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Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hannah Arendt: The Intersection of Institution, Natality, and Birth

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts
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MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY AND HANNAH ARENDT: THE INTERSECTION OF
INSTITUTION, NATALITY, AND BIRTH

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Theory and Criticism

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

Establishing respectively the relevant concepts of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hannah Arendt, this thesis links *flesh* and the *inter esse* as both bespeaking of a fruitful dialectical relationship wherein the new is born by making its visible appearance. This advent of the visible is made possible in differentiation from an implied invisibility, which for both authors determines a connection between nature and temporality; nature as related to the appearance of the visible as grounded upon temporal implications within the invisible. Commensurate temporal structures of the invisible between these authors demonstrate birth as institutional (the continuation of a historically contingent sensibility) and institutional events as synonymous with re-birth in their natal links to Arendtian action. Like the act of promise that initiates an institution and outlines what it will return to the world, birth satisfies the preconditions for action by establishing a spectacular point of intersection with nature's cyclical rule of return. In this way, the child appears as a metaphor through/of that which his or her birth returns to the world, comparable to a cyclical structure analogous with nature's own rule - the *noēsis noēseōs* of thought in its metaphorical outcomes.

Keywords

Merleau-Ponty, Hannah Arendt, Phenomenology, Natality, Birth, Institution, Flesh, *Inter Esse*, Metaphor

Epigraph

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?

From *The Second Coming*
-W. B. Yeats

To my family, especially “mom”

Acknowledgments

I would first and foremost like to acknowledge my supervisor Dr. Antonio Calcagno for his continued support in the writing of this thesis. His suggested sources, rich understanding of the texts and general guidance are deeply appreciated. This project would not have materialized without his support. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Sharon Sliwinski for initially taking me on in a supervisory role, for recommending a number of useful readings and for agreeing to sit through some lengthy meetings. I would also like to mention some fellow students and friends – Galen Crout, Drew Desai, Kate Lawless, and David Janzen – who were kind enough to look at sections of my work and speak about the material at length. Thanks to all of you for your help and support.

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Introduction

Despite different departures and aims, the works of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Hannah Arendt contain many intersections with implications for thinking temporality, visibility/invisibility, intersubjectivity, and natality. By merging our central authors within the first three of these categories, our ultimate aim will be a reformulated convergence of the last; towards their mutual co-supplementation in a genuine account of birth. Drawing on a homology between Merleau-Pontyan *flesh* and Arendtian *inter esse*, the borne will show birth to be institutional (the continuation of a historically contingent sensibility) insofar as the event/advent exposes an interiority of time. Inversely, an institutional event/sequel will be shown as synonymous with re-birth whereby satisfying Arendt's notion of action in its links to natality, grants a glimpse at *physis* – nature, understood as the normally invisible appearing in the midst of the visibility as a natal “miracle” of the birth of being.¹

The first two chapters of this thesis will establish the major relevant concepts of Merleau-Ponty and Arendt. This foundation will put us in a position to link the outlined notions of Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* and Arendt's *inter esse* as both bespeaking of a fruitful dialectical relationship wherein the new is born by making its visible appearance. This advent of the visible is made possible in differentiation from an implied invisibility which for both authors determines a connection between nature and temporality; nature as

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ed. James M. Edie, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes From the Collège de France* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 7. Hereafter IP.

Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 246. Hereafter HC

related to the appearance of the visible as grounded upon the temporal implication within the invisible.

The first chapter develops a chronological understanding of Merleau-Ponty's thought, threading through its movement involved natal implications. This chronological account includes a rejection of the *tacit cogito* in its natal analogy and formulation for the *synergetic body* in its relation to *flesh* and *institution*. By virtue of a reversibility upon itself from within the world, the synergetic body demonstrates its very corporeality as informed by, extending into, and perpetuating *flesh* – a barely effable threshold as the exemplar sensible of a sensibility (cultural, mythological, ideological, and otherwise). In this way *flesh* will be comparable to the only plausible metaphor for Arendt's thinking ego in its sheer activity – as the very conditioned sensation of being alive.

The present, opened through the generated chiasm between reversible body and world reveals engendered fields and normally invisible routes dormant within *flesh* itself. It is these opened fields and routes followed out which allows for a kind of perpetuating intercourse between others with their synergetic bodies and what Merleau-Ponty calls *institutions*. Specifically, institutional sequels will be demonstrated as moments whereby *flesh* can appear in making visible the constitutive invisible temporality contained in the now. Comparable to what Arendt outlines as appearing *physis* (the invisible in the midst of the visible and the totality of all things), these events are witnessed by a *Rückgestaltung* effected between body (or bodies) and reflection which fissures *flesh* in its very temporality to reveal a temporal index proper to the time that is – the institutional *Stiftung* as a chiasm whereby a past and present are made visibly *Ineinander*, enveloping-enveloped. Charged as they are, such institutional sequels will be those “events in an

experience which endow the experience with durable dimensions...which deposit a sense in me...as the call to follow, the demand of a future.” (IP x) As we will show in our third chapter, it is an intercourse between synergetic bodies, the intermingling of our *flesh* as the cause of institutional re-birth, demonstrated as synonymous with the emergence of nature anew or the birth of being at revealed *physis*.

In our second chapter, we will have the opportunity to work towards a supplementation of Merleau-Ponty’s natal thread, abandoned with the *tacit cogito* in its natal formulation, towards a vague and unspecified reformulation already suggested in the shift towards *flesh* and *institution*. Here, Arendt direct reflections on natality in its relationship to action will prove invaluable insofar as the latter’s outlined preconditions remind us that of all human activities “action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality.” (HC 9) In this way our second chapter will establish the *inter esse* as the well-spring of dynamic possibility between persons.² The *inter esse* will be precisely that location where aimed action delays an otherwise mortal trajectory by intersecting with nature’s eternal cycle in the advent of the new; an instance of revealed *physis* to be expanded within the cycling *noēsis noēseōs* of the thinking ego. It is the deep temporal structure exposed within the *noēsis noēseōs* which makes its metaphorical re-turn a tangent whereby nature itself, as what is between persons, is reconfigured in its appearance as the new.

² In following the philosophic tradition, Arendt speaks of the *inter esse* as the in-between of men or that which is between men. For our purposes, use of “men” would expose a limit and an insensitivity when considering, as we will, the act of giving birth. In other words, to say the birth of a child happens “between men” is more than just inaccurate. We further do not wish to limit the emergence of the new beyond the birth of children to men alone. In some instances we have attempted to stay close to Arendt’s language, but for the reasons just mentioned have in those cases which are not direct quotes changed “man” or “men” to persons or some other variant.

In our final chapter, we will make commensurate *flesh* and *inter esse*. Initially it will be Arendt's continual emphasis on the appearance of *physis*, situated in its own institutional expansion within the *noēsis noēseōs* of contemplated Being, that we link with Merleau-Ponty's passing reflections on nature. This puts our author's on a common term inherently institutional/indicative of our having been conditioned, while locating the *Stiftung* of appearing *physis*, an institution in sequel, and visibility. Our major convergence will follow wherein the outlined temporal invisibility of *flesh*, necessary for perception and institutional sequel, is demonstrated as convergent with the since shifted and metaphorically returned point of cyclical completion found in Arendt; from that normally invisible *physis* made visible by action's intersection and natal outcome with the cyclicity of nature, to the invisibility of the thinking in its cyclical, mnemonic, and visible return as a metaphor indicative of the birth of being in the present which appears "like a miracle." (HC 246) Solidified by commensurate invisibilities in their intimate relationships to temporality as contingent for the visible (as nature and the emergence of the new), the link between the asymmetrical sequel of institution, to the re-cycling of mnemonic metaphors from the life of the mind equates both *flesh* and *inter esse* as conditions for the institution of our nature and the *inter esse* itself.

Having made commensurate *flesh* and *inter esse*, the third chapter will outline an exposed and shared temporal absence of the present between our central authors necessary for our reformulation of birth; for Merleau-Ponty, a "quasi-eternity" of lived instants between times exchanged and the eternity of the *nunc stans* as taken up by Arendt. Reflection on their shared temporal structure yields a shared sense of divergence or decentering indicative of the present as being a certain absence.

Finally, it is within these commensurate temporal structures and absences that we explicate the mechanisms for institutional sequel, an enigma kept in reserve giving impetus for the rebirth of institution and inversely demonstrating birth as institutional. In this way, both birth and institution will *harbor* miraculous newness. This will be explicated through the example of an institution of love begun by the initial action of promise - that which will perpetuate the institution itself. This example allows us to directly take up the birth of a child. Indeed, birth, like a promise in what it returns to the world, will be shown as satisfying the preconditions for action - that human activity linked to natality by intersecting with nature in its cyclical processes outlining the child as a kind of returned metaphor comparable to analogous cyclical return within *noēsis noēseōs* of thought.

Because birth necessarily occurs in plurality, emerges from in-between persons, and commences the disclosure to the question of ‘who?’, birth will be seen as aimed at and an upsurge within the *inter esse* or a passing into *flesh*, bearing the former’s peculiar structure of dissemination; like one’s “who” witnessed only by others, birth is paradoxically one’s and yet never an event witnessed in their life, an invisible origin that is never fully appropriable. In addition to being an action, this birth will qualify as an institutional sequel, simultaneously decentering the established institution which the borne is equally inaugurated within. This inauguration as the entrance of the new is an institutional event insofar as its overcoming preserves yet reconfigures the invisibility prior to its very advent.

The invisibility of our origin and birth will be foundational for all subsequent invisibilities involved in the reckoning with our differentiated and unfolding visible

present. Thus, we conclude, that by virtue of a kind of recession of invisibility, birth as the flesh from which we pass, commensurate with an instance of *physis* or institutional sequel, is always the unfolding into the Merleau-Pontyan *flesh* of those others whose appearance in *ek-stasis* was like a lifelong preparation for our arrival.

Chapter One: Merleau-Ponty

1:1 *Body and World on the Way to Meaning: Tacit Cogito*

A person appeared to him in his sleep, and saluting him by his name, said “Caedmon, sing some song to me.”...”What shall I sing?” he rejoined. “Sing the beginning of created beings,” said the other. Hereupon he presently began to sing verses to the praise of God, which he had never heard...He sang the creation of the world, the origins of man, and all the history of Genesis...

-St. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*³

In our first chapter, we will begin a brief chronological explication of Merleau-Ponty’s thought beginning with the introduction of the *tacit cogito*, “myself [silently] experienced by myself” under the “chatter of words.”⁴ In its attempt to bridge a body/mind divide that the Cartesian ontology grossly parsed in misrepresentation of its own sensorial experience, and in its simultaneous attempt to reconcile our direct experience with the world and meaningful transaction with others, the *tacit cogito* points towards the precarious threshold indicating the entrance of the new in its natal formulation: “the infant at its first breath.” (PhP 470) Brought new into the world at this continued “first breath” is the possibility of meaningful speech from silent signification, an expression born from the depths of a body loaded in spatio-temporal anteriority, cradled within one’s silent perceptual stand and a silence of consciousness embracing the world of speech in which “words first receive form and meaning.” (PhP 469)

³ St. Bede, trans. L.C. Jane, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, (New York, NY: Everyman’s Library, 1978).

⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, trans. Colin Smith, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (New York, NY: Routledge Classics, 2002), 469. Hereafter PhP.

Insofar as the silent embrace of the *tacit cogito* is the continued mediator between incarnated body-world and speech, every subsequent expression signals a “being born again” such that the continually pregnant present in its spatio-temporal acquisition brought to term “is irreducible and the arrival of every moment changes its predecessor.” (PhP 457/469) This configuration is meant to confirm the time that is, the body/world co-incarnation, and thought in a mutual punctuality of the now. In its natal implications as “the infant at its first breath,” birth is the spontaneous interruption of the new; the spontaneous entrance of someone who was nothing to a newly delivered significance as consciousness’ confirmation of the world in a full plenitude over-against which its entrance stands. (PhP 470) Conceptually, this birth is an “openness of a future, from a background of non-being from which what was projects itself” such that it “arises from nothing.” (IP 8) The *tacit cogito* along with such a formulation of birth will for reasons explored be abandoned.

Through the celebrated chapter *The Body as Expression, and Speech* we are invited to follow that strategic “double refusal” so characteristic of Merleau-Ponty in his critical engagements with text: refuting either of two seemingly unavoidable philosophical choices to assess the remainder as a starting point or position for further thought.⁵ With this technique’s employment in tackling the problems inherent in both modern empiricism and intellectualism, we find both schools are refuted by demonstrating one as merely the mirror of the other, that both require their reflected counterpart for foundation,

⁵ This strategic ‘double refutation’ was first brought to my attention by the works of Robert Vallier whose commentary on Merleau-Ponty has proved invaluable. In particular his essay *Institution: The Significance of Merleau-Ponty’s 1954 Course at the Collège de France*. See specifically: Robert Vallier, *Institution: The Significance of Merleau-Ponty’s 1954 Course at the Collège de France*, in *Chiasmi International Vol. 7: Life and Individuation*, ed. Renaud Barbaras, Mauro Carbone, Helen A. Fielding, Leonard A. Lawlor, (Memphis, TN: Clinamen Press, 2005), 282. Hereafter RVI.

and finally, that both subjected to the same criticism are “not solved by going from one extreme to the other.” (PhP 205)

The empirical and intellectual accounts of meaning are “one in holding that the word *has* no significance.” (PhP 205) They deny engagement as a speaking agent and ultimately agency itself. The empiricist offering a mechanics of neurological stimuli or psychological association triggering speech as an effect, renders the spoken response impotent as the bearer its own meaning, leaves it and the speaking subject no “inner power” and presumes a possibility of meaning’s unequivocal mapping within a given order of scientific causality. (PhP 205) The intellectualist philosophy differs little wherein one “duplicate[s] denomination with a categorial operation.” (PhP 205) The word is left lame, being only an external sign of an internal recognition. Here, “[i]t is not without meaning, since behind it there is a categorial operation, but this meaning is something which it does not *have*...the word remaining an empty container.” (PhP 205) As Merleau-Ponty concludes, “In the first...we are on this side of the word as meaningful; in the second we are beyond it. In the first there is nobody to speak; in the second, there is certainly a subject, but a thinking one, not a speaking one.” (PhP 205)

It follows that both schools of thinking lead into a relativism that their sciences hoped to circumvent. The empirical thinker apprehends others in their speech-acts as causal effects, leaving them caught in a machine like mechanism. The intellectualist, assuming a coincidental quality between him, his ultimate interiority, and his meaning fails to empower either himself or any subject with the means necessary to guarantee contact with others or the openness onto which perception dawns. From subjective

isolation, he is left to assume a monopoly on meaning that constructs the way of the world in solipsistic projections.

The solipsism of our isolated intellectualist becomes equally true of his empiricist counterpart when their limits reveal the two as interchangeable. The empiricist, considering his body as subjected to his own suggested mechanistic causality makes untenable his own explanation, leaving unaccountable his transcendent capacity which allows him to speak “from the outside” of the implied causal order. Hence, the transcendental mark of intellectualism. The intellectualist becomes equally indistinguishable from the empiricist: “Once the categorial operation is performed, the appearance of the word...has to be explained...by recourse to a physiological or psychic mechanism, since the word is a passive shell” marking the intellectualist’s dependency on empiricism. (PhP 208)

The failure of empiricism and intellectualism as demonstrated by this analysis indicates that both are overcome by affirming what they deny, that the word has a meaning and speech a *gestural sense*. As remainder and starting point for further thought, sense is induced by the words spoken, whose “... conceptual meaning must be formed by a kind of deduction from [the] gestural meaning, which is immanent in speech.” (PhP 208) By following this reduction, we have been taken from “higher altitude thinking” of a theoretical gaze to an experiencing subject that finds him or herself “in a situation” that is meaningful. (PhP 475)

This reduction from a theoretical approach to speech to encountering meaning its very lived situation is perhaps best illustrated by John Berger’s example of progressing

sketch, having begun as a white page whose progressive genesis and cumulative internal reference involves moments of “confirmation or denial [which] bring you closer to the object, until finally you are, as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer marking the edge of what you have seen, but the edge of what you have become.”⁶ Listen now to Merleau-Ponty reflect on the same act: “We have seen that what occurs is clearly not a purely manual operation, the actual movement of my hand and pen over the paper...” The drawing is “a gesture...the lines drawn are the outward expression of an intention...which is for me a set of lines with a certain orientation.” (PhP 449) It is in the act of drawing that one places themselves at a point from where potential trajectories can begin to come into view. By following up on one’s initial orientation (which is not the steady-handed tracing of a figure presented to the mind’s eye) one anticipates the course that their pen must take. It is because the figure from the outset is a dynamic possibility that, “...enables the conclusion to be reached...[the conclusion] not really contained in the essence of the triangle, but merely possible when that essence serves as a starting point.” (PhP 447) There is a coincidental relationship between one and one’s perception-of as the punctuation of now in all its dynamic possibility. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty’s reduction bring us to a beginning analogous with Berger’s “what you have become”, that becoming already involved in a preemptive essence and not merely a being as a “thing seen.”

That this link suggests that one is coincidental with one’s perception-of as the punctuation of what is now in its dynamic possibility does not quite fully answer the

⁶ John Berger, “Drawing” in *Selected Essays*, (New York, NY: Vintage International, 2002), 10.

riddle. What it does suggest is that “our hold on the world” in perceptual intentionality is equivocal with “the world’s hold on us” in a shared mutuality. If now the question concerns the intersection of these mutual “holds”, the analysis has arrived at the point of contact between them as the abode of perception that qualifies being “in a situation” – the “living body.” (PhP 87) “I cannot understand the function of the living body except by enacting it myself, and except in so far as I am a body which rises towards the world.” (PhP 87)

If indeed meaning is accessible and the world open, it can be only by mutually opening on one’s corporeality in the world: “If the subject is in a situation, even if he is no more than a possibility of situations, this is because he forces his ipseity into reality only by actually being a body, and entering the world through that body.” (PhP 475) Within this structure, an initial expressive movement links-up to farther points and reliefs to which one tends along its expressive trajectory, is confirmed within the sensation of its very movement, and is understood by the corresponding spatiality, attitude, and “posturing” of one’s body as the grounds for its very arch.

As impetus for an act then, there is thus, the movements of our body prior to movement initiated in the expressive moment itself, a carried over spatial anteriority engaged in and brought to bear in perceptual experience as the outcome of our reckoning with the world; Kant’s hypothesized “motion that generates space.” (PhP 450) Epistemologically speaking, that one retains the capacity to employ or carry through within lived situations such outwardly expressive intention/movement can solely be based on the activation of a retentional and anticipatory quality with which one’s body is endowed.

Indeed, a constituting consciousness could never completely synthesize a course or object at which its trajectory is aimed. An object is not a judgment whereby I link together successive perspectives unto completion. Insofar as each individual aspect given to consciousness requires accountability within its own synthesis - a process further divided unto infinity - constituting consciousness precludes the possibility of synthesis before it even begins. Perception of an object is given, concordant with my body's perspectival stance, "aspects intended but not possessed in the present perception...kept in reserve."⁷ For "...if each six sides of a transparent cube were visible as square, it is not a cube we would be seeing." (SB 218) This would be a point of view presupposing that perspectives in simultaneity - "a pure contradiction in terms." (SB 212) Thus, a synthesis of the unseen sides, of an object's "concordant phenomena", is not an incomprehensible synthesis performed by constituting consciousness, but is "the formula of an attitude, a certain modality of my hold on the world..." like the dynamic possibility of the geometric shape that my body with pen in hand is about to exploit through an anteriority it carries forward and makes good on. (PhP 449) In its behavior, the body links such "concordant phenomena" - "logical significations bound up with my actual perceptions on valid 'grounds'" - giving the "index of the real existence" and real possibility. (PhP 449) The body is endowed; not an "I think" but opened bodily powers as an "I can" in the situation before me:

The part played by the body in memory is comprehensible only if memory is, not only the constituting consciousness of the past, but an effort to reopen time on the basis of the implications contained in the present, and if the body, as our permanent means of 'taking up attitudes' and thus constructing

⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour* (New York, NY: Beacon Press, 1963), 212. Hereafter SB.

pseudo-presents, is the medium of our communication with time as well as with space. (PhP 210)

There is a link then, established between the body's spatial anteriority with *the time that it was*, a temporal anteriority with which the body is equally endowed. It is a history I have and future this history opens in possibility in its perceptual and experiential outcome in confrontation with the world. It is a temporal richness accounting for perception that provides me with a "perceptual faith" of the world in accumulating spatio-temporal structures. Body and object mirror one another to become "the same in kind as each other." (PhP 305/215) One is "involved with things with [their] body" and they "co-exist" as "incarnate subject": (PhP 215)

I arrive at an *eidos*: it is because I perform the synthesis of the new property by means of my body which immediately implants me in space, while its autonomous motion enables me, through a series of definite procedures, to arrive once more at an all-inclusive view of space...[I]t is from the world of perception that I borrow the notion of essence. (PhP 452)

Thus, "[t]he identity of the thing through perceptual experience is only another aspect of the identity of one's own body through exploratory movements." (PhP 215) As a perceptual intersection the body finds itself involved in an "existential system of exchanges and 'equivalences'" wherein I perceive the world and tacitly, my body's alignment towards it.⁸ It is by this body that I encounter myself, the body I am, and object in combined full plenitude; their relationship to one another through my very assessment of their arrangement insofar as I am in equivalency with the perception from which it arises: "to the extent that it [our body] is inseparable from a view of the world

⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ed. John Wild, *Signs* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 176. Hereafter Signs.

and is that view itself brought into existence, is the condition of possibility...of all expressive operation and all acquired views which constitute the cultural world.” (PhP 452) Perception arises between my comportment and the world it addresses held in a mutuality, the world inhabiting us as we do it: “inside...[as] the edge of what you have become.”⁹ Hence, I am able to think the world as the world is able to, as Cézanne said, “think itself in me.”¹⁰ It is in this silent intersection wherein “the act by which I lend myself to the spectacle...is recognized as irreducible to anything else,” and from where expression takes flight that we begin to glimpse the *tacit cogito*. (PhP 216)

Now touching on the *tacit cogito* and concerning the problem of meaning, we note that neither body nor world think and speak. Thus far our analysis has affirmed a communicative system of incarnate equivalencies between a body and object, (“...the identity of the thing through perceptual experience [being]...only another aspect of the identity of one’s own body...”) affirmed by a body’s part played in memory as “the medium of communication with time as well as space.” (PhP 210) Left unexplained by this analysis is the linguistic identity of objects given not to a body, but mediated by this silent intersection between them. To put the question in Merleau-Ponty’s own words: “The problem is how I can be the constituting agent of my thought in general...since I never see them come into being in the full light of day, but merely know myself through them.” (PhP 446) In order to account for consciousness, Merleau-Ponty concedes and

⁹ John Berger, “Drawing” in *Selected Essays*, (New York, NY: Vintage International, 2002), 10.

¹⁰ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 17. Hereafter SNS

affirms “beneath the chatter of words, [a] primordial silence” from which words find their very source. (PhP 214)

This is commensurate with the above analysis of both empiricism and intellectualism: to speak or understand cannot be to translate or decipher a pure ideal language implicit in oneself or others. Analogous to the problem of conscious synthesis, if one had to translate “pure” thought from its own order into speech, one would never be able to speak, all attempts encountering only more “empty containers” who are in turn need of translation. Thought without speech would fall into oblivion before being thought itself and thus the word must be “present with no other consciousness behind it to grasp at its being.” (PhP 493) Thus, if the affirmed gestural sense is necessary for the deduction of “conceptual meaning” implied in the spoken word, it can only be so if the word echoes “the external existence of the sense”. (PhP 211) In their mutual inter-anticipation, thought (never pure), and speech (never without thought), must aim to “transform a certain kind of silence into speech.” (PhP 214)

With the bridge between the existential equivalents of body and world unclear, Merleau-Ponty is forced to concede that language itself, “presupposes nothing less than a consciousness of language, a silence of consciousness embracing the world of speech in which words first receive a form and meaning...” (PhP 469) Thus, we arrive at the *tacit cogito*, “myself experienced by myself” under the “chatter of words” in silence. (PhP 469) It is the glimpse one catches of oneself independently of any particular act, independently of any words spoken. It is not the cogito in its spoken form. It is rather a “silent cogito [as] the one Descartes sought when writing his *Meditations*.” (PhP 468)

Behind the spoken cogito...there lies a tacit cogito, myself experienced by myself. But this subjectivity, indeclinable, has upon itself and upon the world only a precarious hold. It does not constitute the world, it divines the world's presence round about it as a field not provided by itself; not does it constitute the word, but speaks as we *sing* when we are happy... (PhP 469)

Not quite body and not yet spoken, this "I see that I see", functions to translate the passive mute end of bodily synthesis and the expressive gesture that takes off from this orientation. And thus we return to our section's opening example: Caedmon when called upon in his passive sleep by an apparition sang "the creation of the world, the origins of man, and the history of all Genesis."¹¹ And Caedmon was left astounded and in awe at the verses and praise from his own mouth and body which he had never heard. Sartre is correct to say that speaking "teaches us...our own thought" but only if we only lend ourselves to this precarious dawning, this silence of consciousness embracing the world of speech, this "inarticulate grasp on the world, like that of the infant at its first breath..." (Signs 17/PhP 470)

It is here with the advent of the *tacit cogito* that we are introduced to our first natal analogy for the coming to terms of meaning an embodied life: "...that of the infant at its first breath." (PhP 470) Aligned with spontaneous interruption of the *tacit cogito*, birth is suggested as the entrance of someone who was not there, who was nothing, to a newly delivered significance as consciousness' confirmation of the world over-against which their entrance stands.

¹¹ St. Bede, Trans. L.C. Jane, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, (New York, NY: Everyman's Library, 1978).

1:2 Rejection of the Tacit Cogito Towards Flesh and Institution

From within a dream, Caedmon answered a call with question and then miraculously sang. His hymn echoed the creation of the world, the origin of man, and the history of all Genesis. He sang “the sense but not the words as he sang them in his sleep; for verses, though never so well composed, cannot be literally translated out of one language into another.”¹² If the language of his dreams and the language of his waking world “cannot be literally translated” nor could we add could the divine request. We begin then, by noting that the oneiric calling is comparable to the experience of the tacit cogito, an awakening to a gestural sense called for from a certain silence found beneath that “chatter of words.” (PhP 214)

Upon waking Caedmon informed his brothers at the Streaneshalch monastery of his visitation: “They all concluded that heavenly grace had been conferred on him by our Lord.”¹³ We are invited to preemptively introduce Arendt here as she reminds us that the spontaneous nature of thought is probably “the aboriginal source of our notion of spirituality in itself.”¹⁴ It was indeed such a thinking capacity towards Self-conferral, crossing a certain threshold that Kant confessed as the reason for proof of a transcendental “in-itself” order and subsequent appearance towards a two-world theory: “in the consciousness of myself in the sheer thinking activity, I am the thing itself

¹² St. Bede, Trans. L.C. Jane, *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* (New York, NY: Everyman’s Library, 1978), 207.

¹³ *Ibid.* 207.

¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York, NY: Harcourt Inc., 1977), 44. Hereafter LM

although nothing of myself is thereby given for thought.”¹⁵ Hence, Kant sought to understand the limitations of our reason and senses between parallel orders of the Noumenal as what cannot appear but causes the latter phenomenal order of appearances: “The thinking ego is indeed Kant’s ‘thing in itself’: it does not appear to others and, unlike the self of self-awareness, it does not appear to itself, and yet it is ‘not nothing.’” (LM 42)

Note the similarities between the *tacit cogito* and thinking ego, mediating an entrance or passage between two mutually exclusive orders that their very advent divide. For commensurate with the *tacit cogito* and Kant’s self-concealing self-representation with the orders it implies, is that this sudden crossing from an invisible process, dealing in invisibilities, can only be described by examples of metaphor latent to the crossing itself. This is why Kant tells us that “nothing of myself is thereby given for thought” indicating self directed intentionality as the reception of representation, a metaphorical appearance caused by its concealed grounds.¹⁶ According to Arendt:

...the chief difficulty here seems to be that for thinking itself – whose language is entirely metaphorical and whose conceptual framework depends entirely on the gift of metaphor, which bridges the gulf between the visible and invisible, the world of appearances and the thinking ego - there exists no metaphor that could plausibly illuminate this special activity of the mind, in which something invisible within us deals with the invisibles of the world. All difficulties drawn from the senses will lead us into difficulties for the simple reason that all our senses are essentially cognitive, hence, if understood as activities, have an end outside themselves; they are...instruments enabling us to know and deal with the world. (LM 123)

¹⁵ Immanuel Kant, Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1963), B429

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant, Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1963), B429

If indeed, “in the consciousness of myself in the sheer thinking activity, I am the thing itself although nothing of myself is thereby given for thought” we follow our analogy by saying that in the consciousness of the *tacit cogito*, it is the purported experience itself although nothing of the experience it purports is thereby given by its intended formulation with which it is charged the task of making possible. Like Kant’s thinking ego, any intentional act towards the *tacit cogito* results in the concealment and subsequent reception of metaphorical representation of that very experience which caused its appearance: “What I call the tacit cogito is impossible. To have the idea of ‘thinking’ (in the sense of the ‘thought of seeing and feeling’), to make the ‘reduction,’ to return to immanence and to the consciousness of...it is necessary to have words.”¹⁷

Indeed, words need be presupposed. Having been outlined as that silent cradle of consciousness from “which words first receive a form and meaning...” the *tacit cogito* remains charged with the task of mediating the mute synthesis between body and world to the level of a language which must already be established. (PhP 469) Analogous then, with “...consciousness...seen as the peak of an iceberg, a mere indication of the floating mass of unconsciousness beneath it” the *tacit cogito* is unable to be demonstrated in its own terms: “the moment a fragment of unconsciousness reaches the peak of the iceberg it has become conscious and lost all the properties of its alleged origin.” (LM 113) Likewise, the *tacit cogito* as pre-linguistic mediator is betrayed in its explicit formulation having lost “properties of its alleged origin” distributed in the language it is meant to explain and unable to account for itself as the mediator from silence to speech. (LM 113)

¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ed. John Wild, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 171. Hereafter VI

Hence: “[t]he tacit cogito should make understood how language is not impossible, but cannot make understood how it is possible – There remains the problem of the passage from the perceptual meaning to the language meaning, from behavior to thematization.” (VI 175) In the intending of the *tacit cogito*, it not only loses all properties of its alleged silent origin, it preemptively precludes its very function in the linguistic body it finds itself formulated in.

It is from this first negative touchstone of foundational truth at home in the *I see that I see* that makes the tacit source for speech impossible to explicate without an infidelity to its purported function. The “truth” of perception is not only ineffable by definition but precludes the possibility of definition. It is as though one is unable to both unable to “*see and grasp*” this truth, “like children trying to catch smoke by closing their hands.”¹⁸ Pursuit of a solution to this metaphysical quandary has oscillated in the philosophic tradition between metaphors of sight and hearing (Job 42:5, About God: “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth¹⁹) but found its final bastion in an example of the latter: “[I]n Heidegger the moment of illumination is understood as “lightning” (Blitz), and finally replaced by an altogether different metaphor...”the ringing sound of silence.”” (LM 122) Heidegger’s metaphor brings us closer insofar as hearing seems the other passive side of speech and cognition. But

¹⁸ Henri Bergson, Trans. T.E. Hulme, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 1999), 45.

¹⁹ Or see this tension as noted by Artemidorus in speaking on the interpretation of dreams: “To have ears in one’s eyes signifies that one will go deaf and that the information usually received by the ears will have to come to one through the eyes. To have eyes in one’s ears signifies that one will go blind and that the information usually received by the eyes will have to come to one through the ears.” Artemidorus, Trans. Robert J. White, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (New York, NY: Original Books Inc., 1990), 40.

hearing as the idea of pure passivity will always remain in opposition with the sheer act of thinking (“the silent dialogue of me with myself”). (LM 122)

Thus, whereas the thinking ego led Kant into reckoning assumed parallel orders, the *tacit cogito* despite its return to the world is no different. The body in its mute synthesis of those aforementioned “concordant phenomena...(aspects intended but not possessed in the present perception)...” demonstrated that the past is not declinable nor over; its presence in the present as bodily habit such that “the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past’s awareness of itself cannot show.”²⁰ (SB 212) As I move towards the world, carried with me, like a thread through a needle are those instantaneous cross-sections of my times previously passed through towards their integration within the silent perceptual present as the confrontation of being and myself. And indeed, this “affecting of self by self” solicit us deeper into accumulating spatio-temporal thickness of our mutual unfolding relationship with the identity of the object or world such that the present in its temporal acquisition is irreducible and the arrival of every moment changes its predecessors.”²¹ (PhP 494/457)

Yet, this outcome occurs only when the body “catches itself from the outside in a *cognitive process*...[that] initiates a ‘kind of reflection’”, the *tacit cogito* receiving only the end of this mute synthesis, the object is “perceived as a residue” rather than in its “ontological originality.” (PhP 107/RVI 284) That the continually pregnant present in its

²⁰ T.S. Eliot T.S., *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, (New York, NY: Harcourt, 1975), 39.

²¹ Jean-Paul Sartre, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes, *Being and Nothingness* (New York, NY: Washington Square Press, 1992), 58.

spatio-temporal acquisition brought to expression was “irreducible [such that] the arrival of every moment changes its predecessor” was the confirmation that the time that is - body/world and thought - were pushed up in a monopolized punctuality of the now. (PhP 457) Yet this read carnal immediacy “undercuts the punctuality of the cogito, which we saw as fundamental to it.”²²

Distributed it in the language it is meant to explain, the problem stems from a philosophic formulation beginning with “consciousness of-“ conceived of as an empty and relative consciousness as prior to consciousness itself - “entirely outside itself by exactly coextensive with being.” (IP 5) Indeed, “[e]xistentially speaking, Parmenides was wrong when he said that only Being manifests itself in, and is the same as, thinking. Non-being is also thinkable if the will commands the mind...and nothingness becomes a full substitute for reality.” (LM 157) The *tacit cogito* as the thought of seeing and feeling is precisely this fallacious importation of what is otherwise an absence in the full positivity of conceptual thought. As such, as the idea of thinking, the *tacit cogito* as pre-linguistic mediator is, to reiterate, betrayed in its explicit formulation having lost not only “properties of its alleged origin” but likewise a precluding on the very function to which it purports. (LM 113)

Thus, we run the risk of describing badly if our positing of a *tacit cogito* as the thought of seeing in its very absence leads us to admit a “subjective component’...[that] comes to cover over the things themselves: it is not a matter of another layer or veil that

²² Felix Ó Murchadha, “Being Alive: The Places of Life in Merleau-Ponty and Descartes” in *Chiasmi International Vol. 7: Life and Individuation*, ed. Renaud Barbaras, Mauro Carbone, Helen A. Fielding, Leonard A. Lawlor, (Memphis, TN: Clinamen Press, 2005), 216. Hereafter BA.

would have come to pose itself between them [the world and others] and me.”²³ Such a subjective component does not quite abort the spontaneity of birth, but makes it such that the borne never truly leaves the womb of solipsistic projections. Like the received representation of the *tacit cogito* that conceals its very experienced source, to have the idea of our birth gives only a metaphorical representation within words that were not available at the event itself – an event that is in fact not an event in our lives. In this projected womb, like the intellectualist caught in his interiorized categorical operations, there can be “no truth, nor falsity” to the certain silence as an infant’s first breath. It is assumed “as soon as it [the birth from silence] is felt, it is true. And it is never true as conformity to nature or to a destiny.”²⁴ In other words, it is free in the sense of lacking all contingencies by which to orient it or to explain its freedom.

Rather, we should “not thinking it [the negative] as negative if we treat it as an ‘object of thought’ or try to say *what it is*: that is to make of it a more subtle or more rarefied species of being, it is to reintegrate it into being.” (VI 6) Merleau-Ponty remarks, “It is the naiveté that rends itself sunder in the night. Between Being in itself and the ‘interior life’ it does not even catch sight of the *problem of the world*. Whereas it is toward that problem that we are making our way.” (VI 6) And it is here that we leave our first natal analogy of the *tacit cogito* towards the means for a reformulation of birth.

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²³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ed. John Wild, Trans. Alphonso Lingis, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 7. Hereafter VI

²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Trans. Robert Vallier, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), 28. Hereafter NA

Insofar as we saw a punctuality to the cogito undercut, a punctuation that was fundamental to it, a notion was needed that would remain faithful to “the interplay of presence and absence as prior to those apparently constitutive elements”, a notion that would not put speech over a silence its very words break and would not put reflection over against an unthinkable unreflected. (BA 212) This subsequent introduction was *flesh*: “...not a concept...barely even a word or notion,” a barely effable threshold as the exemplar sensible of sensibility as comparable to the very conditioned sensation of being alive.²⁵ It is an “interiorly worked-over man, [that] has no name in philosophy” but is rather the unconscious conditions from which we think, act, and speak as sedimented in their temporality and carried through to the time that is.

Flesh, then, is not latent or prior to our body but located in its very accomplishments: “The flesh is the body inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch – the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing.” (VI Iiv) It is an anchor for our body then, a body that accomplishes this very sensibility in a reversibility upon itself opening to the perceptual *fields* it harbors within. Something opened and moved through, “...to designate it [*flesh*] we should need the old term ‘element’...in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being.” (VI 139) Thus, *flesh* is that which bodies both institute and perpetuate in their transitivity towards

²⁵ Dennis T. O’Connor, ed. M.C. Dillon, “Reconstructive Time: Écart, Différance, Fundamental Obscurity” in *Écart & Différance: Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing* (New York, NY: Humanities Press, 1997) 156.

a horizon opened within the possibilities of *flesh*, a movement fed back into what is its temporal sedimentation of its being the exemplar sensible.

Of this body however, “one can indeed say [of my body] that is not *elsewhere*, but one cannot say that it is *here* or *now* in the sense that objects are.” (VI 147) As an elemental unconscious then “...my flesh as gangue of my perception has taught me that perception does not come to birth just anywhere, that it emerges in the recess of a body.” (VI 8)

This new “synergetic body” maintains anteriority as a recessional temporal index of its ontological registers, opened through solicitations of the world between which raises the *flesh*. We say then, of this “synergetic body” that it is the perpetuator of *flesh* insofar as it continually moves through its own recessional absence into the unfolding of the elemental latter by a performed reversibility in the world, ushering in perception of fields and perpetuated passageways harbored within *flesh's* expanding thickness (spatial, cultural, mythological, ideological, and as domains of knowledge).

It is this recessional index accessed by the synergetic body in a reversibility upon itself – a *Gestalt* the world invited by *Rückgestaltung* that results in “an openness upon a field of *Gestaltungen* – And this means that perception is unconscious.” (VI 189/243) This movement presents a halo of possibilities and possible fields into which with our bodies we might enter: “The lived body has an outstanding experience of the *Gestalt* because the system it sets up is arranged around a central axis, a hinge, which is openness to the *Gestalt* and at once a component of it. The subject holds sway over its lived body both as a system of actual positions and as ‘an open system of an infinite number of

equivalent positions directed to other ends.”²⁶ We are invited to think of Rilke’s Spanish dancer, who generating “her own fire” with solicited bodily gestures opens an inferno and decidedly steps through the flames to stamp the fire out.²⁷ Within the chiasm of reversible body and horizontally surrounding world *flesh* opens into fields that appear and transcend us; “the sensible world full of gaps, ellipses, allusions; objects are ‘physiognomies,’ ‘behaviour,’” and these resulting *Gestaltungen* means “...my whole unconscious perception at each moment is only the relation of a human action...” towards which my body is already being involved in a world that is being overcome. (IP 124)

To be sure, this movement of the *Rückgestaltung* is carried through into the movements of the fields opened within *flesh*. The spatial analogy of a field points us towards a horizon at its peripheral edge, orienting and outlining the field in its possibilities of visibility and movement. Indeed, the *Rückgestaltung* opens the field in its forever fleeting vanishing point, the zero degree of our visibility such that “the space *beyond* what is actually presented us is *still presented in experience*, already experienced by us.”²⁸ We have mentioned that perception is unconscious and is only insofar as “the space beyond” the horizon not only is still presented in experience as its invisible outline, is that upon which visibility is differentiated for space of the field, spatial and otherwise.

²⁶ Graciela Ralón De Walton, “Symbolic Matrices and the Institution of Meaning” in *Chiasmi International Vol. 9: Architecture and Other Institutions of Life*, ed. Barbaras, Renaud. Carbone, Mauro. Lawlor, Leonard. (Memphis, TN: University of Memphis Press, 2007), 115. Hereafter SMIM

²⁷ Rainer Maria Rilke, Trans. Susan Ranson and Marielle Sutherland, “Spanish Dancer” in *Selected Poems* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75. See Appendix A

²⁸ John Russon, “The Spatiality of Self-Consciousness: Original Passivity in Kant, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida” in *Chiasmi International 9: Architecture and Other Institutions of Life*, ed. Renaud Barbaras, Mauro Carbone, Leonard Lawlor (Memphis, TN: University of Memphis Press, 2007), 210. Hereafter JRI.

Like Cézanne's objects the horizon is a "contour...the ideal limit towards which the sides of the apple recede in depth" whereby the visible "subtly illuminated from within, [and] light emanates from it" by virtue of a peripheral swelling of colors leading into their indistinctness. (SNS 15/12)

But this indistinctness of the beyond, not forever concealed but still presented in and outlining experience itself is precisely *flesh* as the unconscious periphery between body and world. In the chiasm of the unconscious recessional index of our body in its ontological registers and the world, there exists a spatio-temporal quotient beyond visibility and constitutive of it, creating a "cohesion without concept" wherein time opens before our eyes in a differentiated vibration upon temporality, echoing "in the totality of the world", and harmonizing and inverting its accumulating contingencies as we make our way through the field it presents. The field then "straddles its future, has its future, its temporality..." and the "sensible thing" like our body "...is not *in* the here and *in* the now, but it is not intemporal and a-spatial either, an ideality. It presides over a region, it is a field being." (IP 8/VI 218) Both scene and object harbor inner and outer temporal horizons. Each bears their own epoch, touched upon at the horizontal vanishing point as a no-longer within the not-yet in *ek-stasis*, including times of the time that it is being enveloped-enveloping in our very movement: "[b]ackwards, gazing at a point in the distance, but moving away from it, walking straight into the unknown."²⁹

The time that is the field then, differentiated upon this temporal index makes it such that the field leads into a thickness from present to the past in a "[l]ateral kinship of

²⁹ Roberto Bolano, *Savage Detectives* (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2007), 7.

all the ‘nows.’” (IP 7) Likewise then, *Flesh* is “...immediate non-presence, but perspective understood as opening beyond, leading to it by its very thickness...” (IP 6) In this temporal sense, we have “access to another time on the basis of time” that is now. (IP xii) Listen to Goethe’s, when on a trip to Rome he noted that: “...such conditions make it difficult from the outset for the observer to decipher how Rome follows on Rome, and not only the new on the old, but also the various epochs within the old and new Rome on one another.”³⁰ Difficult, but not impossible, the *Rückgestaltung* of those imperceptible bearings differentiates the present in this richness between body and world made *flesh*, a visible foreground over-against a soliciting contingency of invisibility that informs us our possibility of movement: “Our time provides us with the resources of a communication with the past precisely when we do justice to its difference.” (IP xviii)

It is this *fleshy* element in its temporality then that the body and reflection never leave. The reversibility of experience and reflection open passageways within fleshly grounded fields provided by the those very curvatures between bodily perceived world and traversed by following them out. Our fields then are spatial, but also cultural; mythical, ideological, domains of knowledge by the invisible richness of the spatio-temporal horizon which outlines them in a presented not-yet as an indirect return to a no-longer. In this way, the perceived between body and world is an “ensemble of my body’s routes and not a multitude of spatio-temporal individuals” whereby ensembles of bodies can come together in their unconscious intercorporeality to comprise the elemental fleshly thickets of fields and those compressed routes to be demonstrated as institutional

³⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Trans. Robert R. Heitner, “Italian Journey” in *Goethe: The Collected Works* (New York, NY: Princeton University Press, 1994) 107.

via our passing through one another. (VI 247) Between co-anonymous bodies in their anteriority and soliciting world, *flesh* arises in their recesses, opens us “with the reversibility of the visible and the tangible” back onto our “intercorporeal being” as grounds for *flesh*; between myself and others through an unconscious reversibility within our bodily recesses, we share in, co-institute, and perpetuate the very *flesh* of which we are born. (VI 142)

This *unconscious* reversibility “always immanent and never realized in fact” (VI 147) sustains “both mute perception and the speech” that finally turns back in co-reversibility and “defines the flesh [that] exists in other *fields*.” (VI 147/155/144 Italics mine) Thus, the *flesh* between certain bodies as a kind of double entendre of an unconscious “one same body” opens towards various fields of the world, sourced in the horizontal beyond as the vanishing point already presented in experience of the field itself. And it is at this vanishing limit where synergetic bodies co-institute their very *flesh*: “For they are not fictions with which I might populate my world...but my twins or the flesh of my flesh. Certainly I do not live their lives...but that distance becomes a strange proximity as soon as one comes back to the perceptible world.” (Signs 15) The *flesh* then, announces itself silently, acutely and undeniably as different people, from different places, are united by its ineluctable force. Our encounters as arrangements of crises, traditions, and placements of material elements cuts through monadic cynicism.

Following *flesh's* very thickness of the spatial and temporal horizontal “beyond...still presented in experience” continually and institutionally confirms within each other that as *flesh* we are indeed both inside and outside ourselves rediscovered through each other and in that *flesh* we have left in the world. It is because our spatio-

temporal horizons are given within the differentiation of the field they open, where others in their anonymity and as my twins of *flesh* are equally both inside and outside of themselves. Hence, “man can create the alter ego which ‘thought’ cannot create because he is outside of himself in the world and because on *ek-stasis* is compossible with other *ek-stasis*.” (Signs 170) And finally, it is only by virtue of this chiasm of invisible recesses between us, between commensurable *ek-stases* stretching into the horizontal beyond as given, that as our temporal contingency allows us to understand one another, we understand Hölderlin’s assessment when he reminds that men “dwell near to one another on mountains farthest apart.”³¹ *Flesh* in its recesses as that which contingent for opened fields thus makes perception of things and each other, that which we need now explore, “man’s transitivity before the totality of what is, his displacement.”³²

³¹ John Llewelyn, ed. Andrew Benjamin, “On the Saying the Philosophy Begins in Thaumazein” in *Post-Structuralist Classics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 185.

³² *Ibid.* 186.

1:3 Perception, Institutional Sequel, and an Abandoned Analogy for Birth

I count the day when I entered Rome as my second natal day, a true rebirth...This rebirth, which is remolding me from within.

-Goethe, *Italian Journey*³³

Between the reversible synergetic body and the world, we located an opened field whereby the world could transcend and solicit us; a chiasm wherein an upsurge of flesh as the sensible exemplar outlined the horizon and grounds for possible mobility. It was a commensurate chiasm of invisible recesses and commensurable *ek-stases* between us as our temporal contingencies that allowed us to understand one another; to “dwell near to one another on mountains farthest apart” when anonymous synergetic bodies co-generate *flesh* through co-reversals upon one another in intercorporeality - the “*Ineinander* of the other in us and of us in them.”³⁴ We had suggested that perception arises out of figurations of sedimented *flesh* as “man’s transitivity before the totality of what is” and equally “his displacement.”³⁵ It is by outlining this “transitivity” and “displacement” that we come to understand perception anew as the differentiated outcome upon spatio-temporal invisibility and towards a definition of institution.

Specifically, institutional events or sequels will be shown to be those “events in an experience which endow the experience with a durable dimension”, that show the time

³³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Trans. Robert R. Heitner, “Italian Journey” in *Goethe: The Collected Work* (New York, NY: Princeton University Press, 1994), 109.

³⁴ John Llewelyn, ed. Andrew Benjamin, “On the Saying the Philosophy Begins in Thaumazein” in *Post-Structuralist Classics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 180.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 185.

that is to be “constitutive of a time that is properly temporal” by presenting “the index of an interiority of time” and indicating sequel insofar this “overdetermination” as a “relation of relations” already indicates having gone further. (IP x/VI 240) It will be this institutional moment in its “*ominal* sense” where events cannot be separated from one another, where older events appear and show themselves to be generators of the ones that followed, and the ones that followed showed themselves to bear the trace of those that came before. It will be these events that will direct us towards to our reconceptualization of genuine birth.

It was from the *flesh* as a spatio-temporal recess that we located a source for such “transitivity” and “differentiation”, insofar as committed to its recessional character it remains in “absence.” For *flesh* “...is not a concept; it is barely even a word or notion.”³⁶ Rather, in its absence, we find a “non-figurative inner framework” that opens soliciting transcendence as “always further on” like Cézanne’s swelling outlines or the curvature of a world. (SMIM 114) Opening and outcome of both spatial and temporal fields, *flesh* is thus a “plexus of sedimented meanings and the basis for the emergence of new meanings.” (SMIM 114) These meanings are those accumulated and to be recast. But this does not mean that the past remains truly behind me as I move through it as some predetermination: “The past not a ‘real’ fragment to be added to the present – *Nacheinander der Jetztpunkte*...[rather] implied therefore in the general powers of consciousness as the place of non-being. There must be a presence of the past which is absence...” (IP 193)

³⁶ Dennis T. O’Connor, ed. M.C. Dillon, “Reconstructive Time: Écart, Différance, Fundamental Obscurity” in *Écart & Différance: Merleau-Ponty and Derrida on Seeing and Writing* (New York, NY: Humanities Press, 1997) 156.

Thus, this “non-figurative inner framework” or “plexus of sedimented meanings” is an invisible “constellation wherein our future is read...” pushed up into the time that is now. (VI 180) The present punctuation of “red is what it is only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation...”³⁷ It is by virtue of a compression within its unconscious connections then, that such constellations operate in the manner of “symbolic” or “existential matrices.” As such the time that is in its very temporal differentiation is a coordinated constellation run through like a matrix, such that the perceptual output reconfigures the constellation itself. Thusly invited, we preemptively note “[t]ime is the very model of institution...but it is on time, the time that it is.” (IP 7)

As the “armature of that ‘invisible world’ which, with speech, begins to impregnate all the things we see...” the “symbolic” or “existential matrices provide us with our first and tentative definition of *institution*: “Institution in the strong sense...this symbolic matrix that results in the openness of a field, of a future according to certain dimensions, and from this result we have the possibility of a common adventure and of a history as consciousness.” (VI 80/IP13) Running the world through its recess anew, perception occurs through this constellatory transitivity and differentiated outcome as the present’s displacement.

³⁷ “The red dress a fortiori holds with all its fibers onto the fabric of the visible, and thereby onto a fabric of invisible beings. A punctuation in the field of red things, which includes the tiles of roof tops, the flags of gatekeepers and of the Revolution, certain terrains near Aix or Madagascar, it is also a punctuation in the field of red garments, which includes, along with the dresses of women, robes of professors, bishops, and advocate generals, and also in the field of adornments and that of uniforms...” (VI 132)

Reformulated then, perception is that which becomes differentiated upon these invisible symbolic matrices harbored within the overall absence of *flesh*, that sensible exemplar which we open in our very moving through. Perception in this movement comes to be to be exhibited along the invisible in dimensions, levels, in “the pilings of the world; we discover the world in degrees, in distance, in depth, and in difference.” (VI Iv) Differentiated along the invisible in mobility, perception is “an elemental event by which the *flesh* captures the lines of force of the world, brings itself up to the levels about which visibility is modulated and rises upright before vertical being.” (VI Iv) Arising out of unconscious *flesh* it is an “elemental alliance with the invisible light.” (VI Iv)

Specifically, the perceptible is a “crystallization” insofar as symbolic matrices run and reconfigure their course whereby the given is diffracted into multiple places of unconscious reflection, like multiple eyes shining back from a diamond. (VI 132) Like Cézanne’s apples, “[t]he unity of the thing...is that of a certain style, a certain manner of managing the domain of space and time over which it has competency, of pronouncing, of articulating that domain, of radiating about a wholly virtual center.” (VI 115) Hence, Cézanne’s objects subtly illuminated from within, and whose swells lead us on indirectly to a source never fully elucidated but open a traversable course never finalized: “Its light is never entirely in the present.” (IP 52) It is for this reason, being based on an invisible recess into which the given is already soliciting, that Merleau-Ponty reformulated perception “not first of *things* but perception of *elements*...of rays of the world, things which are dimensions, which are worlds...” (VI 210 Italics mine)

The present then, we tentatively say, is partially lit, is involved in shadows, is a chiaroscuro wherein its visibility leads beyond into its shadowy contingent invisibility.

Running through the internal temporal logic of its compressed constellation made existential matrix, we are invited and able to follow the curvature of this light into an internal logic, an area possible to move through, but not to see through. On our way we enter fields and perceptions comprised of inner and outer horizons made topographical by “unfolding differentiation, by segregation,” which hold together through “the reflections, shadows, levels, and horizons between things.” (Signs 160) Appearing from these shadows, birth, like perception, will be not first of a thing but of the possibility of an appearing world that solicits us to go further.

* * * * *

“The arms of consciousness reach out and grope, and the longer they are the better”, Nabokov once said. “Tentacles, not wings are Apollo’s natural members.”³⁸ Having shown that consciousness is only differentiated on an unconscious, the visible on the invisible, it is the latter which we saw as the source of the lending swells, crescendos, reliefs, and obstacles at play in our grope and involved in a *logos* or structured temporally outlined in recession.

Indeed, in its invisible reach, *flesh* was demonstrated to be a “cohesion without concept” wherein time opens before our eyes in its vibration, “echoes in the totality of the world” and hence bears the possibility of harmonizing and inverting of their parts. Of this involuntary dynamic possibility located within its symbolic matrices, Walton reminds us that “...ruptures in equilibrium, or reorganizations conform to an internal logic of which

³⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*. (New York, NY: Penguin Classics, 1998), 173.

no clear view can be attained, because the course of events depends on the joint action of fragmentary phenomena.” (SMIM 114) Hence, institution in the strong sense is a “symbolic matrix that results in the openness of a field, of a future according to certain dimensions...” (VI 80/IP 13) And it is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty tells us that institution makes no sense for consciousness: “To constitute in this sense is nearly the opposite of to institute: the instituted makes sense without me, the constituted makes sense only for me...” (IP 8)

That these “tentacles” as kinds of temporal logos can of their own accord become inter-tangled, wrap upon themselves in witnessed “overdetermination,” is what Merleau-Ponty calls a “relation of relations, a coincidence that cannot be fortuitous, that has an ominal sense.” (VI 240) And it is this ominal sense, clearly conveyed by Goethe in the quote above. This is the point, the *Stiftung* wherein *flesh* can bear witness to itself and an institutional event or sequel exposes the times of which its time is composed:

...is being at a distance, it is the double ground of my life of consciousness, and it is what makes there be able to be *Stiftung* not only of an instant but of a whole *system of temporal indexes* – time (already as time of the body, taximeter, which are openness upon being. (VI 173)

In this witnessed over-determination we must seek a different temporal compression. We must turn to an instant wherein the combination of those “rays” are charged, wherein a *Rückgestaltung* is effected “through which the truth of this ray of Being or emergent Gestalt can be referred back to its origins in the previous and still not structured elements that bring about an invocation and search for an answer.” (SMIM 122) Hence, our second definition of institution: “[w]hat defines human institution? A past which creates a question, puts it in reserve, makes a situation that is indefinitely

open,” a truth that “lies in restructuring which, from one end to the other, is known to itself, and is in agreement with itself,” and does so by “[a] sort of existential eternity by means of self-interpretation.” (IP 22/49)

Consequently, the pause to think, opening its own fields and domains from *flesh*, from its very own horizontal vanishing points, draws upon the “unthought-of” element (to borrow a term from Heidegger) of the field’s beyond. (Signs 160) Thus, reflection does not put itself against the unreflected as what it would conceive of as a forever concealed non-being. Rather, reflection is importantly put over-against reflection (prior and immediate) in a compression of invisibilities by which it is differentiated. Thus, “to think is not to possess the objects of thought; it is to use them to mark out a realm, to think about that which we therefore are not thinking about.” (Signs 160)

Providing that elementary “unthought-of” through given *flesh*, reflection scans and taps, opening that “other dimension” hinted at by Husserl. (Signs 162) For, from *Ideen II* it is clear that “reflection does not install us in a closed, transparent milieu, and that it does not take us...from ‘objective’ to ‘subjective,’ but that its function is rather to unveil a third dimension in which this distinction becomes problematic.” (Signs 162) It is this stand where one makes pause to think on the peculiar reconfiguration of the opened perceptual field that allows for an over-determination and a compression between them and their invisibilities.

That *flesh* opens in reflection and yet that reflection never escapes *flesh* means our best analogy for this instance where thought glimpses, penetrates, and fissures within *flesh*’s very own constellatory times is a “rogue wave” wherein the velocity of different

wakes (our reflection over against the reversibility of the body and reflection itself) combine to point a newly and significantly elevated crest towards a direction by which to follow: “Human institution: [it is] chained integration, a whirlwind where everything converges, where everything succeeds; the *Deckung* (*recouvrement* or coincidence) of an anticipation and of a regression and the founding of a true now that is full.” (IP 22)

It is this institutional event, not a merely a continued instituting, but as the very repetition in re-operating asymmetrical sequel whereby the institution “reorganize itself according to a new sense that is nevertheless the same sense of this same structure.” (IP x) It opens up and “continues while going beyond, conserves while destroying, interprets by deforming, and infuses a new sense into what nevertheless was called for and anticipated by this sense.” (Signs 34) It is equally whereby one can bear witness to the times within a time, wherein the oldest is identified because it has shown itself to be the generator of the latter and the more recent is identified because it is recognized as an innovation in reference to the former. It is for this reason Merleau-Ponty tells us: “Time is the very model of institution: passivity-activity, it continues, because it has been instituted, it fuses, it cannot stop being, it is total because it is partial, it is a field.” (IP 7) It is the decentering which allows a re-institution through its fissure and a slight glimpse at *flesh* itself:

The *Stiftung* of a point in time can be transmitted to the others without “continuity” without “conservation,” without fictitious “support” in the psyche the moment that one understands time as a chiasm. Then past and present are *Ineinander*, each enveloping-enveloped – and that itself is the flesh.” (VI 267)

Having revealed its institutional momentary predecessors, peculiar to this experience is the sensation of participating in a project, one’s insofar as it is they who

have acted into it, but whereby the project supersedes their very awareness in the convention of the everyday. It bears with it the sensation that one lives outside of themselves, and only through this opened temporal fissure has one reencountered and reestablished an equilibrium within their own temporality: “Theologians at least since Heraclitus have recognized this...the experience of mystical union being at the same time and experience of feeling apart: feeling oneself apart and feeling oneself a part.”³⁹

It is because of a “[l]ateral kinship of all the ‘nows’” that make the present which equally make it susceptible to decentering. Not enclosed in our own time: “Our time provides us with the resource of a communication with the past precisely when we do justice to its difference.” (IP xviii) Hence, “events present the index of an interiority of time”, that they “show themselves to be constitutive of a time, that is properly temporal.”

Thus, we arrive at our most concise and useful definition of institution:

Therefore by institution, we were intending here those events in an experience which endow the experience with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense, will form a thinkable sequel or history – or again events which deposit a sense in me, not just as something surviving as a residue, but as the call to follow, the demand of a future. (IP ix)

Institutional events are indeed these very *sequels*, “events in an experience which endow the experience with a durable dimension”, that show the time that is to be “constitutive of a time that is properly temporal” presenting “the index of an interiority of time.” (IP x) We can recall Goethe from earlier when he lamented Rome’s laterally laden epochs and a difficulty “...to decipher how Rome follows on Rome, and not only the new

³⁹ John Llewelyn, ed. Andrew Benjamin, “On the Saying the Philosophy Begins in Thaumazein” in *Post-Structuralist Classics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 181.

on the old, but also the various epochs within the old and new Rome on one another.”⁴⁰ But indeed, speaking of this multi-layered Rome as a kind of cultural origin he continued: “From this vantage point, history especially is read differently...In other places one reads from the outside in; here we imagine we are reading from the inside-out – everything lies spread around us and also extends out from us.”⁴¹ It is these two reflections taken in tandem, that allow us formulation a second natal description taken from the workings of institution: “...and I count the day when I entered Rome as my second natal day, a true rebirth...This rebirth, which is remolding me from within.”⁴² The sequel as “second natal day” is a re-institution and the beginning or birth of a re-cycling.

Thus, we replace our initial and abandoned natal analogy of “the infant at its first breath” as provided by the *tacit cogito* with a different sort of experience. Rather than a spontaneous and unexplainable irruption, the entrance of someone who was nothing, to a newly delivered significance as consciousness’ confirmation of the world over-against which its entrance stands, we will have to come to understand birth in the very fissure and subsequent exposure of a fullness of time that its very event indicates. In other words, we will have to put birth on the side of life and not from the side of a non-being or death which life merely interrupts.

With institutional events and sequels and circumscribed, we are now able to move to Arendt’s reflections on natality in its links with action to supplement this new and

⁴⁰ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Trans. Robert R. Heitner, “Italian Journey” in *Goethe: The Collected Work* (New York, NY: Princeton University Press, 1994), 107.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 107.

⁴² *Ibid.* 109.

under formulated notion of birth. We can now segue from Merleau-Ponty in this discussion on reconfiguring constellations of significance towards Arendt's exploration of action in its natal links by quoting from Arendt herself: "...the smallest act in the most limited circumstances bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation." (HC 190)

Chapter Two: Hannah Arendt

2.1 Action, its Preconditions, and its Relationship to Natality and Nature

Throughout our first chapter, we provided a chronological account of Merleau-Ponty's thought, tracing a natal thread through the *tacit cogito* towards *flesh* and *institution*. It was the latter of these which failed to carry forward the natal analogy of the former, that "infant at its first breath" abandoned with no subsequent formulation for birth. (PhP 470) We were left to supplement Merleau-Ponty's shift in thought with concordant musings from Goethe, who having entered Rome found history read differently. Entering this temporally compressed origin, the time that was fissured, spreading its epochs before him such that Goethe found himself born anew. Now, in our second chapter, we will have the opportunity to chronologically trace the thoughts of Hannah Arendt and in doing so, provide ourselves with her direct reflection on natality by which to subsequently merge our two thinkers towards a genuine account of birth in the final chapter with a recuperation of this abandoned natal thread.

In this chapter, we continue with an explication of Hannah Arendt's major concept of action, outlining its necessary preconditions that distinguish it from conventional acts. These reflections will prove invaluable insofar as action's outlined preconditions remind us that of all human activities "action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality." (HC 9) Further, these reflections allow us to establish the *inter esse* as the well-spring of dynamic possibility between men. The *inter esse* is precisely that location where aimed action delays an otherwise mortal trajectory by intersecting with nature's eternal cycle in the advent of the new; a instance of revealed *physis* as the totality of man's conditioning to be later expanded within the cyclical *noēsis*

noēseōs of the thinking ego. It is the latter's deep temporal structure which makes its metaphorical re-turn a tangent whereby nature itself, as what is between men, reconfigured in this natal appearance.

It is difficult to read the works of Hannah Arendt without acknowledging the espoused hope of possibility that individual birth brings into the world. It has been suggested that this “natal turn” is in direct response to Arendt's former mentor Heidegger.⁴³ As mentioned earlier, parts of Heidegger's thought were problematic for Arendt, clinging as they were to the final lifelines of a metaphysical tradition. Heidegger's *Blitz* and “ringing sound of silence” were commensurate with his reinterpretation of Husserl's early intentionality; away from static Husserlian epistemology in favor of presence with an emphasized aim towards the future and ultimately outlining Dasein's nature as a being-towards-death. (LM 122) Operating as the dominate half of liminal concepts birth and death, Heidegger's “death” frames a kind determinateness to and grounds the lived present by inclusion of the ultimate end. Thus, the aim remains metaphysical insofar as mortality, casting a shadow of finitude over a lived life from afore, and death, pursued and experienced by an isolated individual in their expiring moments, “provides the limit that allows a grasp of the whole.”⁴⁴

In the section, *The Traditional Substitution of Making for Acting*, Arendt sees Plato as introducing the metaphysical tradition in this originally enframing spirit. It was

⁴³ Peg Birmingham, “Heidegger and Arendt: The Birth of Political Action and Speech,” in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 191.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 191.

Plato's epistemology of reminiscence (*anamnesis*) that took the key concept of "idea, from experiences in the realm of fabrication... first, perceiving the image or shape (*eidōs*) of the product-to-be, and then organizing the means and starting the execution." (HC 225) Indeed, Arendt's choice word of execution is fitting insofar as the enframed ends given in advance truncate the spontaneity of an acting plurality: "Certainly, Plato had already made philosophy what it is by turning from the city and from life to gaze at death, finally construing the philosophical life as the life spent practicing death."⁴⁵ Consequently, our access to knowledge was reminiscence or re-understanding of an already outlined *Form* "that allows a grasp of the whole."⁴⁶ By privileging perceived abstract ends-in-advance (likely with the execution of his mentor in mind), Plato's philosophy sought to control the unpredictability, irreversibility, and anonymity inherent to an active plurality throughout time: "In contradistinction to fabrication, where the light by which to judge the finished product is provided by the image or model perceived beforehand...the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes appears only at their end..." (HC 192)

To be sure, Plato's emphasis of fabrication does not do away in its entirety the possibility of beginnings – "Labor and work, as well as action, are all rooted in natality..." (HC 9) But "[t]he problem, as Plato saw it, was to make sure that the beginner would remain the complete master of what he had begun, not needing the help of others to carry it through." (HC 222) Likewise, Heidegger's metaphysical construal of

⁴⁵ Anne, O'Bryne, *Nativity and Finitude* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2. Hereafter N&F.

⁴⁶ Peg Birmingham, "Heidegger and Arendt: The Birth of Political Action and Speech," in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, ed. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (New York, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 191.

a being-toward-death, despite [*Mitsein* and] futural openness, leads to a progressively isolated individual along a trajectory that ends as solely his own. It is the trajectory of one's own life as one's own final project. And finally this trajectory "...is a thought of endings, and thereby, a thought of passivity rather than of activity with sense of beginnings."⁴⁷

Concerning this passive unfolding, Arendt asserts, "If left to themselves human affairs can only follow the law of mortality, which is the most certain and the only reliable law of a life spent between birth and death." (HC 246) The only alternative to this doomed trajectory is an interruption by *action*. Like the specificity of Merleau-Ponty's institutional events, it would be a mistake to qualify every performance as action in the Arendtian sense. Specifically, qualified action as the highest possible human activity was outlined by Aristotle's *energeia*: "activities that do not pursue an end (are *ateleis*) and leave no work behind (no *par' autas erga*) but exhaust their full meaning in the performance itself." (HC 206) It is in an instance of a full actuality (*energeia*), where "the end (*telos*) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself which therefore becomes an *entelecheia* (full reality)." (HC 206)

Thus, qualified action stands in itself and supplements itself with no external ends, beaming forth in its fullness from a background of conventional acts in meaningful presence.⁴⁸ It is a kind of "event *eudaimonia*" having the "connotation of

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 191.

⁴⁸ Listen to Peg Birmingham, who follows our illuminatory analogy for action by setting the criterion for non-action: "...the cliché darkens the public space by making it more difficult, if not impossible, for the unexpected word to appear." In this way, we being to see that action must arrive with a sense of unexpectedness and awe. *Ibid.* 193.

blessedness...[in] a lasting state of being which is neither subject to change nor capable of effecting change.” (HC 193) Achilles bought his immortality and *eudaimonia* only at the price of summing up his life in a single deed. Likewise, a qualified act “comes to its end together with life itself”, not in an apocalyptic or deathly sense but by virtue of their convergence; life’s total exemplification in compounded fullness opened anew through deed. (HC 194) This is why the two aforementioned Aristotelian concepts are interrelated: “...full actuality (*energeia*) effects and produces nothing besides itself, and full reality (*entelecheia*) has no other end besides itself. (HC 206) And it is at their convergence that Arendtian action in its fullness mirrors in over-determination the full light of that *entelecheia* to which it responds and subsequently breaching a threshold to cast it anew.

It follows that in comparison to Heidegger’s enframing by mortal end, action qualified as this intersection between *energeia* and *entelecheia* “has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth...felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting.” (HC 9) And insofar as *energeia* “lies in the activity itself which therefore becomes an *entelecheia*” *energeia* is in its natal connection the making or birth of being. (HC 206) It is the birth of being from the inner workings of being, pursuing no end exterior to itself and leaving no work behind, that “comes to its ends together with life itself” as life’s total exemplification, beaming forth in meaningful presence with the emergence of the new. (HC 194)

This illuminating quality of qualified action was “*kalon*, the sheer beauty of appearances.” (LM 130) And human virtue, the *kalon k’agathon*, was assessed “only by

the performance, by how he [the actor] *appeared* while he was doing.” (LM 131) With this desire for making a meaningful appearance, a Homeric actor like Achilles would strive for “the only incentive worth of man qua man...the striving for immortality,” exemplifying life in its total fullness whereby the appearing actor, breaching an immortal threshold, entered the ranks of the gods. (LM 134)

In this way, the actor was the correlative inverse of “gods who appeared to men...in a familiar human disguise and...recognized as divinities only by those whom they approached.” (LM 142) He was a man who appeared in familiar divine disguise and was admitted among the latter’s ranks. Both producing *kalon*, their action brought to light “a harmonious order behind them which itself is not visible and of which nevertheless the world of appearances gives us a glimpse.” (LM 143) For “[m]en and gods were like each other, both of one kind...drawing breath from one mother; the Greek gods, as Herodotus tells us, has he same *physis* as men.” (LM 130) Indeed, “[a]nother early word for the invisible in the midst of the appearances is *physis*, nature, which according to the Greeks was the totality of all things...that had come into being by themselves,” and which sent awe struck men into “admiring wonder.” (LM 143) *Physis* then, nature as the appearing totality of all things, is that spectacle opened or cleaving between action and action, the precarious birth of being insofar as it that by which to follow and further act through; the emergence of the new opened in action yet always by being kept at a distance in its outstanding quality.

This illuminating spectacle traced out in the very movement of an act allowed for its witnesses to break out in praise, a retelling of events which immortalized our hero in the form of a story. Within this example of a hero having opened immortality with acts

reflecting in over-determination the *entelecheia* to which they respond (generating the sheer beauty of appearance) we can locate the two preconditions for action as the birth of being.

The first precondition of action is that the birth of being is also a disclosure and subsequent birth of the actor in his “who.” Specifically, it is that our “second birth”, an act by which with “word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world”, can answer with story the question borne with every ‘newcomer’: “Who are you?”⁴⁹ Precarious by nature, this “who” of progressive and multiple insertions cannot be considered an unequivocal or coincidental identity offered in self-reflection. Always finding itself bound to plurality and the relationships from which it springs, this “who” is always a “to-whom” – a persona without person arising in interaction like the ancient Greek *daimon* that accompanies each man throughout his life, “always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus only visible to those he encounters.”⁵⁰ (HC 180) Sourced in the living flux of one’s acting and speaking, this “who” at best comes to pass in the “same manner as the notoriously unreliable manifestations of ancient oracles” neither revealing nor hiding in words, but given as “manifest signs.” (HC 182)

⁴⁹ Indeed, in comparison to the above outlining of action in its positivity, action can equally be outlined by what it is not. If action is inaugural, non-action would be an act that fails to disclose a “who.” We had said in our previous footnote that a cliché darkens the public space. Now we may quote the passage in full: “The use of clichés discloses nothing or no one; it is a cliché precisely because it says nothing. Indeed, it is worse – saying nothing, the cliché darkens the public space by making it more difficult, if not impossible, for the unexpected word to appear.” Arendt here agrees with Heidegger on at least this point: “...clichés are the speech of *das Man*, the Anyone, whose speech covers over the uniqueness of the ‘who.’” *Ibid.* 194.

⁵⁰ “The self is not a consequence of speech: the ‘who’ is born in the very speaking itself...[S]he [Arendt] refers to the Greek notion of the self as *persona*, the voice that speaks through the mask in ancient tragedy. For Arendt, the important point is that there is no one behind the mask – the self is the person, the voice that shines through.” *Ibid.* 192.

Our everyday actions generally leave open their unfinished meaning and that of our public identity, whereas only actions like that of Achilles (“summing up all of one’s life in a single deed”) can grant an immortal “product.” But such greatness is not entirely necessary. For as our “who” conventionally stands, if truly coincidental in nature and not a ‘to-whom’, “we would never be able to keep our identities” condemned to “wander helplessly and without direction in the darkness of each man’s lonely heart, caught in its contradictions and equivocalities.” (HC 244) Hence, the “who” is dependent on plurality, wherein action and subsequent disclosure result in “...the light shed over the public realm through the presence of others,” giving confirmation to our very existence. (HC 244) Our identity in its continual deferral away from oneself is a kind of identity in negation and is that which situates and informs us of who we are amongst a people in its mirrored return through others. Thus, that we already tell stories about one another is enough to grant us a certain freedom in our own person, like all other freedoms, bound in the very contingencies of others.

It is in this plurality where our first precondition can be satisfied that we locate the second precondition for action as the birth of being. Assuming that the capacity for disclosure in the public realm has not been overshadowed by a regime of fabrication (means-to-ends dominance), future-perfect agendas (ends justifying all means), or a loss of “sheer human togetherness,” the resulting stories as answer to our natal question (“who?”) are sourced from and aimed back at an in-between individuals that becomes *sui generis*. This self-generating vague framework is called the “web of human relationships”, composed of those words and deeds that are aimed at and remain active in-between men, what Arendt calls the *inter esse*. Despite lacking the tangibility and

durability of a world borne of fabrication, the *inter esse* is “no less real” and no less operant in the workings of the world, but is far less certain than the shared objective spaces in which we move. (HC 183) Whereas our first precondition for action, then, was the necessary disclosure of a “who”, the second precondition is that an action be aimed at this *inter esse* – that is, never in isolation and always aimed into a web of plurality in its very vibration.

It is this web then that is entangled in an infinite and echoing “process character” out of which the new can emerge. (HC 230) This process character is all important to “the unprecedented concept and consciousness of history,” a process started “whose outcome is unpredictable, so that uncertainty rather than frailty becomes the decisive character of human affairs.” (HC 232) The historicity of this process character in its formative relation to the web of human relationships determines the “[l]imitations and boundaries” with a given realm of human affairs, that thus delineate the qualifications for action opened between actor and spectators and subsequently, like a pregnancy coming to term, the criteria for the new.

And yet, these boundaries “...never offer a framework that can reliably withstand the onslaught with which each new generation must insert itself.” (HC 190) It is in this sense that the full actuality (*energeia*) and subsequent full reality (*entelecheia*) of an action in its contribution to an epoch is itself susceptible to be taken up anew by those “newcomers” who task it will be to take up in their own natal acts those heroic examples to circumvent a trajectory of deterioration. Having an “inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries” action in its very process character means that “[t]he process of a single deed can quite literally endure throughout time until

mankind itself has come to an end” whereby mankind’s very end would signal the end of initiated action itself. (HC 233)

It follows that in contradistinction to the reliable and passively accepted “law of mortality”, action involves “unreliable laws” - an unfinished and precarious “who,” and boundless consequences bearing inherent unpredictability within plurality to which it is aimed. Already aimed at human affairs “with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions...action almost never achieves its purpose, but it is also because of this medium...[by] which action alone is real.” (HC 184) For better or worse, we are bound by a contingency of others that determines what actions are possible and what are actions in the qualified sense. Away from the isolation into which we depart and aimed into the affairs of a plurality into which we insert ourselves in “second birth”, action is the affirmation and expression of bounded potentiality of that which exists in the *inter esse* of men. As such, and as our only alternative to a passive trajectory doomed to deterioration, action as rooted in natality is the “...miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal, ‘natural’ ruin...” (HC 247) In this sense, human affairs left to themselves is in actuality only another way of formulating multiple solitary and parallel paths each driven towards their own solitary mortality writ large. It is here then, that we can quote Arendt in length:

The life span of man running toward death would inevitably carry everything human to ruin and destruction if it were not for the faculty of interrupting it and beginning something a new, a faculty which is inherent in action like an ever present reminder that men, though they must die, are not born in order to die but in order to begin. Yet just as, from the standpoint of nature, the rectilinear movement of man’s life-span between birth and death looks like a peculiar deviation from the common natural rule of cyclical movement, thus action seen from the view point of the automatic processes which seem to determine the course of the world, looks like a miracle. (HC 246)

Not born to die, or a being-towards-death, we are born in order to begin. This beginning through action is a departure from a solitary rectilinear trajectory on the way to ruin. It is a departure from the enframing liminal concepts of “dust to dust,” between a presupposed non-being from which we enter and to which we return in death: “that we are in possession of these limiting boundary concepts enclosing out thought within insurmountable walls – and the notion of an absolute beginning and absolute end is among them – does not tell us more than that we are indeed finite beings.” (LM 200)

This fact is all too obvious. Rather, “[i]f action as beginning corresponds to the fact of birth, if it is the actualization of the human condition of natality,” than our insertion as the birth of being takes its source “from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative.” (HC 177) Thus, away from death in its non-being as a deviation from nature’s eternal return, our liminal boundaries through action must be shown to be birth as re-birth and generation linked within nature’s cyclical return itself.

We have said the man in action makes a kind of divine spectacle in the world and in doing so appears himself in the light of the divine. This illuminating quality of qualified action was “*kalon*, the sheer beauty of appearances” which resonated throughout the *entelecheia* which it recast in an appearance simultaneous with the new. (LM 130) And it is here, in our above mention of nature’s eternal cycle that we may return to equate the aforementioned *kalon* between man and gods, who “both of one kind” sharing the same *physis*, also share in a relationship to the threshold of the immortal. (LM 130) Like his descending divine brethren “who appeared in familiar human disguise and were recognized as divinities only by those whom they approached”

an acting man appeared in familiar divine disguise performing godly actions making *physis*, that harmonious order of the invisible in the midst of the visible (“the totality of all things...that had come into being by themselves”) appear. Making heaven appear on earth, his mortal brothers could wonder at this spectacle and break out in praise: “...what set men wondering is something familiar and yet normally visible...of the harmonious order behind them which itself is not visible and of which nevertheless the world of appearances gives us a glimpse.” (LM 143) Both men in ascending action and descending gods have the ability to cause *kalon*, which is the opening of *physis* (nature).

Thus, action’s natal beginnings as the birth of being, as an initiated upsurge of the dynamic *inter esse* at which it is aimed, shares in and is our “acting in” point of intersection with the automatic cyclical return of nature – a spectacular “miracle” of the totality of all things and the harmonious order between them on the background of our mortal trajectory.

2.2 Inter Esse and Action Continued in Confirmation of Our Being Conditioned

We have seen that it was action's links to natality as the birth of being that otherwise thwarted a mortal trajectory, intersecting with nature's eternal cyclical return in a spectacular upsurge of the *inter esse*; the spectacular and shining appearance of the totality of all things, the invisible in the midst of the visible (*physis*) at the emergence of the new as the miracle that saves man. Bearing this in mind, we continue to explore the conditioned nature of that very *inter esse* where all action is aimed and by which all appearances of the new derive.

Against mortality, all too well known to the ancient Greeks, a confidence in the immortalizing quality of action allowed those famous words - "Wherever you go, you will be a *polis*" - to be a mantra of Greek expansion. (HC 198) This mantra "expressed the conviction that acting and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost anytime and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense...the space where I appear to others as others appear to me..." (HC 198) In order to properly understand this faith in a space of appearance it is important to remember that beyond its fortified walls, the polis was primarily intended as a form of organized remembrance. Having taken its impetus from "the Greek pre-*polis* experience and estimate of what makes it worthwhile for men to live together (*syzēn*)", namely, the "sharing of words and deeds", the polis was meant to ensure that those fleeting human activities (action and speech) and their equally otherwise ephemeral outcomes as stories and the disclosed "who" found at their centers could secure a kind of godly immortality: "[t]he *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of the acting and speaking together, and its true

space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be.” (HC 197) At any place and at any time, acting amongst one another, speaking to each other and of each other’s stories, Homeric Greeks could preserve the space of appearance, evoke that which lies between them, and multiply the chances to make “ordinary the extraordinary” in an immortal aim. (HC 197)

That action understood as such was considered the highest achievement, Pericles himself envisioned a city-state founded solely on the boundlessness and ever-echoing nature of action to keep intact an opened remembrance upon Greeks addressing one another. It was the hope that “men can enact and save their greatness at the same time and, as it were, by one and the same gesture, and that the performance as such will be enough to generate *dynamis* and not need the transforming reification of [fabrication] to keep it in reality.” (HC 205) And yet despite this mantra as the “innermost convictions of the people of Athens” we acknowledge with Arendt that this confidence was an insufficient means to secure one’s god-like status. (HC 205) In the end, the origin the polis, the pre-polis experience of the Trojan War from which the city-state sprang and found its ethos (a space meant to “multiply the occasions to win “immortal fame” and the chances to distinguish oneself amongst his peers), would have been lost without the verse and guiding light provided by a blind poet’s words, Homer’s words.

Thus, our exploration of the *inter esse* in its being conditioned begins in this relationship between actor and witness, the latter of which can recall and convey the former’s heroic deeds. We have said that man in action breaches a threshold, making a divine appearance in the world and that the resulting *kalon* shining and reflecting *entelecheia* in over-determination was linked to *physis* (nature), to the “invisible in the

midst of appearance...which according to the Greeks was the totality of all things.” (LM 143) Such appearances struck men with “admiring wonder...which breaks out in speech...in the form of praise.” (LM143) In this initial movement from praxis to logos, the question is rightly asked, who wins immortal fame, the doer or the storyteller?

The great actor Achilles, remained dependent upon the storyteller as the latter’s story was dependent on those who perform great actions. Action is dependent on spectatorship – aimed at the *inter esse* as one of its preconditions - and spectatorship is defined only by being witness-to. As we have already said, the actor as “hero” is revealed by the light his action sheds over the public realm. But bound as a ‘to-whom’ or bearing his *daimōn* to which he is blind, he is subject to the unpredictability as to the reception of his initiative. For this reason alone, one’s story as “the results of action and speech, reveal and agent, but this agent is not an author or producer.” (HC 184) Prone to this blind spot he acts out of, that to be reflected back upon him, he is “subject in the twofold sense of the word, namely actor and sufferer.” (HC 184) His actions ripple in the already established web of human relationships and these wakes find their way back to their subjected initiator. Thus, his story, like the great story of history, has nobody for its author.

As counterpart to an actor, the witness, in a process of reification, becomes a storyteller. This idea of storyteller is found in Homer in the example of the blind bard. Odysseus, listening to the blind bard’s song of his trials and tribulations “covers his face and weeps, though he has never wept before, and certainly not when what he is now hearing actually happened.” (LM 132) Only when Odysseus hears his tale sung does he become aware of the meaning of his own story. An actor’s blindness to potential and

latent reciprocity of his act reflected in its latent significance and subsequent judgment we have established. But in addition we note that our bard is himself blind: “[t]he bard sings for men and gods what the Muse, Mnemosyne, who watches over Remembrance, had put into his mind. The Muse gave him good and bad: she deprived him of eyesight and gave him sweet song.” (LM 132) Withdrawing from the world given to his senses, the blind bard circles back in memory to make what is absent, but nonetheless called for, present. Memory takes its cues from the sensorial from which it withdraws and conceals in its focus on that returned.

Storytelling then, in contrast to mere witnessing is a mental act that rests on the mind’s faculty of having present to itself what is absent from the senses: “Re-presentation, making present what is actually absent, is the mind’s unique gift, and since our whole mental terminology is based on metaphors drawn from vision’s experience, this gift is called imagination...” (LM 76) Like the actor then, the witness turned storyteller equally operates in and is subject to a sort of latency, the latency of mnemonic return and its recasting of the witnessed deed’s significance only in continued retrospectivity and re-interpretation. To be sure, the return of meaning itself is not latent having occurred with memory itself. Rather, coming out of an action’s infinite process, a historicity formative only in relation to the web’s *inter esse*, an action remembered can be recast. Meaning then, is latent insofar as, like action in its endless process character, it is never finished and casts its significance anew in an appearance never definitely closed.

Regardless of position, actor or storyteller, their blindness equates to the same thing. That “[t]he meaning of what actually happens and appears while it is happening is revealed when it has disappeared; remembrance, by which you make present to your

mind what actually is absent and past, reveals the meaning in the form of a story.” (LM 133) The actor is latent to the meaning of his acts being dependent on plurality for its confirmed return. Likewise, the storyteller “...who does the revealing is not involved in the appearances, he is blind shielded against the visible, in order to be able to ‘see’ the invisible.” (LM 133) By withdrawing from the present world of appearances from where he takes his cue, “...he sees with blind eyes and puts into words...the story, not the deed itself and not the doer, although the doer’s fame will reach the high heavens.” (LM 133) Hence, the story in its solicited return always bears the possibility of taking on meaning anew.

We note then, that both acting and storytelling are involved in their own unique and complimentary blindness. The former’s disclosure through act or speech is inextricably tied to the living flux in which he appears, “it can be represented and ‘reified’ only through a kind of repetition, the imitation of *mimēsis*, which according to Aristotle...is appropriate only to the *drama*, whose very name indicates that play-acting actually is an imitation of acting.” (HC 187) Yet, concerning the storyteller in its evocation, “not only does this imitative element lie in repetition of a performance, but equally in the making or writing of the play.” (HC 187) Hence, both actor and witness seem inclusive and mutually *co-dependent* for the aforementioned “event *eudaimonia*” (the intersection of *energeia* and *entelecheia*) as equated with man’s breaching of the immortal by opening *physis* in all its appearance. That is to say, the spectacle appears only between them, their superimposed blindness’, and mutual latencies. The spectacle of *physis*, whereby the usually invisible is made to appear in the midst of the visible, exists between men or is otherwise, at least temporarily, forgotten.

Both blinded into latency by the sheer *kalon* of an act, meaning cycles back to illuminate the present to those actions worthy of immortality and those stories worthy of praise. It was Homer's tales (that storied art form which throughout Greek was considered *energeia*, which "therefore becomes an *entelecheia*) as a kind of institution that was instituting in its reification through *mimēsis*; the former experience of the Trojan War from which the polis sprang and exemplifying a disposition by which to live, blind Homer's words held in equilibrium and structured in an operating ethos that would have otherwise been lost. (HC 206) Homer's capacity to "turn words to praise" circulated in repetition functioning as a backdrop from which a performance "comes fully to life" and this alone allowed, for a time, the continual re-return and re-renewal of the original obsession with immortality. (HC 197)

Thus, between actor and witness turned storyteller, we expand our prior conclusions: unlike the "light" by which to judge a fabrication as perceived before hand, the "light that illuminates" upon and from within an action inserted into the human web, like the *kalon* of revealed *physis*, appears from its own infinite process character established prior, circulating, and cycling back to an implied encoding before falling on and unveiling that which "shines forth most." (HC 225) What shines forth most as the emergence of the new is already delineated in the *inter esse*, determining the criteria for a qualified action and the spectacle of *physis* between men. And as between men, this light is the upsurge of the *inter esse* through action revealing that which was invisible or otherwise overshadowed as returned anew – *physis*.

Hence we note that work (fabrication), and action are rooted in natality insofar as both are charged with the task of providing for and preserving the world, but it was

specifically the latter that connected to nature in its eternal cycle to circumvent what was otherwise a mortal trajectory. Action's "light from nowhere" like an "infinite improbability which occurs regularly...action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality." (HC 178) It appears from the aforementioned darkness within the human heart whereby the "new...always appears in the guise of a miracle." (HC 178) It is for this reason that the human condition or humans as being conditioned by what lies between them "comprehends more than the conditions under which life has been given to man":

In addition to the conditions under which life is given to man on earth...Men are conditioned being because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence...Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence. This is why men, no matter what they do, are always conditioned beings. Whatever enters the human world of its own accord or is drawn into it by human effort becomes part of the human condition. (HC 9)

We had said that it was the from the view point of nature in its cyclical movement that our life spanning from birth to death seemed like a deviation from this common rule. Likewise, human affairs, passively accepted, found themselves on a trajectory of ruin. We had also said that action's initiative is a departure from this rectilinear and doomed trajectory, that in its natal beginnings it was an initiated upsurge of the *inter esse* and equally our "acting in" point of intersection with the automatic cyclical returning of nature – the appearance of physis as "a miracle" on the background of our mortal trajectory commensurate with the birth of being.

In action's link to this common rule, as a sort of natal pact shared with the world we expand our thoughts by recognizing that intersecting action and nature unfold in

communion upon this “miracle” as the emergence of the new. Action, as the birth of being, and the appearance of the totality of our nature (aligned with our *inter esse*), continually dive into each other in the spectacle that their intersecting creates, opening an “endless process character” of unfolding significance and mutual co-conditioning. In other words, *physis*, the revealed harmonious order between invisibles in the midst of the visible, is that “point” of the conditioning our *inter esse*, that intersection with nature’s eternal cycle to be returned anew.

As the point of intersection, cyclical nature and compressed action converge directly with (and take upsurge from) that which exists in-between persons; acting into our conditioned nature is equally a conditioning of our nature and our powers to act. This is why, paraphrasing *Ecclesiastes* Arendt tells us: “Without action to bring into the play of the world the new beginning of which each man is capable by virtue of being born, “there is no new thing under the sun”; without speech to materialize and memorialize “new things” that appear and shine forth, “there is no remembrance.”” (HC 204)

We conclude this section by reflecting on this “remembrance” insofar as there is one more valuable example of our being conditioned best given in the example of an action itself, whereby the conditioning and action are continually coincidental in their own *entelecheia*. It is an action that best master’s the “two-fold darkness of human affairs” – that is of the “basic reliability of men who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow” and “the impossibility of remaining unique masters of what they do, of knowing its consequences and relying upon the future.” (HC 244) It is a moral precept “not applied from the outside, from some supposedly higher faculty or from experiences outside of action’s own reach” and this action is the unique act of *promise*. (HC 246)

To be sure, promise finds its fulfillment or failure in its signaled return; the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of real events which reveal the promise that was. It is only complete through its being in reserve, its withholding into a kind of latency that signals its end in reference to its having been made, and thus, has a claim upon return prior to performance or constraint at a future date. As an act overarching and encompassing its duration, mutual promise offers us “certain islands of predictability” and “guideposts of reliability” in the unpredictable and irreversible sea of action. (HC 237) Thus, promise, like all actions as aimed between men, grants men more freedom and allows man to go farther than he could in his isolation. The moral precept of promise, within action’s own reach, is like a control mechanism “built into the very faculty to start new and unending processes,” only by virtue of the fact that promise, like all qualified actions, are made on the contingencies of and touch upon the *inter esse* of men. (HC 246)

As an action, as the birth of being, promise is “the one miracle-working faculty of man...as Jesus of Nazareth...must have known very well” when putting such miracles within the reach of us earthly bound creatures. (HC 247) Arendt’s mention of Jesus is not arbitrary. As a symbol of our salvation from ruin, as an espoused faith and hope for a world founded on the promise inherent in natality (in what it can return to the world), it found “its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their ‘glad tidings’: ‘A child has been born unto us.’” (HC 247) If promise, like all other acts, is the birth of being, we can conclude that this birth is of the *inter esse* and bears with it the structure of a promise’s return as indicative our being conditioned by it. Action bears the new, and insofar as promise is an action, promise in its departure and signaled return will provide us with a birth of the now.

2:3 Intersecting of the Inter Esse, Action, and the Life of the Mind

Having shown ourselves as conditioned at a spectacular and appearing intersection, we will now expand our reflections on action and natality into a shift within thought. I would like to expand on the already advanced claim that appearing is a kind of birthing, a making visible of something that was previously invisible as seen in the example of *physis* which in its spectacular opening allowed the new to emerge. That is that originally invisible *physis*, a shared and harmonious cyclical nature between heaven and earth which appearing gods collaterally revealed in its totality through their descending arrival, or that an actor revealed in its totality through his ascending to immortality, came to be replaced with the thought of being, in the very spectacular return provided by the *noēsis noēseōs*.

Thus far, we have focused on an ethos of the pre-philosophic Greeks to multiply the chances to achieve storied immortality through action. It was by virtue of an action wherein a “hero” was disclosed within a web of human relations, wherein no ends were sought outside the performance which qualified this act as of the highest kind. Indeed, “transparent in Homer’s poems...is that the innermost meaning of the acted deed and the spoken word is independent of victory and defeat”, that it remains untouched by outcome or consequence. (HC 205) Rather, the emphasis was on criteria of appearance and the possibility of appearing in a god-like fashion.

Further, we focused on the fact that one, in acting, could never be witness to the final outcome of his deed in an analogous structure to the disclosure of his “who.” Spectators were relied upon as witness to the spectacle and thus, not entirely excluded

from a divine appearance opened between men; as a necessity for storied *athanatizein* the spectator could share in the presence brought to bear. Between God and witnessing man there was a shared desire and passion for seeing, to see the “*kalon*, the sheer beauty of appearances” such that human virtue, “the *kalon k’agathon*, was assessed neither as an innate quality or intention of the actor, nor by the consequences of his deeds – only by the performance, by how he *appeared* while he was doing...” (LM 130) Indeed, “a partiality shared” between gods and their mortal counterparts was the desire to see such spectacles. For the former, this meant to try to affix a god’s eye view and look “down from Olympus upon the affairs of men...[participating in the] Olympian gods’ feeling for the world’s spectacular quality.” (HC 130)

But despite this shared desire differences are clear, namely, the difference in abode, powers, and that divinities although having been born, “were deathless.” (LM 130) Further, the gods were always privileged with the power of appearance, creating spectacles every time they entered into the mortal world. Mortal beholding of such spectacles (*theasthai*, whose very root comes from *theastai* or “spectators”) was reserved for those wonder-struck men for whom a god appeared, “...appeared in familiar human disguise and were recognized as divinities only by those whom they approached.” (LM 142)⁵¹

In this sense, the wonder of spectatorship is *pathos*, something suffered. In Homer, “it is the god who acts, whose appearance men have to endure, from whom they

⁵¹ And here, it is worth noting Odysseus, a great and immortalized actor who approaches Penelope “disguised as a beggar and saying ‘many false things.’” (LM 107) It is this approach which turns Penelope’s response an opening onto nature, a simile wherein we see “‘soul as world and world as soul.’” (LM 108)

must not run away.” (LM 143) That divinities were familiar to man, and yet normally far from sight, it was not in their being made visible that made men still pause in awe. Rather, awe was the outcome of recognition of an invisible order behind visibility. And this we have mentioned: “Another early word for this invisible in the midst of appearances is *physis*, nature, which according to the Greeks was the totality of all things...that had come into being by themselves” and of which, Heraclitus noted, “‘it likes to hid itself,’ namely behind the appearances.” (LM 143)

Upon this suffered revealing, men could give reverence in speech that takes the form of praise, “a glorification not of a particularly amazing appearance or of the sum total of things in the world, but of the harmonious order behind them which itself is not visible and of which nevertheless the world of appearances gives us a glimpse.” (LM 143) Between the appearance of gods and the story of a hero amongst their ranks, we assume that the normally invisible harmonious order of all that is, glimpsed at by spectators, would be that rarity of a collapsed and shared nature between heaven made visible on earth. In some way, the beholding of gods brings the invisible into the light along with the subsequent possibility of praise insofar as storied *athanatizein* of action is “‘reified’ only through a kind of repetition, the imitation of *mimēsis*...appropriate only to the *drama*” whereby “not only does this imitative element lie in repetition of a performance, but equally in the making or writing of the play.” (HC 187)

Yet with the introduction of the philosophic tradition, man turned to find in his own spontaneous thinking ego, harmonious spectacles through the sudden advents of revealed invisibility made visible within himself, and with it a reorientation towards a new sense of spirituality. For despite the Homeric gods “vital duration”, endless as it

was, it still “had a temporal beginning” – a birth and parental lineage. Thus, philosophy sought beyond the divinities for a more fundamental *archē*, a “beginning which is itself unbegun, a permanent and ungenerated source of generation.” (LM 134) What came to replace Olympus was that introduction by the philosophers that more than deathless, was also birthless: Being: “Being became the true divinity of philosophy because, in the famous words of Heraclitus, it was “made by none of the gods or men, but always was and is and shall be: an ever-living fire, fixed measures kindling and fixed measures going out.”” (LM 135)

Indeed, “the great advantage of the new discipline was that man, to win his share of immortality, no longer needed to count on the uncertain ways of posterity.” (LM 135) Immortality no longer required the summing up of one’s life in a single deed and no longer required the spectatorship of others or poets. Instead, this engagement with the immortal was carried over from Homer into the *noos* (Aristotle’s *nous*): “It is *nous* that corresponds to Being”, the harmonious order between world and universe, which led Aristotle and Plato to claim “that there is something in man that corresponds exactly to the divine because it enables him to live, as it were, in its neighborhood.” (LM 136) That the contemplation of the eternal allowed for a kind of participation in it such that “[i]t is this divinity that causes Thinking and Being to be the same. By using his *nous* and by withdrawing mentally from all perishable things, man assimilates himself to the divine”, for just as Being replaces the gods, “*nous*, according to Aristotle...is ‘the god in us’ and ‘every mortal life possesses the part of some god.’” (LM 136)

Thus, the originally invisible *physis*, a shared harmonious nature between heaven and earth which appearing gods collaterally revealed in its totality upon their

descending arrival, came to be replaced with the thought of being; a reconfigured invisible order between soul and contemplated immortal truth wherein man finds nature from within only by withdrawing and being extrapolated from appearing within nature's advent in the world. With the introduction of contemplated Being, the spectacle of heroes and approaching gods became imbued in the invisibility constitutive of thought's miraculous arrival itself, the *kalon* of thought. Thinking this "harmonious order...which is not visible and of which nevertheless the world of appearances gives us a glimpse" is the true engagement in Aristotle's *theōrētikē energeia*, "identical with the activity of the gods and this, is to 'immortalize' (*athanatizein*), or to engage in an act that makes us, as far as possible and in 'accordance with what is highest.'" (LM 136) It is equally for this reason that the contemplating man for Plato, cannot "fail to possess immortality in the fullest measure that human nature admits.'" (LM 138)

In this sense, Greek philosophy is a continuation of the ethos of their Homeric brethren in an aim at immortality, albeit in subsequently disfigured form. Commensurate in its being carried over, this new immortality turned eternity required two parts. Away from Homeric actor and spectator turned storyteller, philosophy's assumed truth took for granted plurality by consolidating this two stage unfolding. First there is "...the activity of *nous*, which consisted in contemplation of the everlasting and was in itself *aneu logou*, speechless." (LM 137) This thinking activity is followed by the second part, *logos*, not merely as speech but "the gift of reasoned argument." (LM 144) *Nous*, as replacement of the gods, and *logos* as substituted for sung praise, continues its privilege of the former in alignment with the divine: "Of these two, it is only *nous* that enables him to partake in the everlasting and the divine, while *logos*, designed "to say what is,"...is the specifically

uniquely human ability,...to what happens in the realm of human affairs and to what merely “seems” but *is* not.” (LM 137) Hence, the admiring praise turned *logos* became: “the attempt to translate the vision into words.” (LM 137)

Taking its cue from the vision of *nous*, thinking then involves a translation into *logos* wherein the philosophical criterion for truth resides. This translation was called “*alēthein*...and applies only to propositions about things that always and necessarily are and cannot be otherwise.” (LM 137) It is because the considered *nous*, as a replacement for originally invisible *physis*, requires speech “not only to sound out and become manifest...[but] to be activated at all”, we are reminded that the invisible and visible, “belong together, are ‘made’ for each other, as it were.” (LM 109)

There is another sense by which Greek philosophy is a continuation of the *ethos* of their Homeric brethren in an aim at immortality that is worth noting, specifically, the philosophic source in the “Homeric Simile.” (LM 108) In true Homeric fashion, such a metaphor combines only visibilities such that the poet can “make known soul as world and world as soul.” (LM 108) And this example we had already noted above, that where Odysseus, a great and immortalized actor, who approaches Penelope “disguised as a beggar and saying ‘many false things.’” (LM 107) It is this approach which turns Penelope’s response an opening onto nature, a simile wherein we see her “‘soul as world and world as soul.’” (LM 108)

Upon this “fibbed” recollection, “her tears ran...and her body was melted, as the snow melts along the high places of the mountains when the West Wind has piled it there, but the South Wind melts it, and as it melts the rivers run full flood.” (LM 107)

Connecting only visibles, the visible tears of Penelope are associated with the running flood of the melting snow. “The invisible made visible in the metaphor is the long winter of Odysseus’ absence, the lifeless frigidity...which now, at the first signs of hope for a renewal of life, begin to melt away.” (LM 107) Having otherwise only expressed certain sadness, these tears take on the meaning – “the thoughts that caused them” – and come to represent the thawing of a bitter long winter and the awakening of life come spring.

Like a disguised yet familiar god who approaches man, a disguised Odysseus inserts himself in word and deed in what will later reveal his “who”, an act opening Penelope’s soul into a mirroring of the cyclical process of nature’s rule. “Behind the opposition of world and soul, there must be a unity that makes the correspondence possible, an “unknown law.” (LM 108) “It is the same unity that binds together all opposites – day and night, light and darkness, coldness and warmth – each of which is inconceivable in separation, unthinkable unless mysteriously related to its antithesis.” (LM 108) But as we must conceded this “unknown law” outlining such polar concepts as a thinkable pair forms a “liminal concept...the marker of the distinction between the elements of the pair, the threshold between inside and outside.” (N&F 10)

It is this liminal concept which as “a point at which revealing and concealing are fused” that philosophy in its withdrawal from the world fails to respect. (N&F 10) This threshold of the unknown law and hidden unity between opposites becomes the unending theme of the philosophic tradition. Thus, rather than an operational simile between visibles revealing *physis*, the philosopher attempts to understand the bound orders in their thematization and subsequent crossing between the two-faceted unfolding *nous* and *logos*, or a two-world theory bridged only by metaphor: “The metaphor, bridging the

abyss between inward and invisible mental activities and the world of appearances, was certainly the greatest gift language could bestow on thinking and hence philosophy, but the metaphor itself is poetic rather than philosophic in origin.” (LM 105)

It becomes philosophy’s goal to bridge this gap between the invisible activity of thought paradoxically with thought’s outcome itself, dealing only in invisibilities and with the metaphorical visibility it manifests. Thus, it is a concern with making the invisible an object of contemplation, “and the problem is that the Nothing cannot be adequately thought as the opposite of Being.” (N&F 10) Like Merleau-Ponty’s flawed *tacit cogito*, the difficulty of understanding thinking is that, “there exists no metaphor that could plausibly illuminate this special activity of the mind, in which something invisible within us deals with the invisibilities of the world.” (LM 124)

It is this quest for meaning in its sheer activity of thought, the *noēsis noēseōs* in dialogue with myself that is out of order because the *nous* yields no end results that will survive its activity or make total a completed sense outside of the reach of action. Rather, “[t]he only possible metaphor one may conceive of for the life of the mind is sensation of being alive.” (LM 123) Like life, “[i]ts inherent law, which only a god can tolerate forever, man merely now and then, during which time he is godlike, is ‘unceasing motion, which is motion in a circle.’” (LM124) It is “...namely, the *noēsis noēseōs*, [that] turns in circles...and is the only movement that never reaches an end or results in an end product.” (LM 124) Finally, we may quote again Arendt at length:

If thinking were a cognitive enterprise it would have to follow a rectilinear motion, starting from the quest for its object and ending with cognition of it. Aristotle’s circular motion taken together with the life metaphor suggests a quest for meaning that for man as a thinking being accompanies life and ends

only in death. The circular motion is a metaphor drawn from the life process, which though it goes from birth to death, also turns in circles as long as man is alive. (LM 124)

We had said earlier that it was from the “standpoint of nature” in its cyclical movement that our life spanning from birth to death seemed like a deviation from this common rule and eternal return. (HC 246) It followed that, human affairs, if passively accepted, found themselves on a trajectory of ruin. This doomed trajectory was thwarted by action. It was action’s natal beginnings as initiated spectacular upsurge of the *interesse* that shares in and is our “acting in” point of intersection with the automatic cyclical processes – an appearing “miracle” of *physis* as the birth or being or emergence of the new on the background of our mortal trajectory.

In *The Life of the Mind*, we have found analogous schematics. From the position of thought, if thinking were a cognitive enterprise it would find itself on that aforementioned mortal trajectory. Its own achievement, like the satisfied ends-in-advance of fabrication, would be its very termination. Rather, and like the light of action (appearing from its own infinite process only at an end) in its relation to *physis*, the making of an appearance in the thinking activity itself is a kind of birth, a making visible that which is invisible as solicited in return from the sensory, what we have called the *kalon* of thought. And yet, as we have demonstrated, “the standpoint of nature” is never entirely distinct from the status quo of the human condition. Acting into our conditioned nature as a conditioning of our powers to act suggests that the ends of thinking are not determined but follow in their own wake and in the wake of other thoughts.

It is here we recollect our since shifted movement from action to thought. Since early immortality was linked to the revealing of *physis*, and since contemplation of being

became a sufficient means of engagement with immortality, we can understand the substitution of immortal divinities with being as involved in a substitution concerning nature itself. From our original *physis*, nature becomes Being and Being, as our being conditioned, is that which has been shown to be between us. Thus, the endless and invisible circular motion of thought dealing in absences made present, metaphorically linked to the life processes from birth to death and sharing in nature's cyclical and eternal return by virtue of its own cycling *noēsis noēseōs*, appears from nowhere and equally must "look like a miracle." It is because thought never abandons the preconditions for action that Arendt can close her primary seminal work and open her last with the words of Cato: "Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself." (HC 325)

Chapter Three: Convergence and Birth

Within this third chapter it will be our task to merge our reflections on our two central authors toward a genuine account of natality, showing birth as institutional and showing institutional sequel as a kind of re-birth. This chapter will proceed by outlining a convergence between the *flesh* of Merleau-Ponty and the *inter esse* of Arendt insofar as both concepts bespeak of a fruitful dialectical relationship between invisibility and visibility wherein the new is born, coming to appear through our conditioned nature as the visible in its intimate relationship to the temporal characteristic of the invisible.

In this way we argue that Merleau-Ponty and Hannah Arendt can be read as sharing a deep concern for the roles of visibility and invisibility, appearing and non-appearing, in their respective philosophies. For Merleau-Ponty, *flesh* and institution have suggested the visible as both differentiated upon invisibility and as exposing this invisibility as a temporal index constitutive of the instance of institutional sequel. Likewise, for Arendt, action in its relation to natality, the *inter esse*, and her cyclical nature as *physis* speak of a particular instance of visibility, that of our conditioning, witnessed as the advent of the invisible in the midst of visibility and as the totality of all things. Ultimately, it is this relation that can serve as a hermeneutic bridge that allows both thinkers to be read in tandem. Crucially important for a genuine account of natality is the implications of their respective views on temporality as aligned with the invisible that makes its appearance within visibility as the emergence of the new.

Thus, having made commensurate *flesh* and *inter esse*, the second section explores an exposed and shared temporal structure of the present necessary for our reformulation of birth - for Merleau-Ponty a “quasi-eternity” of lived instants between

times exchanged and for Arendt the eternity of the *nunc stans*. Reflection on their shared temporal structures provides a common divergence or decentering indicative of the present in its certain absence or recessional quality.

Finally, with the present as absence we outline the mechanisms for institutional sequel. This allows us to see that birth satisfies the outlined preconditions for action and is that instant that both decenters the institution into which the new makes its appearance while equally marking the newcomers inauguration within the very institution in question. Because birth necessarily occurs in plurality, emerges in-between persons, and commences a disclosure and response to the question of “who?”, birth will be seen as an upsurge within the *inter esse* or a passing into *flesh* by bearing the former’s structure of dissemination; like the “who” witnessed only by others birth is paradoxically one’s own and yet never an event in one’s life, an invisible or unconscious origin never fully appropriable and carried through subsequent institutional events as a kind of re-birth. This invisibility of our birth will be foundational for all subsequent invisibilities involved in the reckoning with our differentiated and unfolding visible present. As a kind of invisible recession at our origin and in our present, our birth as the flesh from which we pass is always the unfolding into the Merleau-Pontyan *flesh* of those others whose appearance in anticipatory *ek-stasis* was like a lifelong preparation for our arrival.

3:1 *Flesh, Inter Esse, and their Convergence*

Surely some revelation is at hand;/ Surely the Second
Coming is at hand./ The Second Coming! Hardly are those
words out/ When a vast image out of the Spiritus Mundi/
Trouble my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert/ A
shape with lion body and the head of a man/ A gaze blank
and pitiless as the sun, is moving its slow thighs...And what
rough beast, its hour come round at last/ Slouches toward
Bethlehem to be born?

-W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*⁵²

To summarize our findings, early Merleau-Ponty introduced us to the *tacit cogito*. Not quite the informing body and not yet spoken, this “I see that I see” was the experience and cradle of consciousness mediating across inverse sides of a single structure; from one’s originary orientation of mute body/world co-incarnation breaching the threshold of consciousness from which expressive gestures took flight. This crossing would teach us our thoughts if we lend ourselves to this precarious dawning, this silence of consciousness embracing the world of speech – “like that of the infant at its first breath...” (PhP 470) The *tacit cogito* as the “infant at its first breath” was our first natal analogy. It was the entrance of the new from non-being, an entrance from forever concealed spatio-temporal depths providing impetus for its surfacing cry.

Such a metaphor for the experience of consciousness produced an irreconcilable transcendentalism between two orders paradoxically unable to intersect by definition yet co-dependent on each other for their very existence. Analogous with

⁵² W.B. Yeats, “The Second Coming” in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000), 159.

“...consciousness...seen as the peak of an iceberg, a mere indication of the floating mass of unconsciousness beneath it” the *tacit cogito* was undemonstratable in its own terms: “the moment a fragment of unconsciousness reaches the peak of the iceberg it has become conscious and has lost all the properties of its alleged origin.” (LM 113) Likewise, the *tacit cogito* as pre-linguistic mediator is betrayed in its explicit formulation having lost “properties of its alleged [silent] origin.” (LM 113) The *tacit cogito* was then the consideration of an empty and relative consciousness entirely outside itself yet exactly coextensive with its formulated being, comparable to the consideration of our entrance at birth from presupposed origins in non-being. And insofar as the *tacit cogito*, like our birth, was meant to mediate us into direct conscious contact with the world, such conclusions only pointed to a two-world theory comprised of a cognitive latency underscored by carnal immediacy - the object (or our birth) “perceive[d] as a residue” rather than in its “ontological originality.” (RVI 284)

The *tacit cogito* as an ontological substitution for the experience of the conscious life for which it is meant to account allowed us to turn to Arendt who recognized within the thinking ego the same function: “...the chief difficulty here seems to be that for thinking itself – whose language is entirely metaphorical...there exists no metaphor that could plausibly illuminate this special activity...The only possible metaphor...for the life of the mind is the sensation of being alive.” (LM 123) Hence: “...[for] the philosopher, speaking out of the experience of the thinking ego, man is quite naturally not just word but *thought made flesh*, the always mysterious, never fully elucidated incarnation of the thinking capability...” (LM 47) And it was with Merleau-Ponty’s *flesh* that we grounded

our worldly installment straddling an awareness never fully elucidated and found gestures towards a new conception of birth.

Flesh then, was commensurate but not latent or prior to the flesh of our body: “The flesh is the body inasmuch as it is the visible seer, the audible hearer, the tangible touch – the sensitive sensible: inasmuch as in it is accomplished an equivalence of sensibility and sensible thing.” (VI liv) It was our synergetic body as both anchored in and perpetuator of *flesh* that continually moved through its accumulated temporal recession into the unfolding latter by a reversibility within the world, ushering in the very fields and perpetuated passageways harbored within *flesh*'s expanding thickness (spatial, cultural, mythological, ideological, and as domains of knowledge).

This bodily opening of *flesh* as simultaneous with a movement through subsequently opened fields demonstrated *flesh* as an element of our existence: “...to designate it we should need the old term ‘element’...in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being.” (VI 139)

Yet, Merleau-Ponty notes of this elemental quality: “We must not think of flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit” least be led into contradictions. (VI 147) Our extended *flesh* it is not a positing within a consciousness paradoxically both inside and outside itself, for “this interiorly worked-over mass, has no name in philosophy.” (VI 147) Rather, because it “resides in a unique place and moment: one can indeed say of my body that it is not *elsewhere*, but one cannot say that it is *here* or *now* in the sense that objects are.” (VI 147) It is because this unconscious element and bodily reversibility are

“always immanent and never realized in fact” that *flesh*’s elemental being institutes *us* as both inside and outside ourselves through its very fidelity to “the interplay of presence and absence as prior to those apparently constitutive elements.” (BA 212)

To expand then, *flesh* is this absence comprised of the unconscious and invisible temporality - a constellatory “non-figurative framework” between one’s synergetic body and the opened perceptual horizon, it’s “absent” beyond still given within experience itself. (SMIM 114) It is the curvatures provided between them whereby the field is institutionally outlined and traversed by pursuing the vanishing points provided. Thus opened *flesh* and *field* as the perceived is an “ensemble of my body’s routes” in its recessional index - possible *Gestalts* the world invites by *Rückgestaltung* resulting in “an openness upon a field of *Gestaltungen* – And that means perception is unconsciousness.” (VI 189/243)

As unconscious, perception was demonstrated as a “cohesion without concept, (which is of the same type as the cohesion of the parts of my body)” wherein time opens before our eyes in its vibration, “echoes in the totality of the world” and hence bears the possibility of harmonizing and inverting its temporal components as we make our way through the field. (VI 152) Its visible upsurge came to be exhibited and differentiated along the temporal invisibility of the *flesh* in dimensions, levels, “the pilings of the world; we discover the world in degrees, in distance, in depth, and in difference.” (VI Iv) Thus, appearance from *flesh* was a crystallization differentiated on “...immediate non-presence, but perspective understood as opening beyond, leading to it by its very thickness...” such that “each perception is a vibration of the world, it touches well beyond what it touches, it awakens echoes in all my being in the world...” (IP 6/165)

Already pulled into its dawning movement, perception was also described as an “elemental event by which the *flesh* captures the lines of force of the world, brings itself up to the levels about which visibility is modulated and rises upright before vertical being” in an “elemental alliance with the invisible light.” (VI Iv/IP x) Like Cézanne’s vibrating objects subtly illuminating from within and leading us towards a source never fully elucidated perception’s “light is never entirely in the present.” (IP 52) Thus, perception returns us to the notion of a field as outlined and structured in its horizontal absence, an absence of the beyond still given to experience insofar as it is “not first of things but perception of elements...rays of the world, things which are dimensions, which are worlds...” (VI 210)

The field then, comprised of these vibrating visible and invisible elements is traversable in the institutional routes it provides insofar as it “straddles its future, has its future, its temporality...” (IP 8) This was recognized by Merleau-Ponty as early as the writings of *Signs* where he notes: “It is by time that my thoughts are dated. It is by time too that they make a date, open a future for thought – a cycle, a field...Thought does not bore through time. It follows in the wake of previous thoughts...” and does so at this very peripheral and structuring spatio-temporal horizontal edge. (*Signs* 14) And insofar as the other, with his body is his own vibrations and *ek-stasis* presides over a region, he, both inside and outside himself in absence, is equally “not *in* the here and *in* the now, but...is not intemporal and a-spatial either.” (VI 218)

Indeed, the perceived as the aforementioned unconscious “ensemble of my body’s routes” was writ large in the ensemble of co-instituting and co-reversing bodies upon one another as the foundation for the unfolding of *flesh*. Bodies turn back in a co-reversibility

that “defines the flesh [that] exists in other fields”, those other fields into which we cross by an unconscious intercorporeality between bodily recesses and the chiasm that opens between them. This chiasm of invisible recesses between us, between commensurable *ek-stases* stretching into the horizontal beyond is our temporal contingency that allows us, at its very vanishing threshold, to understand one another to the best that our contingencies would allow. Together then, we perpetuate the very *flesh* of which we are born insofar as field, self, and other, with inner and outer horizons of *ek-stases* are a “passage of freedom.” (VI 144/IP 36) Like flesh, this freedom announces itself silently, acutely, and undeniably as different people from different places are united by its ineluctable force. Our encounter’s as arrangements of crises, traditions, and placements of material elements cuts through monadic cynicism.

Concerning the institutional nature of this passage within *flesh* and field between us, Merleau-Ponty tells us that the “relationship between logical objectivity and carnal intersubjectivity” - what we have call intercorporeality - “is precisely a *Fundierung*”: “Logical objectivity derives from carnal intersubjectivity assuming it has been forgotten as carnal intersubjectivity and carnal intersubjectivity makes this forgetfulness by wending its way to logical objectivity.” (Signs 173) And, it was our first definition of institution “in the strong sense” that hinged on the possibility of objective thought over the anonymous side of the body: “...[a] symbolic matrix that results in the openness of a field, of a future according to certain dimensions, and from this result...the possibility of a common adventure and of a history as consciousness.” (IP13)

In this way, the history of consciousness depends on the unconscious. And perception as unconscious had returned us to the field insofar as it is “not first of things

but perception of elements...of rays of the world, things which are dimensions, which are worlds...” (VI 210) That things harbor dimensions and worlds, we can say of objective contemplation as an entrance into them: “to think is not to possess the objects of thought; it is to use them to mark out a realm, to think about that which we therefore are not thinking about.” (Signs 160) Thus, the objects of contemplation as “worlds” are perpetuated in their domain by that reflective act opening their dormant invisibility or “unthought-of” element as the re-cast horizontal line which constitutes their field as a domain of knowledge. (Signs 160) Indeed, the aforementioned “common adventure and a history as consciousness” is such that reflection, not over against the unreflected but over against reflection of bodily opened *flesh* means that thought never transcends the fleshy fields from which it is sourced. That *flesh* can open in reflection and yet that reflection never escapes *flesh* suggests a compression of invisibilities, including the often interchangeable or synonymous possibility of an over-determination - institutional sequel as a given understanding of other *ek-stasis* in their temporal absence commensurate with the aforementioned passageway to certain freedoms.

Hence, there is a possibility of *fleshly* intercourse whereby we pass into one another, inhabit one another, and can consider each other’s behavior and thoughts. This compression of the invisible contingencies over against themselves, in over-determination, yields the possibility of *flesh* being glimpsed in a charged instance of compressed temporality whereby the time that is opens in witnessed temporal fissure and exposed understanding – the *Stiftung* of an institutional event or sequel:

...is being at a distance, it is the double ground of my life of consciousness, and it is what makes there be able to be *Stiftung* not only of an instant but of a

whole *system of temporal indexes* – time (already as time of the body, taximeter, which are openness upon being). (VI 173)

The field, comprised of a temporally rich “lateral kinship of all the ‘nows’” and opened in *Rückgestaltung* can draw upon and compress the “unthought-of” elements such that the stand of reflection (the *noēsis noēseōs*) can open the displaced time that is now in vibrating fissure: “...the forces of the constitutive field do not move in one direction only; they turn back upon themselves.” (Signs 173) This over-determined accomplishment/outcome upon the compression of eye and mind we had analogized with the “rogue wave” wherein the velocity of different wakes combine to point a significantly elevated crest towards a new direction by which to follow. Concerning this reorientation, we note that “[t]he field is, not an order of essences, but cultural cores (phrases, moments of thought) around which this *Nachvollzug* (reoperation) pivots.” (IP 61) And it is this pivotal moments of reoperation, reorientation, and temporal exposure that we call *institutional sequel* - that call for pause to think that shows the past and present as *Ineinander* and provides the signposting movement of experience by which to return in further continuance of a historically contingent sensibility:

Thereby by institution, we were intending here those events in an experience which endow the experience with durable dimensions, in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense, will form a thinkable sequel or history – or again events which deposit sense in me, not just as something surviving as a residue, but as the call to follow, the demand of a future. (IP x)

As a result of these findings, we found that birth could no longer be conceived in the metaphor of the *tacit cogito*, the entrance of someone from a non-being conceivable in thought. Rather, we were left with the musings of Goethe, who found himself situated in a temporally compressed historical origin wherein history was read differently: “In

other places one reads from the outside in; here we imagine we are reading from the inside-out – everything lies spread around us and also extends out from us.”⁵³ It was here that Goethe found himself born again by that which was left for him: “...and I count the day when I entered Rome as my second natal day, a true rebirth...This rebirth, which is remolding me from within.”⁵⁴

To be sure, sequel speaks of repetition under a continued thematic or rubric of sensibility, a moment drawing its meaning and understanding from prior establishment. Arendt notes that “from the viewpoint of *homo faber*, it is like a miracle, like the revelation of divinity, that meaning should have a place in this world.” (HC 236) It was the revelation or unconcealment of a divinity that we aligned with the making visible of *physis*: “something familiar and yet normally invisible...the harmonious order behind them which itself is not visible and of which nevertheless the world of appearances gives us a glimpse.” (LM 143) The earliest word for “the invisible in the midst of the appearances [*physis*]...[was] nature, which according to the Greeks was the totality of all things.” (LM 143) This nature was made visible by an approaching God or immortalizing act as the most meaningful experience a Homeric Greek could witness. Gods and acting men sharing in the same *physis* and both capable of producing *kalon* revealed nature as the appearing totality of all things. It was this revealing that was an opened spectacle cleaving between action and action, the precarious birth of being only insofar as it is that by which to follow and further act through. This was the emergence

⁵³ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Trans. Robert R. Heitner, “Italian Journey” in *Goethe: The Collected Work* (New York, NY: Princeton University Press, 1994), 107.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 109.

of the new, which like the *Stiftung* of an institutional event (experienced from within while “being at a distance” as “the double ground of my life of consciousness”), was always so by being both included in the *kalon* while equally being kept at a distance from it as its outstanding quality. (VI 173) Hence, we begin to see an analogous connection between Merleau-Ponty’s institutional event or sequel and the making visible of *physis*.

But to continue with our summary of Arendt, we had established that the conditions of this meaningful appearance were sourced in the set-in-motion *inter esse* wherein an action took impetus, satisfied the qualifications to become an *entelecheia*, and vibrated back within a web of human relations. As the highest possible human activity, action was outlined by Aristotle’s *energeia*: “activities that do not pursue an end (are *ateleis*) and leave no work behind (no *par’ autas erga*) but exhaust their full meaning in the performance itself.” (HC 206) It was in this experience of a full actuality, where “the end (*telos*) is not pursued but lies in the activity itself which therefore becomes an *entelecheia* (full reality)...[and where] the performance is the work, is *energeia* (full actuality).” (HC 206) This was why Arendt noted that the two aforementioned Aristotelian concepts (*energeia* and *entelecheia*) are interrelated: “...full actuality (*energeia*) effects and produces nothing besides itself, and full reality (*entelecheia*) has no other end besides itself. (HC 206) Within a plurality, qualified action in its fullness could mirror the full light of the *entelecheia* to which it responds, beaming forth from a background of convention in meaningful presence as the emergence of the new, the birth of being through action’s natal links.

Further, we had established that such action bearing the new held the power to save the realm of human affairs. We can recall that human affairs if passively accepted

found themselves on a merely mortal trajectory. From the viewpoint of nature in its cyclical movement our life spanning from birth to death seemed like a deviation from this common rule of eternal return. It was action as vinculum with this cyclicity that brought salvation; in its links with natal beginnings action as initiated upsurge of the conditioned *inter esse* was that “acting in” point of intersection with nature’s automatic cyclical processes – “a miracle” on the background of our mortal trajectory. (HC 247) *Physis* then, as action’s spectacular outcome and point of intersection with nature in its return was revealed to converge directly with (and take upsurge from) that *inter esse* whereby the act’s aim into our conditioned nature was equally a continued conditioning of our nature (as aligned with the *inter esse*) and our capacities to perform qualified acts: “Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence.” (HC 9) It was for this reason that birth, the entrance of the newcomer taking up that which he has inherited could save the world: “The miracle that saves the world, the realm of human affairs, from its normal ‘natural’ ruin is ultimately the fact of natality, in which the faculty of action is ontologically rooted...” (HC 247)

Cyclicity was extended in *The Life of the Mind*. Away from, but not abandoning the earlier Homeric emphasis on the quality of spectacular appearance, contemplation of being became a sufficient means of engagement with the immortal turned eternal. Meaningful appearance was subsequently sublimated through its own extracted displacement by philosophic reflection away from the public space of a plurality and into a withdrawn cycle between one and oneself - the *noēsis noēseōs* situating meaning as the mnemonic and metaphorical return of thought in its own

temporally conditioned nature. Thus, we were able to extend this being conditioned and the prolongation of a mortal trajectory by a natal “miracle” within the thinking activity itself – what we called the *kalon* of thinking. This was because we found that from the position of the life of the mind, if thinking were a cognitive enterprise it would find itself on a mortal trajectory analogous to those of human affairs as circumvented by action’s intersection with nature’s circular movement: “If thinking were a cognitive enterprise it would have to follow a rectilinear motion, starting from the quest for its object and ending with cognition of it.” (LM 124) Its cognitive achievement as outlined in the means-to-ends structure of fabrication would conclude its own motion having extinguished within the ends outside itself.

Indeed fabricating man, *homo faber*, considered it a miracle that meaning should have a place in the world. In contradistinction to cognition or fabrication then, “where the light by which to judge the finished product is provided by the image or model perceived beforehand”, thinking, withdrawn in-itself with no metaphor for its sheer cyclical activity except for the sensation of being alive, flashes in endless metaphor like the “light that illuminates processes of action...[appearing] only at their end.”: (HC 192/VI Iv)

Aristotle’s circular motion taken together with the life metaphor suggest a quest for meaning that for man as a thinking being accompanies life and ends only in death. The circular motion is a metaphor drawn from the life process, which though it goes from birth to death, also turns in circles as long as man is alive. (LM 124)

Having reviewed our findings, we see in the *noēsis noēseōs* an important point of return, at the threshold of those liminal concepts of life and death defined only in opposition, and it is at this point where we must locate institutional sequel (an over-

determined instant of exposed invisible contingencies as the temporal index to the time that is), qualified action (the convergence of *energeia* and *entelecheia* beaming forth from a background of convention in meaningful presence at an instance of revealed *physis*/the birth of being), and our qualified insertion into nature as a natal miracle or birth.

We need to understand the expansion of appearing *physis* towards its sublimation/expansion within the contemplation of eternal being as carried over in an *institution* of nature, considering nature's cyclical and eternal return of an appearing nature within the *noēsis noēseōs* of thought. We need to understand a shift from that between-(wo)men to the between-(wo)men inserted in one's very reflection, between one and oneself opening a kind of *inter esse* from withdrawn anonymity which does not fail to carry the world and others along with it. *Physis*, the revealed harmonious orders of the invisible in the midst of the visible, as an early word for nature in its eternal cyclical return, is not external to us but becomes imbued in the very *noēsis noēseōs* of the thinking ego in metaphorical re-turn; the endless and invisible circular motion of thought, dealing in absences mnemonically returned to the present as metaphor, sharing in its own eternal re-cycling that *appears* from nowhere, must like action in its relation to birth, "look like a miracle." (HC 236) Like *flesh*, the *inter esse* between us is something that we never transcend in the withdrawal of the mind. Rather, we have a withdrawal from the public space of action to accessing the anonymity of ourselves which like Arendt's "who" remains in-between persons. Within the *noēsis noēseōs* we locate an important point of return – not action in its public appearance, but also not an entire departure from action and its outcome as witnessed *physis* or the *Stiftung* of institutional sequel.

To begin the convergence of our two authors we begin by putting them on a common term indicative of visibility and appearance: nature. Considering cyclical nature's appearing at *physis* and the cyclical and appearing return of the *noēsis noēseōs*, we can now turn to Merleau-Ponty's revision of Schelling's cyclical *Naturphilosophie*: "[t]he circularity of knowing places us not in front of, but rather in the middle of the Absolute." (NA 47) Indeed, Arendt notes that Schelling was seized "with vertigo at the rim of the abyss...suppressed by the insight that 'Being is necessary, [made so] that is, by the absolute affirmation of Being in cognition.'" (LM 146) But *via* the above dissemination of the Absolute, Merleau-Ponty recuperates Schelling's important cyclical contribution: "Just as our intuition is an *ek-stasis*, by which we try to situate ourselves in the absolute, so too must the Absolute leave itself and make itself into the World." (NA 47) Merleau-Ponty continues:

Schelling presents the appearance of human being as a species of the re-creation of the world, as the advent of an opening. By this opening, Nature, when it succeeds in creating human being, finds itself overcome by something new. But the inverse is also true. Not only must Nature become vision, but human being must also become Nature: 'Philosophers, in their visions became Nature.'" (NA 47)

It is with this recuperation that we put Arendt and Merleau-Ponty on similar terms, insofar as nature for both authors becomes a part of our being conditioned. There is first "a sort of natural teleology (our senses function by the institution of Nature)." (NA 226) There is a "...circularity between nature and persons" as the "...*urpräsentierbare...the whole of the world...and as such it encompasses persons who, in another connection in which they are expressively made explicit, encompass Nature as the object they constitute in common.*" (Signs 171 italics mine)

Being then, is not “necessary, [made so] that is, by the absolute affirmation of Being in cognition” as Schelling suspected. (LM 146) It is not what is in itself for someone, but what “is ready to be developed according to another becoming of knowledge, like a constellation whose figure would be continuously remade according to [a] project which appoints such changes as possible.” (IP 61) It is this development and change that we link to the aforementioned “connection in which they [persons] are expressively made explicit”, at that moment when in taking a stand to oneself in thought, “Nature becomes the noema it has always been, nature reintegrated into the consciousness which has always constituted it through and through.” (Signs 171/NA 162) This moment we have called *physis*, the birth of being at the exposure of our conditioning, included but being kept at a distance as part of its outstanding quality. This is synonymous with that institutional event wherein the time that is exposes an index of temporality proper to it: “The ‘Institution of Nature’...makes us have ‘natural judgments,’ that is, ‘to interpret’ the action of things as if we divinely knew...” (NA 222)

Insofar as the *noēsis noēseōs* never abandons its earlier Homeric emphasis of the appearance of *physis* in its harmonious orders, that its endless and invisible circular motion equally and metaphorically appears “like a miracle”, we can reconsider Arendt’s reflection on action in terms of circular thought when she says: “the smallest act in the most limited circumstance bears the seed of the same boundlessness, because one deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation.” (HC 236/190) Indeed, the smallest thought from the most limited circumstance and contingency can suffice to change its very invisible constellation and opened field “according to [a] project which appoints such changes as possible.” (IP 61) Just as thought never leaves the *flesh* from

which it is sourced, thought never leave the conditioned *inter esse* from which it withdraws only by carrying that between men and the possibilities of appearance along with it. Hence, Merleau-Ponty's "...whenever I try to understand myself, the whole fabric of the perceptible world comes too, and with it comes the others who are caught in it" can be seen as synonymous with Arendt's quoting of Cato: "Never is he more active when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself." (Signs 15/HC 325)

Our first convergence between Arendt and Merleau-Ponty puts us on common terms, a shared sense of nature, not merely subjugated to man's critical gaze but where man comes to inhabit nature as his being conditioned in his very vision. Nature is lodged in the dynamic of making visible, is the becoming of this dynamic's very outcome, and finally, is that exposed in totality at the birth of being. It is the latter of these as the "advent of an opening" wherein exists the possibility of "acting-in" to the eternal cycle of nature appearing anew and finds itself overcome by something new in its very being. We have said that of this conditioned nature that thought never transcends it, never leaves its grounds found in the *inter esse*. Indeed, "[w]hoever understood this also understood *Naturphilosophie* is in no way a theory, but rather a *life* within Nature." (NA 47)

Having made our first convergence by putting Merleau-Ponty and Arendt on a common term locating that appearing point of our being, our becoming conditioned, and the birth of the new, we move toward the invisibilities upon which this appearing visibility is differentiated. Our focus turns to the invisible aspects within the work of Arendt compared to the invisibility of *flesh* upon which the visible is differentiated. This allows us to reconsider the just explored "advent of an opening" as what we will see in

Arendt as the present in “metaphorical divergence”, a shift comparable to the decentering of an institution at its *Stiftung* or institution in its “nascent state.” (IP 7)

Traced throughout Arendt, we saw a shifting invisible quotient. In *The Human Condition*, invisibles included the unpredictable outcomes accounted for by the endless process character of initiated action and one’s own “who” this very action disclosed: “like the *daimōn* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters.” (HC 179) This suggested a common structure of deferral within plurality outlined the *inter esse* as determining the qualifications of action and its actor’s subsequent identity in deferred negation to witnessing others. These “uncertain certainties” indicative of action laid the foundation for the possibility of a revealed miracle, an instance of immortality dependent on reification to sustain a cyclical return in the finite present.

And yet, by virtue of our mortality, the movement of a life spanning between birth and death, our qualified action as *vinculum* with nature’s eternally returning cycle and as aligned with the *inter esse*, is never without its own trajectory. The trajectory between conditioned cycling and immortalizing acts is made clear by Anne O’Byrne: “the temporality of ancient political immortals stands out against the cyclical temporality of natural life, refusing to be folded back into a natural flow and instead forging forward at a tangent to the circle.” (N&F 82)

It is here at the point of this ever important tangent where we locate action in its natal intersection with nature or the “advent of [it’s] opening”, opening a kind of

appearing divinity on earth by moving forward while recoiling backward. (NA 47) The circling return of our conditioned nature is seen to be an elliptical orbit dragged along by the forward forging and interrupting tangent of action in their displaced intersection at the emergence of the new. Action as *entelecheia* is only so by its intersection to the orbiting nature/*inter esse* such that the tangent is not stubbornly headlong but bent by the curvature of the latter's cyclical return that provides the new in its very difference. It is this zero point intersection between tangent and cycle where our aforementioned miracle is made, nature's visible "advent of an opening", the aforementioned threshold of those liminal concepts (birth and death defined only in their opposition), and a re-cycling recuperation from an otherwise mortal trajectory. (NA 47)

Institutionally, the visible intersection of this tangent as appearing from invisibility is a sequel resuming what was in dis-continuity. It is the signaled new from the contingency of the old in its very departure from it. Thus our aforementioned Arendtian "miracles" (an appearance of a harmonious order or of a timely and succinct thought that resonates through a sedimented logos in its very compression) are the visible intersecting of tangent (action and emergence of the new), and orbit (as those exposed contingences from which the new emerges), pulling one another to lay the foundational running route of the present by way of their meeting; the conditioned re-cycling of the *inter esse* as a certain nature that centripetally orbits the time that is. Anne O'Byrne agrees when she says that this "forging forward at a tangent to the circle" is "the temporality of the Olympian gods, who unlike the later Christian God, were in fact creatures subject to time." (N&F 82) For noted in our second chapter to be expanded on in the subsequent section, it was only those acts in their full *temporality* as full

entelecheia which stood out as shining examples of an operating institutional ethos, suffered like a pathos, and to be followed in further revealing of the divine. This intersection and interplay of tangent and cycle made visible is the miracle which reveals immortality, a type of eternity as the very infinite in a finite present that is “forging forward.”

This “forging forward” of action finds itself in relation to the invisible activity of the thinking ego (despite lacking public appearance). For as we saw in *The Life of the Mind*, the cyclical return of the *noēsis noēseōs* as the quest for meaning was an expansion of the cyclical return of revealed *physis*. The *noēsis noēseōs* equally provided us with the since shifted quality of sequel in contradistinction to perfect repetition by virtue of its own invisible characteristics as seen in the blind bard. As blind, he sings only what Mnemosyne, “who watches over Remembrance, has put into his mind. The Muse gave him good and bad: she deprived him of eyesight and gave him sweet song.” (LM 132)

The meaning of an act or event while it is happening is revealed only when it has come to a close and has disappeared: “[R]emembrance, by which you make present to your mind what actually is absent and past, reveals the meaning in the form of a story.” (LM 133) The storyteller “is not involved in the appearances; he is blind, shielded against the visible, in order to be able to “see” the invisible...[W]hat he sees with blind eyes and puts into words is the story, not the deed itself and not the doer.” (LM 133) Thus, the basic structure of the thinking deals with things that are absent or invisible. It deals with experiences “that have disappeared from my senses...[to be] summoned up and made present to my mind” only by having been de-sensed and solicited back in re-contextualization by the current sensorial experience that harkens to it. (LM 85)

Recall then, that invisible absence made metaphorically present by the forever invisible activity of the thinking ego is our second example of a “miracle” away from a dying trajectory. Continued from the *physis* of the Homeric Greeks, we discover that thought, making what is absent metaphorically appear qualifies as that located divergent tangent to what would otherwise be a stagnant repeating cycle in exactness and decline. Metaphor in its displaced return achieves equilibrium between the sensorial experience and invisible made visible divergence.

Metaphorical with the experience of life itself, the thinking ego’s sheer activity bends back in withdrawal in an anachronistic scan and climax, providing metaphor to bridge the forever invisible mental activity with speech suitable for the world of appearances: “And it is in this context that the mind’s language by means of metaphor returns to the world of visibilities to illuminate and elaborate further what cannot be seen but can be said.” (LM 109) Institutional itself, language as “[a]nalogies, metaphors, and emblems...are the threads by which the mind holds on to the world even when, absentmindedly, it has lost direct contact with it, and they guarantee the unity of human experience.” It is for this reason Merleau-Ponty tells us “we live in a world where speech is an institution” and Arendt tells us that “the end of thinking can never be an intuition” needing speech to make itself manifest. (PhP 213/LM 121) Thus, “that the world of appearances reminds us of things non-apparent, [and] may be seen as a kind of ‘proof’ that mind and body, thinking and sense-experience, the invisible and the visible, belong together, are ‘made’ for each other, as it were.” (LM 109)

In this way, consciousness and language are found on the side of institution and no longer located on a transcendental plane as with the example of the *tacit cogito*. We

are all subject to the “paradoxical condition of a living being that, though itself a part of the world of appearances, is in possession of a faculty, the ability to think, that permits the mind to withdraw from the world without ever being able to leave it or transcend it.” (LM 45) Our reflections (never against the unreflected and only over against reflection) never leave the *flesh* or *inter esse* from whence they came and to which they return.

It is here we can finalize our comparison of Arendt’s invisibilities to those of Merleau-Ponty. As we summarized above, it was the synergetic body in its temporal recessional and unconscious index that opened *flesh* in its very absence. The subsequently opened field bore its spatio-temporal horizon beyond within experience as these very invisibilities on which perception and thought were differentiated - *ek-stases* which opened their invisibilities toward oncoming visibility. Arendt’s invisibility involved a latent, metaphorical return from oblivion, manifesting meaning and bearing the potential to shine upon a sort of revealed *physis* within the *kalon* of thought (simultaneously imbuing man anew in his very Nature). In this way, appearance, or the making visible for both authors is contingent on invisible sources. For Arendt, this invisible source is within the *inter esse* wherein aimed action resulted in a differed and ephemeral “who.” This source was expanded into the invisible source of thought revealing to ourselves a metaphorical representation of our “who” as already explored in Kant (“in the consciousness of myself in the sheer thinking activity, I am the thing itself although nothing of myself is thereby given for thought”⁵⁵). Merleau-Ponty sourced this invisible background within the *flesh*, on the side of shared anonymity or

⁵⁵ Immanuel Kant, Trans. Norman Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York, NY: MacMillan, 1963), B429

unconsciousness. Hence we find our “who” not in ourselves but in what becomes our unconscious returned to us only in and through others. And insofar as the fleshly fields opened by reflection could never transcend the invisible source of *flesh*, and the *noēsis noēseōs* of thought never abandoned its ties with the *inter esse* at the appearance of *physis*, we can merge both central concepts with that quote of Cato closing Arendt’s seminal work: “Never is he more active than when he does nothing, never is he less alone than when he is by himself.” (HC 325)

We have demonstrated *flesh* and *inter esse* as both bespeaking a fruitful dialectic insofar as their commensurate temporal invisibilities provided for the visible in its intimate relationship with nature. By now opening both *flesh* and *inter esse* in their inner workings, we may suggest that an institutional event is recycled in its meaning by the structure of metaphor; the institutional *Stiftung* as metaphorical for re-birth and aligned with the only working metaphor for the thinking ego, the conditioned sensation of being alive. Of institutional sequel, those “events in an experience which endow the experience with a durable dimension” while providing the “demand of a future”, we can now advance the claim that they are synonymous with the metaphorical divergence implied in the works of Arendt. The divergent nature of metaphor, as a distancing between instances, will be seen as a tangent from an otherwise exact replication - the emergence or birth of the new rather than exact fabrication or duplication. It is the metaphorical quality of this return and reactivation that is the distancing divergence constituting the trajectory around which institution pivots in its ever cyclical orbiting and present intersection as “institution in its nascent state.” (IP 7) Yeats’ poem cited above commences as such: “Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear

the falconer; Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.”⁵⁶ Indeed, some “revelation is at hand,” surely “the Second Coming” conjured by that “*spiritus mundi*,” or what we may substitute with Kant’s “*mundus intelligibilis*”; the instant when one “origin” (that sphinx) becomes centered otherwise, “slouches towards” a subsequent “origin” - “toward Bethlehem” and the birth of Jesus of Nazareth as the embodiment of promise, who like a promise between men, bore with his birth the emergence of the new and the salvation of the world from ruin.

⁵⁶ W.B. Yeats, “The Second Coming” in *The Collected Poems of W.B. Yeats*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2000), 159.

3:2 *The Shared Temporal Structure of Institutional Sequel and the nunc stans*

A certain minor light may still/ Lean incandescent/ Out of kitchen table or chair/ As if a celestial being took/ Possession of the most obtuse object now and then/ Thus hollowing an interval/ otherwise inconsequent/...miracles occur/ if you care to call those spasmodic/ tricks of radiance miracles...

-Sylvia Plath, *Black Rook in Rainy Weather*⁵⁷

Having made commensurate *flesh* and *inter esse*, our accumulated reflections have suggested the need for a proper analytic comparison between the momentary temporal structure of the two at the emergence of the new in the present; between invisible *flesh* opening fields pregnant with the possibility of institutional sequel and the instances of miraculous newness sourced from an *inter esse* expanded within the metaphorical return of thought. In this section it is our intention to first summarize the temporal structure of institutional sequel or institution in its “nascent state.” (IP 7) Compared to this will be an outlining of those pivotal instances of the eternal found in thinking, what Arendt borrows and modifies from Augustine as the *nunc stans*. Having shown both as involved in absence/invisibility, first as a quasi-eternity through “an exchange of my times lived between the instants” and secondly as an eternity or gap between past and future, we will relate the two in their implications for the previously established divergent metaphor. (IP 7) This hollowing out of the present is required to further our conviction that institutional sequel is a reformulation of natality in the Arendtian sense.

⁵⁷ Sylvia Plath, “Black Rook in Rainy Weather” in *A Broadview Anthology of Poetry*, ed. Amanda Goldrick-Jones and Herbert Rosengarten (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1994), 777.

In our chronological tracing of Merleau-Ponty's thought, we employed the term field in an unspecified or unengendered way. We did not designate a specific field, but were "guided by the idea that we can discern, in whatever field we consider, a singular mode of the structuring of events," events, "while being wholly locatable 'in' time...show themselves to be constitutive of a time that is properly temporal." (IP x)

That is, despite a multiplicity of opened fields in relation to communal *flesh*, the institutional routes peripherally structuring the former and soliciting us towards the cast horizon all function in one common temporal structure. This "properly temporal" points to the spatio-temporality constitutive of *flesh*, fields, and foremost perceptual experience. We recall it was the visible in differentiation upon the invisible whereby the latter (comprised of temporal symbolic matrices drawing inner and outer horizons to the field in a chiaroscuro character), offered unconscious solicitations of institutions that open before the world. Over against this, thought introduced the historical adventure of consciousness indicative of institutional dis-continuance. It was between these two that we understood institutional events as the reoperation of the institution whereby the time that is can "present the index of an interiority of time." (IP x)

It would appear that outlining the moment of institutional sequel with time itself - "[t]ime [as] the very model of institution [that which is and demands to be; it has to become what it is]" - leads us into a paradox. It is unclear how time is composed of an amalgamation of its *existentia* and temporal fragments if those parts are interchangeable and do not already bear within them the whole. But recall Merleau-Ponty's comments concerning the encompassing example of Nautre: "Just as our intuition is an *ek-stasis*, by which we try to situate ourselves in the absolute, so too must the Absolute leave itself and

make itself into the World.” (NA 47) Having demonstrated our being both inside and outside ourselves, both situating ourselves in the absolute and the Absolute making itself into our world, we find “two symbolic systems in which each makes sense of the other...connected not through commitment in the event, but through echoes, exchanges, symbolic accumulations.” (IP 15) Comprehension of institutional events in all their temporal interiority lies only in the inter-reference of the time that is to its temporal parts, in their implicit symbolic concordance understood in the convergent and contingent instant that is lived; “...the red is what it is only by connecting up from its place with other reds about it, with which it forms a constellation...[a] punctuation in the field of red things...”, and this constellation from *flesh* is glimpsed in those institutional moments of over-determination making such an interiority clear.

In place of a metaphysical privileging or predominance of either whole or parts we concede in everyday perception the “whole in the parts” insofar as parts are a lateral passageway recoiling/receding towards the invisible whole dragged from behind - a project never satisfied but not without its contingent and referential *flesh*. Hence, in the differentiated perceptual there is “immediate non-presence, but perspective understood as opening it’s beyond, leading to it by its very thickness, [which presupposes relief, obstacles, configuration].” (IP 6) This involves a “non-decisionary project, not chosen, [an] intention without subject: living. The project [implies the] existence of norms or levels...upright objects or not, paths” and it is this project we attribute to the unconscious anonymity of ever thickened *flesh* left unfinished in it navigated routes. (IP 6) Because this project endlessly attempts to address itself by turning back into its own invisibility upon which it is differentiated, Merleau-Ponty claims: “...freedom and truth are

[indissoluble]. The freedom of pure negativity is a signification”, that is not nothing but is indeed meaningful. (IP 15) There is “truly openness and truth as a mystery.”⁵⁸ (IP 15)

These institutional contingencies of the field as “ensemble of my body’s routes” that lead beyond by recoiling back in upright visible verticality clarify much about the temporal structure of institution. (VI 189) Time is not an objective envelopment that flows up from behind; we are not wholly consumed. Likewise time is not the inverse, enveloped by my fallacious non-being; “an idealist reversal as the consciousness of time, a movement of negation of the past, pure in itself, in the name of a future which, itself, is not.” (IP 7) Rather, “[t]he past is not a ‘real’ fragment to be added to the present – *Nacheinander der Jetztpunkte*... There must be a presence of the past which is absence; it is necessary that it be a certain absence.” (IP 193) There is a “[l]ateral kinship of all the ‘nows’” which thought in objective differentiation from the “unthought-of” never transcends in its attempt to scan and parse amongst the times it is. (Signs 160) Time, the past and present as *Ineinander* and navigated in the instances between, make traversable this temporal chiasmatic relationships: “...from me to the past [is] a thickness which is not made of a series of perspectives or of the consciousness of their relations...” (IP 7)

⁵⁸ Listen to Paul Auster: “What he like about these [mystery] books was their sense of plenitude and economy. In the good mystery there is nothing wasted, no sentence, no word that is not significant. And even if it is not significant, it has the potential to be so – which amounts to the same thing. The world of the book comes to life, seething with possibilities, with secrets and contradictions. Since everything seen or said, even the slightest, most trivial thing, can bear a connection to the outcome of the story, nothing must be overlooked. Everything becomes essence; the centre of the book shifts with each event that propels it forward. The centre then is everywhere, and no circumference can be drawn until the book has come to an end.” This is clearly comparable to the light of action: “In contradistinction to fabrication, where the light by which to judge the finished product is provided beforehand...the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes, appears only at their end, frequently when all the participants are dead.” (HC 192) Thus, freedom and truth as commensurate with action are only illuminated retrospectively at the end of the project. Paul Auster, “City of Glass” in *The New York Trilogy*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1990), 9.

Time then, "...is total because it is partial, it is a field. One can speak of a quasi-eternity not by the escaping of instants towards the non-being of the future, but by the exchange of my times lived between the instants." (IP 7)

This "quasi-eternity" as instances lived between temporal exchanges (and as indicative of our capacity to move towards a horizon in its partial-totality) is "...the originary trans-temporality...neither decline and decadence nor moreover the presence of the future in the present (Permanent Revolution), but it is institution in the nascent state." (IP 7) The "nascent moment" is the lived instant opened in transaction, the aforementioned "advent of an opening" wherein nature in its accumulation becomes vision and the "human beings must also become Nature" - a convergence and interlocking of dormant symbolic matrices through behavior or thought. (NA 47) The present is one's spatio-temporal transitivity before the totality of the crystallized world and one's very displacement through this crystallized outcome is the result of this transitivity through symbolic convergence. It is in the life lived between these instances that we can locate our pause to think, when thinking compressed over against this symbolic convergence becomes a *Stiftung* or institution in its very sequel.

This pause to think was indicative of institution as the "possibility of a common adventure and of a history of consciousness" from a "symbolic matrix that results in the openness of [this] field, of a future according to certain dimensions." (IP 13) Our institutional adventure then begins from an unconscious symbolic matrix, a "non-figurative inner framework" or an invisible unconscious "constellation wherein our future is read," pushed up into the time that is now. (VI 180) The present perceptual punctuation of an object residing over a field connects up from its place with other

fragmentary phenomena about it “with which it forms a constellation...” (VI 132) It is by virtue of a compression within these unconscious connections that such constellations operate in the manner of “symbolic” or “existential matrices.” Through them, the time that is in its very constellation is activated or run through such that the output reconfigures the very coordinated constellation by means of its perceptual outcome, “[conforming] to an internal logic of which no clear view can be attained, because the course of events depends on the joint action of fragmentary phenomena.” (SMIM 114) Impossible to predict, these appearing events are recognized in a latency to their having been suffered, revealing that which was.

Such reconfigurations within perception indeed solicited a pause for thought: “[w]hat defines human institution? A past which creates a question, puts it in reserve, makes a situation that is indefinitely open.” (IP 22) And insofar as thought or reflection as taking this question up was demonstrated to be not over against the unreflected but over against reconfiguring reflection of both body and institutionally established thought, the present was outlined by yet another definition of institution according to our common adventure: “Human institution: [it is] chained integration, a whirlwind where everything converges, where everything succeeds; the *Deckung* of an anticipation and of a regression and the founding of a true now that is full.” (IP 22) We have “past-future relation: symbolic matrix” as the intersection of what is between tenses, but not tangible in itself – indeed a gap in the aforementioned exchange. (IP 20)

It is an intersection hollowed out in transaction where we can live thoughtfully in-between to reconfigure what was. It is a gap from this enfolding movement in time, enveloping-enveloped, not merely horizontal head long into the future, but also

encountering “existence of norms or levels...[and] upright objects” as verticality, perception, and thoughtful consideration. (IP 6) Thus, the very combination or perpendicular intersection of perception (reconfigured in its temporal constellation) and thought (bearing its own institutional constellation), yields the present not as in-itself but as a kind of *zwischen*; given yet with vision diffracted into multiple places of reflection like multiple eyes looking back from a diamond. These complex intersections of the “exchanges of my times lived between the instants” are indeed a “quasi-eternity” in continual reorientation towards a demand of a future. (IP 7)

Listen now to Arendt: “Eternity is in the now.” (LM 204) To understand the implications of this statement we must specify within Arendt two sense of time; “time understood as spontaneity, as natality in which a new beginning is made possible today” as over against “the very nature of time itself, understood as the past and the future that make possible the present.”⁵⁹ It is the first of these our reflections have aligned with action in its natal links and with the appearance of *physis* which, according to Antonio Calcagno, “marks a new promise.”⁶⁰ The latter we have located in the *inter esse*, drawn within the *noēsis noēseōs* which “condition the very existence of the human being.”⁶¹ The first is a time of natality which marking “a new promise” corresponds “exactly to the existence of a freedom which was given under the condition of non-sovereignty.” (HC 244) The second notion of time between past and future makes possible the appearance of

⁵⁹ Antonio Calcagno, “The Role of Forgetting in Our Experience of Time: Augustine of Hippo and Hannah Arendt” in *Parrhesia: Journal of Critical Philosophy*, Volume 13, 2011, 14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 14.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* 14.

the former as well as its signaled return. Finally, it is the latter as aligned with the thinking activity that reveals time in its deep temporal structure. It is the experience of the thinking ego, limited in its visibility by its only adequate metaphor as the sensation of being alive, which leads Arendt to borrow and modify an eternity of now from the *nunc stans* of St. Augustine.

Originally conceived, the *nunc stans* (or “standing now”) of St. Augustine was “the eternity of the mind of God or the eternal omnipresence of God” touched upon by humanity “only when the arrow infinite future possibility of anticipations meets with the infinite trajectory of the past as uncovered in memory.”⁶² For St. Augustine, this eternity was a posthumous promise, likely derived from the “incomparable *swiftness*” indicative of the experience of thinking ego itself. (LM 45) This is because, for St. Augustine, it was the experience of the memorial past contained within the present which was proof of, and drew the limitations to, the afterlife for man. Those who had passed would not attain the full eternity of timeless omnipresence God but would be limited as to their inclusion to the fully eternal by a continued bearing of their once lived finitude. Upon death, one “will experience eternity as promised by God” but only by continuing “to bear the finitude of their being...[and] therefore incapable of experiencing eternity in the way an infinite, omniscient, and omnipotent God does.”⁶³

But it is not without coincidence that Plato, who considered contemplation of the remembered eternal *Forms* (*anamnesis*) a “pursuing death”, that it was between past and

⁶² *Ibid.* 14.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 15.

future where St. Augustine contemplating the nature of memory touched upon the eternity of the afterlife, and finally that Arendt in a reduction of St. Augustine's transcendental outlook observes: "The gap between past and future opens only in reflection, whose subject matter is what is absent – either what has already disappeared or what has not yet appeared. (LM 79/206) Like reaching into and carrying that which came before the birth of the now and the eternity promised posthumously, "reflection draws these absent 'regions' into the mind's presence." (LM 206) In the reflective withdrawal of thought we locate a combination of the eternal or infinite over against the sensorial finitude of living experience, metaphorical for the experience of the thinking ego itself:

In other words, the location of the thinking ego in time would be the in-between of past and future, the present, this mysterious and slippery now, a mere gap in time, toward which nevertheless the more solid tenses of past and future are directed insofar as they denote which is no more and that which is not yet. (LM 208)

"Man lives in this in-between" called the present or eternal "now" which although hollowing a gap in time, never leaves the living world; the past as "no more" and the future as "not yet" "is not historical datum; it seems to be coeval with the existence of man on earth." (LM 210) In thought, the present "arises with and through the clash of the past and the future; it is an antagonistic struggle" opening an eternal gap that "occurs as a particular experience of the present, as a place where one is no longer conscious of time."⁶⁴ Not eternity as a conceived boundary deemed unthinkable, this timelessness is truly unthinkable because "it indicates the collapse of all temporal dimensions...[The] *nunc stans*...gathers the absent tenses, the not-yet and not-more, together into its own

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

presence.” (LM 212) Thus, the present as an appearing presence is differentiated upon that which does not appear, the forever absent and invisible thinking activity and its gathered tenses that are not out of time but contingent on their very temporality.

Hence, Arendt’s present as appearing is aligned with those natal “miracles” that bring forward that which is absent in its eternal invisible gap. As the possibility of the natal and mortal threshold (indistinguishable at their very limits), this present harkens to our aforementioned important point of return where the liminal concepts of life and death (defined only in their opposition) were outlined as where we would locate sequel (an over-determined instant of exposed invisible contingencies as the temporal index to the time that is), qualified action (the convergence of *energeia* and *entelecheia* beaming forth from a background of convention in meaningful presence at an instance of *physis* and as the birth of the new), and our insertion into nature as a natal miracle.

The convergence of these liminal concepts is precisely the divergent point of that aforementioned tangent to a circle which nevertheless draws the entire centripetal orbiting of being conditioned along with it. A place of continual motion, the opened gap as an eternity between tenses is “everlasting change.” (LM 208) It is because this structure is not transcendental to time and yet not stationary within it, that “[t]he present is described as a ‘diagonal’ that intersects or transverses the past and the future”; a diagonal trajectory of divergence in the eternal gap pivotally decentering the

aforementioned Arendtian times of natal spontaneity over against the deep structure of time itself.⁶⁵

Our earlier reflections have located this birthed divergence at the opening of *physis*, nature as the normally invisible made visible and as the totality of all thing through which the new makes its appearance as distinguished from the old upon which it is sourced. Our reflections expanded this divergence of the new within the metaphorical return of thought, appearing from a withdrawn timelessness reminding us that the visible and invisible are “‘made’ for each other.” (LM 109) And insofar as the *nunc stans* demonstrates this intimate relationship between the visible and invisible, we also acknowledge it as the place of transitivity towards displacement in-between all the intersections we have laid out above; our spectacular intersection with nature in its eternal cycle, of the visible tangent to an orbiting invisible contingency as our nature, and Merleau-Ponty’s suggested lived instances between an exchange of times in quasi-eternity.

Finally, this present gap is whereby a linear continuity of the past is lost: “What you then are left with is still the past, but a *fragmented* past, which has lost its certainty of evaluation.” (LM 212) As a metaphorical distancing from its primarily sensorial source, the tangent to a circle can never be an exact cyclical repetition or re-presentation but recoils in its present departure to return bearing the gifts of its newly accumulated temporal contingency in re-contextualization: it is “the infinity of possible meanings” precisely because of this non-linear fragmentation and “exchanges of my times lived

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 14.

between the instants” such that “the identification between them [is] the interference and static of the relations of filiation.”⁶⁶ (IP 7) This is why Calcagno reminds us that “[t]hinking makes visible that which is invisible; reflection and imagination allow de-sensed and de-materialized things to appear. But time lets what appears in thought...have movement; time places them into various relations.”⁶⁷ It is equally why institution as departing from while returning into of the absence of *flesh* is, described in a different context, “discontinuous, since each layer is made from forgetting the preceding one. It is continuous from one end to the other because this forgetting is not simply absence.” (Signs 176) Proceeding by its internal sense which “induces the external sense...it is open, because it is divergence in relation to a norm of sense, *difference*”, displacement, or fragmentation. (IP 11)

Here we equate the temporal structures of our two thinkers by recalling that it was the power of reflection to open and scan a field within *flesh*, to seek within its anonymous and unconscious invisibility a metaphor as the possibility of traversal within the opened field, spatial or otherwise. Comparable to Arendt’s timeless gap opened by reflection is a “past-future relation: symbolic matrix” as the hollowed intersection of what is exchanged between tenses and made good by “[a] sort of existential eternity by means of self-interpretation” that the very “standing now” provides.’ (IP 49) It is then that, over layered with thought, the institutional moment possibly pivots to become “centered otherwise” - a decentering indicative of that “tangent to a circle” or diverging “diagonal

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 17.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 16.

trajectory” provided by mnemonic re-appearance from the otherwise invisible source of the life of the mind. Indeed, this makes not only the timeless eternal gap of the *nunc stans* commensurate with Merleau-Ponty’s hollowed out and lived instants between the “exchange of my times”, but allows us to further link Arendt’s “[e]ternity is in the now” with Merleau-Ponty’s “quasi-eternity” wherein “[t]ime is the model of institution...neither decadence...nor anticipation...but it is on time, the time that it is.” (IP 7/LM 204)

We now understand this “standing now” is not so much epistemological confirmation as much as it is continued epistemological creation in its very divergence towards the future which never fails to include its contingencies, like a work of art or a book; “...a series of institutions” proceeding by its internal sense which “induces the external sense because it is open, because it is divergence in relation to a norm of sense...” (IP 11)

With these temporal structures compared we conclude with the following: institutional sequel is the displaced and returned point of an asymmetrical repetition ultimately outlined by metaphor, provided for by that divergent gap or absence in the present and understood as caused by the compressed activity of the thinking ego. Indeed, metaphor, the only product of the sheer activity of the thinking ego whose only adequate exemplification is the sensation of life itself, moves on a tangent of accumulation simultaneously forward towards the demand of the future and back into the very thickness of *flesh* or the *inter esse* that is between persons. It is the movement of return to ourselves “of ‘re-entering ourselves,’ St. Augustine said – is as if rent by an inverse movement which it *elicits*.” (Signs 161)

3:3 Making our Way to Birth

“No single event can awaken in us a stranger totally unknown to us. To live is to slowly be born.”

-Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras*⁶⁸

Making our way to birth, we now will take up our prior convergences and reflections to address the mechanisms of divergence or decentering indicative of the present in its established absence, indicating the *Nachvollzug* or reoperation of an institution in sequel, a moment of miraculous appearance metaphorical or otherwise, and finally the birth of being. An exploration of this mechanism leads us to see that birth, by way of the couple that conceives, satisfies the preconditions for action merging *energeia* and *entelecheia* to reveal *physis* while simultaneously centering otherwise the institution into which the borne is inaugurated. In alignment with our thesis, birth will be shown to be an “institution of a future” and institutional in its very sequel as a re-birth. (IP 8) Finally, we will conclude our project by returning to our abandoned natal analogy left at the end of our first chapter in the example Goethe in Rome.

Our second chapter outlined the appearance of *physis* as the birth of being through an action performed. Like that mortal trajectory of human affairs moving from birth to death and thwarted by action’s spectacular appearance in an intersection with nature’s cyclical rule, we had the opportunity in a structural comparison to distinguish the rectilinear motion of mere cognition from the thinking ego’s cyclical quest for meaning: “Aristotle’s circular motion (*noēsis noēseōs*), taken together with the life metaphor

⁶⁸ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace & Co. 1942), Pg. 41

suggests a quest for meaning that for man as a thinking being accompanies life and ends only in death” turning in circles as long as man is alive. (LM 124) Insofar as meaning was provided by thought in its mnemonic return within the present, we can consider the previously established tangential and diagonal divergence of this quest:

...man, who himself has an ‘origin’, his birth and his death, and therefore stands at any given moment between them; this in-between is called the present...which we can conceive of cyclically as well as in the form of rectilinear motion without ever being able to conceive of an absolute beginning or absolute end – into time as we know it. (LM 203)

Comparable to the instant of appearing *physis*, continuing and coincidental within this divergent timeless gap, the thinking activity does not terminate in an accomplishment of meaning: “If thinking is an activity...[such that] the only adequate metaphor for it...is the sensation of being alive, then...all questions concerning the aim or purpose of thinking are as unanswerable as questions about the aim or purpose of life.” (LM 197) Thought may provide meaning for a quest its activity has opened, but it will never satisfy the chiasm it has opened within itself which it can never fully outrun. Thus, Arendt asserts that in this gap between past and future: “...we find our place in time when we think”, that “we are sufficiently removed from past and future to be relied on to find out their meaning...never arriving at a final solution to their riddles but ready with ever-new answers to the question of what it may be all about.” (LM 209)

Questions kept in reserve are equally important to the dis-continuity of institution. We had seen that the recessional temporal index of our unconscious synergetic body continually inserted itself into its very *flesh* such that opened “routes” within this temporal non-figurative framework of significatory constellations could function as symbolic matrices to reconfigure the framework through its perceptual outcome. The

activation of the invisible constellations as the time that is in its internal temporal differentiation meant that the matrix resulted in “...ruptures in equilibrium, or reorganizations [that] conform to an internal logic of which no clear view can be attained, because the course of events depends on the joint action of fragmentary phenomena.” (SMIM 114) Hence, perception understood as differentiation on this “non-figurative framework” created “cohesion without concept” - associations between “rays” of time and world becoming over-determined in their very *Rückgestaltung* “through which the truth of this ray of Being or emergent Gestalt can be referred back to its origins in the previous and still not structured elements...[to] bring about an invocation and search *for an answer.*” (W 122 italics mine)

Thus, like the never ending puzzles provided by the thinking ego, a puzzling question concerning the unconscious “non-figurative framework” arises through its reconfiguring convergence as the displaced outcome of visibility, appearance, and perception. Institutionally, it is this question or enigma of an origin continually kept in reserve, opened in search for an answer that can decenter the institution’s simple structure and open it up to interrogation. Thus, “Human institution always resumes a prior institution, which has posed a *question*...a past which creates a question, puts it in reserve...which was its anticipation – and which has failed.” (IP 22) Recommencing, “[i]t reactivates this problem and human institution reunites its given in a totality that is centered otherwise...” such that the institution’s truth in divergence “lies in restructuring which, from one end to the other, is known to itself, and is in agreement with itself.” (IP

22) This reorganizing is “according to a new sense that is nevertheless the same sense of this same structure”, accounting for difference without failing to carry its contingencies.⁶⁹

With this forever unsolvable question of origins, this enigma in reserve, we find the mechanism of divergence or decentering indicative of the present in its absence and newness *à la* Husserl: “since inquiry is, as he said, a continuous beginning.” (Signs 161) Like Arendt’s failure and subsequent resumption of a final solution to the riddle of what life is all about, the meaning of an institution in its reoperation is subject to similar re-questioning. Hence, we may link an institution’s becoming “centered otherwise” (as the present’s pivoting displacement upon its non-figurative framework) as synonymous with the aforementioned “tangent to a circle” provided for by the metaphorical re-appearance from and otherwise invisible source in both the case of revealed *physis* and spontaneous return within the thinking activity. The latter’s metaphorical quality accounts for difference or newness made good on by “a sort of existential eternity by means of self-interpretation” that the very “standing now” provides. (IP 49) Hence, the “standing now” is not so much epistemological confirmation as much as it is continued epistemological creation in its very divergence towards the future which never fails to include its contingencies; “...a series of institutions” proceeding by its internal sense which “induces the external sense because it is open, because it is divergence in relation to a norm of sense, *difference*”, or displacement. (IP 11)

⁶⁹ Merleau-Ponty provides us with the example of mathematics: “What is essential to mathematical thought...lies in the moment when a structure is decentered, opens up to an interrogation, and reorganizes itself according to a new sense that is nevertheless the sense of this same structure.” Maurice Merleau-Ponty, trans. John O’Neill, *The Prose of the World* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 127.

It is this question continually kept in reserve within an absence outlining the present in its compressed fullness that we find the quest for meaning bears the most meaningful fruit of all: the birth of being. To properly address our desired connection between birth and institution, we now turn to an example of the lived present bearing this absence, a practical example used by both authors; the institutional development of a feeling between two in a relationship of love.

Merleau-Ponty's account of cathexis begins with his signature double negation: "Common idea of preordination, of a nature calling forth a feeling...the idea of a reality and growth of the feeling as if it were an organism" over against the conventional "no truth, nor falsity of the feeling. As soon as it is felt it is true. And it is never true as conformity to a nature or to a destiny." (IP 28) Like the intellectualist or empiricist account of language, the example of love presents another philosophic quandary wherein the agent's relation to certain transcendentalism is bound in exclusive binary poles - subject to the transcendental or the transcendental as wholly isolated in transcendental subjectivity. Yet reflection located in the eternity of the now or quasi-eternity of lived instants between times exchanged opens the possibility for communion through action: "It is created by oath, decision, i.e. promised behavior. But we throw ourselves into it, i.e., we end up feeling, and not only acting, according to the promise." (IP 28) And as we can recall, promise was that very special performed action performed which according to Arendt arises "directly out of the will to live together with others in the mode of acting and speaking." (HC 246)

To continue with Merleau-Ponty, the project of this promise assumes desire in advance. By virtue of the other's body, perceptually transcending me with mine, the

desire is to achieve an assumed possibility of wholly possessing the other as suggested by the very fact that they appear in the *flesh*. It is because they “appear” in this suggested plenitude that the institution of a feeling between two begins in paradox, the “whole” suggested in the other’s appearing parts that preclude the possibility of their presupposed totality. For this is what men are: “absolutely present beings who have a wake of the negative. A perceiving body that I see is also a certain absence that is followed out and tactfully dealt with behind that body by its behaviour...[and these] ‘negativities’ also count in the sensible world.” (Signs 172) And yet “because of this [paradox], real. It inaugurates a drama which is going to be real.” (IP 30)

The paradox then, begins with the paradoxical structure of desire itself. Desire, structured exterior to itself, aimed at, and fulfilled in its being eclipsed is analogous with the structure of fabrication or cognition as seen in Arendt: “first perceiving the image or shape (*eidos*) of the product-to-be, and then organizing the means and starting the execution.” (HC 225) Likewise Merleau-Ponty suggests that love “is created before anything else by imagining another being, mythological figure of cruelty” whereby desire over-determines the mythological illusion of a figure assumed fully visible and needing no differentiation upon an invisible backdrop. (IP 33) This “reification” is simultaneous with the action of oath or promise that we inhabit in a crossing over into the other through its overarching reach. For love opens its institution on this illusion initiated by the other’s very being in the wake of *flesh*: “This is the illusion, for they are all of that only insofar as non-possessed. But the illusion is in the accomplishment, not in the project which is real by means of the fact that we truly become the other, that the other invades us.” (IP 30) And it is precisely in this wake of the negative, in *ek-stases* testing

their commensurability by establishing their own common adventure that their very basic behavior becomes a consideration of the other insofar as they inhabit one another and find the other carried within themselves.

In invisible wakes and accumulated commitments this on-going institution establishes its times and places in the compressed absence of its present as a point of continual reference, “a series of institutions” proceeding by its internal sense that “induces the external sense because it is open, because it is divergence in relation to a norm of sense...” (IP 11) And because man is present with body and wake, the institution between two in its own certain and compounded absence is best understood in the image of a light bulb whose positive and negative filaments join to cause the very circuit behind which they disappear in blinding light, that which their co-reversing synergetic bodies perpetuate in continual insertion. Indeed, like “the light that illuminates processes of action, and therefore all historical processes, [appearing] only at their end” the light caused by and provided for those instituted in their very movement, “...is never entirely in the present.” (HC 192/IP 52) Hence, we return to the inhabiting of each other’s bodies in our extended *flesh* on through that illuminating promise co-made in oath. The other is “not constituting-constituted, i.e. my negation, but instituted-instituting, [in relation to me, because I am, in relation to myself, instituted-instituting]...[there is] true communication through lateral practicing.” (IP 6) What is at issue is one “intersubjective or symbolic field, [the field] of cultural objects, which is our milieu, our hinge, our jointure – instead of the subject-object alternation.” (IP 6)

The co-reversibility of shared anonymous bodies in promise, opening and unfolding through temporally thick *flesh* is precisely a departure into the certain freedom

this action grants.⁷⁰ In the words of Arendt: “binding oneself through promises, serves to set up in the ocean of uncertainty, which the future is by definition, islands of security without which not even continuity, let alone durability of any kind, would be possible in the relationship between men.” (HC 237) It is this promise in its initiated action and signaled return which open possible paths based on the contingencies indicative of the institution, the freedom of its possibilities bound by a web of relations that links promise (like any other action) to our tacit conditioning.

Thus, institutionally, these very contingencies are found in the hollow of the presence of each other: “One does not love a person, one does not love a body, one loves a life established in a body. [The] body [is] neither first nor second. [The] mind neither second nor first. The individual [is] the passage of a freedom.” (IP 30) Hence, as like any other institution in its bound contingencies by which its certain freedom is possible, “...love, [intends a] sense as open sense, which develops by means of proliferation, by curves, decentering and recentering...a sort of identity between the whole and the parts, the beginning and the need.” (IP 48) The other with body is a point of origin for institutional contingency as a “passage of a freedom” such that its “*Einführung* [is] an echo of my incarnation, and that a flash of meaning makes them [the other] substitutable in the absolute presence of origins.” (Signs 175)

⁷⁰ Here we understand freedom through each other only ever in the contingencies that define the freedom of action in question. We may recall in our second chapter that it was because of the “already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose; but it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it ‘produces’ stories” that satisfy the precondition of action as a disclosure of the “who.” (HC 184) In other words, freedom is only ever found in its bounds.

In this way our body with its wake of the negative that allows us to maintain an “individuality” or relationship with ourselves within an in-between without our entire envelopment, to belong and to be at a distance as comparable to the appearance of *physis*. In the negative, like the body itself (“not *elsewhere*, but one cannot say that it is *here* or *now*”) we recognize love: “[d]ecidedly therefore, love is not [a] positive, it is...negative. And necessarily because it is the question of the essence of being loved (who was she?).” (VI 147/IP 36)

This question, “*who?*” is precisely the mechanism for the institution of a feeling between two. Through this question love can fail and be reactivated again, reconfigure while bearing its adventure, and is that enigma kept in reserve as impetus for institutional continuance. Hence Levinas notes: “What is presented as the failure of communication in love in fact constitutes the positive character of the relationship; this absence of the other is precisely present qua other.”⁷¹ The failure of communication, that which begins the question of “*who?*” anew, bringing the action of promise into play, is the potential continuance of the question: “Like death, love is what reveals the ‘personality’...allows us to see everything someone is, how someone is the world itself, being itself, a being from which we are excluded.” (IP 37) Hence, in the divergence of taking up an existing institution we can follow Ralón de Walton when she says:

If the relationship with the other is as primordial as the relationship with our lived body, an analysis of perception in terms of articulation of the visible and the invisible must have its parallel in an analysis of empathy that also shows our being-for-others taking roots in the lived body along with a dimension of

⁷¹ John Llewelyn ,ed. Andrew Benjamin, “On the Saying the Philosophy Begins in *Thaumazein*” in *Post-Structuralist Classics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 181.

concealment in regard to them. In this case, the unconscious is the ‘the *Urgemeinschaftung* of our intentional life, the *Ineinander* of the other in us and of us in them. (SMIM 119)

To segue to Arendt, we recall that it was also the disclosure of a “who” that was one of our outlined preconditions for qualified action in the Arendtian sense. Unlike fabrication which occurs only in isolation beginning with a means-to-end structure, action as shining over against convention was necessarily aimed into plurality and bore with it the disclosure to this very question (“who?”), opening in its successes a kind of appearing *physis* as the totality of our lover’s mutual understanding from the normally invisible and as the totality of all things between them.

We can further recall that it was the specific action of promise whereby the conditioning and action are continually coincidental in their own *entelecheia*. It was promise, like the words of Homer that held in equilibrium an ethos in-between Greeks that could best master the “darkness of human affairs” – the “basic reliability of men who never can guarantee today who they will be tomorrow” and “the impossibility of remaining unique masters of what they do, of knowing its consequences and relying upon the future.” (HC 244) This moral precept of promise as a recession between men is only so by virtue of the fact that promise, like all qualified actions, are made on the contingencies of and touch upon the *inter esse* of men. (HC 246) Action as the birth of being suggests that this birth is of the *inter esse* and bears with it the structure of promise in its return, indicative of our coming to witness our having been conditioned by it at revealed *physis*. Bearing the new in its departure and signaled return, promise provides us with a present birth in reference to what was in reconfigured latency, a re-appearance in reference to the promise’s having been made. Promise then, is like thought: “It is by

time that my thoughts are dated. It is by time too that they make a date, open a future for thought – a cycle, a field.” (Signs 14)

Listen now to Arendt who depicts love as sharing this field like quality:

This world-creating faculty of love is not the same as fertility, upon which most creation myths are based. The following mythological tale, on the contrary, draws its imagery clearly from the experience of love: the sky is seen as a gigantic goddess who still bends down upon the earth god, from whom she is being separated by the air god who was born between them and is now lifting her up. Thus a world space composed of air comes into being and inserts itself between earth and sky. (HC 242)

Metaphorical for a field, the sky as a gigantic goddess “bends down upon the earth god,” mutually separating the two by a chiasm as the fleeting vanishing point of the visibility between them and where their offspring comes to be born; a world space composed of air. Their love, like the field of institution sends them towards a fleeting intersection on the horizon, the no-longer as a not-yet from which will be sourced that which they return to the world. In their movement, it is this spatio-temporal horizon (its beyond still presented in experience and peripherally structuring the spatio-temporal curvature of the given) that is subject to reconfiguration – fleeting, not in the sense of total disappearance but continually opening towards its continually recast limits as the threshold between the visible and invisible.

That sky and earth in their communion are joined in their ever running, ever extended vanishing point is telling. Never fully elucidated or a gap never fully fused, this chiasm sends our lovers endlessly running towards one another indirectly on an infinite curved plane, towards that “...house on the horizon [that] gleams solemnly, like thing past or hoped for” or like lovers’ idle hands tacitly reaching towards the end of day.

(Signs 15) The institution of love self references the promise on which it is made like a muse, generating its own power or impotence through its own reconfiguration. It is an unending source towards a continually born truth as the ever desired unfolding and deepening mystery of inhabiting each other.

It is for this very reason why both author's link the project of promise to the disclosure of a "who", Merleau-Ponty telling us that "[l]ike death, love is what reveals the 'personality'...allows us to see everything someone is, how someone is the world itself, being itself, a being from which we are excluded", and Arendt tells us that love bears "an unequalled clarity of vision for the disclosure of 'who'" as a "a type or 'character' in the old meaning of the word" whose description results in the other's uniqueness escaping us. (IP 37/HC 181) Thus, when Arendt tells us "[t]he essence of who somebody can come into being only when life departs, leaving behind nothing but a story" and Merleau-Ponty refers to love as a "drama", we can recall that a story is sourced from an action that shows us all the invisible in the midst of visibility at a distance to which we are both included and excluded in our following its example. (HC 193/IP 30)

Arendt's failure to address the body in this instance of love aside, it is true that Arendt sees love as a detriment to the possibility of action in the political sense: "by reason of its passion, it [love] destroys the in-between which relates us to and separates us from others" conceived of as an isolated interiority, womb, or a place forever withdrawn from the public realm. (HC 242) In a sense, she is very correct on this point. It is difficult to conclude with any certainty the nature of the fabric that holds a couple in union, hidden from us in its very withdrawal. Yet despite this attempt to parse the inter-

institutional as aligned with the public realm from the inter-personal as aligned with the private realm, Arendt seems deny the institutional characteristics that finds their way into and structure our private lives. For insofar as love “possess an unequalled...clarity of vision for the disclosure of *who*” and insofar as love never occurs in isolation (always aimed into a conditioned web of contingencies in its very vibration), love continues to satisfy the two outlined preconditions for action which reveals *physis* as a totality of a having been conditioned (as synonymous with institutional sequel and its exposed temporal interiority).

In other words, Arendt is correct to suggest that love is a withdrawal from the public realm as in agreement with Merleau-Ponty’s suggestion that “love is not [a] positive, it is...negative.” (IP 36) Yet, Arendt tries to have it both ways, both reserving action for the political as away from the inter-personal while maintaining the preconditions for action within both. This can best be seen when Arendt criticizes Aristotle for failing to recognize an action between two which is by no means political in nature. Having distinguished *what* somebody is as aligned with fabrication, from *who* somebody is as revealed by action (“[t]he moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him.”) Arendt proceeds to chastise Aristotle for the very public (*what*) and private (“*who*”) distinction she tries to maintain. (HC 181) Aristotle tells us that the relationship between a benefactor and his recipient should be regarded as a work: “that the benefactor always loves those he has helped more than he is loved by them,...that this is only natural, since the benefactor has done a work, an *ergon*, while the recipient has only endured his beneficence.” (HC 196) The

benefactor “according to Aristotle, loves his ‘work,’ the life of the recipient he has ‘made,’ as the poet loves his poems, and he reminds his reader that the poet’s love for his work is hardly less passionate than a mother’s love for her children.” (HC 196) Thus, Arendt criticizes Aristotle for outlining acting in terms of fabrication, along with conceiving love as a self-serving solipsistic projection: “In this instance is it perfectly obvious how this interpretation...actually spoils the action itself and its true result, the relationship it should have established.” (HC 196)

But even in this instance of action, the relationship between men established is not exclusive to the political and indeed is not void of the possibility a kind of love. For if this is so it remains unclear why the criticism of Aristotle includes the example of mother raising her children as merely a type of fabrication. Rather Arendt’s criticism of Aristotle for maintaining love as a solipsistic projection and action is a kind of fabrication should be a clear indication that love cannot be excluded from that between men but can be a part of the in-between’s very fabric even if invisible to certain others, interpretable through their behavior towards one another. It is Arendt who reminds us that Socrates, who despite his proclaimed ignorance said, “this talent I have been given: I can easily recognize a lover and a beloved.” (LM 178) It may be true that love has no place in the realm of political action, but an institution of love can be founded upon actions as that institution’s very signposts to which it returns.

Finally, it would be the love for a child which would return our mother to the world along with the question of “who” the child may be. For, this institutional question as a key component to the preconditions of action, equally sets in motion an upsurge within the *inter esse* allowing us to return to that offspring of analogized love between sky and

earth; the “air god” as a kind of element, invisible but not nothing that can make its appearance at the horizon’s edge:

As long as...[love’s] spell lasts, the only in-between which can insert itself between two lovers is the child, love’s own product. The child, this in-between to which the lovers now are related and which they hold in common, is representative of the world in that it also separates them; it is an indication that they will insert a new world into the existing world. Through the child, it is as though the lovers return to the world from which their love had expelled them. But this new worldliness, the possible result and the only possibly happy ending of a love affair, is, in a sense, the end of love, which must either overcome the partners anew or be transformed into another mode of belonging together. (HC 242)

It is out of the absence between lovers, on the horizon and vanishing threshold between them that the child comes through a couple’s enfolded negation of *ek-stasis* in being born. With the combination of mythological representation and the above quote we are able to suggest that like love, birth in all its passivity is indeed one’s initial action that opens the normally invisible in the midst of visibility by satisfying the two “uncertain certainties” as action’s very preconditions. First, unlike fabrication in its means-to-ends structure which can occur in solitary isolation, action necessarily comes out of and is aimed back at plurality. The borne child is not what we indicate when we speak about the “reproductive process” outlined as a kind of fabrication process attributed to biology. The child is born to a people or a mother at least. Secondly and already explored at length: “Action...the human activity most associated with natality...must at the same time contain the answer to the question asked of every newcomer: ‘Who are you?’” (HC 178) Birth as the arrival of a newcomer from parental flesh introduces this question by revealing, centering otherwise, and perpetuating an institutional found in-between all potentially involved actors.

For those institutionalized actors, the birth of a child as an action signals “the end of love”, or the promise in signaled return, “which must either overcome the partners anew or be transformed into another mode of belonging together.” (HC 242) That is, as a type of action bringing the new into the world, birth reveals *physis* and simultaneously decenters the institutional *inter esse* of those lover’s, makes that between them “centered otherwise” in a divergence of their institution simultaneous with the divergent arrival of the new. Birth signals the moment of institutional sequel whereby the retrograde movement of the true through which the borne emerges becomes over-determined, revealing a recessional index that harkens to our origins along with the child’s, or makes *physis* appear indicating nature’s being overcome in this very return to it.

To continue with this thought, it was an explored wonder caused by the appearance of *physis* as the birth of being witnessed through the paradoxical totality of all things in simultaneity: “the wonder that befalls the philosopher can never concern anything particular but is always aroused by the whole, which...is never manifest.” (LM 143) It is this wonder of the whole of being that is best indicated by the experience of *thaumazein*. Indeed, Plato, speaking through Socrates, tells us “I think he [namely Hesiod] was not a bad genealogist who made Iris [the rainbow, a messenger of the gods] the daughter of Thaumias [the wonderer].” (LM 142) “At first glance” Arendt continues, this makes it seem as though “[wonder] springs from marveling at the miracles of the sky. As the rainbow connecting the sky with the earth god brings its message to men, so thinking...responding in wonder to the daughter of the Wonderer, connects the earth with the sky.” (LM 142) Thus we have an established connection in that place where this

rainbow as birth's meaningful message is coincidental with the junction of sky goddess and earth god, in that absent intersection where their offspring is born.

To be sure, at this emergence from an intersection and in the experience of *thaumazein* the whole is “never manifest” in this message. The totality of the non-figurative framework revealed in institutional sequel, just as the totality of our being conditioned revealed at *physis*, can never be made fully explicit: “It seems possible to use it [the word *thaumazein*] in opposite senses at once; *thaumazein* both opens our eyes wide and plunges us into the dark.”⁷² Rather than an explicit totality, received “is the beauty of the game of the world, the meaning and meaningfulness of all the particulars acting together...manifest only to a beholder in whose mind the particular instances and sequences are invisibly united.” (LM 144)

This meaningful message that connects heaven and earth within the absence of the now through which their offspring is born to reveal all that was, the beauty of the meaning and meaningfulness of all the particulars acting together as the particular instances of united invisibles, is clearly analogous with the re-birth we have aligned with institutional sequel - a glimpse at *flesh* through a harmony of particular times as the time that is: “the oldest let themselves be identified only because they have turned out to have been generators of the ones that came next, and the most recent allow themselves to be identified only because...they bear the trace of their gestation in the past.” (IP x) Those charged moments of institutional sequel whereby the past and present are *Ineinander*, are

⁷² John Llewelyn ,ed. Andrew Benjamin, “On the Saying the Philosophy Begins in *Thaumazein*” in *Post-Structuralist Classics* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1988), 173.

thus, not unlike that experience meaningful message where “particular instances and sequences are invisibly united” (a “recognition of the particularities which unite” in the words of Merleau-Ponty). (LM 144)

Indeed, “of this *physis*, Heraclitus said that ‘it like to hide itself,’ namely behind the appearances”, the latter appearance aligned with the spectacular quality of the new itself. Insofar as the totality of our having been conditioned can never be made fully explicit and our origin as our birth always remains a non-event or fundamental absence in our life, we advance the claim that institutional threads woven through time harkens to an always concealed zero degree from which we are born, an instant never explicit in-itself but nonetheless, emerging from the combined *ek-stases* of others, is contingent for all other instances and institutional sequels in our lives. In the instance of re-birth, these united particularities are understood as involving the times instituting of our birth; passing from others through their recessional temporal index into or through a recessional temporal index that is for us the passage into time itself. (LM 144/IP 64)

We had said that it was the from the view point of nature in its cyclical movement that our life spanning from birth to death seemed like a deviation from this common rule and eternal return. It followed that, human affairs, if passively accepted, found themselves on a trajectory of ruin. This doomed trajectory was thwarted by action. It was action’s natal beginnings as initiated upsurge of the *inter esse* that shares in and is our “acting in” point of intersection with the automatic cyclical processes – “a miracle” called *physis* on the background of our mortal trajectory. From our original *physis*, nature was expanded into contemplated Being, and Being, as our being conditioned, was that which had been shown to be between us. Thus, the endless and invisible circular

motion of thought (*noēsis noēseōs*), dealing in absences made present and never abandoning nature's spectacular eternal return, appears from nowhere and equally must "look like a miracle."

It was metaphor provided by the thinking ego's re-turn that was a "tangent to a circle", a divergence steered through the interplay of orbiting contingencies. This tangent was shown to be an opened diagonal trajectory in the timeless eternity of the now or instances lived between an exchange of times (the no-longer and the not-yet) in quasi-eternity. In this sense, the present itself in its very absence or gap, where both perception (differentiated on its unconscious temporal contingencies), and thought (never a departure from the times that it is), is the birth of being or re-birth of an institution in sequel.

Finally, we had suggested that it is out of that very same absence between lovers, the vanishing threshold between them in *ek-stasis*, that the child comes through in being born. The child, born through these enfolding *ek-stases* into the institutions they entail and as part of the promise of natal newness, meaning, and accumulating contingencies, makes the child appear in the present like *physis*; a coming through those complex temporal arrangements from the negative wake from which the born emerges as a metaphor of what the lover's return to the world. Birth as an action is a kin to promise, leaving exposed all that the child will come through (understood or not only in latency) and returned to the world metaphorically anew. Appearing from the gap on the horizon comprised of all the temporal contingencies to which the child will be exposed, the child is a living metaphor of the institutions that will solicit him into a world and into/by which he or she will act.

To understand this we can recall our reflections on nature and listen to Kierkegaard exploring the image of a mother embracing her child: “It is a picture that must be called the lovelies that human life has to display; it is a nature myth, which therefore may be seen only in artistic portrayal.”⁷³ This is a “nature myth” because it is that nature lived between parent and child, opened from the inside and tangible only in its metaphorical manifestations - gestures and actions which echo beyond their conventional and functional meaning. Hence, “the visible institution is only the support of a spirit of the institution, certainly not immutable (love changes constantly, like a separation), but whose very change is a reaction of the event upon the instituted.” (IP 10) And indeed, for Merleau-Ponty, an “artistic portrayal” follows a “blind logic, logic which creates on the way.” (IP 41) The institution of artistic portrayal, “of an [artistic] work, like the institution of love, [intends a] sense as open sense, which develops by means of proliferation, by curves, decentering and recentering...ambiguous passage, with a sort of identity between the whole and the parts, the beginning and the end...” (IP 49) Like the thinking ego whose only adequate metaphor is the sensation of being alive, the charged advent of the birth of a child is metaphorical expression for the whole of life itself, of all the re-births that we experience in the institutions that make up the world and ourselves through this invisible origin carried through with us for all time.

Existentially speaking, the paradoxical quality of birth is that it is both ours and yet never an event in our lives. Arendt reminds us that “[w]e do not live our death.” (LM 49) The same can be said about our birth as the original unappropriable absence that

⁷³ Søren Kierkegaard, trans. Alastair Hannay, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (New York: Penguin Books Classic, 1992), 325.

institutes and initiates the engenderment of our continued present in its eternal hollowed quality upon sublimated and assimilated temporal contingencies. With us at every moment, reconfigured and aimed anew in those institutional sequels which fissure the time that it is, these experienced “re-births” show us as outside of ourselves in an established temporal equilibrium between those preceding others, their institutions, and the actions and thoughts we perform in the now.

Birth then is truly present by paradoxically staying forever absent in the fullness of the now, and hence our quoting of Kierkegaard and his “nature myth.” It is foundational for the gap of the present, a slippery now in a cycle come to term, continued in the metaphorical return of our birth in our own life, opened again in a reorienting divergence that delivers us the “new.” And insofar as the re-turned metaphor from the life of the mind reminded us that the visible and invisible were made for each other, the active-passivity of birth links up with the revealed *physis* in that question answered only by turning to those to whom, with their own *ek-stases*, we are born to: who are you?

It was this question kept in reserve as the institutional essence of being loved that allowed an institution to continue on its very contingencies. And in this sense, those contingencies of those to whom we are born, find themselves in our infancy in the fulfilling of our dependencies. We had said that passing from others in their recessional temporal index was a passing into or through a recessional temporal index that is for us the passage into time itself. Here we expand: we pass from a body in the flesh only into more bodies in the *flesh* because institution precedes us in preparation for us, co-instituted by others who in their *Fürsorge* are a passage to a certain freedom. Those lives of others become shared by the solicitation in an *ek-stasis* which frees us by the

extending of our flesh into their *flesh*. Hence, the movement of life is always the unfolding in and through others as a “passage of freedom” and as an awakening of the *inter esse* as the dynamic possibility between us, where we come to be imbued with others whose words and deeds return to us in thought and consideration. As we move on a trajectory of life, we become imbued with each other, are thickened in body and thought by the institutions we co-institute together that can reveal each other as a “who” in storied form. Indeed, traveling through this extended *flesh* which we open between us, we understand Saint-Expuéry when he says: “No single event can awaken in us a stranger totally unknown to us. To live is to slowly be born.”

Conclusion

Despite different departures and aims, we have shown that Merleau-Ponty and Hannah Arendt can be read as sharing a deep concern for the roles of visibility and invisibility, appearing and non-appearing, in their respective philosophies towards a mutual co-supplementation in a genuine account of birth. More specifically, we have demonstrated birth as institutional, outlined by the continuation of a historically contingent sensibility insofar as its event exposes the actors and child to an interiority of time. Inversely, we have demonstrated an institutional sequel as a kind of re-birth, synonymous with Arendtian action that granted a glimpse at *physis* as the birth of being – nature, understood as the normally invisible in the midst of the visibility and as the totality of all things, appearing as a kind of natal “miracle.”

This was shown by drawing on a homology between Merleau-Pontyan *flesh* and the Arendtian *inter esse*, demonstrating that both concepts bespoke of a fruitful dialectical relationship between invisibility and visibility wherein the new is born, coming to appear through our conditioned nature as the visible in its intimate relationship to the temporal characteristic of the invisible.

Nature as our having been conditioned was shown to be lodged in the dynamic of making visible. A conditioned nature was this dynamic’s visible outcome and that conditioning exposed by action’s revealing of *physis* (analogous with an exposed interiority in the instance of institutional sequel). *Physis* as the birth of being and an early word for nature was that spectacular intersection between action and nature’s eternal cyclical rule that saved human affairs by exposing our being conditioned as the

invisible in the midst of visibility and as the totality of all things. Likewise, Merleau-Ponty's *flesh* and institution respectively demonstrated the visible as differentiated upon invisibility in an institution of nature and, as analogous with the revealing of *physis*, the exposure of this invisibility as a temporal index to the instant in the case of institutional sequel. It was by the latter of these, institutional sequel, that we were able to introduce the importance of the thinking activity as already over against our being conditioned such that we were able to expand *physis* as the birth of being within the *noēsis noēseōs* of thought - a birth of being through metaphor in its very divergence.

Important for our genuine account of natality was the implications of our author's respective views on temporality as aligned with invisibility. Having outlined an exposed and shared temporal absence of the present between Merleau-Ponty (a "quasi-eternity" of lived instants between times exchanged) and Arendt (the eternity of the *nunc stans*), comparison of their synonymous temporal structure yielded a shared sense of divergence or decentering indicative of the present as being a certain absence made metaphorically visible.

Hence, the temporal invisibility constitutive of *flesh* as necessary for perception and institutional events in their very divergence was demonstrated as convergent with the since shifted and metaphorically returned point of cyclical completion found in Arendt; from that normally invisible *physis* made visible by action's natal intersection with the cyclicity of nature to the invisibility of the thinking ego, the *noēsis noēseōs* in its cyclical and mnemonic return of that which had already passed - a metaphor indicative of the birth of being and the present appearing "like a miracle." (HC 246)

With these analogous dynamics for the emergence of the new from invisibility and with these commensurate temporal structures outlining the present in its invisible absence, both action and institution were shown to harbor miraculous natal newness. Indeed, birth, like the act of promise that initiates institution and outlines what it will return to the world, was shown as satisfying the preconditions for action to intersect with nature's cyclical return in a spectacular revealing appearance – the birth of being as a kind of returned metaphor comparable to the *noēsis noēseōs* of thought.

Because birth necessarily occurred in plurality, emerged in-between men, and commenced the disclosure to the question of “who?”, birth was seen as an upsurge within the *inter esse* or a passing into *flesh* by bearing the former's structure of dissemination within a web of plurality. Like the “who” witnessed only by others, birth is paradoxically one's own and yet never an event witnessed in one's life - an invisible origin never fully appropriable and an unconscious recess carried through subsequent institutional sequels in a re-birth where we find ourselves through others. Foundational for all subsequent invisibilities in our differentiated and unfolding visible present, and as an invisible origin carried through into our present in its very absence, our birth as the flesh from which we pass is always the unfolding into the Merleau-Pontyan *flesh* of those others whose appearance in anticipatory *ek-stasis* was like a lifelong preparation for our arrival.

Existentially speaking, this carried paradox of our birth (a non-event that is ours by being an event for other's) allowing for an intercourse with the *ek-stasis* of others, meant that experienced “re-births” through an exposed temporal interiority reconfigured the institutional significance of our lives, showed us as both inside and outside of

ourselves in an established temporal equilibrium between preceding others in their institutions and the actions and thoughts we can perform amongst others in the now.

We can now recall Goethe from earlier when he lamented Rome's laterally laden epochs and a difficulty "...to decipher how Rome follows on Rome, and not only the new on the old, but also the various epochs within the old and new Rome on one another."⁷⁴ But indeed, speaking of this multi-layered Rome as a kind of cultural origin he continued: "From this vantage point, history especially is read differently...In other places one reads from the outside in; here we imagine we are reading from the inside-out – everything lies spread around us and also extends out from us."⁷⁵ It is these two reflections taken in tandem, that allowed us to borrow a second natal description taken from the workings of institution: "...and I count the day when I entered Rome as my second natal day, a true rebirth...This rebirth, which is remolding me from within."⁷⁶

Indeed, what Goethe had discovered was that time which other's had left open for him and which something in his very being invited. To be sure Goethe was not able to restore the time in question by taking advantage of his decentered present position. Rather, as we have noted, this decentering indicative of institution is possible only because we are always institutionalized, because, by virtue of our reconfigured and stretching *ek-stases* we are not enclosed in our own time: "Our time provides us with the resources of communication with the past precisely when we do justice to its difference."

⁷⁴ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Trans. Robert R. Heitner, "Italian Journey" in *Goethe: The Collected Work* (New York, NY: Princeton University Press, 1994), 107.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 107.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 109.

(IP xviii) This justice is not to fall back upon observed differences between them, to contest the times in the difference that emerged. Rather, “[w]e will arrive at the universal not by abandoning our particularity, but by turning our particularity into a way of reaching others, by virtue of that mysterious affinity that makes situations mutually understandable.” (SNS 92) That is to say, in his particularity, Goethe found an opened affinity, found himself drawn into what had been left open, and through these others found himself born again in the wonder of the world.

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APPENDIX A

*Spanish Dancer*⁷⁷

As on all is sides a kitchen match darts white
 Flickering tongue before it burst into flames:
 With the audience around her, quickened, hot,
 Her dance begins to flicker in the dark room.

And all at once it is completely fire.

One upward glance and she ignites her hair
 And, whirling faster and faster, fans her dress
 Into passionate flames, till it becomes a furnace
 From which, like startled rattlesnakes, the long
 Naked arms uncoil, around and clicking

And then: as if the fire were too tight
 Around her body, she takes and flings it out
 Haughtily, with an imperious gesture,
 And watches: it lies raging on the floor,
 Still blazing up, and the flames refuse to die -.
 Till, moving with total confidence and a sweet
 Exultant smile, she looks up finally
 And stamps it out with powerful small feet.

-Rainer Maria Rilke

⁷⁷ Rainer Maria Rilke, Trans. Susan Ranson and Marielle Sutherland, "Spanish Dancer" in *Selected Poems* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75.

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