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BEARING ONE'S SHADOW: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL FROM KANT, THROUGH HUSSERL, TO MERLEAU-PONTY

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Recent years have witnessed a revival of interest in transcendental philosophy, sparked by debates surrounding the question of the (im)possibility of naturalizing phenomenology. However, it is often the case that these debates fail to appreciate the alterations that the notion of “the transcendental” has undergone since Kant first introduced his system of transcendental idealism. The paper intends to critically examine some of these changes, arguing that Husserl’s “transcendental turn”, although significantly altering Kant’s original conception, remained faithful to the project of transcendentalism and wrought in its wake important resources for Merleau-Ponty’s subsequent elaborations. The central part of the paper takes us through three conceptions — from Kant’s “transcendentalism of faculties”, through Husserl’s “transcendentalism of pure consciousness”, to Merleau-Ponty’s “transcendentalism of the flesh” — arguing that they constitute a coherent transcendentalist “thought style”. In the final section, we claim that these progressive alterations in the meaning of the transcendental project can shed light on the debate about the (im)possibility of naturalizing phenomenology. We do this by providing a notion of the transcendental that makes room for the “truth of naturalism”, while simultaneously insisting on the necessity of a reverse (and supplementary) movement, namely that of phenomenizing (“transcendentalizing”) nature.

Key words: Kant, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, transcendental philosophy, naturalized phenomenology, phenomenologized nature, *epoché*, phenomenological reduction.

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СЛЕДУЯ ТРАДИЦИИ: КОНФИГУРАЦИИ ТРАНСЦЕНДЕНТАЛЬНОГО ОТ КАНТА, ГУССЕРЛЯ К МЕРЛО-ПОНТИ

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В последние годы происходит возрастание интереса к трансцендентальной философии, подогреваемое дебатами по поводу вопроса о (не)возможности натурализованной феноменологии. Однако зачастую эти дебаты ограничиваются утверждением, что понятие «трансцендентальное» потеряло свой изначальный смысл со времен Канта, когда тот впервые представил свою систему трансцендентального идеализма. Данная статья имеет целью проанализировать некоторые важные изменения, полагая, что «трансцендентальный поворот Гуссерля», не смотря на его значительное отличие от изначальной концепции Канта, оставался в лоне трансцендентализма и стал основой для разработки данной темы у Мерло-Понти. В основной части данной работы речь идет о трех концепциях, начиная кантианским «трансцендентализмом способностей», учитывая «трансцендентализм чистого сознания» Гуссерля, и заканчивая «трансцендентализмом тела» Мерло-Понти. При этом указывается на тот факт, что всем им присущ трансцендентализм «стиля мышления». В заключительной части мы отстаиваем тезис, что увеличивающийся разрыв смысла трансцендентального проекта может пролить свет на дебаты по поводу (не)возможности натурализованной феноменологии. Мы осуществляем это намерение, имея в виду значение термина трансцендентальный, который высвобождает пространство для «правды натурализма», и в то же самое время указывает на необходимость реверсивного (и дополняющего) движения, заключающегося в том, чтобы феноменализировать («трансцендировать») природу.

Ключевые слова: Кант, Гуссерль, Мерло-Понти, трансцендентальная философия, натурализованная феноменология, феноменологизирование природы, *epoché*, феноменологическая редукция.

1. THE TRANSCENDENTAL: POLYPHONY OF STYLES?

In his ingenious analysis of “thought styles” — specific ways of being, seeing and thinking characteristic of various ideational groups (so-called “thought collectives”) — Ludwik Fleck calls attention to the fact that technical terms permeating such styles have a distinctive *thought-charm*: far from being exhausted by their nominal definitions, *termini technici* also express “a certain specific power, being not only a

name but also a slogan or symbol” (Fleck, 1986, 99). In other words, technical terms are not mere denotations, but also enactive exhortations; they serve not only as descriptors, but also as expressions of allegiance, even calls to arms. When considering terms like “transcendentalism” and “transcendental philosophy” Fleck’s remarks strike remarkably close to home: while, to some, such terms stand as synonyms for obscure and decidedly *barren* philosophy, to others, they evoke an aura of authenticity surrounding the genuinely *fertile* pastures of thought. As such, “the transcendental” is often depicted as an ideational antipode of other philosophical attitudes, those usually gathered under the flag of “naturalism” or “objectivism”. Regardless of what side one takes, however, the positioning is often done against a horizon of predigested preconceptions and not infrequently leads to knee-jerk reactions: either blunt dismissal or whole-hearted approval.

However, there are signs that tides might be changing. Recent debates on the (im)possibility of “naturalizing phenomenology” have called into question radical dichotomizations and have even, by shying away from more “orthodox” transcendental philosophers (e.g., Kant and Husserl), and moving towards the seemingly more “naturalism friendly” thinkers (e.g., Merleau-Ponty), made daring attempts at weaving *new thought styles* that might mitigate between the age-old extremes. Even if it eventually turns out that the ultimate reconciliation between the warring factions remains unattainable, it could be argued that the greatest merit of such endeavors lies in their ability to “slacken the intentional threads” within both camps, thereby revealing what has, through sheer repetition and inculcation, become sedimented in their ideational backgrounds. It is, we feel, an admirable feat that, in the course of three decades, the question of “the transcendental” has become of interest not only to analytic philosophers, but also, to a certain degree at least, to cognitive (neuro)scientists.

As is often the case, however, such inquiries tend to disclose that what mannerisms of old portray as a coherent whole turns out to be a complex structure. The word “transcendental” means different things to different people, and has been used in different ways in different contexts. One of the aims of this paper is to trace and critically examine some of the alterations that the notion has undergone since its conception under the aegis of Kant’s critical philosophy. Specifically, it intends to show how Husserl’s “transcendental turn”, although altering Kant’s original conception, remained faithful to the project of transcendentalism and wrought in its wake, important resources for subsequent elaborations, some of which were seized and elaborated upon by Merleau-Ponty.

The article proceeds as follows: the main bulk of the paper (sections 2–4) will be dedicated to an analysis of how, and why, the successive move from Kant’s transcen-

dentalism of cognitive faculties, through Husserl's transcendentalism of pure consciousness, to Merleau-Ponty's transcendentalism of sensuous flesh¹, might be said to belong to the same (transcendental) thought style. In the last part (section 5), we will examine what impact the multilayered architecture of the transcendental might have on the interrelation between transcendentalism and naturalism, arguing that *naturalization* of (transcendental) phenomenology cannot be achieved "on the cheap", but must be accompanied by a complementary move of *phenomenologization* ("transcendentalization") of nature and, consequently, natural sciences.

2. OF RAIN AND RAINBOWS: KANT'S TRANSCENDENTALISM OF COGNITIVE FACULTIES

At the very heart of transcendental philosophy lies a perennial philosophical theme, the theme of *wonder*. For, as Kant famously noted, it was not until "the remembrance of Hume" interrupted his "dogmatic slumber" (Kant, 1912, 7) that he undertook his famous shift towards critical philosophy and transcendental idealism. But what dogmatic reverie was Kant shaken from by the recollection of the Scottish philosopher? The wondrous awakening Kant underwent was related to his rationalist presuppositions about the possibility of the metaphysical knowledge of the mind-independent world, i.e., the belief that human beings are capable of gaining, through the faculty of understanding, *a priori* (non-empirical) knowledge of the intelligible (trans-experiential) world.

Fueling his growing doubts about the possibility of such knowledge, Hume's skepticism concerning causality, which Kant generalized to cover the whole of metaphysics², made him recognize the naivety of his Leibnizian-Wolffian heritage and urged him to radically reconsider his views on the (im)possibility of metaphysics. According to Hume, *a priori* knowledge, i.e., knowledge consisting of propositions that are necessarily and universally true, pertains solely to the "relations of ideas" (concepts and logical relations between them), and has no bearing whatsoever on "matters of fact", which are contingent and particular. There can be no *a priori* (necessary and universal) knowledge of the world, as all our knowledge of the world stems

¹ The terms "transcendentalism of pure consciousness" and "transcendentalism of sensuous flesh" were borrowed from an ingenious paper by Heinämaa (1999).

² Cf.: "I therefore first tried whether Hume's objection could not be put into a general form, and soon found that the concept of the connexion of cause and effect was by no means the only idea by which the understanding thinks the connexion of things a priori, but rather that metaphysics consists altogether of such connexions" (Kant, 1912, 7).

from experience, and is therefore *a posteriori* and *contingent*. This, in turn, sheds a grim light on the possibility of mathematics, natural science and metaphysics, all of which, Kant maintains, are based, at least partly, on *a priori* propositions (Kant, 1989, 143–146). Unwilling to cede to Hume’s skeptical musings, Kant famously set out to show how *a priori* knowledge about the world *is* possible, which, in his eyes, boiled down to showing how “synthetic *a priori* propositions” are possible — propositions whose justification does not depend on experience, yet are nonetheless not merely conceptual (elucidatory), but substantive (expansive).

Kant’s main *motivation* for undertaking his critical-*cum*-transcendental turn is then decidedly Cartesian in spirit, as it is aimed at securing our epistemic practices with firm foundations. However, given Kant’s misgivings about the possibility of *a priori* knowledge of the trans-experiential world, is such project not doomed from the very start? Not if we undertake a radical change of perspective:

Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them *a priori* through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an *a priori* cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us. (Kant, 1989, 110)

Instead of inquiring into how it is that our cognitive faculties can conform to the *trans*-experiential objects, Kant invites us to inquire into what the structure of our cognitive apparatus must be like for us to have specifically structured *experienced* objects. This change of perspective, which Kant famously likens to “the first thoughts of Copernicus” (Kant, 1989), entails that we give up on the impossible task of trying to elucidate the nature of *noumena* (“things in themselves”), i.e., things the existence of which is independent of our cognitive faculties, and focus instead on inquiring into the nature and possibility of *phenomena* (“things for us”), i.e., things as they appear in our experience. Put differently, Kant is willing to cede (*pace* rationalists) that our knowledge is, in a crucial sense, limited by our experience. However, *pace* empirical realists, the reason for this is not that experience is the only means of accessing the mind-independent world, but that what we *can* know is determined by the *structure* of our experience.

But although all our cognition commences from the experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience. For it could well be that even our experiential cognition is a composite of that which we receive through impressions and that which our own cognitive faculty (merely prompted by sensible impressions) provides out of itself, which

in addition we cannot distinguish from that fundamental material until long practice has made us attentive to it and skilled in separating it out. (Kant, 1989, 136)

Instead of trying to elucidate how “*objects of experience*” could lead us to *transcendent* (trans-experiential) *objects* (noumena), we should consider a more fruitful question, namely what it means to be an “*object of experience*”, and investigate the *transcendental conditions of objective experience*, i.e., *a priori* cognitive structures that enable objects to appear to us in the first place³. It is with regard to these *a priori* conditions that Kant believes that he can solve the problem of synthetic *a priori* judgments.

Let us now sketch the contours of the “Kantian transcendental” by trying to skillfully unravel the two threads constituting “experiential cognition”. The first thing to note is that the phenomenal world as the only world that is cognitively accessible to us (the noumenal world can be thought, but not known) is an amalgam of passively received sensory *matter* (“impressions” or “sensations”) and *a priori forms* actively supplied by our cognitive apparatus (Kant, 1989, 136). The cognitive apparatus, in turn, consists of several distinct *faculties*, two of which are essential to cognition: the receptive faculty or *sensibility*, through which impressions are “intuited” or “given” to us as presentations, and which invests them with forms of space and time; and the spontaneous faculty or *understanding*, which “thinks” presentations given through sensibility by supplying them with suitable concepts (Kant, 1989, 193).

However, before any kind of conceptual representation of intuited content can take place, the objects of our sensuous experience must be (pre)constituted as synthetic unities. This role is relegated to *imagination* — a third (mediating) faculty — which is responsible for the *synthesis* of intuitive manifold so as to yield a *mediate representation*, which is then given to an otherwise empty concept. Kant seeks to justify our application of pure concepts to appearances by means of so-called *transcendental schemata*, which stand for *procedural rules* issued forth by the faculty of imagination whose function is to govern the subsumption of intuitive presentations under appropriate pure concepts (Kant, 1989, 271).

We are now better equipped to see what Kant meant when referring to his system as “transcendental idealism”. It is *transcendental* because it is concerned with the inquiry into *conditions of possibility of experience*, and not into the possibility of transcendent realities outside all possible experience (Kant, 1989, 149). Further, it is *idealist* because its domain of investigation is relegated to the domain of things *for us*

³ Cf.: “The term ‘transcendental’ [...] signifies such knowledge as concerns the *a priori* possibility of knowledge, or its *a priori* employment” (Kant, 1989, 196).

(phenomena) and not to things in themselves (noumena) (Kant, 1989, 426). Let us have a look at a concrete example:

[W]e would certainly call a rainbow a mere appearance in a sun-shower, but would call this rain the thing in itself, and this is correct, as long as we understand the latter concept in a merely physical sense [...]. But if we consider this empirical object in general and, without turning to its agreement with every human sense, ask whether it [...] represents an object in itself, then the question of the relation of the representation to the object is transcendental, and not only these drops are mere appearances, but even their round form, indeed even the space through which they fall are nothing in themselves, but only mere modifications or foundations of our sensible intuition; the [transcendent] object, however, remains unknown to us. (Kant, 1989, 187)

It is perfectly legitimate to say, in our everyday language anchored in the phenomenal world, that a *rainbow* is an “appearance in a sun-shower”, i.e., an appearance in the *weak* sense, whereas *rain* is “the thing in itself” (the thing that, in the presence of other conditions, causes the appearance); however, considered from a transcendental perspective, rain ultimately consists of drops which can, in turn, be characterized as spatiotemporal objects with specific causal (and other physically determinable) properties and, consequently, as mere appearances in the *strong* sense (phenomena), i.e., as cognitively accessible things for us caused by cognitively inaccessible things in themselves.

Note that Kant’s transcendental analysis of experience remains limited in at least two senses. First off, the *a priori* conditions of experience are not themselves given in experience, but can only be regressively deduced. Further, since the categories of understanding, coupled with the forms of intuition, exhaust the domain of transcendental determinative structures, the only experienceable objects are “natural objects”, i.e., spatiotemporal objects of the Newtonian physics. This is, so to speak, the foundational layer of objectivity: all other characterizations are subsequent additions on this transcendentially determined experiential grid.

3. OF APPLE TREE IN BLOOM: HUSSERL’S TRANSCENDENTALISM OF PURE CONSCIOUSNESS

Husserl’s relationship to Kant and transcendental philosophy had a long and checkered history, ranging from initial aversion to eventual, albeit critical and qualified, endorsement. It is not our intention here to provide a comprehensive analysis of this interesting intellectual genesis (Kern, 1964; Moran, 2005, 174–201). Instead, we would like to focus on some aspects that are especially pertinent to our topic.

Specifically, it seems that, after his famed “transcendental turn”⁴, and despite all the misgivings he might still have harbored towards Kant’s philosophy, Husserl felt strong affinities with the latter’s transcendental project. This sentiment is clearly expressed in his letter to Ernst Cassirer from 1925, where he writes: “I had to realize that this science further developing in me encompassed, in an entirely distinct method, the entire Kantian problematic . . . and that it confirmed Kant’s main results in rigorous scientific founding and in their limitation” (as cited in Luft, 2007, 368).

There are at least two points in Husserl’s comment that bear emphasizing. To begin with, it is clear that Husserl construes his transcendental endeavor not as a substitution, but as a *critical revision and extension* of Kant’s project, one that, significantly, is said to offer a *confirmation* of Kant’s main findings. As he puts it in a manuscript from approximately 1917, “Kant’s oeuvre contains gold in rich abundance”; however, “one must break it and melt in the fire of radical critique to bring out this content” (Luft, 2007, 367). There is, in other words, a “hidden truth” in Kant’s transcendental philosophy, but one which needs to be made “accessible to insight” by means of “a method of disclosure appropriate to it” (Husserl, 1970, 119). What does Husserl mean by that?

It could be said, and this brings us to the second point, that for Husserl, Kant’s wondrous awakening proved to be short-lived. In Husserl’s view, “wonder” understood as the “passion for observing and knowing the world” stands at the very beginning of philosophy, it is that which gives birth to the “theoretical attitude”, the attitude of *pure theoria* devoid of all presuppositions and practical interests (Husserl, 1970, 284–285)⁵. The re-awakened sense of wonder at the world — the world as given to us in experience — allowed Kant to rekindle this originary impetus towards genuine philosophizing and free him from the dogmatic metaphysical preconceptions. However, despite having instigated what would later become known as a “Copernican turn” in philosophy, Kant failed to grasp the *true radicality* of his discovery, which is why he continued to entangle himself in the old ways of thinking and seeing.

⁴ According to Moran, Husserl “began to characterize his phenomenology in transcendental terms and embarked on a serious rereading of Kant” (Moran, 2005, 26) somewhere between 1905 and 1907. However, it was not until 1913, with the publication of *Ideas I*, that he — much to the dismay of his Munich and Göttingen followers — openly, and explicitly, expressed his allegiance to transcendentalism. Yet, while greatly appreciative of Kant’s contribution to philosophy, he refused to be labeled as a Neo-Kantian, and was adamant that his version of transcendental idealism was to be construed “in a fundamentally and essentially new sense” (Husserl, 1960, 86).

⁵ For an in-depth account of Husserl’s understanding of wonder, harkening back to the Greek notion of *thaumazein*, see Kingwell (2000). Kingwell suggests that while it might be “too strong an assertion to say that wonder is the central concept of Husserl’s phenomenology”, it is perhaps not too

What Husserl felt was lacking was a *rigorous method*, an “intuitive exhibiting method” (Husserl, 1970, 114), that would anchor Kant’s initial insights in a domain of self-evident truths and thus secure the firm grounding for our epistemic endeavors that Kant so eagerly sought to provide. For a proper “theoretical attitude” can only be attained and sustained, Husserl believed, if there is a method that enables us to engage in a *presuppositionless* inquiry into how the world appears to us, an inquiry that allows the philosopher-investigator to systematically free herself from any and all of the pre-conceptions that still bedevil Kant’s transcendentalism. We must, in other words, *return to the things themselves*, to the *what* and *how* of the phenomena. Our main source of evidence — the source that alone can provide for the apodicticity required of a rigorous and universal science that transcendental phenomenology aspires to be — should lie not in rational (re)constructions, but rather in the *sphere of appearances* itself, in the domain of what is *immediately (originarily) given* to us in experience:

Enough now of absurd theories. No conceivable theory can make us err with respect to the *principle of all principles: that every originary presentive intuition is a legitimizing source of cognition, that everything originarily (so to speak, in its “personal” actuality) offered to us in ‘intuition’ is to be accepted simply as what it is presented as being, but also only within the limits in which it is presented there.* (Husserl, 1983, 44)

The first step in actualizing this “principle of all principles” is the performance of *epoché*, which, according to Husserl, is the proper “gate of entry” (Husserl, 1970, 257) into transcendental phenomenology, a gate of entry that Kant discovered, but failed to pass through. *Epoché*, a sort of methodically cultivated wonder, entails the “putting out of action”, “exclusion”, or “parenthesizing” of all our “positings”, all our ontological commitments with regard to phenomena, so that, although these commitments are “still there, like the parenthesized in the parentheses, [...] we make no use of [them]” (Husserl, 1983, 59). Such “putting out of action” enables us to investigate phenomena *as phenomena*, i.e., not as self-subsisting objects inhering in the pre-existing world, but as *appearances*, as things offering themselves to us in our experience. This “leading” or “bringing back” of the world and objects to the sphere of subject-relativity is the essence of the second methodological step, namely that of the *phenomenological-transcendental reduction*⁶.

far-fetched “to say that the world exposed by wonder, and the attitude shifts occasioned by it, are central” (Kingwell, 2000, 90–91).

⁶ As is the case with many of his central notions, Husserl’s views on *epoché* and different types of reductions (in addition to phenomenological and transcendental, he also speaks of epistemological, philosophical, and psychological reductions) are notoriously difficult to unravel. Sometimes

In order to see how this methodological shift can be said to critically expand on Kant's project, let us look at some concrete examples. In *Crisis*, Husserl (1970, § 35–38) speaks of two *epochés*, one pertaining to the natural sciences and the other to the life-world (Husserl, 1970, § 39–41). We will focus on each in turn, paying special attention to how they relate to what Husserl felt was lacking in Kant's thought.

One point in which Husserl believed Kant erred is his uncritical endorsement of the picture of the world as propounded by the natural sciences. Kant's domain of phenomena is a very *circumscribed* domain, consisting exclusively of mathematically idealized spatiotemporal objects as posited by Newtonian physics. A raindrop or, to use Husserl's example, an apple tree in bloom (Husserl, 1983, 214 ff.) is not merely a geometrized object, but is endowed with several other meanings — it is something that is pleasant, valuable, and/or useful —, which carries significant implications for its respective modes of being and validity. In fact, from the phenomenological perspective — from the viewpoint of how things appear to me in everyday life — all these other meanings and modes of being and validity can be said to *precede* those posited by the natural sciences. In Husserl's words:

In ordinary life we have nothing whatever to do with nature-Objects. What we take as things are pictures, statues, gardens, houses, tables, clothes, tools, etc. They are value-Objects of various kinds, use-Objects, practical Objects. They are not Objects which can be found in natural science. (Husserl, 1989, 29)

The first *epoché*, then, is meant to parenthesize the “well-fitting garb of ideas”, the “garb of symbols of the symbolic mathematical theories” (Husserl, 1970, 51) that was uncritically projected by Kant onto our “everyday world of experience” (Husserl, 1970, 96). In Husserl's view, by putting out of action such theoretical positings of the natural sciences (Husserl, 1970, 145), the performance of the first *epoché* enables us to bring out into the open Kant's “unexpressed ‘presupposition’” (Husserl, 1970, 103), namely our “life-world” (*Lebenswelt*), the overlooked, taken-for-granted “surrounding world of life” (Husserl, 1970) that functions as a “realm of original self-evidences” (Husserl, 1970, § 33d) for all our theoretical and practical (and, thereby, also scientific) inquiries.

the terms *epoché* and reduction are used synonymously, but often the former seems to function as a prequel to the latter (this is how their relationship is understood in our paper). It is not our intention to provide a comprehensive account of the various uses of, and often subtle differences between, the two terms, a topic of ongoing scholarly interest (Luft, 2012), but to simply point out their methodological significance for Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

It is only when we bracket the *naturalist* attitude and thus overcome “Kant’s ‘prejudice for natural science’” (Husserl, 1974, 52) that we regain the world as lived and experienced in our pre-scientific life. This, in turn, enables us to carry out successive phenomenological reductions, whereby the *derivative* truths and validities of the objective natural sciences can be “brought back” (*re-ducere*) to the *primary* — pre-scientific and subject-relative — evidential subsoil of the life-world. Consequently, many of the things that Kant either took for granted⁷ or simply overlooked⁸ must be “brought into transcendental consideration as ‘objects of possible experience’” (Husserl, 1974), which drastically expands and complexifies the domain of phenomena.

However, according to Husserl, the first *epoché* does not take us far enough. In addition to bracketing the ontology of the natural sciences and revealing the underlying ontology of the life-world, the proper transcendental science of phenomena requires a second, “universal” or “transcendental”, *epoché* (Husserl, 1970, § 39), which further suspends the truths and validities of the life-world, thereby disclosing the domain of *pure transcendental consciousness*. For, after the first *epoché*, the world is still “pre-given to us as that which exists” (Husserl, 1970, 143–145). So, in addition to parenthesizing the *naturalist* attitude (attitude characteristic of the natural sciences), we must also parenthesize the *natural* attitude (attitude characteristic of our natural [everyday] life), and thus put out of action *all* our ontological commitments, even those pertaining to the life-world.

Let us revert to the “blossoming apple tree” example (Husserl, 1983, 214). When bracketing the natural attitude — parenthesizing the “transcendent world” —, and taking on the “[transcendental] phenomenological attitude”, the first thing to note is that everything remains as before: we still perceive “this blossoming apple tree, in this garden, and so forth”, for “the tree has not lost the least nuance of all these moments, qualities, characteristics *with which it was appearing in this perception*”, that is as “‘lovely’, ‘attractive’, and so forth ‘in’ *this liking*” (Husserl, 1983, 215–216). What *does* change, however, is that “all these descriptive statements [...] have undergone a *radical* modification of sense”, as does the thing described, for it becomes “this perceived tree as perceived”, without any reference to a corresponding object in the outside world. We can now analyze not only *what* is given to us in experience, but also *how* it is given, without any references to the trans-experiential domain of being-in-itself.

⁷ For instance, in confronting Hume, Kant uncritically followed the Scottish philosopher by directing his criticism solely to *a posteriori* knowledge, but not to analytic *a priori*, as if the latter were somehow self-evident (Husserl, 1969, 260).

⁸ For instance, the issue of transcendental grounding of (the findings of) social sciences and humanities (Husserl, 1974, 52).

It is only in and through this second transcendental *epoché* that we gain access to the “universe of the subjective” (Husserl, 1970, 146), the “phenomenological residuum” of “absolute or transcendently pure consciousness” (Husserl, 1983, 130) wherein all “objectivity” attains its mode of being and validity. This radical shift of attitude opens up a completely new and self-transparent type of experience, which Husserl calls “transcendental experience” (Husserl, 1970, 153) — a notion that, as Moran rightfully observes, “would have been anathema to Kant” (Moran, 2005, 181) — and which lends itself to *transcendental reduction*. Transcendental reduction discloses the fundamental *intentional structure* of experience, whereby *something* is always given to *someone* in a *certain way*. Things do not simply appear; they appear to someone, and they appear as this-or-that. There is, then, a fundamental transcendental correlation between the world-consciousness (“I-pole”) and the world (“object-pole”); further, how the world appears depends on the activities of the world-consciousness. In other words, different types of objectivities — their meaning and ontological validity — are constituted by transcendental subjectivity: the *sense* of an object — the sense through which I intend it or through which it gives itself to me — is the accomplishment of transcendental subjectivity. Note, however, that Husserl is not interested in *individual, concrete examples* of such intentional and constitutional performances, but rather in their “idealized” essences, which are given to us by so-called “eidetic intuition” (Husserl, 1970, 178)⁹.

Although critical of Kant, it is clear that Husserl remained committed to the spirit of his transcendental idealism in that he sought to ground our knowledge of worldly objects in their subjective conditions of possibility. However, Husserl’s transcendental subjectivity — the domain of pure consciousness — is not the Kantian domain of *formal structures* (experience-enabling faculties), arrived at by means of a *regressive* method, but rather a domain of *transcendental experience* (structured as pure intentionality), attained by means of rigorous *intuitive* method. Since Kant remained a prisoner of the naturalist (and consequently natural) attitude, he was, according to Husserl, never granted access to this “universe of the subjective”. For Kant, the domain of subjectivity always remained *equivocal*: on the one hand, it was, as for Husserl, that which functioned as the condition of possibility of objectivity; on the other hand, since Kant failed to develop an autonomous method for investigating this newly found field of subjectivity — a lack which resulted from his overtly narrow conception of intuition —, he was forced to reconstruct its structure and functioning indirectly (regressively) by reverting to the categories and concepts derived from the

⁹ The method of eidetic intuiting/seeing is more clearly articulated in (Husserl, 1969, 247–248).

objective (natural) sciences. That is to say, in Kant, the realm of the transcendental was populated by “faculties” and “functions” which, for Husserl, are not genuinely (originarily) subjective categories — categories obtained by means of a phenomenological inquiry –, but derivative (objective) notions. It was only by means of *epoché* and phenomenological-transcendental reduction, Husserl contended, that the structure of transcendental subjectivity became open to investigation, which enabled him to not only *validate* some of Kant’s conclusions, but also significantly *expand* the scope of transcendental philosophy.

Before closing this section, we would like to point out that, all these caveats notwithstanding, Husserl’s “transcendental” remains surprisingly Kantian in spirit. This becomes very clear when we consider Husserl’s views on *constitutional hierarchy*. Namely, despite his criticism of Kant’s overtly narrow conception of objectivity in terms of “natural objects” construed as spatiotemporal entities, and his subsequent broadening of the domain of objectivity to include “value-Objects”, “use-Objects”, etc., it would seem that he nonetheless remained committed to a *layered* notion of constituted objectivity, whereby “natural objects” are given the fundamental status. Thus, although in my everyday life a table is not given to me as a spatiotemporal thing, it is “at bottom, *qua* natural body, [always] provided with natural properties accessible to simple experience — although often interest need not be directed toward them” (Husserl, 1973, 54).

Relatedly, there is a strong Kantian streak in Husserl’s general conception of intentionality, one that is said to hold of all constitutive levels. According to Husserl’s early writings, “[t]he stream of phenomenological being”, the domain of pure consciousness disclosed by *epoché* and phenomenological-transcendental reduction, ultimately consists of “a *stuff-stratum* and a *noetic stratum*” (Husserl, 1983, 251). The “stuff-stratum” encompasses the so-called *hyletic data*, or sensuous *matter* (color-data, tone-data, etc.), while the “noetic stratum” comprises *noeses*, or animating *morphe/form* (acts of sense-bestowal, e.g., seeing, judging, meaning, etc.). *Noeses animate*, or *bestow sense* upon, the hyletic data, i.e., they *synthesize* the multitude of sensations into “unities of sense”, or *noemata*, in and through which I intend a given object (Husserl, 1983, 207).

Let us revert, once again, to the apple tree example. Once we have performed the *epoché* and have started examining the apple tree *as a phenomenon*, we will find, as inherent in the stream of pure consciousness, visual hyletic data, e.g., a succession of individual color-sensations, shape-sensations, etc., and noetic aspects, e.g., various sense-bestowing (sub)acts of seeing, judging, etc. Further, these aspects are joined together through multifarious acts of syntheses giving rise to *noema* (object-as-intend-

ed): tree as perceived, or liked, etc. For example, the act of judgement (*noesis*) synthesizes various hues of brown and/or perspectival aspects (hyletic data) so that the tree trunk is given to me *as brown* and/or *as three-dimensional* (*noema*). Even though the tree does not necessarily appear in a causal nexus of nature as regarded by natural science, it is still conceived in its basic phenomenal structure as a *synthetic unity of intuit-ed manifold*. We can see, then, that Husserl inherited the general “synthetic framework” found in Kant, but tried to broaden it to encompass all types of objectivity.

Husserl’s adoption of this general framework has important implications for his philosophy, the most pertinent one being his *ambivalent relation to perception*. On the one hand, Husserl seems to prioritize *perception* above all other noetic acts: “[E]xperience traces back ultimately to perception, to a seeing and grasping of something; and all other intuition, as it founds the procuring of eidetic insights, is merely a modal variation of perception” (Husserl, 1977, 148). To go back to the things themselves is, in the last analysis, to go back to how things are given in *perceptual* experience; perception is understood as the mode of givenness that discloses the most primordial stratum of experience. Yet on the other hand, the noetic-noematic framework, especially the underlying process of *synthesis*, seems to be modeled on the *higher-level* intentional acts, such as “predicating” and “judging”, whereas it is dubious how well it can account, from the *phenomenological* perspective, for the *lower-level* acts, such as “perceiving”. This puts a lot of strain on Husserl’s position, since perception, which is supposed to ground, say, judgement, becomes modeled after, and in a sense predicated on, the latter.

As Husserl deepened his phenomenological investigations, he became progressively aware of these tensions, and sought to remedy them by various means. For example, he would, in addition to *active* syntheses which, roughly speaking, are undertaken reflectively, also speak of *passive* syntheses, which are paired with minimal-to-no reflective awareness. Relatedly, alongside *act-intentionality*, the active/positing intentionality issuing from an explicit act of consciousness, he spoke of *functioning* or *operative* intentionality (*fungierende Intentionalität*), the passive/implicit (anonymous) intentionality carried out on a pre-reflective level. Finally, his phenomenological analyses of “lived body” (*Leib*) and its role in the constitution of perceptual objects were aimed at bridging some of these pertinent difficulties. However, valiant efforts of some interpreters notwithstanding, it seems dubious whether Husserl, who never abandoned the “synthetic framework”, ever succeeded in resolving these tensions¹⁰.

¹⁰ Recently, alternative readings of Husserl have been proffered, based primarily on his late and/or unpublished work. These approaches generally tend to water down some of the more blatantly “intellectualist” (i.e., Cartesian and/or Kantian) features of Husserl’s philosophy, e.g., his emphasis

4. OF HUMAN FACES:
MERLEAU-PONTY'S TRANSCENDENTALISM OF SENSUOUS FLESH

Merleau-Ponty took it upon himself to dispel some of the ambiguities that were bedeviling Husserl's philosophy. In this regard, he could be said to stand in a similar relation to Husserl as the latter stands to Kant: although in general agreement with the *impetus* of Husserl's transcendental-phenomenological project, he feels that, due to certain speculative "neuralgic spots", it ultimately falls short of the goal it sets out to achieve. And, perhaps to the surprise of many, this goal is still, at least in its general outlines, *the same* as it was for both Kant and Husserl, namely that of providing *firm (transcendental) grounding* for our epistemic endeavors. In his reflections on Einstein's theory of relativity, Merleau-Ponty states explicitly that his general aim is not to *undermine* rationality and science, but rather to *rescue* their innermost value by finding a proper justificatory ground for them through "the rebirth of a philosophical sense" (Merleau-Ponty, 1964a, 197).

In a decidedly Husserlian move, Merleau-Ponty contends that the latter can be attained solely by going back to the "things themselves", i.e., by reawakening "the basic experience of the world of which science is the second-order expression" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, ix). To this end, a proper methodological tool is required, and Merleau-Ponty thinks that phenomenological-transcendental reduction, construed, tellingly, as "'wonder' in the face of the world" (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xv), is the best candidate for the job. So far, Merleau-Ponty seems to be following closely in Husserl's footsteps. However, as we will see shortly, there is an important difference between the two authors, one that could be characterized evocatively with regards to how they conceive of wonder. While Husserl, as suggested in the previous section, believes that wonder, that wellspring of all philosophizing, is essential because it *leads* to theoretical attitude, Merleau-Ponty demurs and suggests that its greatest value lies in that it grants us access to that which *precedes*, and thus *cannot be fully exhausted* by, theoretical attitude. Husserl, although significantly improving on Kant's transcendental

on transcendental ego/subjectivity, act-intentionality, etc., and put more emphasis on the notions of embodiment, operative intentionality, etc., arguing that Husserl is a much more varied and radical thinker as is commonly portrayed. We agree that these commonly neglected aspects deserve careful study and provide a much more nuanced view of Husserl's philosophy, yet feel that such alternative readings fail to convincingly demonstrate that Husserl managed to integrate these notions into a coherent philosophical position. In other words, while we appreciate the ingenious analyses of Zahavi (e.g., 1994, 2003) and others, we are much more inclined to side with Carman (1999) and Moran (2005) who insist that, despite significant differences of emphasis in his later philosophy, Husserl never wholly abandoned his earlier "intellectualist" commitments, which imbued his thought with serious conceptual incongruences.

project, errs in moving *too quickly* from the *pre-reflective* world, the “homeland of thoughts” and “cradle of things” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 28, 68), to the *reflective* world of “thoughts” and fully constituted “things”.

In Merleau-Ponty’s view, Husserl ultimately failed to heed his own advice by admitting into the foundations of his project theoretical posits that have not been “purified” in the fire of *epoché*. Most importantly, Husserl’s preconceptions about what constitutes valid knowledge and rigorous science — preconceptions modeled on the notions of belief, judgement, and explicit knowledge — invest his phenomenological investigations with a thick “tissue of judicatory and propositional acts” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 163). This creates a certain *tension* between his initial impulse to return to “the things themselves” and his intellectualist conception of phenomenology as a “rigorous science”, a tension which Husserl was aware of, but one that, as mentioned above, he never seems to have successfully resolved.

Merleau-Ponty’s goal is, therefore, not to undermine or limit Husserl’s transcendental-phenomenological endeavors, as he is sometimes portrayed, but rather, by freeing them of any residual theoretical “sedimentations”, to broaden and solidify them — knowing all too well that, in so doing, he is sometimes pushing Husserl further than he himself was willing to go (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, 72, 75). In an important sense, Merleau-Ponty tries to be *more Husserlian than Husserl*, arguing that it is only by disentangling Husserl’s thought from a web of preconceptions that the dictum of “going back to the things themselves” can be realized and a more genuine thematization of the subterranean transcendental dimensions of experience becomes possible.

This is reflected in how Merleau-Ponty views the two aforementioned *epochés*, the one pertaining to the life-world and the other to the transcendental subjectivity. As for the first *epoché* — the bracketing of the *naturalist* attitude — Merleau-Ponty seems to be in full agreement with Husserl, suggesting that the scientific (naturalist) point of view is “always both naïve and at the same time dishonest”, as it takes for granted, but fails to thematize, that “world which precedes [theoretical] knowledge” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, ix-x). However, Merleau-Ponty feels that, despite having opened up the vast and uncharted terrain of *Lebenswelt*, Husserl’s explorations remained thwarted by his own theoretical preconceptions. There is, for instance, the already mentioned prioritization of the “the ontology of *blosse Sachen*” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 163), which situates the “natural thing” at the fundamental level of objectivity. However, going back to the things themselves discloses that this is precisely *not* our primary way of living among things.

“Things in themselves” are not ultimately *blosse Sachen*; they are *figures* whose webs of significance are gently carved out by *shadowy backgrounds* of indeterminate

sense. A “thing” is not fundamentally a geometrized spatiotemporal object, but *evocative force* endowed with unique physiognomy, and the spectrum of significance it traverses is (co)determined by the precipices of valence behind and underneath it. When, after a long hike, I chance upon an apple tree in bloom, what I see is not, primarily, a natural object but a place of quiet and rest set forth against the background of exhaustion and toil, an alluring panoply of sights, smells and sounds, a soft beckoning murmur of its dense shadow.

Thus, a prototypical example of the sensuous is not a spatiotemporal object, but a *human face*. Just like a landscape or signature, a face, as given originally in experience, is not a fully determinate thing, but a “whole charged with immanent meaning” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 67); I can be “familiar with a face without ever having perceived the color of the eyes in themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 13). The face has unique physiognomy, it is invested with a *unique style*, which cannot be adequately encapsulated in a propositional form, yet is suffused with implicit (motor-, affective- and value-laden) significance: it lends itself to me or pushes me away, it is attractive or repulsive (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 151–152).

Thus, not only is the (re)discovered world of the sensuous, “the world as we lived it before our reflection began” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, 49), the abode of “value-objects”, etc., but these various types of objects constitute conglomerates of significance in a thickly interwoven phenomenal field — the totality of my immediate experience —, where the elusive horizons and backgrounds play no lesser role than the figures that stand out against them. For this reason, the *sense* that is given to me at this *pre-reflective* level is not the full-blown sense that can be captured in pure intuition and expressed a propositional form, but rather “an earthy and aboriginal sense” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, 77), consisting of “network of implications beneath ‘objective material thing’” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 166).

This brings us to Husserl’s second kind of *epoché*, one that is supposed to, through the bracketing of *natural* attitude, open up the self-transparent field of transcendental subjectivity. However, if we take the results of the first kind of *epoché* seriously, Husserl’s understanding of this step becomes problematic. The sensuous, whose deep recesses are imbued with the shadowy “aboriginal sense”, opens up a “pre-theoretical, pre-thetic, or pre-objective order”, which seems to upset “the relationship between the constituted (*noema*) and the constituting (*noesis*)” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 172). On the pre-objective level, there is, *pace* Kant and Husserl, no *hylé*, no sensuous isolated sensations, and for this reason, there is also no *morphe*, no meaning-bestowing activity of consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 471); for even though these sense-dense “pre-givens”, these “knots” or “kernels of [aboriginal] meaning around which

man and the world gravitate” are still woven with intentional threads, they cannot be exhausted by the “intellectual possession of a noema” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 165).

My reflection is “always behind or ahead”, but never wholly “contemporaneous” with them (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c); it always falls short, or reaches too high, to be able to find its place among primordial things. The second reduction, then, does not consist of a move from “objective” to a “closed, transparent milieu” of the “subjective”, but instead discloses a “third dimension” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 162, 164), that “secret of secrets this side of our theses and our theory” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 165), where in dichotomies of *noesis-noema*, constitution-constituted, even subject-object come apart. As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons why Merleau-Ponty felt that Husserl was unable to overcome the incongruences in his rendition of transcendental phenomenology was the latter’s commitment to the theoretical attitude (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 162–3), which prevented him from realizing that reflection — be it of naturalist or classical-transcendentalist bent — remains rooted in the *pre-reflective layer* and cannot simply shed its aboriginal skin.

In other words, if Kant remained, inadvertently, entangled in the naturalist web by failing to thematize the theoretical stance of the natural sciences, Husserl remained, also inadvertently, allied to naturalism by failing to thematize *theoretical stance as such*. For this reason, the *natural* attitude cannot be bracketed in the same manner as the *naturalist* attitude can be: this would hold true only if the latter were, just like the former, a theoretical posit, a *thesis*. But, as Husserl himself conceded, this is decidedly *not* the case: the givenness of the world in the natural attitude precedes all theses; it is, in the words of Merleau-Ponty, the “mystery of a primordial faith”, a “fundamental and original opinion (*Urglaube, Urdoxa*)”, which is “not even in principle translatable in terms of clear and distinct knowledge” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 162). It is for this reason that, in the ultimate analysis, phenomenology is neither a naturalism nor a *classical* (!) transcendentalism, but rather a critical endeavor bent at disclosing, and reflecting upon, the “pre-theoretical layer on which both of these idealizations find their relative justification and are gone beyond” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 164–165).

Drawing on Husserl’s analyses of embodiment in *Ideas II*, Merleau-Ponty speaks of this pre-objective “third dimension”, this purported pre-theoretical ground of both naturalism and classical transcendentalism, as the domain of *corporeality*. To return, once more, to the example of the human face: my gaze fails to recognize a face *as a face* unless it can take a certain *grip* on it, unless its features, with their thick implicative texture, are disposed in relation to me in a way that they can elicit a certain affective/motor/evaluative response from me. That is to say, “its being an object is [...] not a

being for the thinking subject, but a being-for-the-gaze which meets it at a certain angle” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 294–295).

It is by taking into account that the structure and dynamics of my life-world are always intermeshed with the structure and dynamics of my corporeal gaze that my *phenomenal* field becomes the *transcendental* field (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 69) — Merleau-Ponty’s equivalent of Husserl’s “transcendental experience”. In other words, it is only when I realize that the figure/ground structure of my experience always tacitly presupposes the “third term”, namely my body, that these *fleshly conditions of possibility* of experience disclose themselves to me (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 114).

However, unlike Husserl, whose commitment to the self-transparent domain of transcendental subjectivity makes his analyses of the body conceptually ambiguous (Carman, 1999), Merleau-Ponty refrains from putting on the intellectualist glasses and turns “embodiment” into his central transcendental notion. In his view, *my corporeality*, not in the sense of an objective body (*Körper*), as one thing among other things, but as an experiential structure (*Leib*), as my dynamic opening onto things, is the main locus of the *transcendental (non-dualist) betwixt*. The domain of the transcendental is thus ultimately the domain of the *ongoing co-constitution* between the corporeal subject and the aboriginal thing:

If the distinction between subject and object is blurred in my body (and no doubt the distinction between noesis and noema as well?), it is also blurred in the thing, which is the pole of my body’s operations, the terminus its exploration ends up in, and which is thus woven in the same intentional fabric as my body. (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 167)

This ongoing dialectic is expressed in Merleau-Ponty’s concept of *body schema* (*schéma corporel*) (in Merleau-Ponty, 2002, usually mistranslated as “body image”). Although borrowed from psychological literature of the time (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 113 ff.), the notion can be traced back to Kantian “transcendental schemata” (Carman, 1999, 218–219), a set of procedural rules which we touched upon briefly in Section 2 and the main function of which, it will be recalled, was to link the concepts of understanding to imaginative synthesis that is constitutive of objective experience, thus mediating between sensual intuitions and pure concepts. Once purged of their formalist flavor, Merleau-Ponty cashes in on the “in-betweenness” of schemata so as to express an “integrated set of skills poised and ready to anticipate and incorporate a world prior to the application of concepts and the formation of thoughts and judgments” (Carman, 1999, 219).

What particularly sets Merleau-Ponty’s body schema apart from Kant’s faculties and Husserl’s pure consciousness is that, although it delineates conditions of possi-

bility of experience, it is said to be, first of all, *dynamic*, i.e., it is constantly “polarized by its tasks” and “gathers itself up to reach its goal” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 115); secondly, and relatedly, it is decidedly *non-* or *trans-dualist*, i.e., it is, at least in principle, neither objective nor subjective¹¹. As such, Merleau-Ponty moves even further away from “idealism” in the Kantian sense, although he remains committed, in an important sense, to a form of “transcendental anti-realism” (Pollard, 2014), in which body schema functions as a *transcendental Ur-Gestalt*, an ongoing and ever-changing *give-and-take, push-and-pull* between its objective and subjective poles:

[M]y body is geared towards the world when my perception offers me a spectacle as varied and as clearly articulated as possible, and when my motor intentions, as they unfold, receive from the world the responses they anticipate. This maximum distinctness in perception and action defines a perceptual *ground*, a basis of my life, a general milieu for the coexistence of my body and the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 292)

In Merleau-Ponty’s view, one finds, hidden underneath the reflective noesis-noema intentionality, the abode of the pre-reflective “motor intentionality” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 110), which, as a close cousin of Husserl’s aforementioned “operative intentionality”, stands for “that which produces the natural and antepredicative unity of the world and of our life” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xx). It is because of this “antepredicative [body-world] unity” that we need to pay special heed to Husserl’s admonition that *epoché* is not a negation, but a *bracketing*, of the world: reflection does not “withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world’s basis”, (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xiii); instead, it “slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xiii). As such, this transcendental in-between is not a mere regressively postulated entity on a par with Kantian faculties, but something that discloses itself in experience; however, since it is, by its very “nature”, ambiguous, it cannot be (*contra* Husserl) adequately given in pure intuition.

This opens up an important question, namely that of the relationship between (theoretical) reflection and (pre-theoretical) existence. According to Merleau-Ponty, this relationship is not unilateral. It is not as if the latter would simply ground the former and as if, once we would have unearthed it, we could simply discard reflection altogether. It is only in and through reflection that the pre-theoretical order is discovered: since “existence is too tightly caught up in the world to know itself”, there

¹¹ We add the caveat “in principle”, because Merleau-Ponty himself seems to have been dissatisfied with his analyses of the body in *Phenomenology of Perception*, which led him to adopt a more explicitly trans-dualist notion of “the flesh” in his later works (Apostolopoulos, 2017).

is “the need of ideality in order to come and know and prevail over its facticity” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, xiv–xv). However, theoretical reflection is not self-sufficient, as “it is limited to consecrating the labors of the pre-objective layer” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 172): it can only transcend the pre-theoretical “opening to the world” by “making use of the powers it owes to the opening itself” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 164; Merleau-Ponty, 1964c, 172). What is needed, then, is *critical reflection* that never loses track of its corporeal origins and is able to thematize the ongoing dialectical relationship between ideation and existence which Husserl called *Fundierung* (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 458).

This is why, from a Merleau-Pontyan perspective, it can be argued that there is truth to both naturalism *and* classical transcendentalism: they are *both* “fields of idealities” issuing forth from, and reflecting upon, the transcendental domain of existence, and as such, their respective modes of inquiry — *induction* on the one hand and *eidetic analysis* on the other — can be seen as, again, *pace* Husserl, structurally similar and mutually enriching (Merleau-Ponty, 1964b, 69–70). However, this is also why classical transcendentalism can be said to constitute a *significant step forward* in relation to naturalism, for it is only through its reflections that we first awaken to the conditions of possibility of experience. The reason why classical transcendentalism falls short is because, in its call for self-scrutiny, it *excludes itself* from this critical undertaking: it fails to thematize how the uncovered conditions of possibility reflect back upon its own *modi operandi*, thus forgetting the corporeal “opening” from which its reflective activities issue forth. It is because I, as an inquiring scientist or philosopher, *am a living body* that both my personality and my world are given to me; and it is *in and through this givenness* that I *can reflect* on their conditions of possibility. Or in other words, “I can understand the function of the living body only by enacting it myself, and only insofar I am a body” (Merleau-Ponty, 2002, 75).

5. OF SERPENTS AND SHADOWS: BETWEEN NATURALIZATION AND PHENOMENOLOGIZATION

The aim of the forgoing analysis was to show that, all differences notwithstanding, the three authors under scrutiny belong, if we revert to the Fleckian terminology, to the same *thought style*. Their endeavors harken back to a common impetus, namely that of *wonder at the face of the world*, wonder at the realization that things are not simply “out there”, but *appear* to us in unique ways. As such, they agreed that various faces of objectivity, from the geometric contours of a cube to the expressive irregularities of a landscape, are bound to specific conditions of possibility, and that any philosophy that disregards these transcendental conditions — any philosophy that builds

its conceptual nest exclusively amongst things-in-themselves — must be considered naïve.

In unearthing the layered architecture of the transcendental we have hoped to show how the three authors ought to be viewed not as antagonists, but as *critical collaborators*. To reiterate: Husserl saw himself as someone who not only validated, but expanded the main findings of Kant's transcendental inquiries; similarly, Merleau-Ponty conceived of himself not as someone who undermined, but deepened Husserl's transcendental project. However, despite their close affinities, there remain pertinent differences among them, which deters cursory grouping under a common denominator. If Husserl and Merleau-Ponty can be said to bear the shadow of Kant in the sense that they *critically continue* his newly woven thought style, Kant can be said to have borne, in the unthematized subterranean layers of his thought, the shadow of *differentiation* that came to view in Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's *œuvre*.

These reflections have important implications for the current debates on the (im)possibility of naturalizing phenomenology mentioned in Section 1. On the one hand, it is spurious to claim that, due to Merleau-Ponty's change of emphasis from pure consciousness to embodiment, phenomenology has been divested of its transcendental dimension and can therefore be readily incorporated, as a supplementary enterprise dedicated to producing accurate descriptions of experience, into the edifice of the natural sciences. For, it bears recapitulating that, in Merleau-Ponty, body schema is a *transcendental structure*, one that, although significantly different from transcendental structures found in Kant and Husserl, functions as a *condition of possibility of objectivity* (Heinämaa, 1999). However, it is equally wrong to simply lump all three authors under the common heading of "transcendental idealism". The move from Kant through Husserl to Merleau-Ponty, although traversing the same transcendental trajectory, is punctuated by differences that are significant enough to preclude such hasty (over)generalizations. For, if the transcendental idealism of Husserl already differed substantially from that of Kant, the designation seems wholly inappropriate when assigned to Merleau-Ponty. Body schema, albeit a transcendental structure, is so far removed from the idealist tradition that the designation seems unwarranted (Pollard, 2014).

While "deflationary" naturalist approaches (Inkpin, 2017) tend to exacerbate the differences between various conceptions of transcendentalism, "inflationary" transcendentalist approaches (Gardner, 2015) tend to overlook the flexibility of the transcendentalist thought style. Curiously enough, both seem to share a common pre-conception: that the *initial forms* of transcendentalism (those of Kant and, possibly, early Husserl) constitute the genuinely "authentic forms", and that any divergences

from that “ideal” must be put on the Procrustean bed and either divested of the transcendentalist title or lumped, more-or-less forcibly, into the pre-existing transcendentalist categories.

However, by hermeneutically unraveling various strands of transcendentalism, we have tried to show that a much more nuanced relationship between natural sciences and (transcendental) phenomenology is forthcoming. Since all knowledge originates in, and reflects back upon, my embodied existence, it can be argued that both naturalist and transcendentalist approaches represent not only *valid*, but *uniquely valuable* means of expressing this dynamic transcendental flux. It is *this* that makes the transcendentalism of sensuous flesh more amenable to a rapprochement with naturalism, and not the mere fact that it brings to the epistemic table the notion of “embodiment”. Merleau-Ponty’s *Leib* cannot be simply projected onto “nature” as conceived by naturalists. Yet, by imploding a sharp distinction between the constituting and the constituted, the dividing line between transcendental and naturalist “ideations” also becomes much more porous.

For this reason, while there might perhaps be good reasons to label Merleau-Ponty a *methodological naturalist*, as Reynolds (2017) purports (a thesis we take issue with), there are even more convincing reasons to proclaim him a *methodological transcendentalist*, as suggested by Pollard (2017). Namely, the architecture of the transcendental *does* entail a certain *hierarchy* of epistemic-methodological (and existential) significance, where transcendentalist reflections can be said to *foundationally precede* the naturalist ones. For the latter, on account of their methodological (and insofar legitimate) or metaphysical (and insofar naive) disregard for the “cradle of things”, build their conceptual nests among fully-constituted things — entities thickly coated with the logico-mathematical “garb of ideas” — and never engage in *rigorous* self-scrutiny. On the other hand, transcendental ideations in their classical (Kantian and/or Husserlian) guises inquire into conditions of possibility of “thingness” and are therefore closer to the whirlpool of spiraling self-reflectivity, which ends in the pre-reflective realms of corporeal existence.

In this constellation, it becomes obvious that the naturalization of phenomenology cannot be carried out “on the cheap”. While it is true that findings of the natural sciences, especially in domains where they are not yet subsumed under the “garb of ideas”, but hinge on the seams of experience, can be relevant for phenomenology, it is also true that transcendental reflections about the grounds and significance of scientific investigations need to be taken equally seriously. That is to say, the process of *naturalization of transcendental phenomenology* must be accompanied by a complementary move of *phenomenologization* (“*transcendentalization*”) of the natural

sciences (Zahavi, 2004, 344), “a rethinking of a concept of nature [...] that might ultimately lead to a transformation of natural science itself” (Zahavi, 2010, 16–17). What is needed, then, is a conceptual and methodological equivalent of the *uroboros*, that ancient mythical serpent that constantly devours its own tail.

In this regard, perhaps the best way of taking the architecture of the transcendental seriously, would be something along the lines proposed by Varela, Thompson, Rosch (1991), where, in an attempt to erect a more comprehensive platform for investigating mind and cognition, (transcendental) phenomenology and natural sciences are viewed as engaged in an ongoing back-and-forth exchange that is rooted, and refers back on, life-world — world of “everyday practice” and “lived experience”. From a phenomenological perspective, some of the most promising avenues of realizing this conceptual-methodological *uroboros* have been explored by the representatives of the contemporary “French school of phenomenology”, a heterogeneous group of phenomenologists and phenomenologically-minded thinkers (M. Bitbol, N. Depraz, C. Petitmengin, P. Vermersch, etc.) whose distinctive feature is that, in addition to providing textual and theoretical analyses, they try to develop *concrete, embodied first-person methods* for investigating experience and/or combining these investigations with corresponding third-person methods as developed in (cognitive) science.

Let us, before closing, take a look at just one concrete example. In consonance with what has been said above, namely that both naturalist and classical transcendentalist ideations must ultimately stem from, and reflect back upon, the world of lived experience, Depraz, Varela and Vermersch emphasize that “a renewed, contemporary phenomenology” should be centered around *epoché* characterized not so much by “its internal theoretical structure or an *a priori* justification of knowledge”, but primarily *by its praxis or modes of enaction* (Depraz, Varela, Vermersch, 2000, 122). In fact, the three main components of such enacted *epoché* — (i) *suspension*: putting aside our habitual thoughts and judgements; (ii) *conversion*: a shift of attention from objects of experience to modes of givenness of these objects; (iii) *receptivity*: harboring intimate openness towards experience — bring us back to one of the main evocative figures that has been running through our inquiry. For it would seem that it is by developing means for *not only talking about*, but *systematically enacting* a return to the “things themselves” — that is to say, by continuously cultivating *an open attitude of wonder* towards the pre-reflective domain of lived experience, and *only then* engaging in theoretical (naturalist or classical-transcendentalist) reflection on what has been un- and dis-covered — that we can start to weave a new thought style, a style that might, perhaps, subsume and transcend some of the age-old dichotomies.

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