Dimensions of 'Facticity': A Thesis on Our Relationship with Reality


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Abstract

According to this thesis, 'facticity' emerges from a trajectory in the history of Western philosophy as a multifaceted symbol for how we are related to reality. Our metaphysical relationship with reality is a theme that is reflected throughout the etymology of 'facticity', motivating its inception in the eighteenth-century idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814). On my reading, Fichte recognises how the 'facticity' of sensation always 'feels' as though it is contingent on the empirical world, thereby committing us - in the context of everyday life at least - to the realist principle that reality is mind-independent. Arguably continuing this thread, 'facticity' later arises in the idealism of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), where the contingency of 'facticity' is juxtaposed against the necessity of 'essence', and the 'natural attitude' is supposed to mark a pre-philosophical embrace of realism. Additional philosophical dimensions of our relationship with reality are salient in the rest of the trajectory of 'facticity' that is chronicled over the course of this thesis. In the hermeneutic movement that spans over nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thought, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) laments the 'facticity' of everything that is irresistibly given to us in the experience of life as ultimately 'unfathomable', thereby throwing into question our expressive powers over reality. 'Facticity' is swept up in the twentieth-century existentialist systems of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), where it encompasses the sheer contingency of being human, and it is analytically tied to our power to constitute meaning. Completing the trajectory of 'facticity' that is relevant to this thesis, 'facticity' flowers into what is ontologically ultimate for Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) in his unfinished, posthumously published manuscript, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968): in the style of a philosopher-poet, Merleau-Ponty articulates a 'hyper-reflective' encounter with the all-encompassing 'flesh' of 'facticity'. At every stage of the historical trajectory that is in focus, this thesis

gleans phenomenological insights about 'facticity' that arguably prompt the use of symbolism in philosophy. Guided by that meta-philosophy, this thesis compiles 'facticity' as a multifaceted symbol for our relationship with reality by incorporating layers of symbolic meaning from its historical trajectory.

Impact Statement

Though the concept of 'facticity' is mostly neglected in current academia, the term is sometimes invoked in contemporary philosophical discourse, where it bears a glimmer of its historical sense that is arguably mired by a lack of clarity. My thesis is impactful insofar as it shines a spotlight on 'facticity', bringing that concept to the forefront of academic inquiry in order to restore its historical integrity, and thereby pave the way for further investigation into its philosophical ramifications, which are arguably profound.

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# Contents

Chapter 1        Introduction: Thesis Aims, Method and Structure

According to this thesis, 'facticity' emerges from a trajectory in the history of Western philosophy as a multifaceted symbol for how we are related to reality. To make this argument, this thesis has three related aims: demystification, exegesis and assembly. In this introductory chapter, I explain each aim, before outlining the method of this thesis, and also the structure of its main body.

1(a)    Demystification

'Facticity' needs demystifying. While the root word, 'fact', is familiar in everyday discourse with its basic association to what is supposed to be real, the special meaning of the heavily-suffixed and technical-sounding 'facticity' is more obscure - that is, if 'facticity' has a special, unified meaning at all. It is a concept that seems to be scattered across diverse contexts, ranging from eighteenth-century German idealism to twentieth-century existentialism. 'Facticity' sometimes appears in contemporary feminist discourse on the body, arguably marked by a lack of clarity about whether it is semantically equivalent to 'factuality', or intended to bear a glimmer of some special, historical sense.

Helping to lift 'facticity' from obscurity, François Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson suggest in their co-edited anthology, *Rethinking Facticity* (2008), that 'facticity designates a kind of "fact" that has not been previously thematised in the history of philosophy' (2). Having recognised how 'empirical "factuality"' is supposed to consist of the 'fact(s) of nature' that we infer from observation of the world, Raffoul and Nelson distinguish 'facticity' in oblique terms - as a philosophically technical concept that 'points to another kind of fact, one that falls out of and subverts the transcendental/empirical duality' (2008, 3). According to this so-called 'duality', reality is 'transcendental' insofar as it exceeds human consciousness, and reality is 'empirical' insofar as it can be observed (2008, 3).

The primary aim of this thesis is to demystify 'facticity' in the direct, philosophically broad terms of how we are related to reality. Our metaphysical relationship with reality is a theme that is reflected in the etymology of 'facticity'. Additional philosophical dimensions of our relationship with reality are salient in

the trajectory of 'facticity' that is chronicled over the course of this thesis. By demystifying 'facticity' in terms of how we are related to reality, we gain the exegetic advantage of preserving the far-reaching philosophical import of 'facticity' that is historically evident.

## 1(b)    Exegesis

This thesis is not an attempt to account for every historical instantiation of 'facticity'. The exegetic scope of this thesis is limited to a trajectory of 'facticity' that is metaphysically motivated at its origin, and phenomenologically driven in its development - according to the contemporary sense of 'phenomenological' that concerns the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person, or subjective, point-of-view.[1] For the purpose of this thesis, the trajectory of 'facticity' culminates with existential and ontological significance that has a meta-philosophical implication, singing in favour of symbolism.

The trajectory begins in the German idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who recognises how the 'facticity' of sensation always 'feels' as though it is contingent on the empirical world, thereby committing us to realism in the context of everyday life at least. This thread continues in the early phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, where 'facticity' is juxtaposed against 'essence', and the philosophical position of idealism is insulated from the pre-philosophical, 'natural attitude' that embraces realism in everyday life. In a hermeneutic turn, and as an arguable precursor to contemporary phenomenology, Wilhelm Dilthey hones in on the irresistible feeling of 'facticity': he connects the concept to the experience of life, lamenting it as ultimately 'unfathomable', only to find some solace in poetic expression. Spearheading the phenomenological method in a breakthrough ontology developed over a course of lectures delivered in the early 1920s and what is widely regarded as his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time* (1927), Martin Heidegger systematically accounts for 'facticity' in terms of the inexplicable contingency of being human. Continuing the existentialist inquiry into being human, Jean-Paul Sartre emphasises in *Being and Nothingness* (1943) how the 'facticity' of its contingent

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[1] For this definition of 'phenomenology', see the 2018 article on 'phenomenology' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, written by David Woodruff Smith.

conditions nevertheless coincide with our freedom to constitute existential meaning, thereby putting his sense of 'facticity' on a kind of continuum with that 'freedom'. And in his final, unfinished manuscript, *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), Maurice Merleau-Ponty arguably gives us the theoretical resources to help illuminate that conceptual structure through his avant-garde ontology of the 'flesh' ('la chair'), which is explicitly identified with 'facticity', and explored in detail through the motif of an 'intertwining' between what is sensible and what is meaningful.

Forming its bulk, this thesis aims at exegesis of the trajectory of 'facticity' just outlined with a view to building a narrative arc, where a historically definite sequence of 'facticity' coherently uncovers different philosophical dimensions of our relationship with reality. These philosophical dimensions range from what is perceptual, and phenomenological to what is methodologically limited, existentially constituted and perhaps even ontologically ultimate.

### 1(c)    Assembly

The final aim of this thesis is to assemble 'facticity' as a multifaceted symbol for how we are related to reality. Taking stock from the historical instantiations of 'facticity' that are examined over the course of this thesis, and with the greatest debt to Merleau-Ponty, I will put forward 'facticity' as designating an 'intertwining' of what we are given, and what we can do.

Following Merleau-Ponty, the motif of an 'intertwining' capitalises on the power of symbolism to express a philosophical schema that defies binary frameworks. What we are given, and what we can do are philosophically rich matters that intersect throughout the trajectory of 'facticity' that is relevant to this thesis. At the beginning of that trajectory, in Fichte and Husserl, 'facticity' marks the convergence between what seems to be contingently given to us by the empirical world, and what can be transcendentally traced back to an idealist superstructure that paradoxically leaves the feeling of 'facticity' intact. In Dilthey, that irresistible feeling is cashed out as 'unfathomably' given to us in both the sensory experience of nature and the experience of socio-historical reality, all in a way that is supposed to provoke and 'tragically' elude interpretation, while

carving a place for the creation of poetry in the world. In Heidegger, 'facticity' signifies how we are 'thrown' into a world that gives us limited ways to 'project' through life, though the meaning of 'projection' can be reclaimed; in Sartre, 'facticity' entails that we are given a 'situation', whose meaning we are utterly responsible for, and in Merleau-Ponty, 'facticity' is exhaustively given to us as an open invitation to stylise being human.

When framed as a multifaceted symbol for our relationship with reality that derives its symbolic layers from a historical trajectory, 'facticity' arguably resounds with philosophical nuance. It commits us to empirical realism in the context of everyday life, attuning us to the phenomenological limits of the transcendental endeavour; it commits us to the expressive limits of hermeneutics, and to the ontological dimension of poetry; it encompasses the sheer contingency of being human, while remaining faithful to our power to constitute meaning.

### 1(d)    Thesis Method and Structure

Following this introductory chapter, in an effort to put 'facticity' at the forefront of academic research, the main body of this thesis begins with an inquiry into the etymology of 'facticity', where it discovers the metaphysical theme of our relationship with reality as the original motivation for 'facticity'. Chapter 2 has the title: 'From "Fact" to "Facticity": Etymology and Metaphysical Motive'. It traces 'facticity' back to the Latin 'factum', which signifies a human deed, and the entry of the term into British empiricism as the empirical 'matter of fact' that is crystallised in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1695). Chapter 2 follows the development of the German 'Faktum' through the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, where that term is semantically torn between the connotation of human activity and the connotation of what is real, before finding reconciliation in Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) as a 'fact' that arises from human activity. Chapter 2 closes with an overview of how the 'fact' is appropriated in the empirical realism of Karl Leonhard Reinhold as a 'fact of consciousness' ('Faktum des Bewußtseins', or 'Taschen des Bewusstseins') that is supposed to ground philosophy, while Fichte - in direct opposition to Reinhold - grounds philosophy in the 'fact-act' ('Tathandlung') of the self-

positing 'I', which is postulated as ontologically ultimate. Fichte distinguishes that 'fact-act' from the empirical 'facts' ('Tatsachen') of 'facticity' ('Faktizität'), recognising how 'facticity' unavoidably 'feels' as though it is contingently given to us in excess of the self-positing 'I'.

Forming the exegetic bulk of this thesis, chapters 3-6 hone in on the conceptual role of 'facticity' in a number of philosophical projects, beginning with the transcendentalist systems of absolute idealism that are posited by Fichte and later Husserl, continuing through the hermeneutic movement of Dilthey to the existentialist theories of Heidegger and Sartre that are explicitly led by phenomenology, before turning to Merleau-Ponty's 'hyper-reflective' encounter with the all-encompassing 'flesh'. There is no doubt that these philosophical projects sit at overarching, theoretical odds with each other; furthermore, the instances of 'facticity' to be found in these projects may well give the initial impression of being mutually orthogonal. Nevertheless, at every stage of the historical trajectory that is in focus, this thesis gleans phenomenological insights about 'facticity' that inch us towards using symbolism in philosophy. Chapters 3-6 are thematically organised, and largely chronological.

Chapter 3 of this thesis is titled, 'Transcendental Activity and Phenomenological Limitations'. It is split into two sections that focus on the conceptual roles of 'facticity' in Fichte and Husserl. The philosophers are grouped together in the context of this chapter, since they both use the transcendental method to subsume 'facticity' into an overarching idealism that is nevertheless phenomenologically limited, I argue. Section 3(a) has a question for its title: 'What is Fichte's Problem with "Facticity"?' Guided by that question, this section traces Fichte's pejorative sense of 'facticity' to the 'dogmatic' realism that it tends to inspire by simply feeling contingent on the empirical world, as according to Fichte's diagnosis of the 'dogmatic' realist. Section 3(a) draws attention to how Fichte's transcendental solution to 'facticity' associates philosophical activity with ontological power in a radical, theoretical move, before highlighting how our everyday phenomenology endures in spite of these philosophical lengths. Under the title, '"Facticity" Versus "Essence" in Husserl', Section 3(b) of this chapter brings to the surface the Fichtean 'facticity' that is the latent target in Husserl's analyses of 'naturalism' and 'historicism', as

presented in his essay, *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science* (1911). Section 3(b) follows Husserl's transcendental method of accounting for 'facticity' in terms of the essential structure of consciousness, which is supposed to be 'phenomenologically' discovered. Having examined how this theory develops in Husserl's later philosophy, where 'facticity' expands to encompass everything that is empirically given to a living person in the world over time, Section 3(b) indicates how the method of phenomenology after Husserl is disentangled from his metaphysical fixation on a necessary 'essence' that is abstracted from the contingency of 'facticity'. Section 3(b) then closes Chapter 7 as a whole by drawing a parallel between Fichte and Husserl that arguably commits us to realism in the context of everyday life, insofar as that context remains untroubled by the transcendental endeavour.

Chapter 4 of this thesis is titled 'The Hermeneutic Turn: Tragic Expression in Dilthey'. It follows Dilthey's theoretical shift away from metaphysics, towards hermeneutics: through the methodological lens of an overarching distinction between the natural and the human sciences, Dilthey analyses the 'facticity' of everything that is given to us in the experience of life that is both irresistible in 'force' of feeling, and 'unfathomable' in quality, or depth, of feeling. Having put forward Dilthey's analysis of 'facticity' as an inchoate form of contemporary phenomenology, Chapter 4 closes by highlighting how poetry is born out of 'facticity', for Dilthey, in a way that has meta-philosophical significance.

Chapter 5 of this thesis is titled, 'The Inexplicable Contingency of Being Human and the Constitution of Existential Meaning'. It is divided into three sections that focus on the conceptual role of 'facticity' in: (a) Heidegger's lectures of the early 1920s; (b) Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927), and (c) Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (1943). These philosophical works are grouped together in the context of this chapter, since they all characterise 'facticity' in terms of the inexplicable contingency of being human, while connecting 'facticity' to the constitution of existential meaning in analyses that are 'phenomenological' insofar as they reflexively attend to the human experience of 'facticity' from a first-person perspective. Section 5(a) lifts from Heidegger's lectures of the early 1920s an account of 'facticity' that is wrapped up in his notion of 'Dasein' (which is supposed to be the kind of entity that we are): for Heidegger, 'facticity'

designates the lived character of 'Dasein' in its crucial temporality; furthermore, 'facticity' is essentially ambiguous insofar as it supposed to give rise to the hermeneutic project of self-interpretation, all the while causing 'Dasein' to be 'fallen' in a technical sense, where its temporality is obscured by whatever stagnant self-interpretation is pervasive to the conceptual hegemony of its context. Section 5(a) highlights how the ambiguity of 'facticity' makes hermeneutic self-interpretation a project that is phenomenologically-led and necessarily ongoing, for Heidegger. Turning to Heidegger's later work, *Being and Time*, Section 5(b) opens with the distinction that Heidegger clarifies in that text between what is 'ontical' and what is 'ontological'; Section 5(b) emphasises how phenomenology is ontologically revelatory for Heidegger: through a phenomenological analysis, the concept of 'facticity' is supposed to a reach a level of abstraction that enlightens 'Being' itself, rather than being conceptually confined to ordinary things that exist in the world. Furthermore, Section 5(b) highlights how Heidegger develops themes of his lectures from the early 1920s in *Being and Time*: he unpacks the 'facticity' of the temporal 'Dasein' in terms of how it is inexplicably and irrevocably 'thrown' into a specific, concrete context that delimits its possibilities for 'projection' through life. Section 5(b) also examines how 'facticity' retains conceptual ambiguity in *Being and Time*: caught in a constellation of existential concepts, 'facticity' is supposed to be a source of 'lostness in the "they"' (which is technically related to the 'fallenness' of 'Dasein') as well as 'uncanniness' about being inexplicably 'thrown' into the world; however, as the demarcation for the worldly limitations of 'Dasein', 'facticity' is also supposed to make 'Dasein' manifest, provoking it towards a 'resolution', where it comes to terms with how it is 'thrown'. Section 5(b) closes by emphasising how, for Heidegger, it is only through 'anticipatory resolution', where 'Dasein' comes to terms with the 'uncanniness' of its inevitable death, that 'Dasein' can meaningfully respond to how it is 'thrown'.

Moving to the existential framework of Sartre, Section 5(c) of Chapter 5 focuses on *Being and Nothingness*, which Sartre puts forward with the subtitle of 'An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology'. Section 5(c) begins by demonstrating how - *contra* Heidegger - it is not death, but subjectivity that is the locus of existential meaning, for Sartre. Having highlighted how Sartre characterises us as 'haunted' by the 'evanescent contingency' of 'facticity' that encompasses our

interpersonal relations, embodiment, and the past, Section 5(c) examines how Sartre relates this 'facticity' to the 'freedom' by which we are supposed to 'transcend' our original determinations of existence; though Sartre recognises how this 'freedom' is complicated by the existence of 'the Other', he resolves the complication by 'condemning' the consciousness that exists 'for-itself' to be 'free'.

As the final exegetic chapter of this thesis, Chapter 6 is titled, 'Chiastic Flesh: An Avant-Garde Ontology'. It examines the phenomenological role and metaphorical language of the 'hyper-reflection' that Merleau-Ponty pioneers in *The Visible and the Invisible*, before highlighting how 'facticity' has expansive, ontological significance, for Merleau-Ponty: he identifies 'facticity' as 'flesh' in a technical, ontological sense that is ambitiously holistic. 'Flesh' is characterised in the metaphorical terms of an 'intertwining' that is supposed to have a 'chiastic' structure; its elucidation is aided with a mosaic of imagery that is designed to subvert binary models of thinking. Having examined how the 'flesh' is supposed to theoretically play out at the level of what is sensible and what is meaningful, and also between the world and body, I will close Chapter 6 by indicating the proliferation of 'flesh' into other 'chiastic' intricacies that arguably capture different dimensions of our relationship with reality.

In the spirit of an 'intertwining' between what is given to us, and what we can do, Chapter 7 of this thesis is experimental: it inherits historical dimensions of 'facticity' and weaves them together to create a concept that is new, centred on our relationship with reality. As a multifaceted symbol for our relationship with reality, 'facticity' has layers of meaning that are historically derived, while the philosophical use of symbolism is historically demanded by it. Elaborated in Chapter 7 of this thesis as a seamless 'intertwining' between what is given to us, and what we can do, 'facticity' is supposed to symbolise our relationship with reality irreducibly, marking a refusal to dissolve that relationship into either our sheer constitution of reality, or the strict 'realism' that reality is independent of us. Instead, through the metaphorical framework of an 'intertwining', 'facticity' invites us to explore our relationship with reality in terms of an exchange that is mutual, ongoing and multifariously manifest. Chapter 7 considers the scope of what we are given in reality, and our capacity for free activity, before inquiring

into what, if anything, could be characterised as 'intertwining' at the site of human body. Chapter 7 closes with the recommendation that we restore the historical integrity of 'facticity' to contemporary, feminist discourse on the body.

So, having demystified 'facticity' in terms of our relationship with reality on account of the etymological inquiry into 'facticity' that absorbs Chapter 1, and the historical trajectory of 'facticity' that unfolds over Chapters 2-6, from which emerges my attempt at compiling 'facticity' in Chapter 7, this thesis concludes with a reflection on the 'facticity' of human flight - the widespread, technological phenomenon that was once only the fantasy of a foolish King. Through a glimpse at the history of aviation, we will follow the 'facticity' of an irreducible 'intertwining' between what we are given, and what we can do.

Chapter 2      From 'Fact' to 'Facticity': Etymology and Metaphysical Motive

This chapter is an inquiry into the etymology of 'facticity'. It is split into three sections that chronicle the semantic development of 'fact' into 'facticity'. Section 3(a) highlights the original connotation of 'fact' as a 'human deed', and its gradual connotation of 'empirical phenomena'; Section 3(b) accounts for the semantic ambiguity of the 'fact' that is invoked throughout Kantian philosophy, before Section 3(c), the final section of this chapter, follows the philosophical excursions of 'fact' into empirical realism and reductive idealism, where it discovers the metaphysical theme of our relationship with reality as the original motivation for 'facticity'.

2(a)      Human Deeds and Empirical Phenomena

The origin of the word 'fact' lies in the Latin 'factum', which signifies a 'deed', and literally translates to 'a thing done', thereby immediately connoting human activity. Acquiring a legal sense, 'factum' figures in Canon law as an alleged deed that is relevant for courtroom testimony, and judicial evaluation; in the English common law growing out of Canon law, 'matters of fact' (deriving from the Latin 'factum') figure in the same vein, hence the legal phrase that is still

common today: 'before (or after) the fact'.[2]

Only during the seventeenth century did the word 'fact' see a shift in emphasis from human activity to empirical phenomena: refining the scientific method, and arguably inspired by the role of testimony in legal court, British experimentalists (such as Robert Boyle) lift the term 'fact' from its legal context, and transfer it to the scientific domain in order to designate an empirical event that can be observed, reproduced in the laboratory, and reported on.[3] While the experimentalist 'fact' is akin to the legal 'fact' insofar as they are both linked to a kind of testimony, the experimentalist 'fact' is distinctly unconcerned with human activity, looking only to empirical phenomena that are given in the natural world.

Ushering in the Enlightenment at the end of the seventeenth century, British philosopher, John Locke, crystallises the semantic transformation of 'fact' in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1975 [1695]). Removed from its original, Latin connection to human activity, and continuing the experimentalist emphasis on empirical phenomena and testimony, the 'matter of fact' finds a clear-cut, empiricist formulation in Locke: it is identified with 'some particular Existence' that can be empirically discovered through 'observation' and 'report' (1975 [1695], IV.xvi, 6).

While the Lockean 'matters of fact' do not involve the strict proofs of necessity to be found in logic or mathematics, they are supposed to find empirical support - in 'constant observation' and 'the concurrent reports of all' - to the extent that they

> rise so near to *Certainty* that they govern our Thoughts as absolutely, and influence all our Actions as fully, as the most evident Demonstration: and in what concerns us, we make little or no difference between them

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[2] For further discussion, see Barbara Shapiro's essay on 'The Concept 'Fact': Legal Origins and Cultural Diffusion' (1994, 228).

[3] See Hendrik Floris Cohen on the 'Achievements and Limitations of Fact-Finding Experimentalism' in *How Modern Science Came into the World (*2010, 445-508) for a comprehensive history of the experimentalist movement; see Shapiro on 'Testimony in Seventeenth-Century English Natural Philosophy: Legal Origins and Early Development' (2002, 250-8) for further discussion on the guiding role of courtroom testimony for the experimentalist movement; see *The Works of Robert Boyle* (1999–2000, 2:19) for Boyle's appropriation of 'facts', and also Michael Ben-Chaim for a general discussion on 'The Value of Facts in Boyle's Experimental Philosophy' (2000, 70).

and certain Knowledge: our Belief (in facts) thus grounded, rises to *Assurance.* (1975 [1695], IV.xvi, 6, original italics; my parentheses)

As elaborated by Locke, 'matters of fact' involve our confidence about the empirical world. Thus radically departing from the term's traditional use in law to signify what is alleged, open to testimony, and awaiting evaluation, 'matters of fact' acquire an elevated, epistemic status in Locke: by virtue of (an arguably ongoing process of) observation and report, they already contain a positive evaluation connected to 'little doubt', near 'certainty', and 'assurance', as Locke emphatically expresses (1975 [1695], IV.xvi).[4]

Though Locke's empiricist concept of 'fact' is not free from contestation today, it arguably does have enduring influence on modern scientific inquiry.[5] Perhaps indicating the stamp of the 'Enlightenment' on our contemporary, collective consciousness, the Lockean 'fact' may well resonate with our colloquial sense of 'fact' as referring to what is supposed to be real.

2(b)    Immanuel Kant's *Faktum*

Unravelling from the empiricist 'matter of fact' nearly a century after Locke's *Essay*, the German 'Faktum' appears in Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* 1998 [1787], 'first Critique'): Kant refers to the 'fact ('Faktum') of the synthetic, *a priori* cognition that we possess in 'pure mathematics and general natural science' (B127-8). The secondary literature on synthetic, *a priori* cognition is extensive and unresolved, so I will limit our attention to some brief insights, lifted directly from the first *Critique*.[6] At B2-3, Kant suggests that cognition is '*a priori*' - as opposed to '*a posteriori*' - if it 'occur[s] independently'

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[4] Note the similarity with David Hume's empiricist 'matter of fact', which appears in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1993 [1772]) as an object of human reason that is grounded on 'the relation of cause and effect', which can be inferred on the basis of empirical experience (see section IV).

[5] For further discussion, see Chapter 9 of *Stages of Thought: The Co-Evolution of Religious Thought and Science* (2009) by Michael Horace Barnes, titled 'The Method of Modern Empirical Science'; alternatively, see the anthology *The Body as Object and Instrument of Knowledge: Embodied Empiricism in Early Modern Science* (2010), co-edited by Charles T. Wolfe and Ofer Gal.

[6] For examples of secondary literature, see Robert Hanna's *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy* (2001), Daniel N. Robinson's essay on 'Kant: Intuition and the Synthetic A Priori' (2014), or R. Lanier Anderson's *The Poverty of Conceptual Truth: Kant's Analytic/ Synthetic Distinction and the Limits of Metaphysics* (2015).

of sensory experience; furthermore, at B190-3, he suggests that cognition is 'synthetic' - as opposed to 'analytic' - if it 'go[es] beyond' the conceptual content of a given concept. As a mode of cognition, the German 'Faktum' of the first *Critique* recalls its Latin origin in connoting human activity, all the while striking a sharp contrast with the 'matter of fact' that Locke limits to 'some particular Existence' that is given in the empirical world (1975 [1695], IV.xvi, 6).

Though the German 'Faktum' does not appear in Kant's earlier text, *Prolegomena* (1998 [1783]), it arguably helps to illuminate the role of 'Faktum' in the first *Critique*. Kant claims that

> some pure synthetic cognition *a priori* is actual and given, namely, pure mathematics and pure natural science

and that

> we have therefore some at least uncontested synthetic cognition *a priori*, and we do not need to ask whether it is possible (for it is actual) (AA, 4:275, original parentheses, cited in Owen Ware 2014, 7).

On the basis of its characterisation here - as emphatically 'actual', 'given', and 'uncontested' - we can infer that Kant puts forward the synthetic, *a priori* cognition of pure mathematics and pure natural science as 'Faktum', in his first *Critique*, insofar as that cognition is supposed to be obviously active - i.e. we are supposed to be immediately conscious of its activity, as indicated by its *a priori* status.[7] With 'Faktum' figuring in Kantian philosophy as a mode of cognition with the caveat that that mode of cognition is obviously active, it follows that the concept shares (at the bare minimum) the basic association of 'assurance' enjoyed by its Lockean sister concept, 'matters of fact'.[8]

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Kant was familiar with the elevated status of 'facts'. In the 1756 translation of Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion* (1740 [1736]), Johann Joachim Spalding coined the German 'Tatsache' to translate the English expression, 'matters of fact'. Though Butler wields the expression (in his original English) in a theological project, it does continue (at the very least) the Lockean tradition of connoting what is (supposed to be)

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[7] For Kant's precise account of that cognition's activity, see B14-8; see Robinson 2014, 116-117 for more discussion on the subject.

[8] For the same reading that 'Faktum' is associated with 'assurance' in Kant, see Ware on 'Rethinking Kant's Fact of Reason' (2014, 7).

assured. Butler tells us, for example, that it is a 'Matter of Fact' that God 'governs the World by the Method of Rewards and Punishment' (1740 [1736], 167, as cited in Jocelyn Holland essay, 'Facts Are What One Makes of Them: Constructing the Faktum in the Enlightenment and Early German Romanticism' (2016, 36)).[9] Without going so far as to say that Kant read Spalding's translation of Butler, we can reasonably assert that Kant grasped 'Tatsache' in its basic association with what is assured, as imported from the English 'matters of fact'. In one of his *Reflections* from the 1770s, Kant distinguishes 'matters of opinion' ('Sachen der Meynung'), 'matters of belief' ('Glaubenssachen'), and 'matters of fact' ('Tatsachen') (1998 [1724-1804]), 2765, cited in Ware 2014, 5). By marking progress from what is less certain to what is more certain, Kant's use of 'Tatsache' seems to preserve the elevated status that 'matters of fact' attained a century ago in the empiricist framework of Locke's *Essay*, and it subsequently sustained in the theological framework of Butler's *Analogy of Religion*. While Locke granted 'matters of fact' an elevated status with an eye to developing his empiricist strand of epistemology, Kant is (presumably) only embracing what has trickled down from Locke as an innocuous, linguistic tradition, stripped of necessary ties to British empiricism.

Elsewhere in his first *Critique*, we can see Kant use 'Tatsache' and 'Faktum' interchangeably: after referring to the 'fact' ('Tatsache') of the 'pure use of our cognitive faculty' (B5), he highlights the 'fact' ('Faktum') of the synthetic, *a priori* cognition that we possess in 'pure mathematics and general natural science' (B127-8). This suggests that 'Faktum' is semantically equivalent to 'Tatsache', for Kant. In a discussion outside of *a priori* cognition, to be found in a *Reflection* from the late 1790s, Kant refers to the wish (that we all apparently have) to participate in the cosmopolitan world as a 'Faktum' whose reality we can call all persons to witness ('ein Faktum, über dessen Wirklichkeit man alle Menschen zu Zeugen rufen kann'), thereby unambiguously connecting the term, 'Faktum', to what is supposed to be assured (1998 [1724-1804], 8077, cited in Ware 2014, 6).

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9 See Ware 2014, 4 for the same reading of Butler.

The German 'Faktum' resurfaces in a notorious passage from Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason* (1998 [1788] '*Second Critique*':

> our consciousness of the moral law may be called a Fact of Reason ('Faktum der Vernunft')… because it… forces itself upon us of itself as a synthetic *a priori* proposition… (1998 [1788], 5:31)

Kant baptises 'our consciousness of the moral law' as 'Faktum der Vernunft', which can be translated as a 'fact of reason'. Insofar as this translation has been taken faithfully, the 'Faktum der Vernunft' has been widely criticised. Looking, for instance, to *On the Basis of Morality* (1965 [1840]), Arthur Schopenhauer makes the cutting remark that Kantian moral philosophy 'appears more and more as a hyperphysical fact, as a Delphic temple in the human soul' (79). More recently, in *Kantian Ethics* (2008), Allen Wood characterises Kant's 'Faktum der Vernunft' as a 'moralistic bluster' that amounts to no more than a 'bare assertion' (15). Generally speaking, the worry is that it is dogmatic of Kant to characterise our 'consciousness of the moral law' as a 'fact' of reason, since the term 'fact' is historically associated with assurance, and this makes its application unwarranted in the context of a mode of cognition that is merely purported, and thus open to doubt.

Consequently complicating our picture of how 'Faktum' features in Kantian philosophy, there is controversy over how to interpret his 'Faktum der Vernunft'. Resisting its interpretation as a 'fact' of reason on the basis that this is vulnerable to the charge of dogma, some scholars of Kant take his 'Faktum der Vernunft' to signify a 'deed' of reason - where our 'consciousness of the moral law' demonstrably springs from the human activity of reasoning.[10] Because the original Latin 'factum' literally translates to 'thing done', this interpretation of the 'Faktum der Vernunft' has linguistic support. Alternatively, there are some charitable readings of Kant that do take his 'Faktum der Vernunft' to faithfully signify a 'fact' of reason. In his essay, 'Rethinking Kant's Fact of Reason' (2014), Ware suggests that Kant invokes 'Faktum' in his 'Faktum der Vernunft' to capture our consciousness of the moral law as a 'fact' that can be

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[10] See, for example, Stephen Engstrom's 'Introduction' (2002, xli-xlii) to 'Critique of Practical Reason' (2002 [1788]), Paul W. Franks' *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Scepticism in German Idealism (*2005, 260-336) or Henry E. Allison's essay on 'The Fact of Reason and Freedom in the Critique of Practical Reason' (372-3, 2020).

confirmed through thought experiment.[11] Similarly, in her essay on 'Moral Consciousness and the "Fact of Reason"' in *Kant's 'Critique of Practical Reason': A Critical Guide* (2010), Pauline Kleingeld takes the 'Faktum der Vernunft' to signify 'moral consciousness as a fact that is the result of reason's activity' (65).[12]

However thorny the issue may be, it exceeds the scope of this discussion to advance a position on how to interpret Kant's 'Faktum der Vernunft' specifically; what is relevant to the semantic development of 'fact' is how the exegetical debate reflects the competing conceptual facets of 'Faktum', all of which can be etymologically accounted for. After finding origin in the Latin 'factum' that is to do with human activity, 'fact' semantically swerves according to wider philosophical developments: it evokes 'assurance' when given an empiricist formulation in Locke's *Essay* (1975 [1695], IV.xvi, 6), before unfolding in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* as the German 'Faktum', which points to a mode of cognition that is supposed to be obviously active. With the emergence of Kant's 'Faktum der Vernunft' in his later *Critique of Practical Reason*, the term 'Faktum' is swamped in further controversy, with scholars torn to this day between either embracing the 'Faktum der Vernunft' as a 'fact' with a century-old connotation of assurance behind it, or restoring this 'Faktum' to its Latin origin in 'factum', as simply a 'thing done'.

In Kant's third *Critique - The Critique of Judgement* (1987 [1790]) - 'Faktum' reappears in full possession of its multifaceted meaning. In Part II, Section 91, Kant describes 'objects of concepts whose objective reality can be proved' as 'matters of fact (*res facti*)' (468). Elaborating on this point in a footnote, he suggests that

> I here expand, rightly I think, the concept of a matter of fact beyond the ordinary meaning of the word. For it is neither necessary nor even feasible, when we are speaking of the relation of things to our cognitive

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[11] See Ware's essay on ' Accessing the Moral Law through Feeling' (2015) for his development of this interpretation.

[12] See Ware 2014, 9, fn25 for a precise account of his exegetical differences with Kleingeld.

For another view, see fn4 of Jens Timmermann's essay, 'Reversal or Retreat? Kant's Deductions of Freedom and Morality (75 ,2010) ' for an (arguably) instructive, linguistic insight into how Kant intends his 'Faktum der Vernunft'.

powers, to confine this expression to actual experience, because a merely possible experience is sufficient in order to speak of these things merely as objects of a certain way of cognizing. (91, 468, fn79)

Kant acknowledges how a 'matter of fact' ordinarily connotes what is given to us in 'actual experience' (i.e. empirical experience), thereby recalling the empiricist use of the term that is consolidated by Locke. However, Kant appropriates that term in order for it to include objects of our cognition, thereby carving out a role for our activity in generating a 'matter of fact' that has a bearing on 'objective reality' (468). Similarly, and later on in the same section of his third *Critique*, Kant offers a proof of God and immortality as 'a matter of fact' that 'establishes its [own] reality in [our] acts': it is our activity that is supposed to guarantee the 'fact' (474; parentheses are in the original translation). In this way, Kant's use of 'fact' in the third *Critique* blurs the line between what is reality, and what is possible on the basis of our activity.

2(c)     Empirical Realism Versus Reductive Idealism

Having culminated in Kant in a way that blurs the line between what is reality, and what is possible on the basis of our activity, 'Faktum' reaches a critical point that sets post-Kantian philosophy in motion. As we shall see, the 'fact' is wrestled between empirical realism, which posits sensory experience as given to us by empirical reality, and reductive idealism, which posits reality as the pure result of our mental activity. The tension between human activity and empirical phenomena, which shaped the semantic development of 'fact' in the seventeenth century, thus reaches a higher level of abstraction in the post-Kantian era, centred on our relationship with reality.

In his essay 'On the Foundation of Philosophical Knowledge' ['Fundament'] (2011 [1791]), post-Kantian philosopher, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, sets out his 'Elemental Philosophy' ('Elementarphilosophie') as the project to discover 'the ultimate and proper foundation of philosophy' (71-2). In Reinhold's 'Contributions toward Correcting the Previous Misunderstandings of Philosophers' (['Beiträge'] (2004 [1790-1794]), this 'foundation' is characterised as a 'first principle' ('Grundsatz') (115-19, cited in Daniel Breazeale's essay, 'Between Kant and Fichte: Karl Leonhard Reinhold's "Elementary

Philosophy"' (1982) 792, fn15). For Reinhold, this 'first principle' must be 'evident to all people at all times under any condition' (Beiträge, 143, cited in Elise Frketich's essay on 'The First Principle of Philosophy in Fichte's 1794 *Aenesidemus Review'* (2021) 62).

While Reinhold takes the concepts and principles of Kant's first *Critique* to be universally valid ('allgemeingültig'), he does not suppose that they are universally accepted ('allgemeingeltend').[13] In Reinhold's revised form, these concepts and principles are supposed to be rooted in the purportedly uncontroversial 'representation' ('Vorstellung') (*Fundament*, 72-73, cited in Frketich 2021, 63-4, fn11). In his 'Essay on a New Theory of the Human Capacity for Representation' ['Versuch'] (2013 [1789]), a 'representation' is broadly defined by Reinhold as that which 'occurs in our consciousness as an immediate result of sensing, thinking, intuiting, or conceiving' (209; 214, cited in Breazeale 1982, 797, fn24).

As the supposed seat of our representations, it is the so-called 'fact of consciousness' ('Faktum des Bewußtseins', or 'Taschen des Bewusstseins')

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[13] For this position on Kant, see, e.g., *Beiträge*, 264–265, or *Fundament*, 69–70, cited in Frketich 2021, 62.

For Reinhold's list of the concepts and principles of Kant's first Critique, see *Fundament,* where he references the 'representations of sensibility, of the understanding, and of reason… space and time, the twelve categories, and the three forms of the ideas', and their 'original' status as 'characteristics' of 'mere representations' (2011 [1791]), 69–70, 72-3, cited in Frketich 2021, 63-4, fn11).

See Dieter Henrich's *Between Kant and Hegel* (2008) for a more developed discussion on how Reinhold was motivated to appropriate Kant by 'redeveloping Kant's terminology' and 'restructuring the critical philosophy in its entirety' (127-8).

that triumphs, for Reinhold, as the first principle of philosophy.[14] This 'fact' is supposed to 'force… everyone to agree' about it (*Versuch*, 200). Elaborating on his apparently evident 'fact of consciousness', Reinhold suggests that it expresses the principle that

> in consciousness, the subject distinguishes the representation from the subject and the object and relates the representation to both. (*Beiträge*, 167)

At first blush, the 'fact of consciousness' is simply about the cognition that underpins perception: it involves a conscious subject who is 'distinguish[ing]' a representation (that she is conscious of) from herself, and the object that is represented, while 'relat[ing]' the representation to both. However - insofar as the 'fact of consciousness' presupposes that the conscious subject is making a metaphysical distinction that really holds - the principle seems to smuggle in with it an intricate, triadic metaphysical schema, involving the conscious subject, the representation of an object, and the object itself.


In his chapter on 'Reinhold and "Elementary Philosophy"' in *Between Kant and Hegel* (2008), Dieter Henrich raises the puzzle whether it is 'the relational structure or the subject' that is 'primary in representation', according to Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' (133): is the triadic metaphysical structure between the conscious subject, the representation of an object, and the object itself prior to - or dependent on - the subject's cognitive activity of distinguishing that representation from herself and the object itself, all the while relating the representation to both? If this triadic metaphysical structure precedes the subject's cognitive activity, this would undercut the status of Reinhold's 'fact of

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[14] See *Beiträge* (2004 [1790-1794]) 143, 267, or 278-279 for examples where 'Faktum' and 'Tatsachen' are used interchangeably by Reinhold, as helpfully highlighted in Frketich 2021, 64, fn13.

It is important to note how the 'fact of consciousness' plays a distinct theoretical role in early modern, French philosopher, René Descartes. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, the 'fact of consciousness' is famously formulated as the fact that 'I think' ('cogito'), which is discovered as an initial truth (1985 [1641], II, 7:25). According to Descartes, we can deduce that 'I think, therefore I am' ('cogito ergo sum') (1985 [1641], II, 7:140). This enables the fact that 'I think' to form the ground for Descartes' entire epistemological theory which is 'rationalist' in the technical sense that it involves the use of reason without reference to sensory experience. By contrast, Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' is motivated to ground Kantian philosophy. Nevertheless, in using that term, Reinhold arguably 'sought to make clear the Cartesian overtones of his thinking' in terms of what is foundational, as suggested in Henrich 2008, 131.

Also see Frketich 2021, 64, fn12 on the arguable influence of Kant's 'Faktum der Vernunft' on Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness'.

consciousness' as a first principle of philosophy: since the 'fact' expresses the principle that the conscious subject distinguishes the representation from the subject herself and the object itself, all the while relating the representation to both, its primacy would be contradicted by the independent 'fact' that there already is that triadic metaphysical structure in place between the conscious subject, the representation of an object, and the object itself. Whereas, if the triadic metaphysical structure is dependent on the subject's cognitive activity, this means that the subject does not simply cognise what already metaphysically holds. Instead, the subject's cognitive activity brings the triadic metaphysical structure into being. In this case, Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' would hark back to the 'matters of fact' that figure in Kant's third *Critique* as arising from our activity.

To help us disambiguate the triadic metaphysical structure between the conscious subject, the representation of an object, and the object itself, we can take into account Reinhold's commitment to non-reductive idealism. In the light of the principle expressed by the 'fact' - that the conscious subject distinguishes the representation of an object from both herself and the actual object that is represented, all the while relating the representation to both (*Beiträge*, 167) - Reinhold posits the non-reductively idealist conclusion that

> no object can be represented in its form that is independent of the form
> of representation, as it is in itself, but can occur only, modified through
> the form of representation, in consciousness. (*Versuch* 2:252, cited in
> Schulting 2021, 128)

This view is idealist, since representations are supposed to set the limits of our consciousness. The view is non-reductive in its strain of idealism, since these representations are not supposed to set the limits of reality: Reinhold admits that, for every representation of an object, there is an object 'itself' that evades our consciousness. In this way, Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' is bound to a metaphysical distinction between the objects that are independent of our consciousness, and the representations that we are conscious of.

Reinhold's commitment to non-reductive idealism seems to map onto the Kantian theme of transcendental idealism. Though this theme resists a consensual interpretation amongst scholars of Kant, the crux of it seems to be twofold: firstly, there is the idealist thesis that there are 'mere appearances' in

representational content, to which our consciousness is limited; secondly, there is the transcendental thesis that there are 'things in themselves', from which our consciousness is estranged. For this distinction, see Kant's first *Critique*, A42/B59-60, A369, A492/B521, or A493/B522.[15] Leaving aside a full investigation into the exegetical problem of how to understand Kant's transcendental idealism exactly, we can arguably surmise how the basic conceptual distinction between the 'appearances' (that limit us), and the 'things in themselves' (that our consciousness is estranged from) maps onto Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' in its non-reductive idealism, where the subject is limited to the representation of an object, and she is estranged from the object itself.

Having grasped Reinhold's commitment to non-reductive idealism, we must wonder: what does non-reductive idealism mean for the triadic metaphysical structure that Reinhold envisions between the conscious subject, the representation of an object, and the object itself? Insofar as Reinhold postulates a metaphysical distinction between the object that is independent of the conscious subject, and the representation that the subject is conscious of, as *per* non-reductive idealism, it could follow that this distinction holds independently of the subject's cognitive activity - in which case, the primacy of the 'fact of consciousness' would be undercut. However, Reinhold could maintain that it is only because of the subject's cognitive activity (of distinguishing the representation from the object) that there arises a representation that really is metaphysically distinct from the object itself. This would preserve the primacy of the 'fact of consciousness', rendering it

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[15] Scholars of Kant are remarkably divided over how to understand Kant's transcendental idealism exactly: one metaphysical reading takes 'appearances', and the 'things in themselves' to be two distinct classes, or 'worlds', of objects (e.g. Peter Strawson's *The Bounds of Sense: An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (1966), Richard Aquila's *Representational Mind: A Study of Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (1983), Paul Guyer's *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (1987), James Van Cleve's *Problems From Kant* (1999), and Tim Jankowiak's essay, 'Kantian Phenomenalism Without Berkeleyan Idealism' (2017)). Another metaphysical reading takes them to be disjunctive aspects of the same objects (e.g. Rae Langton's *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (1998), and Lucy Allais's *Manifest Reality: Kant's Idealism and his Realism* (2015)). Furthermore, a distinct epistemological reading takes them to be disjunctive theoretical standpoints towards the same objects (e.g. Allison's *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (2004), Graham Bird's *Kant's Theory of Knowledge: An Outline of One Central Argument in the Critique of Pure Reason* (1962), and Bird's later *The Revolutionary Kant: A Commentary on the Critique of Pure Reason* (2006)).

For the related - but subtly different - distinction between 'phenomena' and 'noumena' in Kant, see Nicholas F. Stang 2016 §6.1, omitted here for the sake of brevity.

powerfully reminiscent of the Kantian 'matters of fact' that arise from our activity.

Furthermore - while Reinhold can be seen to make the realist claim that our representational content, or 'matter ('Stoff'), does 'correspond' to an object itself ('Gegenstand') (Versuch 2:403-4, cited in Schulting 2021, 135), he could stipulate that this metaphysical relation really only holds on account of the cognitive activity of the conscious subject (where she relates the representation to the object).

Nevertheless - ultimately jeopardising any such attempt to uphold the primacy of his 'fact of consciousness' - Reinhold's realism takes an empiricist vein. Reinhold suggests that the matter ('Stoff') of a representation is determined by the effect of an actual object ('Gegenstand') on our sense organs (*Versuch* 2:245, cited in Schulting 2021, 127). This is the basic claim of empirical realism about perception: it suggests that representational content derives from empirical reality.

We can see Reinhold's predecessor, Kant, admit 'empirical realism' to the extent that appearances are supposed to derive from what can be empirically investigated - i.e. we can investigate how the 'appearance' of a certain colour derives from the light that bounces from an empirical object to the retina, etc.. However, Kant stipulates that the empirical grounds of our appearances only consist in more appearances, all of which remain divorced from the elusive 'things in themselves' (first *Critique*, A45-6/B62-3; also see A370-1).[16]

On Reinhold's 'empirical realism', and in contrast to Kant, there seems to be an empirical process that unravels between the object *itself*, and the conscious subject, which thereby results in her representation of that object: the matter ('Stoff') of a representation is supposed to be determined by the effect of an actual object ('Gegenstand') on our sense organs (*Versuch* 2:245, cited in Schulting 2021, 127). However - by making conceptual room for the object itself

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[16] Note how this fits with the reading of Kant that takes 'appearances', and the 'things in themselves' to be two distinct classes, or 'worlds', of objects (see fn14 of this thesis).

See Deitmar Heidemann 2021 for an extended discussion on the relationship between Kant and different forms of 'realism'.

to be empirically related to the conscious subject in such a way that she has a corresponding representation of it - Reinhold contradicts the primacy of the 'fact of consciousness': the empirical relation between the subject and the object stretches beyond what is contained by the bare 'fact' that, in consciousness, the subject distinguishes the representation from the subject and the object, all the while relating the representation to both. Preceding that 'fact', there must be empirical reality, on which the metaphysical relation between the subject and object is ultimately contingent.

In the *Aenesidemus Review* of 1794, Fiche targets Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' for its lingering commitment to what happens to be 'empirically given' to our representations (see Fichte's *Early Philosophical Works* ['EPW'] 1988 [1794-1799], 63, cited in Frketich 2021, 68).[17] Fichte corrects Reinhold's 'fact' as

> a theorem which is based upon another first principle, from which, however, the principle of consciousness can be strictly derived, a priori and *independently of all experience* (EPW, 64, cited in Frketich 2021, 70; my italics).

Fichte envisions a 'first principle' that would necessarily ground Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' without succumbing to the contingency of what is empirically given to the senses. As Fichte contemplates in his essay, 'Concerning the Concept of the Theory of Scientific Knowledge' (1794),

> there must be an ultimate foundation for the necessity of representation, a foundation which, *qua* ultimate foundation, can be *based upon nothing further*… (see *Gesamtausgabe*, I, 149, cited in Breazeale 1982, 810; my italics).

Like Reinhold, Fichte was motivated to revise Kantian philosophy.[18] Fichte was clearly discontent with Kant's treatment of the 'categories'. In his first *Critique*, Kant posits the 'categories' as 'concepts that prescribe laws *a priori* to

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[17] Note that, in the *Aenesidemus Review* of 1794, Fichte partly defends Reinhold against Gottlob Ernst Schulze. In his book *Aenesidemus Review* of 1794, Schulze makes various criticisms against Reinhold - see Henrich 2008, 137; 147-9, and 161-2, or Frketich 2021, 67-68 - which Fichte engages with at length. As Frketich helpfully highlights, 'Fichte only agrees (with Schulze) that Reinhold's principle of consciousness cannot be the first principle, and argues, against Schulze, that it must be grounded in yet a higher principle' (2021, 67; my parentheses). See Henrich 2008, 164-173 for further discussion.

[18] See 'From Kant to Post-Kantian Idealism' (2002, 215), by Sebastian Gardner and Paul Franks, for a general discussion on Kant's first *Critique*, and its theoretical shortcomings that seem to explain its widespread and varied appropriation across German idealism in general.

appearances' (B165); they are forms of *a priori* intuition (A24, B38) which are necessary conditions for sensory experience (A41, B58), but which resist direct cognition (A43, B60). Kant describes the problem of deriving the 'categories'

> *rhapsodically* from a haphazard search for pure concepts, of the completeness of which one could never be certain, since one would only infer it through induction, without reflecting that in this way one would never see why just these and not other concepts should inhabit the pure understanding. (A81/B106-7; my italics)

Yet in his 'transcendental deduction' of the 'categories' (A84–130, or B116–169)*,* where he discovers them as the necessary conditions for sensory experience, Kant arguably makes himself guilty of the 'rhapsody' of arbitrary commitment to them. As Kant seems to confess:

> for the peculiarity of our understanding, that it is able to bring about the unity of apperception *a priori* only by means of the categories and only through precisely this kind and number of them, a further ground may be offered just as little as one can be offered for why we have precisely these and no other functions for judgment… (B145-146)

Kant derives the categories as a brute necessity; his commitment to them is arbitrary, as implied by his admission above. Taking this idea seriously, Fichte make the critical assessment in *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1964 ['GA']) that 'Kant does not derive the laws of human thinking in a rigorously scientific manner' (IV/2:7):


Consequently taking up Reinhold's post-Kantian project for himself, Fichte suggests that the very ultimate foundation for philosophy lies not in 'Tatsache' ('fact'), but instead in 'Tathandlung', which is most commonly translated as 'fact-act' in Fichtean scholarship (EPW, 64, cited in Frketich 2021, 70).[19] It is important to note that, in Germany circa 1800, 'Faktum', 'Tatsache' and 'Tathundlung' were used interchangeably to translate the English 'matter of fact', each splintering off from the Latin 'factum'.[20] However - while 'Tatsache' directly translates as 'thing done' - the term 'Tathandlung' linguistically grows out of 'Tatsache' by additionally incorporating 'Handlung', which means 'action' (hence the common translation in secondary literature as 'fact-act').

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[19] For the translation of 'Tathandlung' into 'fact-act', see, for example, Ware's essay on 'Fichte's Method of Moral Justification' (2019), Halla Kim's essay on 'Fact/Act (Tathandlung)' in *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Fichte* (2020), or Breazeale's *Thinking Through the Wissenschaftslehre: Themes from Fichte's Early Philosophy* (2013).

[20] See Holland 2016, 36-7 for this clarification.

By incorporating 'Handlung', the term 'Tathandlung' is uniquely embedded with an emphasis on activity that powerfully recalls its Latin origin in 'factum', and Fichte exploits this: he uses the term in a novel and nuanced way to ground philosophy in what is actively thought, as opposed to what happens to be empirically given to our sensory experience. This is suggested in his lectures on *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* (1998 [1796-99] ['FTP'], where Fichte stipulates that the 'fact-act' is 'what occurs when I allow my I to act within itself', while a 'fact' ('Tatsache') is elucidated as that which is 'present within consciousness as something already given' (109-10). Clarifying the concept of 'fact-act' in *Sämmtliche Werke* ['SW'] (1965 [1845-1846]), Fichte holds that the proposition of self-affirmation - 'I am', which constitutes the activity of the 'I's own positing of itself through itself' - altogether 'expresses Tathandlung' (I, 96, cited in Breazeale 2013, 344). We can thus infer that Fichte distinguishes the 'fact' ('Tatsache') that happens to be empirically given to the senses from the 'fact-act' ('Tathandlung') of self-positing.

In his *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and other writings, 1797-1800* (1994 [1797-1800], ['IWL']), Fichte says that the 'fact-act' of self-positing 'serves to put the I into a position in which self-consciousness - and, along with this, all other consciousness - becomes possible', before clarifying how 'no actual consciousness has yet arisen at this point' (43). So, while the 'fact-act' of self-positing is supposed to operate for Fichte in a way that is crucial for consciousness in general, it is characterised as eluding our everyday consciousness. So, if we concede to Fichte that we cannot be straightforwardly conscious of the 'fact-act' of self-positing, and it is this 'fact-act' that is supposed to underlie all consciousness, what exactly are we supposed to make of it? Fichte uses metaphors to elucidate what it means for the 'I' to posit itself. On the one hand, he portrays the self-positing 'I' as an 'eye that sees itself' (FTP, 130). This signifies the sense in which the self-positing 'I' is both subject and object. Fichte makes this point more explicit by referring to the 'absolute identity of the subject and object in the I' (SW, 1), and he clarifies how it is this 'subject-objectivity' that actually 'designate(s)' the term 'I' (225). Fichte also represents the self-positing 'I' as 'the actor, and that which the activity brings forth' (*Foundations,* I, 2, 259). This signifies how the self-positing 'I' brings itself

into constitution, thereby making consciousness possible. As both subject and object - and the self-constituting condition for all consciousness - the self-positing 'I' cannot be 'demonstrated' as a 'fact of any actual consciousness', Fichte stipulates (SW, IV: 1).[21] This is because our everyday consciousness - 'even if it is only the consciousness of ourselves' incurs 'the separation' of the self as subject and the self as object: I inevitably 'distinguish myself, as the one who is conscious, from me, as the object of this consciousness' (SW, IV: 1).

While Fichte holds that we cannot be straightforwardly conscious of the 'fact-act' of self-positing, he carves out a transcendental route for the philosopher to 'think of [her]self' (FTP, 110; my parentheses), and discover it in so-called 'self-reverting activity' (FTP, 94). By consciously directing her attention towards the 'I', and consciously redirecting attention away from everything else, the philosopher can grasp the condition that enables her self-consciousness in the first place - i.e. she can grasp the 'fact-act' of self-positing, whereby the philosopher is simultaneously (1) the subject that directs her consciousness, and (2) the object that she consciously attends to, and ultimately (3) self-constituting (FTP, 94).

Though Fichte does, on occasion, suppose that 'every rational being' is capable of grasping the 'fact-act' of self-positing (FTP, 101), he also emphasises how this feat is a crucially philosophical enterprise that requires 'abstraction and reflection', and it 'proceed(s) by means of thinking and philosophising' (FTP, 291). Similarly, Fichte suggests that the discovery of the 'fact-act' of self-positing requires 'an *inference* from the obvious facts of consciousness' (IWL, 47-49; my italics for emphasis). Thus unlike the 'fact' ('Tatsache') of sensory experience that happens to be empirically given to the senses, the inference of the 'fact-act' of self-positing is not simply 'given' (FTP, 95): instead, it is *actively* discovered. Fichte consequently recommends the 'education of the whole person from earliest youth' as 'the only way to propagate philosophy' (SW, I: 507, cited in Breazeale 2013, 376). Appearing less hopeful about the power of education to cultivate philosophical thought, Fichte also speculates that 'perhaps philosophy

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[21] Similarly, in FTP, Fichte suggests that the 'fact-act' of self-positing is 'never encountered by itself in ordinary consciousness' (280-2).

is not something that can become universal' (SW, II: 441–43, cited in Breazeale 2013, 376). In what resembles a cursory attempt to mitigate worries about elitism, Fichte suggests that

> it is no more necessary that all men should be philosophers than that they should all be poets or artists. (SW, II: 441–43, cited in Breazeale 2013, 376)

Insofar as the philosopher is well equipped to grasp the 'fact-act' of self-positing, it follows, for Fichte, that she can effectively isolate what has absolute, ontological priority. Fichte suggests that 'all that is not-I is for the I only', and that 'it is only through its relation to an I that the not-I obtains' (EPW, 73-4, cited in Frketich 2021, 70-1). In this way, Fichte puts forward a metaphysical framework that is reductively idealist: everything that is 'not-I' is metaphysically grounded in the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I'. Hence - in his 1804 lectures (2005 [1804]), Fichte refers to 'a being in pure act' (116): he characterises 'being itself' as an 'absolute I' (117) or 'We' (120) that 'constructs itself, and… is only in this self-construction' (122). Fichte thus radicalises the strand of idealism that we saw in Kant and Reinhold. While Kant's transcendental strain of idealism stipulates a conceptual distinction between the 'appearances' (that limit us), and the 'things in themselves' (that our consciousness is estranged from) - and Reinhold's non-reductive idealism upholds the subject as limited to the representation of an object, but crucially estranged from the object itself - Fichte posits idealism in absolute terms, where everything can be boiled down to the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I'.

It is in the framework of Fichte's reductive idealism that 'facticity' is coined through the German 'Faktizität': in his *Reminiscences, Answers, Questions* (1799), Fichte distances what is 'actual' - viz., that which in perception is *'factically* recognisable' ('factisch erkennbar') to consciousness - from what is 'absolutely first' in a 'logical' sense, viz., freedom as the 'principle of possibilities', as indicated in G. Anthony Bruno's essay, 'Facticity and Genesis: Tracking Fichte's Method in the Berlin Wissenschaftslehre' (2021a, 179; 'Facticity and Genesis'). Since Fichte in *The Science of Knowledge* (1889) stipulates that it is the necessary 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I' that marks 'freedom' as 'an absolute first' (363-4), we can reasonably assume that what is

'factically recognisable' to consciousness is, by contrast, empirically 'actual', and thus contingently given to the senses as a 'fact': it is a 'Tatsache', as opposed to 'Tathandlung'.

Arguably clarifying the association between 'facticity' and what happens to be empirically given to the senses, Fichte writes in *The Way Towards the Blessed Life or the Doctrine of Religion* (1806) that reality is 'factical and accidental' ('factisch und zufällig') insofar as it is regarded with a 'merely factical glance' ('factischen Blicke') (SW V:510, cited in Bruno 2021, 181). The word 'accidental' links 'facticity' to the contingency of what is empirically given to the senses (SW V:510, cited in Bruno 2021, 181), and this connection is arguably also implicit in Fichte's reference to a 'merely factical *glance*', where the word - 'glance' - seems to tellingly connote sensory experience (SW V:510, cited in Bruno 2021, 181; my italics for emphasis). It is implied that, beyond the 'glance' towards what is empirically given, reality is ultimately not 'factical' (SW V:510, cited in Bruno 2021, 181; my italics for emphasis) - i.e. reality is grounded in the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I', as opposed to depending on the 'fact' that happens to be empirically given to the senses. Fichte also refers to the 'historical' as 'factical' ('factisch'), and expands on this by describing it as an 'absolute Fact' ('Factum') that 'is not explained or deduced from a higher reason' (SW V:568, cited in Bruno 2021, 181) - i.e. it is derived from (testimony about) what happens to be empirically given as a 'fact', rather than the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I'.

In his 'Facticity and Genesis' essay, Bruno shares the reading of Fichte that

> the contingency of the factical is specifically to be distinguished from
> the necessity of either the I itself or deductions from the I. (2021, 180)

However, in that essay, Bruno does not take 'facticity' in Fichte to signify everything that happens to be empirically given to the senses as a 'fact' ('Tatsache') that is 'present within consciousness as something already given' (FTP, 109-10). Bruno suggests that 'facticity', for Fichte, does not include the 'facts' of the 'sensible givenness of empirical actuality' that are 'empirically contingent', and which are a

> compatible systematic necessity, since, just by appearing, they conform
> to true conditions of experience. (2021, 181)

Instead, for Bruno, Fichte's concept of 'facticity' is supposed to consist in

the brute givenness of unthought or derived conditions of experience, conditions whose origin is obscure and whose necessity thus lies in doubt. (2021, 181)

On the reading of 'facticity' in Fichte that is presented in Bruno's 'Facticity and Genesis' essay, it is arguable that 'facticity' collapses into the 'rhapsody' of arbitrary commitment. As we have already seen, that 'rhapsody' is a philosophical *faux pas,* etched at the heart of Kant's 'transcendental deduction' (B145-146). According to Bruno's reading of Fichte,

> the problem of facticity is thus another guise of rhapsody, for it undermines the possibility of systematic philosophy by subordinating the absolute freedom of reason or the I to brute facts that allegedly exceed its power of self-determination. (2021, 186)

While I agree that 'facticity' is connected to 'rhapsody', for Fichte, I resist dissolving 'facticity' into 'rhapsody'.[22] On my reading of 'facticity' in Fichte, it signifies what happens to be empirically given to the senses as a 'fact' ('Tatsache') of sensory experience, and this has the phenomenology of 'rhapsody', in the sense that it involves an arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of that sensory experience. No doubt - this reading of 'facticity' in Fichte needs unpacking.

Aside from the textual support in Fichte that has already been indicated, we can find the basic reading that '*facticity', for Fichte, signifies what happens to be empirically given to the senses* in another essay by Bruno - 'Hiatus Irrationalis: Lask's Fateful Misreading of Fichte' (2021b; 'Hiatus essay'). In this essay, Bruno offers a broader understanding of Fichtean 'facticity' that encompasses

> 1. 'material facticity', which indicates the 'haecceity' ('thisness') of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, as well as
> 2. 'formal facticity', which indicates the 'rhapsody' of arbitrary commitment to the inexplicable conditions of sensory experience (2021b, 980).

Having distinguished between these types of 'facticity', Bruno argues that

> Fichte aims to avoid formal facticity, not material facticity, since it is the former alone that threatens philosophical systematicity as he conceives of it. (2021b, 980)

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22 See Bruno 2021, 179 for treating 'rhapsody' and 'facticity' as interchangeable terms in Fichte.

On my understanding of 'facticity' in Fichte - and in embrace of Bruno's exegetical terminology - it is the 'material facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses that phenomenologically involves the 'formal facticity' of arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience. Though my contemporary sense of 'phenomenology' runs the risk of seeming anachronistic in the context of Fichtean scholarship, it is arguably apt for a present-day exegesis of Fichte to invoke 'the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view'.[23] Indeed, in Section 6 of his 'Attempt at a New Presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*', Fichte refers to the '*feeling*' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90; my italics). He elaborates that

> it is undoubtedly an immediate *fact* of consciousness that I *feel* myself to
> be determined in a particular way. (SW I:491; my italics)

To '*feel* myself' as 'determined' is an expression that arguably describes the 'phenomenology' of arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience (SW I:491; my italics).[24] For Fichte, that commitment is an 'immediate *fact* of consciousness' (SW I:491; my italics) - i.e. it belongs to what is, on Bruno's terminology, the 'material facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses. In Bruno's 'Hiatus' essay, we can find the recognition that, in Fichtean thought, the 'formal facticity' of arbitrary commitment to the inexplicable conditions of sensory experience actually 'abstracts from' the 'material facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses (2021b, 985). We can now see why this abstraction is even possible: it is the 'material facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses that phenomenologically involves the 'formal facticity' of arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience.

Insofar as the 'material facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses does phenomenologically involve the 'formal facticity' of arbitrary commitment to the inexplicable conditions of sensory experience, this broad

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[23] For this definition of 'phenomenology', see the 2018 article on 'phenomenology' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, written by David Woodruff Smith. For another definition of 'phenomenology' as 'the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience', see Robert Sokolowski's *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2000, 2).

[24] Without wanting to reduce 'phenomenology' to an analysis of how an experience 'feels', that kind of analysis does seem to be an axis of phenomenological inquiry.

understanding of Fichtean 'facticity' has the advantage of highlighting a deep problem to do with that arbitrary commitment: it is remarkably *felt* - i.e. the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses implicates an arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience that *phenomenologically* unfolds, with a certain, qualitative texture, where we overpoweringly '*feel*' arbitrarily 'determined in a particular way' (SW I:491; my italics).

As we shall see in the next chapter, the powerful phenomenology of arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience is what problematises the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses: it lies at the heart of Fichte's attack on the so-called 'dogmatist', and his consequent anti-dogmatic strategy; furthermore, it is this strategy that clarifies how the 'facts' that are 'empirically contingent' are - as Bruno identifies in Fichte - ultimately 'compatible' with the 'systematic necessity' of the self-positing 'I' in the first place (2021, 181). The phenomenology of arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience will turn out to be misleading, while the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses will turn out to be necessarily constructed by the self-positing 'I', thus dissolving the 'fact' ('Tatsache') of what happens to be empirically given to the senses into the 'fact-act' ('Tathandlung') of the self-positing 'I', all the while leaving the phenomenological residue of 'facticity' itself intact.

So, to summarise the inquiry of this whole chapter into the etymology of 'facticity', let us retrace how the term 'fact' begins by shifting from an emphasis on human activity to assured natural phenomena. In Kantian philosophy, the 'fact' returns to its association with human activity as a mode of cognition that is supposed to be obviously active, before playing a role in moral philosophy that divides scholars by virtue of its historically divergent semantic facets - i.e. its connection to human activity, and its connotation of what is generally assured. The 'fact' then culminates in Kant in a way that blurs the line between what is assured as reality, and what is possible on the basis of our activity.

In the wake of Kantian philosophy, the 'fact' is wrestled between empirical realism and reductive idealism. While Reinhold's 'fact of consciousness' renders

sensory experience ultimately contingent on what is empirically given, we find a semantic split, in Fichte, between the empirically given 'fact' ('Tatsache') and the 'fact-act' ('Tathandlung'). While the latter is supposed to ground reality in the purely self-positing 'I', Fichte (post-*Foundations*) draws attention to how that 'fact-act' is not straightforwardly disclosed in our consciousness; the self-positing 'I' can only be actively inferred by the suitably equipped philosopher.

Trickling all the way down from its Latin origin, and thus deeply embedded with rich facets of meaning that each hit upon on our metaphysical relationship with reality, 'facticity' is finally coined by Fichte, bearing an association to everything that happens to be empirically given to the senses, all of which phenomenologically involves the 'rhapsody' of arbitrary commitment to the inexplicable conditions of sensory experience - i.e. the '*feeling*' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90, my italics).

## Chapter 3    Transcendental Activity and Phenomenological Limitations

This chapter explores the conceptual role of 'facticity' in the theoretical frameworks of absolute idealism, as espoused by Fichte and Husserl. Examining the problem that 'facticity' poses for the absolute idealism of Fichte, as well as his solution to it, Section 3(a) is split into three subsections that highlight (i) Fichte's pejorative sense of 'facticity', (ii) the ontological power that Fichte associates with philosophical activity, and (iii) the reality that Fichte conceptually isolates as existing only for the understanding, removed from the tethers of everyday life. With a comparative view to the problem that 'facticity' poses for the absolute idealism of Husserl, and his solution to it, Section(b) is split into three sections that identify (i) the 'facticity' of 'naturalism' and 'historicism', that is implicit, in early Husserl, (ii) how 'facticity' is supposed to be related to the essential structure of consciousness across Husserl's philosophy, and (iii) the path of phenomenology beyond Husserl, which is arguably guided by the import of 'facticity' for everyday realism that resonates in both Fichte and Husserl as an unavoidable theoretical concession.

### 3(a)    What is Fichte's Problem?

### 3(a)i    A Pejorative Sense of 'Facticity'

On the analysis that the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses phenomenologically involves arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience in the form of a 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90), it follows that 'facticity' is problematic for Fichte's project to ground philosophy according to the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I'. In his *Presentation of the Wissenschaftslehre* (1801), Fichte suggests that we are philosophically limited if we dwell on 'immediate facticity' ('unmittelbaren Facticität') (SW II:47, cited in Bruno 2021, 181). Crystallising this pejorative sense of 'facticity', Fichte suggests in his 'Thirteenth Lecture' of *Gesamtausgabe der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1964 ['GA']) that 'the primary error of all previous (philosophical) systems has been that they began with something factical and posited the absolute in this' (11:202-3, cited in Bruno 2021, 189; my parentheses). It is thus clear that, for Fichte, 'facticity' makes trouble for the practice of philosophy: insofar as it phenomenologically involves the 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90), 'facticity' seems to resist subsumption into the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I'.

'Facticity' arguably lies at the heart of Fichte's opposition to what he calls 'dogmatism'. Fichte declares that 'dogmatism is quite adequate' for those who take sensory experience to be 'a most remarkable error' - i.e. as an empirical accident that contingently arises as part of the 'single series constituted by the mechanism of nature' (SW, I: 439, cited in Breazeale 326-7). In this way, Fichte characterises the 'dogmatist' as invoking the naturalistic terms of causation in order to account for the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses. These naturalistic terms presuppose the 'realism' that reality is independent of the mind, thereby reflecting the 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90), which is supposed to be stirred by the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses. In this way, it seems that, for Fichte, the 'dogmatist' is consumed by the phenomenology of 'facticity' to the extent that the 'dogmatist' treats such 'facticity' as arbitrary - i.e. as the contingent effect of some external, empirical cause that extends well beyond the determination of the self-positing 'I' According to this

characterisation, 'dogmatists' only 'discover themselves' as limited beings, bound to that which happens to be empirically given to the senses and which phenomenologically involves an arbitrary commitment to inexplicable conditions of sensory experience that exceed their self-determination: they suffer from a

> self-consciousness (that) is dispersed and attached to *objects* and must be gleaned from the manifold of the latter. (SW, I: 433–34, cited in Breazeale 2013, 375; my parentheses and italics).

Arguably highlighting how the 'dogmatist' is motivated the 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90), as phenomenologically involved in the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, Fichte posits a psychological explanation for philosophical commitment in general: he asserts that 'the kind of philosophy one chooses… depends upon the kind of person one is' (SW, I: 434, cited in Breazeale 2013, 313), reminding us that

> a philosophical system is not a lifeless household utensil that one can put aside or pick up as one wishes; instead, it is animated by the very soul of the person who adopts it. (SW, I: 434, cited in Breazeale 2013, 313)

Speaking in terms that are less general, Fichte suggests that the 'incapacity' [Unvermögen] of the 'dogmatist' to subscribe to reductive-idealism does not stem from 'any particular weakness of their intellectual power'; instead, it is supposed to derive from 'a weakness of their entire character' (SW, I: 505, cited in Breazeale 2013, 373). This 'weakness' can be understood in terms of a weakness for, or a preoccupation with, the 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90).

Repeating the language of 'feeling' in a way that helps to warrant a phenomenological exegesis, Fichte refers to 'dogmatists' as

> those who have not yet attained a full *feeling* of their own freedom and absolute self-sufficiency - (who) discover themselves only in the act of representing things. (SW, I: 433–34, cited in Breazeale 2013, 375; my italics and parentheses)

Indicating how the phenomenology of the 'dogmatist' is misguided, Fichte observes in his lectures on *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* that

> the dogmatist has simply not yet been cultivated to the point where he has come to *feel* that our representations are products of our I'. (FTP: 92–93, cited in Breazeale 2013, 328; my italics)

According to Fichte, the 'dogmatist' even outright 'denies this *feeling*' (FTP: 92–93, cited in Breazeale 2013, 328; my italics).

Indeed, in sharp contrast to the so-called 'dogmatist', the reductive-idealist is portrayed by Fichte as being 'ardently aware of one's own freedom and prizing it above all else', where the language of what is 'ardent' and 'prizing' can be interpreted to emphasise the special phenomenological state that is prerequisite for philosophical commitment to reductive-idealism (SW, I: 507, cited in Breazeale 2013, 330). Similarly, we are told that 'a certain level of self-sufficiency and spiritual freedom' is 'already required' in order to grasp reductive idealism, and it is 'upon this (requirement) that our entire refutation of dogmatism is based'. (SW, I: 439, cited in Breazeale 326-7; my parentheses). It seems that, in order to subscribe to reductive-idealism in opposition to the 'dogmatist' position, the philosopher must have overcome the grip of 'feeling' the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90).

Hence Fichte's speculation that there are 'two different levels of human development' (SW, I: 433–34, cited in Breazeale 2013, 375) - i.e. the superior reductive-idealist, and the inferior 'dogmatist', who are phenomenologically disparate from each other. Fichte suggests that the 'question' between these philosophical positions 'cannot be decided simply by consulting reason alone' (SW, I: 432–33, cited in Breazeale 2013, 312). So, while we have seen how Fichte does envision 'self-reverting activity', by which the philosopher rationally grasps the 'fact-act' of self-positing (FTP, 94), he also contends that

> the decision between these two systems (reductive idealism and dogmatism) is one that is determined by free choice ['durch Willkür']; and thus, since even a free decision is supposed to have some basis, it is a decision determined by inclination and interest. What ultimately distinguishes the idealist from the dogmatist is, accordingly, a difference of interest. (SW, I: 432–33, cited in Breazeale 2013, 312; my parentheses)

Fichte characterises the conflict between reductive-idealism and 'dogmatism' as an issue that is 'ultimately' supra-rational, depending on a person's individual 'inclination and interest', as opposed to sheer reason itself, and this arguably enlightens the latent role of a phenomenology in distinguishing the reductive-idealist from the 'dogmatist', for Fichte (SW, I: 432–33, cited in Breazeale 2013,

312).

Thus arguably implicit in Fichtean thought, the phenomenological juxtaposition between the reductive-idealist and the 'dogmatist' helps us to make some philosophical sense of Fichte's reply to Carl Christian Erhard Schmid, who criticises Fichte's reductive-idealism in 'Bruchstücke aus einer Schrift über die Philosophie und ihre Prinzipien' (1795).[25] Launching a defence in his 'Comparison of Prof. Schmid's System with the Wissenschaftslehre', Fichte writes disparagingly that it is 'not up to Professor Schmid to judge' his theory of reductive idealism, since that philosophical system

> lies in a world that does not exist for him at all - for he lacks the sense through which it becomes present to one… I am firmly convinced that Professor Schmid will never acquire this sense… For half a lifetime he has demonstrated his absolute inability to tear himself away from what is given… (GA, I/3: SW, II, 457, cited in Breazeale 2013, 327, fn84; original parentheses)

This argument is notoriously *ad hominem*.[26] However, choosing to look past its palpably malicious tone, we can perhaps interpret it more charitably as to do with the phenomenological limitation that Fichte seems to diagnose in the paradigmatic 'dogmatist' more generally.

For Fichte, the phenomenological limitation of the 'dogmatist' has dire moral ramifications. In his 'First Introduction' of 1797, Fichte makes the normative demand that

> I *ought* to begin my thinking with the thought of the pure I, and I *ought* to think of this pure I as absolutely self-active - not as determined by things, but rather as determining them. (IWL 50, cited in Breazeale 2013, 111; my italics)

Fichte holds that we *should* seek the necessary, irreducible 'fact-act' of self-positing, and thus conceive of reality idealistically, perfectly in line with that 'fact-act', rather than be carried away by the phenomenology that I am 'determined

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[25] Schmid makes the inflammatory comment against Fichte that - if philosophy is characterised as being independent of the physical world - it is an 'empty and foundationless philosophy' ('leere und grundlose Philosophie'); it is a 'lazy creature of the mind' ('müßiges Hirngespinst') (1795, 101).

[26] See Peter Suber's essay, 'A Case Study in 'ad hominem' Arguments: Fichte's "Science of Knowledge"' (1990) for further discussion on the use of *ad hominem* in Fichte, which Suber helpfully characterises as 'any argument whose conclusion is a disparaging assessment of the character or capacities of a person' (12).

by things' (IWL 50, cited in Breazeale 2013, 111; my italics). In the light of this normative demand, the 'dogmatist' is not only phenomenologically amiss, for Fichte: she is also morally astray.

### 3(a)ii   The Ontological Power of Philosophical Activity

Though the 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' is implicated in the sheer 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, the 'dogmatist' is still found by Fichte to be at fault for explaining 'facticity' in terms that contradict the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' (SW 1:489-90). Spurred against remaining at the level of 'dogmatism', Fichte illuminates how 'facticity' can be systematically diffused into reductive-idealism.

Fichte contrasts the 'factical knowledge' - which consists of insights into what happens to be empirically given to the senses - with the 'absolute knowledge' that everything is necessarily grounded according to the 'I' who performs the 'fact-act' of self-positing (SW II:161-2, cited in Bruno 2021, 181). So, while 'facticity' is a philosophical problem, for Fichte - to the extent that things do happen to be empirically given to the senses in a way that phenomenologically implicates the 'feeling' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90) - he posits a transcendental solution that lies in (what is technically) the 'proper fashion' of rationally tracing that 'facticity' back to the necessary 'fact-act' of self-positing, thereby revealing how such 'facticity' *actually* coheres with his reductive-idealist schema (2005 [1804]) 105). In his 1804 lectures, this transcendental project is expressed as the task to 'deduce… as necessary and true… everything' that falls under the rubric of 'factical existence' (2005 [1804], 121, cited in Sebastian Gardner 2017, 34). Framing the point forcefully elsewhere, Fichte recommends that we 'renounce' all 'facticity' this way (SW II:132-3, cited in Bruno 2021, 182).

So how exactly can we transcendentally trace 'facticity' back to the 'fact-act' of self-positing? In his 1804 lectures, Fichte suggests that we hypothesise a normative principle that hinges on the condition of our 'absolute insight' that reality is grounded in the 'fact-act' of self-positing (2005 [1804], 125). This hypothesis takes the standard form, involving an antecedent that leads to a

consequent. It can be expressed as follows:

> if 'we grasp that reality is grounded in the 'fact-act' of self-positing' then it follows that 'reality should be constructed in such a way that we can grasp its ground in the 'fact-act of self-positing' (see Gardner 2017, 34 for a similar reconstruction of the hypothesis).

For Fichte, the consequent has ontological significance. As he sets forth:

> an inner self-construction is expressed in the 'should': an inner, absolute, pure, qualitative self-making and resting-on-itself… It is, I say, an 'inner self-construction', completely as such. (2005 [1804], 125, cited in Gardner 2017, 34-5)

As Gardner suggests in summation of Fichte's position, the normative principle that 'reality should be constructed in such a way that we can grasp its ground in the 'fact-act' of self-positing' expresses an 'ontologically *creative* ground' (2017, 35; original italics). Elaborated over Fichte's *Lectures 17-21* (2005 [1804], 130-149), this philosophical move is bold, elaborate, and arguably obscure.[27]

Though the normative principle that 'reality should be constructed in such a way that we can grasp its ground in the 'fact-act' of self-positing' is a hypothesis that hinges on the condition that 'we do grasp that reality is grounded in the 'fact-act' of self-positing', Fichte suggests that the normative principle can be lifted from this hypothetical framework and transformed into 'something categorical and absolute' (2005 [1804], 126); the normative principle can shed its 'hypothetical status', and assume the mantle of a 'self-supporting principle' (2005 [1804], 130). Thus categorically normative, as opposed to only hypothetically normative, the principle *stipulates* a ground that actually is ontologically creative (rather than only expressing the notion of that ground): 'it marks a creation from nothing', as Fichte says (2005 [1804], 125, cited in Gardner 2017, 34-5; translation modified by Gardner). Whether the philosophical move is reasonable is another matter.

Returning to Fichte's framework of reductive-idealism, reality is supposed to be constructed by the self-positing 'I'.[28] Fichte also tells us that philosophy - under the rubric of 'The Wissenschaftslehre' - allows the self-positing 'I' to 'act' and

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[27] See Gardner 2017, 35, fn22 for agreement on how the move is 'not easy to make out'.

[28] As mentioned before, Fichte characterises the ontological plane of 'being itself' as an 'absolute I' (2005 [1804], 117) that 'constructs itself, and… is only in this self-construction' (2005 [1804], 122).

'thereby to construct a world' (FTP 109-10). It seems that, because the relation between reality and the self-positing 'I' is constitutive, the line is blurred between what is ontologically in determination and what is hypothetically determinable in the context of philosophy - or rather, as Fichte says,

> the distinction between being's real and ideal self-construction... is... completely annulled. (2005 [1804], 138)[29]

So, although it may seem suspect to make a philosophical move that transforms a hypothetical-normative principle into a categorical-normative principle, Fichte arguably has the metaphysical framework to make sense of this move. It is because (1) the self-positing 'I' can hypothesise that 'reality should be constructed in such a way that we can grasp its ground in the 'fact-act' of self-positing', and (2) there is a constitutive relation between the self-positing 'I' and reality that (3) the hypothetical-normative principle can be transformed into a categorical-normative principle in the context of philosophy. Thus transformed into a the categorical-normative principle, it has an ontological ramification: it determines that the 'Tathandlung' ('fact-act') of self-positing

> is the final ground or foundation ['Grund'] upon which everything else is based and to which everything has to be traced back... (FTP, 114-5)

Philosophical activity is supposed to *actually determine* that reality is constructed by the self-positing 'I', thereby methodically melting the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses into 'the final ground or foundation' of self-positing (FTP, 114-5). As Fichte asserts in his lectures on *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*,

> philosophy encompasses a system of those actions by means of which objects come into being for us. (FTP, 102, cited in Gardner 2008, 17-18)

At this point of our discussion, having witnessed Fichte postulate the sheer *ontological power* of philosophical activity - it seems appropriate to pause and wonder: is philosophy really so marvellous? Can philosophy *actually determine* that reality is constructed by the self-positing 'I'? The prospect is bold: it seems outlandish, perhaps even ridiculous, to suggest that philosophical activity can account for even the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses. Nevertheless, Fichte has the theoretical tools to make sense of any

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[29] See Gardner 2017, 32 for the same reading: 'Fichte seems to envisage some sort of reflexive structure in which "ought" and "is" double up and validate one another.'

hostility that arises in immediate reaction to the idea. As already seen, 'facticity' is supposed to involve the '*feeling*' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90, my italics). As Fichte emphatically attests,

> It is undoubtedly an immediate fact of consciousness that I feel myself to be determined in a particular way. (Fichte SW I:491, cited in Bruno 2021b, 986)

So, for Fichte, it is surely no wonder that eyebrows will raise at the notion of the self-positing 'I' having absolute determination over everything.

Indeed, insofar as 'facticity' is supposed to involve the '*feeling*' of the 'determinate character of my limitation' (SW 1:489-90, my italics), Fichte holds - in perfect coherence with his reductive idealist schema - that that feeling is itself nothing other than a product of the self-positing 'I'. As Fichte suggests,

> to think of objects in general as affecting us is nothing other than to think of ourselves as generally affectable. In other words, it is by means of this act of your own thinking that you ascribe receptivity or sensibility to yourself. (SW I:488, cited in Bruno 2021b, 985)

The 'fact-act' of self-positing even accounts for the 'facticity' that is *misleading* about reality insofar as it insidiously *feels* as though it is exceeds the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' (SW 1:489-90, my italics).[30] As Henrich observes,

> Fichte… concedes and accepts an absolute contingency of the particular qualities of senses… this contingency lies in the mind itself, in the form of concrete sensations. (Heinrich 2008, 221)

In Fichtean philosophy, the reductive idealism of the self-positing 'I' has absolute determination, even over the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, which is a contingency that is produced by the self-positing 'I' so that it feels independent of the self-positing 'I'.

According to Fichte, it is precisely because 'facticity' *feels* as though it exceeds the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' that we are indeed 'required to supply the thought of a thing as a ground or foundation' of what happens to be

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[30] Relatedly, but omitted here for the sake of brevity, see Simon Lumsden's 2003 essay on 'Fichte's Striving Subject' for a discussion of the 'realist check' ['Anstoss'] on the self-positing 'I', which figures in Fichtean philosophy as '*felt*' to be 'genuinely independent of the I…' (129). As Lumsden elaborates,

> the check is the feeling of 'being constrained, of being directed by something that is not of the I's positing and yet is a cue for the determination of the I that could not be understood as an external cause. (130)

empirically given to the senses, thus effectively making 'the thing' itself a 'product' of our 'own thinking' (Fichte SW I:491, cited in Bruno 2021b, 986). Elaborating on the 'facticity' of some *thing* that happens to be empirically given to the senses, Fichte writes as follows:

> The thing is posited in this way insofar as the completely determined image is related to it. There is present a completely determined image, that is, a property. In addition, a thing must also be present if the required relationship is to be possible. (cited in Henrich 2008, 221, fn10).

To reconstruct what seems to be Fichte's line of thought here, we can say that any thing, *x*, is posited as being empirically given to the senses insofar as there is a sensation (i.e. a 'completely determined image' or 'property' that is related to *x*); there is a sensation, and so, there must be a thing, *x*, that is posited as empirically given to the senses and related to the sensation. As Bruno clarifies on behalf of Fichte:

> Insofar as positing the thing in itself is a 'meaning of thinking' of my feeling of being sensibly affected, it is nothing other than a categorial 'principle' that is 'required' in order to explain my capacity for sensible affection. (Bruno 2021b, 986)

So - while there is 'facticity' for Fichte in the sense that things do happen to be empirically given to the senses in a way that feels as though it exceeds the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I', that feeling is itself designed by the self-positing 'I', and all the more - it motivates the philosophical position that there are things, whereby those things become real.

### 3(a)iii  A Reality for Only the Understanding

Having attributed ontological power to philosophical activity, Fichte ruminates in the *Foundations of Natural Right, According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, anticipating the worry that

> if reality belongs only to that which is necessarily posited by the I, then what reality [Realität] is supposed to belong to those actions that lie outside the sphere of all consciousness and are not posited within consciousness? (2000 [1796-97], cited in Gardner 2008, 14).

In response to this worry, Fichte stipulates how there is

> no reality except in so far as it is posited, and thus merely a reality for philosophical understanding. (2000 [1796-97], cited in Gardner 2008,

14)

In this way, Fichte emphasises how the 'reality' of our 'philosophical understanding' is absolute; reality seems to collapse, for Fichte, into our understanding of it as a sheer product of the self-positing 'I'.

Fichte raises the issue of whether the 'actions described by idealism' - whereby the self-positing 'I' has absolute determination - do 'actually occur':

> Do they possess reality, or are they merely invented [erdichtet] by philosophy? (FTP, 102, cited in Gardner 2008, 17-18).

In response to this issue, Fichte postulates an exhaustive 'reality for philosophical understanding', where

> there is no other sort of reality [Realität] at all except for reality of the sort indicated

and our philosophical activity possesses

> the reality of necessary thinking, and it is for necessary thinking that reality exists.' (FTP, 103-4, cited in Gardner 2008, 18).

Sealing his reductive idealism, Fichte identifies 'necessary thinking' with what 'exists'.[31]

In an open letter to Fichte of March 3–21, 1799, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi describes Fichte's reductive idealism as an 'artificial insanity' ['künstliches Von-Sinnen-Kommen'] that transforms 'reality' into a mere 'chimera' or a bizarre,

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[31] See Gardner 2008, 24-5 on how this identification thwarts non-ontological readings of Fichte: it subsumes the ontological/non-ontological distinction within the prior domain of 'necessary thinking' itself.

For a non-ontological reading of Fichte, see Wood's essay, 'Fichte's Philosophical Revolution' (1991), where he suggests that 'the "absolute I" is not a metaphysical reality but an ideal posited by the I' (8), thereby arguably overlooking the key philosophical move whereby Fichte assigns ontological power to philosophical activity, not to mention the arguably metaphysical overtones of Fichte's assertions, as explored throughout this chapter.

Note that, for Fichte, the imagination plays a key role in the ontological power of philosophical activity. As he asserts to Salomon Maimon, 'Imagination itself must produce the object.' (see The Science of Knowledge, 1889, 232.) Elsewhere, he suggests:
> Our doctrine here is therefore that all reality – for us ... as it cannot be otherwise understood in a system of transcendental philosophy – is brought forth solely by the imagination. (GA I, 2:368/9)

For further discussion on the imagination in Fichte, omitted here for the sake of brevity, see 'Imagination and Objectivity in Fichte's Early Wissenschaftslehre, in The Imagination in German Idealism and Romanticism (2019, 109-128).

intellectual kind of 'construction' (cited in Breazeale 2013, 371).[32] However, as Fichte clarifies in his *System of Ethics*, there is 'the transcendental point of view', where reality is 'something that is made', but there is also the 'ordinary point of view', where reality is 'something that is given' (SE, 334, cited in Breazeale 2013, 38). Also referred to as the 'viewpoint of the individual', or 'viewpoint of experience', the 'ordinary point of view' is a 'practical viewpoint' that 'arise(s) in the course of acting', where 'no abstraction occurs' (FTP. 106, cited in Breazeale 2013, 370): 'facticity' is simply experienced as it happens to be empirically given to the senses, with the feeling of it exceeding the self-positing 'I', all unencumbered by the intricacies of reductive-idealist thought.

Fichte juxtaposes the non-reflective 'practical viewpoint' on reality with the systematically reflective 'philosophical' viewpoint - or rather, the 'transcendental point of view' (SE, 334, cited in Breazeale 2013, 38) - according to which, reality is a product of the self-positing 'I', and the feeling of it being exceeded is methodically overcome. Fichte tells us that

> philosophical speculation is possible at all only insofar as one engages in abstraction. Thus the philosophical viewpoint can also be called "the ideal point of view". The practical viewpoint lies beneath the idealistic viewpoint. (FTP. 106, cited in Breazeale 2013, 370)

Thus, only by growing out of the 'practical viewpoint' does the philosophical one methodically overcome the feeling that undermines the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I', finally realising 'why and to what extent the ordinary view is true and *why one has to assume that a world exists*', as Fichte suggests (FTP, 106, cited in Breazeale 2013, 379; my italics).

So, in criticising Fichtean reductive idealism as an 'artificial insanity' that transforms 'reality' into a 'chimerical' construction (as cited in Breazeale 2013, 371), Jacobi seems to overlook the distinction between the 'practical viewpoint' where reality is given, and Fichte's 'philosophical viewpoint', where reality is

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[32] The full text of the published version may be found in GA, III/3: 224–84; the English translation of the letter itself (without the appendices and with some omissions) by Diana I. Behler, "Open Letter to Fichte," in Philosophy of German Idealism, ed. Ernst Behler (New York: Continuum, 1987), pp. 119–41.)

actively posited into existence.[33] As Fichte observes, Jacobi

> did not clearly think through the distinction between these two viewpoints and (he) assumed that the manner of thinking that is characteristic of idealism is also required within life. (SW, I: 482, cited in Breazeale 2013, 371)

As Fichte seems to make clear, reductive-idealist thought is radically disjointed from the rest of everyday, human life: such

> speculations do not disturb the idealist within the course of his active life and do not lead him into error. He is a man like any other; like everyone else, he feels pleasures and pains, for he possesses the facility to transport himself from his speculative point of view to that of life. (FTP, 106, cited in Breazeale 2013, 379)[34]

Though the reductive-idealist takes the philosophical position that all reality is determined by the self-positing 'I', including the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, the reductive-idealist can switch off, suspend or perhaps even *repress* this line of thinking in order to function in ordinary life. The thought here seems to be that even the most loyal disciple of Fichte will have to wash the dishes. While she can posit reality to be a product of philosophical thinking and even subsume into this paradigm the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, the disciple of Fichte will still find the dirty dishes next to the kitchen sink. If the disciple of Fichte dwells too much on reductive-idealism when confronted with the household chore, her line of thought may well spiral: *I sense the dirty dishes; there must be dirty dishes; I posit these dishes as a product of my own thinking; the dishes feel as though they are not a product of my own thinking… but they really are a product of my own thinking: I produce the dishes to feel that way, and it is this feeling that compels me to produce them again… here they are - according to my absolute determination… but I still have to wash the dishes!* The reductive

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[33] Clarifying this distinction, Fichte suggests:
> The world, the world that is actually given, i.e., nature (for that is what I am talking about here), has two sides: it is a product of our limitation, and it is also a product of our free acting - though, to be sure, a product of an ideal acting (and not, as it were, a product of our real… acting). Looked at as a product of our limitation, it is itself limited on all sides; looked at as a product of our free acting, it is itself free on all sides. (SE, p. 334, cited in Breazeale 2013, 38)

[34] It is arguably fascinating that Fichte even grapples with whether the 'speculations' of reductive-idealism could 'disturb' the speculator, and lead him into 'error' as he perseveres to get on with everyday life (FTP, 106, cited in Breazeale 2013, 379). Perhaps this reflects the phenomenological gravity of his reductive idealist schema, which goes against our everyday feeling of *lacking* absolute determination.

idealist has to snap out of philosophical thinking in order to engage with everyday life: as Fichte says, she must 'transport' herself from her 'speculative point of view to that of life' (FTP, 106, cited in Breazeale 2013, 379).

Reductive-idealist thought is radically disjointed from the rest of everyday, human life because, as Fichte explains to Jacobi in a letter from August 30th, 1795, it is 'realism' that 'rules within the domain of the practical standpoint' (EPW, 411–12., cited in Breazeale 2013, 37). It seems that, because everyday life is saturated with the feeling of being limited - as implicated by the 'facticity' of what is empirically given to the senses, and in contradiction to the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' - it follows that everyday life is 'rule(d)' by the 'realist' thesis that 'reality as independent of our mental activity'. In suggesting that 'realism *rules* within the domain of the practical standpoint' (EPW, 411–12., cited in Breazeale 2013, 37), I take Fichte to mean that we have to live in accordance with realism: in day to day life, reality feels as though it is given independently of the self-positing 'I'; because of this, day to day life requires us to think and act as though reality really is given independently of the self-positing 'I'. Hence why Fichte distinguishes between 'real activity', where the I is 'posited' as determinate, and 'ideal activity', where the determination of the I is opposed (SW).[35] Jacobi was consequently mistaken to 'assume' that

> the manner of thinking that is characteristic of idealism is also required
> within life. (SW, I: 482, cited in Breazeale 2013, 371)

For Fichte, the reductive idealist can calibrate her thinking to the tune of realism for the sake of day to day functioning, momentarily retreating from the philosophical vantage point of reductive-idealism.

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[35] Note that 'ideal activity' is called 'striving'] 'Streben'], by Fichte (SW I, 258-9). See Wood 1991, 13 for this point on Fichte.

Note that, on Wood's reading of Fichte, 'the "absolute I" is not a metaphysical reality but an ideal posited by the I's *practical striving*' (1991, 8; my italics). On my distinctly ontological reading of Fichte, the 'ideal activity' of 'striving' - whereby the self-positing 'I' opposes its determination - has ontological ramifications, and this coheres with the ontological power that Fichte arguably attributes to philosophy. See Simon's Lumsden's essay on 'Fichte's Striving Subject' (2003) on how the concept of 'striving' effectively 'unites the realistic and idealistic elements of the *Wissenschaftslehre*' (125), omitted here for the sake of brevity. See also Fichte himself in *The Science of Knowledge*:
> … in relation to a possible object, the pure self-reverting activity of the self is a striving; and as shown earlier, an infinite striving at that. This boundless striving, carried to infinity, is the condition of the possibility of any object whatsoever: no striving, no object' (I:262-3, 231).

Though reductive-idealist thought is radically disjointed from the realism of everyday, human life, Fichte is reluctant to sever the tie completely. He suggests that

> even though it raises itself above the natural view of things and elevates itself above ordinary human understanding, scientific philosophy nevertheless stands firmly with its foot in this same ordinary domain and proceeds from it, even though it eventually leaves it behind.  (cited in Breazeale 393, SW, II: 324)

While everyday life is phenomenologically characterised by a feeling that is contrary to the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I', the philosopher must be rooted - with a 'firm… foot' - in everyday life, in order to 'elevate…' above that feeling. Though Fichte suggests that the philosophy 'eventually leaves' the 'ordinary human understanding' of 'realism' behind, much can be made of the point that it 'nevertheless stands firmly with its foot in this same ordinary domain and proceeds from it' (cited in Breazeale 393, SW, II: 324). It seems that, for Fichte, the philosopher must circle back to 'realism' over the course of everyday life in order to function, and this 'realism' is the point of departure for philosophical practice itself. Hence why Fichte suggests that ideal activity is 'constrained and arrested and can occur only *subsequently* to a real activity' (FTP, 148, my italics for emphasis).


While the 'realist' thesis that 'reality as independent of our mental activity' is antithetical to the general 'idealist' thesis that 'reality is constructed by our mental activity' - and Fichte holds that we live everyday life according to the 'realist' thesis - this is all coherent with Fichte's unique version of idealism. As already noted, Fichte makes conceptual room for the 'facticity' (of what happens to be empirically given) to be contingent on the self-positing 'I' in such a way that *it feels as though it exceeds the self-positing 'I'*, thereby requiring us to act in accordance with 'realism' in everyday life, and use such 'realism' as the springboard for philosophical practice.


Hence - the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' accounts even for why realism 'rules' within the domain of the practical standpoint. As Fichte's letter to Jacobi continues:

> That complete reconciliation of philosophy and common sense that was

> promised by the *Wissenschaftslehre* will occur when this practical point
> of view has been deduced and recognized by speculation itself. (EPW,
> 411–12., cited in Breazeale 2013, 37)

Thus, in contrast to Kant's transcendental idealism that posits mere appearances in addition to the realist things in themselves, and to Reinhold's non-reductive idealism that continues this line of thought, Fichte reinvents idealism so that the self-positing 'I' has absolute determination, even over the realism that is demanded by everyday life, thus 'reconciling' philosophy and 'common sense' (EPW, pp. 411–12., cited in Breazeale 2013, 37). As Fichte elucidates:

> This is not an idealism in which the I is only a subject nor a dogmatism
> according to which the subject is treated only as an object. (EPW 323)

An 'idealism' where the 'I is only a subject' would fail to address the realism that is demanded by everyday life (EPW 323); a 'dogmatism according to which the subject is treated only as an object' would contradict the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' (EPW 323). In contrast to the more limited positions just outlined, Fichte's idealism is arguably tempered with realism: the self-positing 'I' has absolute determination in such a way that the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given feels as though it exceeds the self-positing 'I', thereby giving realism jurisdiction in everyday life.

In a letter to Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling from the 31st May, 1801 - Fichte asserts that the 'question' whether his philosophy is 'idealism or realism' has 'no meaning'; however, this lack of meaning only holds insofar as 'idealist' and 'realist' distinctions are 'first made' in the context of his philosophy; they are not 'outside it, and not beforehand'; dispossessed from the context of Fichtean philosophy, the distinctions of idealism and realism are supposed to 'remain unintelligible' (GA III, 5: 45-6, cited in Gardner 2008, 24). Whereas, when nestled within Fichte's philosophy, 'idealism' captures the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I', while 'realism' captures what is demanded by everyday life as a product of the self-positing 'I', as we have seen over the course of this discussion. I say that Fichte's 'idealism' is 'tempered' with 'realism' in order to avoid mischaracterising Fichte's metaphysical theory as an outright hybrid of idealism and realism. Fichte, after all, stressed that any attempt to fuse idealism with realism was doomed to be an 'inconsistent enterprise' (GA I/4: 189; IWL, 12). Distinct from forming a fusion, for Fichte, the

'idealism' of the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' *incorporates* realism to the extent that reality feels independent of the self-positing 'I'.

Crucially - for Fichte - it is only because of the self-positing 'I' that 'facticity' feels independent of it. As Fichte emphatically stipulates: 'the I posits itself as limited by the not-I (SW I, 126); 'to conceive oneself is to posit oneself in contrast with a not-I' (SW I, 459), and for a final example - 'one is what one is because something else exists in addition to oneself' (SW VI, 296).[36] The self-positing 'I' has absolute determination, even to the extent that it feels undermined by the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses as 'not-I', which the self-positing 'I' posits into existence through the very 'fact-act' of positing herself. It is Fichte's overarching idealism that gives realism jurisdiction in everyday life.

So - it seems that 'facticity' sits at the bottom of an arguably bizarre idealism in Fichte: after the philosophical gymnastics of granting philosophy ontological power, the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I' is supposed to be phenomenologically undermined in everyday life, where realism reigns - since the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses feels as though it exceeds the self-positing 'I'. However, for Fichte, it is only because of the self-positing 'I' that 'facticity' feels independent of it. In this way, Fichte's reductive-idealism is perfectly coherent to the extent that it bites the bullet of being patently out of touch with the phenomenology of everyday life.

As Fichte continues his 1795 letter to Jacobi:

> What is the purpose of the speculative standpoint and indeed of philosophy as a whole if it does not *serve* life? If mankind had never tasted this forbidden fruit, it could dispense with all philosophy. But mankind has an innate desire to catch a glimpse of that realm that transcends the individual - a desire to view this realm not merely in a reflected light, but directly. The first person who asked a question about the existence of God [i.e., the first to ask a genuinely metaphysical question] broke through the boundaries (to see the transcendent realm directly) ; he shook mankind to its deepest foundations and brought man into a conflict with himself which has not been resolved and which can be resolved only by proceeding boldly to that supreme point from which the

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36 All citations helpfully sourced in Wood's essay, 'Fichte's Philosophical Revolution' (1991, 12).

practical and the speculative appear as one. Presumption led us to philosophize, and this cost us our innocence. We caught sight of our nakedness, and since then we have had to philosophize for our own salvation. (cited in Breazeale 2013, fn 49; my parentheses)

It seems that, in boiling all of reality down to the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I', reductive-idealism is supposed to 'serve' life. This suggests that it enriches, benefits or even sustains life. Like the 'forbidden fruit' of Eden, it offers special knowledge of reality, which we natively 'desire'. According to Fichte, in questioning our relationship with reality (by inquiring into the notion of 'God' and thereby engaging in 'metaphysics'), we have been philosophically 'shaken', and in 'conflict' about our ontological role. For Fichte, we can only 'resolve' this conflict by idealistically positing everything to be the product of the self-positing 'I' - including the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, which feels as though it exceeds the self-positing 'I', thereby making realism relevant to everyday life. Having 'proceed(ed)' so 'boldly to that supreme point from which the practical and the speculative appear as one', we are no longer 'innocent' of - or in the dark about - our relationship with reality: we have 'caught sight' of it, and we find 'salvation' in grasping our absolute, ontological role that is nevertheless phenomenologically undermined each and every day (cited in Breazeale 2013, fn 49; Breazeale's parentheses).

The notion of 'salvation' is a powerful reminder of Fichte's moral impetus: he holds that we *should* seek the necessary, irreducible 'fact-act' of self-positing, and thus conceive of reality as idealistically grounded in that 'fact-act', rather than be carried away by the phenomenology that I am 'determined by things' (IWL 50, cited in Breazeale 2013, 111; my italics). While the reductive idealist must indulge 'realist' thinking for the sake of day to day functioning, she must also find the time to rise to the philosophical standpoint, and this is a matter of *normative* import. As Fichte indicates in *The Science of Knowledge*, this 'procedure of the human mind' cannot be labelled a 'deception' that mischaracterises reality, since it is 'proper and necessary by virtue of the laws of a rational being'; it cannot be 'be avoided unless we wish to cease being rational beings' (1889, 232). Note that, in the Kantian tradition, our capacity for reason is intimately connected to our freedom and moral agency. In positing reality as the product of the self-positing 'I', Fichte hopes to secure our status as free, moral beings.

Insofar as he establishes a metaphysics that is normatively driven, Fichte seems to answer to the prophetic message about philosophical practice to be found in 'The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism' (1996 [1796/97]), which is a fragmentary essay of unknown authorship. It is written that

> since in the future the whole of metaphysics will collapse into morals - of which Kant, with his two practical postulates, has given only an example and *exhausted* nothing - all ethics will be nothing more than a complete system of all ideas, or, what amounts to the same, of all practical postulates. Naturally, the first idea is the representation of myself as an absolute free being. With the free self-conscious being a whole world comes forth from nothing - the only true and thinkable *creation from nothing.* The question is this: how must a world be constituted for a moral being? (3, original italics)

In Fichte, the 'whole of metaphysics' seems to 'collapse' into the 'moral' that we should posit reality as a product of the self-positing 'I'. 'All ethics' hinge on 'reductive-idealism' as a 'complete system of all ideas… of all practical postulates' that entangles even the realism that is demanded by everyday life. From the 'fact-act' of the self-positing 'I', 'the whole world comes forth from nothing - the only true and thinkable *creation from nothing*' that answers to the question: 'how must a world be constituted for a moral being?' (1996 [1796/97], 3; original italics).

While Fichte envisions a coherent metaphysics that is ethically driven, it remains phenomenologically mystifying, I argue: idealism is tucked away from life as an elite, philosophical insight about the ontological power of philosophy. Though confined to the philosophical armchair, in a transcendental, ivory tower, the self-positing 'I' is supposed to have absolute determination - even over the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, which feels potently independent of the self-positing 'I' to the ironic extent that realism reigns in everyday life. As we can see, Fichte's idealism harbours realism to the effect that, at the very heart of human consciousness, there lies something of an enigma: by some miracle, the self-positing 'I' who has absolute determination over reality must *trick* herself into feeling determined by reality.

While the 'fact-act' of self-positing 'demands that all reality be in the I' (SW I, 275) in a way that has ontological ramifications, and the ethically-driven impulse

of the self-positing 'I' is to '*let there be no not-I at all*' (SW I, 144, my italics), the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses necessarily remains - for Fichte - in endless production by the self-positing 'I', always phenomenologically undermining her absolute determination. Thus, Fichte says that it is only by '*continuing* to analyse and to explain its own state' that the 'empirical I obtains its universe' (IWL, 75/SWI, 491, my italics for emphasis): we are bound to a transcendental project that is inexplicably undermined by everyday phenomenology. As Fichte formulates the paradox: it is a 'fact' that the self-positing 'I'

> must necessarily posit something absolute outside the self (a thing-in-
> itself), and yet must recognise that, from the other side that the latter
> only exists for it. (SK, 247/SW I, 281)

The self-positing 'I' must posit 'facticity' as exceeding her determination, since this is her everyday phenomenology. But the self-positing 'I' must also 'recognise' from a philosophical standpoint that 'facticity' is a product of the self-positing 'I'. As Fichte identifies, the self-positing 'I' is consequently caught in a 'circle which it is able to extend into infinity but can never escape' (SK, 247/SWI, 281).[37] 'Facticity' methodically melts into the 'fact-act' of self-positing, but 'facticity' must be posited as an independent and ever-arising 'fact': the phenomenology of what happens to be empirically given to the senses drones ceaselessly on, and the philosopher is compelled to re-exert ontological power, thereby reclaiming what is newly sensed.

Thus - for Fichte - 'facticity' is central to the puzzle of our relationship with reality. As everything that happens to be empirically given to the senses, 'facticity' feels independent of the self-positing 'I', though it is actually designed by the self-positing 'I' to feel this way. While realism is consequently relevant to everyday life, idealism is an elaborate philosophical insight to be perennially rediscovered as a sanctuary from the day to day feeling of lacking absolute determination over reality. Through the ontological power of philosophy, that feeling is supposed to be falsified, but the respite is always short-lived, as Fichte recognises: the feeling of lacking absolute determination over reality sweeps back, in quick succession, phenomenologically clashing with reality as it

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[37] In *Self-Consciousness and Critique of the Subject* (2014), Simon Lumsden takes Fichte to 'formulate… this as the essential paradox constituting human consciousness itself' (56).

is philosophically posited to be.

### 3(b)   'Facticity' Versus 'Essence' in Husserl

### 3(b)i   The 'Facticity' of 'Naturalism' and 'Historicism'

On my reading of his essay, 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science' ('*Philosophie els strenge Wissenschaft*') (1965 [1911]), Husserl characterises 'naturalism' and 'historicism' in a way that arguably maps onto Fichte's concept of 'facticity', which signifies what happens to be empirically given to the senses. Husserl portrays naturalism as 'a phenomenon' that is 'consequent upon the discovery of nature' (79), where 'nature' is 'simply there': it is constituted by 'things at rest, in motion, changing in unlimited space', etc., all of which 'we perceive… and describe… by means of simple empirical judgements' (1965 [1911], 85). According to Husserl, the naturalist analyses reality as a 'unity of spatio-temporal being' that is governed by empirically discoverable 'laws of nature' (1965 [1911], 79). Meanwhile, Husserl portrays historicism as a discipline that depends on the 'discovery of history', highlighting how the historicist analyses reality as a developing 'historical creation' (1965 [1911], 79), which our 'empirical life' exhausts in all of its 'individual', 'social' and 'cultural' contingencies (1965 [1911], 122).

Reminiscent of the problem that 'facticity' poses for Fichte's project to ground philosophy according to a necessary principle, Husserl suggests that 'historicism' and 'naturalism' are problematic for a philosophy that aspires to count as a 'rigorous science'. Having expressed the damning perspective on historical Philosophy, that the discipline 'lacked as much as ever the character of rigorous science' (1965 [1911], 72), Husserl spells out the ideal 'content' of 'rigorous science' as 'objectively grounded': it is supposed to capture reality as it necessarily is  (1965 [1911], 73). After accusing 'every position' in the history of Philosophy of consisting in a mere 'matter of individual conviction, of the interpretation given by a school, and of a "point of view"' (1965 [1911], 74-5), Husserl envisages a future system of philosophy which, as a proper 'rigorous science',

   really begins from the ground up with a foundation free of doubt and

rises up like any skilful construction, wherein stone is set upon stones
act as solid as the other… (1965 [1911], 76)

While he admits that an 'impulse' for his ideal philosophy has found manifestation - and he approvingly gestures, for example, to the Kantian and Fichtean eras (1965 [1911], 76) - Husserl suggests that this impulse has resisted full realisation (1965 [1911], 136, 139). He attributes this failure to the apparent the tendency of the discipline towards naturalism, and historicism.

According to Husserl, naturalism subsumes both reason (in epistemology) and consciousness (in psychology) under its naturalistic analysis (1965 [1911], 80-1) - though the 'existential positing of physical nature' that underpins this holistic analysis is itself arbitrary (1965 [1911], 86).[38] To phrase it differently, Husserl's view is that naturalism takes the sensory experience of 'nature' for granted, when that is exactly what should be thrown into question (1965 [1911], 87). As Husserl inquires, at some length:

> How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object? How can experiences be mutually legitimated or corrected by means of each other, and not merely replace each other or confirm each other subjectively? How can the play of a consciousness whose logic is empirical make objectively valid statements, valid for things that are in and for themselves? (1965 [1911], 87-8).

These 'riddles' are 'inherent' to naturalism, Husserl says, because it contingently derives its insights from sensory experience (1965 [1911], 88). It follows that the discipline cannot elucidate reality as it necessarily is - or rather, the 'things that are in and for themselves' (1965 [1911], 88) - and this dissolves the status of naturalism as a 'rigorous science' (1965 [1911], 89).

Similarly, according to Husserl, the historicist engenders 'extreme sceptical subjectivism' about 'absolute validity': the historicist can only admit the validity of an idea insofar as that idea is a 'factual construction which is held as valid' during a particular epoch (1965 [1911], 125). This, however, only counts as 'contingent validity', and Husserl finds it unsatisfactory in contrast to the 'unqualified validity, 'or validity-in-itself' that he posits as the goal of a proper

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[38] Husserl also suggests that the naturalist smuggles 'thetic existential positings of things in the framework of space, time, causality, etc.(86 ,[1911] 1965) '.

'rigorous science' (1965 [1911], 125).[39] Consequently, for Husserl, it follows that historicism leaves us in darkness about reality as it necessarily is.

Husserl criticises both naturalist and historicist stances for 'transform(ing) all reality, all life, into an incomprehensible, idealess confusion of "facts"', and entertaining the 'superstition of the fact' (1965 [1911], 141). Here, Husserl explicitly uses the term 'fact' in the same technical way as Fichte: he distances it from both (1) reality as it necessarily is ('[un]transform[ed]'), and (2) what is a (non-empirical) 'idea', thus associating the 'fact' with what happens to be empirically given to the senses. Furthermore, because of his disparaging description of it as an 'incomprehensible… confusion' and a 'superstition', Husserl can be read as unequivocally invoking the 'fact' in Fichte's pejorative sense. Though Husserl did not make this connection explicit in his essay on 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science', and we have no compelling reason to think that Fichtean 'facticity' was on Husserl's mind at that time, the interpretation seems fitting. Furthermore, the interpretation seems valuable for a historical understanding of 'facticity'. It allows us to draw the following conclusion: though Fichte and Husserl both find 'facticity' problematic for methodological reasons, Fichte finds it problematic for a philosophical system that aims to ground reality according to an overarching, necessary principle, while Husserl can be read as finding 'facticity' problematic for Philosophy as a 'rigorous science', which is supposed to capture reality as it necessarily is (1965 [1911], 116).[40]

3(b)ii   The Essential Structure of Consciousness

As we have seen, the Fichtean strategy to account for 'facticity' is in terms of the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I'; in his essay, 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science', Husserl follows the basic move of appealing to an ontological framework. To prompt the maturation of Philosophy into a proper

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[39] Note that Husserl cites his contemporary, Wilhelm Dilthey, who suggests that 'the absolute validity of any particular form of life-interpretation… disappears' in the light of 'all past events' (1911, 6, cited in Husserl (1965 [1911], 124). Husserl directly opposes this view: though he admits that the historicist can provide insights into what ideas happen to have 'contingent validity' at different points in time, he holds that this can 'advance nothing relevant against the possibility of absolute validities in general' (1965 [1911], 127).

[40] For the same reading of Husserl, but without the comparison to Fichte, see François Raffoul and Eric Sean Nelson 2008, 3 in their introduction to *Rethinking Facticity*.

'rigorous science', Husserl posits a 'phenomenology of consciousness' (1965 [1911], 91). Having argued that the 'solution' to (the implicitly Fichtean facticity of) naturalism and historicism must lie beyond those empirically-based disciplines themselves in order to avoid incurring a 'vicious circle' (1965 [1911], 88-9), Husserl suggests that 'objectivity' is 'manifest' in consciousness, and so it 'must precisely become evident purely from consciousness itself' (1965 [1911], 90). Clearly contrary to the psychological branch of naturalism that is guilty of 'naturalistically adulterating' consciousness (1965 [1911], 109), Husserl holds that consciousness 'excludes the kind of being nature has' (1965 [1911], 107). This is because its contents is 'phenomenal' in the technical sense that it 'knows no real parts, no real changes, and no causality' that would be open to empirical observation (1965 [1911], 106; see 102-3 on how the 'phenomenal' contents of consciousness inevitably 'eludes' psychology). Thus radically distinct from nature, the 'phenomenal' contents of consciousness is, as Husserl tells us, 'simply not experienced as something that appears' during sensory experience of what happens to be empirically given; instead, the 'phenomenal' contents of consciousness is supposed to carry with it a special kind of 'vital experience', whereby that contents

> appears as itself through itself, in an absolute flow, as now and already 'fading away', clearly recognisable as constantly sinking back into a 'having been'… (1965 [1911], 107)

As consciousness seamlessly unravels 'from phenomenon to phenomenon', it is supposed to be open to 'rational investigation and valid statement' (1965 [1911], 108). This follows, for Husserl, since the 'phenomena' that technically constitute consciousness have 'essences', or 'ideas', which can be 'grasped' with 'full intuitive clarity', and subsequently described through 'absolutely valid objective statements' that are 'evident to anyone free of (naturalistic) prejudice' (1965 [1911], 110-2; my parentheses). As 'pure phenomenology', in Husserl's technical terminology, this enterprise 'makes no use of the existential positing of nature'; it is 'not at all an investigation of being-there' (1965 [1911], 116). Instead, as Husserl emphasises, his kind of 'phenomenology' is directed

> toward that which consciousness itself 'is' and that which 'consciousness means', and how ultimate it 'demonstrates' the object as that which is 'validly', 'really'. (1965 [1911], 89)

In short - 'phenomenology', for Husserl, illuminates reality as it necessarily is by

setting out the essential structure of consciousness. And, because his 'phenomenology' recognises 'only essences and essential relations', Husserl envisions that it can 'accomplish' a 'correct understanding' of 'all empirical cognition' (1965 [1911], 116): it can overcome the Fichtean 'facticity' that pervades historical Philosophy under the gloss of naturalism and historicism by accounting for that 'facticity' in terms of the essential structure of consciousness.

So how are we to understand Husserl's essential structure of consciousness? In his later *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy* (1983 [1913]) (his 'first Ideas'), Husserl contrasts 'essence' ('*Wesen*') with what is a 'matter of fact'. Bringing to the surface what can be understood as the latent Fichtean 'facticity' of his essay on 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science', Husserl describes a 'matter of fact' - and what has 'factuality', or what is interchangeable as 'facticity', for Husserl - as 'something' that is 'real *individually*', that exists 'spatiotemporally', and which is '*contingent*' (§2; original italics; see, e.g., §34, §138 and §150 etc. on the interchangeability of 'factuality' and 'facticity' in Husserl). For every 'matter of fact' that happens to be empirically given to the senses, Husserl supposes that there is a 'correlative essence' ('*Wesen*') (1983 [1913], §2). Expanding on this point, Husserl writes that

> it belongs to the sense of anything contingent to have an essence and therefore an Eidos ['Essence'] which can be apprehended purely; and this Eidos comes under eidetic truths belonging to different levels of universality. An individual object is not merely an individual object as such, a 'This here', an object never repeatable; as qualitied *'in itself'* thus and so, it has its *own specific character*, its stock of essential predicables which must belong to it (as 'existent such as it is in itself') (1983 [1913], §2; original italics and parentheses).

What are we to make of this metaphysical framework, esoterically expressed in the passage above?

A general worry about the Husserlian essences is that they seem to resemble Plato's ideal Forms, which arguably lack philosophical robustness. In *The Republic* (2000) Plato sets out the metaphysical principle that, for every class of sensible objects, there is one transcendental Form (596a). According to Plato, only the 'true philosopher' knows the transcendental Forms (485a-d). Striking

what appears to be an analogy with Plato, Husserl does (in the above passage) suggest that 'anything contingent' has an 'essence' that 'belong(s)' to it, and he adds that the essence can be 'apprehended purely' (1983 [1913], §2). In §21, Husserl enigmatically touches on this process of apprehension: he suggests that

> there is something such as pure intuiting as a kind of givenness in which essences are given originarily as objects. (1913, §21)

Bringing the general worry into focus, Rochus Sowa writes that Husserl's 'doctrine of essences' suggests an inadequate 'form of mysticism' (2012, 245, cited in Amie Thomasson 2017, 437). Gilbert Ryle similarly criticises Husserl for being 'bewitched' by a 'Platonic idea' (1971, 180-181, cited in Thomasson 2017, 437). Additionally, Moritz Schlick accuses Husserl of spouting 'nothing but - words' (1910, 59, cited in Thomasson 2017, 444).


In her essay, 'Husserl on Essences' (2017), Amie Thomasson takes a deflationary route to defend Husserl, arguing that his essences lack metaphysical substance. Thomasson draws attention to how Husserl is explicitly wary of essences being taken as mere 'scholastic entities' or problematic 'metaphysical ghosts' (1983 [1913], §19, cited in Thomassion 2017, 440); Husserl directly opposes being characterised as a 'Platonising realist' (1983 [1913], §22, cited in Thomasson 2017, 440), and furthermore, Husserl asserts that

> the positing of the essence … does not imply any positing of individual existence whatsoever; pure essential truths do not make the slightest assertion concerning facts (1983 [1913], §4, cited in Thomasson 441, italics are hers).

On Thomasson's reading, Husserl understands the essence as an object in a strictly logical sense, where it functions as the 'subject' of a 'true statement' (Thomasson 2017, 441).


In Thomasson's words, we can grasp Husserlian essence by 'begin(ning) with ordinary sensory observation of some concrete thing', before 'think(ing) of the species, the type' that corresponds that individual thing (2017, 445), thereby isolating its essence. There is exegetical evidence in Husserl's first *Ideas* for this reading of him. Husserl suggests in this text that

> intuition of an essence is consciousness of something, an 'object, a

> Something to which the intuitional regard is directed and which is 'itself given' in the intuition; it is something which can, however, be 'objectivated' as well in other acts, something that can be thought of vaguely or distinctly, which can be made the subject of true and false predications — just like any other *'object' in the necessarily broadened sense proper to formal logic.* (1983 [1913], §11; original italics)

Husserl's general point seems to be, as Thomasson clarifies, that we can grasp essence on the basis of our sensory experience of what happens to be empirically given to the senses - i.e. what is technically 'facticity'. Explicitly using this terminology himself, Husserl writes that

> we seize upon and fix in an adequate ideation the pure essences that interest us. In the process, the single facts, the *facticity* of the natural world taken universally, disappear from our theoretical regard… (1983 [1913], §34; my italics for emphasis).

So - while Husserl in his essay on 'Philosophy as a Rigorous Science' paved the way for philosophy to account for 'facticity' by appealing to essence, Husserl at a later date, in his first *Ideas*, shows us how the appeal to essence can itself grow out of a focus on 'facticity'. As he suggests at §4,

> The Eidos, the *pure essence*, can be exemplified for intuition in experiential data - in data of perception, memory, and so forth…

Nevertheless making the matter more complicated in his first *Ideas*, Husserl seems to stipulate that we can appeal to essence without necessarily focusing on 'facticity'. At §4, Husserl suggests that 'pure essence' can be 'equally well exemplified in *data of mere phantasy'* (1983 [1913]). In *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory* (2005 [1898-1925), Husserl regularly uses three phrases to capture the unique character of phantasy: 'as it were' ['gleichsam'], 'as if' ['als ob' more common in later texts], and 'quasi'. Husserl describes phantasy as 'perception "as it were"' (345), claiming that I am conscious of what is phantasied 'as if it were being actually experienced' (659). Returning to §4 of his first *Ideas*, Husserl tells us that, in order

> to seize upon an essence itself, and to seize upon it *originarily*, we can start from corresponding experiencing intuitions, *but equally well from intuitions which are non-experiencing, which do not seize upon factual existence but which are instead 'merely imaginative'.* (1983 [1913]; original italics)

So - while the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses (or what is designated by Husserl here as 'factual existence') can be the springboard by which we glean essence, for Husserl, it need not be: we can rely

on 'phantasy' or 'imagination' (1983 [1913]; original italics).[41] As Husserl asserts:

> *If we produce in free phantasy spatial formations, melodies, social*
> *practices, and the like, or if we phantasy acts of experiencing of liking or*
> *disliking, of willing, etc., then on that basis by 'ideation' we can see*
> *various pure essences originarily and perhaps even adequately: either*
> *the essence of any* spatial shape *whatever, any* melody *whatever, any*
> social practice *whatever*, etc., or the essence of a shape, a melody, etc.,
> of the particular type exemplified. In this connection, it does not matter
> whether anything of the sort has ever been given in actual experience or
> not. (1983 [1913], §4; original italics).

It seems that, in order to discover essence, it is not necessary that we pay attention to the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, contra Thomasson's deflationary reading of Husserl.

It is arguably unsurprising that, for Husserl, we can glean essence without reference to the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, since he seems to attribute a kind of ontological power to thought itself, thereby echoing the theoretical move that we attributed to Fichte in Section 3(a)ii of this chapter. In *Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory*, Husserl tells us that, during 'phantasy',

> the actual object dreamt of (the reality dreamt of), is, in the attitude of
> someone living consciously in the actual present, something actual
> itself; namely, a pure possibility 'actually experienced' grasped, by him.
> (2005 [1898-1925], 660)

Husserl clarifies a 'pure possibility' as a possibility 'in which no individual reality is co-posited as actual': a 'pure possibility' is supposed to be 'anything objective that becomes constituted exclusively by phantasying quasi-experience' (2005 [1898-1925], 661). In this way, Husserl seems to carve out an ontological power for thought: through the 'shift into dreaming', an 'actual positing' is supposed to occur, where we 'construct… an individual quasi-object (2005 [1898-1925], 661) - i.e. essences are 'phantastically' posited into existence as an 'ideal' ontological class that is distinct from what happens to empirically given. Indeed, in §4 of his *Ideas*, Husserl reflects that

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41 While Thomasson acknowledges the role that Husserl assigns to the imagination in grasping essence, she maintains the deflationary reading that:

> the story he [Husserl] gives us has to do with transforming first-order judgments
> about particulars perceived in accord with rules of meaning to judgments in which
> essences (or essence terms) take the objectual (or noun) role, so that we are
> entitled to think or say things 'about essences' and other abstracta. (2017, 447; my
> square brackets, original parentheses)

if, by some psychological miracle or other, free phantasy should lead to the imagination of data (sensuous data, for example) of an essentially novel sort such as never have occurred and never will occur in any experience, that would in no respect alter the originary givenness of the corresponding essences: though imagined Data are never actual Data. (1983 [1913] §4; original parentheses).

For Husserl, essence can be phantastically posited in a way that bears no tether to the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses, though the theoretical possibility is portrayed as an extraordinary one: it would have to be a 'psychological miracle' (1983 [1913] §4).


Perhaps elucidating why it would be a 'psychological miracle' for essence to be phantastically posited without connection to 'facticity' (1983 [1913] §4), Husserl suggests at §142 of his first *Ideas* that

physical thing-determinations are temporal and material ones: there belong to them new rules for possible (thus not arbitrary) sense-completions and, in further consequence, for possible positional intuitions, or appearances. Of which essential contents these can be, under which norms their stuff, their possible noematic (and noetic) apprehensional characteristics, stand, that too is a priori predesignated. (1983 [1913])

So - while Husserl does make theoretical space for us to glean and posit essence without recourse to the 'facticity' of what happens to empirically given to the senses, we can see how Husserl also clamps down on this theoretical space. We consequently find a tension about how to understand the essential structure of consciousness: while Husserl carves out the conceptual possibility for essences to be discovered and even posited without reference to the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses (which suggests idealism), Husserl also puts forward the essences as 'predesignated' by the 'temporal and material' determinations of 'facticity' (§142, 1983 [1913]) (which suggests empirical realism).


In his late philosophy, Husserl develops how exactly 'essences' are supposed to be related to 'facticity'. In the *Husserliana* that spans writing from 1859 to 1938, (1950-2014 [1859-1938]; ['Hua']), we can see Husserl pointedly refer to a 'history' of a life of consciousness (see, e.g., Hua XI, 339, and Hua I, 109, §37, cited in Sebastian Luft's *Subjectivity and Lifeworld in Transcendental Phenomenology* (2011, 107). For Husserl, there are 'essential laws' that govern

the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to an 'individual monad' over time (Hua XI, 336, cited in Luft 2011, 107). He elaborates that

> under the rubric 'monad' we have had in mind the unity of its living becoming, of its history, but its also has its living present and it has become in this present, and directly continues in this becoming. . . . (2001 [1920-26], 637).[42]

In his essay, 'Phenomenological Psychology: Husserl's Static and Genetic Methods (2014), Daniel Sousa clarifies how Husserl uses the terms 'monad' and 'person' interchangeably in relation to 'facticity' - which Sousa illuminates, on behalf of later Husserl, as a 'process of becoming, which constitutes time and is constituted in time', where 'person and world are inseparably interrelated' (32-3). In this way, 'facticity' finds a richer conceptualisation in Husserl's later philosophy: rather than simply signifying what happens to be empirically given to the senses, the term 'facticity' thematises all that happens to be empirically given *to a living person in the world over time.*

According to Husserl, it is the task of 'genetic' phenomenology to reveal the 'laws of genesis' that govern the unfolding of 'facticity' (Hua XI, 336). In his 'Lectures on Transcendental Logic' (2001), delivered between 1920 and 1926, Husserl distinguishes between 'static' and 'genetic' methods of phenomenology. While the 'static' method of phenomenology is supposed to 'attend to the correlations between constituting consciousness and the constituted objectlike formations' and it 'excludes genetic problems altogether', the 'genetic' method of phenomenology is supposed to 'attend… to original becoming in the temporal stream' (637-640). Husserl also refers to the 'genetic' method of phenomenology as the 'phenomenology of monadic individuality' (2001 [1920-26], 640). This explains why Husserl suggests, in his first *Ideas*, that

> I have… to describe, going from stage to stage, the surrounding world in which he grew up and how he was motivated by the things and people of his environment just as they appeared to him and as he saw them. Here we touch upon facticity, in itself beyond our comprehension. (1989, 288, cited in Sousa 2011, 55, fn122)

For Husserl, 'genetic' phenomenology investigates the 'facticity' of what is empirically given to a living person in the world over time, thereby revealing the essential laws that govern its meaningful development. To this extent,

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[42] Souza helpfully cites Husserl's *Ideas II* (1989, 290).

essences, or essential laws, depend on 'the fact that something is given' as an 'absolute fact' ['Tatsache'] (Hua XV, 403): they are 'retrospectively *a posteriori* (they are founded in experience)', while being 'prospectively *a priori* (they represent a precondition for further experiences)', as Andrea Zhok elucidates in his essay, 'The Ontological Status of Essences in Husserl's Thought' (2012, 127; original parentheses). So, while the world does have a 'factical history', for Husserl, he stipulates in his *Theory of World-Apperception* (A VII) that 'the world bears an essential historicity in itself: prior to the question of factical history" (11/8b, from September/October 1932, cited in Luft 2011, 118).[43] As Husserl also suggests, 'human being or world indicate a certain transcendental structure of transcendental subjectivity' (Hua XXXIV, 155, from August 1930, cited in Luft 2011, 115-116).

Elaborating on how we can have a 'transcendental interpretation of the natural manner of life as such and its world' (Hua. XXXIV, 16, cited in Luft 2004, 12), Husserl suggests that the genetic-phenomenologist finds the 'world' as a 'historical formation' that is 'transcendentally implied within me', where I

> am myself implied transcendentally 'objectified' as a monad and have, as such, a socially interconnected coexistence. But in a peculiar manner: I as a transcendental timeless monadic I and my transcendental 'humanity' are in historical development. (A VII 11/8b, from September/ October 1932, cited in Luft 2011, 118-9)

Genetic-phenomenology can transcendentally account for the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to a living person in the world over time, with all of its 'socially interconnected' dimensions. And because the 'facticity' that characterises a person's 'humanity' is in 'historical development', it follows, for Husserl, that 'phenomenology is not at an end' (A VII 11/ 11a, cited in Luft 2011, 123): it must rediscover the 'world' as 'transcendentally implied within me', flowing in idealistic accordance with essential laws (A VII 11/8b, from September/ October 1932, cited in Luft 2011, 118-9). Husserl thus strikes a chord with Fichte, for whom the transcendental project is ongoing.

### 3(b)iii Everyday Realism, and Phenomenology Beyond Husserl

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[43] The original text can be found in Husserl's unpublished manuscripts under the rubric, 'Nachlass' (1935). See Luft 2011, 429 for further discussion.

Reminiscent of how Fichte recognised that realism has jurisdiction in everyday life, Husserl recognises how it is our 'natural attitude' to suppose that '"the" world is always there as reality' (Hua III/ 1, 61, cited in Luft 2011, 47). For Husserl, the 'natural attitude' is a pre-philosophical position, characterised by a realist belief in the mind-independence of the world.[44] Husserl clarifies that

> in the 'natural attitude', the world as universe is in general no theme, thus it is actually not an attitude. The world is pregiven, it is the field of all natural attitudes in the actual thematic sense. (Hua. XXXIV, p. 14, footnote, cited in Luft's essay, '"Real-Idealism": An Unorthodox Husserlian Response to the Question of Transcendental Idealism' (2004, 10)

The 'natural attitude' does not take itself to be a distinct point of view on the world: it simply takes realism for granted.

Also reminiscent of how it is idealism, for Fichte, that accounts for the jurisdiction enjoyed by realism in everyday life, Husserl supposes that 'the natural attitude' is 'a mode of the transcendental attitude', and that it is the task of the 'genetic' phenomenologist 'to cognize' this (Hua XXXIV, text no. 8, 148ff, 154–55, cited in Luft 2011, 374, fn 24). Accordingly, Husserl envisions 'genetic' phenomenology as where I 'segue from the factical world (which for me has the factical meaning of "my and our world")' (Hua XXXIV, 155, from August 1930, original parentheses, cited in Luft 2011, 115-116). 'Questioning back from the pre-given world' of 'facticity', the genetic-phenomenologist is supposed to 'discover'

> worldly historicity as formation of transcendental historicity… instead of the naively constituted human world… (AVII 11/ 11a, cited in Luft 2011, 123)

The 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to a living person in the world over time (i.e. 'worldly historicity') is 'discover(ed)' to be 'transcendental historicity' that adheres to essential laws, thereby idealistically overcoming the 'naively constituted world' of the 'natural attitude', which is supposed to exist mind-independently (AVII 11/ 11a, cited in Luft 2011, 123). As Husserl contends:

> my being as a human and my being as being-in-the-world, in the world

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[44] For Husserl's first account of the natural attitude, see his first *Ideas*, §27ff., as well as his later, more detailed analyses in the manuscript material, published in Hua XV, as well as in Crisis, §§34–37. Cf. also his especially penetrating accounts of attitudes in his research manuscripts especially from the fall of 1926 (Hua XXXIV: 3–109), as helpfully highlighted in Luft 2011, 361, fn 14.

experiencing, thinking, valuing, acting living - into it ['Hineinleben'], is a particular mode of my absolute being and life, a mode of consistently bringing worldly being to validity ((B II 4/ 82a/ b, from 1929/ 30, cited in Luft 2011, 96).

While Fichte recognises how realism has jurisdiction in everyday life, for even the philosopher who grasps the absolute-determination of the self-positing 'I', Husserl portrays genetic-phenomenology as intellectually colouring the experience of everyday life. As Husserl suggests in *Ways to the Reduction* (B I) - she, 'who is a naive human, knows only of the worldly' (B I 5/ 157a, cited in Luft 2011, 98); meanwhile, the genetic-phenomenologist has a special, cognitive insight into reality as it really is:

> Now that I recognize the world . . . in its transcendental meaning of being [Seinssinn]… I no longer live as a natural human, I live, so to speak, in an unnaturalness [Unnatürlichkeit]. But when I now keep my transcendental interest bracketed - I can no longer actually abandon it, at least not its former gains - now, then, I live as a human being and perhaps I do research as a human being, only I do so knowing that all of this has an absolute, a transcendental meaning. (B I 5/ 162a/b, cited in Luft 2011, 99)[45]

It is important to recognise that, although the genetic-phenomenologist is supposed to have knowledge of 'an absolute, a transcendental meaning', for Husserl, she must nevertheless 'live as a human being', and this means living according to the 'natural attitude' of pre-philosophical realism. As Husserl admits, it is the case that I '*return* to the natural attitude', and 'I engage myself again in worldliness' (B I 5/ 160b, cited in Luft 2011, 990; my italics).

As we shall see over the course of this thesis, the method of phenomenology after Husserl is disentangled from his metaphysical fixation on a necessary 'essence' that is abstracted from the contingency of 'facticity'. In Heidegger, 'phenomenology' is re-envisioned as a 'mode of research' where

> objects are to be taken just as they show themselves in themselves, i.e., just as they are encountered by a definite manner of looking toward them and seeing them. (1999 [1923], 58-9)

While Husserl pioneered the phenomenological method with the rallying cry to 'go back to the "things themselves"', as expressed in his *Logical Investigations*

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[45] The original text can be found in Husserl's unpublished manuscripts under the rubric, 'Nachlass' (1935). See Luft 2011, 429 for further discussion.

(2001 [1900/1901], 168), and this entailed the isolation of the essential structure of consciousness, removed from the contingency of 'facticity', Heidegger appropriates the phenomenological method with a view to presenting 'objects… just as they show themselves in themselves'. For Heidegger, this return to the objects 'themselves' entails accordance with how they are perceived, and this shall become clear in Chapter 5 of this thesis. As we shall also see, following Heidegger, in his *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre hails

> philosophy's first course of action… to restore the true relationship
> between… (consciousness) and the world: namely, that consciousness
> is a positional consciousness of the world. (2021 [1943]), 18)

Sartre's iteration of phenomenology shifts away from idealism towards the realism that 'consciousness is a positional consciousness of the world' (2021 [1943]), 18). Indirectly targeting Husserl, Sartre suggests that

> if we assume that the phenomenological reduction is possible - which
> remains to be proved - it will confront us with objects that have been
> placed within parentheses, as the pure correlatives of positional acts,
> and not with impressional residues. But the fact remains that the senses
> remain. I see the green; I touch  this polished and cold marble' (2021
> [1943], 355).

As we shall see in greater detail in Chapter 5, Sartre reappropriates phenomenology with a view to focusing on those 'impressional residues': it is driven by the 'fact that the senses remain' (2021 [1943], 355). In Chapter 6 of this thesis, we shall also see the development of phenomenology in Merleau-Ponty. Indirectly targeting Husserl, Merleau-Ponty says that

> to seek the being of the essence in the form of a second positivity
> beyond the order of the 'facts', to dream of a variation of the thing that
> would eliminate from it all that is not authentically itself and would make
> it appear all naked whereas it is always clothed— to dream of an
> impossible labor of experience on experience that would strip it of its
> facticity as if it were an impurity. (1964, 112)

In Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology pays more attention to 'facticity'. The trajectory of 'facticity' that is relevant to this thesis tracks the shift of phenomenology after Husserl towards the contingency of 'facticity'.

In Fichtean philosophy - discussion over which has dominated most of this chapter - 'facticity' signifies what happens to be empirically given to the senses. For Fichte, 'facticity' involves an everyday phenomenology that seems to undermine the absolute determination of the self-positing 'I', which is nevertheless absolute. According to this nuanced form of reductive idealism, thought has the ontological power to posit reality into existence in a way that

makes reality feel totally otherwise in everyday life, and it is this everyday phenomenology that compels the philosopher to circle back to realism over the course of everyday life.

Fichte's concept of 'facticity' resonates in Husserl's early philosophy, where it thematises all that happens to be empirically given to the senses with an everyday phenomenology that does not readily disclose the phenomenal reality of the essential structure of consciousness. Furthermore, in early Husserl, ontological power seems to be ascribed to thought, which can posit essence without reference to anything like Fichtean 'facticity'; however, this ascription of power seems to lie at odds with the idea that essences are somehow necessarily determined by 'facticity'.

In later Husserl, 'facticity' explicitly emerges, and with richer meaning: it signifies what is empirically given to a living person in the world over time. 'Facticity' is supposed to be governed by 'essential laws' that can be genetically accounted for: essence is *a posteriori* founded on experience, but it is an *a priori* condition for experience, according to which 'facticity' flows. Again, in parallel to Fichte, Husserl maintains our everyday phenomenology as removed from reality: our daily life is supposed to be characterised by the 'natural attitude' that takes reality to be mind-independent. This 'attitude' can, however, be transcendentally accounted for, thereby cognitively attuning the genetic-phenomenologist to the essential laws that idealistically govern 'facticity' in the first place.

Thus - for Husserl and Fichte alike, a transcendental account of 'facticity' rectifies the apparent independence of reality from the mind, which nevertheless characterises the immediate experience of everyday life. Our transcendental relationship with reality is revealed to be limited to the extent that 'facticity' can only be transcendentally accounted for in a way that *feels* otherwise during our immediate experience of it. In this way, 'facticity' has a phenomenological residue, committing us to realism in the context of everyday life at least.

Chapter 4     The Hermeneutic Turn: Tragic Expression in Dilthey

Having found, in the previous chapter, that 'facticity' in Fichte and Husserl entails a commitment to realism in the context of everyday life at least, this chapter follows the hermeneutic turn that 'facticity' takes in Dilthey, delving deeper into that context of everyday life. In *Understanding the Human World* (1883-1911)*,* Dilthey articulates the need for a 'cognitive analysis' to 'resolve the struggle between the knowledge of nature' as it is given in everyday life, and a 'subjective-teleological-idealistic metaphysics' that subsumes what is given in everyday life under transcendental terms (84). He calls for a middle ground between 'a metaphysics of natural science' and a 'totally subjective metaphysics' that would reconcile 'a metaphysics of natural cognition and vital but subjective feeling' (2010 [1883-1911], 84). Arguably inhabiting this middle ground by thematising our relationship with reality, 'facticity' is appropriated by Dilthey with a realist construal to encompass all that is 'irresistably' and 'unfathomably' given to us in in life, thus throwing our expressive powers into question.

This chapter is split into three sections that explore (a) Dilthey's methodological distinction between the natural and the human sciences, where 'facticity is theoretically embedded, (b) the seeds of contemporary phenomenology to be found in Dilthey's account of 'facticity' as a 'force' that is 'unfathomable', and (c) the albeit limited expressive promise that Dilthey associates with the poetry arising from 'facticity'.

### 4(a)    The Natural and the Human Sciences

At a first glance, it is difficult to pin down how exactly 'facticity' features in Dilthey. His *Introduction to the Human Sciences* (1989 [1883]) is bursting with various kinds of 'facts' that are not explicitly associated with 'facticity'. Furthermore, Dilthey's original German veers freely between the 'Tatsächlichkeit' and 'Faktizität', as Eric Sean Nelson helpfully indicates in his essay on 'Empiricism, Facticity, and the Immanence of Life in Dilthey' (2007, 109, fn2). So, to inform our discussion of how 'facticity' features in Dilthey, we should begin by making sense of the methodological framework in which that concept arises.

In *Introduction to the Human Sciences* Wilhelm Dilthey characterises 'science' as 'a complex of propositions' whose

> elements are concepts that are completely defined, i.e., permanently and universally valid within the overall logical system… whose connections are well grounded… in which finally the part are connected into a whole for the purpose of communication. (1989 [1883]), 56-7)

On this terminology, Dilthey distinguishes the well-established 'natural sciences' - that have 'the causal nexus of nature' as their subject matter (1989 [1883], 67) - from the 'human sciences' ('*Geisteswissenschaften*') (1989 [1883], 56). Encompassing both the humanities and the social sciences, the 'human sciences' are supposed to have 'socio-historical reality as their subject matter' (1989 [1883], 56).

Though Dilthey settles for the established German term *Geisteswissenschaften* to capture the 'human sciences', he finds the term unsatisfactory insofar as it incorporates the 'spirit' ('*Geist*'), which is a Hegelian term, abstracted from the 'psycho*physical* unity of human nature' (1989 [1883]), 58; my italics).[46] Dilthey clarifies how 'the human sciences do encompass natural facts and are based on knowledge of nature', since the human being is an 'animal organism' that is bound to both the 'natural environment' and various 'natural functions' (1989 [1883], 66). As the subject matter of the human sciences, socio-historical reality is supposed to be comprised of 'the system of… life-units' - i.e. human-beings (1989 [1883], 67; 80). Furthermore, because of 'the earth's position in the cosmic whole', it follows - for Dilthey - that 'nature as a causal system conditions socio-historical reality' (1989 [1883], 69); as Dilthey suggests,

> the development of the individual, the manner in which the human race has been dispersed throughout the earth, and finally man's historical destiny - all these are conditioned by the cosmic whole. (1989 [1883]), 70)

While Dilthey postulates how the human sciences rest on the natural sciences

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[46] Dilthey makes the same point in *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (2002 [1910], 107-8).

See Robert C. Solomon's essay on 'Hegel's Concept of "Geist"' (1970) for the clarification that what clearly emerges from Hegel's writings is that "*Geist*" refers to some sort of *general consciousness, a single "mind" common to all men*' (642; original italics).

to the extent that socio-historical reality is conditioned by nature, he resists reducing the human sciences to the natural sciences: Dilthey maintains their methodological distinction on the basis of the 'incommensurability' of the 'total lived experience of the human world' and 'all sensory experiences of nature' (1989 [1883], 61), and this 'incommensurability' is grounded in how the two are distinctly related to our lives. Elaborating on the 'source of the difference in our relations to society and to nature', Dilthey writes:

> Social states are intelligible to us from within… our representations of the historical world are enlivened by love and hatred, by passionate joy, by the entire gamut of our emotions… Society is our world. We sympathetically experience the interplay of social conditions with the power of our total being. From within we are aware of the states and forces in all their restlessness that constitute the social system. We are constantly required to respond to what we know about the state of society with dynamic judgements of value, and to transform this state - at least in consciousness - with our restless volitional impulses. (1989 [1883] 88).

In short - socio-historical reality is emphatically *lived*, for Dilthey. In sharp contrast, Dilthey suggests that 'nature' is

> dead for us… Nature is alien to us. It is a mere exterior for us without any inner life. Only the power of our imagination can give it an aura of inner life. For insofar as we are systems of corporeal elements that interact with nature, no inner perception accompanies this interplay. It is for this reason that nature can also give the appearance of being sublimely tranquil. This appearance would vanish if we in fact received in nature's elements, or were compelled to imagine in them, the same interplay of inner forces which we see in society. (1989 [1883] 88).

Juxtaposed against the socio-historical reality that is vitally and passionately lived, nature is portrayed as an opaque, impenetrable backdrop to our socio-historical life. While nature is thought to be open to the 'power of our imagination', it is also thought to be removed from 'inner perception', which Dilthey clarifies as a 'non-sensuous' awareness of a 'psychic fact' (1989 [1883], 374-5): for Dilthey, nature is confined to sensory experience.


While Dilthey upholds the methodological distinction between the human sciences and the natural sciences on the basis of how our lives distinctly relate to what is human and what is natural, he also offers us a picture of life that is strikingly holistic, thus undermining the strict incommensurability between the two. In Book 4 of his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey refers to 'life'

itself as 'lived experience', before elaborating that there are

> forces of life in us and around us that are continually experienced and there is pleasure and pain, as fear and hope, as sorrow at what irresistibly bears down on us and as joy over what opens itself to us from without. (1989 [1883], 330)

Here, Dilthey seems to portray life as a singular site that is suffused with emotion. Subverting the principle stated earlier - that 'nature' is 'dead for us' and devoid of any 'inner life' (1989 [1883] 88) -  Dilthey also suggests that

> feelings… allow us to experience the pressure of the external world in another way than by the sense of touch. (1989 [1883] 330)

Similarly, in his later work, *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (2002 [1910]), Dilthey highlights how

> empathy with nature involves a felt interpretation of it, which, on the basis of the mood of the observer, re-feels something kindred in it. And discovering something in nature by feeling involves a retroactive effect on our mood, based on the already performed interpretation of a natural phenomenon, for instance, of the shining sea or the gloomy forest. (74)

Dilthey thereby carves out a place for our emotions to be involved in our sensory experiences of nature in the same way that they are involved in socio-historical reality, where 'our representations of the historical world are enlivened' by 'the entire gamut of our emotions…' (1989 [1883] 88).


At this point of our discussion - with the grounds for the distinction between the human and the natural sciences thrown into question by holistic picture of reality offered up by Dilthey, we can look to his work for another route to grounding the distinction between the human sciences and the natural sciences. In *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (2002 [1910]), Dilthey contemplates the 'distinction' between what is 'physical' and 'psychical' (101). According to Dilthey in this text, the 'distinction' amounts to no more than an 'abstraction': it is a heuristic device, 'employ(ed)' by the human sciences 'whenever their purposes require it' (2002 [1910], 102). In the 'first givens' of 'lived experiences', the distinction is supposed to dissolve (2002 [1910], 102). So, we can say that the incommensurability between socio-historical reality and all sensory experiences of nature effectively dissolves in the context of lived experience; but - in the context of methodology - their incommensurability is intact as a heuristic device, thus grounding the distinction between the human sciences and the natural sciences. As Dilthey suggests in

Book 6 of his *Introduction to the Human Sciences:*

> in nature we observe only signs for unknown properties of a reality
> independent of us. Human life, by contrast, is given in inner experience
> as it is in itself. (1989 [1883] 435)

However, in *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences* (2002 [1910], Dilthey insists that

> the difference between the human and natural sciences is not just about
> the stance of the subject toward the object; it is not merely about a kind
> of attitude, a method

thereby undermining the purely heuristic incommensurability of socio-historical reality and our sensory experience of nature (2002 [1910], 141).


So - to finally make sense of Dilthey's methodological framework, we can turn our attention to his analysis that

> spirit has objectified itself in the former (the objects of socio-historical
> reality), purposes have been embodied in them, values have been
> actualised in them… A life-relationship exists between me and them.
> Their purposiveness is grounded in my capacity to set purposes, their
> beauty and goodness in my capacity to establish value, their intelligibility
> to my intellect. (2002 [1910], 141; my parentheses)

For Dilthey, socio-historical reality is a distinctly human accomplishment. If we refer back to the *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey tells us that

> History shows human beings evolving in relation to the [various]
> conditions of the surface of the earth and gradually liberating
> themselves from their dependence on nature. Necessity and freedom
> are the two poles of the process. The ground lies in necessity, the goal
> in freedom…. (1989 [1883] 455)

Dilthey draws attention to our changing relationship with nature, highlighting our aspiration to find 'freedom' from it (1989 [1883] 455). This suggests that socio-historical reality and our sensory experience of nature have developed to be incommensurable for us in such a way that warrants the methodological distinction between the natural sciences and the human sciences - i.e. the human world has distinctly emerged from nature over time. This is compatible with the anthropological process suggested by the principle that 'spirit has objectified itself' in the objects of socio-historical reality (2002 [1910] 141).


Thus, we can glean from Dilthey that the contingent incommensurability between socio-historical reality and our sensory experience of nature 'imposes on the study of society certain characteristics which distinguish it thoroughly

from the study of nature' (1989 [1883] 454). In the light of the contingent 'incommensurability' that Dilthey asserts between the 'total lived experience of the human world' and 'all sensory experiences of nature' (1989 [1883]), 61), two distinct - but related - applications of 'facticity' emerge in his philosophy.[47]

### 4(b)    The Seeds of Contemporary Phenomenology:
The Irresistible and Unfathomable Experience of Life

On the one hand, we have the 'facticity' that applies to the sensory experience of nature. Dilthey highlights how different sensory experiences of nature derive from different 'sources' - i.e. sense organs (1989 [1883], 62). Because 'each of the senses is confined to its own sphere of qualities' (1989 [1883], 62), it follows that our different sensory experiences are 'incommensurable' in such a way that an inference drawing from one mode of sensory experience cannot be derived from a different mode of sensory experiences - and so, it follows for Dilthey that we are forced to 'merely accept' our sensory experiences as 'givens' (1989 [1883], 62). To echo Dilthey's example:

> from the (visual) properties of space, we arrive at the notion of matter only by means of the *facticity* of tactile sensations in which resistance is experienced. (1989 [1883], 62; my parenthesis and italics)

Anything that we infer from visual experience is shut off from anything that we can infer from tactile experience. We only 'arrive at the notion of matter' owing to the latter's 'facticity' - i.e. it has a phenomenological character that is given in such a way that 'resistance is experienced'. In *Understanding the Human World* [1883-1911]), Dilthey clarifies the link between facticity and what is given in sensory experience by referring to the 'facticity' of what is 'given' in 'the colour blue, in the note middle C, and in the feeling of pain' (58-9).

Expanding on what is means for 'facticity' to be 'given', we can look to Book 4 of Dilthey's *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, where 'facticity' is portrayed as overpoweringly experienced in terms of 'pressure and counter-pressure' (1989 [1883] 330. Also, in his *Grundlegung der Wissenschaften vom Menschen, der*

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[47] Note Nelson's similar reading that there are 'at least two senses of facticity are at work in Dilthey: (1) the singularity and multiplicity of historical facticity, which defy theoretical comprehension into a systematic totality and require the infinite work of description and interpretation; (2) the givenness of positive factuality, which is the basis, object, and potential limiting condition and other of rational and scientific inquiry' (2007, 113).

*Gesellschaft und der Geschichte* (1997), Dilthey also refers to the 'violence of reality' and the 'force of reality', thereby drawing attention to the phenomenology of what is given: it seems to come from without us; it is imposed (19, cited in Nelson's essay, 'Interpreting Practice: Dilthey, Epistemology, and the Hermeneutics of Historical Life (2008, 116)).

Dilthey adds that the 'facticity' of our sensory experience of nature is 'unfathomable for us' (1989 [1883], 62): all our knowledge about that experience is supposed to be 'limited' to 'the establishment of uniformities of succession and simultaneity' insofar as these 'uniformities' are 'related to our experience' (1989 [1883], 62).[48] So, while the natural scientist can provide a 'hypothesis' as to how an experiential quality - i.e. a sweet taste, or a soprano tone - arises in the mechanical 'process of sensation', Dilthey takes such a hypothesis as

> a calculatory device whereby the changes in reality, as they are given in my experience, are reduced to a particular subclass of changes within that reality corresponding to only a part of my experience (1989 [1883], 63).

For Dilthey, the natural scientist cannot explain away the 'facticity' of the sweet taste or the soprano tone by postulating the mechanistic framework in which those experiential qualities 'factically' arise.[49] Thus, the 'facticity' that applies to sensory experience points to its quality of being unfathomable in addition to its quality of being given. A famous, contemporary version of this argument for the irreducibility of phenomenological content can be found in Frank Jackson's essay, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia' (1982).

On the other hand, we have the 'facticity' that applies to socio-historical reality. Though Dilthey does not explicitly refer to socio-historical reality as 'factical' in his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, we can see how it ties in both the quality of being given and the quality of being unfathomable. In Chapter 9 of Book 1, Dilthey writes that the 'whole socio-historical reality… stands over

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[48] Similarly linking 'facticity' to what is unfathomable in sensory experience, Dilthey suggests that 'there is no way to place abstraction in the place of this facticity', where 'this facticity' refers to the 'facticity' of that 'which stands over us, that which has an effect' - i.e. empirically given sensory experience (1989 [1883]), 355).

[49] A famous, contemporary version of this argument for the irreducibility of phenomenological content can be found in Frank Jackson's essay, 'Epiphenomenal Qualia' (1982).

against the individual', that the 'individual is found within it', and that the individual 'did not make the whole into which he is born' (1989 [1883], 87), thereby drawing attention to how socio-historical reality is given to the 'individual'. Furthermore, Dilthey describes socio-historical reality as 'mysterious', thereby signifying its unfathomable quality (1989 [1883], 62). And in Book 4 of his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey emphasises how socio-historical reality is unfathomable. He suggests that 'we can neither grasp nor express it as it is'. (1989 [1883]), 282). However, Dilthey makes conceptual space for socio-historical reality to be open to interpretation, where

> we fix its partial content…From a reality whose complicated character we inadequately designate as complexity, many-sidedness, multiplicity, we select individual aspects as partial contents. we select individual aspects as partial contents… (1989 [1883]), 282)

So - insofar as 'facticity' thematises what is both given and unfathomable in the realms of socio-historical reality and our sensory experience of nature, it follows that there are two distinct applications of facticity, with one directed at sensory experiences of nature, and the other directed at the lived experience of socio-historical reality - but at their core, their meaning is unified. While socio-historical reality and nature share 'facticity' in terms of how both are unfathomably given, Dilthey maintains their incommensurability on the basis of how our lives contingently relate to them in what resembles an inchoate form of contemporary phenomenology. According to Dilthey, socio-historical reality is open to interpretation; by contrast, sensory experience can only be naturalistically reduced - and 'facticity', which spans over both, straddles this bifurcation. The significance of 'facticity' is that whatever is unfathomably given in sensory experience of nature can only be lost in naturalistic reduction. Meanwhile, whatever is unfathomably given in socio-historical reality requires endless interpretation, all of which would contribute to what Dilthey himself laments in the *Introduction to the Human Sciences* as an 'immeasurable multiplicity of human utterances about life and nature [which] overwhelms us and torments us…' (1989 [1883]) 487).

In *Understanding the Human World*, Dilthey portrays our limited expressive power over 'facticity' as a 'tragedy': in Chapter 3, on 'The Striving for Cognition that Proceeds from Life itself, and its Tragedy', Dilthey reflects that

thought can indeed shed light on life, but it cannot go behind life. Thus a tragic contradiction arises. According to this, thought aspires to comprehend the systematic context in which life is formed, even though thought emerges within the context of life and accordingly can never grasp behind that from which it originates (2010 [1883-1911], 83).

As Dilthey elaborates, 'thought cannot go behind life because it is an expression of it'; 'what life is remains an insoluble riddle', and finally

life remains unfathomable as a datum from which thought itself emerges and behind which, therefore, it cannot go. (2010 [1883-1911], 72).

'Facticity' perpetually inspires and tragically eludes our hermeneutic practice, for Dilthey: the sensory/lived experience of it being unfathomably given in nature/ socio-historical reality continues to unravel, being tremendously and wondrously *felt* - all in defiant resistance to a precise description.


4(c)    The Promise of Poetry


Though it amounts to a tragedy, for Dilthey, that we cannot perfectly express the 'facticity' of what is unfathomably given to us in either the sensory experience of nature or our lived experience of the socio-historical world, Dilthey finds a source of hope and comfort in the expressive medium of poetry.


Clarifying the expressive power of poetry over the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in life, Dilthey writes in *Poetry and Experience* (1985) that

facticity has always proved to be the ultimate fresh and firm nucleus of every poetic work. Therefore, a poetic work always contains more than can be expressed in a general proposition, and its gripping force comes precisely from this surplus. (137)

In encompassing all that is unfathomably given to us in life, 'facticity' is 'fresh' as it is continually arises over life, and it is 'firm' in the sense of it being irrevocably given to us in the immediate moment of living existence; insofar as it is supposed to form the 'ultimate nucleus' of 'every poetic work', 'facticity' is the focal point of poetry; it lies at the crux of poetry, directing the practice. Hence, for Dilthey, poetry has expressive depth; it has a 'surplus' of meaning which gives it a special 'gripping force' over the 'facticity' that resists being contained in a 'general proposition' (1985, 137). As Dilthey suggests, 'the sciences of nature and of society' are limited to 'the causal nexus of all appearances as

their object', and so, they cannot 'grasp' the 'meaning of life and of external reality' (1985, 170). I take this special 'meaning' to relate to the 'facticity' of what happens to be unfathomably given to us in life: Dilthey tells us that it can 'only be grasped individually and subjectively through life-experience' of 'facticity' itself (1985, 170). For Dilthey, it is 'literature' that

> gives an intensified expression to the experiences of life and of the heart. (1985, 170)

Dilthey consequently celebrates the prospect that

> through the eyes of the great poets we perceive the value and connectedness of things human. (1985, 251)

According to Dilthey, the special expressive power of poetry over the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in life has an 'ontological dimension', as Jacob Owensby identifies in his essay on 'Dilthey and the Historicity of Poetic Expression' (1988). On Owensby's reading of Dilthey, 'expression' is itself a 'necessary part of the life process by which the relations inherent in lived experience are made more determinate' (1988, 503). There is textual evidence for this reading for Dilthey. In *Poetry and Experience* (1985), Dilthey tells us that 'lived experience generates its own expressions' (1985, 229); the poet is thought to provide us with an expression of the 'most vivid experience of the interconnectedness of our existential relations in the meaning of life' (1985, 238), since those 'lived relations' actually '*govern* the poetic imagination and come to expression in it' (1985, 242; my italics): the poet is, after all, caught up in the 'facticity' of the 'relations' that are unfathomably given to her in life. As Owensby clarifies, 'the poet already exists in a world of lived relations' (1985, 504). So, when 'considered ontologically', as Owensby puts it, the 'poetic expression' is, for Dilthey,

> the embodiment and articulation of the interaction of a number of socio-historical, meaning-constituting systems. (1988, 505)

Clarifying the ontological dimension of poetry in *Poetry and Experience*, Dilthey suggests that

> the relation between feeling and image, between meaning and appearance, does not originate either in the taste of the listener or in the imagination of the artist. Rather, it emerges in the life of the human mind, which expresses its content in gestures and sound, transposes the power of its impulses to a beloved form or to nature, and enjoys the

> intensification of its existence in images of the conditions that produced
> it. In such moments beauty is present in life itself, existence becomes a
> celebration, and reality becomes poetry. (1985, 121)

'Reality becomes poetry', for Dilthey, to the extent that the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in life harbours its own poetic expression: 'the relation between feeling and image, between meaning and appearance' (i.e. what underlies the 'gripping force' of poetry over 'facticity' (1985, 137)), are supposed to find origin in the 'life of the human mind' (1985, 121), which is characterised by the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given over life. And so, Dilthey tells us that

> the poetic world is there before any particular event inspires the poet
> with the conception of a work and before he writes down its first line.
> (1985, 243)

In postulating 'the poetic world', Dilthey highlights the ontological import of poetry: 'the poetic world' is where 'facticity' is unfathomably given to us during our lived experience of reality, from which more poetry is apt to arise. 'The poetic world' is already 'there' - prior to a work of poetry, prior to even 'any particular event' that inspires the practice of poetry - insofar as the 'poetic world' is, after all, the world of the poet: it is where she *lives*, experiencing the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to her. As Owensby clarifies, 'the creative act' of poetry is

> one of bringing this world to a level of greater determinacy in
> language… The poetic expression is not the externalization of
> something internal; rather, it is the articulation of a nexus of lived
> relations within which the poet is already situated, but of which he was
> initially aware only indeterminately. (1988, 504)

The poetic expression of 'facticity' finds manifestation through the poet's lived experience of 'facticity' itself.


Returning to *Understanding the Human World*, we can see Dilthey put 'poetry' on a par with 'metaphysics' and 'religions' insofar as they are all supposed to

> work to establish what is stable and valuable in the nexus of the world
> that shall assign what is fleeting, changeable in a life enveloped by
> obscurity, with a lasting satisfaction through a relation to something
> stable and valuable. Thus they seek to relate life to a more
> encompassing and valuable system of all that is actual. (2010
> [1883-1911], 83)

We can take what is 'fleeting, changeable in a life enveloped by obscurity' to signify the 'facticity' of what is unfathomably given to a person over the course

of their life. Making this connection clearer in the chapter on 'The Philosophy of Reality and of Life' in his *Introduction to the Human Sciences*, Dilthey suggests that

> the poet, the prophet, and the philosopher seek to interpret and elucidate the same reality, the same life. This reality is intelligible, accessible to our thought. It is significant in it vitality, and yet at the same time *unfathomable*. (1989 [1883], 464; my italics)

For Dilthey, as he sets out in the passage from *Understanding the Human World* indicated just before, it is the case that 'all poetry, all metaphysics, and all religions' aim at what is 'stable and valuable', hoping to theoretically relate 'facticity' to 'a more encompassing and valuable system of all that is actual' (2010 [1883-1911], 83).


Elaborating later on in *Understanding the Human World*, Dilthey draws attention to the limits of religion, poetry and metaphysics. While religion and poetry are specifically thought to

> develop… concepts of life that provide infinitely more valuable and rich subjective expressions of the consciousness of the life-unit and its contexts,

Dilthey still supposes, less optimistically, that

> every experience of life, every concept of life, indeed every religious symbol that completes life is ambiguous and subjective. (2010 [1883-1911], 84)

Furthermore, Dilthey suggests that 'every artwork offers a vital truth', and yet artwork is posited to be 'inscrutable like nature itself', since 'it is indeed a part of life, it is ambiguous, inexplicable' (2010 [1883-1911], 84). So, while poetry can expressively manifest the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in life, for Dilthey, it still cannot overcome such 'facticity', capturing it perfectly, once and for all. Regarding the downfall of realist metaphysics and the wider human sciences, Dilthey tells us that

> every practical concept of natural cognition, every life concept about the nature of the law, of the economy or of the state needs to be oriented and stabilised by other concepts. (2010 [1883-1911], 84)

Our conceptual framework is inescapably self-referential, dooming us to an endless project of cross-referencing that inhibits a direct reference to the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in life.

Insofar as poetry, like religion and metaphysics, ultimately fails to overcome the

'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in life, Dilthey conjectures in his chapter on 'The Philosophy of Reality and of Life' in his *Introduction to the Human Sciences* that

> it follows from this unfathomability of life that it can be expressed only in metaphor. To recognise this, to explain the reasons for it, to show its consequences, is the beginning of a philosophy that can really do justice to the great phenomena of poetry, religion and metaphysics, since its grasps the ultimate core of their unity. They all express the same life, some in imagery, others in dogmas, still others in concepts. (1989 [1883], 464)

Insofar as he envisions a method of philosophy that could draw on the device of the 'metaphor' in order to express the 'unfathomability of life' that is technically 'facticity', Dilthey seems to echo the call of 'The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism' for 'philosophers' to 'possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet' (1996 [1796/97], 4), which is a call we shall see more fully answered by the end of this thesis.

To conclude this chapter, we can say that 'facticity' emerges in Dilthey against the background of a methodological distinction between the human sciences and the natural sciences, which is supposed to have contingently developed, according to how socio-historical reality has emerged from nature over time. While 'facticity' applies to our sensory experience of nature, making it unfathomably given to us in such a way that is inevitably lost in the naturalistic reduction, 'facticity' also applies to our lived experience of socio-historical reality, which is unfathomably given to us in such a way that perpetually inspires - and tragically eludes - hermeneutic practice.

Dilthey considers poetry a promising route to expressing the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given to us in general life, and this is linked to the ontological dimension of expression itself, which arises out of 'facticity', making it more - but never completely - determinate. With 'facticity' thus irrevocably and perpetually given to us as unfathomable, Dilthey envisions the kind of philosophy that would utilise the poetic device of the metaphor in order to capture 'facticity'. As Dilthey anticipates in *Understanding the Human World*,

> wanting to comprehend life itself through a universally valid and necessary mode of thought, we are driven forward, according to the

inscrutable nature of life as the ultimate datum that is the very condition of all cognition, from one cognitive position to another… (2010 [1883-1911], 84)

As we shall see, the desire to 'comprehend life itself' propels the concept of 'facticity' to resurface in the philosophical theories of Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, refining the theoretical import of the 'inscrutable nature of life'. Following the development of 'facticity' from one of these 'cognitive position(s)' to the other, we shall discover in the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty the marriage between philosophy and poetry that Dilthey envisions: 'facticity' emerges as a powerful philosophical symbol for our relationship with reality, driven by the phenomenology that Dilthey arguably prefigures.

Chapter 5     The Inexplicable Contingency of Being Human and the
                    Constitution of Existential Meaning

This chapter follows the phenomenological method as it explicitly unravels in the existentialist reflections of Heidegger and Sartre, where 'facticity' reaches a higher level of abstraction that is centred on 'being' itself. Focusing on the significance of 'facticity' in Heidegger's lectures from the early 1920, Section 5(a) of this chapter is split into three subsections that conceptually link 'facticity' to (i) 'Dasein', and its temporal character, (ii) the project of hermeneutics and the phenomenon of 'fallenness', which together make 'facticity' ambiguous, and (iii) the ongoing role of phenomenology in accounting for 'facticity'. Focusing on the significance of 'facticity' in Heidegger's later *Being and Time*, Section 5(b) of this chapter is split into three subsections that conceptually link 'facticity' to (i) the distinction that Heidegger makes between what is 'ontological' and what is 'ontical', (ii) 'thrownness' and 'projection', and (iii) being lost and finding meaning in death. Focusing on the significance of 'facticity' in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, Section 5(c) of this chapter is split into three subsections that examine (i) Sartre's quarrel with Heidegger on death, (ii) Sartre's portrayal of 'facticity' as a 'haunting' of 'evanescent contingency', and (ii) Sartre's crucial 'condemnation' of us to be free.

        5(a)    Heidegger's Lectures from the Early 1920s

5(a)i   'Dasein' and Its Temporal Character

A systematic account of 'facticity' can be found in the manuscript of a lecture course that Heidegger delivered in the summer of 1923 at the University of Freiburg. The manuscript is titled *Ontology - The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1999). From the outset of Part One, which is titled 'Paths of Interpreting the Being-There of Dasein in the Awhileness of Temporal Particularity', Heidegger puts forward 'facticity' as the 'designation we will use of the character of the being of "our" "own" *Dasein'* (1999 [1923], 5).

'Dasein' literally translates to 'there-being', deriving from the German verb *dasein*, 'to exist', or 'to be there', or 'to be here'. According to Michael Inwood's *Very Short Introduction to Heidegger* (2019), '"Dasein" is Heidegger's way of referring both to the human being and to the type of Being that humans have' (23). In the entry on 'Martin Heidegger' in *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Michael Wheeler clarifies how 'Dasein' is 'not to be understood as "the biological human being"… nor is it to be understood as "the person"' (2011), and this reading of Heidegger seems apt. In Chapter Two of *Ontology - The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, which is called 'The Idea of Facticity and the Concept of "Man"', Heidegger writes that 'we avoided on principle the expression "human" Dasein or the "being of man" (1999 [1923], 17). Heidegger explains later on in the same chapter that,

> in choosing a term to designate this region of being and appropriately demarcate it, we have avoided the expression "human Dasein", "human being", and will continue to do so. In all its traditional categorial forms, the concept of man fundamentally obstructs what we are supposed to bring into view as facticity. (1999 [1923], 22)

For Heidegger, the 'fundamental definitions of human being' are 'dogmatically theological' (1999 [1923], 23).[50] This is problematic, for Heidegger, insofar as 'radical philosophical reflection on human being' must 'refrain from an explicit and especially a hidden, *inexplicit* orientation to already defined ideas of human being.': it must not 'already' have 'an answer' to the question of what a human being is (1999 [1923], 24; original italics). Hence, Heidegger writes that,

> in being defined with the terms "our own", "appropriation" "appropriated", the concept of facticity - Dasein, 'which is in each

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50 For Heidegger's full discussion, see pages 17-24 (Ibid.).

case our *own* - initially contains nothing of the ideas of 'ego', person, ego-pole, center of acts. Even the concept of the self is, when employed here, not to be taken as something having its origin in an 'ego'! (1999 [1923], 24; original italics)

As Heidegger makes clear, 'Dasein' is supposed to operate at a conceptual level that delves beyond what is contained by mere 'ego', or personhood. In being 'our own', 'Dasein' is supposed to apply to us as individuals in a profoundly, abstract sense.

Offering a clue to the 'region of being' that is supposed to be 'demarcate(d)' by 'Dasein', and thus characterised by 'facticity' (1999 [1923], 22), Heidegger tells us that

the being-there of our own Dasein is what it is precisely and only in its temporally particular 'there', its being 'there' for a while. (1999 [1923], 24).

A given, temporal context seems to be central to Heidegger's concept of 'Dasein'. Heidegger also tells us that the 'the fundamental phenomenon of facticity' is 'temporality', and he indicates that this is to be understood 'not a category, but (as) an existential' (1999 [1923], 25; my parentheses). This drives home the idea that, in being central to 'Dasein', its given, temporal context is crucially *lived*, and this elucidates the sense in which it is 'our own': 'temporality' is an 'existential', relevant to us as individual, living entities (1999 [1923], 25. The theme of a given, temporal context as crucially lived arises at the beginning of Part One of *Ontology - The Hermeneutics of Facticity*: having put forward 'facticity' as the 'designation we will use of the character of the being of "our" "own" *Dasein'* (1999 [1923], 5), Heidegger continues:

More precisely, this expression means: *in each case*, 'this' *Dasein* in its being-there *for a while at the particular time...* (1999 [1923], 5; original italics)

Emphasising the temporal dimension of the 'facticity' that characterises 'Dasein', Heidegger offers us the forceful exclamation: 'Being - transitive: to be factical life!' (1999 [1923], 5): we are the kind of entities that answer to 'Dasein' insofar as we have our own lived experience of 'being' in its temporal flow.

Owing to the temporal dimension of the 'facticity' that characterises 'Dasein' on Heidegger's analysis, we can appreciate the perspective on Dilthey's

philosophy that Heidegger offers in *Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview* (2002 [1925]): Heidegger recognises how

> Dilthey penetrated into that reality, namely, human *Dasein* which, in the authentic sense, is in the sense of historical being. He succeeded in bringing this reality to givenness, defining it as living, free, and historical. (2002 [1925], 159)

As seen in the previous chapter, Dilthey sets up 'facticity' so that it signifies what is distinct in that it is unfathomably given to a human-being *over time* in the contexts of socio-historical reality and the sensory experience of nature nature. While 'facticity' straddles the methodological bifurcation between the natural and human sciences, for Dilthey, it remains crucially temporal. Hence - on Heidegger's reading - Dilthey effectively 'penetrated' into the 'reality' of 'Dasein' as a 'historical being' (2002 [1925], 159). More critically, however, Heidegger observes that Dilthey

> did not pose the question of historicity itself, the question of the sense of being, i.e., concerning the being of beings. (2002 [1925], 159)

Insofar as 'facticity' in Dilthey is caught between overarching methodological demarcations, it fails to reach the higher level of abstraction that Heidegger envisions, centred on the fundamental 'question of the sense of being' itself (2002 [1925], 159). Returning to Nelson's 2014 essay, we can find the same reading that

> though Dilthey unfolded historical worldly life as the basis for all the sciences, this remained inadequate for Heidegger insofar as it did not reach the ontological questions of the being of that life and of being as such. (116)

As we shall soon see, in *Being and Time* (1962 [1927]), Heidegger puts forward the 'task of ontology' as to 'explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief' (1962 [1927], 49), before explicitly embarking on that 'task' overlooked by Dilthey.

### 5(a)ii   Hermeneutics and Fallenness: The Ambiguity of 'Facticity'

While the 'facticity' of all that is 'unfathomably' given to us in the lived experience of socio-historical reality is open to (limited) interpretation, and the equivalent 'facticity' that applies to the sensory experience of nature can only be naturalistically reduced, for Dilthey, Heidegger in his 1923 lecture recasts

'hermeneutics' as the '*interpreting of facticity*' in its broad, abstract sense - where 'facticity' temporally characterises the being that is 'Dasein' (1999 [1923], 11; original italics). For Heidegger, 'hermeneutics' is where 'facticity is being encountered, seen, grasped, and expressed in concepts' (1999 [1923], 11) - i.e. 'Dasein' in its temporal character is manifest in the hermeneutic project. Seeming to drive home his opposition to Dilthey's system of hermeneutics that is designed to be directed towards only the 'facticity' of all that is unfathomably given in the sphere of socio-historical reality, Heidegger makes the corrective remark that 'hermeneutics is not an artificially devised mode of analysis which is imposed on Dasein' (1999 [1923], 12). For Heidegger, the

> relationship here between hermeneutics and facticity is not a relationship between the grasping of an object and the object grasped, in relation to which the former would simply have to measure itself. (1999 [1923], 12)

On Heidegger's conception, 'facticity' does not function as the target, regulative ideal, or 'object' of hermeneutics (1999 [1923], 12). Instead, Heidegger puts forward 'interpreting' as 'itself a possible and distinctive how of the character of being of facticity' (1999 [1923], 12). On this picture, 'interpreting is a being which belongs to the being of factical life itself' (1999 [1923], 12): the point seems to be that hermeneutics does not transform us into neutral bystanders, surveying 'facticity' from outside of it; instead, hermeneutics is part and parcel of the 'facticity' temporally characterising 'Dasein'. As Heidegger emphatically suggests:

> It is from out of it, on the basis of it, and with a view to it that facticity will be interpretively explicated. The conceptual explicata which grow out of this interpretation are to be designated as existentials. (1999 [1923], 12)

Hermeneutics is born out of lived existence, making interpretation itself existential, according to Heidegger.


We can see how the close relationship that Heidegger postulates between hermeneutics and 'Dasein' emerges from his analysis of 'Dasein' itself. Returning to the beginning of his 1923 lecture, Heidegger tells us that 'facticity' is the 'designation' for 'Dasein… insofar as it is, in the character of its being, *"there" in the manner of be-ing'* (1999 [1923], 5; original italics) - where 'Being-there *in the manner of be-ing*' is itself elucidated as

> not, and never, to be there primarily as an *object* of intuition and definition on the basis of intuition, as an *object* of which we merely take

cognisance and have knowledge. (1999 [1923], 5; original italics)

As temporally characterised by 'facticity', 'Dasein' is supposed to resist objectification. Heidegger makes clear:

> Being is itself never the possible object of a having, since what is at issue in it, what it comes to, is itself: *being.* (1999 [1923], 5; original italics)

Rather than being contained, or fixed, 'Dasein' is supposed to concern the process of 'being' itself, which is crucially ongoing (1999 [1923], 5). As Heidegger reminds us, later on in his 1923 lecture, 'existence is never an "object"'; instead, 'existence' is itself 'being - it is there only insofar as in each case a living "is" it' (1999 [1923], 15).


Insofar as 'Dasein' resists objectification, and it is centred on the process of being itself, it follows - for Heidegger - that hermeneutics

> has the task of making the Dasein which is in each case our own accessible to this Dasein itself with regard to the character of its being, communicating Dasein to itself in this regard. (1999 [1923], 11)

According to Heidegger, hermeneutics is where Dasein turns inwards, taking notice of itself as it temporally flows, as opposed to comprising a project of interpretation that views 'Dasein' from without, at a theoretical distance. The above quotation is lifted from Section 3 of Part One of Heidegger's 1923 lecture, whose title pithily renders '*hermeneutics as the self-interpretation of facticity*', and this is itself illuminating (1999 [1923], 11). Further on in his 1923 lecture, Heidegger clarifies that

> what hermeneutics is really meant to achieve is not merely taking cognizance of something and having knowledge about it, but rather an existential knowing, i.e., a being [ein Sein]. It speaks *from out of* interpretation and for the sake of it. (1999 [1923], 14; original italics).

It is clear that, on Heidegger's conception, hermeneutics is necessarily bound up with existence itself: the project of interpretation is inherent to 'Dasein' as it is temporally characterised by 'facticity'. Hence why Heidegger says that 'the initial hermeneutical engagement' actually

> arises and develops out of a fundamental experience, and here this means a philosophical wakefulness, in which Dasein is encountering itself. The wakefulness is philosophical - this means: it lives and is at work in a primordial self-interpretation which philosophy has given of itself and which is such that philosophy constitutes a decisive possibility and mode of Dasein's self-encounter. (1999 [1923], 14; original italics).

The hermeneutic project springs from 'philosophical wakefulness', where

'Dasein' interprets itself in the process of being (1999 [1923], 14). 'Philosophy', for Heidegger, is thus 'a mode of knowing which is in factical life itself' (1999 [1923], 14).

Elaborating on how hermeneutics is to proceed, Heidegger stipulates that 'interpretation begins in the "today"' (1999 [1923], 14).  For Heidegger,

> a defining feature of the awhileness of temporal particularity is the today - in each case whiling, tarrying for a while, in the present, in each case our own present. (1999 [1923], 24)

While 'facticity' temporally characterises 'Dasein', this 'temporal particularity' is itself 'define(d)' by the 'today'. On its technical conception, the 'today' is to be

> fully defined in its ontological character as a how of facticity (1999 [1923], 25; original parentheses)

In its ontological sense delineated by Heidegger, the 'today' determines 'how' the 'facticity' temporally characterising Dasein is itself manifest, in specific terms relating to our socio-historical context. Heidegger also tells us that 'the today' is to be understood 'ontologically' - as

> the present of those initial givens which are closest to us, every-one, being-with each-other - 'our time'. (1999 [1923], 24)

The 'today' is supposed to be constituted by 'those initial givens' that pervade society via our cultural norms, characterising 'our time' (1999 [1923], 24). Heidegger offers further indication of the 'today' in its ontological sense as

> the definite and average state of understanding from out of which and on the basis of which philosophy lives and back into which it speaks… 1999 [1923], 14)

In this special, ontological sense delineated by Heidegger, the 'today' is characterised by the prevailing conceptual framework, or hegemony, 'the definite and average state of understanding' (1999 [1923], 14). In virtue of the 'today', it is a 'basic phenomenon' of 'Dasein' that it 'moves', in a technical sense, 'around in a definite mode of discourse about itself', which Heidegger technically designates as 'talk' (1999 [1923], 25). Heidegger tells us that

> this discourse 'about' itself is the public and average manner in which Dasein takes itself in hand, holds onto itself, and preserves itself. What lies in this talk is a definite comprehension which Dasein in advance has of itself… This talk is thus the how in which a definite manner of Dasein's having-been interpreted stands at its disposal. (1999 [1923], 25).

The conceptual hegemony of the 'today' is crystallised in the 'public and average' technically-designated 'talk', according to which 'Dasein' has a

prevailing self-interpretation that is, as Heidegger emphasises, inherent to 'Dasein': as Heidegger says, its

> being-interpreted is not something which would have been added to Dasein, externally applied to it, affixed to it, but rather something into which it has come of itself, from out of which it lives, on the basis of which it is lived (a how of its being). (1999 [1923], 25-6).

Insofar as 'being-interpreted' is inherent to 'Dasein', Heidegger clarifies that it is not supposed to be 'explicitly experienced'; it is 'not explicitly present'; instead, 'it is a how of Dasein from out which and on the basis of which the Dasein of each is lived' (1999 [1923], 26). In other words, the being-interpreted that is inherent to Dasein implicitly characterises lived experience through 'innocuous initial "givens" of the day', and this 'publicness' is put forward as a mode of the 'everyone' (1999 [1923], 26). To this extent, we can make sense of Heidegger's claim that 'this "everyone" is precisely *the* "no-one" which circulates in factical Dasein and haunts it like a spectre' (1999 [1923], 26; original italics). For Heidegger then, it is this implicit and pervasive condition of 'Dasein's being-interpreted' that 'circumscribes the terrain on the basis of which Dasein can raise questions and make claims' - i.e. it is the point of departure for the hermeneutic project (1999 [1923], 26). As Heidegger suggests, the prevailing self-interpretation of 'Dasein' is 'what gives to the "there" of the factical being-there of Dasein its character of being-oriented in a definite manner' (1999 [1923], 26) - and it is only from this prior orientation of 'facticity' that a hermeneutics of 'facticity' can get off the ground.

Insofar as hermeneutics is supposed to spring from the prevailing conceptual hegemony of the 'today' which determines 'how' facticity temporally characterises 'Dasein' (1999 [1923], 25), this is linked to Heidegger's technical concept of 'fallenness'. Having recognised that 'Dasein speaks about itself and sees itself in such a such a manner', Heidegger portrays its prevailing hegemony of self-interpretation as 'only a mask which it holds up before itself in order not to be frightened by itself', and similarly a

> mask in which factical Dasein lets itself be encountered, in which it comes forth and appears before itself as though it really 'were' it - in this masquerade of the public manner of being-interpreted (1999 [1923], 26).

By referring to the prevailing hegemony of self-interpretation as a 'mask' and a 'masquerade', Heidegger indicates its falsity. As a 'phenomenon of fallenness',

the 'everyone' is supposed to be connected to 'something definite and positive' as Heidegger tells us: it is a 'how of factical Dasein' (1999 [1923], 14). So, in temporally characterising Dasein, 'facticity' is supposed to be determined by the 'today' to be 'fallen' in the technical sense that the prevailing self-interpretation of Dasein involves falsity, and it is concurrently this 'today' that is supposed to form the starting point of a hermeneutics of 'facticity' (1999 [1923], 14). As Heidegger suggests, 'what Dasein happens to encounter itself' in the hermeneutic project is 'in each case the definite and decisive possibility of concrete facticity' (1999 [1923], 15): self-interpretation springs from 'concrete facticity', which is itself determined by the prevailing conceptual hegemony of the 'today', thus involving 'fallenness' (1999 [1923], 15).

Related to the concept of 'fallenness', it is the case, for Heidegger, that

> as Dasein's historical possibility which is in each case definite and for a
> while at the particular time, existence has as such already been ruined
> when one works with the idea that it can be made present in advance
> for philosophical curiosity to get a picture of it. (1999 [1923], 15)

Since hermeneutics only gets off of the ground insofar as 'existence' is 'made present in advance' via the prevailing hegemony of interpreting 'Dasein', it follows that 'existence has as such already been ruined', for Heidegger (1999 [1923], 15). I take Heidegger's use of the term 'ruin' in this context to elude to his technical concept of 'ruinance' ['Ruinanz'], which finds formulation in 1921-2 lecture course on 'Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research'. Here, Heidegger says that

> ruinance takes time away, i.e. from out of facticity it tries to destroy the
> historical. The ruinance of factical life has this fully actualizing sense of
> the destruction of time. (2001 [1985], 140)

As emphasised throughout this discussion so far, 'facticity' temporally characterises the being that is 'Dasein', for Heidegger. 'Ruinance' is thus where 'Dasein' loses sight of its temporal dimension, thus effectively accomplishing a 'sense of the destruction of time' (2001 [1985], 140). As Scott M. Campbell clarifies in *The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language* (2012), the 'crucial meaning' of 'ruinance' is that it is an

> indication of the way that life is so engrossed within its world that it fails
> to accept its own temporal-historical constitution. (97)

Returning to the passage from Heidegger's 1923 lecture ('as Dasein's historical possibility which is in each case definite and for a while at the particular

time…' (1999 [1923], 15)), we can ascertain that 'existence' has 'already been ruined' in the sense that it has negated its temporal dimension: it is only made 'present in advance for philosophical curiosity' through the hegemony of self-interpretation that lingers on from the past, thereby relating Dasein to what was fixed in the past, as opposed to what is present (2001 [1985], 140). Clarifying the role of 'ruinance' in Heidegger, Campbell suggests that the 'concealment of life's historicality is what Heidegger will call "ruinance" and, later, "fallen-ness"' (2012, 6).

Owing to the related roles of 'ruinance' and 'fallen-ness' in his analysis of the 'facticity' that temporally characterises the being that is Dasein, Campbell identifies 'a fundamental ambiguity in Heidegger's depiction' of 'facticity', as presented in his lectures from the early 1920s (2012, 211). Insofar as 'facticity' forms the point of departure for the hermeneutic project of Dasein interpreting itself, as Heidegger's lectures from the early 1920s indicates,: it follows that 'factical life is a dynamic source of vitality', for Heidegger, as Campbell points out (2012, 211). Indeed, in his 1921-2 lecture course, Heidegger himself says that

> the historical is still there in life, it is in all ruinance always factical (the historical as constitutive [Konstitutivum] of facticity). (2001 [1985], 140; original parentheses)

While 'life' involves 'ruinance' to the extent that Dasein self-interprets according to the prevailing hegemony that undermines the 'facticity' of its temporal dimension, the 'historical' is 'still there in life', for Heidegger - i.e. its temporal dimension remains manifest, or decipherable. As Campbell highlights on behalf of Heidegger, life is 'at other times… a source of fallenness… and ruinance' (2012, 211): since the 'facticity' that temporally characterises Dasein is particularised by the fixed, prevailing hegemony of the 'today', its temporal dimension is made obscure. Hence Heidegger even says that life is 'hazy' ('diesig'), and that 'facticity' is 'always falling into it in new ways' (2001 [1985], 88). 'Facticity' is consequently ambiguous: in temporally characterising 'Dasein', it has promise as the point of departure for the hermeneutic project of Dasein's self-interpretation, but - in being determined by the conceptual hegemony of the 'today' - 'facticity' simultaneously eclipses the temporality of 'Dasein'.

### 5(a)iii Ongoing Phenomenology

With 'facticity' made ambiguous by the issue of the 'today' offering a self-interpretation of 'Dasein' that determines its temporal character in a given context all the while creating the false impression of 'Dasein' being atemporal, Heidegger envisions the hermeneutic project of self-interpretation as an ongoing, phenomenological method - or rather, a phenomenological 'path which the hermeneutics of facticity attempts to travel' (1999 [1923], 57). Returning, for a moment, to *Wilhelm Dilthey's Research and the Struggle for a Historical Worldview*, where Heidegger suggests that Dilthey 'did not pose the question of historicity itself, the question of the sense of being, i.e., concerning the being of beings', Heidegger continues that

> it is only since the development of phenomenology that we are in a position to pose this question clearly. (2002 [1925], 159)

While Dilthey was arguably attuned to an inchoate form of phenomenology to the extent that his concept of 'facticity' emphasised lived experience, Heidegger makes the role of phenomenology explicit for his hermeneutics of 'facticity', by which 'Dasein' self-interprets. As Heidegger suggests in his 1923 lecture:

> what is crucial is that the today be lifted up into the starting point of analysis in such a manner that a characteristic of being already becomes visible in it. This characteristic then needs to be made transparent and as such moved up into the phenomenal sphere of facticity. (1999 [1923], 25)

So, while the 'today' offers a stagnant characterisation of 'Dasein', it is supposed to be the 'starting point' of the hermeneutic project of Dasein's self-interpretation in such a way that discloses 'a characteristic of being' (1999 [1923], 25), thus ultimately illuminating its temporality. For Heidegger, this 'characteristic of being' needs to be 'made transparent' - i.e. brought into attention - and 'moved up into the phenomenal sphere of facticity', wherein Dasein enjoys lived experience.

It is important to address in more detail how Heidegger's phenomenological method differs from Husserl's. As already seen, according to Husserl, it is the task of 'genetic' phenomenology as a 'rigorous science' to reveal the 'laws of genesis' or 'essential laws' that govern the unfolding of 'facticity' (Hua XI, 336).

On Heidegger's view, by contrast, it would be a 'misunderstanding of what it (phenomenology) can and should do' if we 'hold up' before the discipline 'such an extreme ideal of evidence as "intuition of essences" (1999 [1923], 12; my parentheses). Furthermore, Heidegger considers it 'unphenomenological' to 'bring (lawlike) mathematics into play as the model for all scientific disciplines' (1999 [1923], 56; my parentheses). Heidegger offers the corrective that

> one should approach a scientific discipline not as a system of propositions and grounds for justifying them, but rather as something in which factical Dasein critically confronts itself and explicates itself. (1999 [1923], 56)

To grasp what it means for 'factical Dasein' to 'critically confront' and 'explicate' itself (1999 [1923], 56), we should examine in greater detail how Heidegger formulates phenomenology. For Heidegger, and in contrast to Husserl, 'phenomenology' is

> nothing other than a mode of research, namely: addressing something just as it shows itself and only to the extent that it shows itself. (1999 [1923], 56)

Rather than taking phenomenology as a method for deciphering the laws that underpin the 'facticity' of what is given, as Husserl set out the discipline, Heidegger envisions phenomenology as more closely adhering to 'something just as it shows itself and only to the extent that it shows itself' (1999 [1923], 56). Similarly, he suggests that, through the 'distinctive how of research' that is phenomenology, 'objects come to be defined just as they give themselves' (1999 [1923], 57), and that

> objects are to be taken just as they show themselves in themselves, i.e., just as they are encountered by a definite manner of looking toward them and seeing them. (1999 [1923], 58-9)

Insofar as Heidegger formulates a phenomenological method for the hermeneutics of 'facticity' that pays strict attention to its object, Heidegger reminds us that this attention grows out of the 'today', according to which 'Dasein' is given a prevailing self-interpretation. As Heidegger says, in reference to the 'seeing' that is relevant to phenomenology,

> this seeing arises out of and on the basis of a being-oriented regarding the objects, an already-being-familiar with these beings. Being familiar with them is for the most part the sedimented result of having heard

about them and having learned something about them. (1999 [1923], 58-9)

Phenomenology, for Heidegger, must consider its object with respect to how we are 'familiar' with it, which results from 'having heard' and 'having learned' about it in the context of the 'today', with its hegemony of concepts and values (1999 [1923], 58-9).

Rather than simply rehearsing or crystallising its object through the lens of conceptual hegemony characterising the 'today', the phenomenological method - as the 'path of the hermeneutics of facticity' - is and 'calls itself interpretation', according to Heidegger (1999 [1923], 60). This means, for Heidegger, that phenomenology does not

> merely depict matters in terms of the aspect under which they first appear. All interpreting is an interpreting with respect to something, on the basis of it, and with a view to it. The forehaving (Vorhabe) which is to be interpretively explicated, must be put into the context of the object and seen there. One must step away from the subject matter initially given and back to that on which it is based. The progress of hermeneutics must arise out of looking at its object itself. (1999 [1923], 60)

The 'forehaving' is Heidegger's technical reference to the conceptual hegemony of the 'today': it is the starting point for the phenomenological 'path of the hermeneutics of facticity' (1999 [1923], 60), from which self-interpretation of 'Dasein' can be refined by being 'put into context' and traced 'back to that on which it is based' (1999 [1923], 60).

The phenomenological method that Heidegger formulates for the hermeneutics of 'facticity' is supposed to be ongoing. Heidegger suggests that

> philosophy has no mission to take care of universal humanity and culture, to release coming generations once and for all from care about questioning, or to interfere with them simply through wrongheaded claims to validity. Philosophy is what it can be only as a philosophy of 'its time'. 'Temporality'/Dasein works in the how of its being-now. (1999 [1923], 14)

In springing from the conceptual hegemony of the 'today' in order to interpret and reinterpret 'Dasein', phenomenology is not supposed to be complete: the

self-interpretation of 'Dasein' is an ongoing project, and this is not a problem for Heidegger. In his 1921-22 lectures, clarifies that, though there is an 'intrinsic indeterminacy of the object "my life" (Unbestimmtheit des Gegenstandes mein Leben)', it is the case that this 'indeterminacy'

> is not a deficiency in method, rather it ensures the free and ever new
> means of getting at factical life in its temporal, forward development; this
> is an indeterminacy which does not blur its object, but rather secures for
> it the possibility of being genuinely encountered and indicated without
> ever being pre-determined. (2001 [1921-2], 61).

In following a phenomenological method, a hermeneutics of 'facticity' must forever chase 'factical life in its temporal, forward development' in order to properly capture its ongoing dimension (2001 [1921-2], 61). Hence, Heidegger claims that

> secure objectivity is insecure flight from facticity, and that objectivity
> misunderstands itself insofar as it believes that its objectivity increases
> because of that flight. (2001 [1921-2], 90).

Insofar as 'facticity' temporally characterises 'Dasein', it follows that the self-interpretation of 'Dasein' must be ongoing, thus making any appeal to 'secure objectivity' fallacious and far-removed from the naturally fluid object of a hermeneutics of 'facticity'. As though admonishing Fichte, for whom the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given forms a problem for a philosophical system that aims to ground reality according to a necessary principle, Heidegger suggests, also in his 1921-2 lectures, that

> to be sure, it is most comfortable to place oneself outside of the world
> and outside of life directly into the land of the blessed and the absolute. I
> just do not understand why one philosophizes at all, when one is already
> 'that far along'. (2001 [1921-2], 175)

It seems that, for Heidegger, any claim to absolute determinacy defeats the purpose of philosophy.


Returning to his 1923 lecture, we can see Heidegger emphasise the ambiguity of 'facticity', and its import for the phenomenological method of a hermeneutics of 'facticity', which finds greater explication in his later work: Heidegger anticipates that

> Should it turn out that to be in the mode of covering-itself-up and self-
> veiling belongs to the character of being of the being [Seinscharakter

des Seins] which constitutes the object of philosophy, and indeed not in an accessorial sense but in accord with the character of its being, then the category of 'phenomenon' will become a truly earnest matter. The task involved - making it a phenomenon - will become phenomenological in a radical sense. (1999 [1923], 60).

As we shall see with more clarity in the next section, the ambiguity of 'facticity' turns out to be essential to 'Dasein', with the 'mode of covering-itself-up' in salient 'accord with the character of its being', thus making phenomenology 'radical' in the sense of tracking such ambiguity. (1999 [1923], 60).

To conclude this section on 'facticity' in Heidegger's lectures from the early 1920s, we can say that 'facticity' temporally characterises 'Dasein'. A hermeneutics of 'facticity' springs from the conceptual hegemony of the 'today', which offers an interpretation of 'Dasein' that cloaks its temporal nature, making 'facticity' require ongoing, phenomenological attention.

### 5(b)    Heidegger's *Being and Time*

### 5(b)i    Ontological Versus Ontical

In *Being and Time* (1962 [1927]), Heidegger embarks on the 'task of ontology' to 'explain Being itself and to make the Being of entities stand out in full relief' (1962 [1927], 49). Heidegger distinguishes what is 'ontical' ('ontisch') from what is 'ontological' ('ontologisch') (1962 [1927], 11): while the former is a mode of inquiry that is concerned with entities and facts about them, the latter is concerned with being itself.[51] Over the course of *Being and Time*, the task of 'ontology' is 'treated *phenomenologically*' (1962 [1927], 50; original italics). As in Heidegger's lectures from the early 1920s, phenomenology is put forward as 'primarily a *methodological conception*', or rather, as a 'how' of 'research' (1962 [1927], 50). Clarifying what exactly phenomenology is supposed to 'let us see', Heidegger suggests that it makes a 'phenomenon' out of - or rather, it makes manifest - that which otherwise 'lies *hidden' qua* the '*Being* of entities' (1962 [1927], 59; original italics). Through 'interpretation', phenomenology is

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[51] Presumably, for Heidegger, the hermeneutic project of Dilthey is confined to the level of what is 'ontical' insofar as it failed to 'pose the question of historicity itself, the question of the sense of being, i.e., concerning the being of beings' (2002 [1925], 159).

supposed to enlighten

> the authentic meaning of Being, and also those basic structures of
> Being which Dasein itself possesses. (1962 [1927], 62)

At the heart of the 'basic structures' that constitute 'Dasein' (1962 [1927], 62), the concept of 'facticity' continues in *Being and Time* to reach a high level of abstraction about human existence, and this reflects what is 'ontological' as opposed to 'ontical'. Heidegger suggests that

> the 'factuality' of the fact [Tatsache] of one's own Dasein is at bottom
> quite different ontologically from the factual occurrence of some kind of
> mineral, for example. Whenever Dasein is, it is as a Fact; and the
> factuality of such a Fact is what we shall call Dasein's 'facticity'. (1962
> [1927], 82)

'Facticity', for Heidegger, is technically differentiated from mere 'factuality': while mere 'factuality' would characterise something ordinarily empirical that is simply given to us in the world - like 'some kind of mineral' - 'facticity', by contrast, is invoked by Heidegger to characterise the entity who has the kind of special being that answers to the notion of 'Dasein' - i.e. humans. Hence, Heidegger stipulates that 'every Dasein always exists factically' (1962 [1927], 321). Highlighting the distinction between 'facticity' and 'factuality', Heidegger reminds us that 'facticity is not the factuality of the *factum brutum* of something present-at-hand ('Vorhandenheit')' - i.e. in characterising 'Dasein', 'facticity' is not given in the same way as ordinary, empirical phenomena, which - as mere 'factuality' - 'become… accessible only if we ascertain it by looking at it' (1962 [1927], 174). By contrast, for Heidegger, 'the "that-it-is" of facticity never becomes something that we can come across by beholding it' - i.e. in characterising 'Dasein', 'facticity' reaches a higher level of abstraction than the 'factuality' of mere, empirical phenomena: 'facticity' must be conceived of as an 'existential attribute', and this elucidates the sense in which 'facticity' is crucially *lived out* (1962 [1927], 174). The distinction between 'factuality' and 'facticity' thus capitalises on the distinction that Heidegger posits between what is 'ontical' ('ontisch') and what is 'ontological' ('ontologisch') (1962 [1927], 11), where the former is a mode of inquiry that is concerned with entities and facts about them, while the latter is concerned with being itself. Emphasising the existential significance of 'facticity', Heidegger tells us that 'existing is always factical' and that 'existentiality is essentially determined by facticity' (1962

[1927], 236). Furthermore, to drive home the point of distinction between 'facticity' and mere 'factuality', Heidegger tells us that 'Dasein's facticity… is essentially distinct from the factuality of something present-at-hand', before clarifying how 'existent Dasein does not encounter itself as something present-at-hand within-the-world (1962 [1927], 321): in being characterised by 'facticity', 'Dasein' does not take itself to be akin to ordinary, empirical phenomena, which it can consider from a theoretical distance. As opposed to, e.g. 'some kind of mineral' (1962 [1927], 321), the entity that answers to Heidegger's  locution - 'Dasein' - is the kind of entity who *lives*.

Marking a continuation and a clarification of a theme that we identified in his lectures from the early 1920s, Heidegger in *Being and Time* puts forward 'facticity' as characterising 'Dasein' in a way that is specifically temporal. He suggests that,

> in its factical Being, any Dasein is as it already was, and it is 'what' it already was. It is its past, whether explicitly or not. And this is so not only in that its past is, as it were, pushing itself along 'behind' it… Dasein 'is' its past in the way of its own Being, which, to put it roughly, 'historizes' out of its future on each occasion. (1962 [1927], 41)

Insofar as 'Dasein' is 'factical', it follows that it has a temporal dimension, emerging as present from its past and flowing into its future. Heidegger clarifies, later on in *Being and Time*, that

> 'as long as' Dasein factically exists, it is never past ['vergangen'], but it always is indeed as already having been, in the sense of the 'I am-as-having been'. And only as long as Dasein is, can it be as having been. (1962 [1927], 376)

For Heidegger, the 'past' remains relevant to 'Dasein' in its present moment to the extent that it existentially 'is… as already having been' (1962 [1927], 376) - i.e. the significance of its past is not effaced with the progress of time through life. Heidegger adds that 'the primary existential meaning of facticity lies in the character of "having been"' (1962 [1927], 376), thereby elucidating the crucial role of the past in determining the existence of 'Dasein'. Similarly, Heidegger suggests that 'Dasein factically has its "history"… because the Being of this entity is constituted by historicality' (1962 [1927], 434) - i.e. insofar as 'facticity' temporally characterises 'Dasein', it follows that 'Dasein' has 'history', for Heidegger; it is 'constituted by historicality', thus making its temporal dimension essential.

5(b)ii   'Thrownness' and 'Projection'


Marking an implicit continuation of a theme that we identified in his lectures from the early 1920s, Heidegger in *Being and Time* seems to echo the role of the contextual 'today' in establishing an initial self-interpretation of 'Dasein'. Heidegger says that,

> whatever the way of being it may have at the time, and thus with whatever understanding of Being it may possess, Dasein has grown up both into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself: in terms of this it understands itself proximally and, within a certain range, constantly. (1962 [1927], 41)

The idea that 'Dasein' has 'grown up both into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself' draws us back to the ontological concept of the 'today', as seen in his lectures from the early 1920s: through the prevailing hegemony of values and ideas, the 'today' is supposed to offer a context that conceptually grounds the temporal character of 'Dasein', giving it some definite 'way of being' and some preliminary 'understanding of Being' (1962 [1927], 41).


Heidegger in *Being and Time* also arguably develops the role of the 'today' in his lectures from the early 1920s so that context not only conceptually grounds the temporal character of 'Dasein', thereby giving 'Dasein' an initial self-interpretation at a fixed moment in time, it also delineates the future possibilities of 'Dasein'. Heidegger indicates that

> by this understanding (given by the 'today'), the possibilities of its Being are disclosed and regulated. Its own past - and this always means the past of its 'generation' - is not something which follows along after Dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it.   (1962 [1927], 41; my parentheses)

The potential of 'Dasein' is supposed to be 'disclosed and regulated' by its prevailing self-understanding that is implicit in the 'today'. According to Heidegger, 'Dasein' inherits 'the past of "its generation"' as 'its own past' in such a way that has a causal connection to its future (1962 [1927], 41).


Through the technical notion of 'thrownness', Heidegger crystallises the idea that 'Dasein' is conceptualised in the context of the 'today' in a way that determines its possibilities. Heidegger stipulates that

>we call it the 'thrownness' of this entity (Dasein) into its 'there'; indeed, it
>is thrown in such a way that, as Being-in-the-world, it is the 'there'. The
>expression 'thrownness' is meant to suggest the facticity of its being
>delivered over. (1962 [1927], 174; my parentheses)

For Heidegger, 'Dasein' is 'thrown' in the sense that it has a context: it is 'in-the-world'; the temporal character of its 'facticity' is 'delivered over' in that it is made socio-historically and geographically specific (1962 [1927], 174). As Heidegger elucidates,

>in thrownness [it] is revealed that in each case Dasein, as my Dasein
>and this Dasein, is already in a definite world and alongside a definite
>range of definite entities within-the-world. (1962 [1927], 264, my
>parentheses)

The 'thrownness' of 'Dasein' contextualises the temporal character of its 'facticity', immersing it in the environment of a given, 'definite world' (1962 [1927], 264). Similarly, Heidegger suggests that, insofar as 'Dasein' is 'thrown into its "there"', it follows that 'every Dasein has been factically submitted to a definite "world" - its "world"' (1962 [1927], 344). Furthermore, we are told that, 'as thrown, it (Dasein) has been submitted to a "world", and (it) exists factically with Others' (1962 [1927], 435; my parentheses). The repeated use of the word 'submitted' suggests that 'Dasein' is 'thrown' into a given world without a say of its own, and Heidegger makes this point explicit. He says that, 'as being, Dasein is something that has been thrown; it has been brought into its "there", but not of its own accord' (1962 [1927], 329).

Insofar as 'Dasein' just is 'thrown' into a context, its possibilities are duly delineated: Heidegger claims, 'as something thrown, Dasein has been thrown into existence. It exists as an entity which has to be as it is and *as it can be*.' (1962 [1927], 321; my italics). Making clearer the conceptual connection between the 'thrownness' of 'Dasein' and its potential, Heidegger stipulates that, 'as thrown, Dasein is thrown into the kind of Being which we call "projecting"' (1962 [1927], 185). Clarifying what 'projecting' technically means here, Heidegger says that

>projecting has nothing to do with comporting oneself towards a plan that
>has been thought out, and in accordance with which Dasein arranges its
>Being. On the contrary, any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected
>itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. (1962 [1927], 185)

For Heidegger, 'projection' is a non-reflective matter; it is a necessary structure of 'Dasein', according to which 'Dasein' moves forward in time - with its

possibilities delineated by its having been 'thrown'. With the forward motion of 'Dasein' technically designated as 'projection', Heidegger explains that,

> because of the kind of Being which is constituted by the existentiale of projection, Dasein is constantly 'more' than it factually is, supposing that one might want to make an inventory of it as something-at-hand and list the contents of its Being, and supposing that one were able to do so. But Dasein is never more than it factically is, for to its facticity its potentiality for-Being belongs essentially. Yet as Being-possible, moreover, Dasein is never anything less; that is to say, it is existentially that which, in its potentiality-for-Being, it is not yet. (1962 [1927], 185-6)

'Projection' is an 'existentiale' that belongs to the structure of 'Dasein', making its possibilities a part of its very being in such a way that exceeds its status as a mere 'factual' thing in the world. Insofar as 'Dasein' possesses its possibilities as part of itself, 'Dasein' remains 'factical' in its temporal character, for 'facticity' technically encompasses the 'potential' of 'Dasein', for Heidegger (1962 [1927], 185-6).


Helping to clarify the connection between 'thrownness' and 'projection', Heidegger tells us that,

> as something factical, Dasein's projection of itself understandingly is in each case already alongside a world that has been discovered. From this world it takes its possibilities, and it does so first in accordance with the way things have been interpreted by the 'they'. This interpretation has already restricted the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable-that which is fitting and proper. (1962 [1927], 239)

As Heidegger indicates, 'Dasein's projection' is 'already alongside a world that has been discovered', meaning that 'projection' springs from the 'world' into which 'Dasein' is technically 'thrown' (1962 [1927], 239). This 'world' is supposed to demarcate the 'possibilities' of 'Dasein', as arising from the context of the 'today', which is shaped by the prevailing conceptual framework, or hegemony, of the 'they' - as laid out in Heidegger's lectures from the early 1920s and arguably developed in the passage above and throughout *Being and Time* itself more widely. By virtue of 'the way things have been interpreted by the "they"', the 'possibilities' of 'Dasein' are supposed to be limited, as Heidegger tells us (1962 [1927], 239). Emphasising the connection between 'thrownness' and 'projection' later on in *Being and Time*, Heidegger writes that 'Dasein' 'is not a free-floating self-projection; but its character is determined by thrownness' (1962 [1927], 321). So, rather than being arbitrary or whimsical, the

'projection' of 'Dasein' is tethered to the context of the world into which it is irrevocably 'thrown'.

Having shown how the scope of 'projection' for 'Dasein' is limited by its being 'thrown' into the world, Heidegger stresses the import of this in the day-to-day life of 'Dasein'. He says that

> this levelling off of Dasein's possibilities to what is proximally at its everyday disposal… results in a dimming down of the possible as such. The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquillizes itself with that which is merely 'actual'.  (1962 [1927], 239)

The 'levelling off of Dasein's possibilities to what is proximally at its everyday disposal' captures its limited avenues for 'projection', as determined by its being 'thrown' into the world (1962 [1927], 239). According to Heidegger, this results in a 'dimming down of the possible as such', and I take this to mean that 'Dasein' is insensitive to its sheer potential in the abstract sense of such 'potential' (1962 [1927], 239). As Heidegger clarifies, 'the average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities' (1962 [1927], 239): while the 'average everydayness' picks out the typical way that 'Dasein' exists in day to day life, the notion of 'concern' ('Sorge') captures the state of 'Dasein' as being engaged, or taking issue, with the world. So - insofar as its possibilities for 'projection' are limited by its being 'thrown' - it seems that 'Dasein', in day to day life, is engaged with the world in a limited way that is 'blind to its possibilities' - i.e. in the dark about its sheer potential. According to Heidegger, 'Dasein' consequently 'tranquillises itself with that which is merely "actual"' (1962 [1927], 239), and this suggests that 'Dasein' settles for the world it is 'thrown' into. Heidegger also refers to 'Dasein' as exhibiting a 'tranquillised "willing" under the guidance of the "they"' (1962 [1927], 239), thereby portraying 'Dasein' as subdued in its 'projection', having being 'thrown' into a context that has a certain, conceptual hegemony, and which determines the possibilities for such 'projection'.

### 5(b)iii  Being Lost and Finding Meaning in Death

With its possibilities for 'projection' profoundly limited by its state of being 'thrown' into the concrete world, 'Dasein' can retreat into the world of fantasy, as

Heidegger recognises. In the case of 'tranquilised "willing"' (1962 [1927], 239), where 'Dasein' seems to be resigned to its limited avenues for 'projection', Heidegger tells us that

> one's Being towards possibilities shows itself for the most part as mere wishing. In the wish Dasein projects its Being upon possibilities which not only have not been taken hold of in concern, but whose fulfilment has not even been pondered over and expected. On the contrary, in the mode of mere wishing, the ascendancy of Being-ahead-of-oneself brings with it a lack of understanding for the factical possibilities. When the world has been primarily projected as a wish-world, Being-in-the-world has lost itself inertly in what is at its disposal; but it has done so in such a way that, in the light of what is wished for, that which is at its disposal (and this is all that is ready-to-hand) is never enough. (1962 [1927], 239; original parentheses)

For Heidegger, 'Being towards possibilities' and 'being-ahead-of-oneself' are essential structures of 'Dasein', and this is coherent with the temporal character of its 'facticity' (1962 [1927], 239). According to Heidegger, for the 'Dasein' who is 'tranquilised' in the face of her limited scope of projection, the essential structure of 'Being towards possibilities' manifests in 'mere wishing' (1962 [1927], 239). Heidegger posits the 'wish' as involving a serious disengagement with the world, where the essential structure of 'being-ahead-of-oneself' manifests for 'Dasein' as a 'lack of understanding for the factical possibilities' (1962 [1927], 239). Though the 'Dasein' who 'wishes' does remain structurally 'in-the-world' by virtue of the kind of entity it is, such a 'Dasein' is portrayed by Heidegger as 'lost' and stagnantly 'inert' in the 'wish-world'; she is removed from the avenues for 'projection' that are at her 'disposal' and which involve what is immediately 'ready-for-hand' - i.e. open to use/interaction (1962 [1927], 239). All the more, according to Heidegger, the 'Dasein' who loses herself to the 'wish-world' is dissatisfied with the avenues for projection that are given to her in the concrete world: they are, for the wishful 'Dasein', 'never enough' (1962 [1927], 239).

While 'Dasein' can, in the face of her limited avenues for projection, retreat into the 'wish-world' (1962 [1927], 239), she can also lose herself in the socio-historical world as it is given. Heidegger refers to 'Dasein's lostness in the "they"' as where (1962 [1927], 312)

> that factical potentiality-for Being which is closest to it (the tasks, rules, and standards, the urgency and extent, of concernful and solicitous

> Being-in-the-world) has already been decided upon. The 'they' has always kept Dasein from taking hold of these possibilities of Being. The 'they' even hides the manner in which it has tacitly relieved Dasein of the burden of explicitly choosing these possibilities. (1962 [1927], 312; original parentheses)

In being 'lost' to the 'they' whose conceptual hegemony pervades everyday life, the avenues for the projection of 'Dasein' are 'already… decided'; they are fixed in a way that is supposed to elude 'Dasein'  (1962 [1927], 312). Heidegger clarifies that

> proximally and for the most part the Self is lost in the 'they'. It understands itself in terms of those possibilities of existence which 'circulate' in the 'average' public way of interpreting Dasein today. (1962 [1927], 435)

It seems that, according to Heidegger, 'Dasein' is usually 'lost in the 'they', insofar as its self-interpretation and 'projection' are limited to the conceptual hegemony that is characteristic of its time. Heidegger also tells us that

> Dasein's facticity is such that as long as it is what it is, Dasein remains in the throw, and is sucked into the turbulence of the 'they's' inauthenticity. (1962 [1927], 223).

It is clear that, for Heidegger, the 'facticity' that temporally characterises 'Dasein' necessarily involves its being 'thrown' into a certain context, which is itself shaped by the prevailing conceptual hegemony of the 'today', as circulated amongst the 'they' of society, providing a preliminary self-interpretation of 'Dasein' (1962 [1927], 223). In Heidegger's portrayal of 'Dasein' as 'sucked into the turbulence of the "they's" inauthenticity', we can recognise the echoed motif of 'Dasein's lostness in the "they"' (1962 [1927], 312). Later on in *Being and Time*, this motif is explicitly repeated when Heidegger tells us that

> Dasein gets dragged along in thrownness; that is to say, as something which has been thrown into the world, it loses itself in the 'world' in its factical submission to that with which it is to concern itself. (1962 [1927], 400)

Heidegger portrays what is technically the 'projection' by which 'Dasein' moved forward in life as 'Dasein' being 'dragged along', thereby rendering 'Dasein' subdued. Heidegger attributes the subdued state of 'Dasein', where it is defeatedly 'dragged along', to the way 'it loses itself in the "world" (1962 [1927], 400). In this passage, the 'lostness' of 'Dasein' is spelt out in terms of 'factical submission to that with which it is to concern itself', and I take this to mean that 'Dasein' is 'lost' to the extent that she accepts a life with a limited scope of things to engage with (1962 [1927], 400).

Developing what it means for 'Dasein' to be 'lost' in the 'they' (1962 [1927], 312), Heidegger continues to thematise the link between 'facticity' and 'fallenness', as seen in his lectures from the early 1920s. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger postulates an 'equiprimordial connection with Dasein's facticity and its falling' (1962 [1927], 274). Elaborating on this 'connection', Heidegger writes in an earlier passage that,

> in falling, Dasein itself as factical Being-in-the-world, is something from which it has already fallen away. And it has not fallen into some entity which it comes upon for the first time in the course of its Being, or even one which it has not come upon at all; it has fallen into the world, which itself belongs to its Being. Falling is a definite existential characteristic of Dasein itself. (1962 [1927], 220)

It seems that the 'facticity' that temporally characterises 'Dasein' necessarily involves it 'falling'. Clarifying what he means by 'fallenness' in this context, Heidegger suggests that,

> in falling, we flee into the 'at-home' of publicness, we flee in the face of the 'not-at-home'; that is, we flee in the face of the uncanniness which lies in Dasein - in Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-world, which has been delivered over to itself in its Being. The uncanniness pursues Dasein constantly, and is a threat to its everyday lostness in the 'they', though not explicitly. (1962 [1927], 234)

In this passage, Heidegger makes clear the link between the 'falling' of 'Dasein' and its 'everyday lostness in the "they"' (1962 [1927], 234). Heidegger portrays 'falling' as a kind of escape: the 'fallen Dasein' is one who 'flee(s)' from the perturbing 'uncanniness' of its being 'thrown' into the given world. I take the notion of 'uncanniness' to draw on the strangeness or inexplicability of 'thrownness": there is arguably something inexplicable, eerie or bizarre about the specific and unique way in which we are each 'thrown' into the world. Hence, Heidegger portrays 'Dasein in its uncanniness' through the image of it being 'thrown Being-in-the-world as the "not-at-home"' (1962 [1927], 321), thereby illuminating the sense in which the 'uncanniness' of being 'thrown' makes 'Dasein' feel as though it does not necessarily belong or feel comfortable in the world that is given. According to Heidegger, and returning to an analysis of the passage above, it is 'in the face of the "not-at-home" - i.e. the discomfort - of having been 'thrown' into a given world that the 'fallen Dasein' seeks refuge in the conceptual hegemony of its time; it finds itself 'at-home' in 'publicness', reassuringly wrapped up in its 'everyday lostness in the "they"' (1962 [1927],

234). However, for Heidegger, the 'uncanniness' of 'thrownness' nevertheless 'pursues Dasein constantly, and (it) is a threat to its everyday lostness in the "they", though not explicitly' (1962 [1927], 234; my parentheses): 'Dasein' is portrayed as continually stalked by the 'uncanniness' of her having been 'thrown' into the world.[52] Thus, for Heidegger - aside from inviting recourse to the 'wish-world' - 'facticity' involves the 'uncanniness' of being inexplicably 'thrown' into a given world, 'fallenness' in response to such 'uncanniness', and relatedly 'lostness' in the conceptual hegemony of its time.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger continues to thematise the ambiguity of 'facticity', which arose as an issue in his lectures from the early 1920s. Heidegger suggests that the

> characteristic of Dasein's Being-this 'that it is' is veiled in its 'whence' and 'whither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly… (1962 [1927], 174)

I take the 'whence' and 'whither' of Dasein to pick out the context that Dasein is 'thrown' into. According to Heidegger, 'Dasein' is ambiguous insofar as it is obscured by having a context - i.e. it is 'veiled'; however, 'Dasein' is also revealed through this context. As Heidegger says, it is 'disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly' (1962 [1927], 174). Highlighting the ambiguity of 'facticity', Heidegger suggests that 'facticity is… taken up into existence, even if proximally it has been thrust aside' (1962 [1927], 174). While 'facticity' is 'taken

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[52] Heidegger tells us that 'uncanniness reveals itself authentically in the basic state-of-mind of anxiety' (1962 [1927], 321). Expanding on this point, Heidegger suggests that the 'everydayness of this fleeing' by Dasein from 'uncanniness'

> shows phenomenally that anxiety, as a basic state-of-mind, belongs to Dasein's essential state of Being-in-the-world, which, as one that is existential, is never present-at-hand but is itself always in a mode of factical Being-there. (1962 [1927], 234)

'Anxiety' is a structural part of existing, for 'Dasein' as Heidegger postulates it, since 'Dasein' is not 'present-at-hand' in the sense that it can be contemplated or analysed from a theoretical distance; instead, 'Dasein' is supposed to be 'always in a mode of factical Being-there': 'Dasein' has the temporal character of 'facticity', which is crucially lived out 'in-the-world', thus resisting analysis from a neutral standpoint, as though 'Dasein' could view itself from without (1962 [1927], 234). Hence, Heidegger tells us that 'the entire phenomenon of anxiety shows Dasein as factically existing Being-in-the-world' (1962 [1927], 235): 'anxiety' is just part and parcel of 'factical… existence' (1962 [1927], 235). As Heidegger says, *the world as such is that in the face of which one has anxiety* (1962 [1927], 231; original italics).

Omitting further discussion into 'anxiety' for the sake of brevity, I confine the rest of this discussion to the significance of 'uncanniness' itself, since Heidegger does say that it is 'in' the phenomenon of 'anxiety' that 'Dasein is taken all the way back to its naked uncanniness, and becomes fascinated by it' (1962 [1927], 394)

up into existence' insofar as 'Dasein' is 'thrown' into a context from which it necessarily 'projects' itself while stalked by the 'uncanniness' of having even been 'thrown', 'Dasein' is also 'thrust aside' to the extent that it obscures itself, 'falling' when faced with the 'uncanniness' of being 'thrown' by getting comfortably 'lost' in either the 'wish-world', or the conceptual hegemony that is characteristic of its time (1962 [1927], 239, 174). Hence Heidegger tells us that it is 'only in so far as Dasein has been disclosed has it also been closed off' (1962 [1927], 265): in being temporally characterised by 'facticity', which is made socio-historically and geographically definite by its being 'thrown' into the world, 'Dasein' is both revealed and hidden, meaning that it finds manifestation through its worldly limitations (1962 [1927], 265).

Giving us a more fine-grained picture of how 'facticity' is ambiguous, Heidegger suggests that - while 'facticity' is a source of 'uncanniness' about the inexplicability of being 'thrown', which can result in 'fallenness' and 'lostness' in the 'they' or the 'wish-world' on the one hand, as we have noted - it can also involve 'resoluteness' ('Entschlossenheit'). As Heidegger formulates it, '"resoluteness" signifies letting oneself be summoned out of one's lostness in the "they"' (1962 [1927], 345): the 'resolute' 'Dasein' does not succumb to the comfort of the conceptual hegemony of its time when faced with the 'uncanniness' of having been inexplicably thrown into a given world. Heidegger elaborates:

> in resoluteness the issue for Dasein is its own-most potentiality-for-Being, which, as something thrown, can project itself only upon definite factical possibilities. Resolution does not withdraw itself from 'actuality', but discovers first what is factically possible; and it does so by seizing upon it in whatever way is possible for it as its own-most potentiality-for-Being in the "they". (1962 [1927], 346)

According to Heidegger, the 'resolute' 'Dasein' is engaged with her given avenues for projection, as delimited by her being 'thrown' into the world. In contrast to the wishful 'Dasein' - who retreats into the world of fantasy when confronted by her limited scope of projection, finding dissatisfaction in the concrete world as it is given - the 'resolute' 'Dasein' seems to come to terms with its given limitations: it 'does not withdraw itself' from the 'actuality' of concrete reality; it instead 'discovers first what is factually possible' and it 'seize(s) upon' its potential within the confines established by the conceptual

hegemony of the 'they', to echo Heidegger (1962 [1927], 346).

Offering more clarity into what 'resoluteness' is supposed to entail, Heidegger suggests that

> one would completely misunderstand the phenomenon of resoluteness if one should want to suppose that this consists *simply in taking up possibilities which have been proposed and recommended*, and seizing hold of them. The resolution is precisely the disclosive projection and determination of what is factically possible at the time. To resoluteness, the indefiniteness characteristic of every potentiality-for-Being into which Dasein has been factically thrown, is something that necessarily belongs… The existentiell indefiniteness of resoluteness never makes itself definite (1962 [1927], 345; my italics).

It seems that, rather than marking pure fulfilment of a given avenue for projection, the 'resolution' of 'Dasen' is supposed to crucially manifest the scope of what is 'factically possible at the time' for 'Dasein' (1962 [1927], 345). While the 'potentiality-of-Being' of 'Dasein' is 'indefinite' insofar as there are different avenues for projection that are available to it, we are told that this 'indefiniteness… is something that necessarily belongs' to 'resoluteness' (1962 [1927], 345): 'resoluteness' has an 'existentiell indefiniteness', and I take this to mean that the 'resolute' 'Dasein' lives out the indeterminacy by which she is 'thrown' into having various avenues for projection.

Clarifying how the exact content of 'resoluteness' depends on the context into which the 'resolute' 'Dasein' is thrown, Heidegger suggests that 'resoluteness, by its ontological essence, is always the resoluteness of some factical Dasein at a particular time'  (1962 [1927], 345). Having posed the question of 'what is it ('Dasein') to resolve?' (1962 [1927], 345), Heidegger attests that 'only the resolution itself can give the answer' (1962 [1927], 345). It seems that whatever a given 'Dasein' becomes 'resolute' about, the specifics of this 'resolution' necessarily depend on how exactly it is 'thrown' into the world in the first place. In the abstract, however, and as indicated in the quotation in the paragraph above, the 'resolution' is supposed to be 'disclosive' of its avenues for 'projection', which are fixed by its being 'thrown' into a world (1962 [1927], 345).

Continuing to highlight how the 'resolution' of 'Dasein' is 'disclosive… of what is factically possible at the time' (1962 [1927], 345), Heidegger suggests that, 'as

resolute, Dasein is revealed to itself in its current factical potentiality-for-Being' and the 'Dasein itself is this revealing and Being-revealed' (1962 [1927], 355). It seems that, in coming to terms with the 'uncanniness' of being 'thrown' into a world where it is given limited avenues for projection, the 'resolute' 'Dasein' comes to terms with what it is. Hence Heidegger discusses

> the resoluteness in which Dasein comes back to itself, discloses current factical possibilities of authentic existing, and discloses them in terms of the heritage which that resoluteness, as thrown, takes over. In one's coming back resolutely to one's thrownness, there is hidden a handing down to oneself of the possibilities that have come down to one, but not necessarily as having thus come down. (1962 [1927], 435)

As opposed to getting 'lost' in the 'turbulence of the "they's" inauthenticity' (1962 [1927], 312), the 'resolute' 'Dasein' is supposed to 'disclose… current factical possibilities of authentic existing in terms of the heritage which that resoluteness, as thrown, takes over' (1962 [1927], 435). This portrays the 'resolute' 'Dasein' as laying claim to the avenues of projection that are available to it. Heidegger also refers to the 'resolute' 'Dasein' as returning to itself, or as 'coming back' to its 'thrownness' (1962 [1927], 435), and this arguably illuminates the sense in which the 'resolute' 'Dasein' seems to be in touch with the kind of entity that it is. Elsewhere, Heidegger also refers to 'the resolute taking over of one's factical "there"' (1962 [1927], 434), thereby highlighting the image of the 'resolute' 'Dasein' as one who takes ownership of their being 'thrown' into the world. So, while 'facticity' is set out by Heidegger as a source of 'uncanniness' about the inexplicability of being 'thrown' - which can result in 'lostness' in the 'wish-world', or 'fallenness'/'lostness' in the 'they' - Heidegger makes his concept of 'facticity' ambiguous to the extent that it can also involve 'resoluteness', whereby 'Dasein' comes to terms with its being 'thrown'.

Heidegger delineates 'anticipatory resoluteness' as where the 'resolute' 'Dasein' comes to terms with the inevitability of its death. For Heidegger, it is the case that 'factical Dasein exists as born; and, as born, it is already dying, in the sense of Being-towards-death' (1962 [1927], 426): 'being-towards-death' is an essential structure of 'Dasein', on Heidegger's conception. According to Heidegger, 'anticipatory resoluteness' is where

> Dasein understands itself with regard to its potentiality-for-Being, and it does so in such a manner that it will go right under the eyes of Death in order thus to take over in its thrownness that entity which it is itself, and

to take it over wholly. (1962 [1927], 434)

Clearly, 'anticipatory resoluteness' is put forward by Heidegger as a development of 'resoluteness' itself. While 'resoluteness' discloses the potential of 'Dasein' - allowing it to come to terms with the way it is 'thrown' into the world - 'anticipatory resoluteness' is supposed to 'go right under the eyes of Death', and I take this to mean that it involves facing the inevitability of death (1962 [1927], 434). When confronted with its inevitable death, 'Dasein' can completely reclaim its being 'thrown' into the 'entity which it is itself', as Heidegger says (1962 [1927], 434).

Clarifying what it means for the 'Dasein' to come to terms with its inevitable death in 'anticipatory resoluteness', Heidegger stipulates that 'anticipatory resoluteness is not a way of escape, fabricated for the "overcoming" of death' (1962 [1927], 357). 'Being-towards-death' is, after all for Heidegger, an essential structure of 'Dasein' (1962 [1927], 426). Rather than allowing 'Dasein' to evade its death - which would be impossible according to just the kind of entity that 'Dasein' is - 'anticipatory resoluteness' is supposed to 'free…  for death the possibility of acquiring power over Dasein's existence and of basically dispersing all fugitive Self concealments' (1962 [1927], 357): the 'resolute' 'Dasein' who 'anticipates' its death comes to terms with its inevitable death in such a way that it reclaims 'power' over itself, peeling away obscurity about what it is. As Heidegger suggests, 'anticipatory resoluteness… brings one without Illusions into the resoluteness of "taking action"' (1962 [1927], 357): in 'anticipating' its death, the 'resolute' 'Dasein' is poised to project itself forward into the future 'without Illusions' of what it is (1962 [1927], 357). Furthermore, Heidegger clarifies how 'anticipatory resoluteness' does not 'stem from "idealistic" exactions soaring above existence and its possibilities' (1962 [1927], 358); instead, 'anticipatory resoluteness' is supposed to 'spring… from a sober understanding of what are factically the basic possibilities for Dasein' (1962 [1927], 358). Thus, it seems that, for Heidegger, 'anticipatory resoluteness' involves 'Dasein' being attuned to the kind of entity that it is, and also the limited scope of projection that results from its being 'thrown' into the world. As Heidegger suggests, 'when one has an understanding Being-towards-death - towards death as one's ownmost possibility', as delineated in the phenomenon of 'anticipatory resoluteness', it follows that 'one's potentiality-for-Being

becomes authentic and wholly transparent' (1962 [1927], 354). Hence, Heidegger states that

> the authentic coming-towards-itself of anticipatory resoluteness is at the same time a coming-back to one's ownmost Self, which has been thrown into its individualization. This ecstasis makes it possible for Dasein to be able to takeover resolutely that entity which it already is. In anticipating, Dasein brings itself again forth into its own most potentiality-for-Being. (1962 [1927], 388)

'Anticipatory resoluteness' - for Heidegger - allows 'Dasein' to return to, reclaim and realise the kind of entity that it is.


According to Heidegger, it is only by coming to terms with its death in 'anticipatory resoluteness' that 'Dasein' can live meaningfully. He suggests that it is 'only Being free for death' (in 'anticipatory resoluteness') that

> gives Dasein its goal outright and pushes existence into its finitude. Once one has grasped the finitude of one's existence, it snatches one back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities which offer themselves as closest to one - those of comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly - and brings Dasein into the simplicity of its fate ['Schicksals']. This is how we designate Dasein's primordial historizing, which lies in authentic resoluteness and in which Dasein hands itself down to itself, free for death, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen. (1962 [1927], 435)

It seems that, in coming to terms with its inevitable death, 'Dasein' is able to untangle itself from the conceptual fold that is characteristic of is time: it 'snatches' itself back from the 'endless multiplicity of possibilities' that are presented by the 'they' as 'closest' to 'Dasein' (1962 [1927], 435). According to Heidegger, these myriad avenues for 'projection' lack worth: they are too 'comfortable' in the face of the 'uncanniness' of being 'thrown' into the world; they involve the 'shirking' of the kind of entity that 'Dasein' is, and they treat 'things lightly', in want of a depth of meaning (1962 [1927], 435). Reclaiming itself from the hollowness of the many 'possibilities' that are available to it, the 'Dasein' who comes to terms with death acquires a 'goal'; it is attuned to its 'fate' (1962 [1927], 435). Expressed by Heidegger as a process of 'primordial historicising', the 'Dasein' who is 'free for death' is supposed to select a 'possibility which it has inherited and yet chosen' (1962 [1927], 435). I take this to mean that, in 'anticipatory resoluteness', the 'Dasein' who comes to terms with its inevitable death carves out its own meaning for an avenue for

'projection' that is available to it.

Expanding on how 'Dasein' is to live meaningfully, having come to terms with its death in 'anticipatory resoluteness', Heidegger says that

> only an entity which, in its Being, is essentially futural so that it is free for its death… can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision for 'its time'. (1962 [1927], 437)

For Heidegger, 'the moment of vision… weans one from the conventionalities of the "they"' (1962 [1927], 443-4): it signifies the untangling of 'Dasein' from the conceptual hegemony of its context. Heidegger also tells us that

> one's existence in the moment of vision temporalizes itself as something that has been stretched along in a way which is fatefully whole in the sense of the authentic historical constancy of the Self. (1962 [1927], 463)

It seems that, on Heidegger's conception, the 'moment of vision' marks the seamless 'historicality' of 'Dasein', by which 'Dasein' exists in a 'state of Being that is constitutive' of its 'historicising' (1962 [1927], 20). Returning to the quotation from page 437 of *Being and Time* that is included at the beginning of this paragraph, we can see that, for Heidegger, it is only the 'Dasein' who comes to terms with its inevitable death who can reclaim the way it is 'thrown' into the world, and thus enjoy 'the moment of vision for "its time"' (1962 [1927], 437), whereby its history finds coherence and unification. Hence, Heidegger refers to 'anticipatory resoluteness' as 'the steadiness with which Dasein as fate "incorporates" into its existence birth and death and their "between", and holds them as thus "incorporated"' (1962 [1927], 442): in coming to terms with its inevitable death, 'Dasein' can forge a life that hangs together meaningfully. Heidegger attests that, 'in such constancy Dasein is indeed in a moment of vision…' (1962 [1927], 442): its historicality is whole.

To see why, for Heidegger, it is only through the 'anticipatory resoluteness' of coming to terms with its death that 'Dasein' can live meaningfully, we should pay attention to the following passage in *Being and Time*, where Heidegger tells us that

> history has its roots so essentially in the future that death… throws anticipatory existence back upon its factical thrownness, and so for the

first time imparts to having been its peculiarly privileged position in the historical. Authentic Being-towards-death - that is to say, the finitude of temporality - is the hidden basis of Dasein's historicality. (1962 [1927], 438)

In suggesting that 'history has its roots so essentially in the future', Heidegger seems to ground 'history' in the 'future', and this is explicated in terms of 'death... throw(ing) anticipatory existence back upon its factical thrownness' (1962 [1927], 438). What are we to make of this image? I take it signify that, when 'Dasein' comes to terms with its future death, it is that inevitability that returns 'Dasein' or 'throws' it 'back' to its 'factical thrownness' so that 'Dasein' can reclaim it, giving it meaning. (1962 [1927], 438). As Heidegger says, 'death... imparts' to the past 'its peculiarly privileged position in the historical'(1962 [1927], 438): it is death that that grounds the meaning of historicality, and this is why we are told at the beginning of the passage that 'history has its roots so essentially in the future', and later on in the passage that the 'finitude of temporality... is the hidden basis of Dasein's historicality' (1962 [1927], 438). For Heidegger, death gives the 'historicality' of 'Dasein' its significance.

Insofar as death imbues the 'historicality' of 'Dasein' with meaning, we can see why, regarding the 'irresolute' 'Dasein' who fails to 'anticipate' its inevitable death, Heidegger posits that 'the way in which fate has been primordially stretched along has been hidden' (1962 [1927], 443): the 'irresolute' 'Dasein' who cannot come to terms with its inevitable death is insensitive to the unity and coherence of its historicality, which is itself grounded in death. For such a 'Dasein'

> the 'they' evades choice. Blind for possibilities, it ('Dasein') … only retains and receives the 'actual' that is left over, the world-historical that has been, the leavings, and the information about them that is present-at-hand. (1962 [1927], 443)

Having failed to come to terms with its inevitable death, the 'irresolute' 'Dasein' is unable to make the 'choice' of living meaningfully, Instead, such a 'Dasein' must settle for whatever drips down to it from the conceptual hegemony of its time without a sense of its whole historicality.

While the 'Dasein' who fails to come to terms with its inevitable death cannot

live meaningfully, on Heidegger's theory, the 'resolute' 'Dasein' who 'anticipates' death can perform 'repetition' ['Wielderholung'], whereby it meaningfully responds to its past. Heidegger suggests that 'resoluteness'

> becomes the repetition of a possibility of existence that has come down to us. Repeating is handing down explicitly - that is to say, going back into the possibilities of the Dasein that has-been-there. (1962 [1927], 437)

In coming to terms with its being 'thrown' into 'being-towards-death', the 'resolute' 'Dasein' is one who  is supposed to 'repeat' a 'possibility of existence' that has historic precedence (1962 [1927], 437). Highlighting the connection between 'resoluteness' and 'repetition', Heidegger suggests that

> it is in resoluteness that one first chooses the choice which makes one free for the struggle of loyally following in the footsteps of that which can be repeated. (1962 [1927], 437)

In this way, Heidegger emphasises how 'resoluteness' requires 'Dasein' to reclaim the avenues for 'projection' that it inherits, as given by the world it has been 'thrown' into, thus paving way for its 'repetition' of what has been inherited. Heidegger also 'characterise(s) repetition as a mode of that resoluteness which hands itself down - the mode by which Dasein exists explicitly as fate' (1962 [1927], 438): the notion of 'fate' recalls the 'Dasein' who is 'resolute' as being attuned to its historicality as a whole; according to Heidegger, 'repetition' is how 'Dasein' 'exists explicitly' in being attuned to its historicality as a whole (1962 [1927], 437).

At first blush, the notion of 'repetition' might seem to preclude room for 'Dasein' to be revolutionary, or subversive. This perspective arguably finds support in the image of the 'Dasein' who engages in 'repetition' as a '*loyally* following' through with a possibility that it inherits (1962 [1927], 437; my italics). However, it is important to note that, in the original German, Heidegger uses the term 'Wielderholung', which can be translated as 'retrieval', As opposed to 'repetition' (which is the technical term that I shall continue to use for the sake of continuity with the translation of *Being and Time* referred to in the context of this thesis), the term 'retrieval' captures the sense in which 'Dasein' can reappropriate tradition, and this seems to be a crucial point for Heidegger. As Heidegger clarifies, that

> when one has, by repetition, handed down to oneself a possibility that has been, the Dasein that has been-there is not disclosed in order to be

actualized over again. The repeating of that which is possible does not bring again ['Wiederbringen'] something that is 'past', nor does it bind the 'Present' back to that which has already been 'outstripped'. Arising, as it does, from a resolute projection of oneself, repetition does not let itself be persuaded of something by what is 'past', just in order that this, as something which was formerly actual, may recur. Rather, the repetition makes a *reciprocative rejoinder* to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there. (1962 [1927], 437-8; original italics)

Though 'repetition' involves the 'hand(ing) down to oneself a possibility that has been', this is not supposed to be for the sake of the simply 'actualis(ing)' what has already 'been-there' (1962 [1927], 437-8). Rather than merely reviving a practice of the past, or acquiescing to tradition, 'repetition' is put forward by Heidegger as involving a '*reciprocative rejoinder* to the possibility of that existence which has-been-there' (1962 [1927], 438; original italics). Thus, as a 'resolute projection of oneself' that requires 'Dasein' to be in tune with its historicality as a whole, 'repetition' involves more activity on the part of 'Dasein': it requires 'Dasein' to be 'reciprocative' and make a 'rejoinder' to the historical 'possibility' that it is given (1962 [1927], 438). This suggests that 'Dasein' can be reactionary. Heidegger clarifies that,

when such a rejoinder is made to this possibility in a resolution, it is made *in a moment of vision; and as such* it is at the same time a *disavowal* of that which in the 'today', is working itself out as the 'past'. Repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past, nor does it aim at progress. In the moment of vision authentic existence is indifferent to both these alternatives. (1962 [1927], 438; original italics)

Piecing together a rich conceptual framework, Heidegger identifies the 'moment of vision' as where the 'resolute' Dasein responds to a possibility for 'projection' that it inherits from being 'thrown' into a given world (1962 [1927], 438). The 'moment of vision' put forward, in the passage above, as a 'disavowal of that which in the "today", is working itself out as the "past"' (1962 [1927], 438): this highlights how, in a 'moment of vision', it is the case that 'Dasein' relinquishes the conceptual hegemony that characterises its time (1962 [1927], 438). As Heidegger emphasises, 'repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past' (1962 [1927], 438): in reclaiming a historical possibility for 'projection', 'Dasein' does not simply yield to tradition. It is unclear, however, what exactly the alternative consists in, for Heidegger. Insofar as Heidegger states that 'repetition does not abandon itself to that which is past', he also claims that 'repetition' does not 'aim at progress' (1962 [1927], 438). For the 'Dasein' who

enjoys 'the moment of vision', its 'authentic existence is indifferent to both these alternatives', according to Heidegger (1962 [1927], 438).

It is arguably coherent for Heidegger to omit a positive account of what 'repetition' is supposed to consist in, since it is a conceptual development of a 'resolution', whose content itself depends on the socio-historical specifics of how exactly 'Dasein' has been thrown into the world: remember that 'resoluteness', as we are told, 'is always the resoluteness of some factical Dasein at a particular time' (1962 [1927], 345). In the abstract then, 'repetition' is necessarily underspecified, since it requires 'Dasein' to form its own distinct response to the historical possibilities that it has been given. As 'resolute', that 'Dasein' must have come to terms with being 'thrown' into a world that gives her limited avenues for 'projection': this involves reclaiming her scope of possibilities, and revealing the kind of entity that she is. According to Heidegger, it is by 'anticipating' death that the 'resolute' 'Dasein' is well poised to give meaning to a possibility that it inherits, and to be in tune with its 'historicality' as a whole - both of which enable 'repetition' as the meaningful reaction of 'Dasein' to a historical possibility that it inherits. Whatever the meaning of this reaction is, it will depend on the 'resolution' that 'Dasein' makes in coming to terms with its being 'thrown' into the world, and also ultimately its 'anticipation' of 'death', which imbues its historicality with its own meaning in a 'moment of vision'. As Heidegger suggests, 'anticipation utterly individualizes Dasein' (1962 [1927], 310).

So - insofar as 'facticity' involves the 'uncanniness' of being inexplicably 'thrown' into a world that gives 'Dasein' limited avenues for 'projection', it seems that 'Dasein' can either stray into the 'wish-world', get 'lost' by 'falling' into the conceptual hegemony of the 'today', or become 'resolute', according to Heidegger. Through 'resolution', 'Dasein' is supposed to come to terms with its 'thrownness'. In 'anticipatory resolution', 'Dasein' finds existential meaning in the face of death. Through 'repetition', 'Dasein' meaningfully appropriates its historical possibilities. 'Facticity' is thus ultimately ambiguous - for Heidegger in Being and Time - as the inexplicable condition of being human, 'facticity' is a source of 'falling' and 'lostness', but also 'resolution', revelation, and meaning.

Reminding us of the ultimate ambiguity of 'facticity', Heidegger tells us that

> in anticipatory resoluteness, Dasein holds itself open for its constant
> lostness in the irresoluteness of the 'they' - a lostness which is possible
> from the very basis of its own Being. (1962 [1927], 356)

While it is the case, for Heidegger, that 'anticipatory resoluteness' allows 'Dasein' to find existential meaning in the face of death, this does not immunise 'Dasein' to encountering 'constant lostness in the irresoluteness of the "they" (1962 [1927], 356): the 'Dasein' who 'anticipates' death is still vulnerable to the conceptual hegemony of its time. As Heidegger, clarifies, this vulnerability is essential to 'Dasein': since it is irrevocably 'thrown' into a world that is characterised by the conceptual hegemony of its time, it follows that it is the 'very basis of its own Being' that makes it 'possible' to get 'lost' in that prevailing conceptual framework (1962 [1927], 356). Hence, Heidegger tells us that, 'for the most part, Dasein interprets itself in terms of its lostness in concerning itself with the "world"' (1962 [1927], 360). It seems that, for Heidegger, 'Dasein' exists in a way that tends to be bogged down by the prevailing conceptual framework of its time. Furthermore, we are told that, 'factically, Dasein is constantly ahead of itself, but inconstantly anticipatory with regard to its existentiell possibility (1962 [1927], 386): with the temporal character of 'facticity', 'Dasein' is 'constantly ahead of itself' in the sense that it is always in progress, developing into the future, but it is 'inconstantly anticipatory' in the sense that it is not always attuned to its inevitable death. While Heidegger claims that, 'in the moment of vision, indeed, and often just "for that moment" existence can even gain the mastery over the "everyday"', he goes on to say that 'it can never extinguish it' (1962 [1927], 422): conceptual hegemony prevails. It seems that, for Heidegger, 'Dasein' can only fleetingly overcome the prevailing conceptual framework of its time: it is, after all, irrevocably 'thrown' into a world that is characterised by conceptual hegemony. As Heidegger attests, 'nothing is so plain… as the Fact that the ontology of Dasein is always falling back upon the allurements of the way in which Being is ordinarily understood' (1962 [1927], 439): conceptual hegemony is alluring as it is comfortable for 'Dasein' to retreat into its fold when faced with the sheer 'uncanniness' of it being 'thrown' into the world in the first place. Elsewhere, Heidegger refers to the 'tendency' of 'Dasein' to 'cover things up' (1962 [1927], 439), and he generalises about the 'factical

tendency to cover up' (1962 [1927], 301), thus portraying 'Dasein' as likely to live in semi-obscurity about itself, bereft of the existential meaning that is grounded in death.

### 5(c)    Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*

### 5(c)i    Sartre's Quarrel with Heidegger on Death

As we have noted in exegesis of 'facticity' in Heidegger, it is the 'Dasein' who comes to terms with its inevitable death who is well poised to give meaning to a possibility that it inherits by being 'thrown' into the world, thereby making way for 'repetition' as a meaningful reaction to its historical possibility. For Heidegger, it is death that imbues the 'historicality' of 'Dasein' with meaning. In the philosophy of Sartre, we find a clear point of difference. Under the rubric of 'facticity', death - for Sartre - deprives life of meaning. While 'facticity' in Sartre is like 'facticity' in Heidegger in that it continues to thematise inexplicable conditions of human existence, Sartrean 'facticity' differs from Heidegger's to the extent that it seems to place more emphasis on the role of subjectivity in the constitution of meaning, and this comes at the cost of negating death as the source of existential meaning.

In identifying death as the locus of existential meaning, Heidegger is criticised by Sartre as a performing an argumentative 'sleight of hand' that oversteps the power of death to confer meaning (202 [1943], 578). On Sartre's reading of Heidegger to be found in *Being and Nothingness* (2021 [1943]), it is the case that Heidegger

> begins by individualising the death of each one of us, by pointing out that it is the death of a *person*, an individual… and then he exploits this incomparable individuality which has been - on the basis of Dasein - conferred on death, in order to individualise Dasein itself. (2021 [1943], 578)

As already seen, being-towards-death is an essential structure of 'Dasein' for Heidegger, and it is by coming to terms with death in 'anticipatory resolution' that 'Dasein' can find their own existential meaning. For Sartre, however, as he writes in *Being and Nothingness,* the notional death of an individual 'person' is not necessarily what 'individualise(s)' that person (2021 [1943], 578). As Sartre

raises the question: 'how in fact can we prove that death has this individuality and the power to confer it?' (2021 [1943], 578).

According to Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, *contra* Heidegger, 'there is no kind of personalising power that belongs to my death' (2021 [1943], 579): my death is not my source of existential meaning. Sartre argues that a person's death is ultimately a matter of chance. As Sartre attests, I am not the one who establishes the minute of my death: the sequences of the universe decide that' (2021 [1943], 583); how exactly a person dies depends on factors that ultimately stretch beyond their control. And so, Sartre suggests that, 'chance, in deciding it [death], wholly deprives it [death] of the character of a harmonious end' (2021 [1943], 581): death, for Sartre, does not mark a coherent resolution of an entire life, since it exceeds the very life which it ends: it is not even a part of my life, and so it cannot bestow on my life existential meaning. As Sartre elaborates

> this constant appearance of chance at the heart of my projects cannot therefore be grasped as my possibility but, on the contrary, as the nihilation of all of my possibilities, a nihilation that *itself no longer forms part of my possibilities.* Thus death is not my possibility of no longer actualising a presence within the world, but *a nihilation that is always possible of my possibles, and which lies outside my possibilities.* (2021 [1943], 581; original italics).

Sartre refers to death as a 'constant appearance of chance at the heart of my projects', thus emphasising how it ultimately lies outside of our control. Insofar as it exceeds my control, death cannot count as 'my possibility', for Sartre; instead, death marks the 'nihilation of all my possibilities' in the sense that it utterly precludes them. Furthermore, death 'lies outside my possibilities', for Sartre, in the sense that it stretches beyond the circle of what is in my control (2021 [1943], 581). Sartre concludes that

> we cannot even say any longer that death confers from outside a meaning of life: a meaning can come only from subjectivity itself. Since death does not appear on the foundation of our freedom, it can only *deprive life of all meaning.* (2021 [1943], 583; original italics)

In direct contradiction to Heidegger, Sartre opposes death as the source of existential meaning insofar as it ultimately lies beyond our determination, while marking an end to our life. For Sartre, it is instead only within the bounds of life that 'meaning' can originate in 'subjectivity itself' (2021 [1943], 583).

Having argued that 'death is never what gives life its meaning', Sartre adds that 'it is, on the contrary, that which eliminates all meaning from it' (2021 [1943], 584). To see why this is coherent, for Sartre, we need to bear in mind his position that 'meaning can come only from subjectivity itself' (2021 [1943], 583). As Sartre reflects, 'it is Pierre's own life whose meaning was being metamorphosed as it continuously temporised itself' (2021 [1943], 586): meaning grows out of subjectivity so long as it endures. Sartre clarifies that

> life decides on its own meaning, because it is always 'suspended'; in its essence it has a power of self-critique and self-metamorphosis which means it defines itself as a 'not-yet' or, alternatively, that its way of being is to change what it is. (2021 [1943], 587-8).

Life is in development and open to transformation. By contrast,

> a dead life does not for all that cease to change, and yet it is *done*; it die is cast, therefore, and henceforth it will undergo its changes without being in any way responsible for them. What happens to the life here is not just an arbitrary and definite totalisation but, in addition, a radical transformation: nothing can any longer *happen* to the life from within it; it is entirely closed, and nothing more can enter into it; from outside, its meaning does not stop changing… But to the extent to which this meaning exceeds the limits of a single individuality… death represents a complete *dispossession…* (2021 [1943], 587-8)

Sartre emphasises how death exceeds subjectivity: elsewhere, Sartre affirms that, 'as something which is always beyond my subjectivity, there is no place for it (death) within my subjectivity' (2021 [1943], 590); my parentheses). In the passage above, Sartre does, nonetheless, recognise how the 'dead life… will undergo its changes without being in any way responsible for them' and that 'from outside, its meaning does not stop changing' - in the sense that other people will attribute meaning to the life that is dead (2021 [1943], 587-8). As Sartre says, this meaning conferred on the dead life after death 'exceeds the limits of a single individuality' (2021 [1943], 587-8). To this extent, it follows that 'death represents a complete dispossession' (2021 [1943], 587-8): subjectivity is deprived of its capacity to confer meaning on its life; for the 'dead life', its meaning is conferred externally. Hence, Sartre suggests that

> the very existence of death alienates us entirely, in our own life to the advantage of the Other. To be dead is to become prey to the living. That means therefore that a person who tries to grasp the meaning of his future death is obliged to discover himself to be the future prey for others. (2021 [1943], 588)

According to Sartre's theory, Heidegger is at fault for identifying death as the locus of existential meaning: death entails the end of his subjectivity, and the meaning of his death is in the hands of 'the Other' (2021 [1943], 588). Sartre clarifies that

> my death… confers a meaning from outside on everything that I lived as a subjectivity; it seizes back all of this subjective dominion, which was able to protect itself, as long as it 'was living', against externalisation, and it deprives it of all subjective meaning, in order to hand it over, on the contrary, to any *objective* meaning that the other cares to give it. (2021, [1943] 589)

As posited above, death - for Sartre - deprives subjectivity of its power to assign meaning to the life that it lives to the advantage of other people. As Sartre emphatically says, '*dead* represents the future meaning of my current for-itself for the other' (2021 [1943], 591; original italics).

It is important to note how Sartre conceptually distinguishes death and finitude. His predecessor, Heidegger, seems to conflate death and finitude. As we have already seen, Heidegger suggests that 'authentic Being-towards-death - that is to say, the finitude of temporality - is the hidden basis of Dasein's historicality': it is the source of existential meaning (1962 [1927], 438). According to Sartre, we should - *contra* Heidegger - 'radically separate the two ideas that are ordinarily joined, of death and of finitude' (2021, [1943] 590). For Sartre,

> finitude is an ontological structure of the for-itself who determines its freedom, and exists only in and through the free project of the end that acquaints me with my being. (2021, [1943] 591)

Sartre suggests that

> to be finite is, in fact, to choose oneself, i.e. to become acquainted with what one is by projecting oneself towards one possible, in a way that excludes others. (2021, [1943] 591)

Sartre identifies 'the very act of freedom' with 'the acceptance and creation of finitude', elaborating that 'if I make myself, I make myself finite and, in consequence, my life is unique' (2021, [1943] 591). Sartre argues that 'human-reality's revelation of its finitude does not amount to a discovery of its mortality' (2021, [1943] 591).

While Sartre directly contradicts Heidegger in negating death as the source of existential meaning, he does - like Heidegger - conceptually link death to 'facticity' as the inexplicable condition of being human. Sartre attests that 'there

is… an undeniable and fundamental character of *fact* - which it say a radical contingency - about death' (2021 [1943], 590), and that 'death… is a *contingent fact*… which originates in my facticity' (2021 [1943], 590). However, while Heidegger considers 'being-towards-death' an essential structure of 'Dasein' who is characterised by 'facticity', Sartre negates the ontological import of death for being human on the basis of its 'radical contingency', which 'removes it in advance from any ontological conjectures' (2021 [1943], 590). Sartre clarifies that 'death is no way an ontological structure of my being, at least not in so far as it is *for-itself:* it is *the other* who is mortal in his being' (2021 [1943], 591; original italics). Sartre clarifies the 'for-itself' as 'who determines its freedom, and exists only in and through the free project of the end that acquaints me with my being' (2021 [1943], 591). So, 'insofar as it (death) is a nihilation of my possibles that is always possible' and 'it is outside my possibilities', it follows, for Sartre, that death 'cannot therefore belong to the for-itself's ontological structure' (2021 [1943], 589). The point for Sartre seems to be that, because death lies outside of our subjectivity, and it derives meaning from other people as opposed to the person who is dead, it follows that death cannot be a part of the ontological structure of that subjectivity insofar as it exists 'for itself' in the technical sense specified. For Sartre, 'death is not my possibility… in the sense of my own end, informing me of my being' (2021 [1943], 592). Nevertheless, death remains a part of 'facticity', for Sartre, to the extent that it is an inexplicable condition of being human. Indeed, Sartre characterises death as 'nothing but a specific aspect of facticity and being-for-the-other, which is to say nothing but something *given*' (2021 [1943], 591; original italics). Sartre emphasises that 'death is a contingent fact that has to do with our facticity' (2021 [1943], 591). Sartre concedes that, 'by virtue of being the ineluctable necessity of existing elsewhere as an outside and an in-itself', death is

> internalised as what is 'ultimate', i.e. as the thematic meaning, out of reach, of the hierarchy of possibles. In this way it haunts me in the very heart of each of my projects, as their ineluctable reverse side. But, precisely as their 'reverse side' is not to be accepted as my possibility, but as the possibility of there no longer being any possibilities for me, it does not *make a dent* in me. (2021 [1943], 592; original italics).

Insofar as Sartre admits that death is 'internalised as what is "ultimate", i.e. as the thematic meaning…', he seems to be in agreement with Heidegger about death being the source of existential meaning. Indeed, Heidegger might even

say that it is because death 'haunts me in the very heart of each of my projects' that it is the source of existential meaning. Nevertheless, Sartre draws the line in rejecting death as 'my possibility'. He insists that death 'does not make a dent in me', and this position ultimately hinges on Sartre's exclusion of death from the realm of subjectivity, and on the priority that he gives to subjectivity in determining meaning. While it exceeds the scope of this thesis to settle the questions of how death is related to subjectivity, if it all, and whether death has a role in constituting existential meaning, this thesis follows Sartre's quarrel with Heidegger on death as a route to grasping the priority that he gives to subjectivity in determining meaning.

Indeed, having argued that death is not the locus of existential meaning, that death deprives life of such meaning (since meaning finds origin in subjectivity), and that death is distinct from finitude, all the while affirming death as a part of 'facticity', Sartre inquires:

> By abandoning Heidegger's Being-towards-death, have we abandoned
> for ever the possibility of freely giving our being a meaning for which we
> are responsible? (2021 [1943], 590).

To see how Sartre addresses this question negatively - i.e. to see how he does carve out the possibility for us to freely give our being a meaning for which we are responsible - we need to examine 'facticity' more closely, and also its relation to 'finitude' - i.e. the 'ontological structure of the for-itself who determines its freedom, and exists only in and through the free project of the end that acquaints me with my being' (2021, [1943] 591). We will clarify how 'facticity' for Sartre denotes inexplicable conditions of being human, before highlighting its conflation with 'finitude', which is puzzling, given the distinction between 'finitude' and 'death' and the link between 'facticity' and 'death'. I will show how the conflation between 'finitude' and 'facticity' remains coherent, for Sartre, by virtue of the continuum on which 'facticity' gives rise to 'freedom', by which a subjectivity chooses to constitute existential meaning. I will show how this so-called 'choice' is complicated by the existence of others, who also constitute existential meaning in a way that has exigent ontological ramifications. I will highlight how it is these very ramifications that are taken seriously by Heidegger in his analysis of the 'they', before suggesting that their weight is comparatively underestimated by Sartre. I will conclude that 'facticity'

for Sartre and Heidegger alike signifies inexplicable conditions of being human, but the philosophers vary in their points of emphasis: for Heidegger, 'Dasein' is irrevocably 'thrown' into the conceptual hegemony of its time in such a way that it is only death that can enlighten 'historicality' as existential meaning; for Sartre, subjectivity is 'condemned' to constitute its own existential meaning.

### 5(c)ii   The Haunting of Evanescent Contingency

We can see Sartre clarify 'facticity' as denoting inexplicable conditions of being human. He suggests that

> we may call this constantly evanescent contingency of the in-itself – which haunts the for-itself and ties it to being-in-itself without ever allowing itself to be grasped – the for-itself's facticity. (2021 [1943], 119)

Having already seen how Sartre characterises the 'for-itself' as a mode of consciousness 'who determines its freedom, and exists only in and through the free project of the end that acquaints me with my being' (2021 [1943], 591), it is important to see how Sartre understands 'being-in-itself' as a category of ordinary objects: Sartre says that 'being-in-itself' emphatically '*is*' (2021 [1943], 32); it is supposed to form an 'absolute positivity' (2021; [1943] 76); it is just 'given' (2021 [1943], 119; 526). Sartre also refers to 'facticity' as the 'fact that things are there, simply as they are… and that I am there, among them' (2021 [1943], 593). Furthermore, 'facticity' is elaborated as 'the existence of a being that is its being in the mode of having to be it.' (2021 [1943], 488). For Sartre then, returning to the passage above, we can say that the 'facticity' of the 'for-itself' refers to 'this constantly evanescent contingency of the in-itself… without ever allowing itself to be grasped' in the sense that it demarcates the inexplicable conditions of being a human who just does exist amongst other objects in the world (2021 [1943], 119). Hence, Sartre refers to the 'empirical circumstances of our facticity' (2021  [1943], 290); he refers to 'my facticity' as 'pure contingency' that is 'non-thetically revealed to me as a factual necessity' in the sense that it is lived (2021  [1943], 393).

Beyond using it to generally denote inexplicable conditions of being human (including death), Sartre offers us a fine-grained picture of 'facticity' in *Being and Nothingness*. We can see that 'facticity', for Sartre, conceptually

encompasses interpersonal relations, embodiment, and the past. Drawing attention to the relevance of 'facticity' for interpersonal relations, Sartre suggests that

> it is my facticity and the Other's facticity that decide whether the Other can see me, and if I can see that Other. (2021 [1943], 335)

Furthermore, Sartre characterises 'the other' as 'a facticity appearing to a facticity' (2021 [1943], 381), before elaborating that

> the Other's body is his facticity, as an implement and as the synthesis of sensory organs, in so far as it is revealed to my facticity. It is given to me the moment the Other exists for me within the world. (2021 [1943], 382)

It seems that, for Sartre, 'facticity' is central to interpersonal relations insofar as it grounds embodiment. As Sartre says,

> I exist for myself as known by the Other in the capacity of a body. (2021 [1943], 391)

Furthermore, in denoting inexplicable conditions of being human, 'facticity', for Sartre, conceptually encompasses the past. Sartre suggests that

> 'facticity' and 'the past' are two words to refer to one and the same thing. In fact the Past, like Facticity, is the in-itself's invulnerable contingency - what I have to be, without any possibility of not being it. It is the inevitability of a factual necessity: inevitable not *qua* necessity, but *qua* fact. (2021 [1943], 153)

The 'past', for Sartre, counts as 'facticity' insofar as constitutes an inexplicable condition of being human: it is characterised as the 'in-itself's invulnerable contingency', and a 'factual necessity' that humans just have to deal with (2021 [1943], 153).

At one point in *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre refers to 'my finitude, my contingency - in a word, my facticity' (2021 [1943], 367). Insofar as Sartre in this context preserves his technical sense of 'finitude' where it is distinct from death, this arguably creates a puzzle: on the one hand, we are told that death is not equivalent to 'finitude', and that death belongs to 'facticity', as we have seen; now, however, we see Sartre conflate 'finitude' and the 'facticity' to which death belongs. What are we to make of this conceptual move? Though Sartre draws a sharp conceptual distinction between death and 'finitude', it seems to remain coherent for him to associate 'finitude' with the 'facticity' to which death belongs: in broadly denoting inexplicable conditions of being human, 'facticity' is supposed to lie on a continuum with 'freedom', for Sartre, by which a subjectivity chooses to constitute existential meaning. According to Sartre, there

is a 'twofold property of human beings, of being a facticity and a transcendence' (2021 [1943], 91). For Sartre, 'transcendence' is defined as a 'relation of man to being' (2021 [1943], 42): it signifies the freedom of the human being to rise above or 'transcend' its original determinations of existence, as captured by 'facticity'. Arguably invoking the conceptual structure of a continuum, Sartre suggests that

> these two aspects of human-reality (i.e. facticity and transcendence) are, in truth – and ought to be - capable of being validly coordinated… Facticity must be affirmed as *being* transcendence and transcendence as *being* facticity, in a way that allows us, at the moment we apprehend one of them, to find ourselves suddenly faced with the other. (2021 [1943], 91; my parentheses)

Hence, Sartre also refers to 'this metastable concept of "transcendence-facticity' (2021 [1943], 92). To spell out how the interrelation between 'facticity' and 'transcendence' manifests in human life, Sartre suggests that

> the for-itself as nihilation of the in-itself temporalizes itself as flight towards. In effect, it surpasses its facticity - or its being given, or its past, or its body. (2021, [1943] 402)

In this passage, 'transcendence' is captured as a 'nihilation of the in-itself', performed by the 'for-itself' over time in a 'flight towards' its own purposes that thereby 'surpasses its facticity' - i.e. it overcomes its initial determinations of existence, as establish in its 'being given, or its past, or its body' (2021 [1943], 402). Sartre also refers to the 'for-itself's project' as 'the nihilation of the in-itself, and the constant escape from contingency and facticity' (2021 [1943], 611), thus highlighting how, insofar as human consciousness exists 'for-itself' in accord with its own purposes, it marks the 'nihilation' of the 'facticity' that originally determines the human to be a thing 'in-itself', amongst other things in the world. Similarly, Sartre refers to the 'for-itself's flight in the face of facticity's in-itself', thus capturing the 'transcendence' that is a 'nihilation' of 'facticity' here in terms of 'flight' from 'facticity' (2021 [1943], 658).

Making clear the relevance of 'freedom' for the interrelation between 'transcendence' and 'facticity', Sartre characterises 'freedom' as

> nothing other than the existence of our will and our passions, in so far as this existence is a nihilation of facticity (2021 [1943], 488).

Again, 'transcendence' is captured as a 'nihiliation' - a negation, or destruction - of 'facticity', and this is directly associated with freedom. Thus, it is clear that, for

Sartre, 'facticity' grounds 'freedom' insofar as the latter aims to overcome the former. Hence, Sartre says that 'we are condemned to freedom' (2021 [1943], 530): it is only because of the 'facticity' of inexplicable conditions of being human that we are free. As Sartre clarifies, 'the fact of not being able to not be free is freedom's facticity' (2021 [1943], 530); and furthermore: 'freedom is from the outset a relation to the given' (2021 [1943], 530): freedom is grounded on 'facticity'. Hence Sartre says that

> facticity is the only reality that freedom is able to encounter, the only
> reality it can nihilate by positing an end, the only reality on whose basis
> it makes any sense to posit an end. (2021 [1943], 539)

It is only against the background of 'facticity', by which humans find their original determinations, that the human can be free in the sense that she can 'nihilate' that 'facticity' through the formation of her own purposes. Emphasising the interrelation between 'freedom' and 'facticity', Sartre refers to the 'inextricable connection between freedom and facticity', attesting that 'without facticity freedom would not exist – as a power to nihilate and to choose' (2021 [1943], 541). So, to the extent that it is 'facticity' that enables 'freedom', it follows that it is coherent of Sartre to association 'facticity' with 'finitude' as 'an ontological structure of the for-itself who determines its freedom…' (2021, [1943] 591).

Having shown how 'freedom' arises from 'facticity', for Sartre - thus making the association between 'facticity' and 'finitude' coherent to this extent - it is important to note how 'facticity' is only manifest according to 'freedom', on Sartre's theory. Having posited, as we have just seen, that 'without facticity freedom would not exist – as a power to nihilate and to choose', Sartre continues that 'without freedom, facticity would not be uncovered and would not even have any meaning' (2021 [1943], 541). Sartre clarifies that, insofar as 'facticity' denotes the inexplicable conditions of being human, it is 'impossible to grasp it in its brute nakedness, because we only encounter it when we have already reclaimed and freely constructed it' (2021 [1943], 541). For Sartre, the determinations for existence encompassed by 'facticity' are only manifest according to how they are freely encountered in life. As Sartre says, 'freedom is indispensable to the discovery of my facticity' (2021 [1943], 539):

> Every point in the future I am projecting teaches me about this facticity;
> it is on the basis of this chosen future that it appears to me, with its
> character of powerlessness, contingency, weakness and absurdity… It

would be absolutely futile to try to define or to describe this facticity's *quid* 'before' freedom has turned back towards it to grasp it as a specific deficiency… On the other hand, the question itself is unintelligible, because it introduces a 'before' that has no meaning: it is freedom itself, in fact, which temporalizes itself, in accordance with the directions of 'before' and 'after'. (2021 [1943], 539).

For Sartre, it makes no sense to inquire into 'facticity' as such: in encompassing inexplicable conditions of being human, 'facticity' is only disclosed through life, in which I am 'projecting' over time in accordance with my 'freedom'  (2021 [1943], 539). Hence, Sartre speaks of 'freedom' as having 'discovered facticity and apprehended it as its *place*' to the effect that 'this place, thus defined, manifests itself as a *hindrance* to my desires, an *obstacle*, etc' (2021 [1943], 539): the 'facticity' of inexplicable conditions of being human is disclosed in terms of what is freely chosen as meaningful by the subject.


Building on the idea that 'facticity' is only disclosed through the 'freedom' of the subject to constitute meaning, Sartre invokes the technical term of a 'situation'. He uses this term to delineate

my position in the midst of the world… in the light of a radical nihilation of myself, and a radical and internal negation of the in-itself, brought about from the point of view of an end that I freely posit. (2021 [1943], 593)

For Sartre, a 'situation' is meaningful: it encompasses 'my position in the midst of the world' insofar as I have my own purposes, and it is this meaningful 'situation' that 'makes visible my facticity' (2021 [1943], 593). Sartre also refers to the 'situation' as where 'things' are 'organised' (2021 [1943], 555), and as where 'the subject' is 'lighting things up through his very surpassing' (2021 [1943], 593); I take both of these characterisations to emphasise how a situation in meaningful for a subject since it is directed towards her own purposes. According to Sartre, it is this 'situation' that 'makes it the case that there is a facticity for me' (2021 [1943], 593) - i.e. the meaningful 'situation' discloses the 'facticity' of inexplicable conditions of being human.


The relationship between 'facticity' and 'freedom' is consequently complex,  for Sartre, with 'facticity' giving rise to 'freedom', and 'freedom' disclosing 'facticity'. Emphasising this complexity, Sartre suggests that the

inapprehensible *fact* of my condition… explains why the for-itself, even

while it chooses the meaning of its situation and constitutes itself in situation as its own foundation, does not choose its position. It is the reason why I apprehend myself as being wholly responsible for my being, in so far as I am its foundation, and at the same time wholly unjustifiable. (2021 [1943], 119; original italics)

As it encompasses inexplicable conditions of being human, 'facticity' explains why the freedom of the 'for-itself' to 'choose… the meaning of its situation and constitute itself' is punctuated by the reality that the 'for-itself' does 'not choose its position' (2021 [1943], 119). I consequently 'apprehend myself as wholly responsible for my being' and also 'wholly unjustifiable': my 'freedom' is connected to my 'facticity' (2021 [1943], 119). Furthermore, while Sartre suggests that the the 'for-itself can discover in itself nothing but its motivations, which means it will be constantly referred back to itself and to its constant freedom', it is also the case that 'the contingency that permeates these motivations… is the for-itself's facticity' (2021 [1943], 120). Again, the freedom of the 'for-itself' to posit its own ends is caught in an interrelation with the 'facticity' of being inexplicably determined. Thus, Sartre speaks of 'the relation between the for-itself – which, as for-itself, is its own foundation – and facticity' as a 'factual necessity' (2021 [1943], 120).

### 5(c)iii  The Ontological Priority of Freedom

Having shown how 'facticity' and 'freedom' stand in a complex interrelation, for Sartre, I will highlight how the 'freedom' to constitute meaning is complicated by the existence of 'the Other'. Sartre recognises how

> to live in a world haunted by my fellow man is… to find myself committed within a world whose structures of equipment may have meaning that does not come in the first place from my free project. And it is also, in the midst of this world that is *already* endowed with a meaning, to have to deal with a meaning that is *mine* and that I did not give to myself either, a meaning that I discover myself 'already to possess' (2021 [1943], 554).

Insofar as 'facticity' involves intersubjectivity, where I 'live in a world haunted by my fellow man', it follows that the world is saturated with 'meaning that does not come in the first place from my free project'; it is '*already* endowed with meaning', as Sartre emphasises (2021 [1943], 554). Furthermore, there is 'meaning that is *mine*' and 'already' in my possession insofar as it is assigned to me: 'I did not give (it) to myself' (2021 [1943], 554). In this way, my freedom to

constitute meaning seems to be exceeded by the 'facticity' of there being other humans, who subjectively confer meaning on the world and myself. Sartre highlights how

> facticity shows itself through the fact of my appearing in a world that is revealed to me only through techniques that are collective and already constituted, which aim to make me grasp it in a way whose meaning has been defined outside me. These techniques will determine my membership of communities: of the human species, the national community, the professional and familial group. (2021 [1943], 557)

As Sartre makes clear, 'facticity' involves my existence in a world where there are 'techniques' of constituting meaning that are 'collective and already constituted', having been 'defined outside me' in a way that shapes the world and engenders my identity (2021 [1943], 557). Sartre stresses that

> my de facto existence, i.e. my birth and my place, brings in its wake my way of apprehending the world and myself through certain techniques. Now, these techniques, which I have not chosen, are what give the world its meanings. I am no longer the one, it seems, who decides on the basis of my ends whether the world will appear to me with the simple and clear-cut oppositions of the 'proletarian' universe or with the innumerable and complicated nuances of the 'bourgeois' world. I am not only thrown in the face of the brute existent; I am thrown into a world that is working-class, French, with the character of Lorraine or of the South, and which offers me its meanings when I have done nothing to reveal them. (2021 [1943], 558-9)

Echoing the language of his predecessor, Heidegger, Sartre suggests that I am 'thrown into a world' that is saturated with meanings that 'I have not chosen', and which 'I have done nothing to reveal' (2021 [1943], 558-9), thereby highlighting how the constitution of intersubjective meaning seems to interfere with my freedom to constitute meaning independently. Sartre emphasises 'the fact is that, through the arising of the other, certain determinations that I *am* - without having chosen them - appear' (2021 [1943], 568; original italics).

Building on how intersubjectivity poses a problem for my freedom to constitute meaning, Sartre draws attention to its pertinent ontological ramifications. He suggests that 'as soon as s a freedom other than my own arises to confront me' - in the sense that I am exposed to intersubjectivity - it follows that

> I begin to exist in a new dimension of being and, this time, it is not a matter of my conferring a meaning on brute existents, or of taking up on my own account the meaning that others have conferred on certain objects: it is myself who I can see conferred with a meaning… Thus,

> something about me - according to this new dimension - exists in the
> manner of the *given*, at least for me, since this being that I am is
> *undergone:* it is, without *being existed.* I learn of it and I undergo it in
> and through the relations that I maintain with others, in and through their
> behaviour in relation to me… (2021 [1943], 568; original italics)

Insofar as intersubjectivity entails that 'it is myself who I can see conferred with a new meaning', it is the case that I 'exist in a new dimension of being' that is 'given' to me, and which is passively 'undergone' by me (2021 [1943], 568). Hence, Sartre speaks of 'the true limit to my freedom' that 'lies purely and simply in the very fact that another apprehends me as an object-other' (2021 [1943], 570). According to Sartre, it is this

> alienating objectification of my situation that is my situation's permanent
> and specific limit… by virtue of the Other's existence, I exist in a
> situation which *has an outside* and which, by this very fact, has an
> alienating dimension that I can in no way remove from it, no more than I
> can directly act upon it. This limit to my freedom is, we can see, posited
> by the Other's pure and simple existence. (2021 [1943], 570)

For Sartre, intersubjectivity entails 'alienation' from my 'situation' as a 'limit to my freedom' to constitute meaning, since I exist for the Other (2021 [1943], 570).


Having shown how, for Sartre, intersubjectivity has the ontological ramification of 'alienating' me from my 'situation' where I constitute meaning, I will highlight how this kind of ramification is taken seriously by Heidegger in his analysis of the 'they', before suggesting that its weight is comparatively underestimated by Sartre. . As we have seen, it is the case, for Heidegger, that

> proximally and for the most part the Self is lost in the 'they'. It
> understands itself in terms of those possibilities of existence which
> 'circulate' in the 'average' public way of interpreting Dasein today. (1962
> [1927], 435)

For Heidegger, 'Dasein' is usually 'lost in the 'they', insofar as its self-interpretation and 'projection' are limited to the conceptual hegemony that is characteristic of its time. Similarly, Heidegger tells us that, by virtue of 'Dasein's facticity', it follows that 'Dasein remains in the throw, and is sucked into the turbulence of the "they"…' (1962 [1927], 223). In this way, Heidegger emphasises the power of the 'they' to limit 'Dasein'. While it is true, for Heidegger, that the 'resolute' 'Dasein' who 'anticipates' death can find existential meaning in the light of their 'historicality', it remains the case that 'Dasein' can

only form a meaningful reaction to the avenues for projection that are set out for it, as according to the conceptual hegemony of its time. Ultimately, 'Dasein' is irrevocably 'thrown' into the context of the 'today' that is shaped by that conceptual hegemony. In this way, 'Dasein' is crucially limited, for Heidegger.

While Sartre recognises how intersubjectivity incurs 'alienation' from my 'situation', he ultimately undermines the power of 'the Other' to limit my 'freedom' to constitute meaning. Sartre suggests that

> the existence of meanings that do not emanate from the for-itself cannot constitute an external limit to its freedom… it is in order to choose himself as a personal self that the for-itself maintains particular social and abstract characteristics of existence… (2021 [1943], 564)

So, while Sartre recognises how intersubjectivity presents a '*real* limit to our freedom, i.e. a way of being that is forced on us, without being found in our freedom', he argues that 'the limit that is imposed does not come from the *action* of others… we give in to it *freely*' (2021 [1943], 569). In the same vein, we can see Sartre admit that, when we bring 'the Other into consideration', it is 'at this new level (that) my freedom… meets its limits in the existence of the Other's freedom', yet Sartre ultimately holds that 'the only limits that a freedom meets will be found by it within freedom' itself (2021 [1943], 570).

To see why Sartre gives priority to our freedom, we need to pay further attention to the 'alienation of the situation' that I undergo when I exist for 'the Other'. In an extended passage that I include here for the sake of analysis, Sartre elaborates that

> alienation of the situation does not represent an internal break, nor the introduction of something given as brute resistance within the situation, such as I live it. Quite to the contrary, this alienation is neither an internal modification nor a partial change in the situation; it does not appear in the course of temporalisation; I only ever encounter it *within* the situation and it is not, in consequence, ever given to my intuition. But, as a matter of principle, it escapes me; it is the situation's very externality, which is to say its being-outside-for-the-other. We are dealing therefore with an essential characteristic of any situation in general; this characteristic cannot act upon its content, but is accepted and taken up by the very person who *puts himself in situation*. In this way, the very meaning of our free choice is to make a situation arise which expresses it and of which an essential characteristic is to be *alienated* i.e. to exist for the other as a figure in itself. We cannot escape from this alienation… This

> characteristic does not manifest itself through an internal resistance but, on the contrary, it is felt in and through its very elusiveness. (2021 [1943], 570-1)

For Sartre, 'alienation' does not disrupt the 'situation' in my constitution of its meaning 'such as I live it': as Sartre says, it does not 'represent an internal break, nor the introduction of something given as brute resistance within the situation, such as I live it' (2021 [1943], 570-1). In this way, Sartre seems to undermine the phenomenological weight of 'alienation', and this reading is supported by his claims later on in the same passage that alienation does 'not appear in the course of temporisation', that it is not 'ever given to my intuition', and that it does not 'manifest itself through internal resistance', but it is instead 'felt in an through its very elusiveness' (2021 [1943], 570-1). While Sartre undermines the phenomenological weight of 'alienation', he maintains its ontological import as 'an essential characteristic of any situation in general' that marks the 'situation's very externality' in the sense of its 'being-outside-for-the-other' (2021 [1943], 570-1). With this ontological structure in place, Sartre emphasises that 'alienation' 'escapes me', and that 'we cannot escape from this alienation' etc. (2021 [1943], 570-1). Nevertheless, he ultimately gives priority to our freedom to constitute meaning: for Sartre, 'alienation' is a 'characteristic' of the 'situation' that is 'accepted and taken up by the very person who *puts himself in situation*': Sartre argues that 'the very meaning of our free choice is to make a situation arise which expresses' that 'free choice', before highlighting how an 'essential characteristic' of this 'situation' is to be 'alienated, i.e. to exist for the other as a figure in itself' (2021 [1943], 570-1). Sartre concludes that 'alienation' is

> therefore, in the end, not an obstacle which freedom encounters head on, but a sort of centrifugal force within its very nature, a weakness in its mix which means that everything it undertakes will always have a side that it has not chosen, which escape it and which, for the other, will be pure existence. (2021 [1943], 570-1)

So, while the 'situation' where I constitute meaning does involve 'alienation' by virtue of intersubjectivity, this does not negate my 'freedom' to constitute meaning, for Sartre; it only gives us a more complicated picture of that 'freedom', where 'everything (that) it undertakes' is punctuated by the 'facticity' of what 'it has not chosen, which escape it' as the 'pure existence' that endures for 'the other' (2021 [1943], 570-1).

Having shown how, for Sartre, intersubjectivity entails 'alienation' that is essential to the 'situation' in a way that does not disrupt my 'freedom' to constitute the meaning of that 'situation', I will draw attention to the role that Sartre gives 'recognition' in making 'alienation' more phenomenologically pertinent, but still a matter of my own 'freedom'. As already seen, Sartre seems to undermine the phenomenological weight of the 'alienation', according to which I exist for 'the Other'. Sartre goes on to say that

> I cannot *experience* this alienation without at the same time *recognising* the Other as a transcendence… there is no difference between my free project of *recognition* of the Other and the free acceptance of my being-for-the-Other. It is here therefore that my freedom somehow retrieves its own limits, because I can apprehend myself as limited by the Other only in so far as the Other exists for me, and I can make the Other exist for me as a recognised subjectivity only by accepting my being-for-Other… through my free acceptance of this alienated-being that I undergo, I suddenly make the Other's transcendence exist for me as such. (2021 [1943], 571; original italics)

It seems that, for Sartre, 'alienation' can only be 'experience(d)', and I can only 'apprehend myself as limited by the Other' insofar as I freely 'recognis(e) the Other as a transcendence', allowing that 'the Other exists for me as a recognised subjectivity' (2021 [1943], 571). For Sartre, the 'free project of recognition of the Other' is equivalent to the 'free acceptance of my being-for-the-Other' (2021 [1943], 571). So, by freely recognising the subjectivity of the Other, it follows that 'my freedom somehow retrieves its own limits': I freely accept the 'alienated-being that I undergo' (2021 [1943], 571). In this way, Sartre draws attention to how 'alienation' can be experienced as a limitation to my 'freedom' to constitute meaning, but this experience itself hinges on my free 'recognition' of the Other as a subjectivity who constitutes meaning. 'Freedom' consequently has priority, for Sartre. The experience of any limitation posed by 'alienation' springs from my 'freedom' itself: it is, after all, the free recognition of the Other that makes me experience the 'alienation' of my 'situation' as a limitation to my freedom to constitute the meaning of that 'situation'. As Sartre clarifies,

> the other's freedom confers limits on my situation, but I can *experience* these limits only if I reclaim this being for the other that I am…(2021 [1943], 571)

Having given absolute priority to our freedom, since it is only through the free

recognition of the Other's subjectivity that the 'alienating' dimension of my 'situation' manifests in experience, Sartre offers some powerful illustrations of what it means to be free to constitute the meaning of my 'situation'. Sartre gives us the example that

> race, disability or ugliness can *appear* only within the limits of my own choice of inferiority or pride; in order words, they can appear only with a meaning that my freedom confers on them. That means… that they *are* for the other but that they can be for me only if I *choose* them.  (2021 [1943], 573)

For Sartre, significations such as 'race, disability or ugliness' only acquire their meaning 'for me' according to my 'choice of inferiority or pride': my 'freedom' is thus the ultimate origin of their meaning 'for me' (2021 [1943], 573). Giving us another illustration of what it means to be free to constitute the meaning of my 'situation', Sartre states that

> I do not restrict myself to passively receiving the meaning of 'ugliness', 'handicap', 'race' etc. but on the contrary I can apprehend these characteristics - merely as meanings - only in the light of my own ends…
> (2021 [1943], 573)

According to Sartre, we do not 'passively receive' the meaning of significations that are attached to us  (2021 [1943], 573). Instead, we 'apprehend' them 'as meanings' according to our own purposes   (2021 [1943], 573): the power of intersubjectivity to limit our freedom to constitute meaning is consequently undercut. So, while intersubjectivity does belong to 'facticity', for Sartre, it is freedom that has ultimate priority.


In *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), we can see Merleau-Ponty place more emphasis on the power of 'facticity' to limit our freedom. On the one hand, Merleau-Ponty agrees with Sartre that 'I have the choice between being an object of disapproval or disapproving of others' (1945, 505): I can freely constitute the meaning of, e.g., 'race, disability or ugliness' for me, as we have seen Sartre affirm (2021 [1943], 573). Extrapolating about the priority of freedom to constitute meaning in general, Merleau-Ponty recognises how

> even what are called obstacles to freedom are in reality deployed by it. An unclimbable rock face, a large or small, vertical or slanting rock, are things which have no meaning for anyone who is not intending to surmount them, for a subject whose projects do not carve out such determinate forms from the uniform mass of the in itself and cause an orientated world to arise—a significance in things.  (1945, 507)

For Merleau-Ponty, there is a 'significance in things' that arises from the 'uniform mass of the in itself' according to my 'projects', which give the world its 'orientat(ion)' (1945, 507). Merleau-Ponty consequently concurs with Sartre that

> there is, then, ultimately nothing that can set limits to freedom, except those limits that freedom itself has set in the form of its various initiatives, so that the subject has simply the external world that he gives himself. (1945, 507)

Like Sartre, Merleau-Ponty seems to emphasise our freedom to constitute meaning. However, drawing attention to the power of 'facticity' to undermine that freedom, Merleau-Ponty highlights how,

> whether or not I have decided to climb them, these mountains appear high to me, because they exceed my body's power to take them in its stride, and… I cannot so contrive it that they are small for me. Underlying myself as a thinking subject… there is, therefore, as it were a natural self which does not budge from its terrestrial situation and which constantly adumbrates absolute valuations. (1945, 511)

Though he does not use the locution of 'facticity' here, we can say that Merleau-Ponty implicitly emphasises the 'facticity' of the 'body', or the 'natural self', who belongs to a 'terrestrial situation' that is carved out by 'absolute valuations', all of which extend beyond 'myself as a thinking subject' (1945, 511). Highlighting these inexplicable conditions of being human, Merleau-Ponty suggests that

> in so far as I have hands, feet, a body, I sustain around me intentions which are not dependent upon my decisions and which affect my surroundings in a way which I do not choose. (1945, 511)

Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, freedom is undermined by what Sartre calls 'facticity': insofar as I am embodied, for Merleau-Ponty, it follows that my 'surroundings' are 'affect(ed)' in a way that surpasses my freedom to choose (1945, 511). Merleau-Ponty concludes that

> it is, therefore, true that there are no obstacles in themselves, but the self which qualifies them as such is not some acosmic subject; it runs ahead of itself in relation to things in order to confer upon them the form of things. There is an autochthonous significance of the world which is constituted in the dealings which our incarnate existence has with it. (1945, 512)

While Merleau-Ponty agrees with Sartre that 'there are no obstacles in themselves', since it is 'the self which qualifies them as such' according to the projects it has chosen for itself, Merleau-Ponty stresses how the 'self' is 'not some acosmic subject' that floats free of the material plane to which it is bound (1945, 512). According to Merleau-Ponty, there is a native 'significance of the

world which is constituted in the dealings which our incarnate existence has with it', and this cannot be neglected in an analysis of our freedom (1945, 512).

In his essay, 'The Freedom of Facticity' (2018), we can see Abraham Olivier argue in the same vein as Merleau-Ponty: while Olivier agrees with Sartre that 'freedom is based on and manifests in choice', Olivier holds that 'choices are not in the first place the manifestation of the nihilating power of consciousness, but rather that they are originally based on and shaped by the options offered in particular situations' (2018, 8-9). In this way, Olivier emphasises the 'facticity' of inexplicable conditions of being human, and its role as the ground and limit of our 'freedom' to make choice. While Sartre admits 'facticity' as the ground of 'freedom', as we have seen, the priority that he gives to that 'freedom' could be accused of ultimately undermining the concrete limitations to 'freedom' that are afforded by 'facticity' throughout earthly existence, as emphasised by Merleau-Ponty.

Having shown how Merleau-Ponty and Olivier emphasise the power of 'facticity' to curb 'freedom', it is important to clarify whether this lies at odds with the priority Sartre gives to freedom. In her *Political Writings* (1951-2), Simone de Beauvoir discredits Merleau-Ponty's reading of Sartre: she suggests that Merleau-Ponty sets up a 'pseudo Sartreanism', where meaning is entirely imposed on the world (204). For Simone de Beaviour, Merleau-Ponty mischaracterises Sartre: Merleau-Ponty fails to grasp 'facticity' as the foundation for Sartrean ontology (1951-2, 204). Though Sartre gives freedom priority to the extent that we are free to constitute the meaning of our 'situation' - and the 'alienating' dimension introduced to that 'situation' by intersubjectivity can only be experienced according to our freedom to recognise the Other in the first place - the 'freedom' that Sartre enshrines is nevertheless grounded on and tempered by 'facticity'. As Sartre holds,

> the surpassed in-itself remains and haunts it (the for-itself), as its original contingency. The for-itself can never make contact with it, or grasp itself as being this or that, but neither can it prevent itself from being, at a distance from itself, what it is. This contingency, this heaviness that belongs to the for-itself at a distance, a heaviness that it never is, but that it has to be as a heaviness that is surpassed, and preserved in its very surpassing, is facticity... (2021 [1943], 153; my

parentheses)

Though the 'for-itself' can 'surpass' the 'in-itself' by freely constituting the meaning of its situation according to its own purposes, it is the case, for Sartre, that the 'in-itself remains and haunts' the 'for-itself' as its 'original contingency' (2021 [1943], 153). According to Sartre, this 'original contingency' eludes the 'for-itself' in designating the inexplicable conditions of being human, yet it 'belongs to the for-itself' as a 'heaviness that is surpassed, and preserved in its very surpassing': under the guise of 'facticity', the 'original contingency' of the 'in-itself' is supposed to endure (2021 [1943], 153): the 'freedom' by which we 'surpass' 'facticity' nevertheless 'preserve(s)' it (2021 [1943], 153). Merleau-Ponty is consequently too quick to accuse Sartre of portraying the 'for-itself' as an 'acosmic subject' that is untethered to the 'facticity' of earthly existence (1945, 512). As it is encompassed by 'facticity', Sartre even attests that death 'haunts me in the very heart of each of my projects', though 'the possibility of there no longer being any possibilities for me' is supposed to 'not *make a dent in me*' in the sense that it does not inform my existential meaning (2021 [1943], 592). Thus, we can see that, in giving priority to our 'freedom', Sartre does not neglect the ontological import of 'facticity'.

For another objection to Sartre, we can say that he neglects the phenomenological import of 'facticity' when it comes to intersubjective relations. As already seen, Sartre holds that the 'alienating' dimension to my 'situation' that is introduced by 'intersubjectivity' can only be experienced by me as a limit to my freedom to constitute the meaning of my 'situation' insofar as I freely recognise the subjectivity of the Other. In his essay, 'Race, Culture, Identity' (2003), which appears in *The African Philosophy Reader*, Kwame Appiah highlights how collective identification in the form of 'labelling' shapes the way people conceive of themselves and their projects (436-7; 438-9). According to Appiah, Sartre underestimates the capacity of collective identification to generate an oppressive situation that deprives people of the choice to constitute meaning (2003, 438), and this criticism seems reasonable. We can see  Sartre claim that 'I have at my disposal an infinite number of ways of accepting my being-for-the-Other' (2021 [1943], 573), but this characterisation is arguably too hasty, without an analysis of how it is privilege that affords him this scope, or oppression that would hinder it. While Sartre

draws attention to how I 'cannot not accept' my 'being-for-the-Osther', and he attributes this impossibility to the 'condemnation to freedom' that is 'facticity', he does not link the principle that 'I cannot abstain completely in relation to what I am (for the other)' to the axes of oppression that determine 'what I am (for the other)' (2021 [1943], 573; original parentheses). Sartre maintains that I cannot 'undergo' my being-for-Other 'passively; in rage, hatred, pride, shame, disgusted rejection or joyful assertion, I have to choose to be what I am'(2021 [1943], 573). In giving priority to our choice in this way, Sartre neglects how my response to who I am for the Other stretches beyond the realm of what is voluntary; as Appiah highlights, the response is subject to axes of oppression, the phenomenology of which is totally underrepresented by Sartre. In his essay, 'The Freedom of Facticity' (2018), Abraham Olivier similarly argues that 'Sartre does not adequately account for the need of oppressive situations to change as a condition of the possibility for subjects to be free' (8). Sartre is consequently too quick to say that 'the only limits that freedom comes up against in every instant are those which it imposes on itself' (2021 [1943], 576). In suggesting that 'I never encounter anything but myself and my projects, so that in the end… my facticity… consists merely in my being condemned to be fully responsible for myself (2021 [1943], 601), Sartre neglects the full weight of the problem posed by intersubjectivity for my freedom to constitute the meaning of my 'situation'. Though Sartre holds that it is 'through this free recognition of the Other - through the alienation that I undergo - I *accept* my being-for-the-Other, whatever it may be, and I accept it precisely because it is my bridge to the Other' (2021 [1943], 571), he fails to address the impossibility of burning that 'bridge': under the rubric of 'facticity', intersubjectivity entails phenomenological ramifications in such a way that diminishes my freedom to constitute the meaning of my 'situation'. This objection reveals something phenomenologically significant about intersubjectivity that fails to get into focus in Sartre. In the next chapter,  which focuses on 'facticity' in Merleau-Ponty, we shall discover the conceptual resources for filling that phenomenological lacuna.

To conclude - we have seen how 'facticity' for Sartre and Heidegger alike signifies inexplicable conditions of being human, but the philosophers vary in their points of emphasis: for Heidegger, 'Dasein' is irrevocably 'thrown' into the conceptual hegemony of its time in such a way that it is only death that can

enlighten 'historicality' as existential meaning; for Sartre, it is not death, but living subjectivity that is 'condemned' to constitute its own existential meaning, but this theoretical move comes at the cost of overlooking the phenomenological depth of intersubjectivity.

## Chapter 6     Chiastic Flesh: An Avant-Garde Ontology

As the final exegetic chapter of this thesis, this chapter examines the avant-garde ontology of the 'chiastic flesh', where Merleau-Ponty appropriates 'facticity' in the spirit of inheriting and reconstituting meaning, arguably giving us the conceptual resources to capture our multifaceted relationship with reality. This chapter is split into three sections. Section 6(a) of this chapter highlights the role and language of 'hyper-reflection' in Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (henceforth abbreviated as 'VI')*. Section 6(b) of this chapter explores the sensible and the meaningful; the world and body, and other 'chiastic' structures that are supposed to be encompassed by 'facticity' as 'flesh', thus completing the historical trajectory of 'facticity' to be recounted in this thesis.

6(a)    The Role and Language of Hyper-Reflection in Merleau-Ponty's
The Visible and the Invisible

'Hyper-reflection' ('sur-réflexion') is a form of phenomenology which Merleau-Ponty explicitly introduces on Page 38 of VI (original italics). The method is characterised by reflexivity, since it is intended to 'take itself and the changes it introduces into the spectacle into account' (VI, 38) - i.e. it is supposed to be wary of the transformative role of reflection. In Husserl, we find the idea that you can reflect on unreflected lived experience without this is any way impinging on the latter. Husserl writes:

> [W]hen a lived-experience, that at some particular time is actually being lived, comes into the reflective regard it becomes given as actually being lived, as existing 'now'... it becomes given as having just now been and, insofar as it was unregarded, precisely as not having been reflected on. (Ideas I, 145)

For Husserl, it seems that we can, via reflection, perfectly apprehend the lived experience that was unreflected. For Merleau-Ponty, however, it is the case that

reflection inevitably modifies that which is being reflected on (see VI, 38 on how '... there was there a thing perceived and an openness upon this thing which the reflection has neutralized and transformed into perception-reflected-on and thing- perceived-within-a-perception-reflected-on.'). So, because it reflexively grasps the transformative role of reflection, the method of hyper-reflection is better equipped as phenomenology to 'not lose sight of the brute thing and the brute perception... not finally efface them' (VI, 38).

According to Merleau-Ponty, phenomenological the method of hyper-reflection cannot simply analyse or rehearse the conventions of language: we cannot 'reduce philosophy to a linguistic analysis' of how we use the terms that are relevant to veridical perception, such as 'world' or 'thing' (VI, 96), as Merleau-Ponty suggests. Merleau-Ponty elaborates that

> it (philosophy *qua* hyper-reflection) asks of our experience of the world what the world is before it is a thing one speaks of and which is taken for granted, before it has been reduced to a set of manageable, disposable significations; it directs this question to our mute life, it addresses itself to that compound of the world and of ourselves that precedes reflection, because the examination of the significations in themselves would give us the world reduced to our idealizations and our syntax... (VI, 102; my parentheses)

Here, Merleau-Ponty characterises the ideal mode of philosophy - i.e. hyper-reflection - as an inquiry into our pre-linguistic experience of veridical perception, as opposed to an inquiry into the meanings of words that are historically established in relation to it. According to Merleau-Ponty, the latter kind of inquiry would only reaffirm our prejudicial conceptions about veridical perception (it would 'give us the world reduced to our idealizations and our syntax'), rather than evoking how veridical perception of the world features 'before it (the world) is a thing one speaks of and which is taken for granted, before it has been reduced to a set of manageable, disposable significations' (my parentheses) (VI, 102).

Clarifying that hyper-reflection, as the ideal mode of philosophy, should aim to express our pre-linguistic experience of veridical perception, Merleau-Ponty writes early on in VI that 'it is the things themselves, from the depths of their *silence,* that it (philosophy *qua* hyper-reflection) wishes to bring to expression' (4, my italics; my parentheses). Similarly, a few pages later, Merleau-Ponty declares that philosophy must 'make it (the world) say, finally,

what in its silence *it means to say. . .* ' (VI, 39; my parentheses; original italics). Again, it seems that the method of hyper-reflection is supposed to capture that which is pre-linguistic - i.e. our unarticulated experience of veridical perception, which Merleau-Ponty also characterises as something 'wild', or 'brute' (VI, 102, 110 etc.). Faced with the seemingly impossible task of expressing what is pre-linguistic, the philosopher must make an 'absurd effort' (VI, 125): he must 'put into words a certain silence he hearkens to within himself' (VI, 125).

Envisioning the kind of meaning that would be relevant to the hyper- reflective project of expressing our pre-linguistic perceptual life, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> It would be a language... that would combine through him (the philosopher) by virtue of a natural intertwining of their meaning, through the occult trading of the metaphor— where what counts is no longer the manifest meaning of each word and of each image, but the lateral relations, the kinships that are implicated in their transfers and their exchanges... (VI, 125; my parentheses)

Here, Merleau-Ponty advocates innovating the kind of meaning that would stretch beyond the literal use of words - i.e. the 'manifest meaning of each word' - and centre instead around what is more evocatively connoted through 'the occult trading of the metaphor'. Though Merleau-Ponty does not offer a comprehensive account of what a metaphor exactly is (i.e. it is 'occult'), and he mentions the literary device very scarcely in VI, its relevance to the method of hyper-reflection is widely agreed upon across the secondary literature on VI (see, for example, Luca Vanzago 2005, Berndt Sellheim 2010, and Jerry H. Gill 1991).

Without delving too much into the philosophy of language, it seems reasonable to understand metaphorical language as that which is figurative - i.e. it departs from the literal use of words in order to generate some other meaning. Following the trend of secondary literature on VI, we can say that metaphor plays a necessary role in the hyper-reflective enterprise of expressing what has not been expressed before. As we have seen, Merleau-Ponty captures our pre-linguistic perceptual life as our 'mute life' (VI, 102), or as simply 'silence' (VI, 3, 39, 125, etc.'). Clarifying how 'silence' evades standard expression, Merleau-Ponty writes in a working note the following principle: 'Silence = absence of the word due' (VI, 263). Vanzago is therefore right to observe that, for Merleau-Ponty, hyper-reflection is a philosophy that 'needs to recur to the power of

metaphorical expressions in order to communicate what cannot otherwise be adequately expressed' (2005, 429). Similarly, Sellheim seems right to suggest that, for Merleau-Ponty, 'the philosopher... must become a poet' (2010, 261).

6(b)    The Sensible and the Meaningful; the World and
        Body, and Other Chiastic Structures

In the style of a philosopher-poet, Merleau-Ponty puts forward the concept of 'flesh' as a motif that answers to the phenomenological method of 'hyper-reflection'. The word 'flesh' first appears in VI on Page 9, for the moment unencumbered by the technical, metaphysical meaning that comes to imbue it. Merleau-Ponty refers to 'the experience of my flesh', thereby pointing to the phenomenology of embodiment (VI, 9). 'Flesh' is thus used in the ordinary sense here, denoting the muscle and fat between skin and bones, or your corporeal being more loosely. Gradually, however, the word 'flesh' starts to be used in a more novel and esoteric way. On Page 84, we see Merleau-Ponty enigmatically refer to the 'flesh of the world'. Pages later, he refers to 'the flesh of being and the flesh of the seer' as that which is to be 'rediscover(ed) behind the vision, as immediate presence to being' (VI, 88). Clearly, the word 'flesh' is being used in an extraordinary sense here: a greater meaning has sidled into the picture, however cryptically: it seems to be an expansive, ontological concept that encompasses everything - 'world' (VI, 84), 'being' and 'seer' alike (VI, 88). In his essay, 'World, Flesh, Vision' (2000), François Dastur similarly understands Merleau-Ponty's technical sense of 'flesh' as a 'name for being as a whole' (2000, 37). Indeed, Merleau-Ponty defines the Flesh as an 'element' of Being' (VI, 139). In using the word 'element', he is hoping to capture the 'old' sense in which it was used 'to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing…' (VI, 139). Merleau-Ponty clarifies that the 'flesh' is

> not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet (it is) adherent to *location* and to the *now.* Much more: the inauguration of the *where* and the *when,* the possibility and exigency for the fact; in a word: facticity, what makes the fact be a fact. (VI, 140; my parentheses)

Identified with 'facticity' as the most ultimate notion, the 'flesh' is characterised in simple terms, as both visible, and invisible. While vision is just one sensory modality, Merleau-Ponty also refers to the 'flesh' of the world as tangible, and

intangible (VI, p117, p123, p137 etc.). He thereby implies that the 'flesh' is that which is sensible more generally, while its invisible/intangible quality can be attributed to the way it is meaningful. In short, then, we can say that the 'flesh' is that which is both sensible (i.e. visible, tangible etc.) and meaningful (i.e. invisible, intangible etc.): it is "facticity and ideality undividedly" (VI, p117).

Clarifying what it means for 'flesh' to be sensible, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> What we call a visible is, we said, a quality pregnant with a texture, the surface of a depth, a cross section upon a massive being (VI, 136).

So, treating the 'visible' as a synecdoche for the things that are sensible more generally, we can see that sensibility involves 'texture'; it has a certain qualitative feel to it. Furthermore, it seems that sensibility involves dimensionality: it is the 'surface of a depth, a cross section…'. So, owing to its sensible nature, the Flesh is not perceived whimsically, without dimensionality or structure, as a mere 'wandering troop of sensations' (VI, p123). Instead, Flesh is perceived as a vivid landscape, or an open field, poised for immediate exploration: it 'gives rise to an open series of concordant explorations' (VI, p5). The Flesh is perceived as entirely present to me, just there, 'at the end of my gaze and… at the end of my exploration' more generally (VI, p11).

Clarifying what it means for 'flesh' to be meaningful, Merleau-Ponty writes:

> With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. The idea is this level, this dimension… (VI, p151).

By referring to 'the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure', I take Merleau-Ponty to mean perception of Flesh. And with this perception, there is supposed to be 'the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed', and this dimension - unlike the physical dimensionality of the Flesh - refers to the invisible realm of 'the idea' - i.e. of meaning. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, perception of Flesh involves an apprehension of what that Flesh means: the sensible landscape is suffused with invisible meanings, 'as with an invasion', and it cannot be severed from them (VI, p155). Hence why Merleau-Ponty writes that "it is within a world already spoken and speaking that we think', thus drawing attention to how meaning is already built into the sensible world (VI,

184). And, having made an impression on you, such meaning 'can never again be closed' insofar as it inevitably informs the rest of your perceptual experiences  (VI, p151).

While the 'flesh' is supposed to be universal, Merleau-Ponty refers to 'the Flesh of the world' and 'the Flesh of the body', as though there are two separate kinds of Flesh. Ultimately, however, the discrete expressions do not coincide with things that are entirely separate in themselves: the 'flesh' of the world is intimately and necessarily related with the 'flesh' of the body in a way that forms a metaphysical kinship. In an enigmatic working note from May, 1960, Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world *reflects* it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world' (VI, 248; original italics).

While the 'flesh of the world' refers to the world insofar as it is both *sensible* and *meaningful*, the 'flesh of the body' picks out the human-being who belongs to the world. In addition to the symmetry arising from their sensibility, there is supposed to be asymmetry between the perceptual agent and the sensible world, since the former is supposed to be sentient in a way that the latter is not (for the same reading of VI, see Bannon 2001, 332; Dillon 1998, 167, and Clarke 2002, 215). On Page 116, in italicised font, Merleau-Ponty clarifies that we, as agents of perception, are '*sensible-sentients*' (*sentants-sensibles*): we are sensible bodies that can perceive the world we inhabit, as well as our own bodies (from certain perspectives). By contrast, the sensible world that we inhabit is 'not *self-sensing* (*se sentir*) ... not sentient' (VI, 250; original italics).

Merleau-Ponty's characterisation of the sentient-sensible existence is rich, and ambitious. On the one hand, he suggests that it involves 'divergence' *(ecart)* between what is sensible and what is sentient. Speaking metaphorically, he refers to 'the segregation of the 'within' and the 'without'' (VI, 188), and similarly: 'that divergence between the within and the without' (VI, 135), where the 'within' captures sentience, while the 'without' captures sensibility. More directly, he refers to a 'fundamental fission or segregation of the sentient and the sensible' (VI, 146), before repeating the language of 'fission' on Page 146, when

he refers to 'dehiscence or fission'. While the notion of 'fission' connotes 'divergence' quite simply, the notion of 'dehiscence' introduces further depth. In the medical sense, 'dehiscence' refers to a rupture in the body, like a surgical wound, that allows a discharge of the fluid inside. In botanical terms, it refers to the splitting of a plant structure that releases the seed(s) inside. There is thus something productive, or revelatory about dehiscence, and this lends another dimension as to how a sensible-sentient existence involves divergence. Rather than merely splitting open, that which is sensible and that which is sentient split into a division that is productive, or revelatory. Presumably, this is because it allows perception: there is a 'bursting forth of the mass of the body toward the things' (VI, 146) So, by introducing the notion of dehiscence, Merleau-Ponty adds complexity to the way that a sensible-sentient existence involves divergence: it is a divergence that is supposed to allow perception of the world.

In addition to divergence, a sentient-sensible existence is supposed to involve an 'intertwining' (*entrelacs*). Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'there is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other' (VI, 138), also characterising this phenomenon as a 'crisscrossing' within the body of 'the touching and the tangible' (VI, 133). Relatedly, he also suggests that a sentient-sensible existence involves 'encroachment' (*empiéter*). He suggests that, between 'my body touched and my body touching, there is overlapping or encroachment' (VI, 123). On my reading, all of these notions characterise the sensible and the sentient as entangled at the site of the body, though the notions of mutual 'encroachment' and 'insertion' perhaps imply a greater level of amalgamation between the two. Leaving this nuance aside for now, the intertwining of the sensible and the sentient is supposed to be exemplified in an instance of self-perception, where:

> my body— which is visible, tangible like a thing— acquires this view upon itself, this contact with itself, where it doubles itself up, unifies itself, in such a way that the objective body and the phenomenal body turn about one another or encroach upon one another... (VI, 117)

While the idea that my body is 'visible, tangible like a thing' highlights the quality of sensibility that it shares with the world, the fact that it can 'acquire... this view upon itself' picks out the power for self- perception that goes along with a sentient-sensible existence. In all her sentience, the perceptual agent can make 'contact' with her body, in all its sensibility. For Merleau-Ponty, this moment of

self-perception demonstrates how the body entangles sensibility and sentience: we are told that the 'objective body and the phenomenal body turn about one another or encroach upon one another', with these terms denoting the body in its sensibility and the body in its sentience respectively (note how Merleau-Ponty clarifies these associations himself on Page 136 of VI). And, insofar as the body intertwines what is sensible with what is sentient, it is supposed to form a unity: back to the quote above, we are told that the body 'unifies itself'. As Merleau-Ponty clarifies elsewhere in VI, '...my body is *at once* phenomenal body and objective body...' (VI, p136; my italics). Gallagher and Zahavi are therefore right to observe that 'the notion of an embodied mind or a minded body' is central to VI, (2012, 153), and the interchangeability of these terms underlines the idea that, for Merleau-Ponty, sentience and sensibility are supposed to be tangled together at the site of the body in such a way that forms a single entity.

So does the intertwining of the body give Merleau-Ponty the theoretical tools to overcome the kind of dualistic paradigm that would posit a breach between the sentient and the sensible? In his *Sixth Meditation*, Descartes holds that the mind is thinking and unextended, while matter is extended and unthinking (7:78), thus generating a 'real distinction' between them (see *Principles*, part I, section 60). It seems reasonable to associate the mind, insofar as Descartes conceives of it, with sentience: he defines 'a thing that thinks' as 'a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and which also imagines and *senses*.' (1980, 63; my italics). Furthermore, it seems reasonable to associate matter, insofar as Descartes conceives of it, with what is sensible: in his *Fifth Meditation*, he suggests that matter can be ascribed (by the perceptual agent) 'certain sizes, shapes, positions' etc. (1980, 85). In Classical philosophy, we can find a parallel to Cartesian dualism in Plato's *Phaedrus*, where he suggests that 'we are imprisoned (by the body) like an oyster in its shell' (250c; my parentheses): the body is supposed to house, or enclose, the discrete mind. Contemporarily speaking, the dualistic framework has been satirised by Gilbert Ryle as involving a 'ghost in the machine': it commits the metaphysical fallacy of jumbling together two discrete categories (1949).

It is clear that Merleau-Ponty wants to distance his philosophy from Cartesian dualism. In a working note from June 1960, he explicitly contrasts his ontology with Descartes when he writes that the Flesh 'is not the objective body, nor the body thought by the soul as its own (Descartes)' (VI, 250; original parentheses). Furthermore, Merleau- Ponty seems to reject the analogy that Plato postulates between the body and a shell: Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'we have to reject the age-old assumptions that put... the seer in the body... as in a box' (VI, 137). And, as though trying to evade falling into Ryle's satirical trap, he insists that 'the flesh is an ultimate notion, that it is not the union or compound of two substances, but thinkable by itself' (VI, 140), and similarly: 'We must not think the flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit— for then it would be the union of contradictories.' (VI, 147).

While there is textual evidence strongly indicative of Merleau-Ponty's desire to distance his philosophy from dualism, it remains difficult to provide a positive account as to how exactly the intertwining of the body is supposed to form a unity between what is sentient and what is sensible. Since a sensible-sentient existence is also supposed to involve divergence, Merleau-Ponty is arguably vulnerable to the criticism that he engenders dualism, however unintentionally, and he remains vulnerable to this criticism even when we take into account the notion of dehiscence. While the notion adds complexity to the way a sensible-sentient existence involves divergence - since it seems to suggest that the body splits open in such a way that allows perception of the world, like a seed bursting forth from a plant - the binary between what is sentient and what is sensible still seems to be operative, and thus problematic to the extent that it is arguably resembles dualism. Before seeing how Merleau-Ponty overcomes this problem, it is important to note that, pervading the VI, is an awareness of the difficulty in conceptualising the body: Merleau- Ponty acknowledges that 'it is a problem... to determine how the sensible sentient can also be thought', while making the promise that 'we will not avoid it' (VI, 137).

To see how Merleau-Ponty conceptualises a sentient-sensible existence as a unified existence - arguably without its apparent divergence smuggling in dualism - we should pay attention to his concept of the 'chiasm', and the related concept of 'reversibility'. As Ted Toadvine helpfully elucidates:

Chiasm has two senses in French and English that are both relevant to Merleau-Ponty's project: a physiological sense that refers to anatomical or genetic structures with a crossed arrangement (such as the optic nerves), and a literary sense referring to figures of speech that repeat structures in reverse order (AB:BA). (2016; original parentheses; also see 2012, 336, 339)

We can see that Merleau-Ponty appeals to the chiasm in its physiological sense to inform how the body intertwines sentience and sensibility in a way that retains their divergence, while generating unity: he describes it as 'one sole movement in its two phases' (VI 138). Showing how this structure is relevant to the body, Merleau- Ponty suggests that, during self-touch, 'either my right hand really passes over to the rank of touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it*' (VI, 148; original italics; see also VI, 9: 'the moment I feel my left hand with my right hand, I correspondingly cease touching my right hand with my left hand'): sentience lapses into sensibility at the cusp of self-perception, rather than the two coinciding, or overriding, in the locus of the body. Since the body goes back and forth between sentience and sensibility during self-perception, this illuminates why Merleau-Ponty portrays the intertwining as a 'crisscrossing' movement that repeats within the body (VI, 133), while this language also reinforces the physiological sense of the chiasm. Similarly, we can see that Merleau-Ponty appeals to the chiasm in its literary sense to characterise the body, since he suggests that 'there is a body of the mind, and a mind of the body, and a chiasm between them' (VI, 259), with the first two clauses of this sentence clearly reproducing the reversible 'AB:BA' structure that is linked to the literary chiasm. Emphasising how the body is reversibly both sentient and sensible, Merleau-Ponty refers to 'the cohesion of the obverse and the reverse of my body' (VI, 117), while clarifying later that 'the body sensed and the body sentient are as the obverse and the reverse' (VI, 138).

So, because the body is supposed to repeat and reverse sentience and sensibility in a chiastic pattern, we yield a complex picture of the body that arguably leaves behind the more simplistic images of it as a shell, machine, or box, while allowing a sensible-sentient existence to be divergent. Lending weight to this sophisticated characterisation, Merleau-Ponty asks whether 'we have a body - that is, not a permanent object of thought, but a flesh that suffers when it is wounded, hands that touch?' (VI, 137). While the language of 'flesh'

has a double-meaning here, connoting both our carnal existence and his technical ontology of the Flesh, Merleau-Ponty denies that the body is a mere 'object of thought', thereby again distancing himself from Descartes, for whom the body is extended and unthinking, and postulated by the distinct, thinking mind. For Merleau-Ponty, the body 'suffers when... wounded'; it has 'hands that touch': it chiastically intertwines sensibility and sentience in such a way that is orthogonally opposed to dualism, though the two remain divergent. Rendering an intricate image of the body, he writes that

> the other side of *the body overflows* into it... encroaches upon it, is hidden in it— and at the same time needs it, terminates in it, is *anchored* in it... (VI, 259; original italics).

While the language of 'sides' picks out the body's divergent nature, it would be a misnomer to associate this with simplistic dualism, since we are also told that sentience and sensibility simultaneously 'overflow' into and 'encroach' upon each other, with this language arguably reinforcing their chiastic unity. Caught in this complex structure, the sensible and the sentient are 'hidden' into and *'anchored'* within each other (VI, 259).

While Merleau-Ponty does offer rich imagery to substantiate how the body intertwines sentience and sensibility in a way that is coherent with their divergence, and yet resistant to dualism, we can nevertheless ask whether this is *philosophically* substantial enough. Rather than offering a precise metaphysical account as to how the body, in all its sentience and sensibility, forms a complex unity, does the concept of a chiasm deliver mere 'poetry', as Crowther suggests - a 'poetic expression' that lacks 'explanatory power in ontological terms' (2015, 22)? Similarly, Renaud Barbaras considers the concept problematic, wherein 'the difficulties, if not the impossibility, of Merleau-Ponty's last ontology are concentrated' (2002, 21). Writing about this criticism, Sellheim identifies that, for Barbaras, the chiasm of the sensible and the sentient is 'fundamentally unresolvable, remaining too metaphorical' (2010, 263).

Here, however, we should recall the methodological axis of hyper-reflection to express what is pre-linguistic via new metaphorical meaning. While the concept of the body chiastically intertwining the sensible and sentient is certainly avant-garde, it is arguably this kind of semantic nuance that has the power to evoke 'a

new conceptual space', as Sellheim suggests; 'such a new space requires a new means of expression, a new name — flesh is such a name.' (2010, 263). Under the rubric of Flesh, the body 'is not matter, is not mind, is not substance' (VI, 139). The body is instead something that has never been articulated before. Overcoming a linguistic lacuna that was ripe for philosophical expression - or, as Merleau-Ponty calls it, that 'fecund negative' (VI, 263) - the body is portrayed as a complex entity that chiastically repeats and reverses sentience and sensibility, thereby intertwining what is divergent.

Acknowledging that the body *qua* Flesh 'push(es) philosophy in the direction of quasi-poetic discourse', Paul Crowther sees this as a problem: 'its practical effect has been to close-off the possibility of further systematic/analytic investigation' (2015, 32). By making this point, Crowther invites us to consider the relationship between language, and academic Philosophy: he raises the issue of whether Philosophy should conform to the stylistic ideal that, taking inspiration from Science, prevails throughout the analytic tradition - or whether there is room for the discipline to embrace non-figurative language. While a full exploration of this matter stretches beyond the scope of this thesis, it suffices to point out that Crowther is begging the question as to how philosophy should proceed. As already seen, Merleau-Ponty puts forward the idea that some things evade literal expression - in which case, it is only metaphor that can do the trick. So, although metaphor may well introduce a level of indeterminacy to philosophy (see VI, 222 for Merleau-Ponty's admission: '*metaphor* is too much or too little'; original italics; also recall VI, 125 on the '*occult* trading of the metaphor'; my italics), it remains necessary for expressing that which is otherwise elusive - which, in this case, is the Flesh (VI, 125). As Vanzago highlights, 'the role of the metaphor is that of an effective door through which the access to a proper understanding of the ontology of the flesh is provided' (2005, 463). So, rather than taking Merleau-Ponty's indirect language to detract from the quality of his philosophy, his project is arguably enabled. As Sellheim suggests, '... in the stretching of language there is a concomitant stretching of ideas, and with it, an emergent capacity to generate valuable new conceptual ground.' (2010, 265). Understood this way, Merleau- Ponty's metaphorical exposition of the body *qua* Flesh marks a philosophical step forward, away from the dualistic convention of the mental estranged from the

material, and towards the expression of something previously untold: a sentient-sensible existence that is unified under the symbol of the chiasm, and which 'has no name in any philosophy' beyond that of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of 'flesh' (VI, 147).

In summary - there is symmetry between the perceptual agent and the world on account of their mutual sensibility, while there is asymmetry between them, since it is only the perceptual agent who is sentient. A sensible-sentient existence has been elaborated as involving both divergence and an intertwining. Put forward as a rival to dualism, the body *qua* Flesh is substantiated by novel, non-figurative language under the motif of the chiasm.

It follows that we can postulate multiple chiasms, corresponding between each perceiving agent and the rest of the sensible world, while also unravelling between what is sensible and what is meaningful in general. As Barbaras rightly observes, "It is necessary... to picture the universe as intuited by Merleau-Ponty as a proliferation of chiasms...' (2004: 307). We are thus given a complex picture of reality. Characterised by the sheer potential for veridical perception, reality rests on the possibility of manifold chiastic structures that hold between each perceiving body and the world, before ultimately converging on that 'one sole world' (VI, 8; see Toadvine 2012 for a similar exposition of what he calls 'the intersubjective chiasm'). Merleau-Ponty suggests that

> if there is a relation of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer... this coiling over of the visible upon the visible, can traverse, animate other bodies as well as my own. And if I was able to understand how this wave arises within me, how the visible which is yonder is simultaneously my landscape, I can understand a fortiori that elsewhere it also closes over upon itself and that there are other landscapes besides my own... (VI, 140-1)

In this way, 'flesh' as 'facticity' makes conceptual room for intersubjectivity.

Merleau-Ponty elaborates that

> the other's gaze— and it is here that it brings me something new— envelops me wholly, being and nothingness. This is what, in the relationship with another, depends on no interior possibility and what obliges us to say that it is a pure fact. But though this relationship be a part of my facticity, though it be an encounter that cannot be deduced from the For Itself, still it does present a sense for me; it is not a nameless catastrophe that leaves me petrified *(médusé),* it is the entry on the scene of someone else. (VI, 72).

In this way, Merleau-Ponty gives us the conceptual resources to grasp the phenomenological import of intersubjectivity, which is neglected in Sartre, as I suggest in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

Insofar as it thematises the mutual sensibility of the body and the world it inhabits, the ontology of Flesh is criticised by Merleau-Ponty's student and editor, Claude Lefort, as lacking conceptual room for alterity (1990). On his interpretation of VI, it is 'the body (that) communicates to the things its own divergence' (1990, 5; my parentheses). Discussing Lefort's reading of Merleau-Ponty, Martin Dillon writes that 'otherness becomes a meaning constituted by the body, and genuine alterity is lost in the selfsameness of the flesh' (1990, 18-19; my parentheses; see Anya Daly 2016, 4 for support that Lefort interprets the Flesh as 'an intractable, indivisible, uniform substance'). While Lefort's objection seems to be motivated by the ethical consideration that the ontology of Flesh precludes intersubjectivity, let us focus for now on the more limited, metaphysical dimension to this objection: Lefort seems to be accusing Merleau-Ponty of monism, as though his ontology inadequately accounts for the diversity amongst phenomena.

To defend Merleau-Ponty, I will draw attention to how it is the *meaningfulness* of what is sensible that is supposed to reflect the diversity amongst it. On Page 114 of VI, Merleau-Ponty characterises the sensible world as a 'whole architecture... differentiated by the coiling up of the visible and the universal'. This suggests that the diversity of the sensible world is reflected by the 'the depository of significations' that are historically established about it (VI, 102). Similarly, Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'there is no individual that would not be representative of a species or of a family of beings...' (VI, 114-5), thereby emphatically linking the diversity amongst sensible things to their sedimented meanings - i.e. the way they are historically taken to represent 'a species or... a family of beings', or rather, a concept that is a 'universal' (VI, 114).

Clarifying how it is language that reflects the diversity of things in the sensible world, Merleau-Ponty writes,

> If they (various sensible things) are to subsist as individuals... they have
> to exhibit a certain number of properties that are in some way nuclear,

that derive from one another, and, all together, emanate from this individual pebble, from this individual shell, or, in general, from every individual of the same name. When we say therefore, that there is here a pebble, a shell, and even this pebble, this shell, we mean that it fulfills these exigencies... this unique foundation of the nuclear properties... manifests itself unimpeded... (VI, 161; my parentheses)

A sensible thing belongs to a type in virtue of the collection of properties it 'emanate(s)', and what kind of identification, or 'name' that standardly warrants. A sensible thing thus answers to a fixed name, such as 'a pebble' or 'a shell', insofar as we are directly related to it during veridical perception: the pebble or shell must 'manifest... itself unimpeded' in order to 'exhibit' the properties that are relevant to its designation. Daly is therefore right to interpret VI as suggesting that 'things, the world and others are meaningful in-themselves' (2016, 6), since we see the things, the world and others as 'the locus' of their meanings (2016, 6). Similarly, as on Toadvine's reading of Merleau-Ponty, it is the case that 'perceived meaning is ontologically basic' (2009, 131). In III.3, we shall see how Merleau- Ponty appeals to the notion of the 'chiasm' in order to substantiate the relationship between what is sensible and what is meaningful. For now, it suffices to say that Merleau-Ponty does make theoretical room for diversity amongst what is sensible, since it is supposed to be its various sedimented meanings that reflect this. Emphasising this idea, Merleau-Ponty refers to 'an ideality that is not alien to the flesh, that gives it its axes, its depth, its dimensions' (VI, 152).


Insofar as the diversity of things in the sensible world is reflected by its meanings, should we follow Lefort in saying that the pre-linguistic - or 'wild' - aspect to life is undermined insofar as it is always already 'tamed' with the meaning that is historically established about it (1990, 11)? Resisting this interpretation, Merleau-Ponty insists on 'the wild region wherein they (meanings) all have originated' (VI, 115; my parentheses). Clarifying this point, Merleau-Ponty suggests that meaning is always 'first mute, then uttered' (VI, 119): there is a pre-linguistic dimension that is characterised as a 'depth' (VI, 126), or a 'great mute land' (VI, 126). And it is from this pre-linguistic dimension that new meanings are supposed to spring: Merleau-Ponty describes 'the birth of speech as bubbling up at the bottom of... mute experience' (VI, 126), while characterising 'silence' as simply 'the absence of the word *due*' (VI, 263; my italics). So, while it is true that meanings reflect the diversity of the sensible

world, 'the process of sedimentation' cannot 'exhaust Merleau-Ponty's promiscuous "wild being"', as Daly observes (2016, 8). Eloquently emphasising the point himself, Merleau-Ponty acknowledges that

> while ideality already streams forth along the articulations of the aesthesiological body, along the contours of the sensible things, however new it is, it slips through ways it has not traced, transfigures horizons it did not open (VI, 152).

Though language accounts for diversity amongst what is sensible - it 'streams forth along... (its) contours' - the sensible world awaits the cultivation of new meanings, as though beckoning the method of hyper-reflection to begin. In summary, we can say that (for Merleau-Ponty) there is symmetry between the body and world at the level of sensibility. While the diversity of the sensible world is reflected in its various sedimented meanings, there remains a pre-linguistic dimension to reality, wherein new meanings can spring forth.

In the light of the chiastic structure that holds between the world in all its sensibility and the world in all its intelligibility, it follows, for Merleau-Ponty, that 'it is in the world that we communicate, through what, in our life, is articulate' (VI, 11): insofar as reality can be perceived and thereby conceptualised, it can also be *discussed*. As Merleau-Ponty emphasises, language is 'coextensive with the thinkable' (VI, 118), while the body is a 'sonorous being' (VI, 145). Thus, it follows that we are able to vocalise meaningful thoughts about reality through the 'totality of what is said' (VI, 155). So, while the 'thickness of flesh' holds together a multiplicity of chiastic structures, spanning between each body and the world, it is *discourse* that offers an effective bridge between chiasms: we are told that 'our existence as sonorous beings for others and for ourselves contain everything required for there to be (verbal) speech from the one to the other, (verbal) speech about the world' (VI, 151; my parentheses to distinguish it from the technical concept of 'speech' explicitly formulated in PW). Insofar as we can speak about reality, we can speak to each other: 'weaving relations between bodies', we can discuss what is aesthetic, or ethical, or political etc. (VI, 144).

With reality up for collective discussion, Merleau-Ponty emphasises that

> ... each (speaker) is caught up in the vortex in which he first committed only measured stakes, each is led on by what he said and the response he received, led on by his own thought of which he is no longer the sole thinker. (VI, 119; my parentheses)

In this passage, Merleau-Ponty offers us a picture of conceptual progress that is arguably reminiscent of the Hegelian dialectic, where conflicting ideas find synthesis. Meaning seems to evolve through collective discourse in such a way that we are not limited to the sedimented meanings that reflect the diversity of the sensible world. Recalling the technical idea of 'speech' explicitly given in PW, the innovation of meaning is possible. So, while it is true that language is 'coextensive with the thinkable' (VI, 118), it follows that linguistic *innovation* is too.

Since the world in all its sensibility forms a chiasm with the world in all its meaning, and reality is up for discussion in such a way that meaning can evolve, it follows that semantic change engenders ontological change: the landscape can face a fresh 'invasion' of meaning (VI, 155). Hence, Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'language in forming itself expresses, at least laterally, an ontogenesis of which it is a part' (VI, 102): the metamorphosis of meaning is matched by a shift in the scope of reality - i.e. a shift in the scope of what can be perceived in the thickness of 'flesh' between body and world, and what can be discussed about the world across the thickness of 'flesh' by various bodies. This illuminates the full sense in which 'the ideas return to life' (VI, 119).

Since the innovation of meaning has direct ontological significance, for Merleau-Ponty, the method of hyper-reflection takes on greater depth: it empowers the philosopher to play a role in sculpting reality in all its potentiality. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, 'speech is a relation to Being through a being' (VI, 118): by innovating meaning, the philosopher enters a special relationship with reality as a whole. But rather than taking on some grand, directive power, like Plato's 'philosopher-kings', Merleau-Ponty characterises the philosopher who engages in hyper-reflection as strangely *passive*. The innovation of meaning is supposed to be 'possessed' by reality in such a way that 'lets' reality itself speak (VI, 188). Creating an air of mysticism around the hyper-reflective enterprise, the philosopher is characterised as channeling reality itself. Emphasising this idea, Merleau-Ponty insists that the philosopher should employ a

> language of which he (the philosopher) would not be the organizer, words he would not assemble, that would combine through him by virtue of a natural intertwining of their meaning. (VI, 125; my parentheses)

To demystify Merleau-Ponty's portrayal of the ideal philosopher as channelling reality itself, we should recall how the hyper-reflective innovation of meaning seeks to express what is pre-linguistic - i.e. reality in all its silence, or latent possibility, prior to conceptualisation: the philosopher is supposed to be 'called forth by the voices of silence' (VI, 127). So, by innovating meaning that gives novel expression to our pre-linguistic life, it follows that the philosopher acts as a vehicle for the expansion of reality itself - i.e. the expansion of what it is possible to think about, and thereby perceive, insofar as those 'ideas return to life' (VI, 119). So, by reconverting 'silence and speech into one another' (VI, 129), the philosopher is a catalyst for the ultimate chiasm that holds and unfolds between what is sensible and what is intelligible. The epistemic value of hyper-reflection to express what is pre-linguistic is thus matched by its ontological power to expand the horizons of reality.

Insofar as hyper-reflection drives forward the chiasm that unifies the world in all its sensibility and the world in all its intelligibility, it is a process that is necessarily ongoing. Merleau-Ponty writes that hyper-reflection

> cannot reconstruct the thing and the world by condensing in them, in the form of implication, everything we have subsequently been able to think and say of them; rather, it remains a question, it interrogates the world and the thing, it revives, repeats, or imitates their crystallization before us. For this crystallization which is partly given to us ready-made is in other respects never terminated, and thereby we can see how the world comes about... (VI, 100)

Merleau-Ponty is not satisfied for philosophy to stop there. Rather than 'condensing' reality through a reductive, single expression, the method of hyper-reflection is supposed to be open-ended: it 'remains a question', insofar as reality remains characterised by potentiality. While 'partly given to us ready-made', reality is 'never-terminated': the scope of what can be perceived and what can be thought is continually growing as the chiasm between them mounts. Hyper-reflection therefore necessarily stands in need of further development: we must continue to make reality say 'what in its silence *it means to say*' (VI, 39; original italics). Hyper-reflection becomes a continual enterprise of both epistemic and ontological import: ripe for development, it is supposed to 'continue... an effort of articulation which is the Being of every being' (VI, 127),

while awaiting further articulation that would 'energetically open upon Being' (VI, 102).

Insofar as veridical perception is crucial to reality in its 'sensibility', for Merleau-Ponty, does it follow that reality is transformed by the perceptual experience, thereby engendering the ontology of flesh with the transcendentalist doctrine that the things themselves exist beyond our perceptual experience? As Barbaras understands Merleau-Ponty, veridical perception is supposed to depend on the perceptual constitution of a perceiving body; the perceptual experience must therefore do some transformative work that prevents the perceptual agent from directly reaching the thing that is perceived itself (2002, 20; see Bannon 2011, 334 for the same reading of Barbaras). However, here we can emphasise how the perceiving body is, for Merleau-Ponty, a sentient-sensible that belongs to the 'flesh' as a whole. So, although veridical perception does depend on the perceptual constitution of a perceiving body, it still ultimately belongs to the 'flesh', which is why Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'there is vision, touch, when a certain visible, a certain tangible, turns back upon the whole of the visible, the whole of the tangible, of which it is a part' (VI, 139). So, on Merleau-Ponty's theory, there is no conceptual room for the perceptual experience to transform reality, thus removing the perceptual agent from what is perceived. As he writes:

> When we speak of the flesh of the visible, we do not mean to do anthropology, to describe a world covered over with all our own projections, leaving aside what it can be under the human mask. (VI, 136)

In this passage, Merleau-Ponty emphasises how the 'flesh' resists transcendentalism: the reality perceived is not supposed to be the residue of our 'projections', which would leave a prior reality, hidden beneath the 'human mask'. As he clarifies elsewhere, the things perceived are not 'brought into being by the things factually existing and acting on my factual body', which would introduce a transcendentalist chasm between the things perceived and the things themselves (VI, 139).

Though the perceptual experience is not supposed to *transform* reality, would Merleau-Ponty allow that it *informs* reality? In which case, his ontology of the Flesh would arguably engender the idealist doctrine that reality is limited to our

perceptual experience. As Barbaras interprets Merleau-Ponty, 'we must give up the distinction between perception and perceived object' (2002, 25), since the reality of the perceived thing is tied to the perception of it. However, Merleau-Ponty explicitly insists that 'we do not have a consciousness constitutive of the things, as idealism believes' (VI, 103). Similarly, he writes that, 'we have with our body, our senses, our look... *measurants* (*mesurants*) for Being... but not a relation of adequation or of immanence' (VI, 103; original parentheses and italics): while we can perceive reality, our perceptual experiences are not supposed to equal, or exhaust, reality. Emphasising this point, Merleau-Ponty asserts, 'The flesh.... is not mind...' (VI, 139).

Insofar as the perceptual experience does not either transcendentally *transform* or idealistically *inform* reality, how should we understand the idea that veridical perception is crucial to reality? Offering some guidance, Merleau-Ponty refers to reality - *qua* 'flesh' - as 'that carnal being, as a being of depths, of several leaves or several faces, a being in latency', thereby highlighting its potential to be perceived from different perspectives (VI, 136). For Merleau-Ponty, this potentiality is implicit in every case of veridical perception. Referring to his experience as a perceptual agent, he suggests that 'each landscape of my life (is) pregnant with many other visions besides my own' (VI, 123; my parentheses), and that reality is given to him as 'ready to be seen, pregnant— in principle as well as in fact— with all the visions one can have of it' (VI, 124). So, rather than transforming or informing reality, an individual case of veridical perception is supposed to disclose reality *in all its potentiality*. For Merleau-Ponty, it is this potentiality that characterises reality: 'flesh' is defined as a '*pregnancy* of possibles' (VI, 250; original italics), and a 'possibility, a latency' etc. (VI, 133). More explicitly, the 'flesh' is identified throughout VI as simply that which is 'sensible': it is supposed to be 'a *visibility* older than my operations or my acts' alone (VI, 123; my italics); it is a '*visibility* by principle' (VI, 140; my italics).

To close this chapter, let us consider how, early in his book *The Visible and the Invisible* (VI, 1964), Maurice Merleau-Ponty writes:

> …we should rather be astonished that sometimes men come to agreement about anything whatever. For after all each of them has begun by being a fragile mass of living jelly, and it is already a great deal that they would have taken the same route of ontogenesis… (VI, p14).

While the first remark is arguably apt for any era, it is striking to see this poignant testimony to human conflict followed by a salient truth that no one could deny: we all enter the world as a "fragile mass of living jelly", a baby, a sentient bundle of limbs and lumps and orifices. And we remain that way, fundamentally, despite growing up. While our cultural context drills into us an abundance of extra meanings concerning gender, race, class, and even beauty, we are ultimately heaps of sentient, sensible 'flesh', hoping to understand ourselves, the world, and what we can be.

Reading *The Visible and the Invisible*, I find an ontology that articulates my intuitions about the human condition: it captures the feeling of being lost in the world, and yet wholly integrated into it. For Merleau-Ponty, a complete understanding of reality will always evade us; it is an ever-receding horizon. But, through the very attempt of reaching that horizon, through the exploration - the mulling over of reality itself - the obscurity can dissipate for a moment. Ontology is thus a continual interrogation of reality that constantly illuminates it. A metaphor that comes to my mind is of trying to grasp water, and having the liquid slip through your fingers, escaping you, and yet cleansing your skin. For Merleau-Ponty, you cannot hold onto your understanding of reality with absolute certainty, but you can try to keep up with its contours: you can actively engage with it. And this, to me, speaks of the human condition: it is a perpetual trying, an effort, exertion; we must persistently navigate the world, always striving to discover more. Ontology, then, is presented as a way of life - "the questions are within our life, within our history" (VI, p105) - and the *The Visible and the Invisible* recreates the method for the reader, inviting you to try, make an effort, and exert yourself to grasp the ontological theory that resides along the esoteric prose.

With 'facticity' identified as 'flesh', and substantiated through the motif of an 'intertwining' between what is sensible and what is meaningful that spans out in general, and also at the level of the body and world, and between the plurality

of bodies co-inhabiting the world, we are delivered a holistic and ambitious ontology that captures different facets of our relationship with reality.

Chapter 7      Assembling 'Facticity'

Having emphasised how the motif of an 'intertwining' emancipates us from the binary thinking that would dissolve our relationship with reality into either our sheer constitution of reality, or the strict 'realism' that reality is independent of us, this chapter assembles 'facticity' as a metaphorical 'intertwining' of (1) what is given to us in reality, and (2) what we can do as a possibility.

We can characterise *what is given to us in reality* as a broad philosophical domain. It is difficult to pinpoint how exactly this whole domain fits into the landscape of academic Philosophy. Since 'metaphysics' is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of reality, and the notion of 'reality' is native to the domain of *what is given to us in reality*, we have good reason to classify that domain metaphysically. However, a complication arises when we take into account how *we* figure in the domain of *what is given to us in reality.* Our centrality to this domain seems to resist its straightforward subsumption into metaphysics at large.

The more narrow notion of 'the human condition' becomes pertinent to our discussion: does the philosophical domain of *what is given to us in reality* belong to discourse on what is called 'the human condition'? Problematically, such discourse does beg the question that there is a singular, general, timeless 'human condition' that holds sway over all of our lives, sweeping over a population of several billion today, with its reach extending all the way into the past to the hundred-of-billion human beings who have ever lived, and all the way into the future to the countless human beings who will ever live. Given the general diversity of our species across space and time, and the special idiosyncrasies possessed by each individual through what is arguably still the mystique of nature or nurture, the notion of an all-encompassing 'human condition' may seem objectionably far-fetched. If, however, there is a human condition, binding each and every one of us forever and for always, our scepticism about it would only attest to our relegation in the dark, and it would

be appropriate to wonder whether the philosophical domain of *what is given to us in reality* can help us to illuminate the human condition.

While I am tempted to echo the twentieth-century philosopher, Theodore Adorno, in lamenting how 'the occupation with things of the mind has… become "practical"' - akin to 'a business with strict division of labour, departments and restricted entry' - and I take heed of his suspicion that 'the departmentalisation of mind is means of abolishing mind' (2005 [1951], 21), I will avoid entertaining such radicalism about academic Philosophy for the moment.[53] For the sake of conveying the scholarly relevance of the concept, I hope to emphasise how 'facticity' signifies *what is given to us in reality* as a philosophical domain that is to be *broadly* construed: rather than neatly fitting into what has been carved out as a distinct branch of Philosophy, it sweeps over many contours of the academic landscape - delving into metaphysics at large, discourse on what may be called 'the human condition', and more. 'Facticity' is, then, a profoundly expansive philosophical concept.

Having put forward 'facticity' as generally signifying what is given to us in reality, it is important to remember how key philosophers use the term to delineate what is given to us in reality *in some particular way*, thereby capturing different dimensions of 'facticity', as we have seen. After finding a metaphysical origin in the German idealism of Fichte, 'facticity' is appropriated in a hermeneutical context by Dilthey, and a phenomenological context by Husserl. The concept reaches prominence in the existentialist frameworks of Heidegger, and Sartre, before spiralling into the esoteric ontology of Merleau-Ponty. This philosophical arc is not put forward as an *exhaustive* chronology of 'facticity'. Instead, it is intended to form a coherent narrative, where certain, historical uses of 'facticity' are unified by their mutual designation of what is (in some way) given to us in reality.

Insofar as it signifies what is given to us in reality, the concept of 'facticity' is

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[53] Note that the original German for 'things of the mind' includes '*geistigen*', an inflection of '*geistig*', meaning what is 'mental', 'intellectual', or 'spiritual'. Furthermore, the original German for the 'departmentalisation of mind' uses the term 'Geist', which directly translates to 'spirit', thus recalling Hegelian philosophy. See Solomon on 'Hegel's Concept of "Geist"' (1970) for further discussion.

neither orthogonal, nor antithetical to the principle of our activity. With the effect of a continuum that demarcates a conceptual territory before flowing to what lies beyond the conceptual horizon - as opposed to simply terminating halfway - 'facticity' does not signify *what is given to us in reality* in isolation. Remarkably more elaborate than that, the concept is (crucially) analytically entangled with the issue of *what we can do* with what is given to us in reality.

In the analytic literature on *doing*, we can find competing, narrow conceptions of what it is to *do.* In his essay on *Agency* in his collection of *Essays on Actions and Events* (2001 [1971]), Donald Davidson tells us that 'we never do more than move our bodies' (2001 [1971], essay 3, 59). In the light of Jennifer Hornsby's book on *Actions* (1980), where she helpfully distinguishes between 'things done', which consist of general types of actions, and 'doings', which consist of particular things that are done (3-4), we can interpret Davidson to mean that - at the level of *doing* itself - there are only really bodily movements, though there are many different generic things that can be done, which are reducible to those bodily movements [1971], essay 3, 59, footnote 20). It is intentional bodily movements that are relevant for Davidson's account of doing (2001 [1971], essay 3, 46), and while he assumes the absence of a gap between the mental activity of trying to do something and the actual doing of that thing (2001 [1971] essay 3, 24), Hornsby appeals to the phenomenon of trying to do something but failing in order to illuminate how there is such a gap (1980, 39-40). On the basis of this gap, Hornsby holds that all bodily movements can be reduced to the trying that an agent (necessarily) does in order to do a bodily movement in the first place: the movement of my fingers can be reduced to my trying to move my fingers, which is causally prior to it. So, against the Davidsonian thesis that all doings are certain bodily movements, Hornsby asserts that we never do more than try; all doings are tryings (1980, 13-14, 33, 45).

For the purpose of framing the conceptual development of 'facticity', we should broadly construe *what we can do*. By freeing ourselves from the narrow, competing conceptions of *doing* to be found in the analytic literature, we can permit at the level of *doing* all of the complex enterprises that would amount to generic things done, as well as more basic bodily movements, in addition to

mental activity. Thus construed broadly, *what we can do* includes our ability to even conceive of the possibility of *what we can do.*

By latching onto the possibility of *what we can do*, 'facticity' shines a spotlight on the conceptual space between what is given to us in reality and what could be real on the basis of our activity. In this way, 'facticity' arguably answers to the profound desire expressed by Wilhelm Dilthey in *Understanding the Human World*, (2010 [1883-1911]), where he refers to 'wanting to comprehend life itself through a universally valid and necessary mode of thought' (2010 [1883-1911], 84). By honing in on the conceptual space between what is given to us in reality and what could be real on the basis of our activity, 'facticity' can provide a lens that is 'universally valid and necessary', through which we can interrogate our relationship with reality. 'Facticity' thus emerges from its conceptual development as a theoretical device, via which we can pin down the extent to which something is (universally and necessarily) given to us in reality, and the extent to which that something is open to our activity, and thus within our power to transform.

So, as a symbol for our relationship with reality, 'facticity' is twofold in that it
      1. signifies what is given to us in reality, and;
      2. it is analytically entangled with the issue of *what we can do* with what is given to us in reality.

To unpack (1) - we can construe *what is given to us as a 'fact' of reality* as a broad domain that is arguably exhausted by
      (a) the bare 'facts' of phenomenological experience that are immediately given to us; and
      (b) the 'facts' that reach a higher level of abstraction in our institutionalised disciplines, where they are given to us through the appropriate methodology.

To unpack (2) - we can construe the scope of our *activity* as encompassing both
      (a) practical activity (e.g. walking, typing, dancing, etc.) and
      (b) 'intellectual' activity, (e.g. imagining, philosophising, poeticising, etc.).

So - to assemble 'facticity' as an intertwining (between what we are given and

what we can do) that lifts its symbolic layers from its historical development, this chapter is split into three sections. Reflecting on the philosophical status of what we are given, Section 7(a) of this chapter is split into two subsections that focus on (i) phenomenological experience in an imagined dialogue between Wilfrid Sellars and Merleau-Ponty, and (ii) institutional knowledge in the light of Michel Foucault. Section 7(b) continues this chapter by reflecting on the philosophical status of human activity before invoking Hannah Arendt's conviction about it. As the final section of this chapter, Section 7(c) explores the implications of 'facticity' in designating an 'intertwining' of what we are given, and what we can do, with a view to anchoring feminist discourse on the body in terms of our ongoing relationship with reality.

### 7(a)    The 'Myth' of the Given

### 7(a)i   Phenomenological Experience: An Imagined
###          Dialogue between Sellars and Merleau-Ponty

In the anglophone tradition, Wilfrid Sellars is a key opponent to the idea that there are 'facts' that are given to us in sensory experience. While Sellars suggests that

> many things have been said to be 'given': sense contents, material objects, universals, propositions, real connections, first principles, even givenness itself…

and he promises a 'general critique of the entire framework of givenness' (1963 [1956] §1), I will read Sellars as directing his critique against what is said to be given in 'sense contents' (i.e. sensory experience) alone (1963 [1956] §1). This interpretation is apt for two reasons. The first reason is that Sellars has a narrow conception of 'givenness' that is strictly associated with 'immediacy' (1963 [1956] §1): while the characteristic of 'immediacy' saliently applies to the phenomenological character of sensory experience, that characteristic does not apply to the 'facts' of our institutionalised disciplines, which operate at a higher level of abstraction, where they are 'given' through (the appropriate) methodology. On this conception (which shall be elaborated in due course), the 'facts' of our institutionalised disciplines are immune to the critique that Sellars levies against 'givenness' *qua* 'immediacy' (1963 [1956]

§1).[54] The second reason for my limited interpretation of Sellars is that his discussion is explicitly focused on what is given to us in sensory experience, although we are confronted with thematically disparate articulations of what exactly is 'mythic' about it.

Thus focused on the concept of what is *immediately* given to us in sensory experience, we are well poised to unpick what Sellars' chastises as the 'myth' of the given. The 'myth' is, however, notoriously obscure, yielding different scholarly interpretations, which I shall try to address in turn. The first interpretation is cognitive; the second interpretation is categorial, and the third interpretation hones in on the rigidity of our categorial structures.

Motivating the cognitive interpretation of what is 'mythic' about what is *immediately* given to us in sensory experience. Sellars suggests that it 'carries a substantial theoretical commitment' (1963 [1956] §1): it is taken to be

> a fact which presupposes no learning, no forming of associations, no setting up of stimulus-response connections. (1963 [1956] §6)

According to Sellars, that which is immediately given to us in sensory experience is theoretically loaded insofar as it makes a claim to non-inferential knowledge about reality (1963 [1956] §1) - i.e. I have a particular visual sensation, and because of that visual sensation, I non-inferentially know that there is a willow tree by the pond. To clarify the epistemological import that Sellars attaches to that which is immediately given to us in sensory experience, we can turn to his section, 'More on Givenness and Explanatory Coherence', which appears in *Justification and Knowledge* (1979): Sellars characterises that which is immediately given to us in sensory experience as 'a *fact* (an *obtaining* state of affairs)', that is

> known to obtain, not by virtue of an act of warranted belief, but by virtue of a unique cognitive act which is more basic than that of any believing however warranted. (1979, 169; original italics and parentheses)

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54 Though I do not conceive of them as immediately given, the 'facts' of our institutionalised bodies of *empirical* knowledge could be susceptible to Sellars' complaint that what is 'given' in 'empirical knowledge' rests on a '"foundation" of non-inferential knowledge as a matter of "fact"' (1963 [1956] §3). While I conceive of the 'facts' of, e.g., history and natural science as methodologically given, I leave open the methodological issues of whether they rest on any such 'foundation', and whether that 'foundation' would indeed be problematic: it extends beyond the scope of this thesis to delineate or evaluate the specifics of the methodologies behind the institutionalised 'facts'.

Returning to his essay, 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', Sellars highlights the problem that is presented by what is immediately given to us in sensory experience: insofar as it makes a claim to non-inferential knowledge, it is placed

> in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says. (1963 [1956] §36)

We endow what is immediately given to us in sensory experience with justificatory, epistemological power. However, on Sellars' corrective, 'sensations' do not 'belong to the same general pigeonhole as… cognitive facts' (1963 [1956] §7), and

> there is no reason to suppose that having the sensation of a red triangle is a *cognitive* or *epistemic* fact. (1963 [1956] §7; original italics)

For Sellars, the sensation of a red triangle is distinct from the cognitive or epistemic fact that 'there is a red triangle', since the sensation is immediately given, while the cognitive/epistemic fact requires steps of inference that go over and above what is immediately given. Hence - in the first chapter of *Experience, Norm and Nature*, which is titled, 'Avoiding the Myth of the Given' (2008), John McDowell suggests that it is a 'form' of Sellars' 'myth of the given'

> to think sensibility by itself, without any involvement of capacities that belong to our rationality, can make things available for our cognition. (2)

On this reading of Sellars - which I call 'the cognitive interpretation' - the 'myth of the given' does not concern what is immediately given in sensory experience *per se*; the 'myth' is that such experience provides us with non-inferential knowledge about reality.[55]


To maintain the immediacy of what is given to us in sensory experience without incurring the 'myth' that it makes a claim to non-inferential knowledge, we can conceive of it in phenomenological terms, rather than in epistemological terms. So, in agreement with Sellars that 'sensations are no more epistemic in character than are trees or tables' (1963 [1956] §40), we can characterise that which is given to us in sensory experience as a phenomenological fact that allows us to *experience* reality immediately, rather than characterising it as a cognitive/epistemic fact that instantaneously provides us with non-inferential

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[55] Hence Michael R. Hicks' observation in 'Sellars, Price, and the Myth of the Given' (2020) that 'there is the general consensus that Sellars understands sense-data in particular as instances of the "*epistemic given*"…' (1; my italics). Note that James R. O' Shea first used the terminology of what is an 'epistemic given' in his exegesis of Sellars in *Wilfrid Sellars: Naturalism with a Normative Turn* (2007, 7).

knowledge about reality. The same theoretical move can be found in *Mind and the World-Order* (1929), where American philosopher (and eventual target of Sellars), Clarence Irving Lewis, seeks to 'isolate' the 'thin given of immediacy' from 'the thick experience of the world of (conceptual) things', where knowledge is supposed to be only relevant to the latter (54; my parentheses).[56] According to Lewis, the 'criteria' of 'the element of the given' lies in its 'unalterability and its character as sensuous feel or quality' (1929, 52–53). Highlighting the intuitive appeal of what is immediately given to us in sensory experience as a phenomenological fact, Lewis makes the wry suggestion that

> …no one but a philosopher could for a moment deny this immediate presence in consciousness of that which no activity of thought can… alter. (1929, 52–53)

However, even if we maintain the immediacy of that which is given to us in sensory experience in phenomenological terms - thus evading the cognitive 'myth' that it makes a claim to non-inferential knowledge - there is the 'categorial' version of the 'myth of the given' that can cause us trouble.[57] In the first of his Carus Lectures, 'The Lever of Archimedes' (1981), which was published in *The Monist* with the title, 'Foundations for a Metaphysics of Pure Process' (1981), Sellars articulates 'perhaps the most basic form' of what he has 'castigated as "the myth of the given"' via the following 'principle':

> If a person is directly aware of an item which has categorial status C, then the person is aware of it as having categorial status C (1981, I §44).

Not to be confused with what is 'categori*cal*' and thus opposed to what is hypothetical, the 'categori*al*' is a term traditionally used to refer to the kind of 'categories' postulated by Aristotle in his *Categories* (1963 [335-323 BC], 1b25) and Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (A70/B95–A93/B109; A80/B106). In ontology, 'categories' articulate the fundamental kinds of being; in epistemology, they pick out the fundamental concepts of human

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[56] See Tomasz Zarębski on 'Sellars and Lewis on the Given and Empirical Knowledge' (2017) for the suggestion that
> since Lewis's conception of givenness is not directly epistemological in the Sellarsian sense…Lewis's conception of the given is immune to Sellarsian criticism of the 'myth of the given' (200).

[57] See Dionysis Christias' essay on 'Sellars Contra McDowell on Intuitional Content and the Myth of the Given' (2015) for the view that although the
> McDowellian version of the myth of the Given does indeed capture a basic form of the myth as described by Sellars, it still leaves out what is, for Sellars, maybe its most central form, namely, the myth of the *Categorial* Given. (976, original italics)

understanding.[58] In his essay, 'What *is* the Myth of the Given?' (2021; original italics), James R. O'Shea clarifies how 'categories', for Sellars, are

> (meta-)conceptual classifications of types of concepts, classifying the latter as functioning within some cognitive-linguistic framework that serves to represent the world as being a certain way and thus as containing various sorts of things and events. (10552; original parentheses)

Meanwhile, Sellars himself suggests that 'categories in general are classifications of conceptual roles' (1981, I §81). The 'myth of the *categorial given*' thus holds, for Sellars, when we postulate that a person who is 'directly aware of an item' as a fundamental sort of thing is aware of that item *actually being* that fundamental sort of thing (1981, I §44).[59]

According to Sellars, immediate awareness of an item cannot reveal it to be the sort of thing it is. In 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', Sellars targets the idea that we have '*ab initio* some degree of awareness' of the 'logical space' - that is, the 'world of physical objects, colored, producing sounds, existing in Space and Time', 'particulars, universals, facts etc.' (1963 [1956] §30). According to Sellars, we do not

> begin our sojourn in this world with any - even a vague, fragmentary, and undiscriminating - awareness of the logical space of particulars, kinds, facts, and resemblances

since

> even such 'simple' concepts as those of colors are the fruit of a long process of publicly reinforced responses to public objects (including verbal performances) in public situations (1963 [1956] §45; original parentheses).

And so, Sellars concludes that we do not 'come to have a concept of something because we have noticed that sort of thing' (1963 [1956] §45). Instead, we can only 'notice a sort of thing', because we 'already… have the concept of that sort of thing' through learning (1963 [1956] §45).

In his essay on 'Meaning as Functional Classification' (1974), Sellars develops the idea that the meaning of an utterance is determined by its function within a norm-governed 'linguistic community' (422), while 'the key to the concept of a

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[58] For further discussion, see Amie Thomasson's entry on 'categories' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2022).

[59] The terminology of what is a 'categorial given' was coined by O'Shea 2007 on page 115 in his reconstruction of Sellars' argument.

linguistic rule is its complex relation to pattern-governed linguistic behavior', where such

> behavior which exhibits a pattern, not because it is brought about by the intention that it exhibit this pattern, but because the propensity to emit behavior of the pattern has been selectively reinforced, and the propensity to emit behavior which does not conform to this pattern selectively extinguished. (423)

Sellars clarifies the claim that 'this is red' as a 'patterned governed response' to objects that appear 'red'; the claim is

> covered by a rule… a rule which is involved in the explanation of its occurrence. The rule which directly covers it is, however, an ought-to-be, and it is involved in the explanation by virtue of the fact that it was envisaged by the trainers who assisted the speaker in acquiring his linguistic ability. (1974, 423)[60]

So - while the learnt concept for a sort of thing applies to 'public objects' to the extent that we are taught to associate their *appearances* with the concept, it remains the case that that concept crucially cannot 'account' for whatever sort of thing is *really there*, as Sellars asserts in 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' (1963 [1956] §45). Similarly, in his first Carus lecture, Sellars states that 'we must not suppose that' if items

> have categorial status C, then they present themselves phenomenologically *as having this status.* (1981, I §78; original italics )

As Sellars phrases it more poetically -

> To reject the Myth of the Given is to reject the idea that the categorial structure of the world - if it has a categorial structure - imposes itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on melted wax. (1981, I §45)

In other words, we are not aware of what sorts of things are really there; as perceptual agents, we only impose our inherited categories on the world.

While Lewis upholds the immediacy of what is given to us in sensory experience in phenomenological terms, he characterises the qualitative content of that experience as 'repeatable in experience and intrinsically recognisable' (1929, 61). Looking to 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', we can see Sellars strike up a dialogue with Lewis, albeit indirectly: Sellars points out how 'the givenness of determinate kinds or repeatables, say crimson'

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[60] See Sellar's essay, 'Some Reflections on Language Games' (1954), for his solution to the apparent paradox that the learning of a linguistic rule requires the learning of a host of other linguistic rules and so on, *ad infinitum*. For further discussion, see Jiayi Lu's essay on 'Sellar's Paradox and Language Games'.

are not free from (at least implicit) categorisation (1963 [1956] §29).[61] So while Lewis seeks to 'isolate' the 'thin given of immediacy' from 'the thick experience of the world of (conceptual) things' (1929, 54; my parentheses), and the former is *ostensibly* non-conceptual, we can ascertain that it still implicates the categories of what are intrinsically recognisable and repeatable.

Lewis thus falls foul of the 'myth of the categorial given', which lumps him with the British empiricists, John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume - all of whom, on Sellars' interpretation

> take for granted that the human mind has an innate ability to be aware of certain determinate sorts – indeed, that we are aware of them simply by virtue of having sensations and images. (1963 [1956] 28)

Leaving aside the issue of whether the British empiricists are actually guilty of Sellars' charge, let us get to better grips with that charge itself. On the one hand, Sellars' charge is directed against the metaphysical principle that we have *veridical* perception of 'certain determinate sorts' (1963 [1956] 28). In their entry on 'The Problem of Perception' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2015), Tim Crane and Craig French portray the perception that is 'veridical' as the kind where you genuinely perceive something 'for what it is'.[62] While Sellars does not use the language of 'veridicality' in the quotation above, he explicitly targets the position on perception that 'take(s) for granted' our 'innate ability to be aware of certain determinate sorts' - i.e. to have veridical perception of them (1963 [1956] 28).[63] We can also read Sellars' charge as

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[61] For the same evaluation of Lewis, see O' Shea 2021, 10555.

For Sellars' direct criticism of Lewis, see the chapter, 'Is There a Synthetic A Priori?' in *Science, Perception and Reality* (1963 [1956]):
> All classification of objects, however confident and pre-emptory, is a venture, a venture which at no point finds its justification in a pre-symbolic vision of generic and specific hearts on the sleeves of the objects of experience. . . . while he (Lewis) writes in this manner of the interpretation of the given by means of concepts whose implications transcend the given, he also holds that the sensible appearances of things do wear their hearts on their sleeves, and that we do have a cognitive vision of these hearts which is direct, unlearned, and incapable of error… (VII, §44; my parentheses)

[62] Expanding on the visual type of perception in his entry on 'The Disjunctive Theory of Perception' in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2014), Matthew Soteriou suggests that 'veridical' visual perception involves 'really seeing an object'. Similarly, in *Seeing Things as They Are: A Theory of Perception* (2015), Searle describes a first-hand case of visual veridical perception, where 'there really is a computer screen and I really am seeing it...' (15).

[63] See Hicks 2020 for the reading that 'what really matters (for Sellars) is that capacities for recognition are acquired' as opposed to being innate (11, fn21; my parentheses).

aimed against the naive realist principle that our 'sensations' make us 'aware' of 'certain determinate sorts' (1963 [1956] 28). In his essay on 'Recent Work on Naive Realism' (2016), James Genone expresses the naive realist analysis that

> perceptual experiences are necessarily constituted by relations of conscious sensory awareness to mind-independent objects and properties. (7)[64]

While Sellars does not explicitly specify the contemporary, anglophone movement of naive realism as his target, he does directly oppose the idea that we are 'aware of certain determinate sorts… simply by virtue of having sensations and images', which would naturally suggest our relation of awareness to those 'certain determinate sorts' (1963 [1956] 28).[65]

We are consequently forced to admit the mythic status of what is categorially given to us in sensory experience: even if we spell out the immediacy of what is categorially given to us in phenomenological terms, this analysis is metaphysically loaded: it assumes (firstly) that we veridically perceive the sorts of things that are really there, and (secondly) that such veridical perception holds simply because we have (immediate) sensations of the sorts of things that are really there - i.e. we have a relation of awareness to them.[66]

Insofar as Merleau-Ponty is committed, in the phenomenological tradition, to both the possibility of veridical perception and naive realism about veridical perception, he is guilty of perpetuating what has been branded by Sellars as the 'myth' of the given, insofar as we adhere to the categorial reading. As we can see, Merleau-Ponty describes the perceptual field as a 'system' (1968, 22) that demonstrates its own 'perceptual logic' (1968, 247), rather than consisting in a

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[64] Note that within the anglophone movement of 'naive realism', there is 'indirect realism', which leaves theoretical room for the relation that constitutes perception to be mediated by further, intermediate states of that agent, and 'direct realism', which stipulates that the relation is direct. The distinction is not, however, pertinent to this discussion. For further discussion on the distinction, see Genone 2016.

[65] Note the same reading of Sellars in O'Shea 2021, 10555.

[66] This understanding of the 'myth' of the categorial given is arguably supported by its articulation in Sellars' first Carus lecture:

> If a person is directly aware of an item which has categorial status C, then the person is aware of it as having categorial status C (1981, I §44; my italics and parentheses).

For additional support, recall §78 of the same text on how 'we must not suppose that' if items 'have categorical status C, then they present themselves phenomenologically *as having this status*' (original italics).

disorderly 'pile of spatio-temporal individuals' that is untethered to categorisation (1968, 247). Stressing the role that categorisation plays in the perceptual field - though he does not use the language of 'categorisation' directly - Merleau-Ponty claims, 'I do not look at a chaos, but at *things…*' (1968, 133 my italics).

While Merleau-Ponty does not strike up an explicit dialogue with Sellars himself, we can read Merleau-Ponty as positively *embracing* the myth of the categorial given. Returning to the opening of *The Visible and the Invisible* in full, it goes as follows:

> We see the things themselves, the world is what we see: formulae of this kind express a faith common to the natural man and the philosopher - the moment he opens his eyes; they refer to a deep- seated set of mute 'opinions' implicated in our lives... (1968, 3)

Since he uses the language of 'faith' and 'opinion' to describe commitment to the possibility of veridical perception, Merleau-Ponty seems receptive to the view that it incurs a kind of non-rational, or cognitively unjustifiable 'myth' - though he would most likely shirk the pejorative sense in which Sellars uses that term to connote what is fabricated or otherwise hollow. Later in *The Visible and the Invisible,* Merleau-Ponty even suggests that

> the perceptual faith is, precisely because it is a faith... an adherence that knows itself to be *beyond proofs* (1968, 28; my italics)

and that it is

> faith… and *not knowledge*… rather than affirmed, it is *taken for granted,* rather than disclosed, it is non-dissimulated, non-refuted. (1968, 28; my italics).

Also seeming to embrace the mythic status of naive realism, Merleau-Ponty refers to 'the *certitude* I have of being connected up with the world by my look' (1968, 28; my italics), and similarly, he suggests that it is 'the greatest degree of *belief* that our vision goes to the things themselves' (1968, 28; my italics). In this way, we can read Merleau-Ponty as maintaining the immediacy of what is categorially given to us in sensory experience, all the while arguably admitting - or perhaps even celebrating - its mythical status.

Effectively substantiating the immediacy of what is supposed to be categorially given to us in sensory experience, Merleau-Ponty posits its phenomenological character in bold terms: he suggests that

> it is our experience, prior to every opinion… without there being need to choose nor even to distinguish between the assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true… the world is here not separated from our

hold on it… (1962, 28)

For Merleau-Ponty, the phenomenology of sensory experience is marked by immediacy - 'prior to every opinion' - in such a way that precludes doubt about whether we veridically perceive the sorts of things that are really there: as Merleau-Ponty claims, there is no 'need to choose nor even to distinguish between the assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true' (1962, 28). Furthermore, scepticism about (what is technically) naive realism is supposed to be negated: as Merleau-Ponty asserts, 'the world is here (in sensory experience) not separated from our hold on it' (1962, 28; my parentheses). Arguably highlighting the immediacy of what is supposed to be categorially given to us in sensory experience, Merleau-Ponty captures its phenomenology with vivid imagery:

> It is as though there were between it (the world perceived) and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand. (1962, 130-121; my parentheses)

While Merleau-Ponty can be interpreted to phenomenologically ground the immediacy of what is supposed to be categorially given to us in sensory experience, Sellars clamps down on the theoretical scope of phenomenology. In his first Carus lecture, Sellars asserts:

> The one thing we can say, with phenomenological assurance, is that whatever its 'true' *categorial* status, the expanse of red involved in an ostensible seeing of the very redness of an apple has *actual existence* as contrasted with… that which is believed in as believed in. But notice that the family of concepts to which this contrast belongs consists of *transcendental* concepts, i.e., concepts which apply across *categories*. An expanse of red could be something *actual* and be *either* a sense datum in visual space, a manner of sensing, or a spatial constituent of a physical object. (1981, I §88; original italics)

According to Sellars, it *does* fall within the theoretical scope of phenomenology to posit, on the basis of our sensory experience, that that which is perceived has an 'actual existence', transcendent of the artificial categorisation that is imposed on it by us, as perceptual agents (1981, I §88). However, for Sellars, it *does not* fall within the theoretical scope of phenomenology to posit how exactly this 'actual existence' is constituted: as an open question, it could be '*either* a sense datum in visual space, a manner of sensing, or a spatial constituent of a physical object' (1981, I §88; original italics).

Clarifying what he takes to be the theoretical limits of phenomenology, Sellars suggests that

> Phenomenology nears the end of its descriptive tether when it points out that when we ostensibly see the very redness of an apple, we see an *actually existing* expanse of red which, if circumstances were normal, would be part of the surface of a physical object, and, indeed, part of its very redness. (1981, I §89; original italics)

Earlier in his first Carus lecture, Sellars elucidates the 'distinction between seeing and ostensibly seeing' as

> called for by such facts as that one can have an experience which is intrinsically like seeing a physical object when there is no physical object there. (1981, I, §77)

The analysis above is usually invoked with reference to the phenomenon of 'hallucination'. As Matthew Nudds observes in his essay on 'Naive Realism and Hallucinations' (2013):

> When I hallucinate a red cube, my experience seems to present me with a red cube even when there is no red cube present. (280)

In the philosophical literature on perception, a 'hallucination' is (typically) characterised as non-veridical, where the sensation of an item does not coincide with that thing really being there - i.e. seeing a fire-breathing dragon after taking LSD.[67] Relatedly, as another extraordinary type of perception, an 'illusion' is (typically) understood as a variant of veridical perception, where the sensation of an item *does* coincide with something that is really there, but you perceive it in a way that departs from how it really is - e.g. seeing a straight stick that is submerged underwater as though it is bent.[68]

While Sellars does not directly engage with the possibility of the extraordinary types of perception mentioned above, we can glean from his writings the following position: *everything* that is categorially given to us in sensory experience is *metaphysically* estranged from what sorts of things are really there - since 'the categorial structure of the world - if it has a categorial structure' does not 'impose… itself on the mind as a seal imposes an image on melted wax', to re-echo Sellars (1981, I §45). This principle is designed to be

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[67] Note that it is technically possible for a hallucination to be accidentally 'veridical' - i.e. veridical in the unusual sense that what is hallucinated just so happens to coincide with what is really there. For further discussion on the kind of hallucination that is accidentally veridical, see David Lewis' essay, 'Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision' (1980, 239-240), or page 6 of Fiona Macpherson on 'The Philosophy and Psychology of Hallucination: An Introduction' in *Hallucination* (2013).

[68] See Genone 2016 for the account that 'illusions are typically thought to involve successfully perceiving an object, though experiencing it as possessing properties it lacks' (4). Also see *The Problem of Perception* (2002), where A.D. Smith defines an illusion as 'any perceptual situation in which a physical object is actually perceived, but in which that object perceptually appears other than it really is' (23).

drastic: it extends to even 'normal' (i.e. everyday, ordinary) cases of perception, which are assumed to be standardly veridical - as according to the 'myth' of what is categorially given (1981, I §89). It follows, for Sellars, that phenomenology cannot account for the immediacy of what is supposed to be categorially given to us in sensory experience, even under the 'normal circumstances' which belong to its domain (1981, I §89). Sellars thus targets the Merleau-Pontian idea that 'the assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true' are 'in principle… one and the same thing' (1968, 28). To borrow the language of Merleau-Ponty - it is the case, for Sellars, that 'the assurance of seeing' should be far removed from the 'assurance of seeing' whatever it is that may be categorially 'true' (1968, 28).

Elaborating on the theoretical limits of phenomenology, Sellars continues:

> If circumstances are not normal, we do not have another category than that of the physical to fall back on. All that is available is such transcendentals as *actual*, *something* and *somehow*. The red is something actual which is somehow a portion of red stuff, *somehow* the sort of item which is suited to be part of the content of a physical object, but which, though *somehow* that sort of item, is not, in point of fact, a portion of physical stuff. (1981, I §90; original italics)

In 'Some Reflections on Thoughts and Things' (2007 [1967]), Sellars characterises 'most sound phenomenology' as a 'doctrine of synthetic necessary truth', which he unpacks as 'necessary truth which is subject matter *dependent*' (265; original italics). Insofar as it is 'subject matter *dependent*' (2007 [1967], 265; original italics), it would follow that it falls beyond the scope of phenomenology to explain cases of sensory perception that are not 'normal' for reasons that are actually 'physical' and thus objective (1981, I §90).

Arguably in agreement with Sellars about the theoretical limits of phenomenology when it comes to the kind of sensory experience that defies 'normal' circumstances (1981, I §90), Merleau-Ponty admits the possibility of a hallucination that is phenomenologically equivalent to the veridical perception that is supposed to normally hold: he suggests in *The Visible and the Invisible* that 'the rags of the dream can, before the dreamer, be worth the close-woven

fabric of the true world' (1968, 5).[69] In this light, Merleau-Ponty appeals to what are, on Sellars' terminology, 'transcendentals' (1981, I §90) - i.e. 'concepts which apply across categories' (1981, I §88): Merleau-Ponty identifies 'a difference in structure' between hallucinations and veridical perception (1968, 5); he suggests that veridical perception and hallucinations have distinct 'ontological value(s)' (1968, 5). This idea is continuous with *Phenomenology of Perception*, where Merleau-Ponty refers to the 'essential difference' between the two (1962, 352).[70]

In his treatment of illusion, Merleau-Ponty also adopts terms that go above and beyond our categories. He draws attention to how all sensory experience depends on our being sentient agents - i.e. perceiving bodies - since it is the body that 'casts me fully into the world' (1968, 8), and 'I cannot perceive without its permission', since 'perception… dawns through it' (1968, 9). According to Merleau-Ponty, our bodies are dynamically integrated into the world: my body is an 'exploring body' (1968, 38); 'I am... not shut up in one sector of the visible world...' (1968, 100). It is precisely this dynamic integration that is supposed to enable veridical sensory experience. As Merleau-Ponty emphatically claims

> It is the body and it alone… that can bring us to the things themselves,
> which are themselves not flat beings but beings in depth... (1968, 136)

As a 'being in depth' that is dynamically integrated into the world, the body 'can bring us to the things themselves' (1968, 136). A 'strict correlation' is consequently posited 'between my exploration of the world and the sensorial responses it arouses' (1968, 29): as a matter of physical necessity that goes beyond our categories - 'the perspective views I have... are bound to the position of my body' (1968, 57), and this can account for 'the buzzing of

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[69] Hence why 'the assurance of seeing and the assurance of seeing the true' are only '*in principle*… one and the same thing' (1968, 28; my italics).

See Komarine Romdenh-Romluc's essay on 'Merleau-Ponty's Account of Hallucination' (2009) for the reading that Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, acknowledges the 'existence of hallucinatory deception' (77). For a direct quotation from that text, see page 13, where Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'the perceived, by its nature, admits of the ambiguous'.

[70] Note the parallel in the contemporary, analytic movement of 'disjunctivism' - the crux of which is to theoretically block the idea that hallucinations can share metaphysical equivalence with veridical perception. For a comprehensive taxonomy on various disjunctivist theories, see Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson's 'Introduction: Varieties of Disjunctivism' in *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, Knowledge* (2008), or Alex Byrne and Heather Logue's chapter in *Disjunctivism: Contemporary Readings* (2009), titled 'Either/Or'.

appearances' (1968, 8) - i.e. illusory cases of veridical perception.[71]

While Merleau-Ponty seems to agree with Sellars about the theoretical limits of phenomenology when it comes to extraordinary types of perception, he has the theoretical resources to undermine Sellars' contention that phenomenology cannot account for the immediacy of what is supposed to be categorially given to us in ordinary sensory experience. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty attacks the radical scepticism famously developed by René Descartes. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1985 [1641]), Descartes hypothesises that 'some malicious demon of the utmost power and cunning has employed all his energies in order to deceive me' (2:15). This radically sceptical hypothesis is motivated by methodic doubt, which Descartes expresses as the epistemic enterprise 'to demolish everything completely' (1985 [1641] 2:12) - i.e. to systematically throw doubt on everything that we ordinarily take for granted.

Against Cartesian radical scepticism, Merleau-Ponty characterises methodic doubt as a pathological project that is 'no longer a fluidification (i.e. a continuation) of the certitudes but a deliberate withdrawal, a refusal to embody them' (1968, 106; my parentheses). The notion of 'the certitudes' recalls the 'belief', or 'faith' - i.e. the 'myth' - that we see the sorts of things that there really are (1968, 28). According to Merleau-Ponty's analysis, the radical sceptic recognises how those 'certitudes' form an ordinary part of life - which, indeed, marks its 'fluidification' (1968, 106). Only when the radical sceptic takes the measured steps of methodic doubt are her 'certitudes' intellectually stifled; she effectively '*represses* an involuntary truth', as Merleau-Ponty suggests (1968, 106; my italics).

While Sellars does not put forward a hypothesis that is radically sceptical in the Cartesian sense, nor does he aim to *systematically* cast doubt on what is ordinarily taken for granted, his position is a reflective one that expresses

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[71] See Merleau-Ponty's account as to how, e.g.,

> … my movements and the movements of my eyes make the world vibrate... With each flutter of my eyelashes a curtain lowers and rises... with each movement of my eyes that sweep the space before me the things suffer a brief torsion... and when I walk in the street with eyes fixed on the horizon of the houses, the whole of the setting near at hand quivers with each footfall on the asphalt, then settles down in its place. (1968, 7)

scepticism about what seems to be categorially given to us in sensory experience. By virtue of this (albeit limited) strand of scepticism, we can arguably see how Merleau-Ponty's criticism of Descartes applies to Sellars. To begin - Sellars understands the 'myth' of what is categorially given to us as propped up by ordinary language, via which 'the plain man describes and explains empirical fact with the presuppositions of *givenness*', as asserted in 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind' (1963 [1956], §44; original italics). While Sellars admits that the 'myth' of what is categorially given 'can be related to our ordinary conceptual framework', he stipulates that it 'does not belong in an analysis of it' (1963 [1956], §23). Thus, in a similar vein to the radical sceptic, Sellars operates 'within the voluntary zone', actively making 'the decision to tacitly presuppose nothing', to echo Merleau-Ponty (1968, 106).

Sellars is consequently vulnerable to Merleau-Ponty's diagnosis that insofar as we are

> passive beings, we feel ourselves caught up in a mass of Being that escapes us, or even maneuvered by an evil agent, and we oppose to this adversity the desire for an absolute evidence, delivered from all facticity. (1968, 106)

According to my reconstruction of Merleau-Ponty that borrows from the analytic language of Sellars - we are 'passive' on account of all that is categorially *given* to us in sensory experience. While Sellars is not so radical in his scepticism as to hypothesise 'an evil agent' who orchestrates our whole perceptual life, he does seem to 'feel' that 'Being... escapes us', since he supposes that we are unaware of the sorts of things that are really there (1968, 106). Perhaps struck by this 'adversity', Sellars certainly fetishises an ideal of 'absolute evidence' (1968, 106): he attaches absolute value to the 'logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says' (1963 [1956] §36).

Beyond the psychological speculation that Sellars' evidential standard arises as a mechanism for coping within the mystifying clutches of reality, we can see how that evidential standard effectively reinforces the lived immediacy of all that is categorially given to us in sensory experience. On my reading of Merleau-Ponty, adapted here in order to engage with Sellars - it is that immediacy which actually 'inspires the very project of seeking evidence which would be absolute' - i.e. that immediacy is the point of departure for all scepticism about it (1968,

106). Sellars consequently 'give(s) weight' to that immediacy: by virtue of his attempt to hold the 'myth' of what is categorially given 'in suspense' for the sake of absolute analytic rigour, it follows, according to Merleau-Ponty's analysis, that Sellars only enlightens the remarkable and irrevocable extent to which that 'myth' is deep-seated.[72] As Merleau-Ponty would say, the 'myth' of what is categorially given is manifestly 'our own, caught up in the flux of our life' (1968, 106) - i.e. it is phenomenologically grounded as an 'unjustifiable certitude' (1968, 11). On this view, Sellars' evidential standard is objectionably high.

While Merleau-Ponty can be interpreted to embrace the 'myth' of the categorial given, phenomenologically grounding all that is categorially given to us in sensory experience, we can look to Sellars for another problem entailed by that 'myth'. In 'Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind', Sellars reflects:

> There is a widespread impression that reflection on how we learn the language in which, in everyday life, we describe the world, leads to the conclusion that the categories of the common-sense picture of the world have, so to speak, an unchallengeable authenticity. There are, of course, different conceptions of just what this fundamental categorial framework is. For some it is sense contents and phenomenal relations between them; for others physical objects, persons, and processes in Space and Time. But whatever their points of difference, the philosophers I have in mind are united in the conviction that what is called the 'ostensive tie' between our fundamental descriptive vocabulary and the world rules out of court as utterly absurd any notion that there are no such thing as this framework talks about.(1963 [1956] §43)

According to Sellars, we tend to attribute infallibility to the different categories that we learn and subsequently impose on the world. In his essay, 'Hochberg on Mapping, Meaning, and Metaphysics' (1977), Sellars clarifies that

> the idea that the background language is to be taken at its face value is surely the last bastion of the 'Myth of the Given'. §24

On this articulation, it is a myth to suppose that what is categorially given to us

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in sensory experience lies beyond critical appraisal, or revisionary work.[73] As O'

Shea clarifies on behalf of Sellars in his essay, 'What *is* the Myth of the Given?':

> Sellars's contention (is) that philosophers have almost always assumed, whether explicitly, implicitly, or by unwitting implication, that some fundamental categorization of the world or of persons is irrevisable, and so is assumed to be just 'given' in that sense. (2021, 10553)

And similarly -

> The myth of the given, in perhaps its most basic form, is thus the idea that there is some implicit categorization of whatever is under consideration that is assumed to be in principle not revisable or replaceable by a fundamentally different categorization in this way. This is due to the fact that the given type of presence or entity is thought or assumed to be revealed as it really is… simply in virtue of… one's being directly aware of it under this implicit, and perhaps unwitting categorization. (2021, 10554)

We could accuse Merleau-Ponty of perpetuating the 'myth' that what is categorially given in sensory experience is infallibly fixed. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, he suggests that

> with the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, that is, not the positing of a content, but the opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. The idea is this level, this dimension… (1968, 151).

It seems that, for Merleau-Ponty, sensory experience is necessarily suffused with the 'dimension', or 'level' of the 'idea' (1968, 151). In Sellars' analytic turn of phrase, this would amount to a categorial framework, and - according to Merleau-Ponty - it necessarily holds sway: it can 'never again be closed'; it is the lens through which all subsequent sensory experience is 'situated' (1968, 151). As Merleau-Ponty also suggests,

> the whole landscape is overrun with words as with an invasion, it is henceforth but a variant of speech before our eyes… (1968, 155)

It would, however, be too hasty to accuse Merleau-Ponty of perpetuating the 'myth' that what is categorially given in sensory experience is infallibly fixed. If we look to Merleau-Ponty's essay, 'The Prose of the World' (1973), we can find

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[73] Hence the view of O' Shea 2021 regarding Hicks' view that 'what really matters (for Sellars) is that capacities for recognition are acquired' as opposed to being innate (2020 11, fn21; my parentheses):

> … the importance here (for Sellars) is not so much that our recognitional capacities are acquired as that the implicit categorizations such recognitions involve are criticizable and revisable, and thus in principle replaceable by alternative re-conceptualizations. (10552, fn15; my parentheses)

Note also the acknowledgement in Hicks 2020 that 'the problem (for Sellars) is the assumption of unrevisably authentic presence to mind' (14; my parentheses).

a distinction between two kinds of language: (1) 'sedimented language', and (2) 'speech' (1973, 10). 'Sedimented language' is supposed to be historically established: it is 'language as an institution' (1973, 10); it marks 'the stock of accepted relations between signs and familiar significations' (1973, 13). Meanwhile, 'speech' is supposed to refer to

> the operation through which a certain arrangement of already available signs and significations alters and then transfigures each of them, so that in the end a new signification is secreted. (1973, 13).[74]

By postulating 'speech', whereby a 'a new signification is secreted', Merleau-Ponty makes conceptual room for the principle that our categorial framework can change (1973, 13).


The linguistic distinction between 'sedimented language' and 'speech' 1973, 10) is arguably implicit in *The Visible and the Invisible*, where Merleau-Ponty suggests that

> the univocal signification is but one part of the signification of the word, that beyond it there is always a halo of signification that manifests itself in new and unexpected modes of use... (1963, 96)

While we can attribute the 'univocal signification' of a word to 'sedimented language', we can attribute the 'halo' of possible signification that surrounds a word to 'speech' - the creative act that invents new meaning, which is supposed to be 'sustained by the thousands of ideal relations of the particular language', as Merleau-Ponty suggests (1963, 118). So - rather than perpetuating the 'myth' that what is categorially given in sensory experience is infallibly fixed - we can see how Merleau-Ponty posits the fluidity of language and the inception of meaning in such a way that guarantees the possibility that we can recategorise what is immediately given to us in sensory experience. the ontological power of language to *transform* reality emerges as a central implication of 'facticity', as Merleau-Ponty articulates it. Merleau-Ponty also suggests that 'life becomes ideas and the ideas return to life' (VI, 119). Framed in a sentence that recreates the 'AB:BA' structure that is relevant to the chiasm in its literary sense, this principle highlights how the sensibility of the world and the intelligibility of the

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[74] Note the parallel in the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, who distinguishes between (1) *langue*, a socially shared system of abstract conventions, and (2) *parole*, the active choices made by the speaker who deploys a language. See page 118 of *The Visible and the Invisible* for Merleau-Ponty's employment of this terminology: 'speech *(la parole)* — which is sustained by the thousands of ideal relations of the particular language *(la langue...)*'; for further discussion on Saussure, see Ngoni Chipere on 'Saussure's Theory of Language' *Understanding Complex Sentences* (2003, 134-156).

world mutually reinforce each other. While recalling how it is sedimented language that reflects the diversity of the sensible world, this also gestures at the possibility for the innovation of further meanings: there is 'the folding over within him (the speaker) of the visible and the lived experience upon language, and of language upon the visible and the lived experience' (VI, 126; my parentheses)

In summary of this discussion on the 'fact' of sensory experience - we can draw inspiration from Merleau-Ponty to embrace the Sellarsian myth of what is categorially given to us in sensory experience. While the sheer immediacy of what is given to us in sensory experience could be considered mythic insofar as it makes a claim to non-inferential knowledge about reality, we can avoid incurring this 'myth' by postulating that immediacy in phenomenological terms, as opposed to epistemological terms. Phenomenologically expressed, the immediacy of what is given to us in sensory experience does, however, incur the metaphysical 'myth' that we perceive the sorts of things that are really there, and that such veridical perception holds simply because we have (immediate) sensations of the sorts of things that are really there. As we have seen, however, Merleau-Ponty positively embraces this 'myth': he grounds the immediacy of what is categorially given to us in compelling, phenomenological terms. While Sellars suggests that it extends beyond the theoretical scope of phenomenology to account for the immediacy of what is supposed to be categorially given to us in sensory experience, and Merleau-Ponty seems to agree that phenomenology is limited when it comes to explaining extraordinary cases of perception - i.e. hallucination and illusion - Merleau-Ponty does have the theoretical resources to defend the phenomenological ground of what is categorially given to us in veridical perception: he reveals how, insofar as scepticism about it departs from that phenomenological ground, such scepticism effectively reinforces how the phenomenological ground is vividly operational, while setting the justificatory standard for the phenomenological ground itself objectionably high. Finally, Merleau-Ponty cannot be considered guilty of perpetuating the 'myth' that what is categorially given to us in sensory experience is infallibly fixed, since he makes conceptual room for our categorial framework to be transformed. Thus, it suffices to maintain the 'fact' of sensory experience: even though a mythical air surrounds what is categorially given to

us in such experience, its phenomenological ground resonates.

### 7(a)ii Methodologically Derived Knowledge: Foucauldian Considerations and a Political Impetus

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), the French philosopher, Michel Foucault, characterises the facts that are methodologically given to us as 'facts of discourse' (1972, 29), which altogether constitute 'an entire field', a 'vast field' that is 'made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written)' (1972, 26-7; original parentheses).

Foucault calls into question the purported unities of the 'sciences of man', which carve up the whole 'field' of discursive facts into our institutionalised disciplines (1972, 30). He recommends that we 'tear away' from such disciplines their 'virtual self-evidence' in order to recognise how

> they are not the tranquil locus on the basis of which other questions (concerning their structure, coherence, systematicity, transformations) may be posed… (1972, 26; original parentheses)

According to Foucault, our institutionalised disciplines

> pose a whole cluster of questions (What are they? How can they be defined or limited? What distinct types of laws can they obey? What articulation are they capable of ? What sub-groups can they give rise to? What specific phenomena do they reveal in the field of discourse?). (1972, 26; original parentheses)

In what is technically delineated as his 'archaeological' project (1972, 27), Foucault inquires into how our institutionalised disciplines - 'such as psychopathology, medicine, or political economy' - can 'claim a field that specifies them in space and a continuity that individualizes them in time' (1972, 26).[75] Foucault considers different candidates on which 'their unity could be based' (1972, 37).

> On a full, tightly packed, continuous, geographically well-defined field of

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[75] Note how the archaeological method appears in Foucault's earlier work, *The Order of Things* (1994 [1966]): it is put forward as aiming at an 'analysis' that does not

> belong to the history of ideas or of science: it is rather an inquiry who aim is to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what… ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed, only, perhaps to dissolve and vanish soon afterwards. (xxi-ii)

Foucault promises to give the 'archaeological' method 'greater coherence' in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972, 15).

objects? What appeared to me were rather series full of gaps, intertwined with one another, interplays of differences, distances, substitutions, transformations. On a definite, normative type of statement? I found formulations of levels that were much too different and functions that were much too heterogeneous to be linked together and arranged in a single figure… On a well-defined alphabet of notions? One is confronted with concepts that differ in structure and in the rules governing their use, which ignore or exclude one another, and which cannot enter the unity of a logical architecture. On the permanence of a thematic? What one finds are rather various strategic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes, or, again, the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statement. (1972, 37)[76]

In the light of these failed attempts to ground the unity of our institutionalised disciplines, Foucault settles on the 'setting-up of relations that characterizes discursive practice itself' (1972, 46); he 'discover(s)' a 'group of *rules*' that is 'immanent' in each practice, defining it 'in its specificity' (1972, 46; original italics). For Foucault, a 'discursive practice' is itself

> a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function. (1972, 117)

Elaborating on the notion of a 'discursive practice', Foucault tells us that, 'in a particular discursive practice', there is a 'system of formation', which is a

> complex group of relations that function as a rule: it lays down (*'prescrit'*) what must be related… for such and such an enunciation to be made, for such and such a concept to be used, for such and such a strategy to be organized

in that practice (1972, 74; my parentheses). The 'complex group of relations' that constitute a 'system of formation' are themselves

> established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization. (1972, 45)

Thus defined in its 'specific individuality', a system of formation is supposed to 'characterise a discourse or a group of statements by the regularity of a practice' (1972, 74).[77] A particular 'discursive practice' thus incorporates factors

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[76] For Foucault's full discussion on these matters, see pp. 31-37 of *Archaeology of Knowledge*. For further discussion, see pp. 57-70 of David Webb's chapter on 'The Discursive Regularities' in *Foucault's Archaeology: Science and Transformation* (2013).

[77] Note that such a 'regularity' is technically defined as a '*discursive formation*': Foucault suggests that
> whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say… that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*. (1972, 38; original italics and parentheses)

that are socially contingent: it rests on a 'whole domain of institutions, economic processes, and social relations' (1972, 164).

Emphasising the point that a particular 'discursive practice' emerges from factors that are socially contingent, Foucault draws attention to how the 'theoretical choices' that are involved in a 'discursive practice' are themselves 'dependent upon' a certain kind of 'authority' (1972, 67). Foucault characterises this 'authority' according to the '*function* that the discourse under study must carry out *in a field of non-discursive practices*', the institutionalised '*rules and processes of appropriation* of discourse', and lastly the '*possible positions of desire in relation to discourse*' (1972, 68; original italics). According to Foucault,

> the analysis of this authority must show that neither the relation of discourse to desire, nor the processes of its appropriation, nor its role among non-discursive practices is extrinsic to its unity, its characterization, and the laws of its formation. They are not disturbing elements which, superposing themselves upon its pure, neutral, atemporal, silent form, suppress its true voice and emit in its place a travestied discourse, but, on the contrary, its formative elements. (1972, 68)

With discursive practice revealed to be socially contingent, we have good reason to be wary of the 'facts' that are methodologically given to us: as Foucault proclaims, the discourse to which our 'facts' belong is an 'asset' which is, 'by nature, the object of a struggle, a political struggle' (1972, 120). Caught in this 'struggle', 'facts' can be overlooked, buried, or rejected. A powerful historical example lies in Galileo's struggle with the Roman Catholic Church over what is a cosmological fact: following Copernicus, Galileo postulated a heliocentric model for what we now call the 'solar system'; however, in virtue of the Church's monopolisation over what counts as a 'fact', and the epistemological authority assigned to biblical revelation over and above reason and sense experience, the geocentric cosmological model that dates back to Aristotle and Ptolemy prevailed, and Galileo was formally declared a heretic in 1616.[78] In her essay, 'Lying in Politics' (1971), Hannah Arendt highlights the vulnerability of the 'whole texture of facts in which we spend our daily life':

> it is always in danger of being perforated by single lies or torn to shreds by the organised lying of groups, nations, or classes, or denied and

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[78] For further discussion, see David C. Lindberg's chapter on 'Galileo, the Church and the Cosmos', in *When Science and Christianity Meet* (2003, 33-60).

distorted, often carefully covered up by reams of falsehoods or simply allowed to fall into oblivion. (6)

Arendt emphasises how axes of power can monopolise, manipulate or conceal what counts as a 'fact'.

While these reflections provide reason to be wary of the 'facts' that are methodologically given to us, our wariness about purported 'facts' can descend into complete scepticism about their association with non-discursive reality. In *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (1986), sociologists of science, Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, argue that 'facts' are not discovered by science; they are instead 'constructed', 'constituted', or 'fabricated'. In the deconstructionist vein, Woolgar asserts in *Science, the Very Idea* (1988) that facts are 'inescapably textual constructions' (73).

The deconstructionist reduction of our facts of discourse to that discourse can be traced back to Foucault. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault expresses his 'wish'

> to dispense with 'things'… To substitute for the enigmatic treasure of 'things' anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. To define these *objects* without reference to the *ground*, *the foundation of things*, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical appearance. (1972, 47-8; original italics)

For Foucault, the 'facts' of discourse lack a connection to non-discursive reality: the 'objects' of that discourse are supposed to be the product of the 'body of rules' - i.e. the 'system of formation' - that characterises the discourse. Clarifying his deconstructionist position in negative terms, Foucault suggests:

> I would like to show that 'discourses', in the form in which they can be heard or read, are not, as one might expect, a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words; I would like to show that discourse is not a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language (*langue*), the intrication of a lexicon and an experience… (1972, 48)

Framing his understanding of discourse in positive terms, Foucault asserts that,

> in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. (1972, 49)

According to Foucault, these 'rules' do not 'define' the 'dumb existence of a reality'; they only 'define' the 'ordering of objects' (1972, 49). The 'facts' of discourse are thus removed from non-discursive reality.

Insofar as Foucault reduces the facts of our discourse to that discourse itself, there seems to arise a tension in his theory. Foucault suggests that the 'object' of discourse 'exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations' which are 'not present in the object' itself (1972, 45). As already seen, such 'relations' are supposed to constitute the 'system of formation' that 'characterise(s)' a 'discursive practice' (1972, 74); furthermore, such relations are supposed to be socially contingent: recall that they are

> established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization (1972, 45)

To the extent that they are socially contingent, the 'relations' that bring the 'object' of discourse into existence are non-discursive. Citing the quotation above, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow concur with this reading: in *Michael Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (1983), they suggest that Foucault

> emphasises the importance of non-discursive social practice in his list of relations that make it possible (for discursive practice) to pick out objects and give them public reality. (62)[79]

Insofar as the 'relations' that bring the 'object' of discourse into existence are non-discursive, it would seem to follow that the facts of discourse cannot be reduced to that discourse itself.

However - while Foucault allows some 'relations' that bring the 'object' of discourse into existence to be non-discursive, he postulates that there are also 'discursive relations', which have priority in the formation of the 'object' of discourse. Offering us an oblique characterisation of 'discursive relations', Foucault suggests that discursive relations are not

> '*real* or *primary relations*' which, independently of all discourse or all object of discourse, may be described between institutions, techniques, social forms, etc. (1972, 45)

Foucault also suggests that discursive relations are not '*reflexive* or *secondary* relations', which are 'formulated in discourse itself' (1972, 45). To address the 'problem' of 'reveal(ing) the specificity of these discursive relations, and their

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[79] Note that Dreyfus and Rabinow cite Foucault's suggestion, which is quoted on pp. 32 of this thesis, that the 'complex group of relations' that constitute a 'system of formation' are themselves

> established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterization. (1972, 45)

interplay' with the reflexive and secondary ones (1972, 45-6), Foucault implies that 'discursive relations' actually organise the relations that are technically 'real' and 'reflexive': he asserts that

> when one speaks of a system of formation, one does not only mean the juxtaposition, coexistence, or interaction of heterogeneous elements (institutions, techniques, social groups, perceptual organizations, relations between various discourses), but also the relation that is established between them - and in a well determined form - by discursive practice. (1972, 72; original parentheses)

So - while a 'system of formation' is constituted by (1) 'real relations' that are socially contingent, and (2) 'reflexive relations' that hold 'between various discourses', there are also supposed to be 'discursive relations' which operate at a deeper level: prior to the 'real' and 'reflexive' ones, the 'discursive relations' are 'established between' them by 'discursive practice' itself - i.e. the 'discursive relations' organise the 'real' and the 'reflexive' ones (1972, 72). In this way, 'discursive relations' are supposed to have priority with regard to the formation of the object of discourse.[80] As Foucault makes clear, 'discursive relations' actually 'offer' discourse

> objects of which it can speak, or rather (for this image of offering presupposes that objects are formed independently of discourse), they determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal with them, name them, analyse them, classify them, explain them, etc. These relations characterize not the language (*langue*) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice (1972, 46; original parentheses).

Insofar as 'discursive relations' actually 'determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of' its object, it follows - for Foucault - that facts of discourse are reducible to the discourse wherein their objects find existence (1972, 46).

While 'discursive relations' are supposed to organise the relations between 'real' and 'reflexive' ones - thus making the 'object' of discourse discursive, for Foucault - they can still be seen to engender theoretical tension. As Dreyfus and Rabinow highlight, it is 'striking' to see Foucault give 'discursive relations' this organisational role,

> because one might have thought that the institutional practices (of real

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[80] See Dreyfus and Rabinow 2013 for the reading that
    this thesis, that the discursive practices have a certain priority because they 'establish' relations between the other types of relations, is one of the most important but least discussed claims in the *Archaeology.* (63)

> relations) would have to be already coherent and unified in order for unified discursive practices to develop, or at least, that there would have to be some common cultural practices underlying both the institutional and discursive practices in order for both of these sets of practices to mesh with each other. (1983, 65-6; my parentheses)

In other words - it is arguably counterintuitive to give priority to the 'discursive relations' that are supposed to organise the 'real' and 'reflexive' ones. Insofar as Foucault says that 'discursive relations' actually '*determine* the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of' its object (1972, 46), this suggests that 'discursive relations' have *prescriptive* - as opposed to purely *descriptive* - force. In characterising the 'system of formation', where 'discursive relations' are supposed to organise the 'real' and 'reflexive' ones, Foucault also uses the language of it 'govern(ing)' the way in which the statements of a 'discursive practice' can be 'institutionalised, received, used, reused, combined together' etc. (1974, 115); similarly, as already seen, he talks about the 'system of formation' actually 'lay(ing) down (*prescrit*)' what must be related in the 'discursive practice' (1972, 74; my parentheses).


According to Dreyfus and Rabinow, 'the very claim that discourse is *governed* by rules contradicts the project of the archaeologist' (2013, 83). In *The Order of Things*, the archaeological method is put forward as a *descriptive* project that aims

> to rediscover on what basis knowledge and theory became possible; within what space of order knowledge was constituted; on the basis of what… ideas could appear, sciences be established, experience be reflected in philosophies, rationalities be formed… (1994 [1966], xxi-ii)

This theme is continued in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, to the extent that Foucault suggests, for example, that archaeology is

> nothing more than a rewriting… a regulated transformation of what has already been written… it is the systematic *description* of a discourse-object. (1972, 140; my parentheses)

However, in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault oversteps the descriptive scope of his archaeological project. As Dreyfus and Rabinow suggest, Foucault

> cannot seem to resist giving a quasi-structuralist explanation of the phenomena he has discovered. Far from accepting a descriptive theory, he seems to want a prescriptive one. (2013, 84)

This introduces a problem that Dreyfus and Rabinow helpfully bring to light:

> in his account of the causal power of rules of discursive formations, Foucault illegitimately hypostatised the observed formal regularities which describe discursive formations into conditions of these formations' existence (2013, 83).

As Dreyfus and Rabinow succinctly put it: the 'regularities that *describe* the

corpus of serious discourse' are problematically also supposed to 'regulate its production' (2013, 90; original italics).[81]

Leaving aside the methodological tension entailed by the prescriptive force that Foucault allocates the 'system of formation' that characterises a 'discursive practice', let us emphasise the role that Foucault gives to non-discursive reality in that 'system of formation'. He states that the 'real relations' (which are supposedly organised by the 'discursive' ones) are themselves 'independent… of all discourse' (1972, 45). This suggests that 'real relations' belong to the 'state anterior to discourse' (1972, 48) - i.e. non-discursive reality. While non-discursive reality is exactly what Foucault vows to abjure - confining himself 'at the level of discourse itself' (1972, 48), and professedly depriving his 'archaeological' analysis of 'any reference to the (non-discursive) living plenitude of experience' (1972, 48; my parentheses) - he elaborates on his 'archaeological' analysis in such a way that non-discursive reality sneaks back into the picture:

> Archaeology… reveals relations between discursive formations and non-discursive domains (institutions, political events, economic practices and processes). These *rapprochements* are not intended to uncover great cultural continuities, nor to isolate mechanisms of causality. Before a set of enunciative facts, archaeology does not ask what could have motivated them… nor does it seek to rediscover what is expressed in them… it tries to determine how the rules of formation that govern it… may be linked to non-discursive systems… (1972, 162)

While Foucault distances the 'relations between discursive formations and non-discursive domains' from the ideas of 'great cultural continuities', and 'mechanisms of causality', which would give priority to a non-discursive reality, he still carves out a role for non-discursive reality in his archaeological analysis (1972, 162; my parentheses). As Foucault emphasises, insofar as archaeology

> suspends… causal analysis… *it is not in order to guarantee the*

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[81] Dreyfus and Rabinow observe that, by assigning prescriptive power to the 'system of formation' that characterises a 'discursive practice', Foucault betrays how he is 'aware' that 'discursive practices are not simply regular but that they do, indeed, have the power to form objects and subjects' (2013, 84). This reading has support, since Foucault suggests that
> we are not dealing with a silent content that has remained implicit, that has been said and yet not said, and which constitutes beneath manifest statements a sort of sub-discourse that is more fundamental, and which is now emerging at last into the light of day; *what we are dealing with is a modification in the principle of exclusion and the principle of the possibility of choices; a modification that is due to an insertion in a new discursive constellation.* (1974, 67; my italics).
> Note that it is, however, theoretically possible to recognise the ontological power of discourse without going so far as to frame that power in exclusive and absolute terms.

> *sovereign, sole independence of discourse*; it is in order to discover the domain of existence and functioning of a discursive practice. (1972, 164; my italics)

So - since they feed into a 'system of formation', it is the case that non-discursive 'real relations' do help to characterise the 'existence' and 'functioning' of a 'discursive practice', thereby ultimately disrupting the priority that Foucault sometimes associates with discourse itself (1972, 164).


Having found that the coherence of the Foucauldian theory of 'discursive practice' is problematic - since Foucault hopes to reduce the object of discourse to that discourse itself, all the while admitting the role played by non-discursive reality in the formation of the discursive object - we can turn to Arendt for a powerful political motivation for securing a basis of factuality that is irreducible to the discourse in which it is nevertheless enshrined. In her essay, 'Truth and Politics' (1993 [1967]), Arendt characterises 20th century totalitarianism as where the 'sense by which we take our bearings in the real world… is being destroyed' (308). In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1976), Arendt suggests:

> The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the dedicated communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience)… no longer exist(s). (474)

Arendt gives us reason to oppose the reduction of facts of discourse to that discourse itself: there is political urgency for us to establish a common, non-discursive 'reality of experience', where 'the distinction between fact and fiction' prevails (2976, 474).


The political urgency to restore factuality that is irreducible to discourse finds expression in Latour's essay, which was written for the Stanford presidential lecture of April 7th, 2003: 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern' (2014). Latour begins by appealing to an editorial in the *New York Times*. The article highlights how 'most scientists believe that (global) warming is caused largely by manmade pollutants that require strict regulation' (cited in Latour 2014, 226; his parentheses). While the Republican strategist, Frank Luntz, acknowledged how 'the scientific debate is closing against us', he recommended making 'the *lack of scientific certainty* a primary issue' in order to influence public opinion against global warming (cited in Latour 2014, 226; his italics). For Latour, the worry arises that

> entire Ph.D. programs are still running to make sure that good American

kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same argument of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives. (2014, 227)

Latour observes his intellectual role in popularising the deconstructionist position: as he suggests

I myself have spent some time in the past trying to show 'the lack of scientific certainty' inherent in the construction of facts. I too made it a 'primary issue'... I intended to *emancipate* the public from prematurely naturalised objectified facts. (2014, 227, original italics)

While 'prematurely naturalised objectified facts' were Latour's target in, for example, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, he rethinks his target in his 2014 essay. On Latour's analysis - in the light of our 21st century negligence of factuality, as exemplified by Luntz - the 'danger' is

no longer coming from an excessive confidence in ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact... but from an excessive *distrust* of good matters of fact disguised as bad ideological biases! (2014, 227, original italics)

Rather than simply aiming to renew our trust in 'good matters of fact' (Latour 2014, 228), Latour advocates the 'cultivation of a *stubbornly realist attitude*... dealing with... *matters of concern*, not *matters of fact*' (2014, 231; original italics). How Latour conceives of this distinction is heavily inspired by Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger criticises our tendency to uncritically assume an 'ontology of presence-at-hand' ('*Vorehandenheit*'), which takes things as isolated objects that present themselves to an isolated subject (1962 [1927]), 91-102). For Heidegger, things as we encounter them are actually embedded in a complex web of relations - or rather, a 'totality of involvements' (1962 [1927], 115-117). Emphasising the relationality of things in his later writing, 'The Thing' in *Poetry, Language, Thoughts* (1971), Heidegger draws on the Old High German word 'thing' ('*Ding*'), which was used to refer to a people's assembly or trial, in order to suggest that a 'thing' is a gathering: rather than simply presenting itself to a subject, things assemble within themselves a complex web of relations, referring to, for example, their producer, their production, their site of production and conditions for production, their

cultural connotations etc. (171).[82]

According to Latour, 'matters of concern' allow us to perceive objects as 'highly complex, historically situated, (and) richly diverse' (2014, 237), while

> reality is not defined by matters of fact. Matters of fact are not all that is given in experience. Matters of fact are only very partial and, I would argue, very polemical, very political renderings of matters of concern… (2014, 232)

Latour thus aligns himself with the philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, who 'considered matters of fact to be a very poor rendering of what is given in experience', on Latour's reading (2014, 244). Indeed, in his Tanner lectures of 1919, which was published as *The Concept of Nature* in 1995, Whitehead recommends that we take into account the complexity of things, since

> For us, the red glow of the sunset should be as much part of nature as are the molecules and electric waves by which men of science would explain the phenomenon. (20)

According to Latour, the

> question was never to get *away* from facts but *closer* to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism. (2014, 231; original italics)

And yet, Latour advocates substituting the finding of facts for

> a multifarious inquiry launched with the tools of anthropology, philosophy, metaphysics, history, sociology to detect how many participants are gathered in a thing to make it exist and to maintain its existence…

thereby failing to address the dimensions of power that monopolised what counts as 'factuality' in the first place (2014, 246). As Matthias Flatscher and Sergej Seitz suggest in their essay, 'Latour, Foucault, and Post-Truth: The Role and Function of Critique in the Era of the Truth Crisis' (2020)

> Latour fails to take into consideration the strategic, economic, and political interests that play into post-truth obscurantism, or, for that matter, climate change denial. Indeed, he restricts himself to offering an expanded and transformed epistemology - from matters of fact to matters of concern - and a new concept of objectivity - from the object to the thing-as-gathering. He does not, however, explicate the relation this expanded notion of epistemology bears to the spheres of social power,

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[82] See Heidegger's *Country Path Conversations* (2010) on how

the drink [*Trank*] abides in the whole gathering involved in the event of drinking [*Getränk*]. This gathering is the belonging-together in the event of drinking of what is offered and received as drinkable. The whole gathering of the drink [*Getränk*] consists of the drink offered [*Trank*] and the drink received [*Trunk*]. What is offered as drinkable is among other things wine. The one who drinks is the human. The whole gathering of the drink as what is offered abides in the wine, which abides in the grapevine, which abides in the earth and in the gifts from the sky (87).

economy and politics. (§5)

In his 1973 lecture 'Truth and Juridical Forms', which appears in *Power: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954–1984* (2002, 1954–1984), Foucault highlights how, during modernity, our method of inquiry metamorphosed under the monopoly of power:

> It was no longer a matter of reconstituting an event, but something - or, rather, someone - who needed total, uninterrupted supervision. A constant supervision of individuals by someone who exercised a power over them - schoolteacher, foreman, physician, psychiatrist, prison warden - and who, so long as he exercised power, had the possibility of both supervising and constituting a knowledge concerning those he supervised. A knowledge that now was no longer about determining whether or not something had occurred; rather, it was about whether an individual was behaving as he should, in accordance with the rule or not, and whether he was progressing or not. (59)

Similarly, in his appendix to *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault emphasises how the 'will to truth' itself

> relies on institutional support: it is both reinforced and accompanied by whole strata of practices such as pedagogy - naturally - the book-system, publishing, libraries, such as the learned societies in the past, and laboratories today. But it is probably even more profoundly accompanied by the manner in which knowledge is employed in a society, the way in which it is exploited, divided and, in some ways, attributed. (1972, 219)[83]

In summary of this section on the facts that are methodologically given, and spurred on by the political impetus to secure a common world, we can maintain that there is factuality that is irreducible to the discourse in which it is enshrined, emerging from a methodology that is contingent, though more discussion is needed to dissect factuality as such from the axes of power that prop it up.

### 7(b)     Arendt's Conviction on Human Activity

For opposition to the idea that we are capable of activity that is *genuine* in the post-Kantian sense of being autonomous, free, or self-determined, we can look to Baruch Spinoza. In his *Ethics* (1985 [1677]), Spinoza characterises reality as causally closed: he posits that

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[83] Foucault insightfully continues:
> It is worth recalling at this point, if only symbolically, the old Greek adage, that arithmetic should be taught in democracies, for it teaches relations of equality, but that geometry alone should be reserved for oligarchies, as it demonstrates the proportions within inequality. (1972, 219)

> for each thing there must be assigned a cause, or reason, as much for its existence as for its nonexistence. (E1, proposition 11, definition 2)

Similarly, he argues that

> From a given determinate cause the effect follows necessarily; and conversely, if there is no determinate cause, it is impossible for an effect to follow. (E1, axiom 3)

Fine-tuning his characterisation of reality as causally closed, Spinoza invokes the distinction between causes that are *efficient* and causes that are *final*, a distinction that can be traced back to Aristotle.[84] A cause is said to be 'final' when it has a teleological dimension that concerns the final end, or purpose, of an effect. Rejecting the possibility of final causes, Spinoza argues that 'nature has no end set before it' and that 'all final causes are nothing but human fictions' (E1, appendix). By contrast, a cause is said to be 'efficient' insofar as it is the source of change resulting in an effect; according to Spinoza, causes are only ever efficient, since

> nothing belongs to the nature of anything except what follows from the necessity of the nature of the efficient cause. (E4, preface)[85]

With the possibility of final causes ruled out, and with reality posited to be causally closed in terms that are purely efficient, it follows - for Spinoza - that we cannot be capable of *genuine* activity. As autonomous, free, or self-determined, as in its post-Kantian sense, such activity would require us to act as final causes - i.e. with overarching purposes originating in, e.g., our desires or will. In a letter to Moses Mendelssohn, 'On the Doctrine of Spinoza' (2011 [1785]), where he recounts his discussions with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing on the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi observes that

> if there is nothing but efficient causes and no final causes, then in all of nature the faculty of thought does nothing but observe - its sole

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[84] For further discussion, see the chapter by Thomas M. Tuozzo on 'Aristotle and the Discovery of Efficient Causation' that appears in the anthology, *Efficient Causation: A History* (2014, 22-47).

[85] For the same reading of Spinoza, see *A Study of Spinoza's* Ethics (1984), where Jonathon Bennett asserts that, according to Spinoza, 'nothing has a final cause because everything has an efficient cause.' (215) Also see Martin Lin's chapter, 'Efficient Causation in: Spinoza and Leibniz' in *Efficient Causation: A History* (165-191).

business is to accompany the mechanism of efficient causes. (134)[86]

As Jacobi highlights, Spinoza's reduction of causation to efficient causation strips us from having purposes that actually effect change. This undermines our capacity for activity that would be *genuine* in the post-Kantian sense of the word.

Elaborating on the ramifications of Spinoza's reduction of causation to efficient causation, Jacobi conjectures how, if we lack purposes that actually affect change, it follows that

> the inventor of the clock did not in truth invent it - he only observed its genesis out of blindly self-developing forces. So too Raphael, when he sketched *The School of Athens*, and Lessing, when he wrote his *Nathan*. The same holds true of philosophising, the arts, forms of government, wars on land and sea, in short, of all that is possible. For even affects and passions cause nothing insofar as they are sensations and thought, or, more precisely, insofar as they carry sensations and thoughts within themselves. We only believe that we have acted out of anger, love, and magnanimity, or on the basis of a rational decision. Mere illusion! In all of these cases, that which moves us is, in truth, something that knows nothing of any of this and to that extent is simply devoid of sensations and thoughts. (2011 [1785], 134)

In this passage, Jacobi powerfully draws attention to the counterintuitive implications of the idea that reality is causally closed in efficient terms. When removed from acting as a final cause, where our purposes would have brought change into being, our actions are instead reduced to moments of efficient causation, and our apparent accomplishments dissolve into mere products of that causal chain. Finding these consequences objectionable, Jacobi pronounces that there is 'no conviction more vivid than that I do what I think and not that I only think what I do' (2011 [1785] 135) - i.e. intuition arguably points to the reality of our acting as final causes, where our actions arise from our reflective purposes.

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[86] Note that Jacobi understands efficiency in Spinoza mechanistically - hence Jacobi's reference to 'the mechanism of efficient causes' and, later in his letter to Mendelssohn, the consideration that, on Spinoza's metaphysical picture,

> the conversation that we are currently having with each other is only an affair of our bodies, and the entire content of this conversation, when it is resolved into its elemental components, (consists of) extension, motion, degree of velocity, along with their concepts as well as the concepts of these concepts. (2011 [1785], 134)

For the argument that Spinoza does not necessarily conceive of efficiency in mechanistic terms, see Valtteri Viljanen's essay on 'Spinoza's Essentialist Model of Causation' (2008). For the purpose of this thesis, however, it suffices to say that efficiency in Spinoza is removed from the causes that have final ends.

Taking seriously the Jacobian 'conviction' in our capacity to act as final causes (2011 [1785] 135), we can look to Arendt for more detail on the origin of the purposes that we arguably intuit as lying behind our actions. Returning to *Lying in Politics*, we can find Arendt's suggestion that

> a characteristic of human action is that it always begins something new, and this does not mean that it is ever permitted to start *ab ovo*, to create *ex nihilo*. In order to make room for one's own action, something that was there before must be removed or destroyed, and things as they were before are changed. (1971, 5)

Arendt firstly highlights how human action works against a background of what is already there, i.e, what is *given* as a fact. Using the language of 'givenness', Arendt refers to the 'mental freedom' that we possess to 'deny or affirm' the 'existence' of 'things as they are *given* to our organs of perception and cognition' (1971, 5-6; my italics). For Arendt, this denial or affirmation stretches beyond what is directed to 'statements or propositions in order to express agreement or disagreement' (1971, 5-6): as a denial or affirmation of 'existence' itself, it is emphatically directed towards 'things' as they are existentially 'given' in reality. According to Arendt, the 'mental freedom' to affirm or deny existence in this way is what makes action 'possible' (1971, 6): the changes that we purposefully make to what is given

> would be impossible if we could not mentally remove ourselves from where we physically are located and *imagine* that things might as well be different from what they actually are. (1971, 5; original italics)

Clarifying the role of the imagination as the source of our purpose to produce change, Arendt asserts that

> the capacity to change facts - the ability to act …. owe(s) (its) existence to… imagination. (1971, 5)

Thus, by drawing on the imaginative source of our purpose to transform what is given, Arendt defends our capacity for activity that is *genuine* in the post-Kantian sense: she characterises us as emphatically '*free* to change the world and to start something new in it' (1971, 5; original italics).


7(c)    Clarifying the 'Chiasm': Restoring 'Facticity' in
        Feminist Discourse on the Body


While the word 'factuality' is all too familiar, with a colloquial association to reality that is crystallised at a higher level of abstraction in the discourse of natural science, the heavily suffixed 'facticity' is shrouded in obscurity. With

enigmatic reconfigurations dotted across various philosophical projects, 'facticity' has intricate shades of meaning that seem to get lost in contemporary, feminist discourse on the body. By delving into such discourse, it will emerge how my framing of 'facticity' proves to be linguistically beneficial, as well as conceptually resourceful: it can articulate - and crucially help to illuminate - the complex relationship between what is given to the body in reality, and what the body could possibly be.

It is arguable that, throughout her work, Judith Butler conflates 'facticity' with what would be more colloquially expressed as 'factuality'. In her essay, 'Gendering the Body' on 'Beauvoir's Philosophical Contribution' (1989a), 'facticity' is explicitly associated with biological essentialism about the sexed body, which would posit sex as purely a matter of biological fact: Butler considers whether 'one is perhaps a given sex with a *biological* facticity' (254; my italics), and whether 'sex is the *anatomical* facticity of binary difference among human bodies' (261; my italics). Similarly, in *Gender Trouble* (1999 [1990]), Butler argues that 'sex could not qualify as a prediscursive *anatomical* facticity' (12; my italics), thereby linking 'facticity' to the biological essentialism about sex that she rejects.

Outside of feminist texts by Butler, we can look to Pauline Johnson's essay, *Feminism and the Enlightenment* (1993), where she echoes Butler in referring to a '*mere* facticity' (my italics), explicitly linking it to what is simply 'given' (3), thus arguably pointing to an underlying underestimation of 'facticity'. For a final example of contemporary, feminist literature that invokes 'facticity' without seeming to do justice to the concept, we can look to Donna Haraway's essay, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' (1988), where she refers to 'the "facticity" of biological discourse' and the 'ideological dimensions of "facticity"' (595) without reference to its historical significance.

Returning to Butler, where 'facticity' is prevalent, we can see her refer to a '*prediscursive* anatomical facticity' (1999 [1990], 12; my italics), thereby

associating 'facticity' with what is extra-cultural.[87] Building on this association, Butler refers to a 'mute facticity, anticipating some meaning' (164), and, similarly, to a 'mere facticity devoid of value, prior to significance' (165).[88] Meanwhile, in her essay, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' (1988), Butler conflates 'the existence and facticity of the material or natural dimensions of the body' (520), before suggesting that 'the body is not a... merely factic materiality' (521).

Offering a diagnosis of our cultural norms in *Gender Trouble*, Butler suggests that

> within the sex/gender distinction, sex poses as "the real" and the "factic,"
> the material or corporeal ground upon which gender operates as an act
> of cultural *inscription*. (1999 [1990], 186; original italics)

Butler uses the language of 'inscription' as a metaphor for the process by which the body acquires cultural meaning. Treated interchangeably, the 'real' and the 'factic' are terms that Butler wields in unison to signify what is extra-cultural. By embedding these terms in quotation marks, Butler betrays her suspicion towards what is meant to be signified (i.e. the extra-cultural), and this attitude is soon manifest. To dispel our cultural norms, Butler argues:

> The "real" and the "sexually factic" are phantasmatic constructions -
> illusions of substance - that bodies are compelled to approximate, but
> never can. (1999 [1990], 186)

Insofar as it is akin to the 'real', and the terms are taken to altogether signify what is extra-cultural, 'facticity' is Butler's target. However, this usage of 'facticity' is arguably misguided, along with the association that Butler makes between 'facticity' and biological essentialism about the sexed body. For what Butler is trying to express, it is arguable that 'factuality' would serve as a more suitable semantic fit. So, to be more precise, we can say that it is the so-called 'factuality' of scientific discourse that is actually Butler's target - insofar as that 'factuality' reductively characterises the body as existing outside of culture, and it is tied to biological essentialism about the sexed body.

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[87] In order to signify what lies outside of culture, I refer to what is 'extra-cultural' - as opposed to what is 'pre-cultural' - in order to avoid committing my discussion to the temporal commitment of the latter term, which Butler seems to incur.

[88] In her essay on *Feminism and the Enlightenment* (1993), Pauline Johnson repeats the locution of a '*mere* facticity' (3; my italics), which arguably points to an underlying misunderstanding of 'facticity'.

Looking to *Volatile Bodies* (1994), we can see Grosz repeat Butler's mistake of conflating 'facticity' with 'factuality'. Grosz opposes what is 'regarded as purely fixed and unchangeable elements of *facticity*, biologically given factors' - all of which are actually, as she contends, 'amenable to wide historical vicissitudes and transformations' (1994, 190; my italics). Again, 'facticity' is associated with biological essentialism about the sexed body, and a reductive characterisation of the body as extra-cultural - both of which would be better captured by a certain sense of 'factuality'.

For my final example of contemporary, feminist literature that conflates 'facticity' with 'factuality', I will briefly refer to Susan J. Brison's essay on 'Personal Identity and Relational Selves', which appears in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (2017). At one moment in her essay, Brison appeals to

> the facticity of one's past - the brute facts about what happened, neurological constraints and linguistic constraints. (227)

Since 'facticity' is spelt out here in terms of various immutable 'facts', it is clear how 'facticity' is being conflated with 'factuality' in general.

Evidently endemic to the contemporary, feminist literature considered here (at least), the conflation between 'facticity' and 'factuality' threatens to make the former term redundant. We are thereby deprived of the language that is needed to articulate the relationship between *the 'fact' of what is given to us in reality*, and *the principle of our activity*, which is vital to feminist philosophy on the body, as Grosz envisages it. In *Volatile Bodies*, Grosz identifies 'two conditions' that are jointly 'necessary for a feminist reconfiguration of the notion of the body' (1994, 13). Since it demands less discussion, I will begin with what Grosz (arbitrarily) presents as the second condition:

> human bodies have the wonderful ability… to… provide for and indeed produce fragmentations, dislocations that orient bodies and body parts toward other bodies and body parts. (1994, 13)

This draws on *the principle of our activity*: it pinpoints our potential to transform the body, which Grosz clarifies as the 'openness of (our) *organic* processes to cultural intervention' (1994, 23; my italics). Using the language of 'inscription' to capture these processes, Grosz recommends that

> the body must be regarded as a site of social, political, cultural and

geographical inscriptions… (1994, 23)[89]

The other 'condition' that Grosz delineates for the feminist project of accounting for the body is that

> human bodies have irreducible neurophysiological and psychological dimensions… (1994, 13)

This marks an implicit adherence to *what is given to us in reality as a 'fact'*, and its expression in terms of 'neurophysiological and psychological dimensions' answers to the 'factuality' of scientific discourse (1994, 13).

It is important to clarify that, in parallel to Butler's position as I have reconstructed it, Grosz rejects the 'factuality' of scientific discourse on the body insofar as it reductively characterises the body as extra-cultural and it is tied to biological essentialism about the sexed body. Grosz holds that

> bodies are *not* fixed, inert, purely genetically or biologically programmed entities that function in their particular ways and in their determinate forms *independent* of their cultural milieu and value…. (1994, 190; my italics)

Furthermore, in her 'note on essentialism and difference' (1990), Grosz explicitly targets biological essentialism for explaining the prevailing cultural meanings of the body in terms of some kind of fixed essence, which insidiously casts those meanings as 'unalterable', and 'necessary', thereby providing them with a normatively 'powerful political justification' that is pernicious to feminist thought (1990, 335).

While Grosz rejects the 'factuality' of scientific discourse on the body insofar as that 'factuality' reductively characterises the body as extra-cultural and it is tied to biological essentialism about the sexed body, she seems sceptical of the theoretical impulse to completely eradicate what is 'factually' given to us at a somatic level. As she says,

> The sexual difference I explore here cannot be regarded in terms of a fixed or ahistorical biology, although *it must clearly contain a biological dimension*. (1994, 191; my italics)

Albeit implicitly, there seems to be a distinction between the 'factuality' that is objectionable (insofar as it reductively characterises the body as extra-cultural

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[89] For Grosz, 'processes of bodily *inscription* must be understood as literal and constitutive' (1994, 137; my italics). See Chapter 6 of *Volatile Bodies* on 'The Body as an Inscriptive Surface' for an extended discussion on some of the 'various techniques of social inscription' (1994, 141) - e.g. violent techniques in 'social institutions of correction', where the body is 'confined, constrained, supervised and regimented(141 ,1994) ', and voluntary techniques related to 'lifestyles, habits and behaviours' (1994, 142), including 'muscular exertion', 'clothing, ornamentation, prosthetic devices and makeup' (1994, 144).

and it is tied to biological essentialism about the sexed body), and the non-objectionable 'factuality' of a 'biological dimension' that is given to the body *as such*, which is neither necessarily encumbered to a reductive characterisation of the body as extra-cultural, nor is it necessarily bound to biological essentialism about sex (1994, 191). Distinctly non-objectionable, such 'factuality' would mark a theoretical commitment to the material dimensions of the body *without* reductively characterising the body as existing outside of culture, or incurring normative implications about how the body should be.

To consolidate my reading that Grosz advocates the preservation of a distinctly non-objectionable kind of 'factuality' that characterises the body, we can turn to the introduction of *Volatile Bodies*, where she elucidates the 'goals and criteria' that 'should govern a feminist, theoretical approach to concepts of the body' (1994, 21). Grosz argues that the body cannot be regarded as 'lacking its own weighty materiality', and that 'it is not adequate to simply dismiss the category of nature outright', where 'nature' is supposed to encompass 'materiality in its most general sense' (1994, 21). So, although she herself refrains from using the locution of 'factuality', Grosz seems to be theoretically committed to the minimal 'factuality' that is given in the material dimensions of the body, which she also refers to as its 'tangibility, its matter' (1994, 23).

Feminist literature on the body is mired by the issue of how (and, as we shall see, even whether) we should address the material 'factuality' of the body. According to Grosz, social constructionist discourse frames the body as a product of culture in such a way that it commits a 'reduction of materiality to representation' (172) - but this charge is perhaps too strong. While the social constructionist, Michel Foucault, does famously characterise the body as the 'inscribed surface of events' that is '*totally* imprinted by history' - where the language of what is 'inscribed' and 'imprinted' figuratively captures the body's acquisition of cultural meaning (1977, 148; my italics) - his position can be more charitably interpreted. In his chapter on 'Social Constructionism and the Body', which appears in the *Routledge Handbook of Body Studies* (2012), Darin Weinberg contests what he calls the 'crude' interpretation of social constructionism, where the body figures as 'just a figment of our literary imaginations', and where 'there are no material constraints upon how we render

the body' (149). Weinberg suggests that, in characterising the body as 'discursively constituted', social constructionism only highlights how

> any answers we might give to the question, "What is the body?" are inescapably linguistic. Moreover, whatever causal influence is exercised by the non-discursive world on how we choose among these answers is always thoroughly mediated and channelled by reigning sociohistorical conditions. (2012, 149)

For Weinburg, social constructionism does not eliminate the materiality of the body altogether; instead, the theory refocuses our attention to how the body bears cultural meaning in such a way that all considerations of its materiality are inevitably adulterated by its cultural meaning. As Weinburg says, such considerations are 'inescapably linguistic' (where the notion of what is 'linguistic' captures what is culturally meaningful) (2012, 149). Weinberg also highlights how consideration over the materiality of the body is itself contingent on the 'reigning sociohistorical conditions', wherein cultural meaning plays out (2012, 149).


Putting forward a radical strain of social constructionism, Butler takes issue with Foucault for 'maintaining a body prior to its cultural inscription', and thus upholding a 'materiality prior to signification' (1999 [1990], 166).[90] In *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler posits 'the materiality of the body' as not even 'thinkable' beyond the process of cultural 'inscription', whereby the 'materialisation' of the body is supposed to effectively occur (2). Butler advocates

> the recasting of the matter of bodies as the effect of a dynamic of power, such that the matter of bodies will be indissociable from the regulatory norms that govern their materialisation and the signification of those material effects…(1993, 2)

For Butler, the body undergoes 'materialisation' in such a way that it takes on cultural meaning 'as the effect of a dynamic of power' and various 'regulatory norms', and this process is supposed to preclude the body having any prior 'matter' (1993, 2). Indeed, Butler refers to 'the reiterative power of discourse to *produce*' the very 'phenomena that it regulates and constrains' - i.e. the body (1993, 2; my italics).[91] Butler's radical strain of social constructionism is thus vulnerable to Grosz's charge of committing a 'reduction of materiality to

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[90] See Butler's essay on 'Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions' (1989b) for the same critique of Foucault.

[91] Following Butler, Drucilla Cornell proclaims in *The Philosophy of the Limit (*1992) that 'there is no body that is *just there*' - i.e. prior to culture (145, my italics).

representation' (2005, 172).

While Butler would (probably) be happy to receive Grosz's charge, Grosz emphasises why it is a problem:

> To understand matter as "materialising" implies a process of putting into materiality that elides or denies that matter is itself what enables materialisation… what slips out, what disappears (from Butler's theory) is stuff, the real, biology, nature, matter (2005, 78; my parentheses)

Butler theoretically effaces any 'matter' of the body that would precede the process of 'materialisation', whereby the body takes on cultural meaning - and yet, it is the prior 'matter' of the body that would 'enable' that process of 'materialisation' in the first place (2005, 78). The 'factuality' of 'stuff, the real, biology, nature, matter' is omitted from Butler's account of the body, though it is required as the site for the 'materialisation' of cultural meaning (2005, 78). As Grosz points out - issues of cultural meaning

> are in fact never independent or capable of effectivity except insofar as they are lived through bodies, in biologies, in and as the real. (2005, 78)

For Grosz, the body is a necessary precondition of its cultural meanings. However, in Butler's theory, 'the body itself dissolves', on Grosz's reading (2005, 78).

In levying her objection against Butler, Grosz seems to be troubled by the temporal direction that underlies the process by which the body acquires cultural meaning. While Butler arguably invites this worry in *Bodies That Matter* (as exemplified by her reference to the 'power of discourse to *produce*' the body (1993, 2; my italics; see my fn5)), her earlier work explicitly sidesteps it. In her essay on 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex' (1986), Butler suggests that

> Although we 'become' our genders, the temporal movement of this becoming does not follow a linear progression. The origin of gender is not temporally discrete because gender is not originated at some point in time after which it is fixed in form. In an important sense gender is not traceable to a definable origin precisely because it is itself an originating activity incessantly taking place. (39)

Using the language of Simone de Beauvoir, Butler refers to the process of the body acquiring the cultural meaning of gender as 'becoming' that gender.[92] According to Butler, in the passage above, that process evades a 'linear'

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[92] See de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1973) on how 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman' (301).

analysis, since it is necessarily ongoing (1986, 39). On the one hand, this is because cultural meaning is not 'fixed'; it is subject to change (1986, 39). On the other hand, Butler stipulates how there is no 'origin' to the process of 'becoming' a gender, since the body cannot be devoid of cultural meaning (1986, 39).

Later on in her 1986 essay, Butler clarifies that

> As a locus of cultural interpretations, the body is a material reality which has already been located and defined within a social context. (1986, 45)

In suggesting that the the body has 'already been located and defined' (1986, 45), Butler does not mean to suggest that there is a fixed origin for the body's acquisition of cultural meaning. Instead, Butler means to suggest that the body bears cultural meaning in such a way that it is *never without* cultural meaning. So, while the body is indeed a 'material reality' - whose material dimensions are conceptually distinct from the process by which it acquires cultural meaning - it the case (for Butler) that embodiment necessarily entails this process; the body does not pre-exist the social discourse that makes it culturally meaningful. Hence why, in her essay on 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory' (1988) Butler characterises the body as 'a materiality that bears meaning' (521).

So, according to the social constructivism set out in her 1986 and 1988 essays, Butler does not reject the materiality of the body outright. Instead, in a way that is reminiscent of Weinburg's reconstruction of Foucault, Butler illuminates how the materiality of the body is obscure: inquiry into such materiality is always complicated by the cultural meanings that are necessarily borne by the body. This explains why, in her later work (i.e. *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993)), Butler seems to launch a polemic against philosophical scrutiny of the body in its materiality, as we have already seen. As if to warn us against the project of conceptualising the material dimensions of the body in isolation from its cultural meaning, Butler makes the radical theoretical recommendation that such dimensions should be 'indissociable' from - and not 'thinkable' beyond - the social discourse that makes it culturally meaningful (1993, 2). Butler also makes metaphysical claims about the body being 'produce(d)' by - and finding 'materialisation' within - social discourse (1993, 2). While the metaphysical

claims are vulnerable to Grosz's charge of committing a 'reduction of materiality to representation' (2005, 172), the social constructionism of Butler's 1986 and 1988 essays are immune to it. Insofar as it figures there as a 'materiality that bears meaning' (1988, 521), the body's material dimensions are accounted for. Owing to the inevitability of the cultural meanings borne by the body, Butler simply redirects our philosophical attention away from the material 'factuality' of the body, before repeating this move more radically in her later work of the early 1990s. But is it reasonable to push the material 'factuality' of the body beyond the limits of our philosophical scrutiny?

In her essay '*Quand Nos Levres S'Ecrivent*: Irigaray's Body Politic', Jane Gallop rejects the viability of discourse on the material 'factuality' of the body. She argues that the body is inextricably entangled with cultural meaning in such a way that we cannot conceptually isolate the body 'as such' - i.e. its 'essential matter': there is an 'absence of any certain access to the referent' (1983, 82, cited in Kirby 1991, 13). As Gallop explains:

> belief in simple referentiality… cannot recognise that the reality to which it appeals is a traditional ideological construction… Traditional ideological constructs which are not recognised as such… are taken for the "real". (1983, 83, cited in Kirby 1991, 12).

For Gallop, we are prevented from referencing the materiality of the body on account of its saturation with cultural meaning. In trying to pin down the materiality of the body, we only come across more cultural meaning.

In her essay 'Corporeal Habits' (1991), Vicky Kirby commends Gallop for acknowledging

> the confounded nature of any argument that claims to separate the supposed brute matter of anatomy from its interpretation. (13)

More critically, Kirby asserts that

> the purchase of Gallop's corrective...is predicated on the necessity for just such a separation. (1991, 13)

As Kirby highlights, Gallop's worry about the viability of discourse on the materiality of the body only gets off the ground *because* of the conceptual 'separation' that holds - ever so murkily - between the materiality of the body and its cultural meaning (1991, 13). So, while the materiality of the body may be saturated with cultural meaning to an extent that *complicates* our reference to its materiality in isolation from cultural meaning, thereby making Gallop *justifiably wary* about the viability of discourse on such materiality, she is not

justified to write off its viability altogether. We can still reasonably attest to the materiality of the body that is distinctly *there*, as an inescapable given. To echo Kirby, there is 'the unarguably real body, the literal body', which has 'immovable and immobilising substance', and an 'ineluctable immediacy' (1991, 8).

In sharp contrast to Kirby - and in arguable contradiction to phenomenological experience - Butler in her 1986 essay suggests that 'the body as a natural fact never really exists within human experience' (46), as though the body's layers of cultural meaning could destroy the felt immediacy of embodiment itself. While Butler's claim might warrant the exclusion of the body in its materiality from philosophical scrutiny, we can - in the footsteps of Kirby - diagnose this claim as resulting from a kind of intellectual 'somatophobia' (1991, 4). On Kirby's reading, the feminist discourse that shies away from the materiality of the body - and even denies our experience of it - is ultimately shaped by the worry that such materiality precludes cultural transformation. For the likes of Gallop and Butler, the materiality of the body 'must be secured outside the discussion', as Kirby recognises (1991, 8); the materiality of the body is 'quarantined for fear' that it

> will leave us no space for change, no chance to be otherwise, no place
> from which to engender a different future. (1991, 8)

But as we have seen, following a theoretical move that is implicit in Grosz, we could postulate the material 'factuality' of the body in such a way that it does not reductively characterise the body as existing outside of culture, nor does it entail normative implications about how the body should be. Against social constructionism then, we can echo the words of Grosz: 'it is not adequate to simply dismiss the category of nature outright', where 'nature' encompasses 'materiality in its most general sense' (1994, 21).

Insofar as social constructionism (at least) neglects the material 'factuality' of the body, while biological essentialism is inimical to feminist thought, we can see why Grosz suggests in *Volatile Bodies* that

> in the face of social constructionism, the body's tangibility, its matter…
> may be invoked; but in opposition to essentialism, biologism… it is the
> body as cultural product that must be stressed. (1994, 23-4)

In other words, we must account for the body in terms of both (1) what is 'factually' given to the body in its materiality, and (2) the body's potential for

cultural transformation. Insofar as it hones in on the relationship between *the 'fact' of what is given to us in reality*, which maps onto (1)) and *the principle of our activity* (which maps onto (2))*,* 'facticity' provides the language for the feminist project that Grosz envisions.

Without the special locution of 'facticity' put forward in this thesis, Grosz resorts to an arguably cumbersome motif to express both (1) what is 'factually' given to the body in its materiality, and (2) the body's potential for cultural transformation. She deliberates at length that

> the kind of model I have in mind here is not simply… a model of an imposition of inscription on a blank slate, a page with no "texture" and no resistance of its own. As any calligrapher knows, the kind of texts produced depends not only in the message to be inscribed, not only on the inscriptive tools - stylus, ink - used, but also on the quality and distinctiveness of the paper written upon. Perhaps, then, a more appropriate model for this kind of body writing is not the writing of the blank page - a model which minimises the impact and effects of the paper itself - but a model of etching, a model which needs to take into account the specificities of the materials being thus inscribed and their concrete effects in the kind of text produced (1994, 191).

While 'a model of an imposition of inscription on a *blank* slate, a page with *no* "*texture*" and *no resistance* of its own' would erase what is 'factually' given to the body as such, the 'model of etching' is supposed to reconcile that kind of 'factuality' with the body's potential for cultural transformation (1994, 191; my italics).

Nevertheless unsatisfied with the 'model of etching', Grosz worries in a footnote that

> even the model of etching has its problems: it assumes the independent preexistence of its raw materials, whereas what I want to suggest is that these very elements themselves are produced in the inscriptive process. (1994, 191, fn4)

It is unclear how Grosz is using the language of 'inscription' here (1994, 191, fn4). Insofar as she suggests elsewhere in *Volatile Bodies* that 'processes of *bodily inscription* must be understood as *literal* and *constitutive*' (1994, 137; my italics; see my fn7), it seems trivial to stipulate that the 'very elements' of the body as such 'are produced in the inscriptive process' by which the body is *literally constituted* (1994, 191, fn4). Whereas, if - in line with Foucault and Butler - 'inscription' in the passage above is supposed to *figuratively* capture the process of the body acquiring cultural meaning, it (ironically) follows that Grosz

lapses into what resembles radical social constructivism, where the material 'factuality' (i.e. the 'very elements') of the body are '*produced* in the inscriptive process' (1994, 191, fn4; my italics). It is arguable that we could attribute this lapse to the difficulty that mires the intellectual ambition to straddle (1) what is 'factually' given to the body in its materiality, and (2) the body's potential for cultural transformation, all the while lacking the language that would enshrine this indeterminate position. Fortunately filling this linguistic lacuna, 'facticity' could help us to attune our thinking to the complexity of the body, and to thereby avoid the pitfall of tunnel vision about it.

Nevertheless, the conflation between 'facticity' and 'factuality' cannot be dismissed as a merely *linguistic* mishap. By invoking 'facticity' where 'factuality' would be more apt, we are not only deprived of the language that is needed to articulate the relationship between *the 'fact' of what is given to us in reality*, and *the principle of our activity*. We are also bereft of 'facticity' as a conceptual resource, and this presents a dilemma for anyone interested in the history of ideas. Plucked from its history in European philosophy, 'facticity' floats throughout contemporary, feminist discourse on the body in a way that is regrettably severed from its historical nuance. With its conceptual integrity restored, 'facticity' can arguably help us to illuminate the relationship between (1) what is 'factually' given to the body in its materiality, and (2) the body's potential for cultural transformation.

Throughout *Volatile Bodies*, Grosz reflects on the mystification that surrounds the relationship between (1) what is 'factually' given to the body in its materiality, and (2) the body's potential for cultural transformation. She esoterically envisages 'the hole in nature that allows cultural seepage or production', which 'must provide something like a natural condition for cultural production' (1994, 21), while also taking into account 'the openness of organic processes to cultural intervention, transformation, or even production', which 'must', as she says emphatically, 'be explored' (1994, 23). Similarly, Grosz suggests that 'our ideas and attitudes seep into the functioning of the body itself' (1994, 190), though it is coincidentally the case that there is a 'scope and limit' to the 'body's pliability' that 'is not yet adequately understood; nor is the biologically constitutive role played by the significances and meanings attributed to bodies,

the codes and practices that tattoo it in various ways' (1994, 190). There seems to be a messy relationship between (1) what is 'factually' given to the body in its materiality, and (2) the body's potential for cultural transformation - but 'facticity' can arguably give us the framework to start making sense of it.

Insofar as 'facticity' hones in on the relationship between *the 'fact' of what is given to us in reality*, and *the principle of our activity*, it can account for what is given to us in reality as a matter of 'fact' that is based on our activity. In this way, 'facticity' gives us the conceptual tools to accommodate the following principles:

1. There is materiality that is factually given to the body.
2. The materiality of the body is open to our activity of cultural transformation.
3. There is materiality that is factually given to the body as the result of cultural activity.

Thus, in the light of 'facticity', we are better equipped to unpick the body in all of its 'volatility' (Grosz 1994). 'Facticity' is linguistically beneficial: it marks a conceptual expansion of sheer 'factuality', bridging the gap between what is given to us as a 'fact' of reality, and our activity. Furthermore, 'facticity' is a resourceful, philosophical concept: it illuminates our relationship with reality in terms of what we are given and what we can do, thereby enriching our general understanding of reality by allowing us to posit reality in terms of our ongoing dynamic - where we take up what is given to us in reality, and we actively transform it in some way, thereby reconstituting reality so that it returns to us, as given. Though more work is needed, I suggest that 'facticity' can act as a descriptive device: it provides a theoretical framework for us to account for the way(s) in which some aspect of reality is given to us, and the way(s) in which that aspect of reality is open to our activity. In this way, 'facticity' could aid normative discussion: it equips us with the theoretical tools to find a common ground for normative discussion about how human action should unfold in harness of our powers for transforming reality, and in harmony with our given limitations.

Chapter 8    Thesis Conclusion: The 'Facticity' of Flight

*Your lungs fill & spread themselves,*

*wings of pink blood, and your bones*

*empty themselves and become hollow.*

*When you breathe in you'll lift like a balloon*

*and your heart is light too & huge,*

*beating with pure joy, pure helium.*

*The sun's white winds blow through you,*

*there's nothing above you,*

*you see the earth now as an oval jewel,*

*radiant & seablue with love.*

*It's only in dreams you can do this.*

*Waking, your heart is a shaken fist,*

*a fine dust clogs the air you breathe in;*

*the sun's a hot copper weight pressing straight*

*down on the thin pink rind of your skull.*

*It's always the moment just before gunshot.*

*You try & try to rise but you cannot.*

Flying Inside Your Own Body - Margaret Atwood


*Here Icarus fell; these waves beheld his fate,*

*which drew the daring wings to their embrace;*

*Here the flight ended; here the event took place,*

*which those unborn will yearn to emulate…*

Here Icarus Fell - Jacopo Sannazaro, translated in *Ovid Renewed* (1990, 40).


We have always fantasised about flying. In the epigraph above, Margaret Atwood paints a wonderful picture of what it would be like to glide through the air. She also gives us a poignant reminder of the fact that it is 'only in dreams you can do this'. Legend has it that an ancient English king tried to realise such a dream. In the *History of the Kings of Britain* (1999 [circa 1136]), the Anglo-Norman cleric, Geoffrey of Monmouth, writes that King Bladud of the ninth century BC 'attempted to fly to the upper region of the air with wings he had prepared', only to fall upon the temple of Apollo, in the city of Trinovantum, 'where he was dashed to pieces' (28).

In his *System of Ethics* (2005 [1798]), Johann Gottlieb Fichte envisions

overcoming our earth-bound limitation with something more complicated than makeshift wings. Qualifying our inability to fly as an inability that is only 'immediate', he appeals to the invention of the hot air balloon, which was recent at his time of writing (2005 [1798], 92).[93] 'By means of a balloon', Fichte suggests,

> one can indeed lift oneself into the air and can move around there with some degree of freedom and purposiveness. (2005 [1798], 92)

As we know especially well today, in the age of space exploration, technology can allow us to fly. This attests to our general power to transform fantasy into reality: what begins as an outlandish figment of the imagination can - through the appropriate steps - be transposed to the realm of the real. Thus regarding whatever his generation is 'not yet able to do, inasmuch as it has not yet found the means to do so', Fichte scorns whoever 'says that human beings are unable to do this' as a matter of necessity (2005 [1798], 92).

Yet it remains the case that, however great our mastery over the laws of nature may become, we will always be shackled to the limitations that are *immediately* given to us. Leaving technological advances aside, there are some things that we simply cannot accomplish 'all at once', as Fichte admits (2005 [1798], 92). Perhaps lamented by King Bladud and onlookers in his final, calamitous moments, it is a fact that without successful aeronautics, we could only ever leap into the sky and soar amongst the birds within the confines of a dream. To echo Atwood, we can 'try and try to rise', but - as a matter of *immediate* necessity - we 'cannot'.

Stressing the necessity of what is immediately given to us, Grosz acknowledges in *Volatile Bodies* (1994) how the human body

> cannot fly in the air, it cannot breathe underwater unaided by prostheses, it requires a broad range of temperatures and environmental supports, without which it risks collapse and death. (187)

Having clarified that 'there must be some kinds of biological limit or restraint' to which we are fettered, Grosz reminds us that

> these constraints are perpetually capable of being superseded, overcome, through the human body's capacity to open itself up to prosthetic synthesis, to transform or rewrite its environment, to continually augment its powers and capacities… (187-8)

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[93] For the history of the hot air balloon in Europe, see Mi Gyung Kim's *The Imagined Empire: Balloon Enlightenments in Revolutionary Europe* (2016).

As a point of emphasis - the limitations that are immediately given to us can be overcome.

According to contemporary, 'transhumanist' discourse, we could overcome particular limitations, such as ageing and death, which have historically been associated with the 'human'.[94] Faced with such extraordinary avenues for development, we might feel some anxiety. We may wonder whether we are pushing the boundary of being human too far. (Like Icarus, are we destined to fly too close to the sun?)

In her prologue to *The Human Condition* (2018 [1958]), Arendt envisages 'the future man' as

> possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere (secularly speaking), which he wishes to exchange, as it were, for something he has made himself. (3; original parentheses)

Expressing the conviction (shared by both Fichte and Grosz) that

> …there is no reason to doubt our present ability to accomplish such an exchange… (2018 [1958]), 3

Arendt raises 'the question'

> whether we wish to use our new scientific and technical knowledge in this direction… (2018 [1958]), 3

Connected to the descriptive issue of how we *'wish'* to develop, there is the normative inquiry as to how we *should* reinvent 'human existence as it has been given' (2018 [1958], 3; my italics). Preceding both of these questions - and at the heart of this thesis - there is the relationship between (1) that 'gift from nowhere' that characterises 'human existence', and (2) whatever 'wish' we could chase after (2018 [1958], 3).

Beckoned by the future in its vast possibility, it is worthwhile to consider the relationship between

> 1. the 'facts' that are given to us in reality (which includes all that
> characterises our phenomenological experience, and all that is
> enshrined at a higher level of abstraction by our institutionalised

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94 For further discussion, see Chapter Two on 'Ancestors and Avatars: Immortality Transformed' in Jennifer Huberman's *Transhumanism: From Ancestors to Avatars* (2020); also see Bryan Turner's discussion on the question of 'Can We Live Forever?', included in *A Sociological and Moral Inquiry* (2009, xi-xii).

disciplines) - and,

2. the principle of our activity (which is to be construed broadly as encompassing both intentional, practical activity (e.g. walking, typing, dancing, etc.) and 'intellectual' activity, (e.g. imagining, philosophising, poeticising, etc.)).

Not only would this help to animate discussions about how we should or desire to develop, it would crucially enlighten reality in terms of how we are mutually enmeshed, thus reconciling the *givenness* of 'factual' reality with our ability to *do* things, and thereby have an impact on reality.

In 'The Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism' (1996 [1796/97]), which is a fragmentary essay of unknown authorship, we are presented with the question:

… how must a world be constituted for a moral being?' (3)

In the post-Kantian vein, a 'moral being' is posited as one who is an 'absolutely free being', as the anonymous writer suggests (1996 [1796/97], 3). Interchangeably, a 'moral being' is posited as one who is 'self-determining', or 'autonomous'; one must possess 'free agency', and thus be genuinely *active* - as according to the language of this thesis. So, taking the liberty of additionally substituting 'a world' for 'reality', we can rephrase the question that is posed above as follows:

How must reality be constituted for an active being?[95]

To elaborate - taking the principle of our activity for granted, how must reality be constituted so that it does not contradict that principle, thereby rendering us inactive, like rocks scattered across the landscape, idly eroding in the wind? Framed positively - how must reality be constituted so that it *accommodates* or even *enables* our activity, whether that activity be a dance or a deliberation?

As a concept that appears in the history of European philosophy, with enigmatic reconfigurations dotted across various philosophical projects, 'facticity' promises to elucidate how reality is constituted for us, as active beings. According to this thesis, the concept thematises the relationship between what is given to us in reality, and the principle of our activity. What we are given and what we can do

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[95] The substitution of 'a world' for 'reality' is, I hope, an unobjectionable move, motivated to maintain the consistency of this thesis.

are philosophically rich matters that intersect throughout the trajectory of 'facticity' that is analysed in this thesis, as indicated in the table below:

| Historical Instantiation of 'Facticity' | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Philosopher | Signification of 'Facticity' in Terms of 'What We Are Given' | Necessary Implication for Human Activity | Result for our Relationship with Reality |
| Johann Gottlieb Fichte 1762-1814 | Everything that happens to be empirically given to us in sensory experience. | We can philosophise that 'facticity' can be traced back to the absolute, self-positing 'I'; such philosophical activity makes it the case. | Our philosophical activity makes us absolutely constitutive of reality in such a way that 'realism' reigns in everyday life. |
| Edmund Husserl 1859-1938 | Everything that happens to be empirically given to us in sensory experience/to a living person in the world. | We can trace 'facticity' back to essence/essential laws. | Reality is in historical development, which can be transcendentally accounted for, though 'realism' is relevant to everyday life. |
| Wilhelm Dilthey 1833-1911 | Everything that is unfathomably given to us in both socio-historical reality, and our sensory experience of nature. | Socio-historical reality can be continually (re)interpreted; our sensory experience resists full expression in naturalistic terms. | Reality perpetually inspires and tragically eludes hermeneutic practice, but poetry harbours expressive power. |
| Martin Heidegger 1889-1976 | The arbitrarily definite ways of being there, for a while, at a particular time. | Self-projection is at least partly determined by 'facticity'. | We are all irrevocably 'thrown' into reality. |
| Jean-Paul Sartre 1905-1980 | Being given a 'situation' in reality. | Being 'situated' is the necessary point of departure for our projects, which give meaning to reality. | We are individually free to constitute meaning. |
| Maurice Merleau-Ponty 1908-1961 | Everything that is given to us in sensory experience, all of which 'intertwines' with conceptual meaning through life. | We can innovate conceptual meaning. | We can collaboratively determine the meaning of reality. |

As a symbol for our relationship with reality that lifts layers of symbolic meaning from its historical development, 'facticity' ultimately provides us with the theoretical resources to understand reality in terms of the ongoing dynamic whereby we take up what is given to us in reality, and we actively transform it, thereby reconstituting reality in a way that returns to us, as given.

So - having demystified 'facticity' in terms of our relationship with reality on account of the etymological inquiry into 'facticity' that absorbs Chapter 1, and the historical trajectory of 'facticity' that unfolds over Chapters 2-6, from which emerges my attempt to assemble 'facticity' in Chapter 7, this thesis concludes that 'facticity' emerges from the history of Western philosophy as a multifaceted symbol for our relationship with reality: when we follow a certain historical

trajectory of 'facticity', we are phenomenologically driven towards symbolising our relationship with reality in its philosophical complexity.

As we have seen, different philosophical dimensions of our relationship with reality are salient in the trajectory of 'facticity' that is analysed over the course of this thesis. At the inception of 'facticity', we see Fichte self-posit so that the 'facticity' of what happens to be empirically given to the senses is actually determined by his philosophical activity, thus giving philosophy absolute ontological power in a way that is phenomenologically contradicted by the ordinary experience of 'facticity', which makes realism relevant to everyday life. In Husserl's early philosophy, the Fichtean concept of 'facticity' lies latent, before emerging in his later philosophy to explicitly thematise all that is empirically given to a living person in the world over time in a way that is supposed to adhere to essential laws, though the natural attitude remains in full embrace of everyday realism. Dilthey strips philosophical activity of ontological power, relegating it to an interpretative role that is tragically doomed to last forever in pursuit of the unfathomable 'facticity' of life as it is lived, which is supposed to be a bit more amenable to poetic expression. Heidegger and Sartre hail the meaningful projection by which we transcend the 'facticity' of being inexplicably contextualised. Finally, completing the trajectory of 'facticity' that is relevant to this thesis, Merleau-Ponty weds the 'facticity' of what is sensible with the 'ideality' of what is meaningful. 'Facticity' culminates as an ontological motif for our relationship with reality; it is identified with the universal 'flesh', and posited to possess a thoroughly 'chiastic' structure that 'intertwines' in abundance, capturing different facets of our relationship with reality.

Thus, closing the trajectory of 'facticity' that is relevant to this thesis, Merleau-Ponty gives us the conceptual resources to put forward 'facticity' as a symbol for our relationship with reality that lifts layers of symbolic meaning from its historical development. As an 'intertwining' between what we are given and what we can do, 'facticity' compels us to consider the scope of our activity in reality: what can we *do* with what we are 'given'? In this way, 'facticity' presents us with what is effectively a continuum: the concept demarcates what is given, and it analytically entails what can be done with what is given. The concept of 'facticity' is therefore not opposed to the principle of our activity. As the locus for

what we are given in reality, 'facticity' catalyses our activity. On this view, 'facticity' commits us to empirical realism in the context of everyday life, attuning us to the phenomenological limits of the transcendental endeavour; it commits us to the expressive limits of hermeneutics, and to the ontological dimension of poetry; it encompasses the sheer contingency of being human, while remaining faithful to our power to constitute meaning.

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