplay of its dissociated, and hence controllable, elements.

2.4 Transcendence

48. A complex, emerging within the horizon of actuality, is a particular object and as such appears external. But its transcendence is not exhausted by the simple externality. A complex is also a totality of its properties and relations, it can suddenly reveal a new side which, as long as one focused merely on its immediately given aspects, remained hidden. One is aware of this difference between the actual sign and its correlate; they do not coincide. Perceiving a house, one sees its front but also knows that it has a back-side. One knows it, that is, it is a part of the experienced totality. Yet, these two aspects are not given in the same way, and one is aware of this difference: one knows that there is more to the house than what one is actually seeing of it. In the same way, one may grasp the definition of a concept in its intuitive totality, but one knows that one does not actualise all the details, that its complexity

exceeds the horizon of actuality, that it has a potential which can be used or explained only through a lengthy labour. The transcendence of a complex involves something more than what is actually given. This more, however, is not anything qualitatively different. The back-side of the house is as actual as its front-side, it only is not given actually. More of a complex involves sides which are of the same character as the ones actually given. They can be given in the same way, only, at some other actuality. The more of a complex consists of other complexes.

The difference between the complex and its more concerns only the way of 49. appearance – the former is here-and-now while the latter is not, but could be. The more is not essential non-actuality but only something which happens not to be actual now – it is not-actual. This quantitative more constitutes the horizontal aspect of the transcendence of complexes. It may be more of the same complex which is not actual at the moment, or it may be more complexes to which the actual one refers along some among the infinity of possible relations: as its cause or effect, as its predecessor or successor, as its part or its whole, as its motivation or purpose.

The difference between the actual sign and the signified complex, the difference experienced now between the actuality and not-actuality, marks thus the experience of time. The more of a complex, the surplus hiding behind its given surface, is hiding in its other actualities, in its temporality. All complexes are temporal in the sense that, emerging as actual objects, they are not *fully* present, hiding something more beyond the horizon of the actually given. This more is an intended element of the complex but it resides in the past or future actuality of its possible appearances. Complexes are temporally stretched and it is not merely one of their features but an indispensable aspect of their appearance as complexes. The horizontal transcendence of a complex is thus not mere externality but more of not-actual aspects. This more involves temporality stretching beyond here-and-now.

Actuality constitutes the vertical aspect of the transcendence with respect to 50. a the level of immediacy. Complexes give a single object the context in which the arbitrariness of the mere ‘that it is’ finds the first form of meaning: a purpose, a reason, a relation to other objects. Now, the complexes with their more, reveal an analogous ‘meaninglessness’, indicating the vertical dimension of transcendence. No matter how far one follows the dimension of more, one never encounters anything qualitatively new – only more complexes or more complex complexes. Eventually, one may reach the first or the second antinomy of pure reason, where thinking in terms of complexes and their relations must stop: there is nothing more left and to the extent we assume that there is, it can no longer serve us since its breadth and complexity make it inaccessible to the actuality of reflection, the finitude of reason. In this way, the more of a complex tends towards its inexhaustibility, appears as

the potentiality of an external object to disclose an unlimited number of ever new aspects, sides, relations. This potential inexhaustibility is the ideal limit of more.

A popular expression of the dissatisfaction with the representational thinking, with the mere externality of dissociated objects, is to refer everything to some context. But since it is impossible to determine what, in general, a context should mean and what might possibly exhaust legitimate contexts for anything, one tends to extend it as far as ... everything. The more sober attempts to put everything in the historical context, the social context, the inferential context, the context of usage, etc., are accompanied by the ghost of the limit of such contextualisations: the totality of everything, 'the whole'. Context manages to cover up the negative aspect of every recognition, but as one asks more and more fundamental questions, contextualisation suffers the inaccessibility of the eventual more. For moving in the sphere of dissociated atoms, it meets the combinatorial barrier. If we have n atoms and, in principle, any combination thereof might be a context, we get 2^n contexts. Take half of them, one-tenth – as n increases, the number of contexts becomes very quickly unmanageable. Although context does point toward something endowing the object x with a purpose, if not with meaning, such an unmanageable number of contexts confuses rather than helps to understand x . The real question is *which* context to consider, and this is just the question about the limits of x . But contextualisation can only put such a question into some contexts, not answer it.

51. The more objective contexts to investigate, the more the actual object dissolves in them and the less understandable it becomes. The more information available, the more difficult to find any valuable information. The more ambitious professor of the more imprecise subject, the more attempts at mathematical precision in his research. The more persons with higher education, the more stupid and less knowledgeable each one of them. This general law – 'the smarter, the more stupid' or 'the more, the less' – underlies the life and expansion of objectivistic insatiability. As an example: precision, richness, depth of the language in all expositions, not only the primary, but also secondary ones, or even those on the edge of mere journalism (like literary criticism) are worthy highest appreciation. But the overflow of richness exhausts the attention, and so the increased precision is accompanied by the increased distraction. The result: instead of increased communication, increased misunderstanding. In all discussions penetrating the Western *episteme*, you will never hear a single voice starting with "I do not know exactly... am not familiar with... did not read through... who could remember all that..." Yet, exactly from that one should start! But who would dare? So, proving trifles, we let them parade as the genuine truths until, eventually, they start to seem the same. And then more seriousness can only breed

more ridicule, more smartness only more stupidity, more achievements only more disappointments. The smarter, the more stupid; the more, the less.

More never sums up to any unity and, chasting its inexhaustible limits, 52. keeps expanding into more and more comprehensive totality. But, the more comprehensive – the less comprehensible. Inversion reveals a lack. The more intensely one focuses on the actual complexities, the less sense and meaning one finds in them. The more one's understanding approaches the self-secure enlightenment of scientism, the intellectual self-confidence or the safety of a bourgeois sterility, the greater the chance that one may wake up as Gregor Samsa in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* – in the known, safe surroundings, in the same orderly house, in one's own bed, but transformed into a cockroach scared, or rather merely pacified, by the inexplicable loss of one's so far obvious and unproblematic identity. At the limit of more one encounters oneself, even if only as one's own caricature.

The person is encountered at the limit of the world and, perhaps, only there. The person does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world. But although never actually encountered, it is present in the world from the very beginning. The objectivity of a complex consists in its being given as an object in actual experience and, moreover, in the fact that its more is just more of the actual, objective aspects. However, to the extent that a complex is not given immediately in its full complexity, it bears always a mark of subjectivity. This is no longer the subjectivity of an ideal, purely actual subject, but a more genuine subjectivity understood as that which brings not-actuality, and eventually also non-actuality, into actual experience. Not-actual aspects can be always considered as objective, but their intrusion onto the actual object signals a subjective unity stretching beyond the horizon of actuality.

Ego is the aspect of subjectivity within the horizon of actuality. But as one 53. asks for more and more, as the totality of complexes extends beyond the limits of one's possibilities and, gradually, begins to dissolve in the flux of experience, ego's status becomes more and more dubious. The ideal limit of more, this world as the totality of complexes, is also the place where the ego complex dissolves in the experienced chaos. The obsessive rigidity of a systematic organisation, when carried to the extremes, creates mad pandemonium, whether on personal or social scale. The ever renewed and never accomplished project of control encounters more in the most dramatic fashion. When driven beyond its proper limits, when attempted not only with respect to particular complexes but also their totality, it makes one acutely aware of the uncontrollable more which lurks in the depth of everything one believes to control. The disappointments of the projects of total appropriation and control throw us back onto ourselves – for the limit of the horizontal transcendence is but a shadow of its vertical dimension.

The subject, implicitly present all the time, is encountered by reflection at the limit of objectivity. But it is encountered only as its own absence, as the emptiness surrounding the objective world, as the lack of something which should be there but is not. For it is neither the immediate subject of a reflective act nor the egotic complex of objective properties. It is something personal, something which never becomes precisely visible within the totality of objective determinations and subjective *qualia*. Insatiability – whether of Hegelian conceptualisations, of positivistic optimism, of sociological eschatologism, of progressive scientism or of those who, bored by the abundance of all past novelties, await impatiently for the next novelty which will finally cure their boredom – all forms of insatiability breed, eventually, dissatisfaction, the feeling of unfulfillment and incompleteness, of broken promise, perhaps nihilism. From these ashes, when the impassable limit of more and more has been left, not behind but below, there emerges a more genuine, personal subject.

3 Mineness

- 54. As the insatiability of more dissolves in the confrontation with chaos, the discovery of the limitations of one's ego engenders the reflection that I am. It does not negate the objective experiences but, so to speak, suspends their importance. From their complexity, it husks the subject which no longer appears as a mere aspect of the (apprehension of the) objective world but as a being raised above it. It marks a breach in the continuity of being and presents oneself in as astonishing a light of dissociated independence as the realisation 'that it is' does with a single object. Reflection 'that it is', the mere observation 'that...' of object's immediacy, dissociates it and presents it as being 'on its own'. Reflection that I am, in so far as it merely notices 'that...' of my presence, does the same with myself. As the intentional object of this act, I appear as isolated from the world, from any origin, as being alone, 'on my own'. By the same token, it seems, I am free, absolutely, unreservedly. I emerge *ex nihilo* with the same ungrounded arbitrariness as an object appears for an immediate subject – it is, but might not be, and there is no apparent reason for its being rather than not being, or for its being so rather than otherwise. On my own – as free as arbitrary, as unconstrained as alienated.
- 55. But reflection that I am knows also that I am not merely an actual object. Although the act attempts to grasp its intended object, this object immediately slips away, leaving only a mere noumenal site as the immediate content. Self-reflection is (self-)aware of this insufficiency. It recognises that one is much more than what is actually given in any single here-and-now. This recognition gives self-reflection concreteness distinguishing it from a formal

constatation of simply and merely being here.¹¹

One experiences oneself as transcending the horizon of actuality, but merely 56. as some noumenal site of identity. One knows one's identity extending over time – not because one has managed to re-construct and comprehend it but simply because one knows it. Experience of this identity precedes any particular act of reflection and extends beyond it. It is experienced in the course of one's whole life and does not depend on one's reflecting over it or not. One knows it long before one reflectively thinks about it. If experience transcends the horizon of actuality, then so does the experiencing being. In this form of reflection, one represents oneself as a being whose unity is not, like ego's, a mere totality of actual contents, but extends over time. Yet, this unity is for reflection *only* experienced. It is not grasped as a comprehensible, reflective concept. Self-reflection posits this noumenal identity as its primary object, but it appears under the actual signs which are inherently inadequate and incomplete.

This inadequacy and incompleteness is well recognised with respect to I's temporal unity. Reflection that I am encounters myself, an enigmatic site of continuous self-sameness. The enigma concerns the sameness of the actually reflecting subject and of myself who was yesterday, years ago, and whom I am going to be in all my future. For the categories of actuality alone, this unity poses an ever perplexing problem. For, being unable to deny the experience of sameness, they imply reversal of the order of founding trying, as Hume and others did, to derive it from the visible, particular contents. One attempts to reduce oneself to the totality of visible contents, to the ego. But lower categories yield only totalities – never unities.

Just like the temporal scope of subject (and object) is pure here-and-now, 57. while of ego (and complexes) some finite and limited time, the I of the reflection that I am is finite but unlimited – it has no experienced beginning nor end. Your birth is something you may be told about but not something you have experienced; your death is a perpetual not-yet. You are stretching yourself between these two limits, both real and yet ideal, since forever inaccessible.

They appear as actually given only when projected as points on the infinite line of objective time. Its infinity is, of course, not experienced but only thought, and that only in terms of more, that is, as a potential infinity, as unboundedness. This unboundedness reflects the impossibility to specify any first or last point of experience, to trace the details of experience to

¹¹Such a constatation would amount to the reflection 'that it is' with its object being only *accidentally* oneself. Its course would be a series of reflections that: this is and that is, everything in the objective world is, but I am also one of the entities in this world, hence I, too, am. It finds in oneself exactly as much as in any other object – the mere being. We might call it an "abstract self-reflection".

its origin. But we carry the origin through all our experience and the self-awareness, the awareness of being finite, is its trace. The experience of our finitude, of having an origin, is hard to ignore. The ideal points of beginning and end are only objective images of the constant presence of the origin. Temporality has an origin, but not a beginning nor end. The time which has thus originated but which has neither beginning nor end, the finite yet unbounded time, is the temporal context of the experience that I am.

3.1 The signs

The experience that I am suspends the unquestioned validity of the objective world. The signs of mineness are no longer relative to specific organs nor even to the whole body. They are no longer sensations nor vital feelings, they are no longer localised, narrowed to the context of actuality. The original signs of mineness are kind of feelings which, unlike mere moods, do not reflect merely the actual situation, but rather one's personal apprehension of and attitude towards it. They modify its actual perception by immersing it in the quality of one's life or, if one prefers, of one's soul.

3.1.1. Original signs

- 58. We call the original signs of this level “qualities of life” or, shortly, “qualities”. Unlike moods and impressions, they do not concern particular things or situations, are not specific, situated moods but qualities of some vague whole: life, experience, the world. We notice easily such a quality with a child, often even before it starts talking. The whole future can be seen – not, of course, any details concerning the development, career and the like, not any specific events of the future but ‘the whole future’, the quality of the person, the quality of his life. With the adults, impression of such a quality is, typically, weakened by the noise of all more specific features, habits and norms but, our claim goes, it remains the same quality.
- 59. As signs, the qualities are felt in particular situations, perhaps even as specific moods and impressions. But they are not limited to such particular situations within the world. There is a fundamental difference between elation caused by a specific event and the general joy of life. The latter lacks any objective correlates, any complexes which might be identified as their proper origin. Complexes are only sites where such qualities are actualised, not by which they are caused. Joy, as a quality of life, is not the vital feeling of elation and vigour which may change into its opposite in the matter of hours or minutes. It is something which, through all the variations of vital feelings and moods, through all the variations of situated joys and sorrows, unveils a theme which underlies and surrounds all of them. The qualities of

life constitute a deeper layer of emotional life. They are experienced underneath variations of different situations which, in themselves, may give rise to very different impressions and moods.

Going far away, to an exotic and unfamiliar corner of the world, is naturally accompanied by an excitement and openness to the encounter with something – as the expectations go – completely new. But after some time (perhaps a week, perhaps a year), when the storm of novelties and initial impressions has calmed down, there arises a specific mood of something familiar in the midst of all this unfamiliarity. One notices that, in spite of all the differences and novelties, one has not traveled that far. Even if the life there is very different from that at home, the mood of one's life seems to be only slightly affected by it and, at the bottom, remains the same. Such a variation and novelty of actual experiences unveils often the deeper quality of one's life, just as variation of accidental features helps bringing forth the fundamental aspects of a concept or a thing.

The qualities are constant themes which, remaining mostly unthematic, are experienced in the background of actual situations, as mere modifiers of particular moods and impressions. Most actual feelings can accompany most qualities. Calmness can express certainty or resignation, laughter can express acceptance or contempt, any actual mood and reaction can be associated with very different deeper qualities. And it is only this deeper association which modifies the actual signs so that the laughter of a happy man is different from the laughter of a desperate man, even if both are laughing at the same thing. For it is only this deeper association which gives the actual signs their more profound meaning reaching beyond the horizon of mere actualities.

Having no specific actual content, qualities may be clearly recognisable, but 60. are vague and hardly definable. This vagueness and lack of any objective correlates gives them a 'calm' character. Even if one's life has the quality of restlessness or confusion, the experience of the quality is not so. For it is experienced as a constant theme, as something which gives the actual situations a deeper character, something which is greater than what can be voluntarily controlled. Even if encountered in a particular situation, it is not limited to this situation. It arises from a deeper context as something which is prior to the situation and is not given as an external datum but as the internal determination.

One might try to divide the qualities into positive and negative, into sense of 61. spiritual gratification, peace, and, on the other hand, of sadness, mourning. But such oppositions are abstractions. Every person, every life has its unique quality which easily evades reflection trying to draw all too precise borders. Every man carries with him the quality of his life which can be experienced by himself and by others. There are people whose life *is* light or shallow,

and whose life *is* sad or tragic. Everybody has, besides some egotic features and character traits which also others might possess, something – *je ne sais quoi* – which gives all these features a uniquely personal touch.

Unlike vital feelings, qualities of life are not actual expressions of the animated energy nor of life in general, but of *my* life. Life in general may have all kinds of alternative qualities; it may be tragic *or* comic, meaningful *or* wasted, hard *or* easy, intense *or* peaceful. One's life, too, can have different qualities for which we need different words, but to the extent these signify the quality of one life, they are not joined by “*or*” but by “*and*”. One's life can be both tragic *and* comic, and then this conjunction, with its specific manifestations, expresses this particular and unique quality. The whole concreteness of the quality lies in this ‘*and*’, in the peculiar way it connects the descriptions which, when applied to the actual contents, would appear contrary.

3.1.2. Reflective signs

- 62. The undefinability of the qualities of life makes their verbal expressions inherently inadequate. Whatever follows the opening phrase “Life is...” or “The world is...”, appears always either too general or too specific, and allows always a devastating critique. But we are not concerned with the *truth* of such general thoughts. They are never true in the strict, objectivistic sense. What we find in them is a witness to experience of a different order than the experiences of complexes. One can claim them to be merely generalisations from a series of experiences and to express nothing more than their common features. Yet, if one wants to maintain this empiristic view, one should also explain what the supposed subject of such descriptions is and what constitutes the need for such useless judgments. In fact, they are neither meaningless nor useless. Their meaning is grounded in the experience of one's life and even if they do not express precise content, they can communicate the intended qualities, they can be understood by a sympathy which need not conceptual precision but only clear indications.¹² The very fact that such verbal expressions are accompanied by the awareness of their insufficiency and inadequacy, suggests that they describe something experienced. The experience of the insufficiency of words for an adequate expression of the quality of life is also the experience of the presence of something to express.
- 63. Qualities of life do not involve any clear split into the world and oneself. The reflective signs of the experience that I am, the general thoughts, emerging

¹²They are usually made in a specific context, say, of a paternalistic advice or an intimate complain, where they also may communicate quite a lot. Literature describes often such qualities, while in daily situations we can often agree on the quality of life of somebody we all know, without knowing exactly what we are agreeing upon.

from the standpoint of the reflective dissociation, tend to set up such a distinction, even an opposition. In spite of this, expressing the qualities, they tell one as much about the world as about the speaker. The properties ascribed to the world reflect only the quality of one's life and vice versa. Saying "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," one seems to characterise the world, but one actually states something about the life in the world, about the quality of life. Certainly, one does not state any true fact, even less a fact which could be verified. But one does not make any false statement, either – one expresses general thoughts about the quality of life.

Discussing actual matters – the current political situation, the recent technological achievement, the events at work, ... – one can pretend to remain objective, that is, half-anonymous, keeping a distance to the matter at hand which is impersonal and external. But the more general thoughts one expresses, the less possibility of keeping a distance. Characterising the world or life in general, one unveils oneself. He who says "Life is real, life is earnest", however much he may speak of the fundamental mysteriousness of things, gives a distinct definition of this mysteriousness by ascribing to it the right to claim from us the particular mood called seriousness – which means willingness to live with energy, though energy bring pain. The same is true of him who says that all is vanity. For indefinable as the predicate 'vanity' may be *in se*, it is clearly something that permits anaesthesia, mere escape from suffering, to be our rule of life.

The vague generality of the statements "The world is...", "Life is...", does not empty them of their existential content. They can be supported by various arguments and examples, elaborated *ad nauseam* over a glass of beer or whiskey (and another glass, and another...) Eventually, they tell us nothing about the world or life in general, but tell a lot about a *possible* experience of the world and life, about the person making such statements and *his* experience of life. It does not matter whether their grammatical subject happens to be the world or life. In either case, they address the same, for the world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man and general thoughts are expressions of such differences.

3.2 This world

The totality of all things of this world is never given in an actual experience. 64. But the conclusion that there is no such unity follows then only if one has reduced reality to actual experiences. If nothing more than at least our inability to give up the mode of speaking involving such general judgments about the world or life suggests that there may be some experienced unity which transcends the distinctions made within it. There are totalities which are reducible to their constituents, which are only sums of their parts. This

world is not such a totality. If it can be posited as one totality which does not appear as an arbitrary, reflective invention, it is only because it is underlied by an already experienced unity. Like every unity transcending some complex of distinctions, this unity, which is not reducible to the totality of things, is more primordial than such a totality.

Phenomenologists coined the phrase “phenomenon of the world”. But the world is not a phenomenon. If it ever appears in the unity of a single act of consciousness, then only as an empty intention, a loose idea of something close to void of any content, a mere sign pointing towards some all-embracing container. Yet, the sign is not entirely void, it expresses some quality, and so one may attempt further analysis. But such an analysis can hardly unveil any conceptual unity, once the general qualities are dismissed as subjective. The divergent analyses of the supposed phenomenon among various phenomenologists illustrate the failure of making the world into a correlate of adequate intuition. In our terms, it illustrates the irreducibility of its transcendent unity to the actuality of features, facts, things and observations. This world, emerging as the third hypostasis, as chaos turned into recognisable experience, precedes all things which are later found within it.

65. This world is the presence of the visible. It is not like the immediate givenness of an object but like an opening of the field for one’s activities, passions, goals, in short, the field of one’s life. It does contain particular things, tools, concepts but this is just an analytical statement – all these are just cuts from experience, made within the horizon of this world. This horizon is not something merely surrounding the totality of visible things. It is something from which all visible things emerge. We could say, it is the visibility itself. If we were to use the language we have given up: it is not an accidental totality of dissociated substances but, on the contrary, it is the ‘substance’ of which all particular things are accidents.

For a phenomenological analysis it may, indeed, appear as only ideal horizon of the actual contents. The tendency to view it only as a totality of things is a natural consequence of reflective inability to grasp its objective unity in the actuality of a single act. The world is not an object of an experience. But it manifests itself in every experience, not as its thematic object, but as the constant aspect which connects all actual experiences and is the same, constant field of their unfolding. In every experience it is *mitgegeben* but only as a vague quality or general thought and, when one can not rest satisfied with such vague generalities, then as a merely noumenal unity. It is, however, not merely an ideal limit but an experienced horizon, the background against which all things of actual experience appear. In this sense, the world is indeed in each thing, is reflected in all experiences, which emerge only from its prior unity.

3.3 I

The act of self-reflection is always aware of its insufficiency, 3.1.2. Positing 66. the I as its actual, dissociated object, it re-cognises also the concreteness of the I which slips out of the horizon of actual givens and does so *essentially*. It re-cognises oneself as something which never can be reduced to the actuality of an object. “Who am I?” is the question of adolescence emerging from the egotic preoccupations and beginning to recognise the wider horizon of one’s life. But it never finds a satisfactory answer. One would like to get it in terms of actual, precise categories but such an answer would amount to reducing oneself to one’s ego. The only answer is that I am myself, but for the reflective thirst for plain visibility it is only a miserable tautology.

The question never finds any final and adequate answer because I is not reducible to its actual characteristics. I has a multiplicity of egos, none of which nor the totality of which exhaust oneself. The relation between oneself and one’s egos can be compared to that between the residual correlate obtained in the process of variation (like eidetic reduction, only varying the whole life) in which the varied elements are egos. There are, for instance, persons with strong skills for social adaptation, perhaps actor-like characters who, behaving differently on different occasions, do not suffer from any identity crises. Or else, ‘rich personalities’ with a wide range of expressions which may easily seem incongruent but which are underlined some higher form of personal coherence and control. Every person has such a multiplicity of egos, or ‘persona’: one for work, one for home, another for friends at one’s place and another for friends at their place, one for children, another for a party. Strength of a personality is much closer related to the wide span of apparently incongruent egos the person possesses and controls, than to the uniformity of one’s egos across different contexts and situations. Variations of egos across different actual situations unveil for reflection the underlying unity of oneself.

Yet, the multiplicity of egos is also what makes personal disintegration possible. For instance, dissociative identity disorder, DID, involves a multiplicity of egos, each of which is sufficiently integrated to have a relatively stable life of its own and recurrently to take full control of the person’s behavior. Differences between various egos of one person may be astonishing – amnesia of other egos, changed wishes, attitudes, interests, hand writing, even different physiological indices like heart rate, blood pressure, EEG. A person suffering from DID has, as a normal person, a multiplicity of egos. The difference is that, while a healthy person keeps egos under some degree of control, so with a sick person distinct egos gain uncanny autonomy and possess the person. The relation between I and egos gets inverted, I becomes reduced to the level of egos and, unable to organise them, suffers their multiplicity – the higher

becomes a mere totality of the lower.

It is easy to misuse such examples for claiming that ‘in reality’ there is no I and only a multiplicity of egos. But the fact that we can demolish a building into a heap of bricks proves neither the unreality of the building nor that it is, ‘in reality’, only a heap of bricks. Phenomena like DID represent disintegration which is possible because human being is not any ideal and extensionless subject, but possesses complex aspects whose configurations may change in the course of time. Yet even such a disintegration can be taken as an extreme form of variation mentioned above. It changes certainly the feeling of life and the sense of oneself, but it does not change the fact that even such a person is oneself all the time. Each of the egos has only a “*relatively* stable life of its own”. While psychologists focus on what constitutes the problem – the dissociation of the *sense of* identity, we focus rather on the unity prevailing above the actual multiplicity. For instance, there is usually one dominant personality (who ‘knows’ about others), and one can often change from one to another, through a process similar to self-hypnosis (DID patients are highly hypnotisable and susceptible to self-hypnosis). Who does the changing? New egos can be spawned to handle some unbearable emotional problems (child abuse is the recurring theme in the etiology of DID, the first alter ego appears usually between the 4th and 6th year of life). But spawning presupposes a prior nexus. Although pathology of multiple egos dissociates this nexus into unrelated actual entities, it remains in its virtual unity which only loses continuity with the actual appearances. The person still retains some degree of continuity. It is the person himself who addresses the therapist and, most importantly, it is the person himself who suffers dissociation, who is being treated and, as the case may be, cured. A successful treatment of DID results in an integration of multiple egos, in merging them back into the unity of one person. It is not the multiplicity of egos which gets cured – it is *the person*.

68. I is not reducible to the plain categories of reflective visibility. It is something other, something above the visible world, something noumenal. Reflection dissociates and posits it against a foreign world – as opposed to it, thrown into it, confronted with it. It does not belong there among things and complexes, it does not even belong among others who, for such a reflection, are just foreigners. The pure I of the abstract reflection that I am is, as Camus would repeat after so many others, a stranger. The strangeness is, however, only in the externalised objects and in their posited totality. *This* is indeed the world in which soul is a stranger, the world viewed by the abstract reflection as a mere totality of dissociated things and situations. Stranger is the person alienated from such a dissociated world.

Concrete self-reflection, on the other hand, marks the experience of one’s life. We have purposefully not distinguished between the qualities of the

world and the qualities of the experience of the world. They are the same signs which, as all original signs, involve a valuation, here, a quality. It is the quality of some 'whole'. Whether this is 'the whole of life' or 'the whole of the world' is never easy to tell because such a split results only from reflective dissociation, from the application of the subject-object opposition to the level of mineness, where it yields the I and its objectified correlate, world. Concrete I is not such an alienated subject thrown into a strange world. It is the richness of one's life transcending every such act. Experience of myself is equiprimordial with the experience of *my* life. One tends to think the latter as an accident of the former but this is because the former has still deeper roots to which we will return in Section 4. One's life is not something which I accidentally has, it is something it is.

To use yet another word, the richness of one's life is one's soul. The quality of life is the quality of the soul and of its world – the three can be dissociated only by reflective abstraction. As we saw, the unity of the world does not appear *as* such a unity. It appears simply as the quality of one's life. The world understood as the continuity of experience, as the unity preceding, and hence stretching beyond its dissociations, is the same as one's life, is intimately one's world. The world and life are one. I am my world. I, being the world of one's life, precedes the things emerging within this world just like the world does. Not only the emergence of the world but also the creation of man is prior to those things which were created in it. Consequently, soul can feel stranger among the external things created below it, but not in the world which is simply its life.

The equipollence of I and my world does not amount to any subjectivism. 69. Both are far above the sphere of immediate subjectivity providing the latter with deep, internal objectivities, I:4.1.§29. Their equipollence amounts simply to the fact that, in order to change one's life, not only this or that aspect of it, but its deep quality, that is oneself, one has to change the world. Say, good soul cannot live in an evil world, for no matter to how much evil the world exposes the soul, the good soul will still see – in the world – goodness and reasons to be good. Actual events may be evil, but not the world. To be good *in spite of the evil* world is to turn a moralist, a pharisee or, in a more lofty variant, a resigned Stoic who is only a tiny step from the apathy of a bored intellectual, gnawed by the unreality of his lofty ideas and ideals. To be good is to find goodness, find the need and reason for it not only in the self-goodness of one's inner life but in the world. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. And the treasure of the heart is not any subjectivity of one's 'inner life'. It is one's life, that is, one's world, it is something found, given from above, not something one arbitrarily decides to value.

Wanting to change one's life, not only this or that aspect of it but oneself, one has to change the world. One's life changes not because one realises something in a momentaneous illumination but as a consequence of a new way of experiencing the world, of finding a new treasure. Healing a true suffering of the soul amounts to healing the world of this soul. For, in deeper respects, one can not change understanding of the world without actually experiencing a changed world. An emotional impairment resulting from the lack of love and warmth can not be changed by a mere realisation that this was its cause. It may take not only the will to change but also the very experience of love and warmth. This is what can make a travel to a remote place needed to regenerate the soul and this is what often makes meeting new people worthwhile: they can make things which seemed impossible, even non-existent, to appear obvious and natural. They can show us a different world which cures the lacks of the world in which we used to live. This intimacy of myself and the world has nothing to do with the arbitrariness of subjective images opposed to the objective world. It reflects only the deep internal objectivity.

70. In the same sense, if one wants to change the world, not this or that thing but the world, one has to bring to it a changed quality of one's life. Political achievements and social reforms do change the objective world. But it is never certain if they also change the world. In most cases, they do not, and the more violent changes of the objective world make only the remoteness of salvation more clear. Revolution as a means of abolishing alienation is one of the most tragic human inventions, an extreme example of existential frustration turned into social destruction. With respect to the personal dimension of existence, social activism more often than not witnesses to alienation which it is unable to cure. No doubt, improving social institutions may be a useful activity. But taken as a medicine to cure the world, that is, to change the quality of life it is, at best, a misunderstanding and, at worst, an expression of an instinctive resentment, the more dangerous because unchecked in its convictions about its beneficent intentions. Certainly, living in a particular social world may promote some and not other ways of experiencing and only some, but not other qualities of life. But these are, at best, statistical tendencies. They hardly ever have a predictable effect on a particular individual whose world is much more than the objective world of tools and political, economical and social organisation.
71. One's life, that is, the world, is the field of one's expression. Its unlimited, though finite, scope is no longer a stage of single acts or manipulative actions but of activity in the broadest sense of the word, activity which is not merely a sum of acts and actions, which is not directed towards achievement of some goals, but which expresses the traces of values, the motives which shape the

horizon for selecting possible goals.¹³ My life is just that – the way I spend my time. A common answer to the question “Who is he?” would simply tell what the person is doing for living. A profession tells something about that: what one does with one’s time, or better, to what one dedicates one’s time. A (deliberate) choice of profession involves often, besides detailed considerations of specific demands and associated forms of activity, also a sense of the quality, of the character of the profession. One would like it to reflect the values and quality of one’s life. The activities to which one devotes much of one’s time express also the quality of one’s life. And it is no longer talk about simple grasping-avoiding as in the case of objects, nor arranging-preventing as in the case of complexes, but about dedication, about accepting some values transcending the actuality and about dedicating one’s time to their expression. The world is the expression of oneself, the field of realisation of one’s motivations and inspirations.

3.4 Transcendence

At the current level, the distinction between the objective and the subjective loses almost completely its meaning. It is myself, my life which is involved, in a sense, the most ‘subjective’ aspect of experience. On the ‘objective’ side there is, perhaps, the world, in the sense of ‘everything but me’. But this phrase can signify here only the correlate of my life, the field of its unfolding. The world, my life and myself are not synonymous in the common language usage which always reflects the subject-object dissociation. But they are inseparably knitted aspects of the nexus of experience.

The tension of the horizontal transcendence at this level does not arise from the more of complexes but from the basic opposition between mine and not-mine. It is immediately present in the reflection that I am which performs a highly artificial operation of dissociating myself from something – from the world, perhaps, from my life, apparently from that which is not-mine but eventually, as a matter of fact, from my self. This finds an expression in the opposition between the ‘inner’ and the ‘outer’. Inner would usually refer to the inner life, but here it may be taken as anything experienced in some way as mine: my feelings, my things, my friends, my family. The outer is then everything else, everything excluded from this inner circle, everything for which I do not feel any responsibility, everything which perhaps influences me but is not influenced by me. The sign of the transcendence of that which is not mine may be, for instance, my indifference as opposed to care and

¹³Using the distinction of Scheler, a specific goal corresponds to *Zweck*, a motivation to *Ziel*. Motivation is a horizon of values which, on the one hand, functions as the foundation for choosing particular goals and, on the other hand, becomes actualised through their realisation – it comes both before and after the goals, it surrounds them. We will say more about motivations in the following subsection.

responsibility I take for what is mine. It can likewise emerge as my inability to draw borders between the two, ‘to gather myself’, as when I get lost in the complexity of the world, confronted by too demanding challenges or temptations. When manifested in actual signs, the horizontal transcendence involves the sense of me being *only* myself, confronted with the rest which, being not-mine, is foreign and disturbing, even threatening and dangerous.

73. In the face of horizontal transcendence, I am just the border drawn around everything which is mine and separating me from all that falls outside this border. In the extreme cases, this can become a dramatic conflict leading even to the dissolution of my world in the uncontrollable complexity, invasion from the ‘outside’. This may be a signal of the vertical aspect of transcendence, in so far as the chaos does not merely defeat me but displays a new quality, in so far as it is not merely an overpowering totality, but something hiding behind it, something in the face of which the categories of visibility simply lose their meaning. It is ‘something completely other’, something which can no longer be treated in the familiar ways organising one’s world. This may, but need not, mean disorder – it is only lack of objective order, of any sufficient reasons which explain relations *within* the world.

Kierkegaard’s *Angst* is a well known example of such an embrace. It confronts one with something uncanny, inexplicable and irreducible to the familiar categories of visibility. Suspending the validity of all worldly categories, such an encounter amounts, in fact, to the question about oneself. Manifesting irreducible otherness beyond one’s world, it oppugns the assumed foundations of one’s life and poses the question about oneself. But *Angst* is only an extreme example. Love which begins to penetrate one’s whole being, which makes the whole world dissolve in a continuity of thankfulness and inspiration can be a good example, too. Love, also personal love, is not anything one chooses and arranges. It is something one meets from above, something not-mine invading me. And yet, it is not a foreign, accidental event which only happens to me as do the actual experiences. Embracing my whole being, it is thoroughly mine, it involves myself to the very depth of my soul, to the point where I cease to be myself. Just like *Angst*, so also love, transcending me, is most intimately mine.

74. Thus, the horizontal transcendence of mineness involves alienation from the perhaps meaningless, perhaps dangerous otherness of not-mine. It is threatening exactly by being foreign, because one stays attached to the merely visible world, my world. Yet, any attempt to escape and hide from it behind the safe walls of one’s home-castle is at most temporarily successful. It ends by the return of the foreign element, usually, with the increased force and, sometimes, in a changed form. For this transcendent element of not-mine is not so foreign as it at first appears. Its vertical aspect unveils it as something which, although transcendent, is strangely and most intimately mine.

Chaos, as the border of the world, is also the source of the world, of the richness of one's life, and hence the most immanent aspect of oneself. It is not chaos understood as any disorder (thought this, too, can be its form) but as the limit beyond which the visible categories lose any significance. One can try to defend oneself against it but one cannot escape it. Once touched by it, one can only deepen the acquaintance.

Upsetting thus the familiar order of things, it can become an abyss, capable of devouring one. But since it is also the source from which the familiar order of things ensues, it can also become the source of strength and energy. The two aspects of the transcendence of not-mine are reflected in these two basic forms: of dissolution or enrichment, of destruction or creation. Simply because where things are created, they can also be destroyed. Only at the limit of one's world (life, soul), in the face of chaos, one becomes oneself. But it is also where one can lose oneself. Suspending the validity of the visible categories, chaos carries the element of madness. This element, observed in every creative genius, reflects the fact that creation amounts to organising the disorganised, to bringing experience out of chaos. Creativity moves only at the border where the visible world dissolves in its invisible origins. Hence, it involves a deep personal engagement which arises only from the I confronting the not-I so intimately that it can no longer draw precise borders between the two. As such, chaos accompanies every life which is a creative discovery, differentiation from the indistinct and then organisation of the disorganised. But as an actual experience, that is, not merely an ontological but also consciously reflected fact, it tends to produce more definite results: either strength of dedicated love and resolute patience, as the case may be, new works of art or science, or else madness. A creative genius organises chaos emerging, like Jonas, after three days from the depths of whale's belly. A madman is, too, swallowed by the overpowering force of chaos but, unable to wrest himself from it, remains there or else, if he returns, returns empty-handed.

4 Invisibles

Self-reflection discloses my separation, but it does so under the mark of disso- 75. ciation – it posits myself as an entity independent from the not-mine, which is therefore experienced as alienated. This alienation is easily recognised in the structure of the self-reflective act. I know intimately that it is myself I am reflecting over, yet this identity remains only ideal, unexperienced. Myself discovered by the reflection that I am is the result of a rather artificial abstraction in which reflection dissociates myself from the world and thus, unwilling and unknowing, from my life, that is, from myself. As much as I know that I am myself, I also know that the reflecting I is not fully myself;

the I grasped by the reflective act does not coincide with myself living my life. I am myself and yet I am losing myself, I am close to myself, but also remote – the same and different. Alienation from the world reflects only the estrangement from oneself, since both are the same.

We have repaired this mode of thinking by viewing every actual event as an actualisation of the non-actuality, as an actual expression of the being transcending the horizon of actuality. But we will not for this reason deny the possibility, or even relative frequency, of the experience of alienation.

The common experience centers around the basic mode of mineness, namely, my will: I am the subject of my experience. As long as I can choose and control my acts, as long as all my decisions, actions and activities are referred back to myself as their protagonist, I seem to be fully myself. Even when I feel that, as a matter of fact, I am not in control, I still persist in the attempts to realise my will. And as long as I persist in this focusing on mineness, my goals, my wishes, my will, I also keep experiencing separation as alienation. Even if I recognise the world as my world, I do not appropriate it, it does not become fully mine. For my world should conform to my projects, while the world does not. Alienation is another word for the life defined by the opposition between mine and not-mine. One putting exclusive emphasis on the former may be, perhaps, considered more egoistic than one emphasizing the latter, but both are alienated trying to establish oneself in opposition to something. Eventually, this something turns out to be the self which, raised above myself and the dictates of my will, is taken not to be myself.

76. There are experiences when I am not in control of myself, when I am seized by an impulse, an urge to act in a way which, to all my consciousness and knowledge, is not my way of acting, which does not originate in my will. An impulsive act, a murder in affect may be followed by an outcry “It was not me, it was something strange in me!” The primitive phenomenon of *obsession* has not vanished; it is the same as ever. It is only interpreted in a different and more obnoxious way.

Such impulses and acts, although mine, emerge as if from above, as if they were coming from some higher or deeper layers which are not under my control, which, although originating ‘in me’, are not mine at all. This, in fact, is the case with every particular experience which, surrounded by the invisible Rest, is never fully exhausted by its actual elements. A man likes to believe that he is the master of his soul. But as long as he is unable to control his moods and emotions, or to be conscious of the myriad secret ways in which invisible factors insinuate themselves into his arrangements and decisions, he is certainly not his own master. This aspect of every experience and the experiences of this special kind, when I am not myself, when one becomes two, make present something which ‘lives in me but is not me’,

which is ‘inside’ myself and yet stays ‘outside’. This is the ultimate site of the reflective sense of alienation – the split between myself and my self.

Reflection necessary for overcoming alienation (once more, alienation from the world is only a reflection of the alienation from my self) abolishes the opposition between the two by accepting that I am not the master – not only of the world, but neither of my self, of my very being. My attempts are often opposed by external factors or my own inability or laziness. This is trivial at the level of objects (which are external and given rather than chosen) and of complexes (where there is always more which I cannot conquer). But one is not the master also in the more profound sense of not being the master even of one’s being, of not possessing even oneself. One’s will to be good may never get realised, sometimes due to one’s obvious weakness or impatience, sometimes due to unclear and hardly visible obstacles; where failure can be blamed on one’s own incapacity as well as on bad luck. One does not decide to fall in love with a given person. One may do even if, as far as one can see or as the course of life shows, the person is not worth loving. The hope for tranquility or excitement may never find fulfillment – and the more actual factors forcing their presence one may produce, the more transparent becomes their insufficiency. There are sufferings of which one can be acutely aware and which one can firmly defy but which last for years leaving hardly any hope that they may ever terminate. There are states offering no signs, no visible possibilities of redemption. Despair is to yield to this impossibility, is to accept it, but it is not something ones chooses voluntarily: it happens to one, and one only can not resist it.

And yet, one day, one may find that all that was ceased to be, that one is satisfied but knows neither when nor how that happened. One does not even know what it means – only that it did happen. One day, one may find that the insecurity or angst which have been lurking in the depths of one’s soul disappeared and their place took tranquility and peace. But one knows neither when nor how that happened – only that one had wished, had prayed for that to happen and that it did. This hell and this heaven come about a man in such sort, that he knows not whence they come; and whether they come to him, or depart from him, he can of himself do little towards it.

4.1 The signs

4.1.1. Original signs

Acts and actions, involved in the texture of the world, are also involved in the broader context of activities. As such, they may be studied as objective, purposeful ways of achieving various goals or as expressions of various needs. But this does not exhaust their significance. Acts and, in particular, the ways in which they are carried out, are not determined exclusively by will nor their

objective context. Every act, in addition to its objective and visible content, involves an undefinable Rest, a side which does not pertain to its objective determinations. For instance, the value ‘good’ is present as if ‘behind’ the acts of will, and this in the essential way; it cannot therefore be intended *in* these acts. Intending goodness is sufficient to take it away from the act. An act directed by one’s will, aimed at a specific objective, has an involuntary aura around itself which indicates something else, often different, than what one’s intention has put into it.

Acts are not any dissociated, isolated and mutually independent events, but are involved in the context of actions and activities and, eventually, reveal ‘who I am’. Their Rest dissolves for reflection in a complete vagueness. (It can be compared to the how, in the sense of ‘how the act is performed’, as opposed to its more objective what or even why.) Attempts to grasp the ultimate meaning of any single act never terminate as the search for the ultimate in-itself always encounters some overlooked Rest, which germinates underneath the supposedly grasped foundations. No amount of intentional deliberation is able to remove this unintended Rest from an act, to reduce an act to its visible whats and whys. This Rest, experienced though not grasped, is a sign, too. It is the actual terminus of the trace of signification which, surrounding the current situation by the moods, feelings and qualities, anchors the actuality in its ultimate origin.

79. Every act of a person expresses this Rest, its invisible origins, fully and completely. For instance, being in love finds its expressions in various acts and the ways of performing them. In so far as one acts from love, these acts are signs of its presence, they unveil this Rest. One may not know that one is in love. To begin with, one may only find oneself acting in a bit unusual way. The first signs, the rests hiding behind the unusualness of the actions, are original and not reflected. One acts this love, is lead and almost forced to act in accordance with some vague and perfectly clear intuition, according to some invisible command which one neither grasps nor controls. It dawns on one and then haunts one.

And it haunts one to the most actual and specific details. Its concreteness lies in its deep, invisible origins, penetrating one’s whole being. Still, it is not expressed only in the vague intuition but also in the most specific elements of one’s acts. Just like a single moment of the ‘murder in affect’ reveals the underlying conflicts of the person going, perhaps, to the bottom of his being, so a moment of loving intimacy reveals and express love completely, though never finally. The expressed conflicts or love transcend the horizon of actuality, they are capable of infinite manifestations reaching far beyond, that is, originating far above their totality. And yet, a single moment can express them completely and adequately. Love finds its expression in every moment and each such moment incarnates the whole essence of this love.

Love is always more than its incarnations, overflows any actual expression and yet is fully present in its every sign.¹⁴

The word “intuition” in its usual sense might be appropriate for the original 80. signs of invisibles. Strong intuitions have this inspiring effect, precisely by being vague and, at the same time, clear and unconditional. It is this duality of vagueness and definiteness which makes it so hard to ignore intuition and let it go. It nags one and, having no precise, objective content, can not be ignored until one follows it and finds out what it is intimating. But, usually, intuitions are only first announcements of something which, in due course, may be unveiled and seen. As Jung says, intuition is *perception* via the unconscious, it is an intuition *about* or *of something*. With time and effort, it will give place to specific explanations and actual reasons which reveal their place in the complex from which they arouse. It turns out to be a sign of something visible which has only been hiding below the threshold of consciousness. Thus intuition (especially as grasping the unity of a complex in one act, §23) is relative to particular things or regions of being.

The signs of invisibles, however, do not lead to any such final actualisations. The first signs of love are vague, like mere hunch or nagging, and can even remain actually imperceptible. Gradually, they become manifest in things one does and in how one does them. But even when they become noticed and transparent, love is not reducible to any actual insight nor to any acts, actions or a totality thereof. It does reside in acts or activities but not only there. It enters them from above as their Rest. Intuition may be an inspiration to follow its thread and to ‘figure out’. Love, too, inspires before it finds an expression in acts. But its inspiration does not end when one realises that one is in love. On the contrary, the inspiration continues and even increases. It affects one’s whole being with an atmosphere of strength and unlimited potential, with the sense of possibility to perform not this particular act or that, but any act whatsoever.

This sense of the unlimited potential is not, of course, any conviction of 81. the actual omnipotence. It is only an unlimited inspiration. It is a sign of openness, of loosening the limits of myself and, opening up onto something not-mine, accepting it as a gift. In this sense, love is not limited to any particular region of being, it is not restricted to any particular object or person. Although expressed in an actual situation or centered around a particular person, it is love only to the extent it opens up the limits of oneself and impresses one’s whole being with a thankful quality and command: love, and do what you wilt – not a command to do this or that, but a vaguest

¹⁴There is no contradiction between completeness and non-finality. Every act expresses the invisible completely, in the sense of containing its whole structure, its whole meaning, surrounding the actuality. At the same time, it is not final, because next moment can express this meaning equally well.

(not limited to *any* particular domain of being), and yet clear (intense and definite) command to do whatever you want *in* love. To what precisely it inspires remains undetermined and open, it will be determined by all kinds of details. The command is not a moral imperative to do this rather than that, nor to do things in a prescribed manner. It is only a command to listen to it, to remember its inspiring voice. It is vague because it does not command any works; it is too subtle for that and is as far from commanding any works as heaven is from earth. Coming from above, it does not perform any works but commands to perform them. It is a command to fill the distance between its invisible origin and one's actuality.

82. The character of a command consists in the complete lack of reactive character. These signs neither are reactions to anything nor cause any specific reaction. Paradoxically as it may appear, this is exactly the command – it challenges but does not cause, it calls but does not force. We can say about these signs exactly what Bergson says about the mystics: they have no need to exhort us, they only have to exist, for their existence is a call. Immediate signs, like sensations, exemplify the extreme opposite of a command in that there the sign, the signified and the reaction coincide. There is no distance between the sign and reaction to it, no distance which could leave doubt and possibility of reacting otherwise, no distance between the actuality and non-actuality allowing the actual sign to challenge, to inspire a movement towards the non-actual. The inspiring character of a command is exactly this distance separating the virtuality of the invisible from its possible actualisations.¹⁵

The command consists also in that it does not create any particular state like, for instance, feelings do. There is no particular emotional or mental state corresponding to love or holiness or damnation. There are as many variations and combinations of the lower elements coexisting with the signs of invisibles, as there are persons. A command can make itself heard at any time, in any situation, in any mood. Likewise, it can be followed at any time, in any situation, irrespectively of the actual moods and thoughts.

This independence from the actual situation marks its absolute, non-relative character. A command is absolute in the sense that it is not relative to any particular region of being, which is the same as saying that it concerns the whole Being. It penetrates to and flows from the very depth of one's person, the point in infinity, which is but the reflection of the infinity of Being.

¹⁵ Any distance separating a sign from the signified can be seen as a command. In the most trivial case, it is merely the command to interpret the sign, to understand what it signifies. Here it has almost reactive character. We do not contemplate *what* a road sign commands – we immediately understand it. Accepting its dictate is to follow a higher form of its command. The longer the distance separating the two (and it is something entirely different from the arbitrariness of an artificial sign), the more insistent the nagging to relate them.

It does not concern any being in particular and, by this very token, concerns every particular being. But it does so not by enumeration of all beings but by being seated in the very center of the person and spreading thence over all particulars. Such signs either are given absolutely, with unconditional validity, or are not given at all. A person can not be partially holy, just like one can be partially satisfied. One can not love a little but not entirely, for such a thing is not love but something else.

Instead of presenting some recognisable content, instead of providing one 83. with the imperative to do this rather than that, a command merely says “you shall love”. Lacking any precise, actual content, the commands do not give any reasons either, they do not provide any explanations or justifications. They do not try to convince but merely manifest and leave one free.

This aspect of freedom in the confrontation with a command does not change its commanding character. For it is often announced with an irresistible force. Original signs may announce the invisibles with imperative intensity in the most rare moments of revelation. They say that a dying person may experience his whole life compressed into a single moment. But one need not be dying. There are rare moments which reveal to us something fundamental, inspirations which may determine our whole future or show the meaning of our past; moments, whether in dreams or in wake life, when the content and meaning of the whole life seems compressed into a single sign. Such moments have a character of foundation, they insert into our time an experience of meaning and value which exceed all reflective understanding. These are the moments establishing *axis mundi*, founding the cosmos out of chaos. Although we may continue to live the same orderly life as before, confrontation with such moments has the character of founding something which either gives a new direction or lends extra strength of explicit presence to something which had previously been only vaguely and implicitly intuited.

And here lies another, deeper aspect of freedom in confrontation with a command. It is not merely freedom of an arbitrary choice but, on the contrary, freedom of following a higher voice which emerges from the center of oneself. Although the command comes from above, this above is not alien and remote but most personal and intimate. Indeterminacy of its actual content notwithstanding, it is the most concrete, and therefore meaningful, element which calls one from beyond the limits of oneself.

4.1.2. Reflective signs

Inspirations do not reveal any content, do not present anything particular 84. which might be grasped in actual consciousness. But they may be grasped by reflection precisely as signs. They appear empty since no precise content can be substituted for them. And yet, as signs, they are not empty; they only

point beyond the horizon of visibility, towards the essentially non-actual. Reflective signs of such essential non-actuality which never can be reduced to an actual phenomenon are symbols. A symbol does not signify in the proper sense – it merely manifests. Although it does bring forth something vaguely distinguished, its inspiration derives from the virtual signification, from its pointing beyond the distinctions towards their origin. The symbolic contents can never be sharply dissociated from each other, for one immediately and imperceptibly flows into another. The inseparability of distinctions is the main feature distinguishing the non-actuality from actuality, and it only increases as we approach the ultimate origin. We can certainly speak about symbols of God, symbols of self, symbols of transformation, etc., but to the extent these are experienced symbols, they do not emerge as so definitely separated as they may appear when turned into reflective thoughts. Consequently, genuine symbols cannot be exhaustively interpreted, either as signs or as allegories. They are genuine symbols precisely because they are ambiguous, full of half-glimpsed meanings, and in the last resort inexhaustible. The discriminating intellect naturally keeps on trying to establish their singleness of meaning and thus misses the essential point: their *manifold meaning*, their almost limitless wealth of reference, which makes any unilateral formulation impossible.

85. Symbols reflect the original signs, the most individual experience of sacred numinosity, the experience which confronts me not only with myself but with my self. When we attempt to understand symbols, we are not only confronted with the symbol itself, but we are brought up against the wholeness of the symbol-producing individual. This individual is not, of course, oneself nor one's ego, but something greater than the individual himself. Symbols emerge through us but they are not created by us, they are better thought of as natural and spontaneous products. No genius has ever sat down with a pen or a brush in his hand and said: "Now I am going to invent a symbol."

Transcending thus the personal sphere of mineness, symbols have a powerful collective aspect. As Jung's investigations suggest, humans tend to express the experience of invisibles (which, for the moment, we can identify with his archetypes) by analogous, symbolic forms and ideas. Whether manifested in dreams, in myths, in religious conceptions, or sometimes in philosophical concepts, the invisible sphere revealed by symbols seems to be the deepest layer of human being, the collective (to use Jung's term) aspect of the psyche, relatively independent from the personal context and cultural tradition. The deepest, the most personal is exactly that which, being universally participated does not become a commonality – the absolute, unrepeatable concreteness of incarnation of invisibles. To the extent this becomes expressed and embraced by a collective culture, it can happen

only through symbols.

A holy stone, a holy tree, a holy brook are signs announcing the presence of *sacrum*. As Eliade aptly illustrates, they are not worshiped in-themselves, they are not the holiness itself. They are worshiped only because *sacrum* has marked its presence *at* these places, because it has manifested itself *through* them. They are hierophanies, the signs of *sacrum* which infinitely transcends them and yet is concretely present in them. They may serve as simplest examples of symbols, the visible, external objects which inspire – awe, fear, wonder, reverence – and command, not any specific acts, but veneration and rituals which take their particular form from the lower levels, from the myths, the tradition, the religious culture.

Transcending one's private sphere, symbols are nevertheless most concrete 86. and personal because to be a symbol, the actual sign must be accompanied by the original command, must be experienced as a hierophany which announces, if not fully manifests, the invisible presence. Symbols are only externalised and objectified reflections of the original signs. Here lie of course unlimited possibilities of discrepancies and conflicts between the individual feelings of the high, deep and reverent and the publicly recognised symbols and accepted forms of their reverence. The distance separating the actuality of the sign from its meaning is, in the case of symbols, virtually infinite. The relation of signification, once the symbol gets dissociated from the original signs, seems completely arbitrary. Almost anything can become a symbol and there is nothing easier than to ask: Why this tree? Why a tree? Why the cross? Why this and not that? – and then conclude that there is no sufficiently convincing answer. Symbols become 'mere symbols' for all too discriminating reflection which notices that mere signs are actually dissociated from any real presence which they should announce with some forcing necessity. But even then symbols can act as reminders of this presence, whose original signs have been forgotten underneath the visible expressions.

Establishing symbols is one of the fundamental needs and activities, as 87. they are the only reflective signs connecting the actual consciousness with the sphere of invisible presence.¹⁶ But signs become symbols only when they actually manifest the invisible, that is, only when they are met and experienced along with the respective original signs. What constitutes a symbol is the double aspect of the invisible flowing in through the visible, of the inspiration arising through the actual sign. The archetypal inspirations

¹⁶It can be seen in the seriousness with which children, in their games, *are* mothers, fathers, policemen or arrange doll houses and build models – without slightest disturbance by the fact, of which they are perfectly aware, that these are only games. Likewise, the pictures from Lascaux are hardly mere traces of boredom or depictions of daily activities. Studies of Eliade and others suggest that the maintenance of the symbolic, and yet concrete, proximity of *sacrum* to the sphere of profanum is one of the founding aspects of the earliest cultures.

are not any emotions but, allowing this mode of speaking, are, at the same time, both pictures and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. The mere picture is of little consequence. But charged with emotion, it gains numinosity.

Reflection devoted exclusively to the matters of its actuality is simply unable to meet a symbolic expression, even if it meets its visible sign. The meaning of a symbol has close to nothing in common with the meanings discernible at the level of actuality, the meanings of precise words, concepts, impressions. In the moment a symbol starts signifying something visible – usually, because the invisible presence is declared unreal – it becomes a mere allegory and, eventually, degenerates to an empty sign.

Put differently, a command is meaningful only in so far as it is not dissociated from its origin. It has unconditional validity only for the one who hears it. The living relation to the actual person is its true nature. Stripping the symbolic origin of its intrinsically invisible character (externalising it in an objectified form), leaves only arbitrariness of an artificial sign and the incomprehensible ‘so it is’. Such symbols may preserve some element of the mystical character, but they lose their commanding force. They may then function as mere reminders, pointing to another world in an indifferent, anonymous way. This is what happens to symbols, whether in literature, painting or mythology, once they are dissociated from their invisible meaning. They appear as arbitrary. Empty symbols are the original commands turned by tradition, culture, repetition or personal estrangement into mere signs, mere indications of nothing specifically discernible and therefore devoid of any concrete meaning. Their originally vague meaning and their lack of any identifiable referent turn into lack of meaning and emptiness of denotation. At best, they only try – deficiently and unsuccessfully – to indicate something vague, unknown, which is never precisely defined or fully explained. And one can not hope to define or explain it, for symbol never explains *what* it is saying – it only says it. It is a pure expression, totally open to misinterpretation, which in particular means, to being ignored. At the same time, it is entirely clear to the one who happens to grasp it, because to grasp it means to already know what it expresses – the symbol is only a trigger actualising this ‘knowledge’, making it conscious. To the scientific mind, symbolic ideas are a nuisance because they cannot be formulated in a way that is satisfactory to intellect and logic. To the concrete reflection, however, they are the most important among the signs because our only approach to invisible, divine things is through symbols.

4.2 The invisibles

There are things which do not belong to this world in the way tools, commodities, situations, daily objects, relations, feelings and thoughts do. There

are things which do not obey our dictates but are the sources of gifts and calamities surpassing our powers. In this sense, they are from another world, lying above this world of our plans and activities. This otherness, however, is not anything absolutely foreign, alien – another world is still the world. Although transcending the sphere of phenomena, of all actual experiences, it manifests its presence in such experiences, it too enters the horizon of one's experience. But even when encountering it in a single moment, in a single act of consciousness, one always knows that it is only a sign of something greater and invisible, something which manifests itself without exposing itself.

The common feature of the unlimited variety of concrete inspirations and 88. symbolic expressions is that they do not announce anything particular, anything specifically discernible. But they do announce. They manifest something more than not only themselves but than any actuality of an experience. Since this something more, this Rest is invisible and remains imprecise, the commanding character of a symbol does not determine any immediate reaction. It only inspires to look for the possible ways of actualising the intimated inspiration, for the actual expressions of the command. It does not announce anything particular but, one might say, only the distance to whatever it might be announcing. This distance reveals the anchoring of the actuality in Something lying above all actual distinctions. It reveals the presence of some *sphere* rather than of any particular entities. Reflection searches this sphere for visibly discernible contents but it is always aware of the inadequacy of such attempts. This sphere remains unitary above the variety of such announcements. Its contents may be vaguely distinguished but, resisting any precise dissociation, remain in the most intimate unity. Invisibles are the first and deepest distinctions, which remain in the closest proximity to the indistinct origin.

In actual reflection we like to consider the problem of freedom, then of truth, then of meaning, then of love, each for itself. But we very quickly realise that to the degree we succeed in such a dissociation, the treatment and the results become so much more sterile. Any attempt to capture the essence of love, sainthood, damnation, to draw a border separating one such element from others, is immediately accompanied by the awareness of non-finality and some arbitrariness. Each invisible has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, so that all are everywhere and each and every one is all; it has the appearance of a part, but a penetrating look sees the whole in it.

Gathered densely in the unitary sphere closest to the origin, invisibles can not be precisely differentiated from each other. They can, at best, be recognised as commands beyond the symbolic expressions: commands which do not dictate but inspire, overflowing with meanings which all point toward the invisible unity but which never reach any final form. The impossibility of

precise division and description is due to this surplus of meaning flowing into an invisible once we attempt to isolate it from its surrounding, from the Rest. They simply can not be meaningfully dissociated from each other, remaining inaccessible to the categories of reflective precision. But the impossibility of reflective dissociation does not mean the lack of any distinctions. It is a well-nigh hopeless undertaking to tear a single aspect out of the invisible sphere; but despite their interwovenness they do form units of meaning that can be apprehended intuitively. This intuitive apprehension amounts exactly to a discernment which is not completed in a dissociation but keeps close to that from which it comes. Diversity of the primordial distinctions leaves the unity of the origin untouched, does not dissociate it. But this original unity is no longer One, it involves already some differentiation: too weak to be grasped reflectively, but thoroughly real and effective. ‘All are One there and yet are distinct’ sounds certainly offending to the reflective axiom of non-contradiction. It does not, however, involve any contradiction but only two levels of experience: the intuitive apprehension of differences and the impossibility of drawing reflectively precise borders between them.

89. To be invisible is to be essentially non-actual, is to be a distinction which can never be fully embraced – as a concept or an experience – in the unity of a single act, within the horizon of actuality. Complexity of earthly distinctions escapes our grasp, hiding always more distinctions beyond the horizon of our apprehension. But invisibles are not only more distinctions which, in due time, might be perhaps uncovered. They are distinctions of a different kind, distinctions without anything distinguished, where the fact of distinction and the distinguished content are not distinct. They are appearances without objects, phenomena without the noematic correlates, powers without any identifiable center.

The invisible sphere lacks any objects but is thoroughly objective. Its objectivity is not opposed to the actual subject, but is raised above it, enfolding it in the element where no such opposition can be postulated. The invisibles are sheer objectivity, as wide as the world. There I am the object of every subject, in complete reversal of my ordinary consciousness, where I am always the subject that has an object. There I am utterly one with the world, so much part of it that I forget all too easily who I am. ‘Lost in oneself’ is a good way of describing this state. But this self is the world, if only reflection could see it. Awareness of invisibles, even though it remains in the actuality of an act, involves suspension of the reflective dissociation into subject and object. At the level of invisibles such a dissociation simply does not obtain, because they form the sphere where even the world and experience have not yet emerged. Unlike the qualities, which characterise *one’s* world and life, invisibles are above them and one can at most live one’s life inspired or, to a degree, determined by them. Their presence does not

involve any opposition but is unconditional. In particular, they do not have any 'outside', any objective correlates. Sainthood has no object, just like genuine love does not have any. They are not opposed to any 'outside' but contain the whole world 'within'. They do not act on any external objects, for actual objects are not their equipollent correlates, are not goals of their actions, but only places of their manifestation. This constant presence of the Rest, of the clear if undefinable inspiration, and the character of expression rather than of directedness towards any external goals, marks the unitary and self-oriented character of the sphere of invisibles or, to use the old concept, of the intellect, this first hypostasis which apprehends itself and is object of its own activity. This unitary self-sufficiency, where distinctions announce only that they are, without possible conflicts with any extraneous objects, raised above the actuality of subjective feelings and concepts, marks the sphere of complete objectivity.

Already at the level of mineness the distinction between the world and my world, and then between my world and myself is close to impossible to draw in a meaningful, not to mention precise, manner, §63. But only now we encounter the true Parmenidean identity of being and knowing. Of course, knowing and being taken not in the reflective sense of a dissociated subject and object – in the spiritual sphere, there is as yet no such distinction. The primordial differentiation of invisibles is the condition founding the very possibility of experience and of dissociated experiences. Without these invisible seeds, no actual objects could ever appear. Consequently, in the spiritual sphere, at the edge of nothingness, being and knowing are synonymous – not because they happened mysteriously to coincide, but because they have not as yet been distinguished, because addressing only nothingness there is not, as yet, enough material to distinguish the two.

Staying thus above the distinctions of this world, invisibles are absolute. 90. They are not relative to the contents of any actual experiences nor to any particular region of Being. They are only a constant and necessary aspect of every lower being and experience. Their presence precedes any recognisable distinctions, and hence embraces the whole person, before one can act and protest. They cast their shadow (or rather their light), as irrevocable as it is ingraspable, as intense and clear as it is indistinct, on all particular beings and actual objects.

This independence from all particulars, from any lower thoughts and feelings, implies lack of any unique and well-defined expression. Specific invisibles can enter virtually any particular situation, any constellation of actual things and feelings. They allow almost unlimited variations at the lower levels which do not affect their presence. Love remains love independently from the feelings, moods, sensations one might experience in particular situations. In fact, all such particular experiences are affected by the love which inspires

their specificity with strength and unity originating above them.

The complete lack of objective correlate is thus here equivalent with embracing all objects. The absolute transcendence beyond any particular region of Being is not remoteness but most intimate presence, immanence. Invisibles can be called inaccessible only if by accessibility one means visibility of precise particulars, accessibility to the subjective grasp. Belonging to the personal center, to the very self above the subject's alienation and limitations of mineness, invisibles lie beyond beings but only in the sense of not pertaining to any particular among them. They are not exhausted by any particular being because they embrace all of them, the whole sphere of actual, not-actual and non-actual distinctions. A person is not holy 'over something' or 'in relation to something' – he *is* holy, nowhere in particular, that is, in his whole being and beyond it. A person is not damned for a particular act; a particular act can only reveal and strengthen the depth of damnation penetrating the person, that is, the whole world. One is not damned temporally, but forever. Invisibles penetrate the whole Being and lend their force and character to every encounter with beings, to all particulars. They belong to another world but that world is not an inaccessible land separated from this world by an impassable barrier. It pours into this world its constant inspirations, remaining inaccessible only to the claims of plain visibility, of external objectivity and subjective control.

91. Lying above this world, invisibles hide the virtuality of ever new manifestations, like the promise of eternal repetition, or better, of the repetition of eternity in time. They do not fall under the temporal dimension of this world – only their manifestations do. A bitter, tragic or trivial end of a love story does not mean the end of love. It is only the end of this manifestation of love, of this experience. Psychological difficulties notwithstanding, one may be equally able to cherish love, to long for its manifestations, to recognise and appreciate it when one meets it again. Psychological difficulties mean only that one tends to lose this ability, not that one cannot retain it.

Independence from time can be seen in all kinds of founding events in which a single manifestation, a single 'moment of truth', expressed and remembered in some symbolic form, inspires all future life of a community or a person. From the archaic ways of establishing the center of the new settlement – whether the placement of the totem, of the altar, of the temple tent – as the *axis mundi* along which gods intervene into the affairs of people; through the legendary foundation events, like that of Rome at the site where divine help had saved Romulus and Remus; to the laicized custom of commencing a construction by placing the foundation stone – symbolic expressions of the presence of the higher element accompany the events of foundation. This symbolic reference, establishing continuity with the origin, anchors the actual, temporal event in the eternal element. For manifestations

reveal truth which is not affected by the actual course of this world. Even if, at some later time, it loses its actuality and passes into oblivion, it still has left its mark which cannot be denied. It revealed something which remains above time, even if its manifestations and actually discernible consequences diminish or disappear.

Although transcending thus time, the invisibles are not timeless in the way of objects which appear as if in a frozen time, on an abstract scene devoid of change and development. They are eternal and time does not contradict eternity but only, as Plato said, is its moving image.¹⁷ Invisibles – manifested through all actuality, at the horizon beyond which it dissolves into nothingness – penetrate also time. They unveil in the sphere of visibles the order which, remaining above it, embraces and enriches everything below. Every such manifestation reveals something absolute, something which is not relative to any particular person nor region of being but which, flowing from its origin, penetrates the whole of it. Every manifestation of invisibles reveals their deepest immanence, their involvement in time, their life.

The invisibles are the most constant aspects of experience and they are always present, even if not manifest in actual signs. This is the meaning of presence which is very different from actualisation. The latter involves explicit presence, actuality of a particular sign or object, which dominates the moment. Presence, on the other hand, does not require any explicit givenness. It is the constant proximity of invisibles, felt or not, as if in the background of and independent from the actuality of our attention. Manifestations are aspects of such actual experiences in which presence comes forth and becomes strongly experienced, even if it does not become the actual object of these experiences.

The above characteristics can be summed up in the claim of the impossibility 92. to capture invisible distinctions in the actual, unambiguous terms of reflective precision, their irreducibility to actual images. They can be symbolised but, as we have observed, symbolic relation remains empty and arbitrary if it is not accompanied by some inspiration. And inspiration refers exactly to the higher element which, calling for an expression, escapes any reduction. The characteristic of a genuine symbolic relation is, on the one hand, the connection of the image with its source and, on the other hand, the entire lack of identification or even similarity reducing the higher to the lower, the non-actual origin to the actual experiences. The former inspires the believer as much as the latter annoys the sceptic.

This irreducibly makes the signs of invisibles, when seen from the per-

¹⁷Strictly speaking, eternity pertains only to the ultimately invisible site of the confrontation of the nothingness of the One and the nothingness of the self; the absolute contentless *fact* of the presence of the origin. But invisibles always reveal the aspect of eternity, which involves unlimited temporal duration only as an image, as a consequence of their absolute validity transcending the visible world.

spective of actuality, the most empty pointers, apparently arbitrary and unrelated to whatever they are pointing to. It is typical of all kinds of rituals, hymns, Song of the Songs, love poetry, and the vast mystical literature with its invocations, prayers and praising – a sceptic can, perhaps, accept them as inadequate *expressions* of experiences and attitudes, but not as *descriptions* of whatever they are praising. As Heidegger might have put it, invisibles appear only (as) disappearing, they are present without becoming actual – distinctions which immediately melt into one another and dissolve in the ever present Rest of invisibility surrounding all actuality. They only manifest – point towards the inexhaustible source, ever indeterminate and forever distinct from all distinctions.

The irreducibility to actuality concerns not only a symbolic expression but any actual experience. As long as such experiences serve as the only measure of convincing us about anything, we can at best encounter vague, and hence never sufficient analogues, momentaneous feelings of ‘oneness’, mystical union, *coincidentia oppositorum*, which can only at best leave a mark, as they disappear from the horizon of actuality. These are only pale, even if intense, actual reflections of something which remains *essentially* – and hence forever – invisible. Openness to such exceptional experiences is one thing. But a search and constant thirst for them witness less to their genuine acceptance and more to the confusion of the invisible and visible, the eternal and temporal: forgetting the irreducibility of the invisible presence to actuality, it only tries to confirm the former by means of visible signs.

4.2.1. Invisible or unconscious?

93. The reader familiar with the respective traditions has noticed the juxtaposition of the Neoplatonic descriptions of the intellect and the Jungian reflections on the archetypes. One should certainly remember that Jung and Plotinus diverge drastically when it comes to the contents of these spheres. While the collective unconscious contains only the archetypes of the most primordial elements of human experience, Plotinian intellect, although it does not include negative ideas and evil, suffers overpopulation similar to that of Plato’s ideal world. It contains qualities, accordant with Nature, and quantities; number and mass; origins and conditions; all actions and experiences not against nature; movement and repose, both the universals and the particulars. And this is only the beginning, because all items listed so far are forms of only sensible things. Yet, the obvious differences of language and concepts should not preclude us from discerning the similarity of the general characteristics which is hardly disputable and hardly accidental. Modern sensibility is certainly closer to the language of Jung than of Neoplatonism. It is easier to recognise fundamental themes in the personal existence than in the eternal essences. But in both the intellect and the collective unconscious

we discern the attempt to capture the idea of the transpersonal, eternal element which founds and penetrates the concreteness of existence.

The collective unconsciousness does not contain any visible contents capable of being grasped within the horizon of actuality, any specific representations, nor any mythological images or motifs. Invisibles, or archetypes, stand for a tendency to form such representations of a motif – representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their pattern. This tendency, lived concretely and individually, is common to human existences. It is collective not because it gathers abstract commonalities of a wide range of particular instances. It is collective because all particular experiences participate in One and the same reality which founds, and hence precedes, their actuality. This founding communion of the shared origin involves only original distinctions which grow up from the dark depths of the mind like a lotus and form a most important part of the subliminal psyche. Their utmost importance is the consequence of their founding role. They do not, as yet, involve the dissociation into elements which could be opposed to each other and could contradict or falsify each other: they found the possibility of forming such oppositions. Or, put differently, they do not as yet involve the distinction between the original and the copy, between the source and the image, which arises only with the distinction of actuality from non-actuality and, then, of one actuality from another. They are all originals. The particular characteristics of the Neoplatonic intellects and Jung's archetypes are distinct. But their very presence and general character corresponds to the character of the sphere of invisibles. Being invisible and transcending every actual what, they can not be expected to ever yield to a univocal and final description.¹⁸

With respect to the Jungian archetypes, we should however clarify one 94. important difference which concerns equally the difference between the subconscious (or unconscious) and invisible contents.

There are many known examples of scientists 'receiving' solutions to their problems from unconscious. Often these come from dreams, like Kekulé's dream of a snake biting its tail or von Neumann's dreams of the actual proofs of his theorems. Intense engagement in some well-defined problem will often stimulate the mind to carry on further work, apparently at the same level of precision, under the threshold of consciousness.

Fascinating as such events may be, they are not exactly what we are aiming at here. What emerges in such cases are actual contents expressed precisely in the categories of conscious thinking. True, they emerge from the unconscious, but it is only the process which is unconscious – the initial input

¹⁸For this reason, we do not attempt to list any specific contents of this sphere nor to form any definite theory of its structure. Leaving such gnostic exercises aside, we rest satisfied with the recognition of its presence and fundamental importance.

as well as the results are thoroughly precise contents of reflective thinking. A slightly different aspect may be adumbrated in the apparently quite analogous experiences of artists. Klee: “Everything «versinkt» [drowns] around me and the work arises as if of itself. [...] My hand is entirely the instrument of a foreign will. I must have friends up there, both light and dark. But I find them, for the most, good.”¹⁹ Pollock: “When I am in my painting I am not aware of what I am doing. It is only after a sort of ‘get acquainted’ period that I see what I have been about.”²⁰ Although the process is equally unconscious, the initial input is probably of a different order than in the case of the scientists. Much conscious work may precede and be involved in the process of artistic creation, but the consciousness is here concerned with contents of a different order than those of scientific consciousness. What is typically received by an artist is not a ready-made solution to an actual problem, but a mere impulse ‘I must paint *this*’. *This* has no visible form but is as if a directing force which provides a guidance during the process ending with the actual expression which so, perhaps after a ‘get acquainted’ period, is seen as a “match”, as a satisfying actualisation not of any preconceived idea, but of the initial, vague intuition.

95. This should indicate the fundamental difference: the difference not so much between conscious as opposed to unconscious, as between actual as opposed to non-actual. The two distinctions are orthogonal and cut the field of experience along independent lines. One can be

- 1.a reflectively conscious of the tree one is looking at or
- 1.b merely aware of it (which would count as being subconscious of it, since the fact that one does not stumble into trees, although one does not pay any reflective attention to them, is credited to subconsciousness).

But one can also be

- 2.a reflectively aware of the indefinable thirst of one’s soul, of a vague dissatisfaction with *je ne sais quoi*, or
- 2.b entirely unconscious (only aware?) of it.

The distinction actual vs. non-actual is that between tree and soul’s thirst, between 1. and 2., while the distinction conscious-unconscious is, in each case, that between a. and b.²¹

96. Certainly, there is a big difference between being conscious and unconscious

¹⁹P. Klee, Diaries, 1918, 1104.

²⁰J. Pollock [after A. Jaffé, *Symbolism in the Visual Arts.* p.308] (By the way, these two quotations illustrate also, in addition to the common aspect which concerns us here, the enormous difference between the poetic intellectualism of Klee’s and the violent expressionism of Pollock’s paintings.)

²¹We gloss over more detailed differences like, for instance, that with Jung consciousness

of something. But what matters much more is that *of which* we are conscious (or unconscious), and what we make of the contents of our consciousness.

Freud made unconsciousness pretty much the same as reflection, only unconscious. Its contents were repressed *conscious* contents. Only for this reason one might postulate (as done constantly by Freud) that *id* should be replaced by *I*, that *I* should keep bringing under its control more and more aspects of the unconscious *id*, as if the ultimate (even though impossible) goal were to eradicate the latter making all its contents visible. The main complication in this extension of consciousness was a complex of mechanisms working to hide the unconscious (though always principally visible) contents. Thus, for instance, for the dream interpretation, one had to invent a censor, a function of the psyche which twisted and confused all the precise contents of unconscious in order to hide them from consciousness. But the form that dream takes is natural to the unconscious because the material from which it is produced is retained in the subliminal state in precisely this fashion. It is natural in so far as the non-actual contents are not expressible directly in the precise, reflective form.

Even if to some degree unconsciousness indeed hides only repressed visible contents, there is much more which remains essentially invisible. Jung's departure from the Freudian psychoanalysis of merely visible but repressed contents, and his study of the collective unconscious, that is, of the transpersonal and not merely subjective dimension of the experience, is an admirable spiritual achievement of the XX-th century. The invisible contents which he finds through dream analysis carry this character of *anamnesis*, of something which does not originate in consciousness and yet, appearing for the first time, can be at once recognised.

The assumption of psychoanalysis (at least, in its folklore) is that there is nothing which, at least in principle, could not become conscious. The unconscious is most intimately present and we are aware of it, although there may be a long way from this awareness to the full visibility in reflection. The important thing, in so far as such a 'making conscious' is concerned, is that contents entering reflection still retain fundamental mutual differences. Becoming (attentively) conscious of the tree I did not see is very different from becoming conscious of the vague dissatisfaction I have felt but did not realise. Reflection, whether of a tree or of dissatisfaction, is fully aware of

involves necessarily opposites, while with us only sufficiently precise distinctions, of which opposites are extreme cases. Also, since our consciousness spans everything from awareness to reflection, we have obviously the degrees of consciousness. The extreme of awareness will often be the same as psychoanalysis' subconsciousness. Perhaps the most significant is that Jung's consciousness is the *totality* of contents related to his ego, which seems to be simply constituted as the subjective pole of this totality. With us, reflection is always only an actual act, and the 'conscious ego' is nothing but the actual subject of such an act. The totality of such acts transcends reflection and pertains to oneself but in no way constitutes it.

such differences, even if they do not become its objects. They are recognised, so to speak, in the background of the reflective acts, in self-awareness.

The invisibles are essentially non-actual and not essentially unconscious. Yet, the consciousness of invisibles is of a very different kind from the usual consciousness of this or that. The difference is established by the distance separating the actual sign from the content it signifies. In case of an external object like a tree, the distance is negligible. In case of Prague, it becomes more apparent, even if one sticks to thinking of Prague merely as a complex of actual objects. In case of the invisible unity of the world, of the vague feeling of the dawning love or despair, and then of the clear – and still equally vague – consciousness of love or despair, the distance is obvious and given in the immediate awareness that what one is actually conscious of does not capture ‘the thing itself’ one is experiencing. Paradoxically as it may seem, the longer this distance, the more concrete the content, that is, the deeper it reaches into the personal being. With invisibles, the virtual infinity of this distance is an aspect of the absolute concreteness of the experience overflowing the actuality of conscious signs. This concreteness is an aspect of immanence which, in the case of invisibles, is in no way opposite to their transcendence.

4.3 Transcendence

97. The transcendence of invisibles amounts to their *essential* non-actuality. They not only happen to be, like complexes, sometimes or partially not-actual but are *essentially* outside the horizon of actuality. Even when their signs appear within this horizon, they are immediately experienced as transcending it. Their indefiniteness evades any attempts to capture them within the unity of a single act. Since by appearing we mean an appearance of something specific, they do not appear, they at most manifest themselves.

Their manifestations are absolute, do not admit any gradation. Either there is an experience, a manifestation of the invisible which also makes me see my subordination to what is above me, or there is no such experience. This is the character of absoluteness which either reveals itself completely or not at all. When revealed, it knows no limits, in particular, no limits between persons who can participate in it, or the forms of such participation. It is an inexhaustible potential for ever new manifestations, a surplus, an untiring force which, fully realised in one situation, never ceases to look for new forms of manifestation, which accessible to one person in one form, does not cease to be accessible to all others in an unlimited number of other forms. Love without any manifestation is hardly love, but in any manifestation and, not least, in any failure, love remains the potential for new manifestations. Therefore it never coincides with its sign because, fully manifested as it is, it also immediately overflows the actuality of this manifestation towards the

new ones. An invisible is a virtuality transcending every actuality, potentiality of ever new manifestations.

By thus transcending every actual appearance, they are also above me. They 98. not only happen to be not-mine, while perhaps they belong to somebody else. Unlike qualities of life, they do not belong to some but not to others. They are equally above every one of us. Yet, transcending particularity of every life and experience, they form their deepest sphere which envelops the personal center, the invisible self confronting directly the nothingness of the One.

Transcending this world, the invisibles transcend the sphere of mineness. They are neither subjective nor objective. In their true manifestations, not involving any object, they do not involve any subject either, or rather, they erase the subject, *aufheben* it. But likewise, they are also neither mine nor not-mine and they *aufheben* also myself. Of course, they manifest themselves through me, through you. But neither you nor I are indispensable for their manifestations. Every one of us is merely their possible site, the place of their possible manifestation. The invisible is not changed if it happens to be manifested through somebody else.

For an experience of beauty or love, it is not essential that I am their subject. In a sense, it is enough that they at all are. The subjectivity of an actual consciousness is merely the place of manifestation of their presence. For instance, creation of a beautiful work of art is a very different experience from its appreciation. But the beholder is given the same gift of beauty which was given to the artist. The latter was only the one who actually happened to bring it to the expression. Manifestations concern everything and everybody, they give joy to anybody who is able to recognise them as a generous gift. Such a recognition, however, is conditioned by the unconditional openness, by suspension of one's private claims and pretensions and by the acceptance of the non-relative validity of the invisible gift. Every manifestation of holiness, of love is accessible to everybody. Invisible does not have to manifest itself through me if I am to find the deep peace and satisfaction in it, to experience its quality. They can not be grasped and so they do not have to be grasped. They do not offer any visible distinctions which might suggest attempts at understanding them. It suffices that they are – in fact, even if they do not manifest themselves. One can wish to attain holiness, peace, love and that is about everything one can do about it. Invisibles are not possible goals of any activity, they are not meaningful intentions of one's will and acts. Intending goodness one turns into a moralist, intending saintliness one turns into a hypocrite. For intending is relative to oneself, to one's will. Invisibles can not be approximated or acted upon. Any directedness towards them turns them into something particular, a specific motive or an actual goal and thus, violating their transcendence, falsifies their nature. They can be only participated, as implicit inspirations which putting

unconditional claims, require that I cease viewing myself as the *axis mundi* and, to the extent that I address myself, I do so only forgetting myself.

99. This transpersonal transcendence of invisibles is expressed in yet another feature. Just like the indistinct remains One, unaffected by all the distinctions, just like multiplicity of selves is the primordial communion, the univocal event of birth in the face of the only One, so invisibles can be shared without diminishing. Actual goods, objects, complexes cannot be so shared, because sharing them requires some kind of division between all parts which involves diminishing them. (Money is the paradigmatic example but this applies to the whole sphere of visibility.) The fact that more people participate in invisible does not, in any way, diminish its quality, intensity and truth. Love can be shared without any restrictions, even if its particular expressions and acts need to be limited to the actual context. But an act of love, in addition to being directed and circumscribed within the horizon of actuality, has the Rest which is not addressed to any particular region of Being. If more people witness to it, it does not lose any of the love it manifests; on the contrary, it radiates the more, allowing everybody to participate in it. An invisible seed has no quantity. Like the five loaves and two fish which feed five thousand people, so an invisible grain, of the size of a mustard seed, is sufficient for any number of people.
100. Invisibles transcend thus the personal sphere of mineness and can be shared without diminishing. They are irreducible to the lower, visible and actual determinations, and this irreducibility involves a series of aspects constituting their vertical transcendence above the visible world: they can not be precisely dissociated from each other; they are vague and hardly identifiable; lacking any final, definite form, they are inexhaustible by the actual phenomena. However, as we have observed several times, the vertical transcendence does not mean any foreign remoteness but, on the contrary, the most concrete presence. Concreteness is the anchoring in the origin, which anchoring happens through the sphere of invisibles, I:§60. Evading precise, conceptual determinations, invisibles are not prone to externalisation, can not be turned into objects which are the more abstract and impersonal the more precise they are. They are the most ‘internal’, the most immanent elements of experience.

Their concreteness is, in fact, the concreteness of the personal existence which is constituted by two, apparently contradictory, aspects. On the one hand, it is the uniqueness of birth and confrontation which, in the existential order of founding, raises a unique world. On the other hand, this uniqueness is the universal aspect which every existence shares with all others as it emerges from the same One into the same, shared world.

Each person is an unrepeatable, that is, original source of variations, always unique variations over the same theme of existential confrontation

which begins (just after *the beginning*) with the invisibles. Human existence is a repetition, but a repetition of the unrepeatable. It is a repetition of the necessity to live one's life, accepting this most personal gift, and to live it from its unique source. Nobody can teach anybody exactly how to live this confrontation except, to some extent, by the very example, by living it oneself. For concrete life does not amount to 'filling in' some abstract 'form of human nature' with the actual 'matter', not to mention, the actual sensations. If we were to use such notions, we would say that it amounts to actually finding this very form, to forming it by drawing the borders – new or old – anew. This drawing of the borders is not any matching of the particular contents to the pre-existing forms. It affects equally the visible and the invisible sphere, involving their most intimate reciprocity and concreteness.

We can learn (from others, from the books) to understand many things, some distinctions between hate, love, friendship, indifference..., between hospitality, generosity, magnanimity, benevolence, largesse, lavishness, wastefulness, squander... But to live, it does not suffice to actually know, we must also draw these distinctions ourselves. To draw them amounts to recognising the particular actualities in their terms, as friendly or unfriendly, as an expression of love or not, as an act of hostility or a mere misunderstanding. To live is to recognise actual situations as signs. Was his smile, his remark, an expression of understanding, of sympathy, of irony, of superiority? Answers to such questions may not be definite but are not arbitrary. They arise from recognition of the actual events as signs terminating the respective traces, which originate in and lead back to the differentiated but hardly distinguishable sphere of shared invisibles.

So far, one might probably still see here only filling in the abstract forms of invisibles with particular contents. However, the interesting part only begins here because there is no given and pre-defined way of connecting the two spheres. The answers to such questions are not arbitrary but they are not determined either. Classification of the actualities affects also the invisible distinctions – not by making them concrete, because they always are so, but by drawing them at some actual limits, by bringing them down to earth. Invisibles live only through their manifestations and can be dissociated from them only by abstracting reflection. I may have a vague understanding of what friendship means and then, confronted with an act of minor opposition or egoism, conclude: no, if he could do *that*, he can not possibly be my friend, he can not possibly be a friend. There is, fortunately, no recipe-book for drawing such conclusions, and this is an aspect of unique concreteness, of repeating the unrepeatable confrontation with the origin. We do not live among the shadowy images but in the middle of the highest realities. Saying "friendship" everybody will understand (or misunderstand) something, even if we disagree whether this particular conclusion, in this particular case was

justified. We do not know where the actual borders go but we must draw them. In fact, we have to draw them *because* we do not know where they actually go, because without us drawing them, they would leave actuality. Drawing them in the actual situations we as if define, again and again, what friendship – as distinct from all that it is not – is.

We do not know exactly and precisely what friendship is. Yet, without knowing it at all, could we have friends? After some time, the friend who did *that* and whom I declared not-my-friend, turns out to be the most worthy person whose act followed from the most genuine friendship or, perhaps, from some restraining circumstances or passing problems. Even more, I may not only learn about some earlier unknown circumstances but may realise that the act does not actually contradict friendship after all, that its intention and significance was genuine friendship which only did not fit my (mis)understanding. He turns out to be, and to have been all the time, my true friend, and friendship acquires a new essence, the border separating it from all the rest becomes re-adjusted.

In this tension between the non-arbitrariness of invisibles and their indefiniteness, provoking the constant need to find their actual signs, lies the whole sphere of concrete freedom. It is not freedom to invent and decide, but to find and recognise; for instance, friendship and generosity where one could earlier see only enmity and egoism. Such recognitions amount to a true, if secondary, creation.

101. The concreteness of invisibles can be thus said to lie in the structure of the existential confrontation making every actuality a terminus of the trace leading to the ultimately transcendent origin. But since the invisible distinctions lack any precise borders, this puts also an obligation – existential and not moral one – on the actual subject to recognise the actual situations as the signs of invisibles, to draw actual distinctions as expressions of the invisible ones.

Like Platonic forms, invisibles belong to the other world which transcends this one. But unlike the Platonic forms, they are not for this reason other-worldly entities, existing independently beyond the world of concrete experience. They are fully experienced and exist only through actual manifestations. Their transcendence means only that they neither are objects of actual experiences nor are reducible to such objects. But neither are invisibles abstracted from the actual experiences as their common features or concepts. Actual instances are usually too few and distinct instances may have nothing visible in common. One cannot be damned twice, just like one cannot commit suicide twice. There is no such thing as multiple ‘instances’ of love from which one could abstract any precise concept. There is not even any experience *of* love (even if grammar and habit allow us to speak this way) – there is only experiencing love, participation in something greater

than oneself, which can be complete even if, or perhaps only if, experienced only once.

This is much more adequate context for the application of Plato's *anamnesis* simile than the field of concepts, essences and generalities. Invisibles, the eternal elements of absolute validity, pertain to everybody's experience. They form the sphere of shared contents which founds the possibility of the genuine communion – with others as much as with the origin and, in particular, of the visible actuality with something of which it reminds. We lack precise concepts of love, sainthood, hatred, but once we encounter them in experience, we do recognise them. And even if specificity and definiteness of such a recognition may initially leave much space for refinements, we recognise them already the first time we meet them. Encountering love, hatred, mystical experience, spiritual strength, we suddenly 'remember'. We never know for sure, at least not at once: is *this* love or not, is *this* sainthood or not. But the very doubt whether this is *it*, witnesses to the fact of recognition and to the presence of something which might be so recognised. Even if we never experienced it before, we know (vaguely and imprecisely) what we are meeting now for the first time. The doubt is almost unavoidable because it only reflects the complete lack of any universal and objective characteristics, the thoroughly personal dimension of such experiences and their irreducibility to any actual signs. The doubt reflects only the concreteness of the command which calls us to actually recognise, to find in the actual situation traces of the invisible presence, which has been always known.

There is no horizontal dimension of the transcendence of invisibles, since 102. they form a sphere closed on itself. Their being is their truth from which the actual life unfolds. As such, they form the most individual, the most concrete – deepest and most immanent – sphere of existence. They offer the ground for all experience and, as such, are themselves experienced. This experience can be clothed in various specific garments but it always involves the primary element of the distance from actuality, of a sphere which, only vaguely differentiated, remains above all actual distinctions. This distance from actuality marks the most immanent element of our existence.

Almost paradoxically, this distance is also marking the vertical transcendence which, in case of invisibles, is virtually unlimited. Their experiences manifest the Rest announcing in every actuality the ultimate transcendence. They lend thus all actual experiences concreteness by anchoring their dissociated actualities in the unity of the existential origin. Their experience coincides with the experience of their transcendence:

- as the contentless indeterminacy, respecting one's freedom, the invisibles offer the experience of nothingness;
- as the unitary sphere endowed only with the inseparable distinctions, they offer the experience of (the differentiated) unity;

- as the overflowing surplus and inexhaustible potential for ever new manifestations – the experience of the origin, the source of meaningfulness;
- as the transcendence unaffected by my choices and actions – the experience of eternity;
- likewise, as the transcendence and constant presence – the experience of communion and participation;
- as the inspiration and command – the experience of the absolute power.

4.4 Self

103. The One, remaining invisible between the distinctions of this most concrete and immanent sphere, is thus the most immanent element of life. Its immanence amounts to the foundation of the deepest personal element, the self, as the beginning of distinguishing, as the primordial confrontation with the indistinct. Birth constitutes self as the God-image: the nothingness of a point reflecting the indistinctness of the plane, the nothingness of One. And then, the differentiation of life and thought, distinguishing the indistinct, conducts a constant dialogue with the One. Everything is but a reflection of the One and thus One is always present. But it is present only through self. Phenomenologically, it is therefore impossible to say whether something comes from self or from One because everything, originating from the latter, comes only through the former. We can neither see nor tell whether self and Godhead are distinct and if so, what distinguishes the two. The self, the archetype of wholeness, so often and naturally symbolised as a mere point, marks the invisible origin. But our scheme claims the difference, giving primacy to the One, from which self originates. Self is one, because it is separated only from the One. But being is asymmetric and the One is not self. The separation, birth is exactly what establishes self as the confrontation with the ultimate transcendence, and what precludes their coincidence – precludes, that is, until death, which is the only return to the calm indistinctness. Birth does not establish a being which then, somehow, becomes confronted with transcendence. The separation of birth is *nothing more* than such a confrontation. There is no substance, no essence, nothing more to this fundamental aspect of being self, than being alive, that is, being confronted with the transcendence, distinguishing the indistinct. If the essence of One is its distinctness from all distinctions, the essence of self is confrontation with that.

104. Self is thus not any substantial being but the deepest structural element of existence, the border between all relative distinctions and the absolute indistinct. As such, it is the ultimate, essentially invisible source of all contents, raised always above myself and without slightest traces of the ego-personality.

Still, it is the foundation of the personality. As the trace of birth, it is the source from which all personal aspects emerge and which founds the ontological unity of a person. Just like the coherence and relative consistency of one's ego and acts are grounded in the unity of one's life, so the unity of oneself, of one's world and life, is grounded in the invisible self confronting the indistinct origin.

Self is like the nothingness of the point in infinity, reflecting the nothingness of the One. The eternity of this immutable relation makes it complete, it has neither a past nor a future, and it is not something to which anything can be added, for it cannot become larger or smaller. But as far as its appearances are concerned, self remains forever incomplete. Its signs, by their very nature, indicate distance to their origin, they manifest without revealing. Self manifests itself but is not reducible to its actual signs which reveal only, so to speak, its consequences, commands, inspirations – not any definable properties of the self. Its manifestation is a sort of intimate understanding and perception of a self which should be careful not to depart from itself by wanting to perceive more. No matter what form manifestations of self assume, the attempts to perceive more, to actually see it, never yield a satisfying result, for it can not be grasped directly but only through the 'text' of its manifestations.

Self is not any substantial being but this contentless fact of facing the bare nothingness lies at the foundation of the idea of a substance. We have opposed all talk about metaphysical substances with respect to the visible or material things. But one has always included living beings among the primary substances, and here our characteristics of self may comply with the tradition. Self is independent in the sense of being completely non-relative; simple and indivisible in the sense of being above all visible distinctions; timeless and unchangeable in the sense of facing only the absolute.

4.4.1. Self vs. my Self

Self is experienced primarily as the mere fact of existing. It arises also in the 105. experience as an inner guiding factor, a regulating center, that is different from the conscious personality and that brings about its constant extension and maturing. As such, it is experienced as risen above me and addressing me from above. In the even more extreme cases, I also meet empty symbols – in texts, art, other people's relations – which I recognise as only possible manifestations of invisibles, but ones which do not appeal to me; symbols which relate some invisible story but a story which is not mine, which does not exercise the same commanding power as the inspirations encountered in my personal experience.

One might then want to extrapolate such anonymous and impersonal elements and maintain the distinction mine vs. not-mine, constitutive for

the level of mineness, also with respect to the invisible things of the other world. The concrete material of the phenomenology of self, its manifestations entering my experience, can be viewed as my self. Approaching the self, I can experience it as mine, as *exclusively* mine. But viewing my self as somewhat opposed to self results only from propagating ‘upwards’ the reflective dissociations. It is grounded in the attachment to the relativity of actual consciousness which insists on the categories of mineness and myself dissociated from not-mine. Talking about *one’s* self, one tends to assume such a distinction at the level of the invisibles as if my invisible self was only a particular form, a particular case of self which then becomes an abstract generality. This, however, is to confuse myself and my self.

Everything else, every other distinction is below self and can be thus, at least in principle, incorporated into it. The “my” in my self can be taken at most as my experience of the self. My self is self experienced as mine, that is, in so far as the commands and symbols are received with all their obliging force by myself, in so far as they actually, even if not consciously, exercise their directing force on my being. My self is my experience of the self, is the self seen through the sieve of mineness, even of ego and pure subjectivity. The commands address myself, and thus turn self into my self, but they do not originate in myself, they do not originate in anything which could be characterized as mine. They emerge from above me, from the ultimate origin and mark the ever present trace of birth – the self.

106. The attachment to the categories of mineness, opposing my self to self, opposes likewise my self to other selves. It views self as if it were an attribute of myself, of my subjectivity. However, as the trace of birth, the contentless point in infinity, one self is indistinguishable from others. One point in infinity is essentially the same as another – they are only numerically distinct. This contentless difference of selves reflects the fundamental character of birth as the separation of self from the One – it does not involve, as yet, any particular distinctions but only this pure one. Different selves are only traces of different births, establishing distinct poles of the same confrontation with the One. This trace (we might say, *haecceitas*) has no principle of individuation beyond the fact of birth. As the point of birth, it constitutes the pole above all distinctions, confronting only the One – its true and only counterpart. As this place of the absolute origin, it is the element of eternity in man, the spark of the soul, as Eckhart would say.

Thus selves are not opposed to each other. Their numerical difference is a thorough community of sharing the same primordial event of birth and being confronted with the same One. In visible terms, this is reflected, for instance, by the possibility to understand the spiritual and psychological constitution of any person. No matter how different from us, how perhaps detestable and annoying a person is, we can always, at least in principle, understand

the deeper motivations and actual objectives driving the person. We can write or, at least, understand when reading, psychological biographies and personal memoirs of the worst criminals and madmen like de Sade, Lenin, Hitler... And we can do it because, again only in principle, we might be capable of doing the same things, of following the same traces. At least in principle, any person can do whatever any other person has done. We are only different traces of the same, primordial event.

Self, the point of eternity in man, is present beyond and irrespectively of 107. any experiences, in particular, any experiences of my self, not to mention, of myself. Yet, this point marks only the eternal truth of confrontation, self is just the simple fact of existence. Consequently, it can not be dissociated from the concrete existence, not to mention positing it as any self-subsistent entity. As such, one self is essentially the same as any other – they are only numerically distinct. The difference, if one insists, between one self and another is just the difference between one existence and another, is the difference between one way (of existing) and another, which is eventually the difference between one person and another. These specific differences of life amount to various ways of elaborating the primordial confrontation. They are thus founded in the merely numerical difference of selves which, as just noted, founds also the genuine community – of repeating the unrepeatable – in the face of the One.

4.4.2. The ‘sense of self’

In particular, *being* self is not dependent on any feeling or ‘sense of self’. The 108. experience of the self is not an experience of any given identity *with* the self. Self is above me, greater than me, it is never given in any actual experience and hence is not reducible to any private sense of being oneself. But at the same time, it is also the source and the ultimate site of my unity, the source of concreteness which makes experience into my experience.

One may ascribe to schizophrenics double personality. And this may be the case, although it implies only the notion of personality allowing for such a multiplicity in *one* person. It seems, however, that a schizophrenic suffers exactly because he retains the ‘sense of self’, because he notices terrifying elements invading *his* being, because he becomes afraid about himself and finds a temporal calm in alluding – perhaps in an escapist way – to his self. People suffering from the Korsakoff syndrome seem to have lost the hold over personal memories and the continuity of their being seems reduced to only the most immediate, last minute’s past. However, they also preserve some childhood and adolescent memories which indicate that the reduction is not that total. But even if it were, even if the ‘sense of self’ and continuity disappeared completely, as may happen in geriatric dementia, we are still

dealing with *the same* person. If such a person is our friend or loved one, we try to help *him*. He is no longer himself as he used to be, perhaps, he no longer has the ‘sense of self’, that is, of the continuity of himself exceeding the actuality of the immediate stimulus and reaction, but he is still the same person, the same self. And when we find out that nothing can be done, we grieve over *this* person, over our loss of *him* and over *his* loss of himself.

Saying “He is not the same person”, we know that he *is* the same. He only behaves, acts, speaks in a way which is not his usual way. Perhaps, he has even changed completely, he acquired a new personality, due to some mystical experiences, intense work on himself, some personal tragedy. But he is the same person, even if completely different. The same applies to a person who has completely lost his memory, who does not any longer know ‘who he is’, to one with a severe dissociative disorder, to an unconscious person kept alive under a drip. If this person is my loved one, I will care and treat him with all consideration and patience which I owe him – because he *is the same person*. When we respect the last will of a deceased person, we do it from respect for *this* very person – this person remains himself, is still identical to himself, even when dead.²²

Thus, not only no two persons are identical, the same person can be vastly different from oneself. Just like it is not any externally observable criteria which constitute the identity of a person, so neither is it any ‘inner sense of self’. If we feel insecure, we may need some criteria to *convince ourselves* that the person is the one he says he is, that he is not a spy, that my friend who just went out is the same who is now coming back, that my wife today is the same person as yesterday, even, that I am today the same person as I was yesterday. If we feel insecure... or, perhaps, suffer from the Capgras syndrome.²³ But what we thus convince ourselves *about* is something different than the mere conformance to any universal criteria. What is it? Where does the idea of *it* come from, if criteria are only to confirm *it*? The unity of a person lies beyond any tests and definitions because it is the first, fundamental fact of existence.²⁴

²²One might want to say that we thus cherish only our memory of the person. This may be so, but the crucial issue here is the emphasis. Respecting a dead person, we do not respect *our* memory of him, our memory which we could recall or put aside at wish as some subjective property. This would be exactly to disrespect the person. We respect *the* memory which, so to speak, only accidentally happens to be ours, which arises from a level of significance above our subjective wishes and acts. One can pretend that such memories can be ignored, but this means only that one does not reflect them in one’s actions. Memory is much more than reflective recollections and we will return to it in Section 5.2.

²³Capgras syndrome makes the affected person believe that some close friend or relative has been replaced by a deceiver or an *alter ego*. This conviction persists even though one can still recognise all the usual signs – the face, the body, the behavior, etc. – of the other.

²⁴Certainly, forensic considerations may call for a more specific notion of a person, or rather of a legal subject, but we are not dealing with such particular issues.

The asymmetry of being in general, and of being self in particular, involves 109. a relative independence of the higher from the lower. A loss at a lower level need not mean a similar loss at the higher level. One's incoherent or inconsistent acts can witness to some disturbances of one's ego but, unless all too frequent and grave, need not contradict the latter's integrity. Similarly, suffering an inflation of ego can as easily lead to problems in one's social interactions as to a realisation of deeper aspects of oneself. One can lose oneself, which we would typically equate with the loss of the 'sense of oneself', an existential crises or a personality disorder. But this does not mean that one has lost self, that one ceased to be self, because this is impossible.

Identification of self with the 'sense of self' is a sad reductionism, a psychologism of extreme subjectivity. The 'sense of self' is not something which establishes self. On the contrary, it is possible to have such a 'sense' only because there is something *of which* this is a sense. Eventually, it is the sense of the eternal validity and uniqueness of the fundamental event – confrontation with the One – which establishes *haecceitas* and whose traces found all the lower modifications of selfhood like personality, ego, subjectivity.

4.4.3. A note on scattered consciousness

Self, the personal unity, is constituted at birth as the fundamental ontological and ultimately transcendent fact. Its exhaustive visible account would amount to the reduction of this unity to the visible categories and can not be expected. In this second part we have seen the stratification of personal being into levels which can be taken as various levels of personal unity. Accordingly, one can experience being more or less oneself. The self above any particular experiences of one's self marks the ultimate unity. If one stays attached to oneself, this invisible unity slips out of one's attempts to *see* it and appears as a merely noumenal identity – irreducible to and unaccountable for in the visible terms of mineness and of the 'sense of self' but which, nevertheless, remains unquestionable. Engaged exclusively in egotic projects, one becomes a confused collection of traits, features, functions and inclinations. And finally, trying to account for oneself in terms of immediacy, one becomes a pure subject, entirely depersonalised act of immediate reaction, as spontaneous as indifferent because external.

The more we narrow the temporal scope of attention and the more objectively 111. we try to inquire into the nature of the subject, the less we find of any subject. Humean series of impressions provide an obvious example, and so does Locke's person who, eventually, seems to become merely a forensic term without any ontological significance.

Yet, we perceive it so plainly and so certainly, that it neither needs nor is capable of any proof. The awareness of personal unity makes it hard to

accept the attempts to dissolve self in a flux of mere actualities. This ‘sense of continuity’, not to mention any real continuity itself, is as perplexing for more recent variants of empiricism and nominalism as it was for Hume. His famous argument shows, indeed, that self can not be accounted for in terms of scattered actual perceptions and ideas. No such events reveal self, even if some might manifest its presence – the presence, however, which for ever transcends the horizon of actuality. As there is no impression constant and invariable, and so none which could give rise to the idea of self, there are two possibilities: either stick to the method requiring to ignore everything except the most minute impressions and perceptions, or look for self elsewhere. According to the former, people are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions. But why then, when no unity is there, does one need the words like “bundle” or “collection”? What or where is the boundary separating one such collection from another? For something makes it *this* collection as opposed to another one.

The more ‘scientific’ variation, in this line of the attempts to reduce person, or consciousness, to the immediacy of atomic givens, employs nowadays the complex of the brain with its intricately networked neurons and the binary minuteness of their firings. No I is, of course, to be found there, so one postulates as if a multiplicity of ‘minute Is’, more minute ‘subjects’, one such ‘I’ responsible for every reaction and bunch of such ‘Is’, each working in its own direction, ‘competing’ with each other for creating an overall, unified, conscious experience. Consciousness thus explained seems to say “We react, therefore you are”. One might, in principle, admit the possibility of such an explanation. But this would not be an explanation of any unity which, on this account, arises at most as some epiphenomenon. For the account is driven by the following principle for distribution of the labels “real” and “unreal”: to be real, an x must be determinate, and determinate means that it is decidable whether something is x or not.²⁵ This is the same principle we have encountered many times which, in the search for the ultimate atoms, declares unreal everything which slips out of the immediacy of the precise determinations and, in particular, which can not be dissociated into more elementary particles. In the present context, it certainly squares well with the cases of dissociative personality disorders, some forms of schizophrenia, and the like. Indeed, such disturbances manifest a dissolution of the ‘sense of personal unity’ and a fall to the level of dissociated impressions and sensations. But does the fact that the sense of self can be dissolved mean that self does not exist? This does not only presuppose reduction of self to the ‘sense of self’. It is also like saying that, since the building *could* be destroyed, it

²⁵The precise bivalence of the principle of non-contradiction and of excluded middle serves here as the ultimate criterion of ‘reality’. Since self is underdetermined (or even may seem to possess contrary characteristics), just like are the characters fabricated in the novels, both are equally fictional – at least, according to the proponents of such views.

is not real.

We should be careful here. For our claim is not only that the unity of the self 112. is real, but that it precedes the atomic units of the empiricistic reductions. We face here the difference between the objectivistic and existential perspective from I.4.4. For the objectivistic explanations, the existential origins are only subjective instances of some objective laws. However, the objectivistic perspective is itself a developed mode, an attitude which must be assumed, at which one arrives in the course of the existential development. Its ultimate atoms are limits of distinctions, never finally determined, and exposed always to further refinements and adjustments. Determinacy and decidability of x being x are misleading depersonalizations of the underlying process of distinguishing. *We and only we*, you and I, are the ones able to determine and decide. Attempts to reduce everything to the ultimate, objective immediacy of the givens, end up in the most intimate, if only confused, associations with the subject, consciousness, mind. The empiricist is there all the time, experiencing, determining, deciding, and nothing helps getting rid of *himself*. Usually, he reaches his limit when the atoms begin to slip out of his view, when the well from the bottom of which he hopes to dig out the atoms, begins to seem bottomless, when all possible scientific questions have been answered while the problems of life remained completely untouched. This is only another side of the fact that the scientific ‘atoms’ and ‘reality’ are but a function of one’s view; not necessarily of any voluntary or subjective decisions but of the sensuous, perceptive, reflective, conceptual, in short, differentiating mechanisms of the human species which furnish the distinctions necessary for arriving at any atoms in the first place.

The empirical and nominalistic bias, nourished by the image of reality reduced to the immediate givens, can not admit any unity beyond actual experiences. From the objectivistic perspective of actuality there is no such thing as the unity of a person; there is at most the unity of an act. The empiricist’s creed – whatever can be distinguished must be dissociated as something independent – with the accompanying ontology of exclusive reality of indivisible atoms can not, if carried consequently, accept any unity stretching beyond the ideal limit of immediacy as real. Even if it finds the understanding and intuition of unity in its personal experience, its conceptual apparatus can only turn it into a multiplicity of minute Is, the ultimate atoms (at least, until the next turn of the empirical wheel).

The inability to *see* any self proves its non-existence only if one has first absolutised visibility. But it is no less justifiable to view it as a limitation of the ability to see. It does not imply that self does not exist but only that if it does, then it is not visible.

4.4.4. Descriptive vs. normative self

113. The scattering of the subject, the reduction of its unity to a conspiracy of cells or some minute movements, like many empirical projects, may probably contribute to increasing the control over particular aspects of environment and life. But as the theories of reality, they effect only its reduction to more and more minutely dissociated elements. Dissolving thus the existential unity, they increase alienation. There is a curious analogy to such a reduction in the spiritual tradition, according to which all who merely live their lives without any spiritual concentration and effort, do not attain any genuine unity and remain only collections of disparate drives and desires, bits of consciousness.

Visions of God, in His terrifying rather than benevolent aspect, involve often demonic manifold of strange, incoherent creatures which appear and act in a dreadful autonomy. “And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. [...] As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them four.”²⁶ The eye is, according to Jung, a symbol as well as an allegory of consciousness. The pictures of “limbs wandering alone” or of “creatures with rolling gait and innumerable hands” may have multiple meanings. “But in Wrath they are all different in form and separate, while in Love they come together and long for one another,”²⁷ indicating the connection between the disorganized autonomy and the moral degeneracy.

Such visions witness to the old acquaintance with the possibility of single aspects of the whole acquiring autonomy in their functioning. In a harmless form, we often notice it in daily experience. At one moment, I feel this, at another that, and for the most I do not even remember what I did a moment ago. I make a promise today, and in two weeks I forget what I promised, the situation has changed so that I act as if I never promised anything. I go around *thinking* that I am one person but, on a closer reflection, there is nothing actual which could account for this unity. It is dissolved in the multiplicity of transient moods, thoughts, actions and reactions.

But such harmless flow of experience, without any reflectively identifiable center of unity, can also acquire more dramatic forms. As a bushman can ‘lose his soul’, so I can lose contact with my self, I can lose myself, dissolve into a multiplicity of egos, and suffer the associated personal and social problems. (Or, perhaps, it would only be suffering of these egos?) The multiple egos, acquiring the character of independent selves, degenerate into an autonomy of various lower functions. But even if, objectively, the relative autonomy of various lower functions is a fact, it would not help me (them?)

²⁶Ezek. I:6,18

²⁷Empedocles, DK 31B58/60/21

the least even to lit a cigarette when I am (they are?) feeling like having one (one?). The actual multiplicity of egos and their relative autonomy is a fact which only calls for the stronger active effort in order to maintain concrete personal unity. It would be hard to deny relative autonomy of various lower functions, not to mention cellular or molecular processes in the body. But if we forget the little word “relative”, if such an autonomy is (taken as) the ontological dissociation of elements unrelated in any unifying whole, it becomes like demons which threaten, as they always did, with the abruptness of their uncoordinated movements, with the disorganised hysteria of a herd of pigs which rushing down the steep banks into the lake, dies in the water.

The normative element amounts to answering the call to oppose such a personal dissolution. We have been speaking about commands and inspirations in the plural form. But the differences between various commands concern only their content. This can, to some extent, mean what they command, but primarily it means only the circumstances under which they occur and the way in which they are received and interpreted. Certainly, distinctionless *Angst* is a different experience from, equally distinctionless, mystical union; the sudden feeling that ‘I am not living my life’ is very different in content from the religious experience of God’s presence. Yet, they do not command anything particular, and to the extent they do, it is hard to say what. One experiences only that something fundamental has happened, some sphere of tremendous significance has penetrated actuality, but *what was it?*

The presence of self in various experiences of my self is related not so much to their contents as to their force: irresistible, binding, absolute. Contents of such experiences can be entirely vague because their external objectivity is nil. It is only their shaking intensity, the tremendous power and significance – of revelations, founding events, archetypal dreams – which, clothed in the more definite contents of my self, signal the presence of the transcendent, unifying pole beyond all such contents.

This power and intensity, irrespectively of the content, is what makes such experiences the calls, the commands to accept the invisible presence above all discernible contents. All commands, irrespectively of the differences in content are, eventually, one and the same command, formulated by the tradition as “Become yourself”, but which we would parse as “Become your self”, and preferably rephrase as “Become self.” The adolescent questions “Who am I? Who am I, really?” are, too, expressions of this call, which does not necessarily come as a particular experience at a particular time but is rather a constant mood of adolescence. Expecting definite answers, expecting something which one could *see*, some actual whats distinguishing me from others – dissolves in egotic divagations. It does not help answering the call, though it might be a stage towards it. For what is commanded is to forget oneself, to stop viewing my self as mine in opposition to others, to

stop viewing self as an attribute of myself but, instead, as the foundation of myself. “Become self” is a call to accept the being I have always been, but which is not and never will be mine, to accept the higher unity as mine without turning it into my property. It is a call to stop dissociating my self from self without, however, identifying the two. For I am self but self is greater than me. Becoming self, accepting this greatness as one’s foundation, amounts to opening the limits of mineness.

115. The unity of the self is abstractly known, in the sense of being intuitively irrefutable. But it is felt and actually experienced only to the extent that symbols are received as inspirations, as manifestations of something which is in constant need of actualisation – as the call from self, through my self, to myself. The challenge may seem abstract in its vagueness, but it is the most concrete command of becoming one self, of seeking a concrete foundation of the unity of a person, as distinguished from its merely ontological foundation. Unlike the latter, the former is not something simply given by nature – it is a possibility which nature only opens before man. Strength is the ability to live the tension between the non-actual and actual not as a conflict but as a foundation, and this amounts to recognition of the direction involved in the higher command, to actualisation of its vague imperative as a concrete value. The strong ‘sense of self’, the strong personal unity above the variations of actuality, is only a reflection of the success in such a following of the command, its final visible consequence. It has a moral, rather than ontological or epistemological flavour, and is a goal rather than a fact.

5 Above and below

116. We have described different levels of experience and talked as if our life was composed of them, being but their totality. But every life is an unrepeatable unity which is not constituted by various parts and elements. We are not four separate souls, but one, for it is not a diversity of parts – if we have to assert that it has parts – which is distinguished in the soul, but a variety of functions and movements. They are distinct and allow one to limit one’s attention to only some of them. Such a limitation affects then understanding of all aspects. For instance, time viewed in terms of immediacy alone becomes a mere point-like here-and-now which, dissociated from other such points, seems almost the opposite of time. In the actual terms of objective complexes, such points are collected on the line of objective time, succession of ideally dissociated time-points. At the level of mineness one encounters the unity of a living being and the corresponding unity of the ‘time of life’. The lived time, Bergson’s *durée*, offers a prominent example of this perspective, with some followers among the phenomenologically grounded existentialistic theories of the unity of past, now and future centered around the ecstatic

actuality of lived experience. Finally, reflection focused exclusively on the level of invisibles tends to diminish the reality of time. Unlike in the first case, however, it does not posit the exclusive reality of dissociated immediacy but, instead, some form of supra-temporal eternity.

Dissociation of various levels is always possible but the resulting functions 117. and movements are only expressions of the unity founded in the deeper aspects and, eventually, in the origin. Only because immediacy is anchored in actuality, the dissociated points are collected into actual units which, in turn, only due to relation to one person form the unity of time. This lived time, in turn, reflects only the invisible distinctions which, narrowed down to actual things and objects, form, as Plato says, a moving image of eternity. The higher is present in everything lower but does not determine it entirely. "As above so below" refers only to the influence and inspiration which higher sphere exercises on the lower elements. The lower can, apparently, dissociate itself from the higher, due to its relative independence. Such a dissociation amounts to the loss of continuity and impairs the mutual influences. In particular, the initial sense of liberation turns often, with time, into a sense of subordination to some unclear fate or even unfreedom. Still, even such a severe dissociation is only apparent, both because the higher is always present and because everything at the lower levels affects the borders drawn in and penetrating the higher ones. This opposite influence can be summarised by saying that also "as below, so above". This concluding section gives some examples of such reciprocal influences.

Before that, let us however note that the influence on the higher levels is 118. of a different kind than a voluntary activity with a particular aim. We act only here-and-now, in actuality – the higher contents are more constant and can be modified primarily through a prolonged, dedicated work. Our actions affect only actual signs, while the higher we move in the hierarchy of levels, the further are the signs removed from what they signify. The two coincide at the level of immediacy, while invisibles remain essentially transcendent and are experienced only as non-actual pure commands.²⁸

This is an aspect of non-reactivity of higher experiences. Sensations are pure reactions, the sign, coinciding with the presence of the signified, is simply the elicited reaction. Moods are already affected by the presence of non-actuality which defers the possible reaction and renders it partially indeterminate. Yet, although what an impression announces can still hide behind it, the impression itself is 'given', it is reactive. The qualities of life are passive but are not reactions to any specific situations. They announce

²⁸A phenomenological analogy could be to say that the signs of the higher levels have more intentional character, are more clearly directed 'toward something' than are the signs at the lower levels. Yet, this 'something' becomes at the same time less and less identifiable and escapes phenomenological reductions.

something which can be only accepted, though what the acceptance means in practice is far removed from the quality itself. Commands and inspirations have no reactive element at all. They are independent from any particular beings and regions of Being, and enter our experience as voices from above which neither are reactions nor cause any reaction but only call for a one.

The reactive character of signs is proportional to the extent to which they are influenced by our attention and will. The significance of the lowest signs can be to high extend determined by the will. One can lessen the feeling of pain, virtually removing its relevance, by an effort of will to overcome it, for instance, by turning away one's attention and concentrating on something else. And, of course, one can easily produce painful experiences, just like one can arrange circumstances to produce pleasant effects for sight, touch or taste. To some extent, one can also arrange the circumstances so that they will produce agreeable or repulsive impressions; one can have some knowledge about kinds of circumstances which result in particular moods. But the higher we move in the hierarchy of levels, the less power one has over the presence or absence of the respective signs, not to mention their correlates. One can try to lead one's life so as to give it a specific quality, but this quality is never entirely under our control. One can crave happiness without ever achieving it, while the regrettable qualities of one's life can be impossible for one to change. Prolonged work can contribute to a change but its eventual effects are not determined by one's intentions. With respect to the deepest aspects of being like holiness, despair, love, one's will has little to say. They are gifts which one can neither refuse nor provoke, one can neither cause their presence nor make them disappear. At most, one can try to ignore them which is simply pretending that they are not there – apparently without any immediate consequences but, in the long run, affecting one in the deepest way. On the other hand, their manifestations, which do not depend on one's will either, require a kind of attention, an openness which does not amount to focusing of the will but to a humble cooperation with the hidden, primordial causes. We should emphasize here the difference between the presence of invisibles, and their manifestations in actual signs. Their presence, the ontological fact, is independent of our attention and cooperation. But their experience, the character of their manifestations, is conditioned by our openness and spiritual cooperation.

5.1 Constant presence

119. The presence of all higher levels in every actual experience reflects the order of ontological founding, described in Part I. Every actual experience is formed by the intersection of various traces, each going all the way back to the origin. Thus, for instance, it is common to distinguish various aspects of an act like its intentional correlate, the pragmatic aspect, the ethical import. The

immediate correlate of an act is its object. But being involved in the context of some action, the act has always also some goal, it has a pragmatic aspect. Whether the goal is immediate or remote does not change its character as the actual objective intended by the act. We have then distinguished between the objective goals and their motivations which, encircling the horizon of possible actions, are themselves counterparts of activities, expressing the lived and, possibly, also the declared values, §71, p. 108. Finally, every act is surrounded by the Rest, expressing the present but invisible aspects which do not become thematically actualised, 4.1, in particular, §4.1.1. Thus, every immediacy of an act contains and expresses all the levels, carrying their unity in its structure.

A specific experiential feature of the presence of the higher levels is the 120. constancy of their contents, allowing a large variation at the lower levels.

A particular mood allows a variety of sensations which do not change the mood. Being in a good mood, one can accept a lot of small, insignificant annoyances without getting out of this mood. The mood, present in all these situations, influences the way one experiences and handles them. Similarly, a quality of life will remain the same irrespectively of the variation of particular moods and impressions. A person generally dissatisfied with his life will carry such an underlying motif through most particular experiences; no positive event seems to be able to change this general quality of his life. And again, this quality makes itself felt and efficient in various ways in all concrete situations. Perhaps, by finding negative aspects in every, even most positive experiences, perhaps, by awaiting always their inevitable and bitter end. It would be too much to say that this quality determines the character of all concrete experiences. But it casts its shadow over them, it moulds them in a specific way so that they seem to conform to the general scheme of things which pollutes all actual experiences.

One should be careful with the criterion of constancy when applied to the highest level. The quality of life of St. Francis, his amiability and goodness, seem to have accompanied him from the early childhood all his life, while with respect to his sainthood, the dream on the way to the Fourth Crusade marks a break and begins a new chapter. St. Paul, before and after the vision on the way to Damascus, was the same person and many qualities (zeal, dedication, *je ne sais quoi*) where present in his life before as much as after the conversion. So, it might seem, the qualities of life are more constant than the presence of invisibles. In fact, sainthood of St. Paul is as different from the sainthood of St. Francis as St. Paul is different from St. Francis, both reflecting the different traces through which the invisibles penetrate actuality. But in this case, these traces, followed bottom up, do not terminate at any lower level, of ego or mineness, but reach the deepest aspects of experience, the source which does not create the specific details of

the actual situation but merely lends it an aura and puts a personal signature underneath.

Manifestations are only particularly intense and visible signs of the presence of this source. The constancy of invisibles is different from the possible constancy (and transience) of their manifestations. It is not relative to one's life but transcends the temporal dimension and the categories of mineness. It is not constant actuality of any visible contents but the constant possibility of new manifestations. Invisibles remain the same whether they are manifested or not, or whether they are manifested through one person or another. Sainthood of St. Francis and of St. Paul, different as they might be, manifest confrontation with the same origin, which remains one beyond all actual differences. The constancy of invisibles is independent from any personal and actual manifestations. It is their eternal validity, the eternal possibility of incarnating in a new actuality.

121. Now, the higher levels do not create the specific contents of the lower ones nor vice versa. Each level, determined by its specific tension between actuality and non-actuality, has its own characteristic contents and ways of their presentation. The invisibles do not determine one's life. The quality of one's life does not determine the actual situations one gets involved in. The actual moods and impressions do not determine any particular sensations. The full range of lower phenomena can be experienced along with any configuration of the higher aspects. The higher levels found the lower ones in the sense of providing the necessary condition for their mere emergence. But the contents of the higher levels of experience do not find the contents of the lower ones.

Still, the higher contents influence crucially the lower ones, they sink in and penetrate whatever qualities may emerge at the lower levels. An annoyance is an annoyance but it changes its character when encountered in a good or in a bad mood. A joy or sadness of a pessimist is different from the respective feelings of an optimist. The drive and life energy of a saint are different from the similar qualities of a person nourished by negation, hatred or bitterness. A joyful feeling of a person who is generally dissatisfied with life will still be joyful. Yet, this joy will be limited to the level of actuality. It will be, so to speak, blocked if it tries to penetrate deeper into the personal being; blocked by a remainder of its transiency, by painful memories, or simply blocked by the general dissatisfaction with life. It won't be able to spread over the totality of the personal being, but will remain localised. You might have heard the difference between a short, nervous, almost involuntary laughter, immediately disturbed by the bad conscience, as if there was no *real* reason to laugh and one did it only because one could not resist it, and, on the other hand, a cordial, warm, full-blooded laughter flowing from the bottom of the heart, in which the laughing face is only an expression of the

soul embracing the whole world with its hearty laughter. In the former case, actuality is not in conformance with the higher level of one's being and the inability for a hearty laughter modifies the actual one. It is still laughter, over the same funny thing, but it testifies to another personal involvement than the latter.

This penetration of lower levels by the higher ones in actual experiences is distinct from the phenomenological founding in so far as the actuality of a given lower aspect is not conditioned by the presence of any particular higher aspect – it is only *modified* by the latter. Both persons laugh for the same reason, but one does it heartily while the other in a forced manner. This modification, this Rest and aura which the higher aspects extend to the lower ones, manifest the unity of every experience involving all levels.

The presence of higher levels in every experience is related to the phenomenological *Mitgegebenheit*, which we translate as co-presence. As Husserl's analyses show, especially with respect to perceptions, the actual contents are surrounded by other aspects which do not fall within the focus of consciousness but which, nevertheless, are co-present. Focusing your sight on the entry door of a house, you still see, albeit only subconsciously, only in the corner of your eye, the windows immediately to the left and right of the door. Furthermore, although you see only the front of the house, its sides are also included, *mitgegeben*, in the actual phenomenon. The question now is where such inclusions should stop. You know that behind the house there is a park. It is not actually given, but is it also co-present? And in the park, there is a lake, behind which there is... It seems implausible to assume that all this is co-present, for then all things ever experienced, unlimited if not infinite number of them, would belong to every phenomenon. The horizon of actuality seems to circumscribe the scope of co-presence, which dissolves beyond it in the surrounding emptiness. In I:4.3.1 we encountered essentially the same break in the phenomenology of time, which did not account for the continuity across the limit of actuality towards the remote past. And as in the case of time, so also here, there is a distinction but there is no sharp border because we have to do with a continuity of experience.

Co-presence of objectivities has its limit which is the limit of the horizon of actuality. Somewhere, at the end of the front wall, behind the house, behind the lake, behind the park, objects and complexes cease to be co-present, they gradually disappear behind the limits of the actual phenomenon. Of course, it is enough to redirect one's attention to bring in other objects and connect them to the ones actual at the moment, but we are now considering an abstract, isolated actuality of an experience, so let us not stroll, not move sight around. What is co-present behind this line are no more objects but... moods, impressions, feelings, intuitions, qualities. Seeing the house and the park around it may bring you in a calm mood, which composes well

with the relaxed atmosphere of the whole week's holidays. This relaxation is surrounded by the quality of your life and thus, eventually, co-presence becomes the presence of invisibles. Moods, feelings, qualities, etc. are the concrete forms under which the potential infinity (of things, of experiences, of *Lebenswelt*) is present in every experience. If we were to use the objectivistic way of speaking, we might say: they do not bring in any objects but only unified signs which comprise the overwhelming number of possible distinctions within the limits of the horizon of actuality; although they do not make any more objects actual, they make them present, by providing actual signs which are nothing else than a comprised multiplicity of objects. But the objectivistic way of speaking loses its adequacy as behind the line of moods and qualities, behind the line where even the actual feelings become blurred and indistinct, there are still invisibles, the inspirations which oversee the whole actual situation.

All this illustrates the anchoring of actuality in the wider context of one's life and eternity. As long as nothing significant happens, the changes in the immediate views and sensations do not affect the deeper layers of this actuality. But assume now that walking around the house, you find behind it a decaying corpse, apparently, of a murdered person. This changes the situation *dramatically*, that is, not only its lower layers but everything which has so far been co-present, the whole traces leading, perhaps, all the way to the center of your being. The depth to which it penetrates one's soul will depend on all kinds of personal traits, but it certainly affects one: perhaps, only the actual mood, perhaps, the atmosphere of the whole holidays and, perhaps, even the general feeling and view of life. The triviality that particularly intense experiences may influence one's life needs no elaboration, and we only note it as an example of the influence of lower events on the higher layers of our being. A blow with a hammer may hurt the soul.

123. Actual events may affect us very deeply, but they never affect the ultimate presence of the origin. Just like we have equated transcendence with the non-actual and, eventually, the invisible, we equate immanence with actuality. Both terms are only abstractions which can hardly be dissociated from each other. Immanence, actual visibility, arises at the limit of the process of differentiation, as the final stage of encircling the hidden, unlimited content within the horizon of actuality. Although it allows reflection to oppose it to the transcendence, the latter does not disappear in the process of actualisation, it penetrates the actuality with all the levels lying above it. Presence is an expression of this insoluble involvement of immanence into transcendence.

The eventual transcendence, the origin, being 'neither this nor that', is never accessible to the categories of visibility and yet, it is always most deeply present. It is present, to paraphrase Heidegger, by not appearing, as the always felt, eternal element which, however, never enters the horizon of

visibility. Self is, after all, on its trace, the trace of birth, and the lowest terminus of this trace is the actual subject. All levels are present in every actual experience, and the invisibility of the origin is what remains the same also across all temporal experiences. Using the categories of reflective oppositions, the actual is incommensurable with the non-actual. But just like one becomes oneself only in confrontation with something transcending one, so the ultimately invisible is that which penetrates all visibility, and does it constantly; which is therefore most intimately, even if not visibly, present, and which therefore is the most immanent. The origin remains present throughout the life, in every actual situation, but only as the Rest, as the indefinable sense of objectivity, of not being alone. It cannot be grasped, but it gives taste to every actual experience.

The father said: Place this salt in water, and come to me tomorrow morning.

The son did as he was told.

Next morning the father said: Bring me the salt which you put in the water.

The son looked for it, but could not find it; for the salt, of course, had dissolved.

The father said: Taste some water from the surface of the vessel.

How is it?

Salty.

Taste some from the middle. How is it?

Salty.

Taste some from the bottom. How is it?

Salty.²⁹

5.2 Memory

We have seen examples of lower elements influencing the higher ones several times, for instance, of getting a unified impression from a series of dispersed experiences, §§22.ff, of new experiences of a ‘cup’ modifying the universal ‘cupness’, §§38.ff, or else of adjusting the borders of friendship in response to new experiences, §100. As the constancy of higher levels, seen from the lower ones, is reflected also as a longer time span, the general pattern of such an influence involves time: prolonged work, dedication, patience are actual attitudes with such potentially deeper influences. The influence amounts to formation of new nexuses, unities which transcend actuality and are not reducible to reflective concepts. A new nexus is simply a new virtual distinction, a new virtual border drawn in a way enabling a novel organisation

²⁹ after Chandogya Upanishad, VI.13.1

of lower elements. The crucial point is virtuality, i.e., non reflective and non voluntary character of the formed unities. Memory, in all its shades and degrees, can serve as a paradigmatic pattern through which actual experiences form higher nexuses which, slipping out of our control, become part of our very being.

- 124. We forget many things. But what does it mean? Do they simply disappear, as if never happened? Certainly not. What we usually mean by memory is related to particular facts and actual events which are stored in the precise form ready to be fetched with a satisfactory exactitude of detail. This ability varies greatly for it happens often that such precise things get dissolved in subconsciousness and have to be fetched back, as it may happen in psycho-analysis. But not even Freudians would assume the possibility of a detailed recall of everything that ever happened. Some things just get lost, not in the subconsciousness from which they might be restored in unchanged form, but in a complete virtuality. They are not kept the way they were experienced but become, so to say, compressed, mingled with other contents losing their rigidity, precision and identity.
- 125. According to Piaget, memory is a function very similar to intelligence and the development of memory with age is the history of gradual organisations closely dependent on the structuring activities of intelligence. Can we know something without remembering it? Can we remember something without knowing it? Such Wittgensteinian questions do not, perhaps, await any answers, but we may try. Both knowing and remembering involve the ability to re-produce or re-cognise. Knowing Pythagorean theorem requires, in particular, that you remember it, are able to state it on demand. But it involves more than mere remembrance. What more? This is unclear, but it might be that you should also be able to use it in various situations, to recognise the situations where it does *not* apply, perhaps, also to justify or prove it. On the other hand, when you remember the theorem, is it possible that you do not know, do not understand it? In principle, this seems possible, you can be able to re-state the theorem without, however, being able to discern adequate meaning in it, you just remember the formulation. If you are to apply it, or to decide if it is applicable, you can be forced to work through it again, try to re-call, or figure out anew, its meaning, etc. Taking it this way, memory is only some minimal precondition of knowing or, as the case may be, is some residual rest which remains from richer knowledge as its elements gradually disappear – from memory.
- 126. What is this rest? What happened to the elements which disappeared? Even if you forgot most of them, it is much easier to bring them forth anew than it is when learning the theorem for the first time. They did not disappear completely, they only as if waned away, but are still – somewhere, somewhat

– around. Consider now what happens when we are thinking. You can work intensely with the theorem, setting its various elements explicitly ‘before your eyes’, trying to connect them, deduce consequences. This is the most active, attentive thinking. When, after several trials, you get stuck unable to reach the desired solution, the best thing to do can be to forget the whole problem for a while. To literally *forget* it, erase it from the horizon of conscious attention. It happens almost typically that the solution, or a new creative suggestion, will just appear after some time (cf. 4.2.1). ‘Thinking’ is obviously going on in the background while one is not thinking actively and deliberately. What is typically called “a thought” is, more often than not, only an actual result of such a hidden process, a precisely visible formulation which reminds more of a momentary revelation than of a careful construction. Of course, careful constructions are helpful in obtaining such revelations, but for the most they concern only verification, adjustment and adequate formulation of vague contents which are given to and not constructed by us (adequacy being exactly the hardly definable proximity of the eventual formulation and the barely visible image).³⁰ It should not be all too daring to propose that such a subconscious ‘thinking’ works not only with other materials which one could, if one wanted to, bring to actual attention but also with contents similar to those which started to wane away but did not quite disappear from the memory. In fact, the creative solution one obtains in this way, involves often some element which was not available to immediate introspection. We might say, thinking reaches here into deeper layers of memory than active, attentively controlled thinking.

Now, what do you remember remembering, say, Eiffel Tower? Wittgenstein 127. would ask: try to describe it! Try to describe what you are seeing (with your eyes closed) when you are trying to recollect Eiffel Tower. You end up describing what you would draw if you were asked to, you end up describing a specific picture. But you do not *see* this picture. With your eyes closed, trying to recall Eiffel Tower, you are trying to actualise it as a picture. But what are you trying to actualise? What is ‘there’ to be actualised? While picture is what can be given as an immediate object, what can be reproduced and re-presented, so image corresponds to a more virtual element which simply does not have any unique representation, it only has many different actualisations. Similarly, the image of pain is not a picture and *this* image is not replaceable by anything we should call a picture. An image is not a picture, but a picture may correspond to it. Recalling Eiffel Tower you can draw it in various ways, you can describe it with various words and pictures. The image must be more like its object than any picture. One

³⁰ Just like ‘nows’ mark only particular peaks of intensity in the flow of time, so thoughts are like visible, substantive parts marking the resting-places between the transitive parts of the continuous – and not conscious – stream of thinking.

might regard the image as a super-likeness,

In this respect, remembering Eiffel Tower is not so different from knowing pain: we have some (yes, unclear) image which can only be actualised in various pictures. To recognise pain of a burning moth or wriggling fly, you have to see them as actual pictures of a vague image: pain; just like to recognise a particular drawing you have to see it as a possible actualisation of the image of Eiffel Tower, and like to use a theorem in an actual situation you have to find the ‘way it applies’, you have to subsume the actual situation under the generality of the theorem. (Even if the last case is simply a subsumption of a particular instance under a general rule, it can be seen as an especially precise case of the general pattern of a picture actualizing an image.) This image is no longer any actual representation but a more vague nexus which no longer has a dissociated existence of merely actual object, but is rooted in the deeper layers of virtuality. The difficulty with remembering is to reproduce an actual picture from this virtual nexus, is to recall anew various aspects of the understood theorem. The difficulty is not that one doubts whether one really imagined Eiffel Tower or pain. But it is *this*: that we should be able, just like that, to point out or describe the thing that we have imagined, that the projection of the image into actuality, presents no difficulty at all. This projection appears less problematic once we stop viewing the virtual image and the actual picture as two independent items but, instead, as two aspect of a unified experience, where an object can appear *only* as an eventual result of narrowing or dissociating some virtual image.

128. Understanding amounts to integration of particular elements into appropriate contexts; integration, that is, ability to fetch them in appropriate situations for particular purposes. Likewise, memory includes (images of the) remembered things into deeper, more virtual layers of our being, from which they can be fetched as actual pictures. The image-likeness, this dissolved but still identifiable character of remembered things, reflects the degree of their entanglement into the mesh of other virtual elements and, eventually, the unity of existence. An effect of this inclusion, of an element becoming an integral part of the whole, is, rather naturally, that the element’s identity becomes less recognisable – no longer a precise picture, actual statement, but a vague image. Consequently, memory is not a mere recording machine which may, possibly, influence the present. It involves a successive and constant re-organisation by a process of active and selective structuring.³¹ All our adult memories, no matter how trivial, isolable, or individualised, involve a

³¹By the way, this fundamental point is consistently ignored by all pedagogy which, assuming artificial dissociation of memory and thinking, tries to motivate every single step of its procedure and to develop ‘understanding’ before, or even instead of ‘memory’, by releasing pupils from the boring memorization drill. Memorization develops deeper structures of mind than mere intelligence, possibly developed by puzzle-solving.

host of spatial, temporal, causal, and other relations, and a whole hierarchy of planes of reality. One could propose the following illustration:

$$\left(\dots \left(((M_0 \rightleftharpoons M_1) \rightleftharpoons M_2) \rightleftharpoons M_3 \dots \right) \rightleftharpoons M_r.$$

M_0 is the original event and the following M_i 's the successive memories (or other influencing experiences) of it until the present recollection M_r . The arrows \rightleftharpoons at each stage represent the interaction and mutual influence of the involved elements. You can not remove your past – you can only change it.

Now, an analogous process affects also particular events and things which we do *not* remember. They get surrounded by other events and experiences, conscious or not, remembered or not, and gradually lose their identity retreating further and further, and merging into the sphere of virtuality. As the time-object withdraws into the past, it shrinks and therewith becomes dim. At the present moment, M_r is confronted with the whole past which is not given as a collection of bits and pieces glued together, but as a virtual unity of the past. It involves things we remember, and can actualise, as well as those we do not, and which we can not. Some might have been lost forever for actual recollection, yet they remain present, albeit transformed beyond possible recognition, dissolved and de-identified. A more accurate picture of the general situation would be something like this:

$$\left(\dots \left(\left(\left(\bullet \rightleftharpoons \begin{array}{c} \vdots \\ M_1 \end{array} \right) \rightleftharpoons \begin{array}{c} M'_2 \\ M_2 \\ \vdots \\ M''_2 \end{array} \right) \rightleftharpoons M_3 \dots \right) \rightleftharpoons M_r.$$

Well known examples – of integration of the actual facts and observations into the totality of our experience – concern learning almost anything, in particular, some skills like riding a bicycle. The scattered pieces of advice from the instructor, the failed attempts to master one particular movement at a time, the intense consciousness trying to organise all the bits in proper sequences and alliances of movements – all that continues until one ‘gets it’. And although we tend to focus on the exact moment when we ‘get it’ for the first time, it is not the moment which is important but the fact that all the laborious details, all the minute successes and failures recede into the background of almost unconscious automatism. The emerging consistency of the totality is a qualitative change in relation to the tiny details which led to this emergence. The moment of ‘getting it’ represents the formation of a new virtual unit, which ‘falls in place’, gets integrated with the totality of other elements. The examples are not, of course, limited to acquiring motoric skills – learning to solve differential equations has exactly the same structure of painful details receding gradually into the background of the

acquired skill.

130. In case it were said that here one is still able to voluntarily actualise the acquired skill, and so it does not really illustrate the transition into virtuality, let us consider some other examples.

As we saw in the opening sections of Part I, the lack of memories from the earliest days of our existence is not due to the lack of memory but of anything specific to remember. In the beginning we do not collect memories of any actual things or events, but only some virtual traces which only later get differentiated into more precise forms. These primal traces, too, may be called “memories”, albeit only in our generous sense of the word.

A still more illustrative example may be that of imperfect memories, memories which lost not only some of the original details but *all* of them. Proust describes also such extreme cases when the actual element triggers the search for its past counterpart which, however, fails; e.g.: “I sensed the smell of the cherries on the table and nothing else. [...] I could not, however, choose anything from the confused, known and forgotten impressions; eventually, after a short while, I ceased seeing anything and my memory for ever immersed itself in sleep.”³² One might say: the smell triggers a recollection which either became completely unrecognisable, or at least is so in the current moment; (an event of) memory without anything remembered, an image without any picture.³³

131. In many situations, what remains are not any specific details but only vague feelings of the atmosphere, of the character of the situation, of the general impression which was actual then or, perhaps, which is so only now and in some way gets referred, ‘connected’ to the original experience. Particular things may, as with Proust, play a role but only auxiliary one, of a trigger. According to him, memories do not *live* in things, they are only imprisoned there. Memories, every hour of our life, once it has passed into the past, incarnates into some material object and remains hidden there, imprisoned until we meet it on our way. This imprisonment is a mere metaphor of the potential to trigger a recollection: the actual things are needed only to *awake* the memories from their sleep, that is, to awake the mind from its sleep in mere actuality devoid of the enlivening presence of memories. Particular things, and their remembrance, are only expressions of the true life of memories; voluntary memory, the memory of intelligence and eyes reproduces the past only as an imperfect picture, which resembles the original

³²M. Proust, *Against Sainte-Beuve*. Introduction

³³A similar and common case: “I know this person, I am sure I know him but ... who is he? Where did I meet him?” Recognition of the remembered image precedes actual and conscious remembering. The person emerges from the surrounding (virtual background) already marked with the sign of his identity (the image is like a super-likeness of its object) – even though consciousness still needs to decipher the tokens of this identity, to fetch the detailed pictures.

as much as the pictures of bad painters resemble spring. Compared to this past which is an intimate part of ourselves, the truths of intelligence seem little real.

Such emotional memory, which is an intimate part of ourselves, is more frequent than we commonly admit. For what counts in actual terms is the voluntary memory, are the precise details which we are able to recount and recollect in the actual context, not any subjective feelings. Yet, much of the childhood memories consist often of exactly such moods and impressions. Reading a book for the second time after 10 years, only some details will re-emerge from memory as you encounter them again. Many of them you simply do not remember. Yet, you will very quickly re-cognise the general impression the book made on you, you will recognise the image by means of a few pictures. Only some accidental element is needed: to hear the sound of a dropped tea-spoon to recall Combray and the childhood home, to stumble over the uneven pavement in front of the palace of the Guermantes to recall the walk in Venice. The recollections do not necessarily come back in all the details, but only with the details which establish the connection between the two points in time. Beyond that, what is being recollected are the significant signs of the more virtual elements, of the context, atmosphere and mood without which the memories would remain dissociated and lifeless.

Voluntary memory, the memory of intelligence and reflection is only one 132. layer of memory, just like the actually dissociated 'givens' constitute only the lowest layer of any situation. These layers of the respective threads, voluntary memory and objects, mark both the same level, are both aspects of the same nexus of objectivity.

A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? – And *what* can he not do here? – How do you do it? Recall two kinds of time (consciousness) from I:4.3.1. §§48 ff: the phenomenal time of actual now, with all its retentions and protentions vs. the objective time of the 'inauthentic' consciousness of time, of remote past. Expecting somebody's arrival the day after tomorrow presupposes consciousness of objective time, simply because having at all the idea of 'the day after tomorrow' requires such consciousness. We could say: if dog does not expect his master to arrive next week, this happens for the same reasons for which he does not consider how the ball he is playing with feels in the hand of his master nor, for that matter, where *this* very ball was made. We do not imagine dogs to have consciousness of objectivity. But a dog can await and expect its master's arrival, and long for him the more, the longer is his absence. For dogs, too, live in the temporality with its past and future. They live in the same time as we do and are aware of the same time – only this awareness does not reach the crispness of objective dissociations.

Reflective signs, constituting the foundation of language, enter also into

the nexus of objectivity. Serving as important tools of ‘freezing’ some limits of distinctions, they serve likewise as tools of voluntary memory or, as we also could say, objective memory. We may have vivid emotional recollections of some particularly significant events from our remote past. But for the most, what happened to us five years ago is not remembered ‘in flesh’ but merely as abstract descriptions. I can say: “Five years ago I was in Prague, I walked past *Malostranské náměstí* almost every day, I ate dinner several times at this place,” etc., but all these events are recalled as mere objective facts, which would feel and could be described the same way if I were relating events from a movie. Of course, I am relating my own past and it is still some virtual image which underlies these recollecting descriptions. So, in principle, one might manage that also without objective time? But the role of objective time, and words, is crucial. Objective time allows us to refer to such a remote event which has been forgotten, just like single objects or situations trigger, according to Proust, vivid emotional memories. Just like words, these reflective epitomes of recognitions, allow objective reference to not-actual elements of experience, so only objective time makes it possible to ask, for instance, “What did you do in the summer for five years ago?” Events in our life do not carry any inherent time stamp on them. One can remember meeting somebody and have no idea if it was two, three or five years ago. One can remember two distinct events and be unable to say which happened before which. Experiences become mutually related and organised along the line of objective time. Without it they would only interlock in a virtual mesh, losing their identities and hence disappearing for future recollections. Even if we could, in some unclear and unspecified sense, remember our whole life while living at some pre-reflective and pre-objective level, we would have no means to fetch these ‘memories’ and actualise them. And what is a memory which can not be recalled? The events would simply keep dissolving in the virtuality of our past, forming us, as experiences form also character of a dog. But the whole process would remain unreflected and hidden in the same virtuality which founds it.

133. The deeper presuppositions of reflective memory correspond to the virtual elements founding actual reflection. The first is that it is needed at all. And it is because life and world are not a whole given in the unity of one act but are split into diversity of separate actualities. The need for the objective memory arises with the dissociating activity of reflective experience and is the more intense the more precisely dissociated become the contents of our attention.

The second presupposition is that it is what actually takes place, that one remembers *the same*. This ‘repetition as recurrence’ requires the possibility of re-cognising identity of the same across time. This is possible because, as we have repeatedly emphasized, new things and experiences do

not appear *ex nihilo*, to be ‘added’ to the actual collection, but emerge as results of differentiation from the indistinct origin. Such ‘repetitions’ express the recognitions stretching beyond the horizon of actuality. They arise from virtual nexuses whose unity precedes dissociation of actualities. Memory, as a reflective repetition, is an experience of a recognition transcending the horizon of actuality.

And thus we arrive at the most fundamental, even if entirely trivial, assumption: memory can take place only in a being whose unity stretches across time, whose unity is not an immediate self-identity limited to pure immediacy but transcends its horizon. Memory does not establish identity nor is constitutive for personal identity – at most, it can help establishing the sense, the feeling of it. Losing memory, one does not necessarily lose oneself, and even without remembering anything of one’s past one can still know *that* one had a past. It is not, for this reason, a mere ontic accident or an epistemological device. It is one of the fundamental aspects disclosing in actual experiences their foundation in the temporal unity and, on the other hand, the influence of the lower, actual elements on the deeper layers of our being.

Concluding remarks

We have seen different levels of being which, emerging gradually from the original indistinctness, can then represent some general types of attitude. Although all are present in every life and experience, the center of a person’s gravity and the general approach to life is often gathered at only one level:

- detached, theoretical,
- practical, natural,
- personal, psychological, or
- religious, mystical.

No valuation is attached to various levels of this hierarchy, which only reflects the order of origination. Values and their lack emerge only with the broken continuity, when levels become dissociated and even set up against each other. Science fighting religion, religion threaten by science, mind opposing body, body rejecting mind, feelings oppressed by reason, reason invaded by feelings, psychology fighting physics, physics trying to conquer religion... Such conflicts can be made very real but are not necessary. For all oppositions are carved from the unity of existence, all distinctions are carved from the indistinct One.

Meaning is the sign of anchoring in this shared origin, is a sign of the continuity with it. Truth is conformance to the origin which, ultimately, where all whats coincide with that, means only *that* there is the origin. This

indistinct origin, remaining by its very nature invisible and inaccessible, is nevertheless present always and everywhere. Everything is its sign, every actuality is a metaphor of its invisible origin. But some visibles express its presence more directly than others, for instance, different forms of unlimited openness:

- the pan-psychic feeling of the unity with the souls of all living beings and dead things;
- fascination and the sense of unlimited potential, which often accompanies the adolescent opening towards the world;
- the sense of power, “everything is possible”, accompanying infatuation and, in a deeper sense, love;
- the helplessness in the face of problems overcoming our abilities;
- the accepting resignation of the older age that so many things and ways, which still retain the element of attraction, are no longer possible
- ...

All witness to a direct – unmediated and clear – contact with the world, which is of a very different kind from the detached – mediated and precise – objectivism. One can conceptualize the former as the transmigration of souls, panpsychism, pantheism or parentheism – but all these are only conceptual expressions of such a contact. Psychologically, they can be as different as fascination or disappointment, attraction or fear, and can lead to as contrary reactions as refreshing opening or defensive self-limitation, powerful unfolding or humble self-constrain. But all such differences notwithstanding, the further we move away from the merely egotic skills and reactions, every man is capable – at least in principle – of whatever any other man is. At the lowest level, this can be seen in the mere ability to comprehend, if not precisely understand, another person’s psychological motivations: fascination can understand the reasons for disappointment just as disappointment can understand, even if not feel, what others find fascinating. In the deeper sense, this is well reflected in the fearful reactions to the evil actions of others. They may scare us by their irrational brutality but, in a deeper sense, they scare us by displaying what is possible for a human being. If another was able to do *that* then, at least in principle, I also might be. The depth to which such a fear affects one may vary, but its universal possibility is founded in all facing the same challenges and dangers, eventually, the same origin. Although one may be far from actually following such a terrifying example, the possibility of doing so is truly present: one is facing the same challenge as the other did, and one does it constantly. Every single act and feeling, every single moment of our life, is just a way of moulding our response to the origin. In every moment we either acknowledge the source of

our thirst, which is close to thankfulness, or reject the invisible reality and, consequently, any reasons for gratitude.

The constant presence of higher elements in every actual experience expresses their primacy and reality, prior to their actualization. It is not so that only the actual expressions lend invisibles any reality. Rather, the actuality of objects is only the ultimate narrowing of reality, is only the sign of the invisible foundation. Presence is concrete reality and actuality only its abstract, precise modification. In this sense, as a dissociated reflection, actuality carries more epistemic flavour than its ontological, non-actual foundation. The latter is already a fully consummated reality of invisibles – not merely their latency, a mere potentiality for actualisation. It is effective and experienced, even if only in its deepest, most virtual form, even if it never reaches actualisation in a manifesting sign. Just like each of us knows the quality of one's life, even if we never manage to capture it exactly in words, we also know the presence of ..., even if we can't say what ... is, even though we have never had any specific experience of The certainty of confrontation, of not being alone, that is, self-awareness is the primary 'given' of life. But it is not given as a visible object, so it remains inexplicable to reflective subjectivism. Not all reality must become actually visible; its deepest, most important aspects never are – at most, they manifest their presence.

Critique of actuality has always aimed at its dissociation from its non-actual foundation. The latter could be taken in the direction of subjectivity (understood generously, as endowing the actual givens with meaning if not also with being), in the direction of absoluteness (as transcending the relativity of here-and-now), in the direction of vague imprecision (as transcending the precision of immediacy). Opposing the dissociation of the abstract externality and mere objectivity from its non-actual roots, it typically emphasizes some existential aspect (of life, personality, spirituality). All differences notwithstanding, a series of examples conforms to the same, albeit rough and general, pattern. Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel from the point of existential relevance and subjectivity as truth, Bergson's critique of the objectified space and time from the point of lived duration, Heidegger's critique of the epistemically oriented metaphysics of beings from the point of fundamental ontology of the non-appearing Being, Derrida's critique of the 'metaphysics of actuality' from the point of inter-permeability of opposites and undefinability of concepts, the general dissatisfaction with the conceptual analyses from the point of concrete existence, even mystics' reservations against philosophical theology from the point of ineffable unity – all are essentially the same critique of the epistemic dissociation of actuality from its non-actual, ontological foundation, which escapes objectivity and merges with the existential origins. The list could be prolonged indefinitely, so let us only add the antique – Platonic and Neoplatonic, and later Christian – opposition

between the senses and the spirit, with sometimes exaggerated calls to renounce the former completely and, other times, with sober reminders not to sell one's invisible soul for any visible currency. Hopefully, our presentation managed to assign visibility an appropriate place in the existential hierarchy, avoiding any gnostic criticism as much as any empiricist idolatry.

Quotations

p.6: “opposites that still are not opposed” in Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI:6.3

p.22: “Language represents only the mass mind.” in B. L. Whorf, *The relationship of habitual thought and behavior to language*,

p.27: “strange crest of the time series” in E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*, B:2.§26

p.29: “stands against the inauthentic representation of time, of infinite time and time relations which are not recognised in experience.” in E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*, A:1.1 §6

p.35: “according to which time it is supposed to take place. Is it a time itself constituted by an atemporal subject? Or is the transcendental subject itself temporal?” in J. Derrida, *The Problem of Genesis...*, I:2

p.38: “intellect, the unity is only a postulate, an act of faith,” in S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, III:7

p.38: “opposites that still are not opposed,” in Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI:6.3

p.38: “It is possible to understand something, deeply, intimately, without grasping it rationally, for instance, music.” in R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, XVIII

p.41: “throughout all our knowledge is always one and the same” in I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A109-110

p.42: “what can alone confer upon all our empirical concepts in general relation to an object, that is, objective reality.” in I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A109-110

p.44: “we obtain from each object a more and more bloodless phantom. Finally we thus obtain from each object a something wholly deprived of content; But the something obtained from one object is different from the something obtained from another object – though it is not easy to say how...” in G. Frege, *Review of Husserl's Philosophie der Arithmetik*,

p.45: “we have a direct awareness of mathematical form as an archetypal structure.” in G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*, Introduction; p.xxiv

p.46: “number is the extension of a concept” in G. Frege, *The concept of number*, §68. Literally: “the number which applies to the concept *F* is the extension of the concept «equinumerous with the concept *F*».”

p.46: “In fact, we do not ask “How many are Caesar and Pompey and London and Edinburgh?”” in G. Frege, *Review of Husserl's Philosophie der Arithmetik*, III

p.51: “maximum beyond which there can be nothing greater.” in Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*, I:2.5

p.58: “Pythagorise and philosophise by mathematics” in G. P. della Mirandola, *Conclusions or 900 Theses*, Mathematical Conclusions, quoted after J. Dee, *The Mathematicall Praeface to the Elements....*

p.59: “the way up and the way down is one and the same,” Heraclitus, DK 22B60

p.63: “dissociated ‘this’” in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, V:8; VII:3

p.63: “a complete indivisible being.” in G. W. Leibniz, *Correspondence with Arnauld*, [to Arnauld 28.11/8.12 1686]

p.64: “that bounding point which exists without all parts, a minimum of nature.” in T. Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, I:5

p.65: “What are the simple constituent parts of which reality is composed? – What are the simple constituent parts of a chair? – The bits of wood of which it is made? Or the molecules, or the atoms? – “Simple” means: not composite. And here the point is: in what sense ‘composite’? It makes no sense at all to speak absolutely of the ‘simple parts of a chair’.” in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, I:47, III;p.58

p.73: “Every one knows how when a painful thing has to be undergone in the near future, the vague feeling that it is impending penetrates all our thought with uneasiness and subtly vitiates our mood even when it does not control our attention; it keeps us from being at rest, at home in the given present.” in W. James, *Essays in Pragmatism*, I;p.13

p.75: “relates immediately to the object, and is single.” in I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A320/B377

p.76: “For the intellect, the unity remains only a postulate, an act of faith.” in S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, III:7

p.77: “Every concept in our conscious mind has its own psychic associations. While such associations may vary in intensity (according to the relative importance of the concept to our whole personality, or according to the other ideas and even complexes to which it is associated), they are capable of changing the ‘normal’ character of that concept.” in C. G. Jung, *Approach-*

ing the Unconscious, p.29

p.77: “if one has character one also has one’s typical experience which recurs again and again.” in F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 70., the essence is precisely what something is.” in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII:4

p.82: “each thing itself, then, and its essence are one and the same.” in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII:6

p.83: “Therefore there is an essence only of those things whose formula is a definition. Definition is the formula of the essence.” in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII:4;5

p.84: “The time has arrived to give up the myths of essences and *Wesen-schau*, which are carried over, as some point of honour, from generation to generation. For it is clear that even Husserl himself never gained *Wesen-schau* so that he would not have to re-consider and re-work it again, not to disqualify it but to force it to express something that it originally did not express.” in M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, Inquiry and intuition; p.122

p.85: “and by the universal we mean that which is predictable of the individuals,” in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, III:4

p.85: “is common, since that is called universal which is such as to belong to more than one thing.” in Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, VII:13

p.85: “implicit in the clearly known particular.” in Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, I:1

p.85: “it is impossible to abstract universals from the singular without previous knowledge of the singular.” in J. Duns Scotus, *De Anima*, 22:3

p.96: “precision, richness, depth of the language in all expositions, not only the primary, but also secondary ones, or even those on the edge of mere journalism (like literary criticism) are worthy highest appreciation. But the overflow of richness exhausts the attention, and so the increased precision is accompanied by the increased distraction. The result: instead of increased communication, increased misunderstanding. In all discussions penetrating the Western *episteme*, you will never hear a single voice starting with “I do not know exactly... am not familiar with... did not read through... who could remember all that...” Yet, exactly from that one should start! But who would dare?” in W. Gombrowicz, *The Diaries*, 1966:XIX

p.97: “The person does not belong to the world: rather it is a limit of the world.” in L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.632 [modified “person” instead of “subject”].

p.103: ““All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players,”” in W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II:7 (Jacques)

p.103: "He who says "Life is real, life is earnest", however much he may speak of the fundamental mysteriousness of things, gives a distinct definition of this mysteriousness by ascribing to it the right to claim from us the particular mood called seriousness – which means willingness to live with energy, though energy bring pain. The same is true of him who says that all is vanity. For indefinable as the predicate 'vanity' may be *in se*, it is clearly something that permits anaesthesia, mere escape from suffering, to be our rule of life." in W. James, *Essays in Pragmatism*, I:p.19

p.103: "the world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man" in L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.43

p.107: "The world and life are one. I am my world." in L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 5.621, 5.63

p.107: "is prior to those things which were created in it." in J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, IV:779ABCD.

p.107: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." in Mt.XII:35; Lk. VI:45

p.112: "The primitive phenomenon of *obsession* has not vanished; it is the same as ever. It is only interpreted in a different and more obnoxious way." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.32

p.112: "A man likes to believe that he is the master of his soul. But as long as he is unable to control his moods and emotions, or to be conscious of the myriad secret ways in which invisible factors insinuate themselves into his arrangements and decisions, he is certainly not his own master." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.72.

p.112: "one becomes two," in F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, From High Mountains (the concluding aftersong)

p.113: "This hell and this heaven come about a man in such sort, that he knows not whence they come; and whether they come to him, or depart from him, he can of himself do little towards it." in *Theologia Germanica*, XI. [modified]

p.114: "the value 'good' is present as if 'behind' the acts of will, and this in the essential way; it cannot therefore be intended *in* these acts." in M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics...*, I:1.2;p.48.

p.115: "love, and do what you wilt" in St. Augustine, *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, VII:8

p.116: "does not command any works; it is too subtle for that and is as far from commanding any works as heaven is from earth.", Meister Eckhart, *German Sermons*, Lk. I:26,28;, in O. Davis, ed., *Meister Eckhart: Selected*

Writings, 2, p.118

p.116: "they have no need to exhort us, they only have to exist, for their existence is a call." in H. Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*,

p.118: "cannot be exhaustively interpreted, either as signs or as allegories. They are genuine symbols precisely because they are ambiguous, full of half-glimpsed meanings, and in the last resort inexhaustible. The discriminating intellect naturally keeps on trying to establish their singleness of meaning and thus misses the essential point: their *manifold meaning*, their almost limitless wealth of reference, which makes any unilateral formulation impossible." in C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, I:80

p.118: "When we attempt to understand symbols, we are not only confronted with the symbol itself, but we are brought up against the wholeness of the symbol-producing individual." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.81

p.118: "natural and spontaneous products. No genius has ever sat down with a pen or a brush in his hand and said: "Now I am going to invent a symbol."" in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.41

p.120: "are, at the same time, both pictures and emotions. One can speak of an archetype only when these two aspects are simultaneous. The mere picture is of little consequence. But charged with emotion, it gains numinosity." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.87.

p.120: "is never precisely defined or fully explained. And one can not hope to define or explain it," in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.4

p.120: "To the scientific mind, symbolic ideas are a nuisance because they cannot be formulated in a way that is satisfactory to intellect and logic." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.80

p.120: "our only approach to invisible, divine things is through symbols." in Nicholas of Cusa, *On Sacred Ignorance*, I:11[32]

p.121: "has everything in itself and sees all things in every other, so that all are everywhere and each and every one is all; it has the appearance of a part, but a penetrating look sees the whole in it." in Plotinus, *Enneads*, V:8.4 [Armstrong]

p.122: "It is a well-nigh hopeless undertaking to tear a single aspect out of the invisible sphere; but despite their interwovenness they do form units of meaning that can be apprehended intuitively." in C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, IV:302

p.122: "keeps close to that from which it comes." in Plotinus, *Enneads*, VI:7.40 [Armstrong]

p.122: "All are One there and yet are distinct" in Plotinus, *Enneads*, V:9.6.

p.122: "sheer objectivity, as wide as the world. There I am the object of every subject, in complete reversal of my ordinary consciousness, where I am always the subject that has an object. There I am utterly one with the world, so much part of it that I forget all too easily who I am. 'Lost in oneself' is a good way of describing this state. But this self is the world, if only reflection could see it." in C. G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, I:46

p.123: "apprehends itself and is object of its own activity." in Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, §20.

p.126: "qualities, accordant with Nature, and quantities; number and mass; origins and conditions; all actions and experiences not against nature; movement and repose, both the universals and the particulars." in Plotinus, *Enneads*, V:9.10.

p.127: "a tendency to form such representations of a motif – representations that can vary a great deal in detail without losing their pattern." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.58

p.127: "grow up from the dark depths of the mind like a lotus and form a most important part of the subliminal psyche." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.25

p.129: "form that dream takes is natural to the unconscious because the material from which it is produced is retained in the subliminal state in precisely this fashion." in C. G. Jung, *Approaching the Unconscious*, p.53

p.137: "has neither a past nor a future, and it is not something to which anything can be added, for it cannot become larger or smaller.", Meister Eckhart, *German Sermons*, Mt. V:3., in O. Davis, ed., *Meister Eckhart: Selected Writings*, 22, p.204

p.137: "is a sort of intimate understanding and perception of a self which should be careful not to depart from itself by wanting to perceive more." in Plotinus, *Enneads*, V:8.11.

p.137: "an inner guiding factor, a regulating center, that is different from the conscious personality and that brings about its constant extension and maturing." in M.-L. von Franz, *The Process of Individuation*, p.163 [modified]

p.141: "we perceive it so plainly and so certainly, that it neither needs nor is capable of any proof." in J. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, IV:9.3

p.142: "there is no impression constant and invariable," in D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*,

p.142: "are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions." in D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I:4.6

p.143: "when all possible scientific questions have been answered while the problems of life remained completely untouched." in L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.52

p.144: "a symbol as well as an allegory of consciousness." in C. G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, II:47

p.145: "rushing down the steep banks into the lake, dies in the water.", Mt., VIII:32.

p.146: "a diversity of parts – if we have to assert that it has parts – which is distinguished in the soul, but a variety of functions and movements." in J. S. Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, IV:787B

p.147: "moving image of eternity" in Plato, *Timaeus*, VII

p.154: "the development of memory with age is the history of gradual organisations closely dependent on the structuring activities of intelligence." in J. Piaget, *Memory and Intelligence*, p.381 [after H. J. Silverman, ed., *Piaget, Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. p.75]

p.155: "the image of pain is not a picture and *this* image is not replaceable by anything we should call a picture. An image is not a picture, but a picture may correspond to it." in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, I:300-301.

p.156: "The image must be more like its object than any picture. One might regard the image as a super-likeness," in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, I:389.

p.156: "The difficulty is not that one doubts whether one really imagined Eiffel Tower or pain. But it is *this*: that we should be able, just like that, to point out or describe the thing that we have imagined, that the projection of the image into actuality, presents no difficulty at all." in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, I:386

p.156: "active and selective structuring." in J. Piaget, *Memory and Intelligence*, p.378.

p.157: "memories, no matter how trivial, isolable, or individualised, involve a host of spatial, temporal, causal, and other relations, and a whole hierarchy of planes of reality." in J. Piaget, *Memory and Intelligence*, p.131

p.157: "As the time-object withdraws into the past, it shrinks and therewith becomes dim." in E. Husserl, *Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Inner Time*, A:1.2.89.

p.158: "every hour of our life, once it has passed into the past, incarnates

into some material object and remains hidden there, imprisoned until we meet it on our way.” in M. Proust, *Against Sainte-Beuve*,

p.159: “voluntary memory, the memory of intelligence and eyes reproduces the past only as an imperfect picture, which resembles the original as much as the pictures of bad painters resemble spring.”, M. Proust in a letter to René Blum.,

p.159: “Compared to this past which is an intimate part of ourselves, the truths of intelligence seem little real.” in M. Proust, *Against Sainte-Beuve*, Introduction

p.159: “A dog believes his master is at the door. But can he also believe his master will come the day after tomorrow? – And *what* can he not do here? – How do you do it?” in L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, II:i

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