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Proximity and Form

The correlation between what humans believe and the nature of their relationships to the material world.

by

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<u>Abstract</u>

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How do humans relate to material culture with respect to what they "believe in" (such as gods or spirits)? Objects used in religious practice have generally been understood within Material Culture Studies as corresponding to mind-dependent concepts. This is largely derived from Neo-Kantian thought which reified ideas of an internal mind in which "representations" are sustained. Attempts to shift thought since the 1990s, including recent "post-anthropocentric" approaches, have arguably only indurated representationalism, albeit with a subjectivist 'twist': they have generally neither demanded nor affected any substantive change to belief or behaviour. Indeed, the concept of "belief" itself has largely been banished from the humanities and social sciences to obviate the "unpalatable" implication that "believers" form attachments to objects associated with "illusory" ideas. But there is an absurd irony in this, of course: belief in a god or a spirit is a "problem" only if one believes they are representational constructs. So, despite recent attempts to overcome representational Euro-American 'metaphysics', belief-claims unwittingly continue to be advanced which, by their own account, cannot and do not involve belief. It is suggested here instead that there can be no change without change in *belief*: we can neither shift our understanding of human relations to the material realm in the past, nor affect change in the future, without a root and branch purge of the spectre of neo-Kantianism.

This thesis draws from Life Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology and Gestalt Psychology as well as more recent research in Enactive Cognition and Affectivity. It posits that belief is derived directly from sensuous affectivity of the experience of life (and death). It further suggests that this leads to perceived tensions between "mind"-body/self-world which elicit conflicting responses concerned with (physical)self-preservation and (conscious)self-annihilation: a kind of yearning for "re-enchantment". Whether understood as localised and imminent (such as the spirit of a tree) or distant and transcendent (such as a god or big-bang theory), the location of the source of life in belief is co-determinate with the form of objects humans enter into direct exchanges with for seeking fulfilment of the yearning. Importantly, exchanges stemming from true belief, do not take place through "mind"-dependent intermediary objects or concepts, but in response to the demands of affective sensory phenomena.

While maintaining that we cannot "interpret" the specific "meanings" individuals or communities attribute to objects, actions or beliefs; this approach offers a way for understanding - through observation of material forms and exchange mechanisms - the nature of a given community's relationship to the material world and drivers of change. This has far-reaching potential implications for understanding past and present material exchanges and social dynamics including religious practice, consumerism, the production and reception of art/literature, social/digital media, and political populism. The kinds of insights such an approach can offer are explored in this thesis through the inherent tensions between figurative, aniconic and iconoclastic traditions in ancient Israel and Punic Carthage; and in recent militant Salafist Islamism.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Print name: FARÈS KHEREDDINE MOUSSA

Title of thesis: Proximity and Form: the correlation between what humans believe and the nature of their relationships to the material world.

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission.

Preface and Acknowledgments

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I grew up in a place where family used to visit a shrine on a dusty low plain, where we would bring offerings of food, meditate, sleep, dream and divine. We would re-emerge rejuvenated, with greater clarity and conviction. We sometimes speak of "sleeping on it' or "looking at it with fresh eyes". The idea that if we take some time out from something, we might come back with some greater perspective, insight, or wisdom. This thesis is to some degree (both) about _and_ the manifest instantiation of that process of incubation, taken to extreme lengths! A first version of a thesis was prepared in Edinburgh between 2008 and 2012 on a part-time basis, alongside archaeological research and heritage impact mitigation projects and a Marie-Curie Fellowship on the History of Thought at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris in 2009. But the thesis was never submitted. The interdisciplinary nature of the work took me far out of my comfort zone and weighed heavily on my confidence at the time. Then, one day, during a Covid pandemic lockdown in 2020, I re-read the near-complete thesis from 2012. I was surprised as to its coherence. But what became apparent when I committed to working on it again between 2021-25 (once again, alongside ongoing work commitments) was that, in the meanwhile, the conviction of my thought on the subject was even clearer than previously. What also became apparent, however, was how far and how quickly discourse within the fields from which it draws moved on ...and how much my own thought, suspended in the intermediary firmament, had stewed into a somewhat more serpentine brew! The greatest challenge, for me, has been to best articulate this ferment of complex arguments with clarity and cogence.

What follows, then, is a culmination of that unintended process and a very different thesis from the one which I ever planned and didn't submit back in 2012! What is

offered here is even more grounded in philosophy and interdisciplinarity and offers a much lighter touch consideration of case-studies material than originally (and now excludes data sets from Libya, which will now published separately). It does so necessarily to get under the skin of the kind of thought which I argue is generally pervasive in material culture studies. Nevertheless, without that first iteration of the thesis, without that long incubation period, and without the development in discourse during that incubation period; what follows simply wouldn't be what it is ...whatever that may be!

checking references for me; but besides from this, has been the most extraordinary encouragement to me. I relish the many exploratory conversations we've had under the lamp of the kitchen table and walking on the hill. If there is one person who I can confidently say has fully understood the spirit of this thesis so far, it is she: plotting with me its potential broader applications, as well as unpicking its drawbacks. Without Amy's *belief*, this work would (once again) never have been submitted!

  It is only when my uncle and dear friend, Freddie, died suddenly when I started work on this thesis, that I realised the magnitude of his influence. His interest and knowledge in philosophy (and art and music); and his broad book collection which I browsed with wonder ever since I can remember, in many ways - alongside my experiences of living between two worlds - led me to anthropology and to always challenge everything we assume to be true. His pure and unrelenting love and kindness furthermore were the most nourishing –a suit very hard to follow so resolutely. As such, I dedicate this work to him. Given all my own limitations, however, whether I do credit to him and all the forebearers of thought manifested herein remains another matter. Needless to say, all the misrepresentations, the state of incompletion, errors of judgment, un-dotted i's and un-crossed t's (of which there are many) in what follows are entirely my own (un)doing!

FKM

1 May / 16 November 2025

In memory of Frederick C J Leopold

Glossary and notes on terminology used

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Note on unusual and contested terminology

Terminology is used herein from various interdisciplinary contexts and timeframes, with different meanings and/or shifts in nuance; sometimes from authors who have used words in new ways, or where there may be some dispute or difficulty in translation. Where words or names used in-text have this sort of technical, subject- or author- specific meaning, a footnote is provided on the first occasion of its use; and, where applicable, a reference to pertinent page/s or section/s if there is any further definition or discussion of that word elsewhere in-text.

Note on new terminology and use of asterix (*) in the glossary

Some words and phrases are introduced for the first time (as far as the author is aware) in this thesis. They will be defined in-text or in a footnote and included in the glossary here with an asterix * to indicate that they are original to this text.

Note on use of guillemets (« »)

There are some terms in wider use and/or in the extant literature, which the present work disputes and/or will seek to displace later with alternative terminology in the development of the argument pursued. Where this is the case, guillemets (« ») are used to acknowledge that the terminology is deemed as problematic, but where it's use suffices as per it's accepted usage until the identified problems are discussed and/or alternative terminology is introduced. The guillemets are used in distinction to the use of speech marks (" "), which are used here only for in-text quotations of specific authors or in references to terminology used by specific authors, as cited accordingly.

Glossary

Aaronic Error *

term used here specifically to denote Aaron's perceived misjudgement in Exodus 32, as described in the Prologue, concerning the appropriate form of the "god(s)" to be presented to the Israelites, in Moses' absence.

Being (with capitalised 'B')

(after Heidegger) the pre-philosophical and pre-reflexive engagement of being in the world.

being

as per usual definition of being

dialectic imperative *

the human compulsion to engage with entities in the material realm, both as a consequence of excentric positionality; and as a means to fulfil the entic imperative

entic (imperative) *

experiences which involve the loss of the sense of awareness of self: this is an "imperative" as in a compulsion or a sense of necessity to achieve such experiences. "Entic" is created here from a compound of the Greek "en"(ἐν): "in", "within" and the adjective-forming suffix "tic" (τικός, tikós): in "the matter of", "pertain to" or "relating to"; but also with the intention of alluding to "oikos"(οἶκος) -"house" or "household", or spiritual house (early usages of the term suggest that "house" or "home" was in-itself a spiritual place as the place of the family and the hearth; and there is some precedence for it being used to give the suffix "ic"). The intention of the meaning of this word is to evoke the sense of being "in", without specific reference to a noun, such as a "god", "body", "place" or "thing"; with the allusion to the concept of "spiritual home" in the sense of being "at home", "at rest" or "close to the source", *wherever* that may be. That is to say, the *overcoming* of excentric positionality.

Euro-American   the broad political and socio-cultural grouping, otherwise
                        typically referred to as "Western" or "Global North".

excentric positionality   (after Plessner) the way in which humans find themselves
                        at once corporeally embodied yet also self-objectifying

god/s   any god or god/s in general with no specific reference to
                        any one god, such as the Christian God or Jewish Yahweh.

God   the Christian God

Immanence Orientated Worldliness (IOW) *
                        the immanent end of a spectrum of types of engagement
                        with the infinite realm involving the most direct
                        relationship with the Source/s of Life in-themselves.

infinite realm *   the realm the Source/s of Life, before they become
                        Worldly enthymemes.

material culture studies   "...the scholarly analysis of human made or altered
                        environments and things..." where there is an
                        "...emphasis on the material to explore and understand
                        the invisible systems of meaning that humans share...".[1]

material realm *   references the sphere of assumed-to-be-real physical
                        entities among which humans live and which constitute
                        humans, but which may or may not already form part of
                        the World (see below). This term is preferred to "material
                        culture", which implies singularly definable objects or
                        things as having been created by or entered into the
                        human World.

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[1] Sheumaker & Wajda's 2008, xi-xii.

«meaning»   the validity of this term outside of the linguistic context (i.e.: in reference to the 'meaning' of one word or other) is disputed here. The use of this word outside linguistic context suggests that a correspondence or resemblance exists between a prototype object or entity as mediated through a «mind»-based idea or thought. This largely relies on a conception of «mind» (see below) and Peircean semiotic conception of an "interpretant": a sign in the «mind» of the person which corresponds in some way to the *sign* (see Appendix III). If the position developed here that all ideas correspond to a chain of sound-based memory associations (see §30) is favoured, then this term becomes redundant. The word "association" is therefore preferred in this context.

«mind»   the argument developed here agrees with the position that the concept of «mind» is a rationalist construction which relies on an idealist conception of a spontaneous God-derived intelligence and imagination which operates in distinction from the rest of the body and external stimuli. As such, if this construction is rejected, then this term becomes redundant.

«representation» / «representational»

                             this term suggests that a correspondence or resemblance exists between a prototype object or entity as mediated through a «mind»-based idea or thought. This largely relies on a conception of «mind» (see «mind» above) and Peircean semiotic conception of an "interpretant": a sign in the «mind» of the person which corresponds in some way to the *sign* (see Appendix III). If this is rejected, as it is here in favour of a position in which all ideas are understood as corresponding to a chain of sound-based memory associations (see §30), then this term becomes redundant. The term "proposition" is preferred here instead.

Source/s of Life * used here to denote, the entity/ies and/or event/s which humans variously perceive and use to explain and account for the world which sustains and nourishes life (and/or which can also bring about death). This term is favoured instead of terms such as "deities" as it excludes spirits, quantum events or big bang theory, for example.

«symbol» / «symbolic» as per «representation» / «representational».

Transcendence Orientated Worldliness (TOW) *

the transcendental end of a spectrum of types of engagement with the infinite realm involving the most distant and detached relationship with the Source/s of Life, usually using proxy Worldly enthymemes

World (after Heidegger) with a capitalised "W", here refers to the collective set of entities in the material realm which is included in a person or social group's awareness (and therefore their linguistic lexicon).

world with uncapitalised "w", here refers to world, as per its usual meaning and usage in common parlance.

Worldly enthymeme * entities which bring the infinite realm into contact with humans, through their either naturally or man-made demanding characteristics and ability to help fulfil the entic imperative.

PROLOGUE: The Aaronic Error[2]

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In Exodus 32 of the Pentateuch,[3] while Moses communes with Yahweh[4] for 40 days and 40 nights, the Israelites grow impatient:

> When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, "Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.[5]

Aaron asks them to give him all their gold earrings, out of which he fashions a Golden Calf and sets up an altar before it, where they may worship Yahweh. Aaron appears to have made a significant error, so serious that Yahweh in anger threatens to condemn all the people of Israel to death. Moses pacifies Yahweh, who then spreads a plague among the unsuspecting apostate Israelites instead.

What these passages from the Pentateuch reveal are perceived errors in Aaron's judgment concerning what are deemed to be appropriate ways in which the Israelites may engage with the material realm in relation to Yahweh. In what appears to be a deliberate juxtaposition, the Golden Calf passage in Exodus 32 follows immediately after

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[2] "The Aaronic Error" is a term used here specifically to denote Aaron's perceived misjudgement, as described in this prologue, concerning the appropriate form of the "god(s)" to be presented to the Israelites, in Moses' absence.

[3] Otherwise known as the Torah, or first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers & Deuteronomy.

[4] Herein 'Yahweh' and 'Allah' will be used in reference to the gods of the Jewish and Islamic faiths, respectively; and the term 'God' (with a capitalised 'G') is reserved for the Christian god. The term 'god/s' (with a small 'g') is used herein when referring to single or multiple supernatural figures associated with religious traditions in general and 'deities' for similar figures from polytheistic traditions specifically.

[5] Exodus 32:1. This is taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) Bible, used for all quotations used herein, unless otherwise stated.

Yahweh sets out to Moses in much detail, from Exodus 25 to Exodus 31, how the Ark of the Covenant - as the correct focus of worship for the Israelites - should be constructed and arranged within the Tabernacle complex (fig. 1) and then observations concerning the arrangement of the Tabernacle and its use on the Sabbath in Exodus 35.[6] The Tabernacle complex is antithetical to the Golden Calf, as neither figurative nor easily accessible: the Ark itself and the Cherubs (the only figurative elements of the accompanying paraphernalia) are veiled-off and made invisible within "the Most Holy Place" (or "Holy of Holies") in the Tabernacle, which is enclosed within a courtyard. (fig. 1). Unlike the Golden Calf, which assumes a figurative form and is readily accessible in the open-air, the form of the Ark is unknown and neither visible nor accessible. Whereas in Exodus 32, the Golden Calf is presented to the Israelites in a direct exchange for their earrings; in Exodus 25 and 35, various materials must be made as offerings to Yahweh.

The 'Aaronic Error', here serves as an of allegory for the central premise of this thesis: that humans desire connection or communion with some*thing* which is perceived as the Source/s of Life[7] (and death), and the kind of quandaries they face therein concerning what kinds of activities and material accoutrements are appropriate for enabling that connection. This dynamic encompasses several components, as follows:

i) The need to commune with something which constitutes the Source/s of Life ("Come, make us gods who will go before us.")[8]

ii) The question of the location and proximity of the material form of that Source/s of Life (the immediacy of the Golden calf versus the distance of the Ark of the Covenant)

iii) The tension between the solemn gift contract or sacrifice (the many materials required to make an offering to Yahweh) versus the apparently instantly

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[6] Childs refers to the "...intentional joining together of the tabernacle chapters with the golden calf story by a Priestly redactor" (1974, 542); and suggests that such a juxtaposition makes a "double point": "First, the alternative to true worship is held up as a terrifying threat which undercuts the very ground of Israel's existence. Secondly, Israel responded to God's forgiveness (ch. 33) and fulfilled her part to the letter in setting up the worship of God which he commanded." (*ibid*., 543). Watts 2011 further makes the case that, whether redacted or not, and whatever the source of Exodus 32 (i.e.: Yahwist, Priestly, Elohist or Deuteronomic -see footnote 40) this juxtaposition is indeed deliberate.

[7] This term is used here to denote, the entity/ies and/or event/s which humans variously perceive and use to explain and/or account for the world which sustains and nourishes life; and/or which can also bring about death. This term is favoured instead of terms such as "deities" as it excludes spirits, quantum events or big bang theory, for example.

[8] Exodus 32:1

gratifying effect of a commodifying exchange mechanism (earrings in exchange for the Golden Calf)

iv)   The question of the invisible, «representational», or non-«representational» form of the Source/s of Life, and the polemics surrounding issues of correspondence emergent therein (the Ark of the Covenant versus the Golden Calf).

INTRODUCTION: Interpretating «symbolic» material culture

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1. This thesis posits that what humans believe about the relative location and nature of entity/ies and/or event/s which account for life and/or the world which sustains and nourishes life - what will be referred to here as the "Source/s of Life" - must, in some ways, correlate with the kinds of relationships those humans have to the material world. If such a correlation is true, then it is further posited that analyses of the forms of material things (and ideas) which different people value should, conversely, help us to offer some understandings about the kinds of beliefs they hold concerning the location and nature of the Source/s of Life; and of their relationships to them.

In particular, the argument will be made that the perceived proximity of the Source/s of Life are constituted by fundamental body-bound responses to the ways in which all humans find themselves in-the-world –at once corporeally immersed and yet also perceptually distanced from them-*selves* and the world. Variances in the perceived location of the Source/s of Life and related degree of proximity in the relationships between humans and the Source/s of Life define the degree of perceived separation to the world and, therefore, to the kinds of material, economic and ethical values which are sustained and produced therein.

It will be suggested however that, true understanding with regard to the varying correlations between belief and material value (and other related values, such as the economic and the ethical), has, for various reasons, generally eluded the social sciences and humanities, including material culture studies.[9] One of the primary reasons for this is

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[9] The term "material culture studies" will be used here (rather than "archaeology" in which the methodological process of survey, excavation and physical analysis is implied), as per Sheumaker & Wajda's (2008, xi-xii) definition; as "the scholarly analysis of human made or altered environments and things..." where there is an "...emphasis on the material to explore and understand the invisible systems of meaning that humans share...". Material culture studies is also preferred here for its allusion to being

that, most approaches in-themselves unwittingly implicitly sustain and project beliefs concerning the location and nature of the Source/s of Life; thereby undermining any understandings concerning the *different* ways humans identify and relate to the Source/s of Life. The general assumption has been that, secularising Euro-American[10] scientific 'truths' have in some way 'overcome' incompatible untrue beliefs which would otherwise only taint their knowledge claims.[11] To help sustain this position, there even persists within the humanities and social sciences a systemic denial of the validity of the concept of "belief", which in-part serves to obviate the apparently derogatory implication that "believers" form attachments to objects associated with "illusory" ideas.[12] But embarrassment on the part of scientific rationalists on behalf of believers betrays a well-meaning (albeit condescending) sentiment, because it *in itself* relies entirely on the equally speculative belief that "beliefs" are «mind»-dependent constructions. It is proposed here, then, that the theoretical and methodological bases of material culture studies have drawn their lineage from traditions within the humanities and social sciences - especially Neo-Kantian[13] thought - which have reified and ossified the rationalist idea of a spontaneous internal «mind» ultimately derived from distant and

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inherently more interdisciplinary, as highlighted, for example, by Woodward (2007, 27), drawing from archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, sociology, art history and cultural studies. This term is used while acknowledging Ian Hodder's reference to the "University College London School of material culture studies" (Hodder 2012, 16), which has led some to use the term in reference specifically to the dialectical materialist approach of the UCL Anthropology department. The term is used here explicitly without any intended reference to dialectical materialist or Marxian approaches. The humanities and social sciences are referred to as the broader disciplinary gamut within which material culture studies falls. Therefore, where a statement is made which pertains to the broader cognate scholarly ecology, humanities and social sciences is used; and where it pertains more specifically to fields of material culture studies or archaeology, then those terms are used respectively.

[10] The term "Euro-American" is used here, as the better of all evils, for referring to the broad political and socio-cultural grouping typically referred to as "Western" or "Global North". It is preferred for its cultural rather than geographical implication, since it's sphere of influence extends far beyond the "west" (which is relative anyway, depending on your location) and the "global north", where there are/have been communities which have not participated in the Euro-American polity. In many ways the term "Classical Abrahamic" would serve better for its allusion to a specific genealogy of thought derived from the Europe and Asia Minor and its dispersion and influence across various parts of the globe, in the way that Euro-American fails to account. However, its use can be confusing in some contexts; and it has Biblical and philosophical connotations which are not always appropriate.

[11] Evans & Evans 2008 refer to this as the "epistemological conflict narrative". A significant body of literature have investigated the perceived incompatibility between science (including social sciences) and belief, for example: Gross & Simmons 2008; Gulker 2019; Hill 2019; Leuba 1933; Larson & Witham 1998; Larsen 2014; Stark 1963, 1999; Willerslev & Suhr 2018. While some have assertively made the case for the incompatibility of belief and faith with science -see, for example: Stenger 2014

[12] For recent surveys and discussions of the use and critiques of the concept of 'belief', especially in anthropology, see Risjord 2020; Streeter 2022; 2023. See also §25.

[13] "Neo-Kantian" here refers to a broad movement of thinkers arising originally from Germany in the 1870s, but which, it is argued here, continues to influence and imbue contemporary Euro-American thought. Neo-Kantianism is focused on a principal of rationalist objectivity and the primacy of the ability of humans to be able to logically calculate and intuit beyond the confines of subjective experience and empirical knowledge. Strictly an idealist and transcendentalist approach, therefore; while the early proponents of the movement expressed aspirations to reinvigorate Kant's thought, "Neo-Kantianism" should not be understood as being representative of or loyal to Kant's particular enterprise, but rather to one aspect of it. See §15.5. For defining Neo-Kantianism see, for example: Heis 2018; Makkreel & Luft 2010, 1-14.

transcendent Source/s of Life –in-itself a *belief* which corresponds to a broad 'category' of attitudinal responses to world which will tentatively be referred to here as "Transcendence Orientated Worldliness" ("ToW").[14] Thought which sustains this belief, it will be argued, assumes the primacy of humans as the highest instantiation of being and «mind», and in doing so, cannot fully account for non-«mind»-based, non-"rational" belief-claims, which may perceive the Source/s of Life as more substance-based, localised and/or immanent (for example) –what will broadly be referred to here as "Immanence Orientated Worldliness" ("IoW").[15]

The problem with Euro-American rationalist approaches, it will be argued, is that they lead invariably to explanations concerned with internal «mind»[16]-based «symbolic»[17] and «representational»[18] content. As essayist Susan Sontag observes in *Against Interpretation*, with reference to 'art' specifically:

> The fact is, all Western consciousness of and reflection upon art have remained within the confines staked out by the Greek theory of art as mimesis or representation. It is through this theory that art as such…becomes problematic, in need of defence. And it is the defence of art which gives birth to the odd vision by which something we have learned to call "form" is separated off from something we learned to call "content," and to the well-intentioned move which makes content essential and form accessory.[19]

She continues:

> None of us can ever retrieve that innocence before all theory when art knew no need to justify itself, when one did not ask of a work of art what it said because one knew (or thought one knew) what it did…
> What the overemphasis on the idea of content entails is the perennial, never consummated project of interpretation.[20]

Sontag's observation is that there is a - particularly "western" - disconnect from the interaction with the *form* of images and things in favour of «meaning» ("content"), which

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[14] This refers to the transcendental end of a spectrum of types of engagement with the infinite realm involving the most distant and detached relationship with the Source/s of Life, usually using proxy Worldly enthymemes (see glossary).

[15] This refers to the immanent end of a spectrum of types of engagement with the infinite realm involving the most direct relationship with the Source/s of Life in-themselves.

[16] The argument developed here agrees with the position that «mind» is a rationalist construction which relies on an idealist conception of a spontaneous God-derived intelligence and imagination which operates in distinction from the rest of the body and external stimuli. If this construction is rejected, then this term becomes redundant.

[17] The use of the terminology «symbol» / «symbolic» suggests that a correspondence or resemblance exists between a prototype object or entity as mediated through a «mind»-based idea or thought. This largely relies on a conception of «mind» (see above) and Peircean semiotic conception of an "interpretant": a sign in the «mind» of the person which corresponds in some way to the sign (see Appendix III). If this is rejected, as it is here in favour of a position in which all ideas are understood as corresponding to a chain of sound-based memory associations (see §30), then this term becomes redundant. The term "proposition" is preferred here instead.

[18] The same rationale for the rejection of the terminology «representation» / «representational» is used here as for «symbol» / «symbolic». See above.

[19] Sontag 2009 [1961], 4.

[20] *Ibid.*, 4-5.

involves an interpretative leap which constructs a conceptual correlative between an internal image or thought (i.e.: "in the mind") and an external image or thing. This thesis proposes that such a perspective denies the direct affectivity of a real world and creates a significant blind spot for being able to understand a range of different types of human engagements with the material world in the past and present; and which furthermore leads to difficulties for 'decoding' value-based cultural conflicts, of which the "culture wars" described today provide a pertinent example.

Specifically, it arrives at this position through the observation that the unique and ubiquitous condition of human experience ("excentric positionality" - akin to self-awareness - as introduced in §16.2) leads to a perceptive dialectical tension between humans and the material realm,[21] and the arising need to identify the relative location *of* and establish a closer connection *with* the Source/s of Life –a kind of 'yearning'. This in-itself embodies an imperative towards what will be referred to here as "entic" experiences; that is to say, experiences which appear to draw one nearer to the Source/s of Life, and which are otherwise variously identified as (for example) "transcendental" or "ecstatic" experiences.

2. What follows, then, is principally a philosophical exploration which interrogates the limits of possible knowledge within material culture studies, and beyond. It proposes that interpretations involving abductive inferences about the specific «symbolic» «meaning» of an image or monument (for example) are unsuitable for reaching reliable understandings concerning the specific ideas or beliefs of the people who create/d and/or use/d those images or monuments. It contends that, claims identifying female figurines as «representing» "«symbols» of fertility", or bronze swords found in burials as «representing» "«symbols» of power" (for example) are ultimately fetishizing interpretative tropes symptomatic of Neo-Kantian rationalist thought, which cannot pretend to offer any proper understandings of non-Euro-American Worlds or beliefs, especially from remote pre- and extra-historic contexts. It furthermore proposes that attempts in the last forty years to shift thought - often referred to as post-processual, post-structural or post-human theorical models (for example) - rather than initiating any kind of significant

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[21] The term "material realm" is used in reference to the sphere of assumed-to-be-real physical entities among which humans live and which constitute humans. This term is preferred to "material culture", which implies singularly definable objects or things as having been created by or entered into the human World.

paradigmatic shift,[22] have generally (often unwittingly) served to further indurate «representational» thought. It is asserted here that it is not possible to make secure statements about the «meaning» of specific symbolic culture belonging to remote peoples.[23] Indeed, the specific perceived value of things to individuals is in-itself so variable and ephemeral and often so detached from the original perceived role or function of the things, that it is of little consequence in helping us arrive at significant understandings of the ways in which different human communities have and do intrinsically relate to the world. Instead, an approach is developed for reaching understandings concerning different people's attitudes and relationships to the world within their particular social context, and how that becomes manifest in the kinds of material culture to which they ascribe certain values and/or potency (what will be referred to here as "worldy enthymemes").[24] In this regard, then, the ambition here is not to offer some magic model through which we may be able to accurately interpret «meaning»[25] through material culture – the suggestion, rather, would be that we abandon such spurious (albeit interesting) endeavours. Instead, what is offered is an approach which can lead to more coarse-grain statements which may help us understand the nature of the beliefs of a particular community within the Transcendence orientated / Immanence orientated (ToW/IoW) spectrum.

Much work needs to be done, then, to isolate and clearly characterise the intricacies of the conceptually nuanced persistent effects and stealth pervasiveness of Euro-American «representational» thought within material culture studies. Demonstrating where and how it hides is, as such, a significant part of the challenge of this thesis, which necessarily unfolds partly as a "problematizing genealogy".[26] Out of this, a ground is situated for an approach broadly known as Philosophical Anthropology,[27] closely related to Life Philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*).[28] This approach has had limited recognition outside German-speaking philosophical circles and largely became a margin-note in the

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[22] The term 'paradigm' is arguably problematic due to the numerous ways in which it has been used, not least by Thomas Kuhn himself (See Masterman 1970). While Kuhn ultimately clarified that his preferred meaning of the term was to describe accepted exemplars or model solutions adopted within a work or body of work (Kuhn 1977), the term is used here in the ways that it has come into common understanding as a reference to the metaphysical level of thought or science: concerning a broad conceptual approach or framework. For a discussion about this in the archaeological context, see Lucas 2017.
[23] This has of course already been acknowledged elsewhere. See, for example, Thomas 1996, 238; Tilley 1991; 1993.
[24] This term refers to entities which bring the infinite realm into contact with humans, through their either naturally or man-made demanding characteristics and ability to help fulfil the entic imperative. See §32.
[25] The term "meaning" is used with caution and therefore marked with guillemets in contexts where it is used not in reference to linguistic meanings, and in relation to the assumed "internal" idea or concept which somehow "represents" external phenomena.
[26] Allen 2008, 2010; Koopman 2013; Sheehey 2020; Ratcliffe 2024.
[27] For overviews of Philosophical Anthropology, see: Fischer 2009; Schacht 1990; Wulf, 2013 [2004], 37-55.
[28] For a recent treatment on *Lebensphilosophie*, see: Beiser 2023.

development of thought within the humanities and social sciences during the twentieth century; in-part due to an aggressive Neo-Kantian purge at the turn of the twentieth century and in-part due to the circumstances during and arising since the Second World War.

What this thesis is not, is a "theory". It is first and foremost a deconstruction of the anatomy of current thought, and then builds on current knowledge to arrive at a synthesis which re-frames the way we might go about our approach to understanding the external form of human expressions, which is pertinent to the study of material culture; but as it turns out, many other social and cultural phenomena. Indeed, while it may be applicable to contexts beyond material culture studies, it also trespasses far from the disciplinary strictures of archaeology and anthropology. In this regard, the author can only re-iterate what Bertrand Russell said of his enterprise in *History of Western Philosophy:*

> Apology is due to the specialists on various schools and individual philosophers. ...Some, whose scholarly austerity is unbending, will conclude that books covering a wide field should not be written at all, or if written, should consist of monographs by a multitude of authors...If there is any unity in the movement of history, if there is any intimate relation between what goes before and what comes later, it is necessary, for setting this forth, that earlier and later periods should be synthesised in a single mind.[29]

While some apology is indeed due, however, the approach of this thesis is also a kind of a plea for extolling the virtues of interdisciplinary enquiries concerning the human condition through a material culture studies lens.

3. Notably, the approach developed relies upon Euro-American-based philosophical traditions and thinkers (and especially German thinkers, for reasons which will become apparent). While some sympathy is held for the argument that the best way to overcome Euro-American rationalism should be through the articulation and development of non-Euro-American approaches;[30] the argument is sustained here that any genuine non-Euro-American approaches would likely neither be compatible with nor manifest themselves as a text-based doctoral thesis steeped in Euro-American academic scholarly conventions, themselves derived from Christian scholasticism and rationalist argumentation. The position assumed instead, is that, from all human perspectives, there must be the possibility of *understanding*, derived from some level of experience of a reality which all humans share in common. As Philosopher Roy Bhasker put it:

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[29] Russell 1961, 7; as cited in Mettinger 1995, 7. Own square brackets.
[30] On indigenous approaches to archaeology and anthropology, see, for example: Atalay 2004; Bruchac et al 2010; González-Ruibal 2019; Nicholas & Andrews 1997; Watkins 2001; 2005; Watkins & Nicholas 2014.

> For Kepler to see the rim of the earth drop away, while Tyco Brahe watches the sun rise, we must suppose that there is something that they both see (in different ways). Similarly, when modern sailors refer to what ancient Mariners called a sea serpent as a school of porpoises, we must suppose that there is something which they are describing in different ways.[31]

But for understanding to be possible - whilst we cannot entirely overcome our own experiences, values and preferences - we can reflexively admit to and interrogate the various modes of thought, beliefs and conventions in which we find ourselves steeped, and which present the world to us in these different ways to which Bhasker refers. Such a process perhaps lays bare our personal vulnerabilities and exposes us most starkly concerning the mystery and finitude of our existence, which is what (it is argued here) leads humans to search for the Source/s of Life in the first place. Philosopher Ray Brassier expresses such a sentiment in no uncertain terms, challenging us to put aside the very values which we believe define our own humanity, if we are going to stand any chance of truly understanding humanity, and each-other:

> ...there is a mind-independent reality, which, despite the presumptions of human narcissism, is indifferent to our existence and oblivious to the 'values' and 'meaning' which we would drape over it in order to make it more hospitable. Nature is not our or anyone's 'home', nor a particularly beneficent progenitor. Philosophers [anthropologists and archaeologists] would do well to desist from issuing any further injunctions about the need to re-establish the meaningfulness of existence, the purposefulness of life, or mend the shattered concord between man and nature. Philosophy should be more than a sop to the pathetic twinge of human self-esteem.[32]

While the approach developed takes sympathy with such a standpoint, it does not do so in a way which seeks to negate belief. Quite in contradistinction to the Neo-Kantian tradition, which it will be argued here underpins most thought in the humanities and social sciences, and which ultimately espouses a form of Idealism; this thesis acknowledges that humans hold different beliefs, but that they do so based on common experiences of the world, in and through bodily functions shared in-common, and – crucially – through the common experience of memory-based associations which awakens in us all common emotions of awe, joy, anxiety and horror.

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[31] Bhasker 2008 [1975], 21.

[32] Brassier 2007, xi. Own square brackets. The present author acknowledges that in order to take such a view, one must be prepared to throw into a speculative light all of one's beliefs and faith. While this may be challenging, it is argued that the third person experience of 'other' people's beliefs which differ from our own in-itself raises the possibility of doubt and therein the opportunity for the contemplation of the possibility of such a "reality" which Brassier and Bhasker both describe. As such, this kind of thought and maintaining a faith are not mutually exclusive. The ability to access and contemplate the possibility of such a "real" world, it is asserted here, is a choice and accessible to all, rather than - as Plato would have it - an enforced condition which is only accessible to a privileged few.

4. A complex compound argument is therefore presented in the pages which follow in as best way as the limitations of linear prose will allow. The thesis is split into two parts, which are each split into chapters and sections. **Part I** deconstructs the problems in the understanding of material culture, which this thesis seeks to address. Chapter 1 introduces three case-studies of material culture, and emergent extant polemics in their interpretation. Chapter 2 explores the ways in which variants in attitudes to material cultural form between iconism and aniconism and outcomes of prohibitions, such as iconoclasm, are frequently misunderstood and/or negated within material culture studies, but also within wider Euro-American popular culture, due to the ubiquity of the ideas of « representation» and «meaning». Chapter 3 deals with the distinction between Wilhelm Dilthey's 'metaphysical consciousness' as the single ontological category of human experience, which we can strive to understand (as ontic experience) in contrast to Martin Heidegger's more broadly adopted assertion that this constitutes one of various ontological realities (western metaphysics), which can be overcome. It is posited that this forms part of a compound of ideas in which ontology has come to be confused as a variable category between different types of human experiences –known as the "epistemic fallacy". The distinction between the three main hermeneutic positions is clarified and the position of this thesis (not one which is otherwise commonly assumed in material culture studies) is established. Chapter 4, presents perhaps some of the most difficult yet revealing arguments. Through a genealogy of the thought culminating in the neo-Kantian position we see how the physical and conceptual entities of «mind» and body have been prized apart, while at the same time the idea of the human *perception* of a kind of separation of body from «mind» (or a kind of self-awareness) has been asserted as something which is subject to variable ontological realities (rather than something which all humans have in common). This thesis proposes a position in exact opposition to this, that the «mind»-body divide is a human *perception* which in-fact defines humanity and is immutable in any permane   nt way; but that this cannot reflect a reality where there is probably no such division.

Chapter 5 in Part II then sets about introducing Helmut Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology as a development of Dilthey's philosophical hermeneutics; introducing the idea that human responses to this immutable division or self-awareness ("excentric positionality") should form the basis for our understanding of human experience and culture; and how the ideas of Georg W F Hegel and Georg Simmel can help to understand the dialectic nature of human experience - the struggle between the experience of self in and with the world (or thing). The argument then sets about exploring the nature of this kind of 'yearning' and the sorts of "entic" experiences which humans seek in its

fulfilment. **Chapter 6** considers the role of art in response to the transition to secularism. The argument is developed that, while the Romantic movement can be seen as a manifest form of the quest for re-enchantment in the face of secularism, a largely transcendentalist pre-occupation - itself a symptom of Neo-Kantianism and secularism rooted in Deism - leads a particular kind of (distancing) relation with the material realm. **Chapter 7** then interrogates the bases of the thought prevalent within post-structuralism and/or post-anthropocentrism, particularly through a deconstruction of Latour's position and the juxtaposition of Heidegger's earlier and later thought which help to reveal flaws and turns which have otherwise not been fully acknowledged or assimilated into areas of material culture studies where Heidegger's contribution is espoused. **Chapter 8** develops the point that the Source/s of Life (as the ultimate and original gift) must be implicated in fulfilment of the yearning (and entic experience) through a kind of gift-exchange contract in the context of a demanding external field of stimuli where the perceived relative location of the Source/s of Life will determine the kinds of activities and objects ("worldly enthymemes") necessarily involved in those exchanges. The beginnings of a scheme of patterning of forms relative to the perceived location of the Source/s of Life is developed; and the approach is tested in the context of understanding changes in the form of infant cemetery iconography at ancient Carthage. **Chapter 9** summarises, concludes and itemises areas where additional work is needed in this thesis.

The appendices provide more detailed explication of subject matter which could not be included in the main body of the text. In **Appendix I** more background is provided on the Punic-Carthaginian context and material culture dealt with in Chapters 1 and 8. **Appendix II** offers some examples of Aniconic traditions, as discussed in §5, especially. **Appendix III** offers a fuller explanation of Charles Sanders Peirce's very particular Semiotic model, discussed in §8. **Appendix IV** offers a deconstruction of the error of Heidegger's 'Great Art', which helps to furnish the argument in Chapter 6. **Appendix V** offers some discussion around the question of death awareness and terror management theory, briefly discussed in §31.

PART I: The Problem of «Representational» Thought

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CHAPTER 1: Case studies in the Polemics of «Representation»
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This chapter briefly introduces three 'case studies' which are used to exemplify the kinds of problems which it is suggested here underlie the interpretative process of human relationships to material culture. The three case studies are used to demonstrate the different ways in which the interpretation of the use of objects and images have become implicated in polemical discourses concerning what is 'true' or 'correct'. In introducing these case studies, it is hoped that the nature of the problem which this thesis seeks to address is in-part unfurled. These case studies, especially case study 1, will be briefly revisited in Chapter 8, in light of the approach developed in this thesis. It should be noted that this thesis focuses more on the philosophical bases of thought, than on the archaeology and material culture of these case studies, which serve predominantly to provide examples of the problems which this thesis seeks to address and some 'real-world' context to the otherwise deep philosophical discussion which will generally ensue. As such, a more detailed introduction of the context and material culture of case study 1, which will be a less familiar subject for most readers, is provided in Appendix 1

§1. Case study 1: Carthaginian infant cemetery stelae 'iconography'

1.1. This thesis was originally born out of an interest in understanding the enigmatic motifs found on Carthaginian-Punic infant cemetery stelae from sixth century to second century BCE Carthage and other sites in the central Mediterranean (Fig. 2). These stelae typically marked the location of urns filled with the calcined remains from pre-, peri- and post-natal infants to children up to six years of age, often mixed with the remains of young birds and animals. Numerous such cemeteries have been found in the central Mediterranean, used successively over a period of several centuries, each yielding tens of

thousands of depositions. Given the nature of the depositions, related supplicatory inscriptions and textual sources purported to describe associated events and rites (see appendix 1), there has been debate - sometimes fierce - and much controversy among scholars, about whether these cemeteries and associated material culture represent the outcome of sacrificial practices.[33] The emotive subject of infanticide coupled with the lack of reliable historical sources or clear epigraphic explanation has elicited a panoply of post-/colonialist and nationalist narratives in the analysis and interpretation of the function of these cemeteries and of the associated iconography.[34] Historiographical analyses have been interesting and helpful in this context, and more broadly, for understanding the ways in which we create, manipulate and mobilise narratives about the past to explain, catalyse and sustain recent and contemporary historical socio-political dynamics.[35] However, any sort of reliable understanding of the ideas and Worlds of the people who cremated and buried these children and rendered the accompanying monuments - the kind of knowledge on which, some would argue, the discipline of archaeology and material culture studies is (or should be) predicated - remains almost entirely in suspense.

1.2. At an early stage of research for this thesis, various systematic methodologies were initially considered for finding patterns from which conclusions may be drawn about the various motifs found on Punic stelae. But it became clear for each approach considered that, at some crucial point, an inevitable abductive inferential leap would have to occur between the ordering of available data for analysis and any final statements about the «symbolism» and possible «meanings» or beliefs associated with the actions or rites involved in the creation of those monuments and motifs. The conclusive outcomes between the different methodologies could be the same or different; not due to any significant similarity or variance in the available data, but rather due to the similarity or variance between the researcher's biases that would have to be either sustained or discarded.

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[33] Garnand 2002; Moussa 2007.
[34] Garnand 2002, 2019; Moussa 2007; Lafrenze Samuels & van Dommelen 2019.
[35] Trigger 1984, 1996 [1984], 2006 [1989]; van Dommelen 2011.

Figure 1: Stelae from Punic infant cemeteries, bearing motifs and inscriptions.
TL: Limestone stele in TNT form with stone/pillar motif and Punic inscription, Carthage.
TR: Sandstone cippi with Egyptianizing false door, pillar and crescent-disk, Carthage.
BL: Limestone stele with pillars motif and crescent-disk, Hadrumetum (contemporary Sousse). BR: TNT form and crescent-disk in Egyptianizing false door. Images: © F.K.Moussa

The present author has suggested elsewhere that shifting patterns in the kinds of narratives concerning Carthaginian infant sacrifice were underpinned by shifts in the pre- and post-colonial identifications with Phoenician-Punic identity. So, from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, predominantly French colonial archaeologists and philologists contrived a complex ethnic and cultural antecedence at-once with Roman and Amazigh ("Berber") heritage, but also a conflated Carthaginian-

Israelite heritage,[36] while assuming an apologetic stance concerning the assumed sacrificial practices of the Carthaginians; in some cases even making a direct connection between Carthaginian infant sacrifice and the consecration of first-born males in the Old Testament (thereby verifying the claimed Judeo-Christian antecedence and at the same time giving Biblical credence to the practices).[37] In later French post-colonial narratives, a dissociation is then made from Carthaginian heritage, while evoking Flaubertian lurid images of Carthaginian sacrificial practices.[38] Amidst this shift, a simultaneous turn occurs away from interpreting Punic iconography (see Fig.2 & Appendix I) as mainly aniconic to mainly iconic.[39] What this appears to suggest is that, in the ascription of certain types of cultural values - from the emic point of view - certain types of formal expression are assumed. In other words, we might say that, while scholars contrived a sympathetic cultural affinity with Carthaginian culture, the iconography was interpreted as aniconic; but once any cultural association was discarded and Carthaginian practices were conversely abhorred, the same iconography was therein interpreted as iconic and/or imitative. What might be informing this kind of patterning in interpretative outcomes of researchers? And if such patterning is true in the interpretation of certain material forms, then does it follow that similar kinds of patterning occur in the creation of or supplicatory activities associated with certain material forms, such as those visible in the Punic iconographic repertoire itself, for example?

§2. Case Study 2: Old Testament image prohibitions

The Aaronic Error introduced in the Prologue of course implicitly references the Second Word ("second commandment") of the Decalogue (the "Ten Commandments") delivered by Moses to the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, in which the prohibition against making images is codified:

> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.[40]

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[36] On this see, for example: Brett, 1976; Fenwick 2008; Guilhaume, 1992; Lorcin, 1995: 8, 21-22; MacDougal 2006; Mattingly, 1996; Silverstein, 2004: 35-75.

[37] Moussa 2007, 79-82. On the connection between presumed Carthaginian infant sacrifice and the consecration of first-born males in the Old Testament (e.g.: Exodus 8, Numbers 8, 18), see, for example, Pallary 1922, 208.

[38] Garnand 2002; Moussa 2007.

[39] Moussa 2007, 82-83.

[40] Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8. The precise way in which the prohibition against 'graven images' varies depending on the version of the Decalogue or Old Testament. This is because the composition, content and authorship of the Decalogue is complex and has been subject to some interpretation. According to the documentary hypothesis - the most established model for the dating of the Pentateuch - the Decalogue is understood as having been authored by four sources in different sections known as the

This prohibition against images, which notably follows as second only to the commandment "You shall have no other gods before me", appears in numerous other passages of the Old Testament besides from the Decalogue.[41] The use of the Golden Calf motif in particular, for some, suggests a process of differentiation between closely related or rival groups –a sentiment repeated on numerous occasions in the Old Testament.[42] So the censure of the Golden Calf specifically is understood by some as an allusion to a "pagan idol";[43] or to Canaanite gods such as El, Ba'al and Hadad.[44] Others have similarly argued for the censure as politically motivated, derived either from conflicts between Aaronic and other priesthoods,[45] or as critiques of Jeroboam's religious policies and systems of governance.[46] Carroll contemplates the possibility of the prohibition of the vain use of Yahweh, such as in Exodus 20:7,[47] as a motivation against the use of images, perhaps influenced by neighbouring 'pagan' practices. The prohibitions, as Carroll puts it, "...are seen as warnings against attempts to manipulate the deity, as prohibitions against magical practices." However, he goes on to raise a crucial question: "It is difficult to see why Yahweh's being should be more threatened by a concrete image than a verbal image, or why his freedom should be affected at all by certain forms of cultic furniture."[48] Indeed, what Carroll's question demands and what this thesis seeks to explore is ways we can better understand and acknowledge the

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"Ritual Decalogue", "Ethical Decalogue", "Covenant Code" and the "Ten Commandments". The former three are associated with the Yahwist ('J'), Priestly ('P') and Elohist ('E') sources, respectively; probably combined later by the Deuteronomic source ('D'), while "Ten Commandments" is only used twice and not in direct association with either of the Decalogue texts. In the Jewish Talmud or Midrash, therefore, the image prohibition appears as the second part of the Second Word ("Word" is more accurately used here instead of "commandment") together with the prohibition against worshipping other gods; it appears solely as the Second Word in the Septuagint or Greek Old Testament, in Philo's Decalogue and Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* versions; and the second or third part of the First Word in the Catholic Catechism, Augustine and Lutheran Old Testament versions. On the Documentary Hypothesis, see, for example: Schwartz 2021.

[41] See, for example, Deuteronomy 4:15-19, 23, 25, 28; 27: 15; Exodus 20:23-24; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4; Judges 17:1-5.

[42] See Deuteronomy 9:7-10:11; 1 Kings 12:26-33; Hosea 8:5, 10:5, 13:2; Psalms 106: 19; Nehemiah 9:18.

[43] On the Golden Calf as being related to *Apis / Mnevis*, see: Robertson 1892, 151; Graetz 1874, 18; Pfeiffer 1926, 217ff; Morenz 1973, 143-144, 148, 157, 259, 265, 268; as *Amon-Re,* see: Oswalt 1973, 13ff; and as *Hathor,* see: Danelius 1967, 95-114; as being related to Mesopotamian *Sin*, see: Lewy 1945, 405-489; Key 1965, 20-26; Bailey 1971, 97-115.

[44] On the Golden Calf as *El*, *Ba'al* and *Hadad*, see: Albright 1946, 71ff, 84-87, 149, 156; Ringgren 1966, 42ff; Clements 1972, 206.

[45] Although, notably, there is little agreement about precisely which priesthood opposed to the Aaronic priesthood. See, for example: Kennett 1905, 161-168; Meek 1929, 149-66; North 1954, 191-99; Aberbach & Smolar 1967, 129-40; Cross 1973, 198-206.

[46] As critiques of Jeroboams religious policies, see: Coats 1968, 184-86; Childs 1974, 557-579; Van Seters 1994, 290-318; as critiques of Jeroboams systems of governance, see: Jenks 1977, 101-4. For a good overview of these discussions, see Ho Chung 2010, 2-6.

[47] Exodus 20:7: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain."

[48] Carroll 1977, 55.

affectivity of the forms of images and things and their relationship to *belief*. This is not to discount entirely the polemics of alterity; but rather that inter-cultural conflict emerges not only or entirely from territorial disputes, power-play and ethnic differences; but also - and perhaps more fundamentally - from differences in the perceived location and form of the Source/s of Life.

§3. Case Study 3: Contemporary Islamic Salafist iconoclasm

3.1. Islamic Salafist[49] destruction of monuments has been extant since the foundation of the Saudi-Arabian Wahhabi tradition in the eighteenth century by Muhammed Ibn Abdul Wahhab, who wrote: "We must find out what true Islam is: it is above all a rejection of all Gods except God....Shirk ['partners to God', polytheism] is evil, no matter what the object, whether it be 'king or prophet, or saint or tree or tomb.'"[50] This sort of iconoclasm guided by similar rhetoric came most sharply into Euro-American awareness with the destruction of two fifth century rock-cut Bamiyan Buddhas at Hadda in south-east Afghanistan on the 14th March 2001, by Taliban forces (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2: THE LARGEST OF THE TWO BAMIYAN BUDDHAS (AFGHANISTAN), BEFORE AND AFTER ITS DESTRUCTION IN 2001.
IMAGES: L: RIC ERGENBRIGHT/DANITA DELIMONT/STOCK.ADOBE.COM. R: JONATHAN WILSON/ STOCK.ADOBE.COM

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[49] Salafism (Arabic Salafia, 'of the ancestors') represents a puritanical Islamist movement, closely associated with Wahhabism, which adheres to traditional interpretations of the Qur'an. See: Doumato 2003; Ungureau 2011.

[50] Gold 2003, 19. Own square brackets. On Salafist iconoclasm see, for example: Beránek & Ťupek 2019.

These actions followed a decree on the 26th February earlier that year (2001) ordering the elimination of all non-Islamic monuments by the then elusive leader of the Taliban, Mullah Mohammed Omar.[51] Numerous similar acts of the destruction of heritage monuments were discharged by Islamic State groups (IS)[52] between 2013 and 2019, as was widely broadcast, recorded and deliberated upon by various international agencies, such as UNESCO, UN Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC).[53] Not surprisingly, these actions led to a furore of worldwide condemnation of such actions that UNESCO described as "wanton destruction";[54] and led to various legal actions.[55] The physical and visual - often-brutal - immediacy of such acts of destruction are effective and accessible foci for emotive discourse around the preservation of heritage and cultural/ethnic identity. However, in the emergent discourse some have drawn attention to the ways in which the ascription of value to certain heritage sites and objects is culturally specific, especially on the part of a presumed 'global community' in a world where some cultural sensibilities would look upon the *presence* of such monuments with as much negative sensitivity as Euro-American sensibilities would regard their absence through destruction. Archaeologist Lynn Meskell has described such phenomena as "Negative Heritage"; that is, "a conflictual site that becomes the repository of negative memory in the collective imaginary."[56] Other examples of negative heritage she provides include the site of the 9/11 attacks and Hiroshima. The difference between 9/11 and Hiroshima (aside from the devasting loss of lives) is that, whilst 9/11 occupies a distinct place in American urban and social memory, the Buddhas occupy a place in Euro-American consciousness albeit only by dint of their incorporation into world heritage by

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[51] Notably, this was a U-turn on Mullah Omar's previous policy, which had been to protect the Bamiyan Buddhas. On their destruction as sites of World Heritage see: Centlivres 2008; Flood 2002; Frei 2005; Meskell 2002; Warikoo 2004.

[52] The acronym "IS" is used here, after the BBC convention (BBC 2015), to refer generically to group/s founded in 1999 which referred to themselves and are referred to in the extant literature variously as "Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL), "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria", "Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS) and "Islamic State". "IS" is favoured as the term closest to the various groups' latest self-ascription, but with the caveat of the acknowledgment that these groups did not in-fact constitute an internationally recognised State, but rather a self-styled or self-declared State. IS also replaces use of the term "Da'esh", which is the Arabic acronym for "Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham" (ISIS) ("al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fī'l ʾIrāq wa'l Shām") but which in Arabic is a politicised derogatory term used in opposition to "IS".

[53] On the UNESCO & UN Security Council documentation of IS heritage destruction, see, for example: Weinert 2016.

[54] Francioni & Lenzerini 2003, 631.

[55] Francioni & Lenzerini 2003.

[56] Meskell 2002, 558. On the sacralisation of 9/11 'ground-zero' as 'negative space' and discussions of how to re-use the space, for example, such as the multi-faith centre ("Park 51") two blocks away from the former site of the World Trade Centre, better known as "Ground-Zero mosque", which became the centre of bitter controversy; see: Davis & Dover 2010; Elliott 2010; Jackson & Hutchinson 2010; Takim 2011; and Kilde 2011 on Ground Zero as a 'Sacred site' and 'contested space'.

Euro-American institutions such as UNESCO, on behalf of an assumed de facto global 'community' interest;[57] what architectural historian Françoise Choay has called the 'ecumenical expansion of heritage practices'.[58]

After Mullah Omar's decree, UNESCO emissaries attempted to engage in a dialogue with Taliban theologians to prevent the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas on the basis that "...a necessary distinction should be made between idolatry and exemplary, idol and icon, between admiration and worship."[59] Despite the acknowledged absence of a Buddhist community actively venerating these statues in Afghanistan, the Taliban legitimised their destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas on the basis that they still attracted idolatrous attention, particularly from the Euro-American community. Therefore, whether the motivation for the adoration or valuing of these statues was religious or secular, was irrelevant to the Taliban. For them, worship and adoration are synonymous.

3.2. Yet, in the background to the destruction of recognisable 'global community' heritage sites and objects, over several decades there have also been continued attacks of Islamic Sufi shrines [60] by Salafists, particularly in Pakistan, Yemen and across North Africa in the the wake of the so-called 'Arab Spring' of 2011, and ever since.[61] In one such example, in June 2012, the international media reported that Islamic Salafis Ansar-Eddine

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[57] UNESCO policy states that: "...cultural and natural property demonstrate the importance, for all the peoples of the world, of safeguarding this unique and irreplaceable property, to whatever people it may belong...parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole." UNESCO 1972.

[58] Choay, as cited in Gamboni 2001, 9.

[59] Centlivres 2008, 13.

[60] Sufism (Arabic Sufia, 'wearers of wool') represents the mystical strand of Islam after the Sunni and Shi'ite traditions. Although not recognised as part of orthodoxy, Sufism is tolerated as a form of 'folk Islam' by most national Islamic authorities. It has many regional variants and tariqa (Arabic, 'pathways' or spiritual progression). Sufi shrines are typically small domed structures enclosing the mausoleum of a local saint or spiritual leader, often forming the focal point of a larger cemetery. Used as places of prayer, meditation and offerings, they are sometimes the site of healing, divination and incubation by local adherents of one or a number of local 'saints' or 'holy men', who may be associated with a family lineage or tariqa. On Sufism see: Doutté 1900; Green 2012; Knysh 2017; Ridgeon 2015; Trimingham 1971; On Sufi shrines see: Charan *et al.* 2018; Ernst 2022.

[61] Sufi-inspired Ahle Sunnat wal Jama'at (Barelvi) shrines in Pakistan have often been demolished by the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan; and in Yemen groups affiliated to Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have attacked Sufi shrines. Attacks on shrines in North Africa: Mali, in 2012: Sheikh Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar, Sidi Mochtar, Sidi Elmety, Mahaman Elmety, Cheikh Sidi Amar, Alpha Moya, and two associated with the Djingareyber mosque, all in Timbuktu; Cheik El-Kebir, 330 km from Goa; and Alpha Mobo, Goundam. Libya, between October 2011 and December 2013: Sidi Abdussalam Mosque, Sidi Al Makari, al-Shaab al-Dahmani, Abdel Salam al-Asmar, Abdullah al-Shaab, Zawiyat Blat in Zlitan and the graves of the family of Yusuf Pasha Qaramanli. Tunisia, between January 2010 and December 2013: thirty-four shrines were reported by the Union of Sufi Brotherhoods as having been attacked since the Tunisian Revolution, including the well-known 13th century mausoleum of Sidi Bou Said, which was set alight, destroying the interior and numerous manuscripts (although local authorities have since claimed that the fire was in-fact an electrical fire); Egypt, since January 2011: at least twenty-five Sufi shrines in Egypt were attacked. Considerably more actions on shrines have taken place since 2013. On this, see in particular Beránek & Ťupek 2019.

rebels [62] had completely destroyed the shrine of Cheikh Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar (see Fig. 5) and a further six in Timbuktu at the same time. 'Ahmed', who identified himself as part of Ansar-Eddine's 'media committee' iterated: "We will destroy everything, even if the mausolea are inside the mosques...".[63] Partly in response to the International Criminal Court's (ICC) denouncement of these actions as "war crimes", Omar Ould Hamaha, Arab-Malian military chief of Ansar-Eddine, explained to Time World their motivation behind these attacks:

> It's forbidden by Islam to pray on tombs and ask for blessings. Ansar Eddine is showing the rest of world, especially Western countries, that whether they want it or not, we will not let the younger generation believe in shrines as God, regardless of what the U.N., UNESCO, International Criminal Court or ECOWAS [the Economic Community of West African States] have to say. We do not recognize these organizations. The only thing we recognize is the court of God.[64]

What is notable about these acts is that they are attacks on non-Euro-American, non-global community, non-figurative objects and/or places. These are acts of destruction inflicted by one Islamic community upon another of the same faith with similar practices involving similarly aniconic (non-figurative) places and objects of worship. The issue at hand here cannot, then, only be concerning image-making prohibitions, or even conflicting values between Islamic / Euro-American/Secular communities, as some have suggested. As Anthropologist Emily O'Dell puts it:

> The denial of the intercessory power of the...Sufi shrine [by Salafist Islamists] are, in effect, a rejection of materiality, not unlike the Taliban's rejection of the Buddhas as nothing more than "stones." Such a drastically different reading of material culture— one that strips the material of meaning, value, and historicity—arouses a strong sense of threat to so-called "universal" conventions about what has value and is worth preserving. The tendency in the media and by cultural preservationists to frame competing notions of materiality and the value and capacity of heritage, not as different, but as wrong, results in analyses that overemphasize the moral dimension in an attempt to protect and maintain the appropriate hierarchy of representation and the relationship between the material and immaterial which is falsely assumed to be stable and universal.[65]

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[62] Ansar-Eddine (Arabic, 'defenders of the faith', often transliterated in the press as 'Ansar Dine') is a Salafist Islamist militant group, who formed an alliance with the secular Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) in October 2011 to liberate the Tuareg territorial heartland in Northern Mali known as Azawad. The MNLA declared independence of the state of Azawad on 6th April 2012 after taking control of the region together with Ansar-Eddine. After ideological disagreements, MNLA lost control of most of the region to Ansar-Eddine and to the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MOJWA) at the end of June 2012, who were engaged mainly in guerrilla battle for control of the region against the MNLA and Malian army from October 2012 and against French, American, Chadian and Nigerian forces from January 2013 to April 2013. The end of a ceasefire between the MNLA and the government and renewed militant Islamist activity has been reported since January 2014.

[63] Al-Jazeera online, 10th July 2012.

[64] Cavendish 2012.

[65] O'Dell 2013a (See also O'Dell 2013b, 517 for a slightly different version of this text). Own square brackets.

CHAPTER 2: The Prevalence of «Representational» Thought
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Getting under the skin of the contested polemics of image and monument making; between figurative and formless traditions ends up as a crucial way in for us to understand the sorts of issues at play with regards to the form (or absence) of material things valued by different communities. To help further elucidate the problem which this thesis seeks to address, this chapter explores in some detail the nature of these dynamics.

§4. "Iconoclash"

4.1. We may immediately recognise Salafist destructions of monuments as a form of iconoclasm. Indeed, these actions conform quite readily to the Oxford English Dictionary (hereafter "OED") definition for iconoclasm. [66] But all is apparently not quite as it seems. Less than a year after 9/11, in 2002, Sociologist Bruno Latour and post-conceptual artist and curator Peter Weibel co-edited _Iconoclash_, a volume of papers, art-works and response articles to accompany a (also co-curated) major exhibition of the same name at the ZKM arts centre in Karlsruhe (southwest Germany).[67] The exhibition and book were a response to 9/11, as the epitome of the increasing conflict between secular and the post-secular 'fundamentalist' religious elements. [68] The exhibition and book, together, can be

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[66] "Iconoclasm: the breaking or destroying of images; esp. The destruction of images set up as objects of veneration…and the attacking or overthrow of venerated institutions and cherished beliefs, regarded as fallacious or superstitious." Oxford English Dictionary online: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/iconoclasm_n?tab=meaning_and_use#1101847 (last accessed 16/11/2025)

[67] Latour & Weibel 2002. The exhibition ran from May to September 2002.

[68] On the increasing post-secular 'return to religion at the turn of the 21st century, see, for example: Asad 2003; Berger 1999.

seen as a conciliatory move towards - as the preamble to the *Iconoclash* exhibition states - overcoming "...mocking...those who produce images or...being simply furious against those who destroy them"; and in so-doing "...the show aims at placing the viewer in this quandary: 'We cannot do without representation. If only we could do without representation.'"[69] The exhibition and book showcase art and thought experiments on the interplay between the image and the iconoclastic act. But, of course, there is some (perhaps self-conscious) irony in what the exhibition and book by their very subject and mode of expression (the visual image) achieve. While they at some level may address the matter of the clash of ideas and/or conflicting motivations in the acts of image making or image destruction; the subject around which they in-fact advance discourse (and in-themselves embody), is the object and form of spectacle –as responses to the "spectacle" of 9/11.

Drawing inspiration from the contributors of *Iconoclash* and beyond, Art Historian James Elkins suggests that ambiguity surrounds the "concept" of iconoclasm.[70] Specifically, three types. The first, *a la* Latour, is that the action of destruction is directed not only at the object of destruction, but also "sideways" at something else –that is to say, as a political statement, for example. Indeed, populist forms of iconoclasm against incumbent, outgoing or historical authorities,[71] are actions which we can all recognise and understand. These acts are valorised as iconic moments in history-making, as acts of resistance by one social group or stratum against the hegemony of another: "a privilege for the victors, and a sacrilege for the vanquished".[72] Deliberate and targeted acts of destruction like this are of course broadly understood as socio-economically motivated.[73] But comparable religiously motivated acts are often 'explained' in the same way as: the dogmatic rhetorical veneer for some other "real" underlying socio-economic grievances or territorial/resource competition. We may cite art historian Hans Belting as an example; who, in relation to Byzantine iconoclasm, said: "...images were often merely the surface issue for deeper conflicts between church and state, centre and provinces, central and marginal groups...". [74] The second ambiguity around the concept of iconoclasm which Elkins identifies, concerns the ways in which the act and outcome of iconoclasm leads and is connected directly to its opposite: as a spectacle in-itself or leading to the

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[69] ZKM | Center for Art and Media 2002.
[70] Elkins 2011, 137.
[71] Examples of such events may include, for example, the toppling of statues of George III in eighteenth century America, Lenin in former communist states, Shah Pahlavi in revolutionary Iran in 1979, Saddam Hussein in post-gulf war Iraq in 2003, or slave-trader Edward Colston in Bristol in 2020 during anti-racism protests.
[72] Warnke 1988 [1973], 11.
[73] See, for example: Freedberg 1985; Beiner 2021; Gamboni 2005; Hardy 2019.
[74] Belting 1997, 146.

production of another object of adoration. As Art Historian Sven Lütticken, for example, puts it: "Today's fundamentalists fully participate in the Western spectacle they professed to abhor: the Taliban took care to document their destruction of the giant Buddha of Bamyan and to distribute this footage."[75] But as Lütticken also notes, the circulation around art dealerships, popularisation and fetishisation of works of proponents of the Situationist International, such as Asger Jorn's protest poster "BRISEZ LE CADRE QI ETOUF LIMAGE" ("smash the frame that suffocates the image") (see Fig. 5) was besides the *intended* point, much to the discontent of Jorn and his comrades.[76] The resultant spectacle in other words is not necessarily the intended outcome. Thirdly, according to Elkins, that the act anticipates, repeats, mirrors and redoubles itself –as we see the potentially endless chain of feedback loops, through the creation of 'spectacle' as the response to previous displays and/or spectacles. As Art and Literary Historian William J T Mitchell put it:

> Iconoclasm...betrays a kind of fearful symmetry, mirroring its own stereotype of idolatry in its emphasis on human sacrifice and terrorism, the latter understood as violence against the innocent, and the staging of spectacular acts of symbolic violence and cruelty. The iconoclastic stereotype of the idolater, of course, is that he is already sacrificing his children and other innocent victims to his idol.[77]

In this sense, it could be argued that the *Iconoclash* exhibition and book themselves were an iconoclastic act in response to an iconoclastic act.

The point of all this is that, understood in these "ambiguous" ways, the original act of iconoclasm is undermined, by drawing attention away from the original motivations; and, instead, towards, the spectre of «representation» and responses to the viscera of the spectacle in-itself, rather than engaging in the "worldview" which constitute the lifeblood and motivation behind the original act.

4.2. Attacks on Poussin's *Adoration of the Golden Calf* (1633-34) (Fig. 3.) provide a poignant example of the ways iconoclasm is perhaps misunderstood. The work displayed at the National Gallery in London has been attacked twice: slashed with a knife in 1978 and spray-painted in red in 2011. In both cases, statements that the assailants made to explain their motivations were never published. The former was officially declared "schizophrenic" and institutionalised [78] and the latter is said to have been detained in a

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[75] Lütticken 2009, 22.
[76] *Ibid.*, 29 & 51.
[77] Mitchell 2011, 60.
[78] Freedberg 1985, 20.

"mental health unit" following an appearance in court.[79] The 2011 attack triggered a flurry of articles in the broadsheet art columns and online blogs alluding to the attacker's mental health and comparing his acts to "terrorism". Guardian art-critic and Turner prize panellist, Jonathan Jones commented: "The photograph of Poussin's painting, The Adoration of the Golden Calf, sprayed with red paint, as if this precious work of art were just a wall or a bridge to be adorned with graffiti, is obscene. It is horrific." Describing the content of the painting, he goes on:

> On their trek out of captivity in Egypt, the Israelites have raised up an idol of a golden calf and are wildly worshipping it. Poussin finds in this idol-worship an image of the seductions of wealth and glamour, the power of folly and the madness of crowds. It is a stern painting; it is a challenging painting. It is also very beautiful... It is looked after in a museum, cleaned, studied, and silently enjoyed by thousands. And then in an instant someone can brutally attack this venerable human creation and make a vile mark on it.
>
> That cannot be allowed, and modern society cannot be trusted – there is too much craziness out there. Museums should be more severe on visitors...Free museums are very fine. But what is the point if people just come in and desecrate the world's cultural heritage? Charge, search, protect.[80]

FIGURE 3: NICOLAS POUSSIN, ADORATION OF THE GOLDEN CALF. IMAGE: NATIONAL GALLERY / CREATIVE COMMONS

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[79] Duggan 2011.
[80] Jones, 2011. The Guardian 18th July 2011.

Much commentary has questioned why anybody would commit such an act towards such a fine painting, and, why *this* painting. Art Historian David Freedberg in *Iconoclasts and their motives* discusses the attack in 1978:

> Both Gallery officials and the press expressed more than usual puzzlement as to the motives for the attack. The Public Relations Officer of the National Gallery declared 'We cannot think of any reason why this particular work should be attacked. It is in fact a very beautiful painting' while Liverpool Daily Post opined that 'It is not offensive. It just depicts the Israelites dancing round the Golden Calf.' It was beautiful, it was not offensive; why then, the naive thought runs, should anyone attack it?[81]

As Freedberg points out, the Golden Calf is a *loci classici* of idolatrous image worship.[82] Poussin's *Adoration of the Golden Calf* was commissioned amid a mood of concern with the veneration of idols in late seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century France. The connection made between sculpture and idol worship among literary writers, ecclesiastics and antiquarians became widespread, and paintings by artists, such as Poussin's *Adoration of the Golden Calf*, became one medium through which this discourse was played out.[83] The subject of the painting therefore should be understood as a comment on the idolisation not only in literal terms, as a painting which recounts the story found in Exodus 32, but as a comment on the idolatry of objects in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. Knowing this, a contemporary act of iconoclasm to this painting which critiques the perils of idolatry, yet which appears itself to have ironically become an object of adoration, seems to be a deliberate attack on the idolisation of art objects and the arts markets. However, Jonathan Jones overlooks any conceivable correlation between his statement on "the seductions of wealth and glamour, the power of folly and the madness of crowd" and the adoration of the *Adoration of the Golden Calf* within the contemporary art markets; while the National Gallery's public relations officer in 1978 seems unable to understand how anyone may wish to comment upon a conceivable connection between people "dancing around the Golden Calf" and people viewing invaluable artworks in a gallery.

Philosopher Michael Kelly suggests that the kind of defence which forms the basis of Latour and Weibel and Jonathan Jones' apparent belief that art as a medium should somehow stand above and beyond religious and/or political polemics "...is to invoke the principle of autonomy and thereby to abstract or distance art, in theory, from the practices whose beliefs are used to criticise it..." He continues:

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[81] Freedberg 1985, 20.
[82] *Ibid.,* 20.
[83] Weinshenker 2005, 489.

> Part of the justification for such acts of abstraction is the claim that once art is autonomous, it provides us with a critical perspective on religion, politics, and culture which we would otherwise not have and which is vital to society's self-understanding. In effect, art is conceived as an autonomous practise not accountable to any of the other practises in society yet, at the same time, as being capable of criticizing them. Art's autonomy thereby underwrites its capacity for critique, which in turn serves as another defence of art against the forces of iconoclasm." [84]

4.3. This principle of autonomy seems to be equally at work in the conceptualisation of heritage objects and sites. Meskell draws attention to the interesting conflation that is made among culturally heterogeneous landmarks or "...cultural icons that bind and inspire communities around the world" by World Monument Watch as all somehow related:

> [O]ur landmarks - the Mostar Bridge, the Bamiyan Buddhas in Afghanistan and the World Trade Center - have become prized targets for terrorists because they are what defines the cultures, ideas, and achievements of the people who created them, who use them, who live with them.[85]

World heritage sites - "our landmarks" - which become the subject of defacement and destruction, therefore, end up understood as the besieged 'symbols', 'indexes' or 'agents' of a Euro-American designation as global asset, thereby enshrined as loci of political conflict. As journalistic historian Jean-Michel Frodon suggests, the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas, was due to "...nothing other than the fact of them being perceived as works of art (which was obviously not the meaning given to them by those who carved the Bamiyan giants in the fifth century of our era)." He continues:

> This cultural belief, elaborated in the West, is currently one of the main bonds uniting what is called the international community (and which by no means comprises the world's entire population).
> It is against that community and against a relationship with the world that values a non-religious relationship with the invisible, that the dynamite which destroyed the giant Buddhas was used.[86]

The idea of a kind of "idolatry" of the arts in the Euro-American 'community' has been discussed by many historians, heritage historians and philosophers alike,[87] and extends to artefacts and monuments of interest to heritage conservationists. Bernard observes:

> Art in the West has become the guardian of the value of the sacred, till now allotted to our declining religions...The Louvre replaced Notre Dame...We really feel that the destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan is a profanation and a sacrilege, and not only an attack against a masterpiece of Art. [88]

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[84] Kelly 2003, 1-2.
[85] Perry and Burnham 2001, 3. Cited by Meskell 2002, 557. (Own emphasis).
[86] Frodon 2002, 223.
[87] E.g. see: Belting 2003, 9; 19; 25ff; Benjamin 1991, 482-485; Danto 1997; Heidegger 1971 [1950]; Lütticken 2009, 46-51.
[88] Bernard 2001, 13.

Thus, Bernard echoes Frodon. In a "world that values a non-religious relationship with the invisible" secularist understandings of the world usurp religious ones and art and heritage become proxies for traditional religious paraphernalia and iconography.

The consequences of the worship or adoration of object in the form of the Golden Calf appears to be the point of contention in Exodus 32 in the same way that the 'worshipping' of sculptures, paintings or heritage objects is the grievance of Mullah Omar, Poussin, and possibly even to the attackers of Poussin's painting. The instability of the "relationship between the material and the immaterial" and the "hierarchies of representation" to which O'Dell refers, cannot be underestimated, if we are to begin to fully acknowledge and understand why Salafist groups display anxieties with Sufi shrines and the Bamiyan Buddhas; or indeed why some individuals may seem to take issue with the adoration of *Adoration of the Golden Calf*. On this basis, then, while not seeking to denigrate the Euro-American belief in the value of arts and heritage objects, an acceptable understanding and definition of iconoclasm cannot reasonably be in one of the ambiguous ways which Elkins identifies. What we can say, however, is that it is the assertive or aggressive expression of disapproval concerning the form of material culture which has been ascribed with value in some way. Importantly, *iconoclasm* and the outcome or resultant spectacle of iconoclasm is *not* the idea or the intended point: it is not a kind of belief, theology or political conviction *in itself*; rather, it is a targeted (and punctuated) action in honour and preservation of a belief or object of belief. As we have seen, such actions may occur internecine - as the manifestation of an internal cultural dispute - or directed towards an external target. While the period of the iconoclastic action, it seems, will always only be limited; where the action appears consistent as linked to a crusade, for example, iconoclasm may become an integral feature of the assailant's external identity albeit temporarily. Such an identity trope, however, may mask the true ideas or values which these actions seek to either protect or assert. To help us understand this better, the argument sustained here is that, where iconoclastic actions relate to a religion or faith, the idea being served will typically have an aniconic form: where figurative «representation» is avoided or prohibited.

§5. Aniconism

The hiddenness of the ideas of aniconism which iconoclasm masks, appears to be in contrast to the broad awareness of iconoclasm as a discrete and visible destructive and anti-social behaviour. This is evident in the variations between the long historical lineage of and familiarity with the term "iconoclasm", in contrast to usage of the term

"aniconism". While only one entry for the term "aniconic" exists in the OED, nine separate entries describe hatred or destruction of images.[89] Similarly, comparison of the frequency of usage of "iconoclasm" and "aniconism" in all published books scanned by Google Books[90] provides an insight into the extent of the variance in the circulation of the terms and the concepts they represent (see Figure 4).[91]
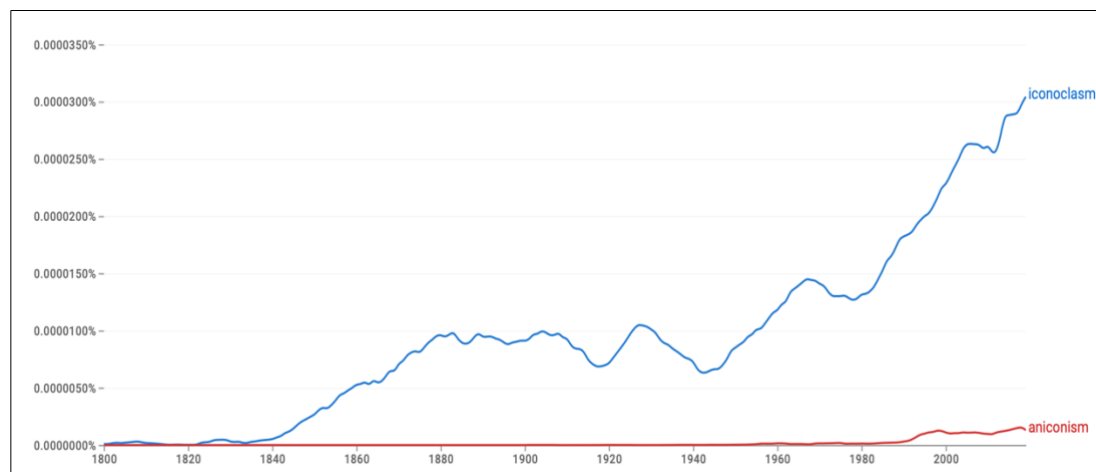
FIGURE 4: GOOGLE NGRAM COMPARISON OF FREQUENCY OF THE OCCURRENCE OF THE WORDS "ICONOCLASM" AND "ANICONISM". THE VERTICAL AXIS REPRESENTS THE PERCENTAGE USAGE OF EACH WORD OUT OF THE ENTIRE ENGLISH LEXICON. RESULT GENERATED ON 16TH MARCH 2024.

The OED defines 'aniconic' as:

> Applied to simple material symbols of a deity, as a pillar or block, not shaped into an image of human form; also to the worship connected with these. Hence aniconism...the use of, or worship connected with, such symbols.[92]

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[89] OED, New Edition, 1989: 609-610. Definitions offered by the OED, for terms referring to the hatred or destruction of images: "Iconoclasm: the breaking or destroying of images; esp. The destruction of images set up as objects of veneration...and the attacking or overthrow of venerated institutions and cherished beliefs, regarded as fallacious or superstitious."; "Iconoclast: 1. A breaker or destroyer of images; spec. (Eccl. Hist) one who took part in or supported the movement in the 8th and 9th centuries, to put down the use of images or pictures in religious worship in the Christian churches of the East; hence applied analogously to those protestants of the 17th and 18th centuries who practiced or countenanced a similar destruction of images in the churches..."; "Iconoclastic: Of or pertaining to iconoclasts or iconoclasm."; "Iconomach: One who is hostile to images"; "Iconomachal: Hostile to images."; "Iconomachy: A war against images; hostility or opposition to images, esp. in their use in connexion with worship."; "...iconophobia, hatred of images; also iconophobe, iconophobic, of or pertaining to one who hates images...". OED 1989: 609-610. Notably, some more recent definitions of the term 'iconoclastic' have turned the concept into one associated with the break with tradition and innovation: "a person who attacks or criticizes cherished beliefs or institutions". See the Oxford Dictionary Online.

[90] Some 40m books reported by Google as scanned in 2019 out of an estimated 158.5m distinct titles in the world as of October 2023.

[91] While the figures generated do not provide a comprehensive picture, the effective sample from approximately 25% of all unique published titles in the world represents a reasonable sample. Of course, the use and circulation of certain words will depend on the date and context of first usage: whereas use of the term "iconoclasm" is attested since 1797 (Bremmer 2008, 13; although the word appears in an earlier form "iconoclasta" in around 1410. Ibid, 10.), the word "aniconism" is not introduced into the lexicon until 1864 (Overbeck 1864; Gaifman 2020, 3). Nonetheless, the extent of the disparity between circulation of the two concepts to the present day is noteworthy.

[92] OED, New Edition, 1989: 472.

Notably, the OED assumes this phenomenon as an exclusively religious one. Similarly, definitions of 'aniconism' elsewhere have generally emerged in the context of studies of 'cultic worship'. These definitions tend to agree that an 'aniconic cult' entails *a mode of worship, veneration or solemn adoration, entailing a focal point (but not necessarily itself an actual object or object of worship) characterised by the absence of representative, figurative, anthropomorphic, theriomorphic or physiomorphic images*.[93]

Despite the many extant examples of aniconic material culture (see Appendix II), there have been few studies across the humanities dedicated to the subject of aniconism in comparison with (also still relatively) limited literature on iconoclasm.[94] The late Old Testament theologian Tryggve Mettinger offered the most cross-culturally synthetic treatment, integrating both textual and archaeological evidence for the prevalence of aniconism in the ancient Near East;[95] while Mikael Aktor and Milette Gaifman's recent edited volume *Exploring Aniconism* represents the most comprehensive collection of works on the subject to date.[96] Otherwise, the subject has received very limited attention within material culture studies, archaeology, art-history and anthropology. But, if iconoclasm has been so ubiquitous throughout history, and if indeed iconoclasm represents the 'face' of aniconism, why has there been such a shortage of interest on the subject? Part of the reason, in the archaeological context may be, of course, because empty spaces and unhewn stones would be relatively invisible in the archaeological record. As Gaifman puts it "...how can one tell that a stone is not just a stone but an aniconic cult monument of a God?" [97] However, this cannot account for the interdisciplinary-wide absence of the acknowledgment or consideration of aniconism as an important cultural phenomenon. Indeed, it is asserted here that aniconism has been and remains a largely mis-understood and unrecognised form of material culture, often even actively dismissed as a false category, although potentially immensely important for helping to understand the different kinds of relationship people have to «religious»

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[93] See: Gaifman 2005: 3; 2012, 29; 2020, 4; Gladigow 1979; 1988: 472; Karlsson 1999; Metzler 1985-86; Mettinger 1995: 19; Reeder 1995: 15; Schmidt 1995, 77. Gaifman offers a definition, based on Alfred Gell's definition of the anicon as the "index of divine presence" (Gell 1998, 13-16; 26; Gaifman 2012, 40-41; 2020, 4). However, for reasons which will become clear in §8, such a definition is discounted here.

[94] For works on aniconism see: Aktor & Gaifman 2020; Dean 2010; Gaifman 2005, 2012, 2017; Mettinger 1995; Mus et al 1987; Reeder 1995; van der Toorn 1997; Wainwright 1928. As MacDonald (2007, 20) suggests there has been a growth of interest in the subject of aniconism in recent years, especially in relation to Old Testament/Israelite aniconism. For a selection of works dedicated to iconoclasm, see: Besancon 2000; Kelly 2003; Koerner 2004; Michalski 1993; Nagel 2011. On the limited literature on iconoclasm see: Freedberg 1989, II, XXI, 421; Gamboni 1997, 13; Kelly 2003, 2-3.

[95] Mettinger 1995.

[96] Aktor & Gaifman 2020.

[97] Gaifman 2005, 24.

material culture. The next section begins the process of unravelling the history of thought on this subject.

§6. "Even if you can see it, it's not there"

6.1. To help define her position around her study of Greek aniconism, Classicist Milette Gaifman calls up Gadamer's statement on the significance of mimesis in the religious picture, that "...we can see without any doubt that a picture is not a copy of a copied being, but is in ontological communion with what is copied."[98] In other words, the image re-presents rather than copies something: it stands for and evokes the presence of something; and people ultimately can discern the difference between an actual being (or god for example) and a picture of a being. For Gaifman, this helps to settle any apparent cleavage between the 'aniconic' and 'iconic', which, she asserts, has perpetuated the tendency within the Greek art-historical tradition to identify them as belonging to different theological systems; the latter as having somehow 'evolved' from the former. She summarises:

> The monument of the cult is not a representation of the divine in a mimetic sense, but a presentation. It is a means to evoke the god's presence. As such, the apparent contradiction between the aniconic and the iconic within one single theological system is resolved. The iconic, semi-iconic, primitive and aniconic cult monuments have similar roles within the system of worship. In one way or another they are addressed as the god. The ritual was directed towards them. They denote divine presence. Which form these markers take, whether a statue, a masked pole, or pillar is an outcome of a choice made by men for a specific cult. Different cults have different markers depending on the circumstance.[99]

Gaifman is not the first to have reached such a conclusion. Alfred Gell, in his celebrated posthumous book *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory,* devotes some time to considering what he refers to as "idols". He states:

> All idols, I think, are 'iconic' – including the so-called aniconic ones – whether or not they look like some familiar object, such as a human body. An aniconic idol is a 'realistic' representation of a god who either has no form (anywhere), or has an 'arbitrary' form, in the particular 'body' he inhabits for the purposes of being worshipped by his mortal devotees, here below. A meteoritic stone is not a very, very, conventionalized or distorted 'portrait' of a god, who, elsewhere, looks like a human being. One need not imagine that worshippers of stones would 'prefer' to worship more realistic portrayals of their gods, but have to make do with unshaped stones for lack of any local stone-carvers of the necessary ability.[100]

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[98] Gadamer 1975, 126; as cited in Gaifman 2005, 22.
[99] Gaifman 2005, 23.
[100] Gell 1998, 97-98.

Gell provides the example of Tahitian To'o figures to furnish his deconstruction of the iconic/aniconic distinction. The To'o, meaning 'pole', 'staff' or 'prop', from the proto-Polynesian toko, were dedicated to a particular god, clan lineage or ancestors. They are composite objects comprising of a wooden pole tightly bound in sennit cord, coconut fibre, bark-cloth and sacred feathers, typically tapering from one end, sometimes bearing rudimentary anthropomorphic facial features and limbs woven from sennit cords (Fig. 5).[101] For Gell, these objects, as "realistic representations" of pillars, were iconic "indexes" of pillars "....in that they refer to the mythological pillars which hold up the sky without actually being these pillars." He continues: "On the other hand, they represent, aniconically, gods who have anthropomorphic attributes." Consequently, Gell concludes: "Here it seems to me that the supposed contrast between iconic and aniconic representation comprehensively breaks down. The to'o are wholly iconic and wholly aniconic at the same time."[102]

FIGURE 5 MAOHI (TAHITIAN) TO'O FIGURE. 18TH CENTURY. IMAGE: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART / CREATIVE COMMONS.

Gell systematically discounts the concept of aniconic images, objects and monuments, and proposes instead that they are all 'iconic', or - in his terms – "idols".[103]

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[101] Babadzan 2003, 26. Gell appears to associate the To'o directly with the Oro god, although Babadzan disputes this outright categorization. On the To'o and the related wrapping and unwrapping rituals, see also: Babadzan 1993; Gell 1998, 109-10; Tcherkezoff 2003.
[102] Gell 1998, 110.
[103] *Ibid.*, 96-99.

Gell, nevertheless also refers to "anti-imagistic forms of religiosity"[104] in contrast to "idol" making traditions. If it is true that all types of religious object (iconic and aniconic) are idols, then in what way could "anti-imagistic forms of religiosity" possibly exist? Gell seems to acknowledge the existence of a cultural phenomenon ("anti-imagistic forms of religiosity"), for which his wider model cannot account. It is possible that Gell was referring to iconoclasm; but by his own definition, iconoclasts could not be imageless because they would use aniconic idols in their religious repertoire.

6.2. Freedberg similarly begins his deconstruction of what he describes as the "myth of aniconism" on the basis that there is no such thing as an "imageless" cultural tradition. He does so pointing to numerous examples of iconic and figurative image-making, particularly - among other examples - secular and sacred Jewish and Islamic domains, as evidence that, despite all the prohibitions of the Mishnah and the Hadith, respectively, what he describes as the "rush to figure", ultimately always prevails.[105] To be clear, for Freedberg, humans have an inbuilt urge to make images. But he operates from that very art historical context that assumes a hierarchy of «representation» which Gaifman and Gell identify as the root of the iconic/aniconic distinction. As such, Freedberg instead attributes the "myth of aniconism" to those who have asserted aniconism as being somehow rooted in more spiritually sophisticated theological realms.[106] For him, "nothing here is borne out by historical or ethnographic evidence",[107] and "these are historiographical inventions that arise from the need to claim for a particular culture a superior spirituality."[108] Freedberg's position occupies a classic art historical ground, which sustains a hierarchy of image-making from the primitive to the mimetic (see §7.1). The unique place of Freedberg's particular thesis is that this hierarchy emerges out of a "rush to figure" facilitated and mediated by developments in technology and craft practices. The assumption, therefore, is that the 'rush' or urge is always towards the making of images, and that any digressions from this pattern are only rhetorical, and that inconsistencies in the aniconic traditions are merely further proof of this.

Freedberg, whilst furnishing his critique with examples of image making in contexts typically associated with non-image-making, such as Judaism and Islam, adds

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[104] *Ibid.*, 115.
[105] Freedberg 1989, 55-59. Freedberg also provides examples of image making in Buddhist, Maori, Nupe (West Africa) and Walbiri Aborigine traditions.
[106] For example, aesthetics philosopher Rosario Assunto, makes the distinction between more spiritual, generally monotheistic religions, as exhibiting aniconic tendencies, and polytheistic religions as "iconic in the highest degree", is one such example. Assunto 1963, cols. 145-146.
[107] Freedberg 1989, 54.
[108] *Ibid.*, 60.

the caveat in an endnote that "The mistake [of the abstinence of figuring as something equated with spirituality] is only explicable if by 'aniconism' one refers solely to those cultures which refrain from figuring the supreme deity".[109] Early on, in introducing his discussion on the 'myth of aniconism', he also writes:

> This is the myth that certain cultures, usually monotheistic or primitively pure cultures, have no images at all, or no figurative imagery, or no images of the deity. Abstinence from figuring the deity does occasionally occur, but for the rest the notion of aniconism is wholly untenable. It is clouded in vagueness and has its roots in confusion.[110]

So, Freedberg sets out to discount the concept of aniconism, on the one hand, summoning examples of image-making in Islam and Judaism; yet, as we have seen, acknowledges that "Abstinence from figuring the deity does occasionally occur"[111] and furthermore entertains the definition of 'aniconism' as potentially referring "solely to those cultures which refrain from figuring the supreme deity".[112] If aniconism and abstinence from image-making may sometimes occur in cultures that refrain from depicting the deity, then what kind of aniconism precisely does he claim to refute as a "myth"? The answer to this, perhaps, is that the "myth of aniconism" for which he argues, is a "myth" only when considering the entirety of any given culture. For Freedberg, although religious traditions like Islam and Judaism have image prohibitions, culture-wide aniconism does not exist among them. This suggests a confusion on Freedberg's part, then, since he assumes that those who recognise or argue for the existence of aniconism, are asserting that it is a culture-wide phenomenon –that is, that aniconism is pervasive both in and outside of the religious context. As the definitions of aniconism we have seen indicate, however, aniconism is understood as a phenomenon that is exclusively or especially specific to the religious domain. There is, therefore, no "myth of aniconism" - in the way Freedberg understands it - to debunk in the first place. [113]

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[109]   *Ibid.*, 451, note 2. This footnote statement is vague on at least two counts. To what the word 'mistake' here precisely refers it not absolutely clear, since Freedberg does not explicitly refer to any 'mistake' in the text prior to that. It presumed here, as noted in square brackets, that he is referring here to the 'mistake' of the abstinence of figuring as something equated with spirituality, with which this footnote appears to be related. Secondly, Freedberg's use of the term 'deity' (in the singular) might be interpreted as referring only to monotheistic religions, although it may also be meant to cover all kinds of deities, whether single or multiple. The latter interpretation is assumed here. His use of this term specifically, rather than - for example - 'the divine', is it assumed here also indicate that Freedberg means to exclude such figures such as Christ (not himself being God) or Buddha, for example.

[110]   *Ibid.*, 54.

[111]   *Ibid.*

[112]   *Ibid.,* 451, note 2.

[113]   Arguments such as Assunto's distinction between spiritual and less spiritual traditions which Freedberg keenly seeks to dismantle, presumably did not intend the aniconic / iconic tendencies he identifies as a commentary on the entire art repertoire of each given culture, but rather specifically to their religious or

Freedberg's position raises several further problems. Firstly, he does not account for how "Abstinence from figuring the deity" fits in with this schema of the "rush to figure". Indeed, how would Salafist or Wahabi Muslims, who do not figure in any way, fit into his schema? Finally, in his excursus to reveal how "aniconic" religious traditions display imagistic tendencies, he does not provide any explanation for why such a tension between figuring and not figuring exists in the first place. If the "rush to figure" is so prevalent, why do so many religious traditions *not* figure?

6.3. The overwhelming majority of the most recent contributions continue to perpetuate similar lines of thought as those exemplified in the thought of Gaifman, Gell and Freedberg. Professor of Religion and Asian Studies Richard Davis, in his deliberations on the different forms of Śiva in Hinduism, mirrors Gell and Gaifman's view in seeking to "...dissolve any firm distinction we might make between iconic and aniconic."[114] Religious Studies expert Michael Aktor similarly argues that the stones used in the Hindu worship of the five pañcāyatanapūjā deities have both aniconic and iconic properties and are «representational»: "...the basic characteristics of...each of the five [stones] are read according to their special shape, lines, and colours with reference to different iconographic features known from the five anthropomorphic gods."[115]

Rock Art specialist Robert Bednarik, in his consideration of aniconic motifs found in Palaeolithic palaeoart, speculates that "aniconic art is clearly the more complex system" so while the "in figurative or iconic symbolism, the connection between referent and referrer is largely via iconicity" and the "...meaning of an adequately detailed iconic depiction is so readily evident that it can even be grasped by some non-human animals"; requiring "...lower levels of perception and neural disambiguation than nonfigurative art...". Therefore, for Bednarik, figurative or iconic art is "the 'less developed' art form and may derive from a ludic or more playful form of graphic expression." [116] Bednarik's perspective is refreshing in not attempting to collapse iconism and aniconism into the one category; and his observations concerning the cognitive processes required and the level of complexity of the respective forms of 'art' may well help to derail the otherwise assumed idea of a figuration developing progressively from the 'crude' and aniconic to the highest forms of Classical art. However, his position still assumes that aniconic art

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spiritual traditions. As such, Assunto's interpretation of the 'iconic' can only be properly understood as objects which are or appear to be revered for and in themselves as the material manifestation of deities, in distinction to the aniconic scriptures and tabernacle or 'holy of holies', as representing the presence of the God or deity.

[114] Davis 2020 [2017],125.
[115] Aktor 2020 [2017], 162.
[116] Bednarik 2020 [2017], 27.

must have some kind of «symbolic» or «representational» «meaning» (hence requiring higher levels of cognition to conceive and process).

This section has sought to demonstrate the ways in which the conceptual validity of aniconism has been largely negated or disputed. Most suggest that aniconism should not be considered as distinct from iconism, and that they are both «representational»; while some seek to demonstrate how "imageless" religions are not possible, while at the same time paradoxically acknowledging the existence of imageless traditions which they are seemingly unable to reconcile into the models they develop for image-making. The next section explores the ways in which the use of and responses to the iconic/aniconic form and acts of iconoclasm have been involved in the polemical discourse between different cultural communities –this helps to reveal the ways in which the cultural ascription of iconistic, aniconistic and iconoclastic tendencies has typically been associated with misunderstandings of ascendency within perceived cultural hierarchies.

§7. "The Great Divide"

7.1. Mettinger suggests that aniconism may be split into two conceptual modes: "programmatic traditions", driven by concerted religious fervour (iconoclasm) and "de facto" or ambivalent traditions. He summarises the distinction between the two aniconic traditions as follows: [117]

De facto tradition	Programmatic tradition
Indifference to icons	Repudiation of images
Mere absence of images	Iconophobia
Tolerant aniconism	Iconoclasm

In §4.3., we speculated tentatively that iconoclasm may be best understood as the episodic ways in which aniconism is more forcefully asserted or guarded. What Mettinger does instead is separate aniconism into distinctive passive (aniconic) or aggressive (iconoclastic) traditions. Such a formulation rather falls more in line with historical popular political and rhetorical ascriptions of types of cultural trope. The ascription of such tropes appears to be driven by two, often intertwined, narratives: one concerning alterity and the "other" concerning ideas of cultural "progress" and hierarchy and one's

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[117] Mettinger 1995, 17 - 18. Notably, he is not the first to identify this distinction. See, for example, Keel 1977; Turner & Turner 1978. Mettinger in-fact adopts this terminology from New Testament scholar Gerhardsson, 1986, 15-16.

own cultural ascendancy within such a schema. These sorts of polemics clearly arise most acutely during episodes of increased intercultural contact and conflict, and have become infused into historical, anthropological and archaeological thought, especially during the colonial era of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[118] Indeed, from a position where «representation» as correspondence is assumed as universal, the narrative of progress further reinforces a "hierarchy of representation" (as O'Dell refers to it), in which humans are understood as developing from the primitive and talismanic fetishism, progressively towards the sophistication of the intellectual aesthetic appreciation of 'high' or 'great' arts, detached from religious ideas.[119] Such ideals have been enshrined in the art historical tradition especially and transfused into neighbouring cognate disciplines. Johann J. Winckelmann perhaps provided the seed for the idea of the evolution of aesthetic merit towards an unsurpassable pinnacle of achievement, as exemplified for him in Greek art.[120] But Hegel's dialectical conception of the expression of the human spirit through progressively finer artistic media seemed to cast the die of the penchant in art history for the cultural historical approach which would end up having such a strong influence in colonial narratives of ascendancy.[121]

What emerges out of all this is a set of polemical discourses, less about understandings concerned with the varying relationships of different humans with different types of images and objects, but rather misunderstandings about other people's relationships with different types of images and objects. Out of all these discourses, apparent confusions arise surrounding how precisely - in religious contexts - images, icons, idols and fetishes should be defined and treated. It is generally projected that "literate", "less sensuous", "spiritually more sophisticated", monotheistic cultures, on the one hand, are regarded as displaying less fetishizing, less idolatrous tendencies; while traditions associated with "illiteracy", "more sensuous", "less spiritually sophisticated", polytheistic religions are understood as more fetishizing and idolatrous.[122] Figure 6 summarises these patterns of the ascription of categories,

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[118]   On this, see, for example: Roberts 2007; Taussig 1993.
[119]   Gombrich 1966.
[120]   Potts, 1994.
[121]   Hegel 2004 [1826]. See also: Danto 2004; Desmond 1986.
[122]   German sociologist Max Weber (2001 [1930]; 1947) distinguished between the 'primitive', 'traditional' and the 'rational', 'world' religions. French philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl critiqued the 'English school' represented particularly by Tylor, Frazer and Lang for assuming 'primitive' «mind» as an "...inferior variety of our own" (Lévy-Bruhl 1985 [1910], 76; Mousalimas 1990, 34) and instead distinguished between mystical and scientific or primitive, irrational and affective 'participation' (based on sense 'feeling') in distinction to 'our' rational and cognitive thought (based on intelligibility). (Lévy-Bruhl 1985 [1910]; 1975 [1949]; Evans-Pritchard 1965; 1970; Mousalimas 1990). French missionary, Maurice Leenhardt, building on Lévy-Bruhl's work, distinguished instead between modes of knowledge, namely the in-dividual

between what is referred to here as "Dionysian", "Apollonian" and "Secular".[123] The reasons why such essentialising distinctions are problematic have been well rehearsed, and - to be clear -they are re-presented here not to reflect 'types' of traditions and social entities which actually exist, but rather to help identify tropes associated with cultural categories as they are self-ascribed and ascribed upon "others".
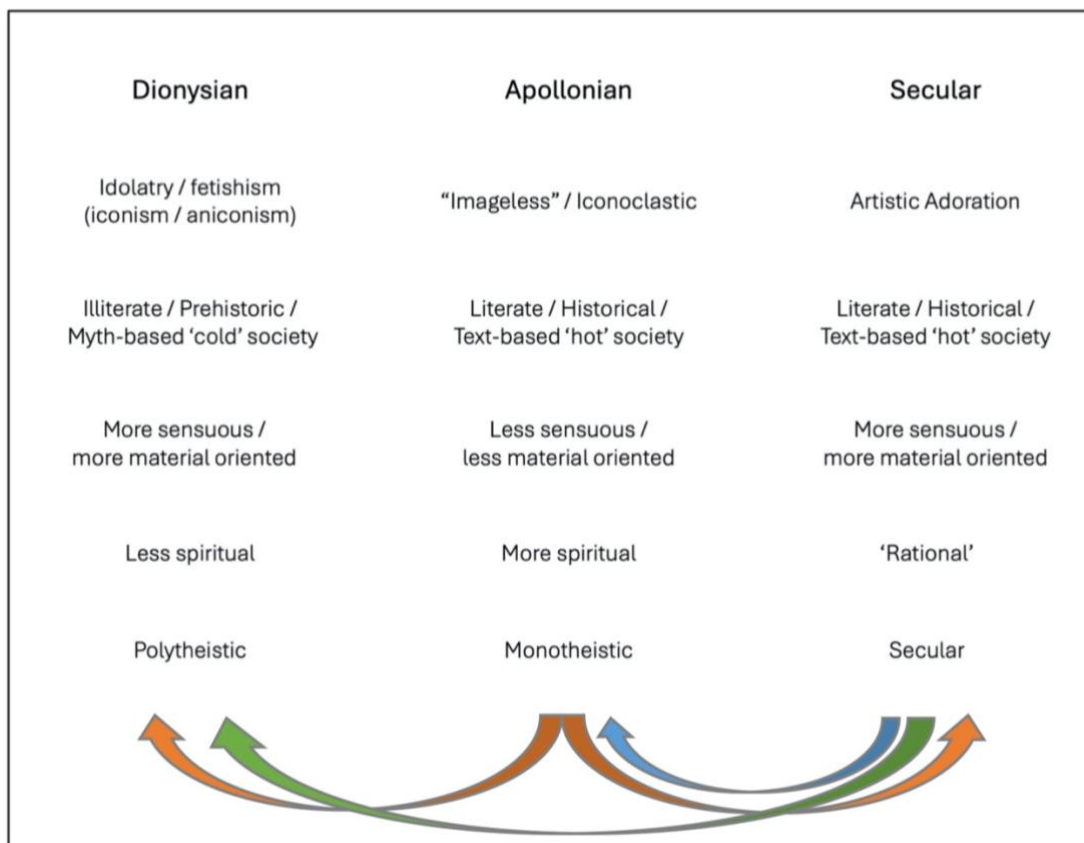
FIGURE 6: ASCRIPTION OF CATEGORIES, BETWEEN "DIONYSIAN", "APOLLONIAN" AND "SECULAR". (THE DIRECTIONS OF THE ARROWS IN INDICATE THE TYPES OF GENERALIST ASCRIPTIONS THAT ARE MADE ABOUT OTHERS, FROM SECULAR, MONOTHEISTIC AND POLYTHEISTIC POSITIONS OF SELF-IDENTIFICATION.

(person, body and landscape inextricably embedded into one another) in the mythic mode of knowledge in contrast to the individual (abstracted and alienated) of the discursive mode of knowledge (Clifford 1982, 185; 1989; Leenhardt 1979 [1947]). Levi-Strauss' 'cold' (mythic) societies typically referred to small-scale social groups which employ mythic narratives in a timeless or non-linear modality, reproducing inherited norms; whilst 'hot' (historic) societies - after a kind of Thucydidean fashion - employ dynamic historic linear narratives, facilitating change. (Levi-Strauss 1966, 233-234). British anthropologist Robin Horton emphasised the closed and static characteristics of traditional African societies compared with open and progressive scientific modernity, (Horton 1967; 1982); while British anthropologist Jack Goody has argued for rigid orthodoxy of literate religions versus the immutable character of non-literate religions (Goody 1968; 1977; 1986).

[123] These categories are based on Benedict from her study of American Pueblo culture and its neighbours (Benedict 1932, 4) in which she adopted the *Nietzschian* distinction between the "Apollonian" and the "Dionysian". She describes the former as the "cultural pursuit of sobriety, of measure, of the distrust of excess and orgy"; in contrast to the "Dionysian", which "values excess as escape to an order of existence beyond that of the five senses, and finds its expression in the creation in culture of painful and dangerous experiences, and in the cultivation of emotional and psychic excesses, in drunkenness, in dreams, and in trance."

For the 'Apollonians' then, both the Dionysians and the Secularists are idolaters; for the Secularists, the Dionysians are idolaters and fetishistic and the Apollonians are iconoclasts. So, from the Deuteronomists to Salafists and anthropologists alike, the "pagans", "infidels" and "primitives", respectively, are all ultimately idolaters by giving attention to material things which they are mistaken for mistaking as images of gods - or 'worse still' - actual deities or gods. For the Salafists, a society that is devoid of figurative images (or music) is a mark of human superiority; while for art-historians, culture-historians, taxonomists and seriationists, more sophisticated societies cannot be devoid of neither figurative nor abstract arts - *this* instead is the mark of cultural sophistication. In this regard, we can also understand better how Gaifman and Gell's efforts to collapse the iconic/aniconic distinction is consistent with maintaining this order of alterity and hierarchy, where figurative and aniconic "idols" and "fetishes" are bracketed together into the Dionysian column traditions: irrespective of the form of the religious objects, they are understood as the 'same'. But we can also see the way in which iconoclasm is classed - in keeping with Mettinger's formulation of the "de facto" (indifferent) and "programmatic" (iconoclastic) aniconic traditions - as being in a separate 'column' from aniconic (or iconic) fetishism (as Apollonian). Interestingly, monotheistic faiths such as Christianity end-up also sitting in the Apollonian column, associated with "imageless" iconoclastic traditions. While Christianity (for example) may be understood as a periodically imageless and an iconoclastic faith, clearly this has not been the whole story. So how can we understand such a logic which apparently treats aniconism and iconoclasm as distinct entities and faiths such as Christianity as belonging in the imageless, iconoclastic category? Summoning Bruno Latour once again can help us here for illustrative purposes.

7.2. Latour describes a scene "...on the west coast of Africa, somewhere in Guinea..." the Portuguese, "Covered with amulets of the saints and the Virgin...accused the Gold Coast Blacks of worshiping fetishes." Latour portrays the Portuguese as outraged when, after asking the question "'Have you made these stone, clay, and wood idols you honor with your own hands?' the Guineans replied at once that indeed they had." Finally, when - as Latour imagines - the "Blacks" return the question to the Portuguese of whether their amulets of the Virgin are truly sacred, the Portuguese retort "Of course they are; they were solemnly blessed by the archbishop in Nossa Senhora dos Remédios church, in the

presence of the king." [124] While Latour (himself a practicing Catholic)[125] deems to expose an absurd display in hypocrisy, he in-fact affords the Portuguese a justification that their amulets came into being through the grace of their God (via the solemn blessing), not - unlike the "Blacks" – who, he imagines, would attribute the coming into being of their 'fetishes' entirely through the expression of their own hand. Of course, if Latour's imagined "Blacks" bore any relationship to reality they would not consider themselves to have simply made their idols with their own hands as he presents it in this scene.[126] Through this sort of example, we can see how Christians may indeed be understood as religiously imageless, but that the issue is not so much that both parties in this dialogue have human-made images and one repudiates the other for having human-made images (which *would* be hypocritical); but rather that one has amulets which came into being by the grace of God and accuses the other of having *human-made* images, placing them firmly in the "other" Dionysian column! Latour claims to have exposed an error (where two groups who have made their own 'idols', but one claims superiority over the other with the claim that they did not make their own idols while the others did). However, Latour has merely reinforced the same error by asserting that one group believe they made the idols with their own hands and the other group believing that they have not made their idols; thereby reaffirming the distinction he seeks to collapse. Importantly, what Latour's position entirely relies upon is a repudiation of what the two groups *believe* and asserting instead what *he* believes: that both groups made the idols with their own hands. Elsewhere, Latour opines the same point in the context of the political critique of iconoclasm:

> Iconoclasm has become much too cheap when applied to the political sphere. Nowhere more than in politics can the absurd but strident request: 'is it manipulated or is it real?' be heard. It is as if...the work of the hands, the careful manipulation, the human made mediation had to be put in one column, and truth, exactitude, mimesis, faithful representation into another. As if everything that was added to the credit in one column had to be deducted from the other. Strange accounting![127]

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[124] Latour 2011, 43-45.

[125] On Latour's Catholicism, see, for example: Hennion 2024; Smith 2016.

[126] There is broad historical and ethnographic evidence which attests that divine images must undergo rituals of 'activation', 'animation' or consecration. These include, for example the 'opening' or 'washing' of the mouth of the divinity's statue in ancient Mesopotamia (Dietrich and Loretz 1992, 25-38; Jacobsen 1987, 23-8; Lambert 1999, 123. Mettinger 1995, 41), and similar rituals conducted on Egyptian statues and mummies (Baly 1930; Blackman 1918:8-10; 1924; Roth 1993); to the painting on or 'opening' of the eyes of the divinity in Hindu worship (Fuller 2004, 60) and the consecration and eye-opening ceremonies of Buddhist icons (Lomi 2024). On these processes of animation and consecration, see also Gell 1998, 133-154.

[127] Latour 2002, 36-37.

But, as we have seen, and as we will see further in due course, while Latour's motivations in attempting to dismantle false distinctions attributed to others (as belonging in one column or other) are venerable, his (rationalist) strategy of reducing the value of all things to all people to one category is equally reductive, placing Latour and his acolytes into a precariously untenable position; not dissimilar to the position of others we have seen so far, such as Gell and Gaifmann.

Indeed, we may summon Gell once again, who observes that "Even if God is the ultimate author of his resemblance in the form of magnificent structures and works of art, it remains the case that, at a critical point in the sequence of causes, instruments, and results, human agency is essential."[128] But for Gell, the involvement of human agency in bringing religious images into being is also his proof that all forms of religious image (iconic or aniconic) are ultimately the same. Again, for the same reason that the Portuguese denigrate the Guineans (based on the belief that they make their religious images with their own hands), Gell conflates all forms of religious image as the same.[129]

7.3. Anthropologist Severin Fowles observed three similar categories in the development of secular narratives. He refers to these as "Primitive", "Premodern" and "Modern" narratives (comparable to the "Dionysian", "Apollonian" and "Secular" positions, respectively), each associated with "magical", "religious" and "scientific" ontologies. (See Figure 7).

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[128] Gell 1998, 114. Own square brackets.

[129] We may also note the Hegelian formulation of the expression of the human spirit through plastic arts as a transitory vehicle towards the ultimate pure form of the uttered word; which perhaps helps us with how images within Christian culture may be accepted as an uncomfortable but inevitable temporary worldly burden in an otherwise "imageless" faith. In this way, for Christians, there is an essential distinction to be made between the sensuous attachment to idols and images in juxtaposition to the mere recognition of images as ultimately superficial and non-essential worldly trappings.
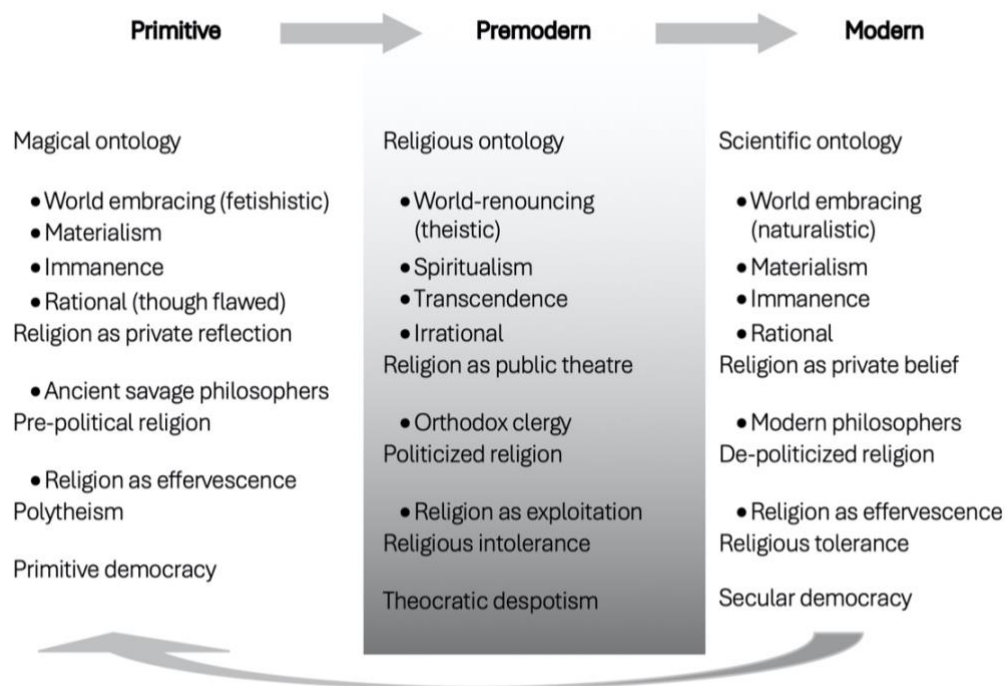
Fowles exposes the paradox in modern thought between narratives of linear histories of 'progress' on the one hand, and cyclical narratives "…of a future return to human origins in which something natural –that is, something essential and unchanging is recovered."[130] As he says:

> Primitives, we are told, suffer historical events in linear, irreversible fashion and yet they seek to deny this irreversibility through myths of eternal return. But the modernist alternative does not present us with a temporality in which real and imagined histories have become any more aligned. Instead, we seem to be presented with a picture of a modern world that experiences history in a circular fashion and yet struggles to deny this circularity by promoting its own myths of progress.[131]

Secular narratives on the one hand, therefore, assert that they are progressing, moving forward, developing; and - in doing so - distinguishing themselves from the idolators and iconoclasts who attach themselves to magical and superstitious ideas. Nevertheless, secularism also searches for "authenticity" to revert towards naturally democratic forms of humanity; or some kind of 're-enchantment' with the natural world. This question of (re)enchantment will be explored in due course.

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[130] Fowles 2013, 22.
[131] *Ibid.*, 23.

§8. 'Representing' the invisible

8.1. Given the apparently invisible nature of gods and deities, many scholars have been influenced by the contribution of semiotics, whether explicitly or implicitly, to help with their understandings of signification and presencing of entities. It will be suggested here instead that Peirce's semiotic (and de Saussure's semiological) models rely upon and sustain representationalist ideas.

Mettinger briefly draws upon the work of semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce to help understand the nature of the aniconic sign or object in logical semiotic terms. (For an overview of Peirce's semiotic model, see Appendix III). In particular, he invokes Peirce's 'indexical sign' as a referent of something in some causal way, either by association or implication (such as a pointing finger), as opposed to the 'iconic sign', which functions as a referent by physical resemblance.[132] Peirce's triadic model places the subject as the intermediary: the vehicle of what he describes as the interpretant (the sign in the «mind» of the person seeing or thinking about the sign), without which any 'indexical' sign, such as an aniconic motif or monument (according to Mettinger's interpretation), would be redundant and entirely meaningless. The fact of the existence of variation between the iconic (the icon) and the aniconic (the index), for Mettinger, therefore, is important as it indicates different referential relations between the sign and significatum or object (the god) to which the sign refers. Mettinger furthermore suggests an important distinction between two physical forms of aniconism: "Material aniconism", in which a physical object constitutes the "central cultic symbol"; and "empty space aniconism" characterised by a dedicated place, such as an empty room or empty throne (Fig. 9) which by the very absence of any "central cultic symbol", alludes to or "...generates in the onlooker the mental image of the deity".[133] Gaifman notes that an empty throne, for example, is significantly more suggestive of a divine presence than an empty room or absence of any object of focus.[134]

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[132] Mettinger 1995, 21.
[133] *Ibid.*, 19-20.
[134] Gaifman 2005, 3, fn. 13.

FIGURE 7: EMPTY THRONE', SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTED TO THE GODDESS ASTARTE
MUSÉE DU LOUVRE, PARIS. IMAGE: F K MOUSSA.

8.2. In their acclaimed study of idolatry, philosophers Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit adopt their own interpretation of the semiotic triad of Peirce to describe three different types of «representation», which they then use to interpret types of what would be deemed as "acceptable" and "unacceptable" «representation» in Old Testament and Reformation image prohibitions. In their own words:

> C. S. Peirce divided the various kinds of representations into three categories. The first is representation based on similarity, the second is causal- representation, and the third is convention-based representation. Representation based on similarity means that one thing represents another because it is similar to it...In causal representation the relation between the representing and the represented things is not a relation or similarity; other relations are involved, such as metonymy, in which a part represents the whole...In conventional representation the representing thing is associated with the represented thing by convention, as the word "cup" represents a cup, without any similarity or causal relation between the word and the object. [135]

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[135] Halbertal & Margalit 1992, 38. Note that Halbertal & Margalit here use their own terminology in reference to Peirce's types of «representation», or what he refers to as the 'triadic relations of comparison'. Halbertal & Margalit's «representations» based on similarity refers to Peirce's "Qaulisign"; their causal-metonymic «representation» refers to Peirce's "Sinsigns", and "convention-based representation" refer to Peirce's "Legisigns". See Appendix III.

Based on this reading of Peirce, Halbertal and Margalit, go on to define the types of religious objects that may fall into each of these categories and the probable reasons for their rejection by prohibitionists and iconoclasts. So, "similarity-based representations" may be identified as icons, to which two main objections may arise: the first, concerns the risk of substitution –that is, the risk of mistaking the similarity-based icon for the actual proto-type, such as the deity or god. This may arise especially in acts of worship when attention is directed towards the object. Secondly, the objection arises where there is ultimately a theological debate concerning whether the god or deity has a form that can be represented; and whether that form can be reproduced.[136] Next, for Halbertal and Margalit, a typical "metonymic representation" might be the cherubim in the Jewish temple, which - as a base or frame of an empty throne - alludes to the presence of Yahweh. We might compare this to the aniconic or, more specifically, to Mettinger's 'empty space anicon', although for Halbertal and Margalit the "metonymic representation" is not strictly only aniconic. So, this kind of object or image may be figurative or aniconic, as long its worshippers do not claim or believe it to resemble the god or deity. Halbertal and Margalit go on: "Metonymic representations are permitted because they do not lead to error in the conception of God, as they do not represent him by being similar to him."[137] As we have already observed, the use of such objects may however be identified or ascribed by others (usually outsiders) as idolatrous, either because they mistake them as «representations», or because - for whatever reason - both iconic and aniconic forms are equally objectionable. Halbertal and Margalit state that:

> Often the accusation of idolatry is hurled at some person or group because the accuser has failed to distinguish between metonymic and similarity-based representations. Thus, for example, some scholars claim that equating worship of the golden calves in the northern kingdom of Israel with idol worship is a mistake. The worshippers of the golden calves, according to this claim, did not worship them as similarity-based representations of God but as a substitute for the cherubim and the Ark of the Covenant, which were in Jerusalem...To consider worship of the golden calves in the northern kingdom idolatry is to attribute similarity-based representation to what is only metonymic representation.[138]

Finally, "conventional representations", for Halbertal and Margalit, are linguistic «representations» or references to the divine,[139] which may be in the form of script, oral narrative and descriptions or chants, hymns and recitations.

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[136] Halbertal & Margalit 1992, 39-48.

[137] *Ibid.*, 48.

[138] *Ibid.*, 49.

[139] *Ibid.*, 49-66. The authors, in fact, provide a detailed analysis in these pages of how and why linguistic references to the divine receive fewer objections. While this is interesting and – in some ways pertinent to the subject discussed here; mainly in the interests of brevity; discussion on this subject has been excluded here.

Halbertal and Margalit's argument is revealing, but also leaves open some significant questions. The overriding problem lies in their assertion that every form of religious object or worship is ultimately «representational» in one way or another. Halbertal and Margalit argue that "metonymic representations" can include figurative forms which bear no resemblance to a divinity, without being objectionable (except by outsiders who misunderstand) "...because they do not lead to error in the conception of God." So let us consider for illustrative purposes, once again, the example of the Golden Calf. Let us assume that the Golden Calf is indeed a substitute for the cherubim or a proxy of Yahweh, to which it bears no physical resemblance. Whether Yahweh is thought to have no physical form or known to have another form unlike the Golden Calf (let's say, for example, a white-bearded figure), surely the same risks of substitution would arise as with the cases of the "similarity-based representations" for which Halbertal and Margalit also argue? That is, the deity of no form may end-up being mistaken for having the form of the Golden Calf, or the form of the Golden Calf may end up being revered, worshipped or valued instead of the white bearded figure. Outsiders or non-believers, of course will always have potential objections based on their own (misinformed) ascriptions and attributions. So Halbertal and Margalit's "metonymic representations", having a figurative form with no resemblance to divinity, without the possibility of internal anxieties or conflicts arising concerning possible errors in the form of the divinity, is not really a sustainable argument. Furthermore, their adoption of Peirce's model - albeit a modified version of it - does not strictly work for describing a kind of «symbol» or object which represents a divinity. All parts of Peirce's "trichotomies" rely on their being a proto-type object to which signs can correspond in some way, except for what he describes as "symbols", which he asserts are almost entirely arbitrary linguistic conventions.[140] So, according to Peirce's formulation, we might propose the existence of a divine entity (a "Dicent Symbolic Legisign") which we call God (a "Rhematic Symbolic Legisign"), and make arguments to support that proposition (an "Argumentative Symbolic Legisign"); [141] but the «representation» of God could only be limited to those linguistic conventions (i.e.: we could not use any other kind of signs to represent God), as there is (arguably) no material thing to which God corresponds which any other type of sign could effectively represent. For Peirce, Halbertal and Margalit's "metonymic representation" could not

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[140] This is not unlike de Saussure's Semiological model (1983[1916]).
[141] See Appendix III for fuller explanation of this.

represent a God without the actual God or proto-type God to which it could be said that the sign has correspondence being visibly known.[142]

8.3. Renowned theologian Robert Cummings Neville similarly adopts Peirce's model of semiotics in his interpretation of the nature of religious «symbols». Acknowledging that a sign cannot operate in a vacuum -that is, without a referent which is "true", as discussed above; Neville explicitly opposes perspectives that understand what he refers to as "religious symbols" where their «representational» function can be called into question. He categorises atheistic or cynical views that - on the basis that gods and divine figures are "self-delusional" constructions - assume religious «symbols» as non-«representational» (by not referring directly to the image of a prototype).[143] He develops the argument instead that what is important in the interpretant (i.e.: the interpreter) in their interaction with things, is its value rather than its form. In his own words:

> It can be shown that what he [Aristotle] and much of the Western tradition has meant by form can be derived from value interpreted a certain way. The question for truth is not whether a form is repeated but whether what is of worth in the thing is grasped by the interpreter. The form of that grasp in the interpreter's experience might be quite different from its form in the object interpreted. [144]

For Neville then, the truth which religious «symbols» represent involves "...the carryover of value from the object into the interpreters' experience by means of signs...",[145] and that truth manifests for the pious through community, devotion and theological understanding. We will return to the role of belief in §25, but by insisting on the pertinence of Peirce's semiotic model, Neville's transposition of form with value (as critiqued by Sontag, for example), he understands that he cannot do so without ruling-out the legitimacy of various other devotional practices. So, for Neville, traditions such as orthodox Zen Buddhism in Japan, Korea and China - for whom religious «symbols» are non-«representational» - are in the same category (albeit "at the opposite extreme" of the spectrum) as atheists and cynics, where "Enlightenment or salvation requires becoming free from the compulsion to symbolise, as well as from other compulsions."[146] He

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[142] The question of the logical possibility of a sign being able to represent a god is an interesting one, and which is both explicit and implicit in the various philosophical investigations. Descartes, for example, argues that the fact that the idea of a god exists without a discernible substance to which that idea can correspond, is the proof of the existence of a god. While, arguably, Bertrand Russell's exposure of the paradox in set theory reinforces the likelihood that, while we may create signs which we recognise correspond to certain concepts, those signs likely have no internal logical coherence.

[143] Neville 1996, 14-15.

[144] Neville 1996, 240.

[145] *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

[146] *Ibid.*, 14-15.

criticises Christian theologian Paul Tillich, furthermore,[147] for a "surprising gaff" he makes by assuming the Platonic and Saint Augustinian view that any image, object or «symbol» may operate as a religious «symbol», whether in respects - directly or indirectly - to a specified divinity or not. He therefore defends religious «symbols» that claim to represent the divine - what he calls the "broken symbol" against its detractors. For rationalists and scientists, religious «symbols» are broken because they refer to something which (for them) is not there; while "the mystics" - whose criticism, he claims, is "more powerful"[148] - maintain that religious «symbols» which represent the divine are "broken" or wrong because (for them) the divine is also not there in a physical or visible form. In other words, whilst he recognises Buddhism (for example) as a religion, he cannot account for the possible existence of non-«representational» or aniconic traditions within it and other religious or religious-like traditions as legitimate "religious symbols". Yet again, then, we are constrained here by an understanding of religious practice as mediated by material things as dependent upon principles of «representation» and correspondence to some-*thing*.

§9. The abstraction of content in the Social Sciences

So far, through various examples, we have attempted to unravel areas where «representational» thought persists. In particular, in contemporary culture clashes, both in religious expression and entwined in narratives of alterity; but also in the way it is expressly manifest in scholarly thought. The historical circumstances of the development of thought and the arising trends within the social sciences and humanities in this regard have been so nuanced and formative, that some necessity arises in deconstructing those events to help situate the bases of the approach proposed here. This section seeks to explicate to some extent the ways in which constructions of the internal/external divide have formed the basis of thought generally within the humanities and social sciences. Such an excursus helps to situate the origins and basis of current thought and research within material culture studies.

9.1. Up until the late nineteenth century, antiquarian pursuits defined explorations of the material past; and had done so inspired by the Hermetic approach in pursuit of the searching, unearthing and collection of artifacts of 'lost civilisations', with a particular penchant for the mythical, legendary, weird and wonderful: from the search for Giants

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[147] Tillich 1951-63; 1959.
[148] Neville 1996, 243.

and Grottoes, to the Arthurian Holy Grail, through to the lost city of Atlantis and Phoenician Britons. [149] In this tradition, the scope for interpretation engendered limitless interconnectivity, conflation and coincidence. For philosopher Umberto Eco, this Hermetic approach in-itself played a role in the new scientific rationalism which came to the fore in the nineteenth century:

> [T]he Hermetic model was suggesting the idea that the order of the universe described by Greek rationalism could be subverted and that it was possible to discover new connections and new relationships in the universe such as would have permitted man to act on nature and change its course. But this influence is merged with the conviction that the world should not be described in terms of qualitative logic but of a quantitative one. Thus the Hermetic model paradoxically contributes to the birth of its new adversary, modern scientific rationalism. [150]

The methods of the scientific approach were integrated into the realm of the humanities to form the social sciences; and the newly emerging discipline of Archaeology at the turn of the twentieth century stood quite uniquely at the intersection of its Hermetic antecedence on the one hand; and the scientific rationalist/empiricist approach on the other.

The scientific objectification and abstraction of natural phenomena through dissection and classification of physical things was transposed to the human realm, for the purposes of interpreting the presumed content of intangible and immaterial thoughts and intentions. But, as we will see, the adoption of the new post-enlightenment scientific approach was controversial and difficult because - for some - it embodied unresolved age-old philosophical quandaries concerning the nature of the human condition and what constituted proper or appropriate knowledge: questions of the «mind»/spirit-body distinction; how we should understand the human as both a 'natural' and 'cultural' type of being; and how concepts of human "soul", «mind», "spirit", "will", "ethics" and "intention" should be understood in relation to non-human entities and the wider 'natural' world.

Scientific rationalism, of course, was not an entirely new project and existed in embryonic form in western philosophy ever since the pre-Socratic philosophers Hermotimus of Clazomenae[151] and Democritus.[152] But, despite popular misunderstandings of it, rationalism never offered a solution for necessarily understanding 'reality', but rather a conception of how the world was comprehended in the «mind». Rationalist ideas were perhaps most famously articulated by the eponymous

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[149] On the antiquarians, see for example, Carrington & Grinsell 1982; Leighton 1989; Mayor 2000.
[150] Eco 1992, 34. On this subject, see also Yates 1964; 1968.
[151] Aristotle, Metaphysics 1:984b.
[152] Soccio 2012, 72.

progenitor of "Cartesian dualism" René Descartes,[153] for whom, for example, things
''...are not perceived because they are seen and touched, but only because they are
rightly comprehended by the mind.'' [154] Similarly for Leibniz, ''...our ideas, even those of
sensible things, come from within our own soul''.[155]

9.2. Emmanuel Kant was one of the most influential in the crystallisation of scientific
rationalism in relation to the experience of a real world (empiricism). In his own words:

> A new light flashed upon the mind of the first man (be he Thales or some other) who
> demonstrated the properties of the isosceles triangle. The true method, so he found,
> was not to inspect what he discerned either in the figure, or in the bare concept of it,
> and from this, as it were, to read off its properties; but to bring out what was
> necessarily implied in the concepts that he had himself formed a priori, and had put
> into the figure in the construction by which he presented it to himself. If he is to know
> anything with a priori certainty he must not ascribe to the figure anything save what
> necessarily follows from what he has himself set into it in accordance with his
> concept.[156]

For Kant, the external object or form - what he calls "sensibility" - is reliant on an internal
concept; what he calls "understanding":

> Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object
> would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions [i.e.,
> representations] without concepts are blind... These two powers or capacities
> [sensibility and understanding] cannot exchange their functions. The understanding
> can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can
> knowledge arise. [157]

He further clarifies: "...appearances are only representations of things that exist without
cognition of what they might be in themselves." [158]

Kant's thought and its relation to the broader ecology of development of scientific
rationalism/empiricism is not straightforward. The bifurcate nature of his Transcendental
Idealist and Empirical Realist perspective has been the source of much confusion and
debate,[159] which has been fateful in the development of the theory and history of thought
in the humanities and social sciences; and is in many regards key to understanding how
«representational» thought has become ossified across various disciplines, including
archaeology and material culture studies. The ways his thought has been significant will

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[153] Descartes 1993 [1641].
[154] Descartes 1982 [1641], 26.
[155] Leibniz 1949 [1705], 15.
[156] Kant 1929 [1781], 19, B xi–xii.
[157] Kant 1929 [1781], 193, B75–76.
[158] Kant 1998 [1781], 263, B164
[159] It is safe to say that most philosophers and historians of philosophy would agree that Kant's thought has
       raised more questions than it has resolved, despite its significant influence. See, for example, Ameriks
       1992, 329; Allais 2015, 2-4; Clarke 2016, 7.

be considered at various stages here as it becomes pertinent to consider the influence of particular aspects of his contribution. We start then, with the problem which Kant set-up in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, first published in 1781, for which he sought to provide a solution. That problem concerned a dispute which had been ensuing between one broad camp including Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, who have come to be known as the "Continental Rationalists" and another broad camp including Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Reid: the "British Empiricists".[160] The former broadly believed that human intuitions such as logic and reason are possible beyond the need for empirical experience or sensory inputs; while the latter believed that all knowledge can ultimately only be derived from worldly sensory inputs. Kant's 'solution' to this dichotomy (or "synthesis", as it is often referred to, though it is technically a critique of rationalism); was to determine that, while things - the world - exist independently of humans and we can be cognisant of them (empirical realism); our cognition of them is limited by the nature of the senses we have available to us and the way they represent the world of things to us (transcendental idealism). So, for Kant, while there is no doubt that there is a real world, there is a difference between the nature of that real world and the way our senses re-present it to us. The extent of the difference (if any) between the actual nature of the real world and our perception of it is where most debate concerning Kant's thought lies.

Kant's ideas were seminal and, in apparently having resolved the rationalist-empiricist / realist-idealism dichotomies, his thought was readily adopted and promoted by many "Neo-Kantians" in the development of the newly emerging 'Social Sciences' in the mid to late nineteenth century on the European Continent, especially within Sociology and Psychology.[161] In Britain, the Social Sciences were developed more directly through the import of the methods and principles of the 'Natural Sciences', derived from the largely empiricist analytical philosophical tradition.[162] But, of course, both parallel and concurrent developments mirrored and ultimately fed into one another. Crucial for us here is the way in which Kant's 'synthesis' which claimed to resolve the division between the internal «mind» and an outside reality was wholly adopted as a foundation for the social sciences and remained unquestioned for a long time. However, as we will see, this synthesis relies on a number of problematic premises which persist unchecked in all the traditions which continue to rely on this dichotomy, including material culture studies.

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[160] Of course, this division is very 'brushstroke', and the picture is much more complex than this. For example, it does not consider Francis Bacon's earlier interesting contribution which sought to collapse the empiricist-rationalist divide; and it disregards the way in which British Philosopher Thomas Hobbes' thought in-fact influenced the 'Continental Rationalists', such as Spinoza and Leibniz. For a good account of this, see for example, McDonald 1993, 81-95.

[161] Hodges 1952; Harrington 2000; Feest 2010

[162] On this, see, for example: Smith 2010. See also §15.5.

Neo-Kantian attempts to graft together arguably incompatible disciplinary approaches of the natural sciences for understanding "nature" (e.g. biology, physics, chemistry, etc.) and the humanities for understanding the human condition (e.g. philosophy, history, sociology, etc.) to create the "social sciences" it has been suggested, have done so while eschewing still unresolved questions concerning the fundamental nature of humans. These unresolved philosophical questions, have been transmitted into the humanities and crystallised within the increasingly compartmentalised disciplinary silos which emerged from the first half of the twentieth century, including archaeology and material culture studies.[163]

9.3. Of course, as each discipline developed its own methods, a slightly different genealogy can be traced respectively but with each taking their ultimate ascendancy from the Neo-Kantian tradition. In the absence of a genealogical analysis of this aspect of the formation of the archaeological / material culture studies traditions, a brief excursus here of the way this has been understood for other cognate subject areas can be helpful.

Within the discipline of Psychology, philosopher and Psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs sets out how the lineage of the idealist component of rationalist thought (especially in relation to contemporary 'neuroconstructivism') can be traced from Kant through Johann Fichte's "transcendental Ego" as the source of the external world, to Schopenhauer's "World as will and representation", and Nietzsche's perspectivism.[164] So, for Fuchs: "With the interpretation of life as a form of physical process, experience lost its embeddedness in life activity and was banished to its own sphere of the purely 'mental'."[165] To illustrate the point, Fuchs cites René Magritte's commentary of his painting *La condition humaine* (1933), in which he explains: "That is exactly how we see the world. We see it outside of ourselves and, nevertheless, we only have a representation of it in us."[166]

Philosopher and Sociologist Helmut Plessner (whose thought will in due course become a keystone of the approach developed here), traces a lineage within the Sociological discipline via Auguste Compte's positivism and Karl Marx's historical materialism. Once these perspectives had been "digested" into the discipline of Sociology, he observes:

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[163] On the compartmentalisation of the disciplines, Edward Said, for example, suggested that since World War II and the displacement of European dominance by American imperialism, the proliferation of academic subspecialties and regionalism was triggered (1995 [1978], 285).
[164] Fuchs 2018, 6.
[165] *Ibid.*, 5.
[166] *Ibid.*, 7.

> The widening of the concept of nature to include objects whose essence is comprehensibility, uniqueness, the ability to be evaluated, and historicity [Vergangenheit] must always remain superficial and leads to the establishment of lawfully determined periods—and thus to cultural predictions that seem to shackle human freedom, but that often enough are refuted by this very freedom. As Sociology advances, we can even observe progress in our familiarisation with the idea of culture being subject to certain laws without at the same time needing to deny or even merely narrow the sphere of human freedom.[167]

While the Kantian legacy within archaeology has not to date been thoroughly deconstructed, Philosopher of archaeology Alison Wylie illustrates the ways in which the discipline has grappled between being initially, for some, a purely scientific pursuit ("sequent stage" approaches); while others became resigned to the interpretative nature of the discipline, to such an extent that there could be "no logical relation" between the social past and the material record [168] ("constructivist" approaches). But, as Wylie also demonstrates, "Integrationist" approaches (also known as "New" or "Processual" approaches), sought to reconcile the scientific method with an acceptance of varying degrees of interpretative license, and have probably become (and continue to be) most prevalent.[169] The import of the idealist-rationalist approach in Archaeology involved being grafted onto the discipline's antecedent Hermetic antiquarian tradition of collecting, sorting and establishing connections. Models which were best adapted to the already established methods - as Phillips and Willie identified - of taxonomical and typological categorisation of forms distributed across time and space as the external cultural manifestations of internal «meanings»– became the *petitio principii* within the archaeological discipline. Material culture was reduced to taxonomies and hierarchies according to an order of internal «representation» and correspondence, which seemed true for the interpreter, and therefore assumed as true for all humans. But of course, since humans appear to be individuals with their own will and intention yet at the same time, to some greater or lesser degree, governed by biological and social determinates, the imputed «meaning» was read off as either consciously intentional (through 'internal' «symbols»), unconsciously inevitable (through internal underlying structures), or both; all of this leaving the discipline open to perpetual vacillations between objectivity and subjectivity; at once a "social science" and a "humanities" discipline.

9.4. Various philosophical developments in the meanwhile sought to address the quandaries which the Neo-Kantian idealist-rationalist formulation had arguably not

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[167] Plessner 2019 [1928], 14. Original (translator's) square brackets.
[168] Smith 1955, 4-5; as cited by Wylie 2007, 520.
[169] Wylie 2002; 2007.

resolved, but merely obfuscated (although notably, the stultification of development of thought is rarely recognised or acknowledged as rooted in the (neo-)Kantian tradition). Out of those, a gamut of 'post-processual' approaches emerged in the study of archaeology and material culture. Since the 1990s; and more broadly across the humanities and social sciences, there has been an attempt to re-evaluate the subjective experience of humans and their place in the environment; and - more recently - of the role of objects, things and animals in relation to humans in what has been coined by some as the "return to things".[170] Eva Domańska refers to such approaches as constituting a "post-anthropocentric" paradigmatic shift from the "interpretivist-constructivist" paradigm,[171] which dominated in the latter twentieth century; distinguished by its equalising flat or symmetrical understanding of relations between humans, animals and things. As such, proponents of this attitude within the humanities often claim to assume or present a more indigenous perspective and share a concomitance with the ecological activist movement. However, with so many intermittent vacillations and ever-more frequent "turns",[172] into what is perhaps now one of the most methodologically and theoretically hybridised scholarly disciplines, a paradigm shift as Domańska describes it, is - as Gavin Lucas suggests - perhaps not quite what we are witnessing here, *yet*.[173]

Three veins of prevalent thought, it is suggested here, can be discerned as continuing to run through the disciplinary horizon of archaeology and material culture studies, as we near the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. These do not emerge as 'pure' and 'discreet', but rather as often cutting across other. The first is what we might broadly refer to as, *à la Wylie*, the integrationist approach (or the 'processual' approach, which to some extent consolidated the "sequent" and "constructivist" approaches). The second, which may technically be identified as a sub-category of the integrationist approach, is Marx's dialectical materialist approach. In the same way that Plessner identifies its pervasiveness within Sociology, Marx's breed of dialectical materialism has become so inherent to the way the discipline of material culture studies has developed, that its significance cannot be overstated. The third is what we might refer to as the ontological hermeneutic or "post-processual" approach, which became de rigueur in the 1990s and continued ever since alongside and occasionally in combination with the integrationist and dialectical materialist approaches.

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[170] Domanska 2006; Preda 1999.
[171] Domańska 2021.
[172] Lucas 2017.
[173] *Ibid.*

There is not scope here for a comprehensive deconstruction of the ways in which all these approaches in their own ways embody and sustain «representational» constructions of human interactions with the material world, as useful as that would be. Instead, a consideration of the ways in which each of these strands continue to sustain, in various ways, the Neo-Kantian synthetic legacy will be integrated into the development of the approach of this thesis.

Summary of Chapter 2

So, the Israelites may have been mistaken in thinking that their neighbours worshipped calves; Salafists may be mistaken in believing that UNESCO 'global community' worships heritage objects or that Sufis worship holy men. Likewise, Euro-American anthropologists may be mistaken that "primitives" worship "idols" (whether iconic or aniconic). So far, we have seen how, ancient Israelites and contemporary Salafists alike, accuse their neighbours of idolatry (irrespective of the form of the idol); and we have suggested that even contemporary categorisations of 'others' within art-history, material culture studies and anthropology make similar types of identifications and assume that the relationships of humans with material culture is the same, irrespective of the form (i.e. iconic or aniconic). This is derived from and serves to sustain the idea that interactions with the material form is an externalist-internalist process; which is ultimately based on the reification of a rational idealist conception of «mind», which assumes that all art objects ultimately «represent» some*thing*.

Part II will set about constructing an alternative approach. However, the attitudes described so-far run deep, and we have some way to go to extricate them. The next chapter begins by clarifying the kind of question we are ultimately asking in this thesis, in contradistinction to the approaches which have been prevalent in material culture studies, both from the integrationist and post-processual perspectives.

CHAPTER 3: The Hermeneutic Question
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§10. Wilhem Dilthey and Martin Heidegger

10.1. This section considers the contribution of Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger,
whose thoughts are significant to the position developed in this thesis. Each propose
their own hermeneutic approaches, which have come to be known as philosophical
hermeneutics and ontological hermeneutics, respectively. As the earlier of the two
thinkers, Dilthey was influential on the early thought of Martin Heidegger, and others,
including Hans-George Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur.[174] Heidegger's thought has had a
significant impact in material culture studies since the 1990s, directly through post-
processual approaches, but also indirectly through his influence on contemporary
philosophers such Graham Harman whose Object Orientated Philosophy has been so
influential in the relatively more recent so-called "return to things". Conversely, any direct
or indirect influence of Dilthey's thought within material culture studies, for largely
historical reasons, is almost entirely absent. Indeed, the hermeneutic position he offered
within the «mind»/spirit-body/nature discourse, in response to the Neo-Kantian approach
to the Social Sciences, "lost" an important argument at the end of the nineteenth century
(discussed in §10.2), and his thought was never incorporated in the theory and methods
of the humanities and social sciences.[175] The reason for the relatively high visibility and
corresponding broad adoption of Heidegger's ontological hermeneutic approach may to

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[174] But, while Heidegger and Gadamer both give due credit to Dilthey, they ultimately turn against him and
pursue divergent paths.

[175] As Heidelberger demonstrates, the discourse on the «mind»/spirit-body/nature problem thereafter was
not re-ignited within the analytic philosophical tradition until Herbert Feigl's and John Smart's revolt in the
1950s to the prevalence of the Cartesian paradigm. (Heidelberger 2003).

some extent be attributed to political-historical circumstances (see section 16.1). Nevertheless, within the German-speaking Continental tradition, a vein of thought arising from Dilthey's approach as part of the Life Philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*) movement,[176] continued through the twentieth century albeit in relative obscurity to the non-German-speaking world: what has broadly come to be known as 'Philosophical Anthropology', and which will in due course provide one of the bases of the thesis developed here (§16).

So, while Heidegger's approach has been important, the case is made here that Dilthey's Life Philosophy (and associated Philosophical Anthropology) for understanding the nature of human being and experience offers a more robust approach. The next few sections will attempt to define and contrast the starting premises of Dilthey and Heidegger. The position developed here at once agrees with and espouses aspects of Heidegger's thought where it aligns with aspects Life Philosophy, Philosophical Anthropology, Realist Phenomenology and Affectivity; and concerning the nature and problem with the contemporary human in relation to the world, which ultimately forms a more ethical component of the argument developed. But at the same time, it pursues a line of argument which is in many ways more faithful to Dilthey's enterprise. In doing so, a critique unfolds of the way Heidegger's approach fails and slips into the kind of thought it seeks to overcome. This and other 'errors', which in the absence of adequately rigorous interrogation of theoretical sources applied within material culture studies, it will be argued here, has often led to the same errors being replicated within the field.

10.2. Our introduction of Dilthey, then, starts with Kant's influential synthesis of the empirical realist and transcendental idealist positions as already introduced in section 9.2. During the late nineteenth century, a heated debate and a controversy ensued between German Neo-Kantians, represented especially by Philosophers Wilhelm Windelband, Heinrich Rickert and Hermann Ebbinghaus[177] in opposition to Wilhelm Dilthey, who questioned the extent to which "internal" human intention can be objectivised. For Dilthey, as he famously put it: "No real blood flows in the veins of the knowing subject constructed by Locke, Hume and Kant...only the diluted juice of reason, a mere process of thought."[178] Instead, he made the case for the study of what he referred to as "Human Studies" (*Geisteswissenschaften*).[179] Dilthey is interested in the "...capacity

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[176] On this, see for example: Beiser 2023.
[177] Windelband 1998 [1894]; Rickert 1986 [1899]; Ebbinghaus 1896.
[178] Dilthey 1976, 162.
[179] Dilthey 1977 [1894]; See also Hodges 1952, xxii-xxiii; Makkreel 1969; Harrington 2000. There is no easy direct translation of the term *Geisteswissenschaften* which does full justice to Dilthey's intended meaning.

of the human being to know itself and the society and history which it has produced."[180]
He is critical of the foundational principles of what he described as 'explanatory
psychology', which, in the Neo-Kantian fashion imported the methods of the natural
sciences by attempting to "…explain the constitution of the psychic world according to its
components, forces and laws, as precisely as physics and chemistry explain the
corporeal world…".[181] As such, for Dilthey, an important distinction is made between this
kind of 'explanation' (*Erklären*) as opposed to 'understanding' (*Verstehen*) for which he
advocated the advancement of 'Human Studies'.[182] It is precisely this distinction which
was the source of so much opposition in the heated stand-off with his Neo-Kantian
adversaries at the end of the nineteenth century, but also later among the logical
positivists in the mid-twentieth century, and then again among the deconstructivists in
the 1980s.[183] What 'understanding' should precisely entail for Dilthey is what has at times
caused further confusion and/or misrepresentation by others, including among them
Heidegger.

10.3. What Dilthey is seeking to 'understand' is neither internal processes nor pure
subjective experience, but what he refers to as a worldview or *Weltanschauung*.[184] The
formation and expression of worldviews are determined at two levels. The first concerns
the unique human life experience (the Life Philosophy component of his thought), which
he refers to as 'metaphysical consciousness'; that is, the conscious experience of life,
which for all humans embodies the "riddle of life" concerning birth and death and all the
challenges they bring to humans.[185] For Dilthey, this is an inescapable reality for all
humans and any attempts at reaching any kind of truths beyond the limitations of this
human condition are not possible. But, for Dilthey, the quest for answers to the riddle of
life is also a driver of human expression - particularly through religion, art and philosophy.

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[180] Dilthey GS I, 116 / SW I: 165 As cited in Bambach 2019, 82.
[181] Dilthey GS V, 158/91. As cited in Harrington 2000.
[182] Dilthey GS V, 139-240. As cited in Harrington 2000, fn 1.
[183] Harrington 2000, 436.
[184] Although *Weltanschauung* was not a term which Dilthey coined; he brought it to the fore perhaps more
than any other philosopher, and it became a cornerstone (in various forms) for *Lebensphilosophie*
thinkers, including Friedrich Nietzsche and Georg Simmel. The origins of the concept of *Weltanschauung*
are not very clear, although some attribute it to Kant. For a discussion of its historic origins, see Thome
2004, Band 12: W–Z, 453–9. Although, as Beiser (2023, 17-18) points out, Fichte (1797) and
Trendelenburg (1855) were probably significant in the development of the concept and influence on
Dilthey. Notably, some have criticised the term "world-view", since it in-itself projects a dualist
epistemology. One cannot hold a non-dualist "world-view", since to 'view the world' assumes in the first
place that the world is something (the object; the body) external to the viewer (the subject; the «mind»).
Although some sympathy is shared here with such a critique in terms of the place of humans in the world
in reals sense, as should become clear in the approach developed herein, the idea of a world-view is also
appropriate for understanding the inherent sense of a distancing of world which linguistic humans
experience.
[185] Dilthey 1989, 59.

Worldviews are then secondarily formed through: (a) a synthesis for the ways subjects know the world (and explain the riddle of life); (b) the historical structures and conventions in which they find themselves; (c) the individual's negotiation between the practical application of these pre-conditions; and (d) the individual's personal experiences and social interactions, which may in turn contribute to knowledge and structures in which they find themselves immersed. Dilthey suggests, therefore, that humans should be studied in terms of their objects or forms of expression, which are ultimately the outcomes of what he refers to as a 'dynamic system' (*Wirkungszusammenhang*).[186]

Similarly, for Heidegger, a given people's 'truth' cannot simply be a question of 'correspondence' with 'reality'; but rather, how a fact is observed or identified is entirely dependent upon what he refers to as "world"[187] or what he also variously refers to as "thrownness" or "being" (with 'b' in lower-case). There are an infinite 'plenitude' of potential truths rather than one constant 'truth', and Euro-American philosophical understandings of truth as correspondence do not account for this variability.[188] As Heideggerian philosopher Herbert Dreyfus puts it: "we are able to understand what a chair or hammer is only because it fits in to a whole set of cultural practices in which we grow up and with which we gradually become familiar."[189] For Heidegger, "The world is not the mere collection of countable or uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there...World is never an object that stands there before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject...".[190] In other words, we are caught-up in our world, which is not an outward objectifiable something 'out there'.

10.4. At first glance, Dilthey's Weltanschauung and Heidegger's concepts of World or being appear to share some similarity. But there is an important fundamental difference which requires some deeper explication.

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[186] Hodges 1952, 267-269. Dilthey's approach, in this regard, is not dissimilar to Foucault's Archaeology of Knowledge (2006[1969]).

[187] Heidegger 1971 [1935-36], 39; 1977 [1954], 129; 1966 [1959], 76; Young 2002, 8. It should be pointed out that there are two senses to the term 'world', but which - in order to allay any unnecessary confusion – is not discussed here in any depth. The first is 'world' in the ontological sense, as described here; and the second is in the ontic sense. This second sense refers to what actually exists or the real physical world prior to human definition of it, prior to its integration to world in the ontological sense. The ontic 'world' is always only partially illuminated by our world in the ontological sense, depending on the extent of our *horizon of disclosure*. See: Young 2002, 8-10.

[188] Seen in this light, as Rorty and Guignon have both observed, Heidegger's perspective on 'world' may be compared to American Pragmatic or constructivist perspectives. See Guignon 2004, 2012.

[189] Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986, 5.

[190] Heidegger 1971 [1935-36], 44.

Heidegger initially displayed some concomitance with Dilthey's Life Philosophy because of his commitment to describing the nature of the life experience of humans - something which he would himself refer to initially as "facticity" and eventually as "Dasein."[191] Indeed, the condition of Dasein in humans, for Heidegger is "This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being".[192] He embellishes later, Dasein "...is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it."[193] In this regard, Dasein aligns very closely with Dilthey's state of Metaphysical Consciousness as the experiential reality in which humans find themselves in seeking to understand their consciousness of being in the world: "the riddle of life". But note Heidegger's caveat that this is what "ontically" distinguishes human experience (Dasein). He was therefore dismissive of Dilthey, because Dilthey - for him - did not go far enough and stops merely at a kind of description of a single type of human state of being ('metaphysical consciousness') which forms the basis of different worldviews –something akin to subjectivist cultural relativism.[194] His critique of Dilthey therefore was that his approach was *merely* ontical, rather than *ontological*: always immersed in a given kind of being in the world. So, for Heidegger, World or being - comparable to Dilthey's Weltanschauung - cannot pertain to matters of human ontology (which he suggests many make the error of conflating with the ontic); but only to matters of variance in the human experience of living with, or coping with being human and all the human cultural behaviours that would involve, which would inevitably even include Heidegger's (and our) activity of attempting to define being. For him, to understand World or being (or variances of worldview, in Dilthey's terms) as the basis of everything, is to take for granted what it is to *be* in the first place.

For Heidegger, "Being" ('B' in upper caps) or "earth" is the pre-philosophical and pre-reflexive engagement of being in the world. To concern oneself philosophically with

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[191] Grondin 2019, 256; Nelson 2015, 115-116. On Heidegger's early approval with Dilthey's concept of the life philosophy, see Heidegger 2002 [1925]; 1993 [1920], 154. On facticity see Heidegger 1993 [1920], 174.

[192] Heidegger 1962 [1927], 27 (INT., I, 2). In this regard, similar to Dilthey's Metaphysical Consciousness, Dasein "...gets its essential character from what is enquired about – namely, Being."

[193] Heidegger 1962 [1927], 32 (INT., I, 4).

[194] On the accusation of subjectivist relativism, the position sustained here is in sympathy with Philosophers Hans Michael Ermarth (1978), Rudolf Makkreel (1977, 1983, 1989) and Austin Harrington (2000), that Dilthey's ideas were not subjectivist as was and has often been misapprehended (and which immersed him in so much heated debate with this contemporaries); but was in many ways resonant with - rather than antithetical to - Weberian and Durkheimian ideas which pre-empted the French *Annales* tradition after the *Annales d'Histoire Sociale et Economique* (now the *Annales: Economies, Societés,* Civilisations), founded in Strasbourg in 1929 by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre (on this, see, for example: Burke 2015; Clark 1985), and Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2006 [1969]). Cultural forms, for Dilthey "...had to be understood *both* as expressions of psychic life in historical contexts *and* as intentional contents whose 'validity' held independently of the particular experiences of their authors." (Harrington 2000, 439-440).

the nature of Being, that is, in 'metaphysics' or 'ontology' - the science of entities or beings[195] - should instead be the primary focus. Metaphysics is also, at a very fundamental level, the basis of how western civilisations since the Pre-Socratic age have understood what *is*: "Metaphysics grounds an age in that, through a specific interpretation of what is...it gives the age the ground of its essential form."[196] "Put simply", in Heideggerian philosopher Iain Thomson's words: "Everything is, so by changing our understanding of what 'is-ness' itself is, metaphysics can change our understanding of everything."[197] So:

> The question of Being aims... at ascertaining the a priori conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine beings as beings of such and such a type, and, in doing so, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations. *Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task*.[198]

By focusing on the worldview at the level of being, then, Dilthey - himself immersed in western metaphysics - is, according to Heidegger, not dealing with the more important question of the nature of the human relationship to Being or earth.

Crucially for Heidegger, Euro-American thought is founded on Platonic and Aristotelian assumptions of a permanent reality that projects a particular techno-scientific mode of theoreticism and instrumentation which 'enframes' the world in a way that permits its objectification and endless utilisation as a resource, what he describes as *Gestell* ('enframing'):

> Research has disposal over anything that is when it can either calculate it in its future course in advance or verify a calculation about its past. Nature, as being calculated in advance, and history, in being historiographically verified as a past, become, as it were, 'set in place' [gestellt]. Nature and history become objects of a representing that explains.[199]

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[195] Heidegger 1998 [1967], 312; 1975 [1949]: 287. Also: Young 2001, 123; 2002, 26; Thomson 2011, 7.

[196] Heidegger 1977 [1954], 115.

[197] Thomson 2011, 7. For Heidegger, the way in which western thought has understood how what is *is*, has undergone five transitions from the 'pre-Socratic' to the 'Platonic', 'medieval', 'modern' and 'late modern' "epochs". (Heidegger 1961, 376-383; 1982 [1961], 230-239. See also Thomson 2011, 8.) Through these various epochs, Heidegger charts the way the metaphysical conditions of western thought moved through significant historical shifts (*geschichte*, translated by some as 'deep history'). (Clark 2002, 27-39.) These shifts are not tangible events we may identify in Euro-American history (*historie*), such as the Second World War, which Heidegger controversially posited caused no discernible change or *shift* in metaphysical thought. (Heidegger 1968 [1954], 66; Clark 2002, 31.) Rather, *geschichte* refers to shifts that subtly, yet significantly alter preconceived 'truths' concerning the nature of what *is*.

[198] Heidegger 1962 [1927], 31 (INT., I, 3). Original italics.

[199] Heidegger 1977 [1954], 126-127. "Is" is italicised here by the present author to facilitate an easier reading of this sentence. Heidegger does not attempt to refute the validity of scientific endeavour of measuring and comparing material variables through repeated and controlled experimentation. Rather, his principal

Heidegger's later philosophical endeavours therefore attempt to access a modality of Being that seeks to overcome this Euro-American metaphysical mode of being. Key to understanding this is Heidegger's insistence on overcoming the subject-object dialectic which is symptomatic of Euro-American metaphysical thought: that is, collapsing into one the core, substance or 'thinglyness' of all things with its visible or observable characteristics, as defined as part of a given people's World.[200] In Euro-American thought, for Heidegger, only the object is visible, and at a fundamental linguistic level prizes earth from world to objectify it; fails to adequately recognise earth (Being) and World (being) as fundamentally and inextricably the same thing.

§11. The Epistemic Fallacy

11.1. So, while Dilthey seeks to find a method of identifying which dynamics in the experience of being human may lead to understanding different worldviews, Heidegger's identification of the western objectification of the world is seen as a symptom of a general state of being, any explanation of which, from the perspective of that state of being, can only perpetuate that very state of being and therefore can only be overcome through its total overcoming, which in any case (and this is an important point often not fully grasped in the wholesale adoption of Heideggerian thought) would lead not to any kind of explanation which that state of being demands. Theologian George Pattison summarises the point well:

> [A]nyone who imagines that either Heidegger or Derrida overcame metaphysics, or that overcoming metaphysics in some project that a group of sufficiently dedicated researchers might accomplish in the near future, just isn't taking this kind of philosophical thinking seriously. Metaphysical ideas don't go away just because someone gave a lecture criticizing them. On the contrary, the more metaphysical ideas are in decline, the more their extraordinary power and impact comes into view and the more questions they provoke...Moreover, if the metaphysics of Being lives on in contemporary technology and in an academic culture shaped, even in the humanities, by technological thinking (as Heidegger himself believed), no one who speaks of their 'research' or their 'project' can safely assume that they are thinking 'after metaphysics'.[201]

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interest is to investigate the ways - through different modes of being - we arrive at 'truth' and the specific problems with instrumentation associated with modernity and techno-science, which has culminated in a kind of 'technological «representation»' of 'truth' or 'reality'. As Clark summarises it: "According to Heidegger, the question is not one of science considered as simply representing an object-world but more fundamentality of a general stance towards entities: the decision in favour of certainty in representation, calculability and hence control of nature, which correspondingly appears under the guise of the totality of exploitable objects." See also Young 1997, 175; Clark 2002, 36-37.

[200] Heidegger 1977 [1954], 22-24. These are known in the ancient Greek world as *hupekeimenon* and - in ta *sumbebekota*, respectively.

[201] Pattison 2011, 3-4; includes a citation to Heidegger 1950, 73-110 (*Die Zeit des Weltbildes*, translated to *The Age of the World Picture*, one of the essays in *The Question Concerning Technology*, referenced here as 1977 [1954]).

At this point we venture into - to borrow a term which Heidegger used to describe his sympathetic critique of Dilthey - a "destructive retrieval"[202] of a significant component of Heidegger's thought. The position developed here concurs with the identification of the objectifying nature of Euro-American 'metaphysics' and Heidegger's concern with overcoming it. However, it remains steadfast with Dilthey in sustaining that this is an *ontic*, rather than an *ontological* matter. Heidegger accused others of conflating the ontic with ontology and sought to differentiate them and experimented with overcoming Euro-American metaphysical ontology. But we first need to disentangle his designation of "western metaphysics" as a variant in human ontology (or being) in itself. And further to the this, his assertion therein that Euro-American being displays a unique dualistic characteristic, which is uniquely responsible for the objectivising mechanistic attitude. This was an area with which Heidegger grappled at an early stage in his work, and - once committed to this position - as we shall see, he then struggles to find ways to truly overcome in his later work.

11.2. To introduce some of the issues this raises, we may cite Psychologist Harris L Friedman from a paper in which he corresponds with other psychologists of varying persuasions about Heidegger's thought on phenomenology. Establishing first that Heidegger's intention, in his conception of Dasein, "...was explicitly to overcome the Cartesian divide, even attempting to go beyond Husserl's call to 'a radical return to the phenomena as they appear prior to. . . metaphysical claims'"; he then quite rightly asks: "But I wonder how well Heidegger really does this?" Friedman goes on to make several observations:

> It seems to me that *Dasein* is unavoidably anthropocentric...Perhaps it endeavors to be more than subjectivistic and attempts to move into the world to see things as they are in some pre-linguistic and non-categorically mediated way, but even this is always limited to a human seeing, hence is tinged with subjectivity, even if a broadened species-shared "we" form of subjectivity—if that were to be possible...
>
> I fear that the *Dasein* project attempted by Heidegger failed and, worse, I fear that the abstruse language in which it was clothed has deluded some into thinking it successful, since pontifical obfuscation can bamboozle those who read more with hope for confirmation than with the openminded but skeptical willingness to reject critically when flaws are revealed. Part of why I hold this fear is Heidigger's [*sic*] own life course and, although I hate to criticize ad hominem, he seemed to abandon his own project, first to Nazism and later to a return to Shopenhauer's [*sic*] grand theorizing...and as a mystic delving into Eastern traditions. Ultimately, to share my deeper interest, I want to write on the difference between "knowing" and "knowledge"...[203]

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202 On Heidegger's 'destructive retrieval' of Dilthey's thought, see Scharff 2012; 2019.
203 Robbins et al 2018, 147-148. Original italics. Own square brackets.

Many have indeed adopted Heideggerian thought and terminology in Material Culture Studies in different ways. And some have attributed humans in the past or in the remote ethnographic present as being ontologically divergent. Among them, some highlight non-dualistic realities, invoking discussions around 'new animism' and 'relational' or 'flat' ontologies. From these perspectives, dualistic thinking has been associated almost invariably, as a 'Western' and 'Cartesian' construct. In works that seek to overcome the 'western' privileging of knowledge, 'Cartesian dualism' remains the default *fait accompli* reference point for the critique of «mind»-body and subject-object dialectics. Table 3 highlights the differences between dualist and non-dualist modalities, as summarised by Anthropologist Michael Scott.[204]

Cartesian dualism	Relational non-dualism
Western modernity	Indigenous non-Western world
Immaterial vs material	Animism
Mind/soul vs body	Perspectivism
Subject vs object	Relationalism
Ideal vs real	Intensive and extensive multiplicity
Culture vs nature	Flux
Human vs animal	Fractality
Animate vs inanimate	Participation
Law of non-contradiction	Transformation
Essentialism	Motility
Stasis	Flat ontology
Science	Immanence
Transcendence	Reciprocity
Hierarchy	Balance
Imperialism	Wonder sustaining
Ecological exploitation	
Wonder-occluding	

FIGURE 8: CARTESIAN DUALISM AND RELATIONAL NON-DUALISM CONTRASTED (AFTER SCOTT 2013)

But there is something about these perspectives which is reminiscent of the various categories of ascription as summarised in Figure 6 or Fowles' 'narrative of return' identified summarised in Figure 7; which romanticises 'primitives' as fundamentally occupying some "other" more enchanted way of being -specifically, as relational non-

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[204] Scott 2013.

dualists. Some claim, while participating in Euro-American academic conventions, that they are approaching the subject from an ontologically different perspective; while others claim this is something which archaeologists and anthropologists should aspire to do. We might, for example, cite Anthropologist Chris Pinney, who commented, after the International Energy Agency's announcement in November 2012 that the "world [is] headed for irreversible climate change in five years", that "we have five years, or so they claim, to escape the potentially terminal consequences of our love affair with dualism".[205] But what is it precisely that would be different about a person who is *not* engaged in a "love affair with dualism"?

Although some recent anthropological approaches discuss alternative ontologies with the best intentions of overcoming objectivising and extractive attitudes, still Euro-American centred knowledge claims are projected which ultimately subjugate presumed alternative ontological possibilities as either somehow accessible and/or objectifiable from some privileged Euro-American standpoint. If, indeed, to engage in academic discourse is to be engaged in a 'metaphysical' mode of being (in Heidegger's sense of the term) which involves dualist thinking processes, it would not be feasible to access a relational ontological reality; nor for people assumed as immersed in a relational ontology to participate in - as anthropologists Porr and Bell put it - "the knowledge insights...assumed by academics to be connected to academic writing, theoretical frameworks and methodologies",[206] without at least momentarily abandoning that relational ontology in the first place.[207] We cannot legitimately make references to

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[205] Pinney 2013, 313. For similar perspectives offered by anthropologists, see also Latour 2009; Rose 2013.

[206] Porr & Bell 2012, 163.

[207] Referring to discourse on relational ontology and new animism within archaeology and anthropology, Porr and Bell make the following observation: "[W]e want to draw attention to the fact that these views also contain the danger of a fetishization of an animistic hunter-gatherer world-view as a distinct and essential mode of thought that represents an alien way of perceiving and experiencing the world. By this means, contemporary knowledge holders of this world-view are excluded from participation in the generation of knowledge insights that is assumed by academics to be connected to academic writing, theoretical frameworks and methodologies. We therefore argue that most of the theoretical developments mentioned above fail to recognise the fundamental challenges that are involved in adopting a relational epistemology in their analyses and in accepting and acknowledging a relational Indigenous world-view or philosophy in opposition to an essentialist understanding in the Western Cartesian tradition." While Porr and Bell's contribution is well intentioned, there are some intrinsic problems with the position they adopt. If that is the case, then by insisting upon "accepting and acknowledging a relational Indigenous world-view...in opposition to an essentialist understanding in the Western Cartesian tradition" - that is, by insisting that one can only be either 'trapped' in one ontology or another, and that dualistic ontology is a uniquely western Cartesian reality - the authors (who earlier assert that 'dualist' and "theoretical" discourse are derived from the Cartesian tradition) inadvertently deny the possibility for knowledge holders of alternative ontologies to participate in the knowledge exchange with western discourse without first having to adopt a western Cartesian dualistic mode of «representation». Porr & Bell 2012, 163. It was for this reason, as we have seen, that Heidegger at the end of this thinking concluded that the practice (or praxis) of poetry (i.e. the 'arts'), and not academic writing, is the only legitimate vehicle for overcoming metaphysical thought. This is taken-up in greater detail by Gadamer and in more radical ways particularly

contrasts between 'relational', 'flat' or 'alternative' *ontologies* 'versus' a dualist *ontology*, if we cannot also respect and pay serious attention - in an internally consistent way - to the immutability of ontology. In other words, to *be* a human is for all humans the same thing, as much as to be human is *not* the same as to *be*, for example, a sandstone boulder -this is not something which is ontologically negotiable (although, as we shall see, such a distinction may be phenomenologically momentarily transcended). By understanding different worldviews as "ontologies" - as different states of *being* – we are making a category error and we in-fact (theoretically) deny the possibility of any true *understanding* between diverse human experiences. Indeed, by Heidegger's own definition, and as Pattison makes the point very clearly, this entirely undermines the very categorical difference which the concept itself sets up, by making claims from within ontology "x" about residing in or having access to ontology "y" (where, presumably, the concept of making such claims in that way would not be possible).

The point argued so far, then, is not that these ontological claims are intentionally fallacious, but rather that a problem of definition has arisen. These categorical differences that are being described in fact can only be ontical divergences (i.e.: descriptions of different worlds and/or perceptions of world) and, by definition, cannot be ontological (i.e.: descriptions of different Being). At the root of this categorical confusion is Heidegger's insistence that western metaphysics is a matter concerning ontology (state of being), rather than an ontical matter (a particular perceptive reality or worldview), as Dilthey espoused.

11.3. Ontology and ontological concerns, then, are principally about the nature and state of being of an entity. We can better contextualise the definition of ontology in contrast with definitions of ontical and epistemological enquiry. Philosopher of cognitive science, Marta Halina, makes the distinction as follows:

> Broadly, epistemic explanation concerns the models, representations, and activities used to communicate and elicit understanding of a target system. When I communicate to a group of students how photosynthesis works, I explain in the epistemic sense. Ontic explanation, in contrast, refers to that aspect of the world that explains why some worldly event happened...When I say that the ice on the road explains the car accident, I am using explanation in this ontic sense. The term "explanation" is often used in both ways...Distinguishing them is important, however, as they impose different constraints on good explanation.[208]

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by Derrida and Rorty, each of whom questioned the limits of 'theoretical' and 'methodological' academic discourse (in the humanities as well as the sciences) for revealing 'truths' beyond dualist metaphysical thought. See, in particular: Gadamer 1989 [1960].

[208] Halina 2017, 215.

Applied to the study of humans, if we try to *describe the way/s* a particular group of people know or believe this or that, then we would be engaged in ontic description. If, however, we try to *explain how* or *why* a particular group of people *know* or *believe* this or that, we would be using epistemic explanation to do so.[209] This difference is comparable to Dilthey's insistence on 'understanding' (*Verstehen*) as opposed to 'explanation' (*Erklären*); or to the interest which Friedman expresses (cited above) in differences between "knowing" and "knowledge"; also equivalent to the distinction between the emic and etic, respectively (see Table 4).

Ontic	Epistemic
Dilthey's *Verstehen* (understanding)	Dilthey's *Erklären* (explanation)
Knowing	Knowledge
emic	etic

Figure 9: Terminological equivalences between the Ontic and the Epistemic

So, for example, in anthropology, descriptions which would use a model to explain the underlying reasons for this or that community's beliefs and behaviours (e.g.: evolutionary, structuralist, psychoanalytic explanatory models) would be epistemic (etic) approaches. Whereas descriptions which would provide an account of beliefs and experiences from the point of view of that community (without any attempt at a meta-level explanation or interpretation), would be engaged in an ontic (or emic) approach. Neither of these are *ontological*, because neither claim to describe any truths about any kind of reality which transcends either of the limitations of the knowledge bases of the presumed superimposed (epistemic) metanarrative, or of the locally meaningful (ontic) descriptions of experience and the perceived world (although both may or may not assume or imply some level of ontological reality or truths within their explanations / descriptions).

Philosopher of Science and Critical Realist Roy Bhaskar provides the most lucid treatment of this category error, which he calls the "epistemic fallacy". In his own words:

> To be is *not* to be the value of a variable; though it is plausible (if, I would argue, incorrect) to suppose that things can only be known as such. For if to be were just to be the value of a variable we could never make sense of the complex processes of identification and measurement by means of which we can sometimes represent some things as such. Knowledge follows existence, in logic and in time; and any

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[209] As we will see "epistemic" is perhaps technically better replaced here with "doxastic", which pertains to belief, rather than knowledge. Indeed, what is understood in logic as the "KK principle" or the "knowledge-reflexivity contention" questions the validity of epistemic axioms on the basis that for one to know that one knows something is reliant on infinite number of supporting absolute knowledge statements, which is probably difficult to sustain. On this, see, for example, Rescher 2005.

philosophical position which explicitly or implicitly denies this has got things upside down.[210]

Bhaskar identifies the conflation of the epistemological with the ontological as forming the basis of Humean empiricism, which continues to persist in modern scientific thought. For him, Hume's empiricism conflates the observation of causal events through sense experience with ontology (and therefore the basis of his critique of the ontological category) which ends up in "…isomorphic correspondence, with the reality known by science" -or rational intuition. This, for Bhaskar leads to "…interminably insoluble problems, such as how we can reason from one experience to another…".[211] Similarly, for 'Green Left' Philosopher Neville Spencer "The confusion between ontology and epistemology…is the confusion between the study of thought and the study of the world as it exists independently of thought…" and as such leads to the study of human society as entirely ideas-based.[212] Such a conflation between epistemology and ontology has likewise been identified by Philosophers Pete Wolfendale and Benjamin Boysen.[213] In this way, we might end up - as has been the case within Material Culture Studies - talking about certain people's or culture's "ontologies", rather than their emic ways of knowing. In archaeology, most explanation has historically taken place at the epistemic level: methods and theories are adopted to help explain and/or interpret the material culture of an associated (usually absent) given community of people. Attempts of ontical understanding have been attempted, at least to some degree, by some, through phenomenological or indigenous perspectives, for example. Once again, these cannot be ontical observations, at least certainly not from the "point of view" or analogously "on behalf" of the community in question, since they are clearly not present to verify or deny such claims. Nor can they claim to be descriptions of other human ontological realities, since for those supposed humans said to be occupying some other ontology would in-fact require them to *not* be human. To *be* human *is* the ontological category.

11.4. But Heidegger was not mistaken in what he *meant*. We are not confronted here with a conceptual or category error on his part. Rather, the point is that, on the one hand, Heidegger has advanced an ambition which, as we will see, he in-fact did not successfully realise; but which has on the other hand *also* been variously misinterpreted and misused. It may be true to say that, as Freidman suggests, Heidegger's at times

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[210] Bhaskar 2008 [1975], 29-30. For similar arguments concerning the 'epistemic fallacy' see also Spencer 2000; Kant 2014.
[211] Bhaskar 2008 [1975], 31.
[212] Spencer 2000. See also Kant 2014, 77.
[213] Wolfendale 2014, 6; Boysen 2018, 226.

impenetrable expression has indeed "bamboozled" some "...who read more with hope for confirmation..." of perspectives and approaches (which do not in-fact wholly align with what Heidegger meant) which *do* embody fallacious category errors. This kind of unwitting advancement of approaches which inherently embody internal categorical inconsistencies resonates with what Bhaskar identifies as the uncritical adoption of the Humean implicit ontology by philosophers of science. As he puts it: "For whether they have agreed with Hume's epistemology or not, they have accepted his critique of ontology, which contains its own implicit ontology, as valid."[214]

This raises the questions: can epistemic explanations and/or ontical understandings be reflections of any kind of 'truth'? Or are they both different types of merely perceived and constructed "realities" or "truths"? For Heidegger, the disclosure of such 'truth' *is* possible, which we see especially in his adoption and advancement of the Parmenidean concept of *Aletheia* (ἀλήθεια)[215] which he translates as "unconcealment".[216] Such an idea which appears to bestow upon the philosopher the privilege of accessing higher truths is of course reminiscent of Plato's famous allegory of the cave and analogy of the divided line.[217] Bruno Latour critiques such 'arrogance' in Heidegger, for assuming such a philosopher's privilege, as somehow being able to access the truth of Being/being, while the rest of us live in the darkness of Plato's cave. So, from the point of view of Heidegger and his "epigones", Latour imputes: "We are keeping the little flame of Being safe from everything, and you, who have all the rest [i.e.: modern metaphysics, empiricism, etc.], have nothing."[218] The issue of the philosopher's privilege is indeed problematic and worth some exploration; although, crucially for Heidegger, ontology is understood originally not as something which can be merely theorised by an individual philosopher in the way that Latour suggests; but which must be collectively *done* through - in the case of western metaphysics - its own *overcoming* by means of, as we will see, "great art-works" in his earlier work, and "event appropriation" in his later thought. But, what will be argued here is that, on this point, Heidegger fails to ultimately fully realise his own thought first by defaulting to the kind of philosophical exclusivity to which Latour

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[214] Bhaskar 2008 [1975], 30. Indeed, it may even be possible to argue that empiricist approaches within the disciplines of archaeology and anthropology were themselves imbued with Humean implicit ontology which Bhaskar identifies and have merely been transposed relatively unscathed into largely Heideggerian phenomenological post-processual/post structural approaches.

[215] Parmenides, *On Nature* (c. 5th century BC), as published in Burnet 1892, 183-189. Heidegger proposes that this is possible through his conception of phenomenology, which is derived through his particular interpretation of "logo" and "phenomenon". See Heidegger 1962 [1927], 51-63. See also Wolfendale 2011, 17-22.

[216] Heidegger 1992 [1942], 11-14.

[217] Plato, *The Republic* (c. 375 BC), 7.514a-7.520d (allegory of the cave); 6.509d-6.511e (analogy of the divided line).

[218] Latour 1993, 66.

alludes; then to esoteric allusions of types of experience which align more with temporarily accessible states of altered consciousness associated with mysticism and shape-shifting (and what will be referred to here as "entic" experience -§18), rather than shifts in Being or ontology *per se*.[219] This brings us to a further conflation to which the ontological-epistemological confusion leads us, which Heidegger's allusions to accessing altered states of consciousness embodies. That is, the conflation of transcendental and immanent experience and their (often confused and contradictory) relationships to ideas of naturalism and humanism. In this regard, the genealogy of the epistemic-ontological conflation can be traced not only to empirical sciences, but to the adoption of idealist rationalism in its Neo-Kantian manifestation in the humanities and social sciences; and this will be dealt with in due course in §15. For now, what has been so far extrapolated concerning the ontological-epistemological conflation (the epistemic fallacy) helps to underscore Dilthey's thought on the primacy of the ontical for understanding human experience as a more internally coherent and compelling position from which to start building the approach developed here.

§12. Defining the hermeneutic question

So, responding to what we might describe as the epistemological hermeneutic question "How can we understand others?" and the resulting quandary of the possibility that a human's horizon of knowledge can only be rooted in an unshakeable historical 'enframing', Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics, essentially instead asks "what is the mode of being of the entity who understands?"[220] In contrast, if we were to paraphrase Dilthey's philosophical hermeneutic question, it might read "How can the expression of the entity who understands help us to understand their response to their awareness of their own being?" Whereas the epistemological hermeneutic question leads us to attempt to access the internal content of the entity or what others think and do («representation»); and the (Heideggerian) ontological hermeneutic question leads to a consideration of how Being grounds the being of others in the world, which many have

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[219] In this way, as we shall see, Friedman's reference to Heidegger's "abandonment" of his own project first to Nazism and then "as a mystic delving into Eastern traditions" turns out to be a largely accurate summation of the trajectory of Heidegger's thought. Although, to be accurate, Heidegger does not appear to "abandon" his project in favour of Nazism and then eastern esotericism, but rather aligns his thought with them. Existential Psychologist Brent Dean Robbins responds to Friedman: "Your transpersonal background might pre-dispose you to identify Heidegger with Zen Buddhism or certain mystical traditions that are all about accessing a kind of unmediated connection to the Divine or Nature that is in principle ineffable. But that is not what Heidegger is doing, as far as I understand his project. No question, Heidegger was influenced by some of these mystical traditions—and probably most especially Meister Eckart, not to mention Aquinas, who was not quite a mystic—but, nevertheless, I think it is important to read Heidegger as up to something different than the mystics." (Robbins et al 2018, 149).

[220] This useful paraphrasing is taken from Richardson 2015, 56.

taken up as a way of understanding the ways others are and do (subjective description), albeit not what Heidegger intended; Dilthey's question suggests that the forms of expression of others are delimited by how they cope with their mode of being and should in-themselves provide adequate information to make observations about their worldview. Put another way, Dilthey's Philosophical Hermeneutics leads to a consideration of how the outcomes of what people do might correspond to the ways they deal with how they are. Notably, while humans are in the unique position of being able to describe what it is like to be a human and this helps to inform the hermeneutic process, Dilthey's approach seeks not to describe singular subjective experience, but rather modes of experience and expression *in the face of being* (and *not* as a unique *mode* of being). It furthermore does so without the need to either speculate about the origin and nature of individual internal content, nor to entirely give up the possibility of being able to describe what is happening in a real world.

To be absolutely clear, since how these different perspectives are situated in relation to one another is crucial for laying the ground here, we may summarise the different perspectives in the following way:

i. Neo-Kantian epistemological hermeneuticians generally assume that thoughts and actions encompass the full being. In this regard, «representational» thought and the internal-external relation are inherent inevitabilities. The things that one sees and actions that one takes correspond to an internal image of things in our brains and one's wilful intentions.

ii. Ontological hermeneuticians believe that there is a metaphysical level of Being (in Heidegger's terms) - the mode of being - which governs how people think and what they do. If you can get to understand that there is this other fundamental level of Being beyond one's own awareness, then you can begin to understand the basis of what governs the thoughts, feelings and doings of those entities. Post-structuralists have adopted this position on two levels: by either (a) acknowledging that immersed in being, one cannot merely overcome it by thinking, but only describe it ("phenomenology"); and/or (b) by suggesting that other modes of Being (beyond western metaphysical being) are somehow extant and accessible through the adoption of alternative ways of approaching the world and doing in the world. The argument is developed here that (a) leads to limited broader relevance and applicability beyond subjectivist description and personal (auto)biography; and that (b) as per our earlier discussion - and indeed as Heidegger's later thought would

suggest – is, whether based on an error of definition or on a romantic idea that being is mutable, is simply not possible.

iii. Philosophical hermeneuticians also believe there is a baseline mode of Being which is inaccessible in its entirety, but which encompasses what Dilthey referred to as Metaphysical Consciousness, which leads to a uniquely human concern (i.e.: Dilthey's "riddle of life") and which is ultimately immutable -not something which can be overcome. Variance in human experience is derived, therefore, from the variance in the nature of human responses to that "riddle of life"; and not from differences in being or ontology in-itself. While subjectivity and personal intention are phenomenally real, those experiences and expressions account only for generally micro variations - surface textures - which span across otherwise much broader more macro response mechanisms (and therefore patterns of behaviour and expression).[221]

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[221] Clearly, philosophical hermeneutics appears to share some similarities with structuralism. The extent of these similarities will be dealt with in due course; while for now we will stick with presenting the broad basis of the position developed here.

CHAPTER 4: The Hypostatisation of Dualism and Abstraction of the Source/s of Life
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Apart from a few mainly German speaking thinkers, Dilthey's 'third way' approach defined in the last chapter has been unrepresented in the humanities and social sciences since his largely failed attempt to overcome the broad influence of Neo-Kantianism. A particular development arising from a narrow vein of thought - known as Philosophical Anthropology - will be introduced and developed in the next chapter. But before doing so, there is some necessity to explicate in more detail the ways in which the Neo-Kantian (epistemological hermeneutics) and ontological hermeneutics have come to form the basis of thought in the humanities and social sciences, including material culture studies. This chapter attempts to unravel some complex dynamics in the history of thought which have led to assumptions concerning the internal nature of the "rational" «mind» and its separation from the world, which it will be argued are obstructive to understanding human action and the artefactual traces left by humans. This chapter includes some complex philosophical discussion. To facilitate a (relatively) unimpeded thread of argument, substantial footnotes are used to provide some background explanation.

§13. The "hard problem" of consciousness

13.1. In 2017 Stephen Leach and David Tartaglia gathered "experts on major figures from the history of philosophy" in a volume in which contributors were invited to answer the question "What would they [the great philosophers] have said about our «mind»-body

problem?"[222] In their summation, Leach and Tartaglia note that the "hard problem" of consciousness "...arises because we think physicalism is true and consciousness exists. But surely if we cannot fit them together, we solve the problem by rejecting either physicalism or consciousness."[223] They go on to observe that "...the overwhelming majority of the Great Philosophers in the volume...think consciousness is OK; it exists (obviously). So if we follow the consensus and the many, many reasons given for that consensus in this volume, then it seems physicalism has to go."[224] They further reflect in their final observation that, given the exponential development of science in the twentieth century, it seems "no bad thing" to suppose that philosophers were attracted by the metaphysical formulation of physicalism. "But" they ask "...is that really what was happening?" Instead, they opine:

> An alternative reading is that those debates reveal philosophy struggling to survive within an arena it had freely but unreflectively joined. Those raising problems like the hard problem of consciousness were, however unwittingly, struggling to prevent their ancient discipline from going under, for physicalism is a worldview in which philosophy has no substantive role, and consciousness is a problem for that worldview.[225]

Leach and Tartaglia's concern encapsulates a tension which is ubiquitous within philosophical thought. The issue they raise harkens back to the origin of the Euro-American philosophical tradition which arose out of mythological and religious thought, but which has remained ambiguous concerning its relationship to god/s (or the Source/s of Life). Leach and Tartaglia's appeal to retrieve the original purpose of philosophy so that we might get closer to some truths for understanding consciousness is in many ways reminiscent of Dilthey's attempt to salvage his vision for Human Studies from the tyranny of Neo-Kantian scientific rationalism. Yet their proposition to abandon physicalism entirely, as somehow beyond the purview of philosophy, is problematic, and indeed reminiscent of the ongoing polemical stand-off between science and religion.

While it is asserted here that physicalism itself cannot be merely "abandoned", we can agree with Leach and Tartaglia's observation that Philosophy had "freely but unreflectively joined" an arena in which it is "struggling to survive". That, it will be argued here, is specifically the arena of Neo-Kantian thought, as a certain *kind* of approach to physicalism, rather than a problem with physicalism *per se* as being somehow incompatible with any sort of understanding of consciousness. However, a complex

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[222] Leach & Tartaglia 2017.
[223] *Ibid.*, 281.
[224] *Ibid.*
[225] *Ibid.*, 282.

compound of events in the history of thought, since Kant, have arisen which forms an important keystone in helping us to consolidate the substructure for the trajectory of the argument developed here, following on from Dilthey. To perform this task, we will first need to unravel the genealogy of the of ideas concerning B/being and dualism and the place of a god within those ideas.

13.2. This chapter therefore sets out an important argument, which forms the basis of what we might, for the purposes of introduction, briefly and simply frame as follows: that to enter into discourse concerning the nature of B/being is in itself to enter into discourse concerning the nature and location of the Source/s of Life; Dilthey's "riddle of life".[226] Further, it is with regard to this that discourse concerning the relationship between physicalism and consciousness becomes difficult to disentangle: both, in their own ways, are attempting to identify and explain the Source/s of Life, which, as we saw Kant attempted to resolve by integrating within his 'synthesis'. The error of Leach and Tartaglia, therefore, is to assume that consciousness and physicalism are mutually exclusive concepts or realities. So, the position assumed here is that, while it is not possible to give a definitive answer concerning the Source/s of Life, nor that it is relevant to do so (although at some point, we cannot deny our own points of view); we should be focused *on understanding the different ways in which humans identify and relate to the Source/s of Life* (and therefore, also, human relationships to the physical/material realm).

What the argument suggests is that, in the quest for the Source/s of Life in Euro-American thought, significant confusion and obfuscation has subsequently occurred in knowledge claims concerning the identity and descriptions of other understandings of and relationships with the Source/s of Life. First, the Source/s of Life has been split along the lines which Heidegger identifies as forming the basis of western metaphysics; what he refers to as "onto-theology". The origins and genealogy of the theological component of onto-theology identified by Heidegger, as a distant source of being and life, is secondly intertwined and concurrent with what will be referred to here as the "hypostatisation of dualism", coinciding also with the emergence of Deism. By "hypostatisation of dualism" is meant the shift from a mere *perception* to the *hard-wiring into a physical reality* of the sense of a separation between «mind»/self from a physical body and world (what may be referred to as "self-awareness, or what will be better defined in due course as "excentric positionality", §16). By Deism is meant the broad cluster of "Philosophical belief in a God

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[226] As we have seen, Heidegger's view on this is similar. As he put it: "The very asking of this question [of Being] is an entity's mode of Being; as such it gets its essential character from what is inquired about—namely, Being". Heidegger 1962 [1927], 27 (INT., I, 7).

established by reason and evidence... without acceptance of the special information supposedly revealed in, for example, the Bible or Koran" which in the eighteenth century "...applied to positions as far apart as the positive religious rationalism of Samuel Clarke and the negative quasi-atheism of Anthony Collins."[227]

The next sections will first summarise Heidegger's description of the genealogy of onto-theology. Secondly, a brief exploration of the genealogy of what is referred to here as the "hypostatisation of dualism" in Euro-American thought is explored which also serves to introduce some of the discourse concerning dualism, which help also to furnish later discussion and analysis. This is followed by an analysis of the ways in which Heidegger's onto-theology and the hypostatisation of dualism are both symptomatic of the same shift towards Deism as a process of the creation of questions concerning the «meaning» of Being (the "semantic teleological abstraction of Being") in distinction from questions concerning the origin/creation of being (aetiology). This analysis helps to demonstrate the genealogical lineage and ways in which the Neo-Kantian idealist formulation of the rational human, as a dynamic which operates in distinction from bodily function and the physical realm, continues to form the basis of thought in the humanities and social sciences, even in thought of Heidegger (for example) which is often assumed to overcome the Neo-Kantian legacy.

§14. Heidegger's Ontotheology

So, for Heidegger, western metaphysical thought, since the Socratic era, has been and continues to be governed by what he describes as 'onto-theology', a concept that is not fully developed until his later work. Ontotheology describes the development of a bifurcate metaphysics, arising from Plato's combination of the formative ontological and theological understandings of the ground of reality proposed by Thales and Anaximander, respectively. Thales postulated - in what (according to Heidegger) may be regarded as the first western ontological philosophy - that all being can be understood as derived from one ultimate internal baseline source, which he then identified as water. Anaximander, conversely, believed the ultimate source of all being as externally derived from a

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227 Gaskin 1995, 182. Notably, numerous authors have drawn attention to ways in which Deism, from its very inception, has evaded a very clear and consistent definition and/or form. See for example Herrick 1997, 22-24; Hudson 2009, 1-3; Leask 2010, 71; Mohamadinia et al 2021. The argument is made here that such confusion in the precise definition of Deism is consistent with the circumstances of its emergence and multifarious functions it ended-up fulfilling.

cosmogenic order which precedes all individual beings.[228] Given his distant 'god-eye' view perspective, therefore, Anaximander emerges for Heidegger as the first 'theologian'. Plato then becomes the first 'onto-theologist', by bringing together these two ontological and theological perspectives; postulating that all forms of being are merely the imperfect instantiation (being) of the highest, most exemplary "ideal form" of that kind of being. This is problematic for Heidegger, because, as Heideggerian philosopher Ben Vedder explains it: "the question of being is not answered" then, because this mode of thinking understands being as "an entity that represents the highest way of being, the whole of being and cause of being." [229]

Tracing a genealogy via various philosophers, Heidegger posits that the appropriation and translation of ontotheology into Latin during the Roman Empire crystallized a form of productionist metaphysics, which had otherwise only been latent in Greek thought and comes to full bloom through overt expression with Leibniz' principle of reason in the late eighteenth century, which has been so instrumental in the foundation of modern techno-scientific rationalism.[230] As such, for Heidegger, the legacy of the Roman empire was (and still is) "...the most dangerous but also the most enduring form of domination": insidiously persisting in affecting the way we see and represent.[231] Concluding with Nietzsche, he suggests that - despite Nietzsche's infamous proclamation that "God is dead", purportedly heralding the dawn of modern atheistic thought (and therefore, in theory, overcoming ontotheology) –apparently even Nietzsche's thought remains bound-up in ontotheological metaphysics as a kind of negative theology.[232] Nietzsche's neo-Darwinian philosophy proposes that what he describes as the "will-to-power" is the essence of life: "...the inner force generating that continuing self-overcoming of existing life forms that works to keep life itself alive."[233] But, for Heidegger, this is problematic:

> The two fundamental terms of Nietzsche's metaphysics, 'will to power' and 'eternal return of the same,' determine entities in their being in accordance with the

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[228] Notably, the understanding of the Anaximandrian view of the source/s of being and life as a distant external world as probably derived from a Hellenistic mythical worldview is broadly attested. For discussions on the mythological sources of the Anaximandrian philosophy, see Kahn 1960; Rowe 1979, especially 201-212; Shelley 2000.

[229] Vedder 2013, 332. Own italics. See also: Vedder 2007, 93-112.

[230] Heidegger 1996. Jean-Luc Marion, a more recent proponent of Heidegger's concept of onto-theology regularly quotes Leibniz himself to demonstrate the modern ontological and theological basis of the principle of reason. See Bloechl 2003, 13; Marion: 1991, 33, 64; 2001[1977], 12-13. This translates ultimately in the medieval scholastic's distinction between existentia and essential Thomson 2011, 12-14; 2013, 320-32

[231] Heidegger 1992 [1942], 44-46. See also Clark 2002, 32.

[232] Heidegger 1977, 53-112; Vedder 2013, 333.

[233] Thomson 2011, 16.

perspective that has led metaphysics since antiquity, the ens qua ens in the sense of essentia and existensia.[234]

So, as Thomson summarises: "Nietzsche too provides a 'cosmodicy', albeit a godless theodicy that seeks to vindicate the meaningfulness of what-is as a whole by appeal to eternal recurrence."[235] Nietzsche's understanding is, for Heidegger, the latest shift (*geschichte*) in the instantiation of metaphysical ontotheology, which exacerbates the technological enframing (*Gestell*) of contemporary Euro-American culture.[236] As Thomson observes "Theologians and astrophysicists alike remain heirs to the Anaximandrian approach."[237] That is, both are derived from understanding beings as having some ultimate monotheistic god-like origin, and the world as governed by some predetermined 'laws'.

§15. The Hypostatisation of Dualism

15.1. This section deals with the closely related subject of the prevalence (or otherwise) and nature of dualism, which will then be considered in relation to Heidegger's ontotheology.

The first point which will be asserted here is that dualistic thought is not a uniquely Euro-American concept as is often flouted. Dualistic thought was prevalent, for example, in ancient Persian Zoroastrian religion; and considerable debate continues concerning whether dualistic thought in Christian and Islamic philosophy was rooted in Zoroastrian and/or Aristotelian thought.[238] Other traditions beyond Europe and Asia Minor are equally steeped in concerns about the nature of the «mind»-body divide. The study of African Metaphysics, for example, reveals a principal material/immaterial dualism which underpins a range of conceptions from 'monist' to 'trichotomist' and 'pentachotomist'

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[234] Heidegger 2002 [1972], 177. Original italics.

[235] Thomson 2011, 16-17.

[236] Thomson puts it this way: "In effect, Nietzsche's ontotheology implicitly provides the lenses through which we see the world and ourselves, leading us to pre-understand the being of all things as eternally recurring will-to-power, that is, as mere forces coming together and breaking apart with no end beyond this continual self-overcoming. Insofar as our sense of reality is shaped by this "technological" understanding of the being of entities, we increasingly come to treat all entities, ourselves included, as intrinsically meaningless 'resources' (*Bestand*) standing by merely to be optimized, enhanced, and ordered for maximally flexible use." Thomson 2011, 19.

[237] Thomson 2011, 12. Thomson suggests that atheist crusader Richard Dawkins, famous author of the God Delusion, "optimistically" predicts "that the physicists of our species will complete Einstein's dream and discover the final theory of everything before superior creatures, evolved on another world, make contact with us and tell us the answer." What is this hope that superior beings will descend from the heavens to confirm our theories but another form of the theological superstition that God will prove us right in the end? *Ibid.*, 13, fn.10. Quotes Dawkins 2006; 2007, 27. In this light, questions concerning the difference between the basis of 'religious' (especially mono-theistic) and the 'secular' thought, then, begin to dissolve. On this, see, for example: Asad 2003; De Kesel 2006, 15-39; Halbertal and Margalit 1992, 112; Lutticken 2009, 15-17.

[238] See, for example: de Blois 2000; Lagerlund 2007c.

perspectives;[239] and in Chinese philosophy, a debate has raged for over 500 years concerning whether Li or Qi formed the basis of human ontology, before they were finally conceptually conjoined.[240]

We must therefore consider two questions in our deliberations about dualism: the first is whether it is something which humans universally *experience*. That is, do all humans experience the sensation of being or self-awareness in a way that one can objectify one's own body and an 'external' physical world in distinction to that sense of being or self? The assertion will be made here, especially, in due course, through Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology (§16), that, yes, it is a fundamental part of *being human*. This is contra to many who have sought to suggest that not all humans have these types of experience. So, an environmental awareness, a wonder or engagement with one's surroundings - the sorts of realities often described within the ontological turn as "flat" or "symmetrical" ontology, for example, it is asserted here, does not equate to some kind of non-dualist ontology, but rather a different type of engagement with the world *within the same perceived dualist human ontology* (and the nature of that kind of experience and those kinds of engagement will be explored in more detail in due course). For now, we might invoke philosopher Lilli Alanen (who will shortly help us with our understanding and interpretation of Descarte's thought), to affirm the position we wish to assert concerning the *experience* of something akin to what we call dualism:

> ...the notion we have of the union of the mind and body is primarily a notion belonging to commonsense psychology which, as such, cannot be rendered clearer by any further, logical or scientific analysis. It is not a philosophical or scientific concept, but a nontechnical notion, one that "everyone has in himself without philosophizing". Everyone can feel, without doing philosophy or fancy experiments "that he is a single person with both body and thought so related by nature that the thought can move the body and feel the things which happen to it."[241]

The second question concerns whether dualism exists as a physical "fact" (Leach and Tartaglia's "physicalism", §13). The view sustained here will be that it probably does not exist *as such*, and therefore the experience which humans have of it is *merely* a *perception,* albeit a universal human perceptive experience. What is asserted here instead is that the human perception of dualism has been codified in the Euro-American tradition as a hard physical fact: it has been hypostatised from mere perceptual experience into a physical "reality". The following sections will seek to unravel the

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[239] On 'African Metaphysics' and discourses on African dualism, see, for example: Asante 1990; Henry 1997; Moodie 2004; Ntuli 2002; Ocholla 2007; Ozumba 2004; Ramose 1999; Wright 1984, and articles therein.
[240] Feng 1938; Chan 1963; Tan 2006; Patt-Shamir 2020; Slingerland & Chudek 2011.
[241] Alanen 1989, 411.

genealogy of this history; and, in doing so, the relationship of that genealogy to Heidegger's onto-theology and to the growth of Deism should also become apparent.

15.2. Prior to the Enlightenment, a vitalist perspective pervaded much thought, which assumed that there is a direct connection between a unified body/soul and the world, as exemplified in Aristotle's "animist" natural teleology. That is, all things have the potential of having a soul (*psuche*) which are governed by telic power: a drive towards a final intentional action, form or event; constituted of four causes: "material cause" (*hū́lē*), "formal cause" (*eidos*), "efficient cause" (*kinoûn*), and "final cause" (*telos*), respectively.[242] The soul (*psuche*, constituted principally of the last three of the four causes)[243] is not (in contrast to the thought of his teacher, Plato, who separated beings as merely the imperfect instantiation of a higher ideal form of being) the expression of some other external or transcendent god or will, but imminent and self-governing, so "...the soul is the first actuality of a natural body which potentially has life";[244] and the universe is constituted of a plurality of souls.[245] But also - through "art" - the affective energy of psuche can extend beyond the corporeal limits of the living entity, to the thing: "...the actuality (*energeia*) resides in the thing produced, e.g. the act of building in the thing built, the act of weaving in the thing woven, and so on...".[246] Based on this conception, human psuche - the immanent Source/s of Life - is neither reduceable to body nor «mind» –not even to the bounds of the body; and humans are connected to, affect and are affected by the world intrinsically and fundamentally: "It seems that all the affections of soul involve a body—a passion, gentleness, fear, pity, courage, joy, loving, and hating; in all these there is a concurrent affection of the body."[247]

Historians generally agree that, while there was no categoric and distinct "scientific revolution",[248] developments in the history of Euro-American thought during the Renaissance and Enlightenment clearly shifted Pre-Socratic and Aristotelian ideas about the location of the soul from the immanent, corporeal, non-rational (i.e.: non-

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[242] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.2; *Physics* II.3.
[243] "The soul is the cause or principle of the living body...It is the source of movement, it is the end, it is the essence of the whole living body." Aristotle, *De Anima* II.4, 415b9-11.
[244] Aristotle, *De Anima*, 412a20-21
[245] Kochan 2021b, 2; Kochan 2021a, 163-164. Not all things have souls, such as water, for example, which is moved not by itself but by its own weight. Aristotle, *Physics* 255a2-7, as cited in Kochan 2021, 3.
[246] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1050a30-36, as cited in Moya 2000, 327. Using the example of the (external) act of shipbuilding in wood, Aristotle says: "...if the ship-building art were in the wood, it would produce the same results by nature". Aristotle 1941b, 251 [Physics 199b27-29], as cited in Kochan 2021, 3.
[247] Aristotle, De Anima, I, 1, 403a16–18
[248] Rather, the broad understanding now is that there were discontinuous developments from the knowledge and practices of mercantile artisans, natural magicians and Hermetic alchemists. On this, see, respectively: Klein & Spary 2010; Smith 2004; Henry 1997, 2012; and Principe 1998; Newman & Principe 2002; Newman 2019.

cognitive), locally generated and self-governing, to being separate from the body and imputed with spontaneously generated rational transcendent divine grace. [249] A rough genealogy of this process would begin in the tenth century when Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), sought to reconcile Aristotelian and Platonic thought by understanding the entity's soul as corporeally located and non-rational, but at the same time "...using power delegated to them by God" as a kind of vicegerent of a rational God.[250] So, for Ibn Sīnā, the "thingness" or "being" (shayʾiyya) of God's intention "...does not become a cause unless it occurs as an image [or «representation»], formed in the soul."[251] Ibn Sīnā's «representation» is not a cognitive or rational one (i.e. not one that is thought), but a corporeally embodied one. In this regard, internal causes which are externalised and affect external causes are perceived corporeally, not rationally or cognitively. It is not until Thomas Aquinas' modification of Ibn Sīnā's thought, in the thirteenth century, in which he extends Ibn Sīnā's "image" or "representation" to become part of rationalised «mind» activities,[252] and, in a significant shift towards "dualism" (known variously as "Thomist substance dualism", "Thomistic Hylomorphic dualism" or even "subsistence dualism"), the activity of the soul is divorced from the body, albeit in a way quite different to Descartes' later "substance dualism".[253] For Aquinas, all souls (substance) afforded with telic powers are vicegerents of God -none have rational autonomy; and all bodies are matter on which souls are dependent, in order to 'ensoul' the animated being.[254] As Kochan puts it: "God is the immeasurable vanishing point at the high end of a telic scale that includes both nature and God. Creatures lower on the scale – like an arrow, ship, or oak tree – exercise imperfect non-rational telic power over themselves and those below them. Creatures higher on the scale – like an archer, shipwright, or arborist – exercise imperfect rational telic power over themselves and those below them. Only God exercises perfect telic power downward without also being subject to it from above."[255]

Through these developments, then, we begin to see some semblance of the kind of thought which led to Descartes' contribution to this subject in the seventeenth

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[249] Notably, any disagreement on this generally centres around the extent to which that shift was continuous or discontinuous. See, for example, Shapin 1996; Dear 2006; Kochan 2021b, 10.

[250] Avicenna 2005; Goodman 1992; Metiva 2012

[251] Wisnovsky 2003, 173 [bk. 6, ch. 5, §28], as cited in Kochan 2021b, 10. Own square brackets: there is some debate concerning the precise way in which this should be translated. Wisnovsky, for example, translates it as "image".

[252] Lagerlund 2007a, 6; Lagerlund 2007b, 24-25; Kochan 2021b, 11.

[253] On the definitions and distinctions with Cartesian substance dualism, see: Stump 2003; Stango 2017; Skrzypek 2021. Notably, there is even some debate about what to call Aquinus' position. See Van Dyke 2009, 186, fn 1.

[254] On Aquinas' dualism see, for example: Stump 2003; Van Dyke 2009.

[255] Kochan 2021b, 12

century.[256] Descartes' thought, however, is not so straightforward as the frequent throwaway references to 'Cartesian (substance) dualism' which are in-fact more representative of particular influential *readings* of Descartes.[257] So, extrapolated from his infamous syllogism "I think, therefore I am",[258] Descartes postulates that the human «mind» is capable of rationality based on "clear and distinct" thoughts "separated and delineated from all others that it contains absolutely nothing except what is clear".[259] Such thoughts, based on innate ideas, may include mathematical propositions but, for example, also the fact of the existence of God, which is discerned by both the way in which existence points to the essence of God, and from the fact of that thought *in-itself*.[260]

But Descartes also postulates something which is otherwise generally excluded from re-presentations of his thought, which Alanen clearly explicates. While Descartes distinguishes between a «mind» from which innate, rational thought is derived; he does not segregate it completely from body quite as categorically as it has become de rigueur to claim. For Descartes, in fact, the human «mind» is "intermingled" with the body, from which humans derive sense perceptions and imagination; which - as far as the rational «mind» is concerned - are "accidental" thoughts which emanate from the body.[261] As a consequence, for Descartes, there are three kinds of knowledge which operate separately and should not be conflated or mistaken for one-another: knowledge by extension into the physical realm; knowledge derived from thought; and knowledge of the «mind»-body union. For him, humans have awareness constituted of a composite of thoughts from the first two forms of knowledge, as mediated by the knowledge derived from the «mind»-body union. While the first form of knowledge pertains to knowing, perceiving and interacting with the world, the second form of knowledge pertains to the

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[256] The summary provided here of the genealogy fulfils our purposes for demonstrating some of the key events in the trajectory of the development of thought; but this is not withstanding the contribution also of Augustine, Ockham, Buridan and the Fifth Lateran Council, from which Cartesian thought effectively constitutes a 'break-away'. Notably, through all these instantiations, there was no consensus in the precise nature of dualism. Only the Fifth Lataran Council sustained the Augustinian formulation, for example, which was then taken up and supported by Gassendi's Epicurean understanding a non-corporeal basis of «mind»/soul (in distinction to the "Cartesian" model). On this, see for example, Michael & Michael 1988. For discussions on the history of the «mind»/body dialectic see Wright & Potter 2002; Crane & Patterson 2000; Lagerlund 2007c.

[257] The finer intricacies of how the common "Cartesian dualism" trope for understanding the body-«mind» division came into the common circulation in western thought deserves deeper consideration, beyond the scope of this work. Influential readings of Descartes to that end include Ryle 1949; Strawson 1949; and Wilson 1978. See Alanen 1989; 2003.

[258] Originally published in French as "je pense, donc je sui" in *Discourse on Method* 1912 [1637] then later in Latin as "Cogito, ergo sum" in *Principles of Philosophy*, 1983 [1644].

[259] Descartes 1983 [1644],I, para 45.

[260] Descartes described this as the "ontological argument", in part based on a similar argument developed by St Anselm. See Descartes 1993 [1641], V.

[261] Descartes 1974 [1897], VII, 80-81; 1911, I, 192; as cited in Alanen 1989, 403.

rational interpretation and explanation of the world. The third kind of knowledge - the kind which he proposes arises from the «mind»-body union - is a kind which is not reducible to a distinct category, although it pertains to clear perceptions of experiences such as hunger, thirst, joy, sadness, love, pain and pleasure.[262] For Descartes, confusion arises around the correct assignation of origins and causes of the experience of these kinds of perceptions; and as such their true source remains obscure.[263] Descartes' formulation is therefore the culmination of a process, not through which «mind» is separated from body *per se*, since, as we can see, there remains ambiguity concerning the «mind»-body union and the origin of desires and emotions.

Baruch Spinoza takes considerable inspiration from Descartes,[264] but instead proposes what is generally understood as a "monist" formulation. For him, God is substance which is all pervasive and at once «mind» *and* body. God's will is manifest in the person's striving to survive (what he referred to as "conatus"), but also in the experiences and expressions which take place in and emanate from the «mind» and body.[265] But, despite his rejection of Descartes' substance dualism, a categorical dualism, or what some have referred to as "double aspect theory"[266] persists in his thought.[267] According to Spinoza, mental and bodily experiences and expressions mirror one-another: they are directly affected by external stimuli; but importantly, there is also no causal relationship between them; so, one does not lead to the other or experience phenomena before the other.[268] In a way that is reminiscent of Descartes' third category of knowledge attributable to desires (of unknown origin), Spinoza refers to "appetite" as the underlying driver of the «mind» and body union which manifest as desires through consciousness; and which is, exceptionally (and rather mysteriously, once again), the "essence" of man, rather than derived from the «mind» or the Will.[269]

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[262] Descartes 1983 [1644], I, para. 48; 1974 [1897], VIII, 23; 1911, I, 238, as cited in Alanen 1989, 407

[263] Descartes 1974 [1897], XI, 488; 1911, I, 427, as cited in Alanen 1989, 408.

[264] On Spinoza on Descartes, see for example, Schmaltz 2018.

[265] See, for example, Spinoza 2000 [1677],III, 6-7; I, 16 & 25. See also Garrett 2002.

[266] See, for example, Koistinen 2009, 273-274.

[267] See, for example, Spinoza 2000 [1677],III.2: "All modes of thinking have for a cause God-considered-as-thinking and not God-considered-as-having-A where A is any other attribute...So what causes a mind to think is some detail of the realm of thought and not of extension, that is...it is not the body."

[268] Spinoza 2000 [1677], III, 2.

[269] *Ibid.*, III, 9: "...since the mind (by II.23) is necessarily conscious of itself through ideas of the body's states, it (by 7) is conscious of its effort. Note on 9: When this effort is related only to the mind, it is called 'will', but when it is related to mind and body together it is called 'appetite'. This appetite, therefore, is nothing but the very essence of the man, from whose nature there necessarily follow the things that promote his survival. And so the man is caused to do those things. Between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that men are usually said to have 'desires' when they are conscious of their appetite. So 'desire' can be defined as 'appetite together with consciousness of it'. From all this, then, it is clear that we don't try for or will or want or desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we try for it, will it, want it, and desire it." As Philosopher Giovanna

15.4. What Descartes and Spinoza envision, then, is a parallelism between «mind» and body. Despite the dualist/monist distinctions frequently drawn between Descartes and Spinoza, the distinction cannot be considered in quite such categoric terms. The important development which both perspectives reflect and are imbued with is, as Philosopher Jos de Mol succinctly puts it "The realization that senses and tradition could be misleading…".[270] That is to say, the need arises to separate the source of bodily desires from the traditional institutions which 'channel' god. Our bodily senses necessarily present the world and our desires to us; but traditional knowledge, laws, religious prohibitions and social rites (for example) transmitted through institutions, purportedly safeguard against and regulate human desires and freedoms. And it was in this spirit in which new religious ideas emerged which would loosely fall into the rubric of Deism. As Anglican philosopher Samuel Clarke's musings on the various forms of Deism demonstrates, besides from the displacement of religious tradition and dogma, its principal concern is for the *ways* in which morality is transmitted to humans.[271] The inherent problem presumably is that, *if* God is - *a la* Descartes - the source of rational thought; or - *a la* Spinoza - the substance of everything; how do we account for immoral human desires and actions? In-fact, as we have seen, neither offer an answer to this question.[272]

Colombetti clarifies, emotions - as far as Spinoza is concerned - "…are analyzed solely in terms of the various ideas that accompany them, with no reference to bodily movements or bodily feelings." Colombetti 2014, 7.

[270] de Mol 2013, 54.

[271] See Force 1996; Mohamadina et al 2021.

[272] To be sure, what we have seen is that, for Descartes desires are of an obscure source which somehow exists where mind and body meet, but yet is disconnected from both. While, for Spinoza, appetites emanate from an essence, which is somehow distinct from substance which *is* God. Schopenhauer arguably offers a solution to this question by the suggestion that desirous instincts, as well as pain and suffering, traditionally deemed to be unholy or ungodly, are as much a manifestation of God. He postulates a single Will that constitutes and determines the Will and intention of all things, which manifest as kinds of 'force-fields', of which (as inspired by the late Vedic Upanishad "Veil of Maya", where an illusory 'truth' conceals the true nature of a universal being and principle – "Purusha "; and also Kant's distinction between phenomenon and noumenon) merely their effects are apparent as the things we subjectively perceive (Schopenhauer WR I, 458) –or "Prakriti" in the Upanishad scheme of things. Schopenhauer agrees with Spinoza, that the Will is not transcendent, but immanent, and effective in all things. But unlike Platonic and Christian theologies of a benevolent God or even Spinoza's substance, the Will, for Schopenhauer, is selfish in having a single and indiscriminate goal of realising its own intentionality, at the expense of everything that constitutes it. While there is a kind of harmony in that "every plant is well adapted to its soil and climate, every animal to its element and the prey that is to become its food…" (Ibid.,159), Schopenhauer invokes scenes of turtles in Java eaten en masse by wild dogs, in turn eaten by tigers (Schopenhauer WR II: 354), or the way in which the Australian Bulldog ant's large mandibled head and poisonous stinging tail fight each-other to the death (Schopenhauer WR I: 147), to demonstrate that the Will must also "…live on itself, since nothing exists besides it, and it is a hungry will." (Ibid., 154). But "What is the point of the whole scene of horror?" asks Schopenhauer. "The only answer is that the will-to-live thus objectifies itself." (Schopenhauer WR II: 354).

As historian Jonathan Israel has cogently argued, it was the complex compound of this kind of thought in which what he calls the "radical enlightenment" movement was entrenched, but which also led to its crisis and effective failure.[273] Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* was very much a response to the ensuing crisis of the enlightenment, specifically concerning where things might end up, if indeed human reason were left to its own devices instead of the traditional authorities. For Kant some kind of mediation was necessary between the unfettered and unlimited "*dogmatic rationalism*" or total freedom of reason in contrast to the limiting and cynical empiricism.[274] For Kyoto School philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō: "The will in Kant is...in essence, supraindividual and universal spontaneity; that is creativity."[275] Therefore, in reference to the influence of external things on the sensitive faculty of humans, "...Kant insists that the will of morality determines itself independent of these influences."[276] Tetsurō further reminds us: "In Kant's opinion, practical objects are perceived things (hence are the contents of representation)." Indeed, we may recall that, for Kant, while there is some relationship between the nature of the world and human experiences of it, there remains a disconnect between the empirically perceived world and the internally constructed world. This was his synthetic solution to the dispute between the rationalists and empiricists at the time.[277] But crucially, the point Tetsurō leads us to is Kant's idea that human morality is derived from a rational soul. For Kant the observation that humans can and do make rational moral judgments (according to him, independently of any external stimuli or demands), is in-itself (the only) evidence that there is a god. While the idea of a "duty" to engage in a religious ritual convention is, for Kant (and very controversially at the time), in itself is an "illusion"[278] and "...cannot by itself constitute a better human being".[279] Humans display eudaimonic predispositions to do good and feel happy doing so (in the face of acquired external influences and propensities to do evil) and towards accountability, which can only be attributed to fulfilling a higher moral law, or what he referred to as the Categorical Imperative.[280] In order for phenomena to be understood,

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273 Israel 2001; 2006; 2019; 2023.

274 As de Mol puts it: "In Kant's critique of reason...the critical function of reason was directed at reason itself... Here we must understand the term critique in both its meanings – "analysis" and "justification." As a justification of human reason it is at the same time a limitation, because the determination of the range of reason also defines the space that is inaccessible to it." (De Mol 2013, 55).

275 Tetsuro 1996 [1937], 252.

276 *Ibid.*, 259.

277 The reason Kant's formulation was so influential, is because he managed to preserve the idea of a world which is real, and at the same time a «mind» which is able to intuit independently but with some reference to that real world (through internal re-presentations of it).

278 Kant 1996 [1793], 152 (6:123, fn).

279 *Ibid.*, 195 (6:176).

280 *Ibid.*

they must be understood in relation to one another as constitutive parts of a totality; and therefore, require an understanding of the totality of phenomena. While this is not possible through (external) sense experience, in Kant's phenomenology (as later adopted by Husserl and Heidegger) knowledge from (internal) reason encompasses the totality of phenomena, which through «representational» concepts (content) provides a transcendental correlative (and therefore the understanding necessary) of those phenomena:

> We confess that **pure earth, pure water, pure air,** etc., are unlikely ever to be encountered. Nevertheless we require the concepts of them (which, as far as their perfect purity is concerned, have their origin only in reason) in order to be able to determine properly the share which belongs to each one of these natural causes in appearance.[281]

However, a concern for Kant was that illusions are derived from sense experiences "...which itself rests on subjective principles and imputes them to us as objective ones..."[282], and which must be distinguished from pure reason.

In this formulation we can see some continuity from Descartes and Spinoza of «mind»-based absolute reason and rationalism; and also of the confusion which occurs between sense experience and "correct" intuition. However, while Kant remains concerned with moderating and maintaining some cynicism with regard to the extent to which the world is knowable, due to the constraints of access to it, he has completed the transition of the teleological basis of human drives as something which is body-bound to something which is grounded in absolute reason and knowledge; and morality is something which must be strived for therein. Finally, the human lust for knowledge (and hope of realising knowledge) is also governed by reason, to fulfil and realise itself.[283]

15.5. It is in the interpretation and application of Kant's thought by the Neo-Kantians, in which the final form of interpretative analytical procedure arises which persists in the humanities and social sciences, including material culture studies; and to which Dilthey was so resistant.

The Neo-Kantians were a set of influential mainly German thinkers, active from c.1850 until c.1918, which can broadly be broken down into two schools: the 'Marburg School' initiated by Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp the 'Southwest School', initiated by

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[281] Kant 2007 [1781/1787], B674 | A646. Original bold emphasis.
[282] Kant 2007 [1781/1787], B355 | A298.
[283] *Ibid.*, B736-822 | A708-97; B360 | A303-5. See also Grier 2024, 120-123.

Wilhelm Windelband.[284] However, as an increasing number of scholars are now acknowledging, their influence through the twentieth century has been significant,[285] and indeed non-German Neo-Kantian traditions can also be identified, such as the French Neo-Kantians.[286] Between these two German schools and between scholars within them, there are of course numerous divergent nuances of thought, to which we cannot do any justice here; but a brief outline of their characteristic thought will suffice for our purposes. What is important to note, first, was that the Neo-Kantian's interest was to revive Kantian philosophy amidst what had become a prevalent interest in positivistic, materialist and psychologistic approaches.[287] For the neo-Kantians, the external world of things corresponds to internal «representations» (known in Kantian terms as "categories"), but which - importantly - have no value without a pre-determining «mind»-based judgement.[288] These judgements are not - as per Hume - ultimately wholly subjective, but underpinned by a universal logic "...under the contingent conditions of the subject, which may hinder or help...".[289] So, for one of the leading proponents of the Southwest Neo-Kantian School, Heinrich Rickert, humans, in their cognition of objects "ought" to make a correlation which pertains to "correct" judgment.[290] Furthermore, for the Neo-Kantians - in keeping with Kant's position - what is perceived as externally given in-fact only appears as such because we (the subject) have presupposed or pre-posited (*vorausgesetzt* or *vorausangenommen*)[291] it in the first place as per our own «representations» (categories) and judgements.[292] Philosopher Charlotte Baumann summarises the position concerning this "Transcendental Subjectivity" very well:

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284 Köhnke 1991; Crowell 1998; Friedmann 2000 [both cited in Luft 2015 a]; Anderson 2005; Beiser 2015; Luft 2015a, 2015b.

285 Makkreel & Luft 2009; Garlitz 2020; Pulte et al 2025

286 As Luft (2015a, fn. 1) notes, for example, the numerous papers published in The Philosophical Forum 2006, 37, 1, represent a selection of French Neo-Kantian positions. See, especially: Lackey 2006; Duhem 2006; Brunschvicg 2006a, 2006b; Bachelard 2006.

287 Anderson 2005; Luft 2015a, xx.

288 On the Neo-Kantian formulation of the relation between objects, «representations» ("categories") and judgment, see, for example: Baumann 2016, 599-602.

289 Kant 2007 [1781/1787], B79-80 | A55. Kant, notably, goes on in the same section: "Pure general logic stands to it [the application of logic] in the same relation as pure ethics, which contains only the necessary moral laws of a free will in general, stands to the proper doctrine of virtue; the doctrine of virtue considers these laws as under the influence of feelings, inclinations and passions to which all human beings are more or less subject." Own square brackets.

290 Rickert 1904, 131: "My representations contain no transcendent necessity whatsoever; they are nothing but contents of consciousness. Only judgments have necessity that points beyond the content of my consciousness, i.e. transcendent necessity, and they have no necessity as regards a transcendent being, but that of a transcendent ought, of a value, that must be accepted as soon as we judge." As translated and cited by Baumann 2016, 601. Rickert's use of the word "ought" is important to emphasise that, from his point of view, humans *should* and *can* arrive at 'true' and 'correct', as they are equipped to do so –the question of whether they in-fact do, is a matter concerning the influence of more 'base' desires.

291 Kant 2007 [1781/1787], B243 | A195.

292 Baumann 2016, 602.

> Transcendental subjectivity is the self-related system of transcendental logic that encompasses both the object and thought. Transcendental subjectivity is a structure or system of concepts, not an activity or actor of any kind. Nevertheless, one could say, metaphorically speaking, that thinking relates to itself, its own structure within the object. This should be understood as meaning: human beings, when thinking and judging consistently, enact or actualize a self-related structure of transcendental subjectivity, making judgments with the help of the categories about objects that display those categories. [293]

While Neo-Kantians were largely loyal to Kant in their ambitions of "re-establishing the Kantian authority"[294] or going "back to Kant",[295] "scientific and socio-political developments... necessitated...an updating of Kant's original position."[296] Indeed, one of the notable developments on Kant's thought was a hardening of the commitment to the transcendental and logical features of Kant's thought; and the diminishment of anything resembling subjectivity, psychologism and empiricism.[297] As such, Kant's idea concerning the-thing-in-itself or the noumenon, are systemically discarded across the board by the Neo-Kantians as an unnecessary fiction[298] -a "dogmatic chimera".[299] The outcome of this was that the Neo-Kantian movement largely represented the reversion to a form of extreme idealism and "dogmatic rationalism"[300] which Kant's synthesis had in-fact in-part sought to avert. So, at this point, the course we have traced of the increased abstraction of a «mind», telic drive and ultimate truth and reason has been brought to its highest point -a kind of apotheosis, in both senses of the term: not only a culmination, but also the conceptualisation of the human «mind» as the ultimate immanent form of the divine through its transcendence to a realm beyond any kind of real world or sensual experience. As will become clear, this kind of rationalism, it is suggested here forms the basis of both integrationist and post-processual or post-structural interpretative thought.

Dilthey's argument with the Neo-Kantians comes to fuller light here. His concern, then, was three-fold. The Neo-Kantian version of human knowledge does not account for human experience in, firstly, assuming that human knowledge is verifiable only at the transcendental logical and mathematical level; and secondly, that it assumes some kind of ultimate universal truth. What Dilthey wishes to tell us is that the closest we might

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[293] *Ibid.*, 603.
[294] Cohen 1871, vi. As translated and cited by Baumann 2016, 597.
[295] As many have noted "Back to Kant" became the "motto" of one of the most radical proponents of the Neo-Kantian Marburg School: Otto Liebmann (1865). See, for example, Kühn 2010, 114. As Chignell (2008, 109, fn 1) notes the term which Liebmann actually uses, "One therefore must return to Kant", ("*Also muss auf Kant zurückgegangen werden*") is in fact in the passive form.
[296] Luft 2015a, xx.
[297] Kühn 2010.
[298] Willey 1978, 37; Kühn 2010, 114.
[299] Liebmann 1865, as per Köhnke's translation (1991, 141).
[300] de Mol 2013, 55.

arrive at any sort of ultimate "truth" is in understanding (as humans) the ways in which humans go about searching for that ultimate truth. While Heidegger will come to criticise Dilthey of some kind of extreme relativism;[301] Dilthey's retort to Heidegger would be that Heidegger's (ontological) quest for the «meaning» of Being has itself merely slipped into a fruitless Romantic (but typically *human*) quest for an ultimate truth, beyond the realms of actual human (ontical) experience.

But there is a third aspect to the nature of Dilthey's objection to the Neo-Kantian project, which underlies and cuts across his two concerns described above: the assumption that the study of humans can be reduced to the same rules and laws as the natural sciences. This is not straightforward, because the divide which Kant had attempted to consolidate between the 'naturalist' British empiricist and the continental rationalist approach through his synthesis remained unresolved; and therefore, Dilthey's position stood not only in explicit opposition to the rational absolutism of the Neo-Kantians, but also implicitly in opposition to the naturalism of the empiricists. However, the significance of the debate enshrined in Dilthey's heated disagreement with the Neo-Kantians is not to be underestimated and did not stop there. Gadamer made the observation that "...all the arduous work of decades that Dilthey devoted to laying the foundations of the human sciences was a constant debate with the logical demand that Mill's famous last chapter made on the human sciences."[302] For Gadamer, then, Dilthey's argument was as much against the British Empiricists, such as naturalist philosopher John Stuart Mill, as with the German-language Neo-Kantians.[303] Indeed, as Historian of Science Roger Smith puts it: "the...debate about relations between Naturwissenschaften and Geisteswissenschaften, was a German-language debate conducted in German philosophical terms. There was no late nineteenth-century English-language argument about the same matters."[304] Hence, as Art Historian Matthew Rampley notes in his survey

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[301] Dilthey's thought cannot strictly be understood as relativist, since he maintains that all humans, being human, share the *same* experience of being human in common. In some ways, Dilthey's inclusion of Kant in his gallery of rogue thinkers as somehow not taking into account the human question for the ultimate truth (or Source/s of Life) as a basis for understanding the human condition, is perhaps not entirely justified. As we will see, aspects of Kant's thought acknowledged this and demonstrate that he was preoccupied with this, albeit disregarded by many of his epigones and critics alike.

[302] Gadamer 1989 [1960], 6f. Gadamer is here referring to John Stuart Mill's 'On the logic of the moral sciences', Book VI, from *A System of Logic* (Mill 1882 [1843]).

[303] This can be misleading by implying that Dilthey somehow discounted the input of the phenomenal world on human experience and behaviours. He did not discount this tout-court. Rather, what he objected to was that idea that humans can be understood and studied on entirely same bases as all other phenomena. The position of Mill and other naturalists of similar persuasion to him, such as H.T.Buckle, Alexander Bain and Herbert Spencer, with which Dilthey had some difficulty, was that all human behaviours, including individual subjective behaviours and experiences could be explained in rational terms, as determined by a naturalistic phenomenal order. For Dilthey, this could only lead to 'psychologism' through which all actions and intentions would be explained in terms of some discernible ultimately material motivation or concern. See Smith 2010, 165-166;

[304] Smith 2010, 161.

of the role of sciences in the arts: "...the dispute between the German scholars of the early twentieth century is now of limited resonance except to specialists, but it laid down the outlines of a debate that has continued to the present."[305] Dilthey' project in many ways was outnumbered on several flanks; his contribution has remained largely untested and the potential of its implications remain unresolved.

15.6. To fully explicate the implications of the developments discussed so far, we will need to momentarily revert to Aristotle's vitalist formulation, which as we have seen, was composed of a soul (*psuche*) constituted of the efficient, formal and final causes which were somehow unified in the first cause of material form -the body. In this formulation we may see some conceptual differentiation between body and soul, although, importantly, none of these causes which pertain to changes in the state of being of a thing, were understood as separable. As scholar of ancient philosophy, Boris Hennig puts it: "...the two questions, out of what something comes to be what it is, and what it comes to be, cannot be separated."[306] The coherence of this formulation indeed is dependent on the integrity of its unified state, which encompasses the etiological (the origin) and the teleological (the causal, drive) and the form of the entity as one unified whole. Once one element is removed or abstracted, then questions arise concerning the source, origin and «meaning». So, for the vitalists, enquiries concerning the Source/s of Life which incorporated questions of the essence of being and the purpose of being were related to immediate experiences of emotions and desires. But for the Neo-Kantians such enquiries have been abstracted to «mind»-based thoughts, equated with rationalism, mathematics and logic -an objectivising or transcendental position. What is notable is that such a formulation could not be possible without the onto-theology as observed by Heidegger. That is, without the splitting of questions concerning aetiology (or theological questions of origin), and questions concerning the essence of being in the first place, the vitalist formulation would remain intact, and the idea of a «mind»-derived transcendent god would not be possible. The onset of onto-theology and of the hypostatisation of dualism are therefore co-determinate.

However, while Heidegger's identification of the onto-theological formulation is useful, his commitment thereafter to the project of explaining the "meaning of being", turns out to be an equally problematic and contradictory pursuit. Heidegger draws attention to Aristotle's definition of "First Philosophy" - that is to say, the fundamental

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[305] Rampley 2017, 2.
[306] Hennig 2009, 137-138. See also, Fulínová 2024; Hueck, 2025, 9-11.

principle of the philosophy of metaphysics - as being concerned with both *being as such* (the essence and nature of beings) and *being as a whole* (the question of existence of being) –"...an inquiring back to the *supreme* and *ultimate*...the most original being, which he [Aristotle] also calls θεîον ["the divine" or "the one"]."[307] For Heidegger, this is a precursor or "prefiguration" (but presumably also a latent earlier Platonic formulation), to the later medieval separation of the essence of sensual beings from a "suprasensual" being. His objection to this (which, of course constitutes part of his genealogy of onto-theology discussed in §14) is that, with this,"...the fact that philosophizing is a *fundamental orientation that stands on its own* completely disappears. Metaphysics is levelled down and trivialized into everyday knowledge...".[308] For Heidegger, philosophizing should take place at a level which supersedes ordinary human concerns of the origin and nature of being which are grounded in sensual (empirical) or suprasensual (divine) entities; to which purposes he instead evokes the idea of the "awakening" of a "fundamental attunement".[309] But how can philosophy as a human activity somehow "stand on its own" as if *beyond* human activity? For Heidegger, as Wolfendale summarises it, this kind of attunement can be attained via a phenomenological approach which interrogates the basis and structure of the ways humans ask questions; and 'get at' the basis of our understanding of Being prior to being ("pre-ontological understanding of Being"). Yet such an approach through such questioning, first of all, can only exist within a framework which has divorced the essence of being (being as such) from the origin of being (being as a whole) in the first place; a mode of thought which is emergent and indeed reliant upon onto-theology and the hypostatisation of dualism –the very kind of framework which Heidegger claims to have exposed and seeks to override. Secondly, any explanation of being, surely (to invoke a Platonic sort of observation) reduces it to a form which can only be an inaccurate re-presentation of it. How can "Being" be explained as anything other than what it already *is*? Indeed, as Wolfendale observes "...the methodological framework (*phenomenology)* within which Heidegger approaches this inquiry is vitiated by its inability to articulate its own status in ontologically neutral terms." He continues:

> The issue with the analysis of questioning is that, in virtue of the derivative status it gives to reasoning, it fails to validate the crucial insight that questions aim at *truth*. The issue with the explication of our pre-ontological understanding of Being is then that precisely what this is an understanding *of* is not adequately defined. This opens the whole project of formulating the question of Being to the objection that it is

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[307] Heidegger 1995 [1983], 42-43. Original italics. Own brackets.
[308] *Ibid.,* 44. Original italics.
[309] *Ibid.,* 59-66.

The crux of Heidegger's concern ends-up being about trying to access and arrive at some kind of 'holy grail' of philosophising concerning the «meaning» and nature of ontology, which, it is argued here, is 1) merely what humans do *anyway* in their quest to solve the "riddle of life" (therefore Heidegger has neither 'overcome' anything nor offered anything novel); and 2) would only be possible by *not* being human. In many ways, acknowledging the failure of this approach, Heidegger's later thought and expression embodies an attempt to achieve the same ends using a different approach, to which we will return in due course.

The important point is that, most current approaches within the humanities and social sciences knowingly or otherwise have adopted either epistemological hermeneutic (Neo-Kantian) or ontological hermeneutic approaches. Yet, both these approaches are built on philosophical foundations which defer to the primacy of «mind»-based and ultimately anthropocentric conceptions of reality. The former posits a strong version of the primacy of a god-derived or spontaneous rational truth; while the latter posits a weak version of the same formulation, which can also be understood as a Neo-Kantianism, but which is more loyal to Kant in recognising that there is an external realm, albeit ultimately only accessible ("phenomenologically") through thinking. Both, ultimately project internal Humanistic "ideas" into an external world more than they derive from any kind of "real world". If we are to understand how other humans negotiate the question of the riddle of life in any way that is a true attempt to understand those communities rather than the imposition of an internalist idealist monotheist perspective, then we must discard both these Neo-Kantian approaches.

Summary of Chapter 4 (& Part II)

We established in Chapter 3 that Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics erroneously identifies human Being as a variable ontological category, or "the value of a variable" as Bhasker put it (§11). In doing so, he believes that the ultimate solution to the problems which the conditions of Euro-American metaphysical being presents, can be overcome by overcoming that particular type of ontological category (or type of Being). This is presented in contrast to Dilthey's philosophical hermeneutics which instead believes that there is no such thing as such variable ontological categories among humans, and that attempting to identify that - "the riddle of life" - is *in-itself* what defines the unique human

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condition; and the best we can do is attempt to understand the different ways in which humans cope with that "riddle of life" or existence. This chapter, then, argues for two co-dependent developments in the history of thought concerning the "riddle of life": first, the separation of being - the ontological category of things (including humans) - from the ultimate Source/s of Life; what Heidegger identified as "onto-theology". Secondly, the conception of a reality in which a "god-derived" "rational" «mind» and all its institutions is disconnected from a body (and especially bodily emotions and desires) of a mysterious origin and an illusory external world. Questions of aetiology (origin) and teleology (cause/drive) which previously together made up the compound concerned with the "riddle of life", have been separated. Neo-Kantian rationalists discarded Kant's attempt to reconcile these two elements, to reinforce the idealist component of the division -this has formed the basis of thought in the social sciences and humanities. But the response to this, manifest in the ontological turn, as strongly inspired by Heidegger, is equally problematic. Heidegger's emphasis on the "meaning of Being" is a means of interpreting the human condition from the opposite side of the teleological/aetiological divide (the teleological side), which is in itself a product of onto-theology and the hypostatisation of dualism. The reason that Heidegger *and* Leach and Tartaglia alike propose to dispense with physicalism entirely comes to full light: the abstraction of Being is necessary, so it is believed, for sustaining the primacy of conscious experience (as a separate entity at the expense of the negation of physical reality) as the only legitimate way we can continue to pursue a humanist (and anthropocentric) agenda of the unrestrained projection of ideal values. But as will be discussed further-on, such values, in the absence of direct real-world reference-points (i.e.: some kind of physicalism), lead to weak affective, emotional and ethical connective tissue between humans and the material realm and environment. Through this we can begin to see how what humans *believe* correlates in some way to what we can observe about their visible relationships to material culture, but also in a way which raises a question concerning ethical values and how human beliefs in-turn impact the material world and environment.

PART II: Towards a Proximist Approach

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CHAPTER 5: The Yearning

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Having established the numerous problems and unpicked the deep-rooted philosophical bases of these problems in Part I, this chapter and the next four chapters in this part now set out an alternative approach tentatively referred to here as "Proximism". The approach is based on the Philosophical Anthropology developed especially by Helmut Plessner (as inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey); and further employs more recent externalist ideas to put some flesh on the otherwise theoretical bones of Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology. This chapter starts by introducing Plessner's approach, and then proceeds to extrapolate some of its implications in two key concepts referred to here as the "dialectical imperative" and "entic imperative." This next section includes numerous direct quotes from Plessner to preserve the spirit of his thought as it arises in his own expression.

§16. Helmut Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology

16.1. Dilthey's position inspired the approach of Philosophical Anthropology of - in particular - Max Scheler, Helmuth Plessner and Arnold Gehlen.[311] While their contributions differed, what unified them was Dilthey's hermeneutic as a 'way-in' for understanding human being, not necessarily as distinct from "nature", but whose experience delimits its mode of expression. Philosopher and Sociologist, Helmut Plessner published his treatise on Philosophical Anthropology, *Levels of Organic Life and the Human* (herein "*Levels*") in 1928. Plessner's work provides some profound insights and seeks to grapple with similar sorts of questions as Heidegger was seeking to address at the same time; yet his work remained largely in obscurity beyond a niche German-

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[311] Fischer 2009; Mondin 1985, 8-18; Wulf, 2013 [2004], 37-55.

speaking fraternity (*Levels* was not translated into English until 2019) except in the last ten years, which has seen a significant and growing recognition of his thought.[312] Plessner's work was eclipsed by his contemporary, Heidegger, partly as a consequence of his forced exile from Germany in 1933 due to his Jewish heritage.[313] This is in stark contrast to the favour which Heidegger enjoyed as a Nazi sympathiser and, briefly, in the esteemed role of Rector of Freiberg University under the Nazi regime.[314]

In *Levels*, Plessner explains the link between what he describes as Dilthey's "philosophical hermeneutics" and the project of Philosophical Anthropology:

> A philosophical hermeneutics as the systematic answer to the question of the possibility of life understanding itself in the medium of its expression through history can only be attempted – let alone realized – on the basis of the study of the structural laws of expression...
> From this perspective of a universal science of expression, it in turn appears necessary to seek out and pursue the questions of a philosophical anthropology...These questions concern...the role played by the living body in determining the type and range of expression; they concern the essential coexistence of person and "world" –that is, the significant question of the human life horizon and its variability, the question of possible world views.[315]

Philosophical Anthropology, then, seeks to understand the nature of human experience as it is sensed and expressed through the body (as a whole entity and not differentiated

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[312] For recent works in English on and/or adapting Plessner's approach, see, for example: Catt 2023; De Mol 2003; Früchtl 2021; Harman 2023; Henkel 2019; Honenberger 2015; Kloeg 2020; Kruger 2019, 2024; Michelini et al 2018; Wentzer 2017.

[313] Plessner was dismissed from his professorship in Cologne in 1933, when the National Socialists took power, upon which he fled first to Turkey and then to Netherlands, where he eventually took up a professorship in Groningen and lived in exile until 1946. On this, see, for example: de Mul 2003, 250.

[314] On the marginalisation of Jews and political opponents and the promotion of sympathisers in the Humanities academe during the Nazi regime and its legacy, see edited volumes Levinson & Eriksen 2022; Rabinach & Bialas 2007. Heidegger was a member of the Nazi's from 1933 until 1945 and appointed by the Nazi regime as rector of the University of Freiburg from 1933 to 1934, where under the self-styled title of 'Führer' he began a remodelling of the educational institution at Freiberg in keeping with the 'world-changing' National Socialist vision. (On Heidegger and his association with the Nazi regime, see, for example: de Beistegui 1998; Bernasconi 2013; Derrida 1989; Clark 2002, 121-138; Ott 1993; Thomas 1996, 2-8). Heidegger's association with the Nazis in Germany appears to have been based upon a personal idealistic vision for a new global era, for which he saw hope in the political philosophy of the National Socialist movement. He does not appear to have been a supporter of the advancement of some Aryan super-race; as such, Heidegger expressed disillusionment in the Nazi regime after the 'Night of the Long Knives' in June/July 1934 and his lectures from 1934 appear to have been couched attacks on the Nazi regime. (Heidegger 2000 [1935]; 1961/1979-1987 [1961] {1936-53}. [see also Clark 2002, 122]). Heidegger is said to have assisted Jewish friends, colleagues, and extramarital lovers, in evading the hands of Nazi officials; and claimed privately that membership of the Nazis was the "biggest stupidity of his life". (de Towarnicki 1993, 125; Petzet 1983, 43). He nevertheless remained a party member, possibly because lapses of Nazi membership often led to serious consequences and his unsettling public silence in the post-war years and for the remainder of his life has left the matter unresolved with widely competing interpretations and considerable criticism and - by some - outright vilification and total discrediting of his work (In particular, see: Farias 1989; Pöggeler 1993; Wolin 1990, 2022). The publication of a series of Heidegger's "black notebooks" (academic diaries) since 2014 in which Heidegger expresses anxieties about the prospect of a new order of "World Judaism" (conspiracy stories prevalent in Nazi Germany and beyond at the time), reignited debates more recently concerning whether Heidegger was anti-Semitic (see, for example, Mitchell & Trawny 2017; Wolin 2022).

[315] Plessner 2019 [1928], 20.

from «mind» or "spirit") in (and as part of) the environment. Plessner goes on to propose a method for understanding the human embodied condition as a continuum from and - at the same time - in distinction to other organic and inorganic beings. Plessner therefore understands being and the relations of all things as defined by their embodied faculties and the extension of their physical boundaries in expressive action.[316]

Plessner was aware of Heidegger's work, and in the preface to the 1965 edition of *Levels*, Plessner discussed why he believes Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics could not be effective. Reflecting on the abstract nature of Heidegger's enquiry into the «meaning» of being, he says:

> Disregarding the physical conditions of "existence" was reasonable if his [Heidegger's] aim was to show what is meant by "being." This disregard only becomes ill-fated—and here indeed is the catch—if it justifies itself with and becomes linked to the claim that the mode of being of life, of body-bound life, is only accessible privately, by way of existing Dasein.[317]

In other words, for Plessner, understanding the nature of a Being as something which exists beyond any physical reality cannot be possible if that understanding requires subjective (body-bound) experience in the first place. Therefore, Heidegger's focus on Being with no reference to its corporeal faculties and engagement as part of an environment, has no coherence. He goes on:

> The analysis of free-floating existence...encounters no biological facts...It is for this reason that there is no path from Heidegger to philosophical anthropology...
> Conversely, anthropological research—somatic anthropology, human palaeontology, proto- and pre-history—finds itself by questions of how to delimit what is human. The answers to these questions remain incomplete insofar as they, at best correlate biological and cultural findings but are unable to relate them to a common ground.[318]

For Plessner, then, he sees no full way through with Heidegger's approach. But he also sees no full way through the scientific approach of correlating observable exclusively human biological anatomy and mechanical function to human cultural expressions. As with Dilthey, only by determining the unique nature of the *experience* of being human - as something which is neither reducible to scientific explanation nor to ontological abstraction - can any progress be made for any study which seeks to understand the human condition.

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[316] There is something reminiscent here of some of the features of structuralism –indeed Plessner refers in the paragraph cited above to "structural laws of expression". The argument developed here is that, although there is some resemblance to the structural approaches of, for example, Karl Mannheim, who also derives some of his inspiration from Dilthey; this approach is not structuralist, as it does not rely on internally held (i.e.: «mind»-based) structures.

[317] Plessner 2019 [1965], xxiv. Own square brackets.

[318] *Ibid.*, xxvi.

Plessner instead understands all things as belonging to a (dis)continuum, from inanimate things with 'edges' which delimits their spatial extension, to living things with agential boundaries which can actively and physically extend beyond themselves. This describes the kinds of concepts encapsulated in what have typically been referred to as "dualism" and "self-awareness", but in a way which relates to a *positional* shift from the animal to the human condition. An animal will experience "...things in its surrounding field, things of its own and not of its own;...able to gain mastery over its own lived body;...a system that refers back to itself, a self, but it does not experience –itself."[319] In this regard, the animal "...set in itself, its life out of the center constitutes the anchor of its existence but does not stand in relation to it, is not given to it."[320] But for humans a position arises in which "the living thing is body, is in its body (as inner life or psyche), and is outside its body as the point of view from which it is both." This "person" arises as "...the subject of his lived experience, of his perceptions and actions, of his initiative. He knows and he wills. His existence is literally based on nothing."[321] This formulation has a striking resemblance to Aristotle's construction of the four causes which constitute the body and soul as one entity; as a kind of teleological outward intentionality which he differentiates from inanimate things without a soul; what Plessner conceptualises as the "boundary" defining different types of entity; between being inanimate, vegetal, animal and human (also comparable to Spinoza's concept of conatus).[322] This also brings his thought very close to more recent ideas of "needful freedom" advanced in philosopher Hans Jonas' philosophical biology[323], the "biological dialecticalism" of biologists Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin,[324] and the theory of "autopoiesis" of philosophers/biologists Humberto Maturana and Fransisco Varela, and Evan Thompson,[325] later adopted by Thomas Fuchs and Ralph Ellis;[326] or Gregory Bateson's "cybernetics";[327] some of whom we will return to in §29.3.

16.2. For Plessner, humans are at once corporeally immersed and - through their self-awareness - distanced from their own corporeality, creating a perception of «mind» -as if

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319 Plessner 2019 [1965], 267.
320 *Ibid.,* 268.
321 *Ibid.*, 272.
322 Spinoza Conatus, see Garrett, 2002
323 Jonas 1966, 1968.
324 Levins & Lewontin 1985.
325 Maturana & Varela 1973, 1980, 1987; Thompson 2007.
326 Fuchs 2018, 2021; Ellis 2023.
327 Bateson 1973, 1991. On the relationship of Plessner to some of ideas of some thinkers mentioned in this and the last four footnotes, see also Catt 2023.

disconnected from body, which he describes as "excentric positionality". [328] This results in a sense of imbalance (what he describes as "natural artificiality") which humans constantly seek to redress.[329] As he put it:

> [T]he question of philosophy, as essentially, every question the human has occasion to ask himself a thousand times in the course of his life—what should I do, how should I live, how can I cope with this existence—signifies the characteristic expression...of human brokenness or excentricity, which not even the most naïve, unbroken, content, tradition-bound and close-to-nature era in human history has been able to elude. There have certainly been periods... when this fissure was not spoken of and of consciousness of the constitutive homelessness of the human being was covered over by strong ties to land and family, to hearth and ancestors. But these periods were not at peace... The idea of paradise, of the state of innocence and the Golden Age, which every human generation has known (today this idea is called "community") points to what the human lacks and to his knowledge of this lack...[330]

The experience of "excentric positionality", which all humans share in common[331] (in the same way that, for Dilthey, the "riddle of life" frames the human condition), embodies a core tenet of Plessner's approach and of the approach developed here. It encapsulates the way in which humans find themselves at once corporeally embodied yet also self-objectifying:

> Although the living being on this level is also absorbed in the here/now, lives out of the center, it has become conscious of the centrality of its existence. It has itself; it knows of itself; it notices itself—and this makes it an *I*. This I is the vanishing point of its own interiority that lies "behind" it; it is removed from its own center in every possible execution of life and is the observer of the scene of this inner field; it is the subject-pole that can no longer be objectified or put into the object position.[332]

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[328] Plessner 2019 [1928], 267-289. Note that the spelling is "excentric" as opposed to the more familiar "eccentric". The 2019 English translators do not offer any note on this, although this has been the convention in previous English references of Plessner's original German "exzentrische Positionalität". While "excentric" bears some resemblance to the English "eccentric"; it does not entirely align with any OED's definition of the usage of "excentric": "Variant of eccentric *adj.*; the preferred spelling for senses A.2 and A.3a in *Botany*, and in contexts where a writer wishes to avoid the associations of sense A.6a." This leaves only the following definitions associated with "excentric", according to OED: "5.a. Of orbital motion: Not referable to a fixed centre of revolution; not circular. Of a curve, an elliptic, parabolic, or hyperbolic orbit: Deviating (in greater or less degree) from a circular form;" and "6.b. Of persons and personal attributes: Deviating from usual methods, odd, whimsical." (OED online, accessed 29/10/2024). Neither of these pertain to the sense in which Plessner uses it; and as such "excentric", in this context, should be understood as a direct transliteration from the original German filling a lexical lacuna in English. The spatial relation which "excentric positionality" conjures is essential to the concept which Plessner seeks to convey, and so preserving that meaning is important. The 2019 translators also offer some notes on the way "positionality", serendipitously, offers an even closer relation to various meanings represented in divergent German words (*Ibid.*, xii).

[329] Plessner 2019 [1928], 267-321.

[330] *Ibid.*, 287.

[331] For Plessner, this shared human experience - the "we-sphere" - is what he calls the human spirit (2019 [1928], 282-284). Schlitte (2018) has alternatively translated what Hyatt translated as "we-sphere" instead as "with-world".

[332] *Ibid.*, 269-270. Original emphasis.

This leads to what he calls the Utopia Standpoint which "...drives the human to cultivation and creates needs that can only be satisfied by a system of artificial objects...";[333] and to "...the idea of a ground of the world [*Weltgrund*], of necessary being resting in itself, of the absolute or God." [334] In other words, humans will inevitably conceptualise and restore their being to a more inert and stable state. Elsewhere he puts it in this way:

> The human wants to escape the unbearable excentricity of his being; he wants to compensate for the dividedness of his own form of life, and he can achieve this only with things that are substantial enough to counterbalance the weight of his own existence...In this neediness...lies the motive of all specifically human activity –that is, activity using artificial means that is directed toward the unreal. In it lies the ultimate ground for the tool and for that which it serves—that is, culture.[335]

But because this kind of yearning for a utopian "escape" towards a "resting in-itself" (a kind of "re-enchantment") is derived from the same uncertainties concerning "...'where' he [the person] and the reality corresponding to his excentricity stand...", those ideas can ultimately only be derived from a "leap of faith".[336]

Plessner's approach, which clearly derives strongly from Dilthey's philosophical hermeneutic approach offers a profound resolution of some of the most nagging questions concerning the human «mind»-body and nature-culture dichotomies; while overcoming the perpetual push-me-pull-you hermeneutic wranglings of the objective-subjective description and explanation of human experience. Through his formulation, then, Plessner resolves those two interrelated questions which have persistently haunted philosophers:

i. the question of the «mind»-body dualism.

ii. the question of nature-culture division; including the relationship of humans to their environment and/or the [earth/World] and ideas of the extent of human embeddedness or enchantment to earth.

Plessner offers a perspective which frames these two questions as in-themselves the dynamic quandaries which define the human condition – Dilthey's "metaphysical consciousness". That is, the excentric positionality of humans describes an uncomfortable perception of a «mind»-body dualism; a perception which humans then

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[333] Plessner 2019 [1928], 316.
[334] *Ibid.*, 317. Own emphasis.
[335] *Ibid.*, 289. Original emphasis.
[336] *Ibid.*, 317.

strive to understand and overcome. The fact that humans perpetually strive to understand this condition is *in-itself* the manifestation of that excentric positionality. So, to be clear, excentric positionality explains the perception of a distancing between a self-aware being and body from the earth, from which the being perceives being at once detached and yet dependent upon (or a part of); to which the being strives to become (re)connected.

16.3. While Plessner's *Levels* sets-out his thought comprehensively in philosophical terms, there are several tasks it does not fulfil, some assumptions which need under-pinning and developments in thought ever since which need consideration. As such, the next few sections unfold in part as a developmentalist reading of Plessner as the basis of the Proximist approach proposed here. In particular, the following lines of enquiry will be pursued:

> i. the way in which Plessner's excentric positionality relates to a dialectic dynamic, as discussed by numerous scholars -what will be referred to here as the "dialectic imperative" (§17).

> ii. the nature of the Utopia Standpoint to which Plessner alludes, --what will be referred to here as the "entic imperative"; and the ways in which this is manifest cross-culturally (§18).

> iii. the ways in which the emergence of and contestation of the role of art at the intersection of religious thought and secularism helps to demonstrate the process of the manifestation of the dialectic and entic imperatives from one 'type' of object to another (§19).

> iv. the implications of Plessner's thought in cognitive and biological terms.

It is important to reiterate that from a Diltheyian or Plessnerian Life Philosophical or Philosophical Anthropological perspective (echoed here), the question of the "origin", "cause" or "event" for such a shift of being from the animal to the human condition is not only besides the point, but is in itself the very instantiation of the "vanishing point". It is from the moment that the human arises as the "subject of his lived experience", and only out of that condition that such questions concerning the origin and the source arise; and which is therefore also simultaneously inherent to the human condition. Therefore,

attempts to understand humans (who are inherently absorbed in such questions) by dwelling on those same questions can only end-up (re)producing the same kinds of patterns as one is attempting to understand -a hermeneutic (vicious) circle. However, we *can* speculate and make observations about what happens at the moment of that "vanishing point" (irrespective of its possible origin or cause). This is the point from which Dilthey and Plessner's thought begins, and the point from which the approach adopted in this thesis begins.

§17. The Dialectic Imperative

17.1. This section will explicate and situate the implications of the idea of this "vanishing point" of existence from nothing, which is somehow the font of the manifest forms of human culture. Inherent to Plessner's approach is an important dialectic dynamic – "...an inner world...where one is at odds with oneself..." [337] from which arises a set of compulsions and behaviours which strive to resolution and/or neutralisation of that tension in a way which becomes manifest in external ways -through things; through culture. Whether "feeling at odds with oneself" are best articulated and understood as an actual "inner world" or rather as a perception, will be discussed in due course. But what is important for now, is how Plessner's thought touches upon dynamics explored by thinkers who have stood at the confluence of dialectical materialism (Hegel, Marx) and Life Philosophy (Simmel, Nietzsche, Tetsuro); [338] traditions from which Material Culture Studies has also been directly and indirectly influenced. In presenting and discussing some of those different perspectives, the intention in this section is to establish, not so much the probity of these various perspectives, but how, in the ways in which they attempt to address and then struggle to grapple with this dialectic imperative, they fall-back to a form of idealism and representationalism for explaining the dialectic inherent to the human encounter with the world; ending-up *in and of themselves* the manifest instantiation of excentric positionality.

Hegel, the "father" of dialectical materialism, begins from a position of what he calls "indeterminate immediacy",[339] by which he means that, before entities are conscious, they operate from a position of nothingness. To provide an example, we might

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[337] Plessner 2019 [1928], 278.
[338] The thought of Marx, but especially Hegel has indeed also been identified by some as forms of Life Philosophy, or as having had a significant influence on Life Philosophy (Lebensphilosophie). See, for example (in the case of Hegel): Przylebski 2011; Solies 2007. While the thought of the likes of Simmel and Nietzsche are very divergent, for various reasons they are identified as proponents of Life Philosophy. Tetsuro's thought (1996 [1937]), while belonging to an entirely different line of Japanese Kyoto School philosophy, it is suggested here, aligns significantly with much of Life Philosophy.
[339] Hegel 2018 [1807], 97.

compare this state of being during infancy (from which period we normally do not usually have any memories), or from induced unconsciousness during surgery, upon which Philosopher Monica Meijsing reflects "Where was I when I had no experiences? Was I really not there? What are we, exactly? When do we still exist and when no longer?"[340] For Hegel, while we might *exist*, we "...do not represent to ourselves the **universal This** or **being as such**, but we *express* the universal."[341] That is, we express (throughout our physical presence and activity) the universal or *being as such* insofar as existing (or being there), but not in any sense which would equate to being aware of existing or being able to differentiate ourselves from other things. Being, simply: "is in fact *nothing* and no more or less than nothing."[342] From this starting point, Hegel determines that as soon as any kind of conception of Being or nothing (or of the self-negating idea of the nothingness of Being) arises, then "becoming" has occurred and the displacement of "indeterminate immediacy" with "determinate being" or **being-there**[343] arises. What this event is or was (if it constitutes any sort of event), for Hegel, is beside the point; as what he is trying to get at in his logical investigation is how the ideas of *being* and *nothing* cannot exist without some kind of **being there.**

Hegel goes on to suggest that humans desire an external object against which self-consciousness - or "being self-assured" (*selbstbewusstsein*) - is facilitated. Through this process, which for Hegel, is a quest for knowledge; self-consciousness and the object re-affirm each-other's existence. But this dialectic, crucially for Hegel, takes place in a tension wherein, paradoxically, consciousness negates the external object which it has sought and created in order to achieve purity through knowledge –what Hegel refers to as sublation (*Aufhebung*).[344] This dialectical process of a progressively higher order of consciousness and external objectivity, culminates in "absolute knowledge", in which consciousness and the object eventually negate one another completely. So, for Hegel, the objectification (and alienation) of consciousness (a kind of splitting) is a necessary process in the objectification of the world in order to obtain absolute knowledge. Marxian Philosopher Chris Arthur summarises Hegel's (otherwise obscurant expression) very well:

> *Geist* ['spirit' or «mind»] learns what it truly is and its relationship to the world of objectivity, at the same time, and in exact proportion, as it becomes what it truly is

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[340] Meijsing 2022

[341] Hegel 2018 [1807], 97. Original italic emphasis. Own bold emphasis, to facilitate easier reading.

[342] Hegel Logic 59/5:82-83. Heidegger reinforces Hegel's stance: "So, if it is said that 'Being' is the most universal concept, this cannot mean that it is the one which is clearest or that it needs no further discussion. It is rather the darkest of all." (Heidegger 1962 [1926], 23.)

[343] Hegel Logic WL 81/5:113. Note the use of the term being-there is used here as a direct translation of the German word Dasein. It is used here in distinction to Heidegger's later adoption of the word Dasein, which has a different and more specific meaning.

[344] Hegel 2018 [1807].

through manifesting itself in objective form (in morality, in bourgeois life in the state, in religion), and in so doing it eventually ends its estrangement from its world through identifying itself in it.[345]

His understanding of the inherent tensions between consciousness and an objectified consciousness in striving for absolute knowledge resonates with the tension inherent in Plessner's excentric positionality; and absolute knowledge relates to Plessner's overcoming excentric positionality. In terminology which seems to follow-on directly from Hegel's "indeterminate immediacy", Plessner describes the condition of excentric positionality of the human in relation to other things and the "surrounding field" as a "mediated immediacy". Describing the idea, he says: "Since the living being is still hidden from 'itself,' this relationship can only appear to it as direct, as immediate. The living being stands at the point of mediation and constitutes it." He further emphasises the point that the human "...constitutes the point of mediation between himself and his surrounding field *and* he is posited at this point...". [346] Plessner and Hegel seem to identify a similar dialectic dynamic between human and world; but Hegel's formulation in many ways rather emulated Kant's internal-external idealist-empiricist 'synthesis', while Plessner expressly disavows such an approach. To be clear, Hegel presents a model in which an empirically real human-being traverses (out of the fulfilment of some desire) into an idealist (i.e.: internally constructed) "real" where it undergoes a process of a perceived self-consciousness, through which it objectivises the world of things –and things in turn become an extension of herself; which, through a long chain of processes of so doing and through the realisation of the highest forms of society and culture (arts, state, religion, etc), reaffirms her true (no-longer self-conscious) being through absolute knowledge, back in the realm of an empirically real world. But Plessner is categoric in deterring from falling back into any kind of dual aspect Kantian «mind»-body/empiricist-idealist explanations: "The human occupies *one* relationship of mediated immediacy, of indirect directness, to external, alien things, and not two neatly separated relationships running along next to each other."[347] He then alludes to the kind of impasse which Leach and Tartaglia embody in understanding physicalism and consciousness as mutually exclusive: "If we were to assume—incorrectly—that the human related to his surrounding field in both an immediate *and* mediated way...The two relations would be incessantly competing with each other: now it would be one way (immediate), then it would be

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[345] Arthur 1982, 15. Original italics. Own square brackets. Notably, some of Hegel's thought related to these ideas are perhaps some of the most difficult to fully decipher, as indeed the range of divergent interpretations which have emerged since he was writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century would attest.

[346] Plessner 2019 [1965], 302.

[347] *ibid.*

another (mediated). The human would never occupy an unequivocal position vis-à-vis his surrounding field, but only a position that oscillated back and forth between opposites."[348]

What is important to reiterate here, then, is that while there is no real distinction between the "person" and the life-force or body of that person, in the perception or *the experience of* mediated immediacy which arises from excentric positionality, that person becomes known to themselves: "He knows of himself that he is identical with himself as the one who knows."[349] At this point (of moving from indeterminate immediacy (nothingness) to mediated immediacy) an apparent tension arises; a "paradox" as Plessner put it, in which the subject "stands against himself and the world…".[350] Kyoto School Philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro similarly refers to a double negation of the human being as *ningen*: the human that is at once individual and part of a whole.[351] To be individual requires the negation of the whole (or "the totality of ningen"), while to be part of the whole requires the negation of the individual.[352]

17.2. Georg Simmel, whose thought is often identified within the broad rubric of Life Philosophy, brings into sharper focus the ways in which the experience of the mediated immediacy between the human and the object relates to a broader social and economic realm where the external value-form of things are implicated in an exchange between the subject and the object:

> The desire and sentiment of the subject is the driving force in the background, but it could not by itself bring about the value-form, which is the result of balancing objects against each other. The economy transmits all valuations through the form of exchange, creating an intermediate realm between the desires that are the source of all human activity and the satisfaction of needs in which they culminate. [353]

But also for Simmel, "Human enjoyment of an object…is a completely undivided act…consciousness is exclusively concerned with satisfaction and pays no attention to its bearer on one side or its objects on the other."[354] In this triadic formulation, a notable distinction is made here not only between the subject and the object, but also a desirous consciousness, as somehow operating in tension with the subject. Indeed, while the full implications of Simmel's intended formulation in this regard is only in its embryonic form

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[348] *ibid.,* 302-303.
[349] *ibid.,* 302
[350] *ibid.*
[351] Tetsuro 1996 [1937], 19.
[352] *Ibid.*, 22.
[353] Simmel 2004 [1907], 77.
[354] *Ibid.*, 62.

in *The Philosophy of Money*, his later work helps us more with understanding his perspective:

> Humans, unlike animals, do not allow themselves simply to be absorbed by the naturally given order of the world. Instead, they tear themselves loose from it, place themselves in opposition to it, making demands of it, overpowering it, then overpowered by it. From this first great dualism springs the never-ending contest between subject and object...[355]

So, for Simmel, as with Hegel, humans are constituted of an inner 'spirit' or consciousness, which bears other unique drives that hold humans perpetually in conflict with objects. This process of consciousness is at once culture and culture-forming, which in its material form - once objectified - as per Hegel's principle of sublation (*Aufhebung*), ends up being those very objects in conflict with consciousness (and therefore the subject). As such, for Simmel, "The whole history of culture is the working out of this contradiction."[356] Simmel's approach is of course also reminiscent of Schopenhauer, who postulates a single Will that constitutes all things, manifesting as kinds of 'force-fields' with a single and indiscriminate goal of realising its own intentionality, at the expense of everything that it constitutes. But Schopenhauer's thought perhaps manifests in its most broadly dialectic form (and is a direct influence) in Nietzsche's thought.[357] For Nietzsche, the form or the thing-in-itself - the "apparent" world - does not exist prior to its objectification in the "true" world. The "apparent world" is only a chaotic and volatile bundle of matter which we cannot know: "Thingness was first created by us" says Nietzsche.[358] The interpretative making of the "true" world apparent, for Nietzsche, was a process of doing or "becoming", ultimately driven through 'Will to Power', to be in control of the environment. Nietzsche's formulation of a true world arising out of the objectification of an apparent world through Will to Power still of course famously attempts to exorcise a 'god illusion' or some omniscient Will from the subject-object dialectic – which otherwise remained a persistent theme for Spinoza, Hegel and Schopenhauer. In this regard, an ethical or value-laden imperative arises for overcoming the tyranny of the 'god illusion', no-longer in some esoteric spiritual or aesthetic way, but in some material-economic way. This purging of any god or residual

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[355] Simmel 1968 [1918]: 27

[356] Simmel 1971 [1911]: 375

[357] Concerning the influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche, see, for example: Dolson 1901; Soll 2013. While Schopenhauer and Nietzsche both embody elements of a Kantian idealist construction they mark a departure from Neo-Kantian scientific rationalism, both also regarded as proponents of the broad church of Life Philosophy (*Lebensphilosophie*).

[358] Nietzsche 1968 [1901], 341

Gnosticism from the subject-object dialectic shares some limited concomitance with Marx.

17.3. For Marx, his ambition, in defining himself as a critical "naturalist",[359] was to relate the Hegelian dialectic to a more "concrete" world through - as Miller usefully paraphrases it - "...act[s] of physical creation by flesh-and-blood people utilizing the material world of nature, and not merely what he derides as mere intellectual positing in Hegel."[360] Specifically, he seems to express concerns about the idealistic nature of Hegel's enterprise in which the real is perceived as "...the result of self-coordinating, self-absorbed, and spontaneously operating thought..." with a move from the abstract to the concrete involving "...thinking...by which the concrete is grasped and is reproduced in our mind as concrete."[361] However, his own thinking is equally largely reliant on an idealist conception of «mind» and of an internalist-externalist human-material relations. In *Capital*, for example, Marx adopts the use of the word "fetish" in reference to the primitivism to which it alluded in eighteenth and nineteenth century literature (as per the polarising cultural ascriptions of the 'Great Divide').[362] He associates the fetish with people's projection of alienated social conditions onto religion. Their relationship to the God creates an alienating distance and that alienation is transferred to the fetishized commodity, where the products of people's labour become in-themselves distant from them, never able to fully fulfil their desires.[363] He marvels at the fetishization of - for example - an ordinary wooden table, which "...so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent." He goes on, the commodity is a "mysterious thing":

> ...simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour.[364]

And so, for Marx, workers perceive the relationships between themselves and to commodities as "material relations between persons and social relations between

[359] Marx 1964 [1843], 202.
[360] Miller 1987, 35.
[361] Marx 1971 [1858], 35.
[362] Marx adopts this term following Charles de Brosses' Du culte des dieux fétiches (1756) and as adopted by Kant and Hegel. See Bass 2015; Safatle 2010; Pimenta 2020. See also Pietz 1985; 1987; 1988 on the origins and social use of the term "fetish".
[363] Rubin 1990; Adorno & Horkheimer 2002; Safatle 2010; Pimenta 2020.
[364] Marx 1974 [1867] Vol I, 77.

things." [365] At the crux of his adoption of the term "fetish" is the inherent tension between the real and imaginary which he identifies as embodied in the fetish, which he also refers to as "objective thought forms" [*objektive Gedankenformen*]: imaginary forms with a real existence.[366] The culmination of this projection of the fetish is what he describes as "capital-fetish" (*kapitalfetish*), where, as money, "the relations of capital assume their most external and most fetish like form".[367] As such, his endeavour becomes one to liberate the worker from their illusory state - in their (un-self-conscious) 'disenchantment' - with the promise of an alternative emancipatory socio-economic model which would re-establish a direct connection between the social realm and the material realm.

What we see here is a formulation which is even more faithful to Kant than Hegel's (already faithful) dialectic and which apparently banishes any hint of residual Gnosticism in Hegel's thought;[368] but which inverses -transcendental subjectivity, not as the god-derived («mind»-based) source of knowledge which informs perception of an otherwise undecipherable sensuous world (in Kant's terms, the "noumenon"), but instead as the illusion of the idea of a god, which, rather than reconciling the ideal (the «mind», knowledge) and the real (sense perceptions); creates the alienating distance to the object. In the same way that Heidegger identifies Nietzsche's "godless theodicy" as a "negative theology",[369] Marx, then, has arguably not banished the illusory world but reified it, tearing people away from a real world rather than bringing them nearer to it. As philosopher Louis Dupré has elucidated, numerous heirs of Marx's dialectic, such as Frederick Engels, T. S. Bakradze and Louis Althusser, all recognising the idealist component of this thought, set about adapting and interpreting his work in ways which sought to overcome (not always successfully) its idealist construction.[370] Similarly, philosopher Karl Ameriks suggests seven ways in which "...the structural features of Marx's 'historical materialism' clearly reflect Hegel's 'idealistic' system in its central doctrine...".[371]

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[365] *ibid*.

[366] *ibid*. 90

[367] Marx 1996 [1894], Capital, Vol. 3, Part V, Chapter XXIV

[368] There has been considerable discourse around the theological motivations of Hegel's thought, with its various allusions to 'absolute knowledge' and the human pursuit of purity, reminiscent of Christian Gnosticism. Indeed, his perspective has been influential in this way and has had a lasting impact to the art-historical tradition of the ascension of the arts towards a higher 'purer' form. On Hegel's thought as religiously motivated see Fackenheim 1967; On his thought specifically as Panentheist, see Whittemore 1960.

[369] Heidegger 1977, 53-112. Vedder 2013, 333.

[370] Dupré 1977, 668-674. For the cited examples, see, specifically: Engels 1947 [1878]; Bakradze 1958; Althusser 1969.

[371] Ameriks 2017, 364-375.

In many regards, then, the idealist component of Hegel's formulation remains intact through the Marxian concept of objectification. The relationship and proximity of the subject to the object, for the dialectical or historical materialist is entirely socially determined and based on an imaginary concept. The distance created between humans and what the apparent conceals, the invisible and the transcendent, is socially determined alienation. The agency of the individual as well as of the object is stripped; and anything perceived as "meaningful" by the subject is cast-off as valueless imaginary. Finally, the position is reliant on the «representational» or fetishized object-form. This is in many ways reminiscent - as we have already seen - of Peirce's concept of the Interpretant (see Appendix III) or Gell's concept of the internalist-externalist formulation (see §6).

17.4. What our exploration of the dialectical dynamic between humans and things helps to do is two things. First, the dynamic identified by these authors (and many others), helps to establish that there is some agreement of a dialectical imperative in the relationship between humans and things, to which Plessner alludes. This is useful for helping us to the build the picture of the human condition based on Plessner's excentric positionality, to which we will return. But, secondly, the way in which this dialectic is generally understood slips into discourse concerned with coming to terms with signified intermediary ideas which are assumed to emanate from an internal «mind». These intermediary ideas pitch humans and things against each-other in a polemical stand-off concerned with their relative positioning to those intermediary ideas; as the instantiation, manifest form or objectification of (in the cases discussed) God, Will, Absolute Truth, or Mode of Production. Inevitably everything - humans and things alike - end up as part of a hierarchy –as subjects and objects, as masters and slaves.

We can see the ways in which these kinds of perspectives have become manifest with material culture studies which has assumed a Marxian material dialectical attitude, through the understanding of material-culture in relation to consumptive behaviour, modes of production, social hierarchy and conspicuous display.[372] This is not always explicit or presumably even necessarily intentional; but rather, it is argued here, has become part of the 'DNA' of archaeological research and material culture studies, perhaps as originally adopted by early influential figures within the disciplines, such as Gordon Childe and Leslie White.[373] As Fowles puts it, "such narratives" which understand objects as the manifest «representation» of hierarchical orders and social status

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[372] Ingold 2011, 26; Olsen 2003, 91-94.
[373] See, for example, Childe 1941, 17-19; 1964 [1942], 145; White 1959, 218. On this subject, see also Fowles 2013, 28-30.

"...continue to quietly propagate in the shadows", especially in the study of chieftains and archaic states.[374] As archaeologist, Karina Croucher similarly observes:

> [I]t is notable that many routes of interpretation lead to discussions of hierarchy and social complexity, and frequently at the expense of other areas of research. Furthermore, it is modern Western perceived notions of wealth that are portrayed into the past and sought archaeologically, with institutionalised hierarchies or displays sought through property and accumulation of wealth, and through the control of resources."[375]

More broadly, in 1975 Baudrillard posited - amid much controversy - that the Marxian model of the relations of production, was problematic on the basis that 'production' is fundamentally a construct which has come to be assumed as the basis of human social relations and knowledge. For Baudrillard such a stance assumes the abstracted "bio-anthropological postulate" that 'individuals' are separate entities from other 'individuals' which have certain kinds of material 'needs' and 'uses' in abstraction from or opposition to their environment or from the world.[376] It, therefore, assumes a certain attitude, which works from within the bounds of the status quo of capitalist Euro-American society.[377] But even aside from this, he points at a deeper level (to which we have already alluded) to "the imposition of a form of a general code of rational abstraction," which "grounds the circulation of values and their play of exchange in the regulated equivalence of values."[378] Indeed, historical materialist explanations give primacy to «representational» and « symbolic» values, relations and hierarchies. As Marxist philosopher Erwin Marquit put it: "dialectical materialism...focuses on the changes in the hierarchical structure of systems of matter resulting from the interpenetration of oppositional tendencies and forces among the different structural levels as well as within the individual levels."[379] We could say, as per Plessner's identification of the Marxian material historicist influence within Sociology, that Marx's dialectical materialism offered an ideal perspective which could consolidate and perpetuate the 'free-form' Hermetic antiquarian penchant for fetishising the mysterious and exotic with an equally 'free-form' 'science' steeped in the idealist-rationalist formulation.

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[374] Fowles 2013, 30-31.
[375] Croucher 2012, 72.
[376] Baudrillard 1975, 22-25; 1981, 80-82.
[377] As he put it: "By pretending to illuminate earlier societies in the light of the present structure of the capitalist economy, it [Marxism] fails to see that, abolishing their difference, it projects onto them the spectral light of political economy." *Ibid.*, 66. Own square brackets.
[378] *Ibid.*, 129-130.
[379] Marquit 1998, cited by Curtis 1998, 316.

Daniel Miller's opening line in his seminal edited volume on Materiality observes that "There is an underlying principle to be found in most of the religions that dominate recorded history."[380] That underlying principle - the issue of materiality and it's "centrality...to the way we understand ourselves" - he observes, is ubiquitous as manifest not only in belief and religion, but in secularism, capitalism, politics and science.[381] In the next line of his opening paragraph he invokes a Platonic (or reverse-Nietzschean!) formulation for our understanding of human-thing relations: "Wisdom has been accredited to those who claim that materiality represents the merely apparent, behind which lies that which is real."[382] But for Miller, it is impossible for the immaterial - that is to say, the divine, the invisible, the holy, the transcendent - to transcend objectivity: "So the passion for immateriality puts even greater pressure on the precise symbolic and efficacious potential of whatever material form remains as the expression of spiritual power."[383] In the tension between the material and immaterial, Miller acknowledges an exchange and/or tension between the human and material realm; but at once dismisses the distance projected between what is apparent and what the apparent conceals as ultimately a false concept or an imaginary projected through the "tyranny" of the objectifying power of the subject. What Miller has ventured to do here, having observed the dialectical tension, is then dissolve any validity in that tension by questioning the object's affectivity on the one hand, and the value of the subject's belief on the other hand. Anthropologist Victor Buchli is more conciliatory in this regard. Describing the phenomenon of 'seeing through' in relation to haptic vision (the perception of touching through sight), he understands the "the surface of things" in this context as "...signs with meanings behind them, that is a material signifier behind which lies immaterial meaning – but actually productive of meaning itself and the novel relations entailed thereof."[384] Buchli here recognises an affectivity between the thing and a shared "meaning". But why the need for a "material signifier" which "conceals" a "meaning"? If the material thing is not in itself the "meaning", then presumably the "meaning", for Buchli, has arisen either from within the «mind» and/or a transcendental divinity (which is certainly not how the location of the divine is perceived in the Hindu faith where haptic vision is a prevalent phenomenon).[385]

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[380] Miller 2005: 1.
[381] *Ibid.*, 2.
[382] *Ibid.*, 1. This statement may be regarded as 'reverse-Nietzschean', although the terminology differs: for Nietzsche, the "real world" is the subjectively constructed visible world (Miller's "apparent world") and the "apparent world" is that which the real world conceals (Miller's "real world").
[383] *Ibid.*, 22.
[384] Buchli 2010, 192.
[385] *ibid*.

17.5. At this point we must stop and take stock of what has happened. In the musings of the various thinkers we have considered so far, we see a concern, an interest; a preoccupation even, which can been broken into two essential components and which correspond to Plessner's two concepts of "mediated immediacy" and of the "Utopian Standpoint". So, the first is the identification of a dialectic, a tension - at the "vanishing point" of human self-awareness - with the material realm (Plessner's mediated immediacy), which we will refer to here as the "dialectic imperative". The second seems to be a concern with how humans do or may go about overcoming that tension - whether, for example, through community or through art (Plessner's Utopian Standpoint), which we will refer to here as the "entic imperative". The "dialectic imperative" and "entic imperative" are preferred here for several reasons. Neither Plessner's "excentric positionality" nor "mediated immediacy" encapsulate the entirety of the process which they together explain; whereas "dialectic" hopefully comes closer at achieving that; while "imperative" marks the concept not only as an important phenomenon in the experience of being human, but as a kind of experience or idea which seems to arise inevitably in the description and explanation of human experience. "Imperative" is used in a similar way in the second term "entic imperative" as defined in the next section which hopefully offers a deeper introduction of the kind of human experiences which it seeks to encapsulate.

It is important to note at this stage something about the approach being developed here which can be hard to grasp and requires some effort to fully assimilate in thought. First, we are progressing through the genealogy of philosophers who have sought to explain and understand the human condition, particularly in idealistic and «representational» ways –in ways which are dependent on a concept of «mind». But secondly, what we also seek to highlight is - and this is very important - how this dependency on the concept of «mind» is in-itself a result of getting caught-up in the dialectic and entic imperatives (i.e.: the condition of being human), which these authors themselves try to grapple with in various ways. The point of demonstrating that these developments in thought are idealistic and «representational» is therefore to argue - having established in Chapter 4 that the Neo-Kantian rational idealist conception is one based on a particular conception of the location of God - that these approaches *in-themselves* continue to embody a particular kind of human relationship to God (or the Source/s of Life). This last point is, in many regards, the very kernel of this thesis. This point will be reiterated several times.

The next section, then, will briefly illustrate the concept of the "entic" as the second imperative after the Dialectic imperative. This will then set the way for us to

explore the ways in which the entic imperative is embodied in post-Enlightenment ideas and approaches to art, as a new kind of relationship to the material realm which arises in the process of secularisation.

§18. The Entic Imperative

Plessner refers to a Utopian Standpoint from which - finding themselves perceptively in this dialectic tension - there is a drive among humans towards a "necessary being resting in itself, of the absolute or God." [386] This will be referred to here as the entic imperative - that is, a necessity arising from the condition which is driven towards achieving entic ("*to within*") experiences.[387] What "entic" encapsulates, then, is a spectrum of events or experiences which can happen accidentally, but which also can be brought-on intentionally. They may happen in the most mundane of daily practices or in the most rapturous of ecstatic religious or non-religious experiences. Artists, writers, scholars and mystics alike have experienced and described them. Some have described them as moments of the most heightened hyper-awareness or connectedness to the world, some describe them as a kind of total "self-annihilation" or "ego-dissolution" and others as simply an absence of «mind». The most mundane may include when driving home from work, while reflecting on the day behind, how it is possible to arrive home barely ever noticing pressing and depressing the clutch and accelerator pedals, checking mirrors and changing lanes. Or how while watching a film, reading a book or playing an instrument, we can proceed for some time without ever 'thinking' about what we are doing. Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky cites from Leo Tolstoy's diary from 1897 as an example of this

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[386] Plessner 2019 [1928], 317. Own emphasis.

[387] The term "entic" ("to within" or "to (be) in") is offered here tentatively, in the absence of an extant equivalent term which satisfactorily describes the kinds of experiences discussed in this section, which involve the loss of the sense of awareness of self. Other terminology used, such as "shapeshifting", "ecstatic", "entheogenic", "chiasma", "ereignis" and "henosis" are either too specific types of events or activities at the exclusion of others and/or carry too much already associative connotations. "Entic" is a compound of the Greek "en"(ἐν): "in", "within" and the adjective-forming suffix "tic" (τικός, tikós): in "the matter of", "pertain to" or "relating to"; but also with the intention of alluding to "oikos"(οἶκος) -"house" or "household", or spiritual house (early usages of the term suggest that "house" or "home" was in-itself a spiritual place as the place of the family and the hearth; and there is some precedence for it being used to give the suffice "ic"). The intention of the meaning of this word is to evoke the sense of being "in", without specific reference to a noun, such as a "god", "body", "place" or "thing"; with the allusion to the concept of "spiritual home" in the sense of being "at home", "at rest" or "close to the source", *wherever* that may be –that is to say, the *overcoming* of excentric positionality. The term deliberately dispenses with any allusions to being, proximity or temporality, since it describes the kinds of experiences which negate or cancel-out all conscious perceptions of being, space and time.

kind of experience –what he describes as "habitualization".[388] As John Higgs describes in his recent study of William Blake:

> High functioning athletes and highly skilled musicians sometimes talk about becoming so focused that they lose all sense of time, space and ego. They become so fully immersed in what they are doing that it is as if they do not exist, except in their actions.[389]

Indeed, for William Blake, this sort of experience, a kind of self-annihilation, was one he actively sought and avowed: "Oh Saviour pour upon me thy spirit of meekness and love: Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!" [390] The concept of self-annihilation as a non-terminal state of being is reminiscent of the Sufi mystical concepts of fanā, meaning "...to pass away, to undergo obliteration, to perish",[391] or as Hans Wehr translates it: "extinction of individual consciousness, recedence of the ego and obliteration of the self."[392] In the Abdulafian ecstatic Kabbalist tradition, such experiences are referred to as "devequt" ("cleaving to god"),[393] or in Chan Buddhism they are referred to as mindlessness.[394]

In one of the first, still pertinent treatments of these of sorts of experiences, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James identifies four principal characteristics:

1. Ineffability: that such experiences are difficult to describe or to relate to without first-hand experience

2. Noetic quality: a sense that something has been gleaned from the experience:

> They are states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by discursive intellect. They are illuminations, revelations, full of significance and importance, all inarticulate though they remain; and as a rule they carry with them a curious sense of authority for after-time.[395]

3. Transiency: these states cannot be sustained for long periods of time

4. Passivity:

> Although the oncoming of mystical states may be facilitated by preliminary voluntary operations, as by fixing the attention, or going through certain bodily performances,

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[388] "I was cleaning and, meandering about, approached the divan and couldn't remember whether or not I had dusted it. Since these movements are habitual and unconscious I could not remember and felt that it was impossible to remember - so that if I had dusted it and forgot - that is, had acted unconsciously, then it was the same as if I had not." Shklovsky 1965 [1917], 12.

[389] Higgs 2021, 29.

[390] Blake, from the poem *Jerusalem* [1810] in Erdman 1988, 147.

[391] Wilcox 2011, 96.

[392] Wehr & Cowan 1994, 854.

[393] See for example: Idel 1988; Schmidt 1995, 109-110.

[394] See for example: Sharf 2014.

[395] James 1917 [1902], 378.

> or in other ways which manuals of mysticism prescribe; yet when the characteristic sort of consciousness once has set in, the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power.[396]

More recently, Philosopher Drew Leder refers to "shapeshifting" as a generic term for describing ontological and perceptive shifts induced by varying types of activities. He lists ritualised forms of dance, performance, shamanism, yoga, meditation, brush painting, chemical intoxication, and sex as all forms of "shape shifting", or "expanded embodiment" through communion with non-human (and human) entities.[397] Merleau-Ponty, in his incomplete work just prior to his death, referred to something similar, which he describes as the "chiasm" or chiastic experience. This word is derived from the Greek letter "X", through which Merleau-Ponty attempts to describe the experience of the human becoming "intertwined" with external phenomena. [398]

But as James alludes, in their noetic quality, some of these experiences may appear as a kind of hyper-consciousness, beyond one's own control or ego. Philip Pullman describes such a type of involuntary sensation he has experienced:

> I'd never taken any drugs stronger than alcohol or cannabis, and not much of that, so I can't compare it to a drug induced trance, and there was nothing trance-like about it. I was intensely and ecstatically awake, if anything. I just saw connections between things – similarities, parallels. It was like rhyme, but instead of sounds rhyming, it was meanings that rhymed, and there were endless series of them, and they went on forever in every direction. The whole universe was connected by lines and chains and fields of meaning, and I was part of it.[399]

Clearly, while these experiences, ranging from the mundane to the esoteric, are very different kinds of event, they belong to a range of experience involving the loss of self in favour of (at least) a perception of a more direct affinity or connectedness to the activity at hand and/or the environment around associated with feelings of euphoria, release and transformation. These are variously identified in technical terms by cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists as "pre-attentive processing", "automaticity", "parallel processing" or the activation of the "default mode network". [400]

Of course, forgetting oneself while deep in thought at the wheel of a car and being emersed in shamanic trans-species shape-shifting event are very different ways of 'losing yourself' and there is no intention here of conflating them as one type of experience. The purpose is illustrative at this stage, for demonstrating the range of types of altered

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[396] *Ibid.*, 377.
[397] Leder 2012.
[398] Merleau-Ponty 2004 [1968].
[399] Pullman 2002, cited in Higgs 2021.
[400] On pre-attentive processing and automaticity, see for example: Treisman, Vieira & Hayes 1992. On automaticity, see: Moors & De Houwer 2006; Kihlstrom 2008.

perceptive experiences which humans are capable; but that they all share a particular characteristic in common: the momentary loss or emersion of self-awareness. It is suggested here that these are the kinds of experience towards which the human is driven in the dialectical tension -of "excentric positionality" and "mediated immediacy". Similarly, this is the Absolute Truth towards which, for Hegel, the human strives for in his residually Gnostic formulation of the human relationship to the world. But notably, for others, in the absence of a supernatural God or Source/s of Life, the necessity for alternative solutions seems to arise: for Marx and Tetsuro both the solution is immersion through community; and, as will be explored in the next chapter, the solution seems to be immersion through art. But a crucial question arises for everyone: are these immanent or transcendental experiences? And what kinds of objects are involved in attaining these kinds of experiences?

Summary of Chapter 5

This chapter outlined Helmut Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology, which proposes that Humans experience a sense of artificial distance between a corporeal self and a person, which he refers to as "excentric positionality", which creates propensity towards culture-making as a process of negation of that otherwise uncomfortable experience. It then went on to demonstrate how these dynamics are similarly identified by various thinkers as a dialectic dynamic, referred to here as the "dialectical imperative". In line with the Neo-Kantian rational idealism and increased secularisation since the Enlightenment, as explored in Chapter 4, we can begin to see how concerns with the imperative to overcome excentric positionality via a god figure seem to shift to ideas embodied in objects and communities as mediated through «mind». It is suggested that the dialectical materialism of Marx has been particularly (but not exclusively) influential in thought within material cultures studies. The "entic imperative" is identified, after Plessner's Utopian Standpoint principle, as an imperative which arises simultaneously with the dialectical imperative, for overcoming the otherwise artificial and uncomfortable sense of "excentric positionality". The case is made that these imperatives are ubiquitous and defining features of being human.

CHAPTER 6: Demagification and the Art of Methexis
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This chapter explores the ways in which ideas of post-enlightenment "demagification" or "disenchantment", as identified by Max Weber and others, and the sense of needing to attain some kind of "re-connection" can be understood as the manifest form of the entic imperative in a secularising age. Art arises as the 'go-to' in an attempt to salvage some*thing* which retains some kind of connection with the "pure", "natural" or the "authentic", for attaining something akin to entic experience in the shift away from the traditional religious objects of focus. But, as we shall see, this proves to be not such a straightforward enterprise. What is argued here in due course is that, the question of the location of the Source/s of Life does not end with secularism, but rather that there is a shift - a radical rupture in-fact - concerning the perceived location and nature of the Source/s of Life; and similarly that the need for "connection" with the Source/s of Life (as encapsulated in the dialectic and entic imperatives) does not disappear, but rather shifts to different *kinds* of objects which correspond to the shift of the location of the Source/s of Life. This process cannot be easy and leads to social disruption and discord concerning the fundamental nature of the relationship of humans to the material realm, which converges with questions of ethics and political economy, sometimes dangerously. The polemics arising with secularism and some of the emergent political movements and events since the Enlightenment reflect the contested discourse concerning the new location/s of the Source/s of Life, as well as questions concerning appropriate (ethical) relationships with the material realm and the resultant corresponding social conditions. A consideration of how this manifests in thought around the subject of "art" helps to disclose the nature of this dynamic, on the one hand, for the purposes of developing our approach to understanding human relationships to material

culture; but also for demonstrating how this kind of discourse is shot through much of contemporary scholarship in the humanities and social sciences (and material culture studies) - as *in themselves* engaged in those discourses rather than providing ways for us to understand them (as they would often claim) - thereby obfuscating alternative ways of understanding human relationships to the material realm.

§19. The Loss of Immanence

19.1. Max Weber's oft quoted term "disenchantment" or rather "demagification" (*Entzauberung*)[401] identifies *the ways* in which monotheistic faiths such as Judaism and Protestantism initially displaced "irrational" "magical" traditions with the rational ethics of one transcendental God.[402] This in turn shifts to a process of secularising thought (as a long march since the pre-Socratics) towards *"...the knowledge or the conviction that...principally there are no mysterious, incalculable forces that come into play, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle control everything by means of calculation."*[403] This is not dissimilar to Heidegger's enframing (*Gestell*) of the world, arising from ontotheology as we have already seen (§14). It is precisely in response to this kind of propulsion and process of progressive disenchantment with which the Romantics are concerned. As Friedrich Schiller, one of the forerunners of German Romanticism, puts it, in this newly arising (secularising) relationship to the world we find a "god emptied nature" (*entgötterte Natur*); forever objectified, blind to the glory of creation and devoid of gratitude.[404] The Romantic movement, in its various forms and divergences, has been notoriously difficult to define,[405] except perhaps in its universal concern with overcoming this sense of the distancing of the divine or disenchantment. But it is precisely this area of confusion and disagreement among the Romantics, concerning the nature of that solution (i.e.: where the location of the Source/s of Life is now, to which attention should be focused; and whether that should be an immanence or transcendental orientated process), which, it is argued here, emerges, as an exemplary pivot point - or *locus classicus* - of the process of discourse which emerges at a point in social history where

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[401] As Joshua Derman suggests, "demagification", is a more literal and more appropriate translation of Weber's term "Entzauberung", otherwise commonly translated as "disenchantment". Derman 2016, 231.

[402] Weber 2001 [1930], 17, 27.

[403] Weber 2004 [1919], 12-13

[404] Schiller 1992 [1788], 161-168. The turn of phrase "entgötterte Natur" comes from Schiller's *Die Götter Griechenlands*, an extract of which helps to give some sense of spirit this (strictly, pre-Romantic) work: "'Unconscious of the joys she dispenses, / Never delighted by her own excellence, / Never aware of the arm that guides her, / Never richer through my gratitude, / Insensitive to her creator's glory, / Like the dead stroke of the pendulum, / She slavishly obeys the laws of gravity, / This nature deprived of God!'" (as translated by Hampton 2019, 14 fn 5)

[405] On the problem of defining Romanticism, see, for example: Lovejoy 1924; Bowie 2009, 175-177.

the location of the Source/s of Life is shifting. This is important for the development of our argument in demonstrating the connection between belief and the nature and forms of the material realm which are considered to hold value.

As we have already discussed, Kant's "Transcendental Subjectivity", sustained by the Neo-Kantians, describes the rational idealist formulation of ways in which the subject channels an internal (ultimately god-derived) rationalism. But, also, as we saw in our excursus on the genealogy of dualism (§15.2), ever since Ibn Sīnā through to Descartes, God becomes the *detached* source of human soul/spirit/«mind» -importantly, the god (the Source/s of Life) is transcendent; and *not* immanent, as was characteristic of more vitalist formulations, such as Aristotle's. We have also seen how, the thought of Marx, via Hegel's latent Gnosticism, unequivocally attempts to exorcise a god figure; but does so in a way which is reliant on the correspondence between this rationalist idealist construction of a «mind» (derived originally from the immanent instantiation of a transcendent god) as the mediator (or "interpretant", in Peircian terms) of external signs (Peirce) or "object thought forms" (Marx). Only changes to the social order - which, for Marx, is so inextricably bound-up in the mode of production - can shift those "illusory" constructions and facilitate a less alienated experience of life.

But, in the same way that Heidegger has helped us to see how Nietzsche's atheistic Will to Power can equally be understood as a transmutation of a transcendent theology (§14); the spectre of religiosity equally persists in the ideas of Marx. Taking its antecedence from de Brosses' *Du culte des dieux fétiches*; and intent on dismantling the idols of the masses and all that is "magic" and "illusory", it is hard to ignore the argument made by some that atheism itself is derived genealogically from monotheistic attacks against idolatry, which in atheism as inspired by Marx translates from the idolatry of the image to idolatry of the god itself.[406] This is echoed in philosopher Slavoj Žižek's argument for understanding Marxism as a form of monotheism,[407] and Max Horkheimer's observation that (Marxian) critical theory is based on the Second Commandment.[408] The point of this is that - as we will see - the transcendent god is somehow understood as what has been 'lost' through much of the Romantic movement (and many scholars of the Romantic movement since) as a symptom of secularisation. But, if secularisation is indeed a continuity of neo-Kantian transcendental subjectivity (god-derived rationalism), then confusion is bound to arise if overcoming 'disenchantment' ends up - paradoxically -

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[406] Halbertal and Margalit 1994, 112-116; De Kesel 2006, 15-39; Lütticken 2009, 16-17.
[407] Žižek 2000: 2.
[408] Horkheimer makes this observation in a 1969 letter written just after Theodor W. Adorno's death. (Lütticken 2009, 17; citing Horkheimer in Schmidt & Schmidt 1996, 743).

being concerned broadly with the restitution of that same distant god via the "transcendental" and all its associated *distancing* institutions.

We will dwell a little here on a few key protagonists as a distillation of what is a long enduring and broad body of thought with numerous transgressions. But the point that we seek to focus on is the ways in which, save for a few thinkers within the Romantic movement, who's true intentions were never properly brought forth (particularly Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Edmund Burke); the pre-dominant motif in the mobilisation of the arts and in the understanding of the role of the arts in the secularisation process after the Enlightenment; has been as a device in the pursuit of the transcendental.

19.2. Some of the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Edmund Burke and Martin Heidegger is introduced here as examples of approaches which each in their own ways acknowledged some kind of 'disenchantment' which they sought to overcome; and for whom art was both a part of the problem and a part of the solution. All three are 'Romantics' in their own ways, but who - theoretically, at least - understood the relationship of humans to the material realm (and the Source/s of Life) as something which exists *beyond* the aesthetic value of art. As such, for them, aesthetics was part of the problem, and the task at hand was to find the ways in which certain types of experience of "art" might restore something which had otherwise been 'lost'. The argument advanced here is that what they believed had been 'lost' was something quite different from the kind of "transcendental" experience which many Romantics therein sought to (re)invoke. And perhaps what both Rousseau and Burke in their own ways recognised better than Heidegger, was the difficulty of retrieving what was 'lost'; while it might be said that many of the Romantics believed that their pursuits heralded new higher levels of transcendental knowledge and experience through art. In this we can begin to understand the divergent understandings of the concepts of "immanence" and "transcendence", which it is argued here remains as a legacy of the influence of Neo-Kantian thought in contemporary thought. We will first briefly consider the thought of Rousseau, Burke and Heidegger against which we will compare some of the ideas of the broader Romantic movement.

Rousseau is considered one of the earliest progenitors of the Romantic tradition[409] as well as the environmental movement,[410] but also perceived as one of the

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[409] Dart 1999; Goulbourne & Higgins 2017.
[410] Boas 1974, 346-351; LeFreniere 1990; Masaki 2021; Trachenberg 2019.

most socio-politically "radical" among the Romantics.[411] His approach argued for a recognition of simple human societies as the most "natural", where the generally good disposition of humans thrived. [412] For Rousseau, more complex institutional societies breed human cruelty and corruption. While he was not an atavist and did not espouse a return to "savagery", his vision was for a substantial reform of society which would enable communal living, more attuned to bodily and emotional spontaneity and in greater harmony with the 'natural' environment:

> Human misery is caused by the contradictions that arise between our condition and our desires, our duties and our inclinations, between nature and political institutions, between the individual and the citizen in us. If man could be united with himself, he would be as happy as he can be. [413]

Notably Rousseau's approach is not a hedonistic one (although it was often interpreted as such), but rather about achieving a "temperate sensuality", and not one which "...extended to those voluptuaries who make a vanity of being so, or who in their wish to exceed the limits of pleasure, fall into depravity."[414] For him, art and science, both, were the root causes of the moral corruption of society.[415] But art can also be used be a "remedy for the evil that they have caused"[416] as a distraction from an "immoral path";[417] in its function as a kind of moral "simulacrum". This offers a means for engaging - at an order once removed - with the *appearance* of those things which are good, beautiful and correct; arresting the otherwise destructive modern human traits.[418] So, Rousseau is concerned with a kind of immanence –that is to say, a tendency towards entic experience derived through immersion through the lived life in a more intimate and reciprocal concern with the world; albeit a kind of relationship with the material realm with which humans have largely lost touch. With aestheticization, monetisation and popularisation of the arts and all the social vices of narcissism and hypocrisy which he suggested these developments brought with them,[419] for Rousseau, the best that could be done was to harness the arts to distract humans from further corruption.

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[411] Some have suggested that Rousseau's perceived radicalism, which envisions a total transformation of Euro-American society, is the reason for the denial of his contribution in much contemporary thought. For example, see: Dwan 2013.

[412] Rousseau 1997 [1755] ,111-229, in Gourevitch 1997. Because of this the concept of the "noble savage" was an is largely attributed to him, albeit incorrectly -on this see, for example: Lovejoy 1924; Ellingson 2001.

[413] Rousseau 1983 [1765], 2.

[414] Rousseau 1990 [1780], 114, as cited in Masters & Kelly 1990. On Rousseau's Epicurean style, see Holley 2019; 2022.

[415] Rousseau 1997 [1750], 8-9, as cited in Gourevitch 1997.

[416] Rousseau 1964, 972.

[417] Rousseau 2011 [1752].

[418] On this, see: Goldschmidt 1974, 81-82; Kelly 2007, 30-31; Lima 2013, 78-79.

[419] Rousseau 1997 [1750], 18-20, as cited in Gourevitch 1997.

Writing shortly after Rousseau, Edmund Burke developed two strands in his aesthetics. The first concerns the development of taste derived from sound intuitive judgments cultivated through correct social and institutional conditions[420] in line with his reflections on moral judgments.[421] We can see immediately here Burke's social conservativism in the contrast to Rousseau's revolutionism.[422] But the second and more abundant strand of his thought on the sublime presents us with a deeper understanding of the way in which his interests are - up to a point - comparable to Rousseau; and indeed distinct from the a later more Schopenhaeun conception of the sublime, which becomes de rigueur for most within the Romantic movement (discussed in §20.2). So, for Burke, the sublime is comprised of two essential components: terror and the obscure.[423] For him, the sense of the sublime is derived ultimately from a survival instinct, which responds to the affectivity of anything which might threaten survival, through the emotion of fear or "astonishment";[424] which, for him, must come down to anything which is mysterious or infinite. In this maelstrom of senses and emotions must also be included the divine -which, as with anything which is mysterious, also cannot be accessed or fully understood (as with the experience of the sublime in itself). So, in "...that great chain of causes, which linking one to another even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth."[425] With objects and events which have these qualities of the infinite, but which do not directly threaten survival, a unique sort of satisfaction is derived, which Burke described as the sublime. This kind of pleasure cannot be derived through useful objects, which in their total availability for use, consumption and manipulation have no infinite value. More than this; he is also keen to emphasise objects and events which he considers as inauthentic sublime experiences. Political historian Stephen K White refers to this idea Burke developed as the "false sublime" which arose with political modernity in which humans create and stand-in for the infinite, such as the public spectacles which the French revolutionaries put on for the public (which Burke comments upon); or the spectacles of contemporary avant-garde artists.[426]

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[420]   Burke 1989 [1757], 209, as cited in Langford 1989.
[421]   Burke 1987 [1790], 78.
[422]   Musgrave (1997) and White (1994), for example, make cogent arguments for the ways in which Burke's later more overt political thought cannot be separated from his earlier less overtly political 'juvenilia' on aesthetics.
[423]   Burke 1989 [1757], 231, as cited in Langford 1989.
[424]   "Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect." Burke 1989 [1757], 230, as cited in Langford 1989.
[425]   Burke 1989 [1757], 238, as cited in Langford 1989.
[426]   White 1994, 74-75.

19.3. Heidegger's thought comes notably close to Burke's "false sublime", as Political historian William F Byrne indeed notes.[427] Heidegger's concern with the aestheticization of sense experience and ethics provides a helpful intervention on the way in which the pursuit of the entic imperative is shifted with secularisation toward the consumption of the arts.[428] According to Heidegger, the Enlightenment movement - rooted in the thought of the Sophists, Plato and Socrates - decoupled ethics from the 'truths' of faith and covenant (i.e.: "thy shalt not murder") into the realm of positivism, which necessarily, invoked sense-feelings (i.e. pain, suffering) as the measurable basis for ethical concerns. Ethics was 'aestheticized'. Young provides a useful example:

> A great medieval altarpiece possessed, for its original receivers, at least two aspects: most importantly, it disclosed the 'truth' of the Christian cosmos but, in second place, it did so in a formally beautiful way. If then, thinking about art in a climate of positivism, one cancels its truth-bearing function, all one is left with is its 'aesthetic' role.[429]

Heidegger's concern with aesthetics then, is that it is a pursuit of experiences available for consumption. It has become, for Heidegger, a form of leisure activity and stress relief –no more than, as he put it, "a matter for pastry cooks."[430]

Heidegger's critique of the objectifying character of aesthetics comprised of two elements in particular. Firstly, the production and display of the work is deeply instantiated in the subject/object dialectic, which assumes an internalist/externalist strategy of visualisation: this is the art-work//you are the viewer: "the modern subject must supposedly first get outside the immanent sphere of its own subjectivity so as to encounter this 'external' object, and then return back to its subjective sphere bearing the fruits of this encounter."[431] We might recall that this is precisely the way in which Gell understands the experience of "idols" as "the external relational context within which the idol is set, and the internal nexus of relations between mind and the body." (See §6) [432]

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[427] Byrne 2006, 28.

[428] There is agreement that there was a rise of the aestheticization of the arts with the decline of the sanctity of orthodox religious authority (or secularisation) during the enlightenment. On this, see for example, Buchenau 2013; Décultot 2002; Dupré 2004, 78-111; Grote 2017; Guyer 2014; Harrison, Wood & Gaiger 2000; Makkreel 2006; Notably, the beginnings of reflections of this kind is broadly credited to Christian Wolff's 1719 *Vernünftige Gedanken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt* (Rational Thoughts on God, the World, and the Soul of Man) and Alexander Baumgarten in his 1735 *Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Philosophical meditations pertaining to some matters concerning poetry, as published 1983. See also 1954 English Translation), both of whom themselves draw upon a rationalism concerning the aestheticisation of art.

[429] Young 2001, 14.

[430] Heidegger 2000 [1953] {1935}, 131. See also: 1977 [1954] {1949}, 34; 1971 [1950] {1935-1937}, 79.

[431] Thomson 2011, 49. See Heidegger 1977 [1954] {1940}, 116.

[432] Gell 1998, 137.

Secondly, this experience, which - for Heidegger - makes us feel "more alive", is mediated through our own internal/external confused discourse around the cult of the artist and their biographical experience, subjectivity and intention: "what did they mean?" "did they mean this or that?" "is it an expression of their feelings?" "are they being subversive?" "or are they being ironic?" "do I agree?" "should I agree?" "do I like it?" "should I like it?" As such, our experience of feeling "more alive" is suspended within this ultimately alienated realm of being: further disconnecting or "un-plugging" us from the world. For Heidegger, then, the self-conscious reflection, critique and theorisation of art is merely a symptom of the aestheticisation of the art-work, rather than a necessary condition.[433]

So, Rousseau and Burke appear to be diametrically opposed politically - as a revolutionary and a conservative, respectively. However, they are both concerned ultimately with the immanent divine and salvaging some remnants of direct relationships with external Source/s of Life (with 'nature' and with established institutions, respectively). Heidegger expresses similar concerns, although, as we will see, he initially demonstrates more optimism for restoring immanent experience through 'great art', albeit in a politically dangerous way. All three share the belief that the aestheticization of the arts - as a manifestation of disenchantment - came to full fruition in the Enlightenment period.

§20. Methexis and the sublime

20.1. The positions of Rousseau, Burke and Heidegger help to frame and offer a contrast to the different sort of concern for attaining transcendence which preoccupied most proponents of the Romantic movement; and which it is sustained here was in-itself a manifestation of Neo-Kantian thought. Despite the concomitance of the sentiments of disenchantment of Rousseau, Burke and Heidegger with the Romantics, the kind of thought which underpins the Romantics in many ways did not share the same caution or cynicism of Rousseau and Burke, especially.

One of the key figures in setting the trajectory of the thought of the Romantic movement was Friedrich Hölderlin. As religious studies scholar Alexander Hampton puts it, "as if responding directly to Schiller" in his concerns on the loss of the transcendent God "over our head", Hölderlin would insist that "...it is the vocation of the poet to make us newly aware of the divine presence in the riverbanks, groves and peaks, where

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[433] Heidegger 1961, 80. The key divergent point which differentiates Heidegger's "death of art" and Arthur Danto's famous "end" of art, is that the former posits that art dies with theory, while for the latter art dies without it! See Danto, 1998.

previously naiads, dryads and oreads had dwelt."[434] To do this, Hölderlin invokes the reactivation of the principle of what Plato called "methexis" or "participation".[435] For Plato, all things have an ideal form, which is the ultimate reality; but the perceptible world is only an imperfect appearance (or shadow of the exterior world on the cave wall, to use his cave analogy) of those forms.[436] Methexis refers to the process of the imperfect physical instantiation of the pure form.[437] So, for example, a beautiful flower is the imperfect form of the pure form of beauty. It is in the context of this formulation that, for Plato, mimesis or «representation» had no value and therefore no place in his proto-Utopian *Republic*, because a picture of a beautiful flower tells us nothing more than what we already know in its conception as an idea or the prototype and can only be an imitation of a flower (the "memetic"): "The artist's representation is...a long way removed from truth, and he is able to reproduce everything because he never penetrates beneath the superficial appearance of anything." [438] But the flower in-itself - in its authenticity - is methexic with or to the original and only pure form. For Plotinus, the so-called founder of Neoplatonism,[439] humans, participate in the ultimate form (or The One which emanates itself into beings), through *nous* or "intellect".[440] From this we can recognise already the template of the Neo-Kantian idealist conception of a rationalist «mind» governed by a transcendental divine. In the context of this appropriation of the Methexis by the Romantics, Hampton provides an interesting diagnosis of the nature of the thought of Romanticism, especially as it arose from the German Frühromantik of which Schiller and Hölderlin were early proponents:

> The presence of Platonic realism in Frühromantik allows one to understand how the movement sought to break down the increasingly sharpened distinction between transcendence and immanence, setting the movement on an opposed trajectory to secularisation. Romanticism did this by taking account of the central Spinozist claim that there was nothing apart from God, and accepting the fundamental insight of post-Kantian idealism, that the mind is fundamental to structuring our experience. Equally the Romantics rejected Spinoza's rational limitations that rendered God wholly immanent, and challenged the limitations which transcendental idealism placed on the possible knowledge of the transcendent. From these two seeming philosophical extremes, and with the insights afforded by the tradition of Platonic realism, the Frühromantiker began to synthesise a new position from the two wherein all individual being, including the self, inhered and participated in absolute being, which itself transcended immanence. To actively engage this participatory ontology,

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[434] Hampton 2019, 17.

[435] *Ibid.*; Pugh, 1997. The various philosophers and poets of the Romantic tradition variously do or do not explicitly acknowledge the Platonic and/or Plotinian heritage of the ideas of methexis and participation. Schiller, for example, barely makes reference to Plato, certainly not in this regard; and never mentions Plotinus, despite the co-proximity of their ideas (Novotney 1977, 517-518; Pugh 1997, 5-6).

[436] Plato, 1995 [c.375 BC].

[437] *Ibid.*

[438] Plato 1995 [c. 375 BC], 374.

[439] For discussions on Plotinus as the 'founder' of Neoplatonism, see, for example: Blumenthal 1993, 1-23; Corrigan 2005, 3; de Vogel 1953.

[440] Plotinus, see Blumenthal, 1993.

Romanticism turned to the language of neither philosophy nor theology, but to aesthetics, which combined both.[441]

So, the core of Hampton's thesis speculates that the Romantics - through the aesthetic - achieved a kind of 'middle ground' transcendent immanence. It is proposed here instead that, while there may have been such an ambition, the real outcome was something quite different. The contention here is that where the shift of the focus of the Source/s of Life occurs - in this case, to the transcendent monotheistic God, as the source of the internal rational «mind» - in a way which Rousseau recognised, Burke partially acknowledged and (as we will see) Heidegger discovered by trial and error; there is no possibility of overcoming the transcendental, or of re-invoking the immanent without a correlating shift in beliefs concerning the Source/s of Life. Indeed, as theologian John Milbank and philosopher Patrice Haynes have both argued, secular "immanentist" constructions, including the work of (for example) Gilles Deleuze, inevitably default to idealist "etherealising" and "transcendentalising" "immanent materialisms" or - in Haynes' words - "pseudo-transcendentalism".[442] Milbank and Haynes' concern is that while such approaches display all the language and rhetoric of immanence orientated perspectives, they in-fact persist as materialist and transcendentalist approaches. To illustrate this sort of dynamic, we will briefly explore two examples of the ways in which the transcendental persists in two different conceptions of human relations to art which are rooted in some way to the Romantic appropriation of methexis/participation. First in the next subsection, the conception of the sublime as it was further developed, especially by Schopenhauer; and secondly, in §21, Heidegger's conception of 'Great Art'.

20.2. In his Critique of Aesthetic Judgment (1790), Kant sought to determine how we might judge that something is "beautiful". As discussed, Kant's principal project was to 'synthesise' the transcendental idealist and empirical realist positions. Regarding aesthetics, the rationalists believed it was possible to make true objective statements about what might be considered beautiful; [443] while the empiricists insisted that beauty is entirely subjective: "in the eye of the beholder".[444] For Kant both positions were unacceptable. Instead, he proposed that there are some types of objects which can be universally aesthetically pleasurable or beautiful, and that the important task was to be

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[441] Hampton 2019, 6-7.
[442] Milbank 2005; Haynes 2012.
[443] See, for example: Baumgarten 2007 [1750].
[444] See, for example: Hume 1742 ("moral and political" -p.128). This term, "in the eye of the beholder", is attributed to numerous sources, including Aristotle, Shakespeare ("Beauty is bought by judgement of the eye", *Love's Labour Lost*, 1588, II,I.); but in its precise formulation - "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" – the idea is most widely credited to Margaret Wolfe Hungerford in *Molly Bawn,* 2008 [1878].

able to define the conditions for this to be true. Of particular importance to Kant was the principal of "disinterestedness". What he suggests is that, any aesthetic pleasure derived from fulfilling a personal interest or emotion cannot lead to unfettered aesthetic judgments. Instead, he suggests that such aesthetic judgments must involve a different kind of cognition.

Kant's contribution formed the basis of Schopenhauer's thought. For him, while daily experience of the world is dominated by "...care for the constantly demanding will...[which] continually fills and moves consciousness"[445] with desires, presented up to the dangers of the same Will which exercises itself mercilessly in the world; there remains some hope of refuge in what he describes as "aesthetic delight" (*Wohlgefallen*), and also in a lesser but still significant extent, through the sublime and the lyrical. Humans on a day-to-day basis cope with life through an ordinary consciousness which engages only with the "relative essence" of things in the world; that is, in their relative usefulness to us (or, rather, to that single Will which drives us). So "...the ordinary man does not linger long over the mere perception...[but]...quickly looks for the concept under which it is to be brought just as the lazy man looks for the chair."[446] In other words, the instrumental purpose and function of things, to survive, is of primary interest in ordinary consciousness.[447] Aesthetic delight (*Wohlgefallen*), on the other hand, offers another much rarer kind of experience through which "...we lose ourselves entirely in the object...". So...

> ...we forget our individuality, our will, and continue to exist only as pure subject, as clear [klarer] mirror of the object, so that it is as though the object alone existed without anyone to perceive it, and thus we are no longer able to separate the perceiver from the perception, but the two have become one, since the entire consciousness is filled and occupied by a single image of perception.[448]

And as such, in aesthetic delight, for Schopenhauer, we enter a "painless state" and are "delivered from the miserable pressure of the will."[449]

Schopenhauer's formulation of aesthetic delight is important as a form of description of entic experience. Similarly, his conception of "the being raised up above"

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[445] Schopenhauer 1966 [1818] WR 1, 196.

[446] Schopenhauer WR 1, 187-188.

[447] As Young puts it: "So, for example, when an object shows up in ordinary consciousness as a tiger, it shows up not, à la William Blake or Douanier Rousseau, as a wonderfully blazing orange contrast to the black-green foliage of the jungle, not as a burning-bright-in-the-forest-of-the-night kind of tiger, but rather as danger. When something shows up as an apple it shows up, not, à la Cézanne, as a delicately variegated display of nature's wondrous infinity of greens, but as food. And when a piece of greenstone shows up as a knife it shows up not as a beautiful, ready-made sculpture, but as equipment, as something for killing tigers or cutting apples." Young 2005, 109.

[448] Schopenhauer 1966 [1818] WR1, 179.

[449] Schopenhauer WR 1, 196.

(*das Erhabene*) offers an entry point for our understanding here of the more commonly recognised concept of "the sublime", as what will be argued here as a significant counterpoint to entic experience. So, how, for Schopenhauer, do "aesthetic delight" and "the being raised up above" (herein "the sublime") differ? In many ways, the process of experiencing Schopenhauer's "sublime" is the positive activation of the dialectical condition described by Schopenhauer, Hegel, Marx and Simmel; through the subject's confrontation of an object. The sublime experience relies on the awareness of one's condition as both the expressive instantiation of the Will and in confrontation to the world as Will, whereas the experience of aesthetic delight, one is utterly subsumed beyond any kind of self-awareness. Indeed, in the sublime experience, the object confronted must appear to threaten the Will, inducing a feeling of "exaltation".[450] But that object, while something which poses a threat to humans as themselves an embodiment of the Will, cannot in that moment pose immediate threat to the subject. The reason that such exultation should create a sense of bitter-sweetness which defines the sublime experience is encapsulated in the term *das Erhabene* - "the being raised up above": for Schopenhauer, while confrontation with such objects reminds the individual of their vulnerability in the face of these unstoppable forces and such infinite time-space, the subject is at once also the will. The human subject is the will - or in Kantian terms, the thing-in-itself[451] - which commands such infinite power. The subject is, in the sublime moment, elevated in an objectivising experience, in which their own mortality (the bitter) is deferred and - as Young puts it - an intimation of immortality[452] (the sweet) is brought forward. Schopenhauer adopts Kant's two types of sublime experience: "dynamical" and "mathematical".[453] The dynamical sublime, are those natural forces against which we have no control:

> ...nature in turbulent and tempestuous motion; semi-darkness through threatening black thunder clouds; overhanging cliffs shutting out the view by their interlacing; rushing, foaming, masses of water; complete desert; the wail of the winds rushing through the ravines... [which] ...reduces us to nought.[454]

The mathematically sublime are those things which reminds us of our finitude against the infinity of time and space: the depths of time as presented to us in ancient places, in fossilised dinosaurs or the vastness of space evident in the distance of the stars.[455]

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[450] Schopenhauer WR 1, 201-202.
[451] Kant [See Young, 2005, 120, fn 17 pg 254]
[452] Young 2005, 120.
[453] Kant *Critique of Judgment* [See YOUNG 115-116]
[454] Schopenhauer WR 1, 204.
[455] Schopenhauer WR 1, 204.

§21. 'Great Art'

Much literature has been devoted to Heidegger's *The Origin of the Work of Art* (TOWA) - his most well-known work on 'art' - in which he made significant developments on his earlier thoughts on buildings, poetry and the character of 'things';[456] and which shares much in common with some of the concerns of the Romantics. Julian Young - in one of few studies that considers the fullness of Heidegger's thinking on art - has pointed out that Heidegger in fact undergoes two 'turns' or developments in his thinking on the work of art after TOWA; which, as will become apparent, are pertinent to the reading developed here.[457]

The Origin of the Work of Art, for Heidegger constitutes "reflections" concerning "the riddle of art". But as he clarifies, these reflections "...are far from claiming to solve the riddle. The task is to see the riddle."[458] In it, what he defines as "great art" is dead.[459] The death of art, he claims, was heralded with the emergence of aesthetics, which he explains as a product of metaphysics.[460] For Heidegger, the 'great artwork', in the first instance, 'opens-up' world. In doing so, it brings forth world, as if for the first time: "Whenever art happens...history either begins or starts over again."[461] Young suggests that Heidegger evokes this idea, particularly of firstness, in a deliberately poetic way in a passagein *The Origin of the Work of Art* in which he describes how the Greek temple operates as an 'art-work' in relation to its worshippers:

> It is the temple-work that first fits together and at the same time gathers around itself the unity of those paths and...relational context of this historical people...first brings to light the light of the day...[allows] tree, grass, eagle and snake and cricket first to enter their distinctive shape...The temple, in standing there first gives to things their look and to men their look on themselves.[462]

By drawing attention to the world as if for the first time, the art-work also brings forth what has become ordinary and disappeared into the background "...to make 'expressly visible',

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[456] Haar posits that this work represents "the most radical transmutation of aesthetics not only since Kant but also since the Greeks." Haar 1993, 191.

[457] Young 2001.

[458] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 79.

[459] *Ibid.*, 79 – 80.

[460] Heidegger 1996 [1984] {1942}, 88.

[461] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 77.

[462] *Ibid.* 42. This is based on an extract presented by Young 2001, 29; including the emphases. Notably, this reading of Heidegger's 'opening-up' and 'first' quality of art, is not universal among scholars of Heidegger, some such as Dreyfus, for example, instead make a so-called 'Promethean' reading. I.e.: Dreyfus 1993. That is, that great art-works found or create the world for the first time. The present author, however, agrees with Young that, as Heidegger makes it quite apparent in various texts. "Not the artwork...but 'language' creates world" (Young 2001, 36). See also: Clark 2002, 45-47.

to 'thematise' a world which is already in existence",[463] to remind us of our world (our voice), when "it grows dumb and weary".[464] Young's invocation of Shelley is helpful here:

> [Poetry] purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being…It creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrent impressions of blunted familiarity.[465]

These ideas share much in common with Brecht's 'estrangement effect'[466] or Russian formalist Shklovsky's 'defamiliarisation' principle.[467] Heideggerian scholar Gianni Vattimo evokes Duchamp's Fountain as an example of modern art that defamiliarizes world (see Figure 10);[468] whilst Santiago Zabala emphasises its revolutionary potential as an artwork within Heidegger's scheme.[469] However, whilst - it may be agreed that it decontextualizes something ordinary and every day, arguably bringing forth our 'world' - would it, for Heidegger, truly qualify as a 'great art-work'?

The latent potency of art, for Heidegger, whether in the form of plastic arts, architecture, or poetry is in its capacity to reveal the thingly nature of things and "…to let the earth be an earth".[470] "European art…" - including Duchamp's *Fountain* - on the other hand "…is in its essence distinguished by the character of representation (*Darstellung*). Representation, eidos, making visible."[471] In this domain, where truth as correspondence operates, there will always be something missing –no earth, no mystery; not because it does not exist, but because Euro-American metaphysical thought conceals it by revealing the thing as an object. In the authentic experience of the thing, we should not draw

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[463] Young 2001, 33.

[464] Heidegger 1949 [1937] {1936}, 312. Young 2001, 35.

[465] Shelley, cited in the Times Literary Supplement 5016, 21 May 1999, 14-15. Cited by Young 2001, 31.

[466] E.g. see: Singer, 2023; Robinson 2008.

[467] In the 'defamiliarisation' principle Shklovsky describes the process of overcoming the "habitualization" of the routine and the everyday through art. To illustrate the point, he cites from Leo Tolstoy's diary: "I was cleaning and, meandering about, approached the divan and couldn't remember whether or not I had dusted it. Since these movements are habitual and unconscious I could not remember and felt that it was impossible to remember - so that if I had dusted it and forgot - that is, had acted unconsciously, then it was the same as if I had not. If some conscious person had been watching, then the fact could be established. If, however, no one was looking, or looking on unconsciously, if the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been…And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habitualization devours work, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war. 'If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.' And art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important." Leo Tolstoy's Diary entry, March 1, 1897. As cited Shklovsky [1917], in Lemon & Reis 1965, 12. Note that Shklovsky in fact cites the entry as February 29th 1897, which Lemon & Reis correct to March 1st 1897.

[468] Vattimo 2008, xv-xvi; 45-47; 105; 159.

[469] Zabala, in Rorty and Vattimo, 2005, xv.

[470] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 46.

[471] Heidegger 1989, 213.

attention, frame and reify things (as with the recent 'return to things', for example), but in fact allow things to remain invisible.

FIGURE 10: MARCEL DUCHAMP, FOUNTAIN (1917). (LOST). IMAGE: ALFRED STEIGLITZ, 1917, AS DISPLAYED AT THE 291 GALLERY, NEW YORK.

In *The Origin of the Work of Art*¸ Heidegger refers to this invisible or concealed truth as 'earth'. Aspects of 'earth' that are "unconcealed" or 'lit up' - become part of our World.[472] But while this unconcealed earth - what is ultimately holy, mysterious - is illuminated in this way, it is ultimately never fully revealed. Heidegger posits then that "great works of art" are, first of all earthly 'things'; that they exhibit a 'thingly' character.[473] It is this underlying, earthly characteristic - unmediated through Worldly conceptual and

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[472] Heidegger 1977 [1954] {1949/1957}, 44; 1977 [1954] {1949}, 33; See also Young 2002: 10.

[473] Developing his treatise on *Thing Theory*, based largely on Heidegger's thought, Bill Brown puts it this way: "Could you clarify this matter of things by...imagining them, first, as the amorphousness out of which objects are materialized by the (ap)perceiving subject, the anterior physicality of the physical world emerging, perhaps, as an after-effect of the mutual constitution of subject and object, a retrojection? You could imagine things, second, as what is excessive in objects, as what exceeds their mere materialization as objects or their mere utilization as objects... Temporalized as the before and after the object, thingness amounts to a latency (the not yet formed or the not yet formable) and to an excess (what remains physically or metaphysically irreducible to objects). But this temporality obscures the all-at-onceness, the simultaneity, of the object/thing dialectic..." (Brown 2001, 5).

linguistic devices - "as a bearer of traits, as the unity of a manifold of sensations, as formed matter",[474] which Heidegger seeks to uncover. As Gianni Vattimo put it:

> While the world is the system of meanings which are read as they unfold in the work, the earth is the element of the work which comes forth as ever concealing itself anew, like a sort of nucleus that is never used up by interpretations and never exhausted by meanings.[475]

Schopenhauer can help us here, when he stated that: "...we are entirely satisfied by the impression of a work of art only when it leaves behind something we cannot bring down to the distinctness of a concept."[476] The 'great art-work', then, brings earth into our midst, but it cannot be summoned through literal representative description or correspondence, which are ultimately vassals of Euro-American metaphysical thought. This non-literal evocation of earth, allows its mystery to shine which in-it-self commands authority and respect.[477]

Young, compares Heidegger's 'opening-up' of the thinglyness of the artwork with "the 'setting-up' of something on display in an exhibition".[478] However, Heidegger is clear that the 'great art-work' is not that which is displayed in a gallery, and further that "the 'artist' remains inconsequential as compared with the work":

> Well, then, the works themselves stand and hang in collections and exhibitions. But are they here in themselves as the works they themselves are, or are they not rather here rather as objects of the art industry? Works are made available for public and private art appreciation. Official agencies assume the care and maintenance of works. Connoisseurs and critics busy themselves with them. Art dealers supply the market. Art-historical study makes them the works the objects of a science. Yet in all this busy activity do we encounter the work itself?
> The Aegina sculptures in the Munich collection, Sophocles' Antigone in the best critical edition, are, as the works they are, torn out of their own native sphere. However high their quality and power of impression, however good their state of preservation, however certain their interpretation, placing them in a collection has withdrawn them from their own world.[479]

Indeed, for Heidegger, 'great artworks' are not merely objects that make us more attentive of our world through their exhibition in galleries, travelling "from one exhibit to another...shipped like coal from the Ruhr and logs from the Black Forest",[480] but rather,

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[474] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 30.
[475] Vattimo 1988, 71.
[476] Schopenhauer 1966 [1844], II, 409.
[477] "'God', says Heidegger, remains something 'exalted and holy' only so long as he preserves 'the mysteriousness of his distance', his beyond-the-horizon-of-our-conceptual-understanding-ness. People, too, are sublime on account of their mystery. If one feels one has plucked out the heart of another's mystery, that one has complete conceptual mastery of what makes her 'tick' – that she has become, as Heidegger would say, completely 'calculable' – then she cannot command awe or even respect." Young 2001, 43.
[478] Young 2001, 38.
[479] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 40.
[480] *Ibid.*, 19.

something that he compares to Greek techne. That is, art and craft as action and process; a process of making and doing, and doing collectively. This doing is not a self-conscious doing when one critiques a work of art on its aesthetic merits for example. By the very virtue that - in Euro-American thought - we recognise these things as objects of 'art' - we obscure the essence of its thinglyness - bringing it out of the earth and making it of the world.[481] It is because of the object-like nature of modern art that Heidegger identifies, that it is doubtful Heidegger would have agreed with Vattimo and Zabala's valorisation of Duchamp's Fountain as a 'great art-work', at least at the time of writing TOWA.

Young lists the range of the kinds of collective events these 'great artworks' may include: "a Greek temple, a medieval altarpiece, a Palestrina Mass, a football match, a rock concert, and perhaps even something not too unlike a Nuremburg rally, might all count as 'art-works'".[482] An artwork, then, for Heidegger must 'create' a people through a common heritage and 'preserves' or 'founds' a people, by bringing forth the mystery and wonder of their shared world, actively engaging them in the constant remaking of the work (and the world), and reaffirming the ethical bases of that community and the social relations within that community.[483] Notably, the great art-work is never a single event, and is necessarily in constant flux; something "to preserve...to repeat, to draw once again (*wieder-holen*) more deeply than ever from the source"[484] and from which we must "take a creative view".[485]

The influence of Hölderlin is important for understanding the role of God/s in Heidegger's thought, and for how his thought at some point converged dangerously with Nazi aspirations;[486] what Young quite aptly referred to as the "(un)holy alliance of 'H's": Hölderlin, Hitler and Heidegger".[487] As Heidegger informs us in the *Spiegel* interview (see §24.2): "My thinking stands in definitive relation to the poetry of Hölderlin".[488] Quoting Hölderlin elsewhere, Heidegger refers to modernity as witnessing the "flight of gods" and as an age of "spiritual decline":[489] "no god any longer gathers men and things unto himself, visibly and unequivocally, and by such gathering disposes the world's history and man's

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[481] Heidegger provides a much more complex formulation of the ways we define the thing in contrast to the actual thingly nature of things, which are excluded here in the interests of brevity. For example, see: Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 20-32; see also Thomson 2011, 77-82.

[482] Young 2001, 18.

[483] Concerning Heidegger's relation of the ethical and social bases of the community see: Heidegger 1996 [1984] {1942}, 82; 1949 [1937] {1936}, 312; 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 43. See also Young 2001, 25-29.

[484] Heidegger 2000 [1953] {1935}, 191, 38.

[485] Heidegger, 1962 [1927], 386.

[486] Young 2001, 69-83.

[487] Young 2001, 78.

[488] Heidegger 1976, 57-58.

[489] Heidegger 2000 [1953] {1935}, 38; Young 2001, 73.

sojourn in it."[490] Young postulates that Heidegger's earlier texts on Hölderlin from 1934-1936[491] embody 'errors' of interpretation and perspective, which Heidegger corrects in his later texts from 1939 onwards.[492] In his earlier texts, Heidegger identifies that Hölderlin's poetry is characterised by a deep sense of mourning of the absence of Gods (*heilige Trauer,* holy mourning).[493] That is, a spiritual-intellectual mourning (*geistige*),[494] which is 'creative and productive' (*schöpferisch-erzeugend*)[495] rather than a psychological or nostalgic.[496] For Heidegger, Hölderlin's poetry provides both the diagnosis and the prescription to the problem of the 'destitution' of modernity by disclosing the restoration of the 'Greek-paradigm artwork' that "brings the dialogue of the divine and human destining to radiance."[497] As Young puts it:

> As 'the most metaphysical of nations' it is, he says, the particular work of the Germans to restore 'the history of the West…to the primordial realm of the powers of Being' by means of 'new spiritual energies unfolding historically from out of the [German] centre'…The beginning of this process, the self-collection of the Germans, is to happen through the poet, Hölderlin, the 'founder' of our 'truth of beings', the thinker, Heidegger, who articulates – in presumably, more literal and therefore more accessible language – the poet's truth, and finally the state-founder, Hitler, who determines the final details and puts into practical effect poetically disclosed truth. It is because of this thinker-mediated link between poetry and politics - and because of the posited supremacy of the poet… - that Heidegger says that poetry is 'politics in the highest and most authentic sense'.[498]

The re-instigation of the 'Greek-paradigm artwork', indeed, is reminiscent of a common motif in the Romantic ideal, as exemplified in Schiller's evocation of Graeco-Roman ideal and Nietzsche's valorisation of the Apollonian art and culture as the highest form of human endeavour; but also in the neo-classical building programmes of Hitler's architects, such as Paul Lugwig Troost, Albert Speer and Hermann Giesler. [499]

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[490] Heidegger 1971 [1946], 91; Young 2001, 85.
[491] In particular: Heidegger 2014 [1934]; 1949 [1937] {1936}; & 2000 [1953] {1935}; Young 2001, 71.
[492] In particular: Heidegger 1977 [1936-1968], 9-32, 43-78, 79-151; 2018 [1943] {1941-42}; 1996 [1984] {1942}; 1971 [1946].. Young notes that although Heidegger continues to the write about Hölderlin after the last of these texts, between 1946 and the end of his life; he suggests that the period between 1934/35-1946 is "the period of Heidegger's engagement with Hölderlin, the period during which, as I put it, Heidegger's education by Hölderlin was undertaken and completed." Young 2001, 84.
[493] Heidegger 2014 [1934], 146; Young 2001, 74.
[494] Heidegger 2014 [1934],82-89; Young 2001, 74.
[495] Heidegger 2014 [1934], 94; Young 2001, 75.
[496] Heidegger 2014 [1934], 170; Young 2001, 75
[497] Heidegger 1977 [1954] {1949}, 34; Young 2001, 75.
[498] Young 2001, 76. Citing Heidegger 1959 [1953] {1935}, 38-39; 1977 [1934], 214. Original square brackets.
[499] Troost, for example, built *Ehrentempels* ("honour-temples") at the Königsplatz in Munich and Speer was the architect of the infamous masterplan to rebuild Berlin which he referred to as the *Welthauptstadt Germania* ("World-Capital Germany"), developing his *Ruinenwerttheorie* ("Theory-of-ruin-value") which conceived of new monuments to survive their eventual abandonment and/or destruction as ruins in a similar way to ancient Greek and Roman monuments. Similarly, *Thingplatz*, resembling Greek and Roman theatres, were constructed across Germany (some 40 out of 400 planned were executed) where *Thing* assemblies (*Thingspiele*) - Nordic/Germanic <u>*völkisch*</u> stagings - and propaganda events were hosted. On

Young shows then, how in Heidegger's later texts, he makes three significant shifts from this position which help us to understand his thought on the God/s in relation to art/material culture. But these later texts furthermore help to elucidate how Heidegger moves away from his "(un)holy alliance of 'H's". The first concerns Heidegger's shift away from Graecocentrism, arising out of his revised position that in-fact "the 'divine radiance', that aether...in which alone gods are gods', has become 'extinguished'." [500] Young summarises the point more artfully than may be paraphrased here:

> It follows from this that in the age of modernity it is impossible to create a Greek-paradigm artwork since it can never be the case that it finds 'preservers'...Modernity makes, the late Heidegger repeatedly says, no 'space'...for art, no space of the right kind, on account of the fact that we have become insensible to 'earth', to 'the holy'.
> Nothing, of course, prevents us building a large, Greek-looking amphitheatre or temple. If, however...one does so...then all one ends up with is a building which is either empty, or else full of people herded there by storm troopers...In the age of de-divination (*Entgötterung*)...of the world there is no more point in building a temple to the gods than there is, in the Amazon rainforest, to building an opera house.[501]

In his second shift, Heidegger realigns his perspective on the role of thinker in relation to the poet (and all artists), and in 1942 critiques the positivistic view of 'thinking' - for which he himself was guilty some seven years before - as:

> [T]he view that considers philosophical thinking as liberating the mythological poem from the mythical and as recasting its remaining content into the rigid grid and debris of empty concepts. According to this view, thinking in general is nothing other than the 'demythologizing' of the myth. One represents this process as though it were the draining of a marshland, a process that, when complete, leaves 'dry' ground remaining. As though thinking already lay waiting within poeticizing and needed only to be liberated from the 'poetic'.[502]

In this regard, Heidegger's so-called 'Van Gogh Passage' in which he provides an interpretation of Van Gogh's painting *A Pair of Shoes* helps us to illustrate the way in which Heidegger's attempt at accessing a the 'great' work of art ultimately failed in reverting to «representational» thinking. (see Appendix IV). Finally, and directly linked to the first two is Heidegger's development of the concept of *Ereignis*, which comes to full actualisation in his *Contributions to Philosophy* and which will be dealt with in due course (see §24.2).

What all of this helps to reveal is the multi-stable nature of the form of the image or thing. The efficacy of the image is not, after all, dependent on the image - on whether it is 'great' or not (which can only be an arbitrary and subjective designation) - but rather on

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Troost, see: Nüsslein 2012; On Speer, see: Speer, 1970; Krier 2013. On Giesler, see: Früchtel 2008; See also Spotts 2003; Taylor 1974. See also Young 2001, 77-78; 81. On *Thingplatz / Thingspiele* see: Fischer-Lichte 2005, 122-158; Gadberry, 1980; Niven 2000; Strobl 2007, 65-87; Taylor 1974, 190; 206; 210-218.

[500] Young 2001, 90. Citing Heidegger 1971 [1946], 91-92.

[501] Young 2001, 91. Citing Biemel & von Herrmann. 1989; Heidegger 1977 [1954] {1940}, 116.

[502] Heidegger 1996 [1984] {1942}, 111-112.

the subject; and the nature of the relationship which the subject has to the form in relation the subject's broader *beliefs*. It can be argued then, that - for Heidegger - only if the subject is trained or attuned beyond the Euro-American metaphysical modality of perception, might she achieve the experience of what he describes as *Ereignis*. It may also be the case that, with the right amount of exposure to certain types of art that invite or propagate a certain kind of gaze (and it seems that this is what Heidegger fundamentally meant by 'great-art'), the possibility of seeing beyond «representation», may be possible; albeit only fleetingly. For Heidegger then, 'great-art' provides opportunities for people to collectively be engaged in experiencing Ereignis. For him - in the Euro-American context - it was about opening up the possibility of experiencing something other than «representational» or metaphysical thought. Heidegger's conviction never was that one could simply overcome it overnight, but rather as we saw earlier "The only possibility remaining to us is that in thinking and in poetry there can be prepared a readiness for the appearing of the God, or for the absence of the God in a decline: that we decline in face of the absent God".[503]

Summary of Chapter 6

This chapter has sought to discuss the ways in which the with the increase of secularisation with the Enlightenment, a shift occurred in which experiences previously associated with the religious realm were transposed to aesthetic pursuits, as a means of overcoming 'disenchantment'. But notably, ideas of the sublime and methexis (participation) involved not experiences which somehow brought the perceiver closer to some kind of spiritual or entic experience; but - in keeping with the Neo-Kantian conception of a humanist transcendental subjectivity - created more distance between the perceiver and the material realm.

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[503] Heidegger 1976.

CHAPTER 7: Post-Humanism [sic]

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In the last chapter, we demonstrated the ways in which the dialectic and entic imperatives were manifest in an idealist form through the Romantic movement as a quest for post-enlightenment "re-enchantment", through transcendental 'sublime' experiences. Similarly, we saw the ways in which Heidegger failed in his early thought to overcome representationalism through a similar romantic conception of 'Great Art' for overcoming Euro-American 'metaphysics'. This helped to lay the ground for seeing the ways in which representationalism steeped in neo-Kantian idealism persists in the ways we conceptualise and engage with visual and material culture. But in the last forty years, the "return to things" and the "ontological turn" has made claims to overcoming representationalism. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the ways in which many of the "post-structural" and "post-humanist" approaches continue to channel Neo-Kantian idealist approaches. This is tackled here principally through an analysis of Bruno Latour's critique of Martin Heidegger, as an example of the ways objects and our relationship to the material world are perceived in Neo-Kantian terms. This leads on to an analysis of the ways in which "belief" has been denied by many allied to the ontological turn; but that this is once again only a symptom of sustaining the primacy of a «mind» concept and the ever-increasing anthropomorphisation of the world and all phenomena.

§22. "We have never been modern"

22.1. In her own review of Plessner's _Levels_, Philosopher Marjorie Grene says "Our understanding of ourselves and our place in nature...has for the most part swung

helplessly between empty idealism and an absurd reductivism."[504] While we have so far considered the ways that idealism persists in certain domains of the humanities and material culture studies, the field has indeed swung among some quarters, in the last forty years especially, towards - if not absurd reductivism exactly - certainly towards pseudo-realism. Cue Bruno Latour's customary flamboyant entrance at the valva regia, to throw up his arms and proclaim that, "We Have Never Been Modern"! Latour's contention is that, through disciplinary fragmentation, especially between the natural and social sciences, conceptual theorisation concerning the nature of things and human relations to them has constructed an ever-increasing bifurcation between nature and the subject/social. He begins by describing the push-me pull-you dynamic among "social scientists" in defining human-thing relations. Latour's artful delivery is better reproduced than paraphrased:

> Ordinary people imagine that the power of gods, the objectivity of money, the attraction of fashion, the beauty of art, come from some objective properties intrinsic to the nature of things. Fortunately, social scientists know better and they show that the arrow goes in fact in the other direction, from society to objects...
> The difficulty, however, is to reconcile this form of denunciation with another one in which the directions of the arrows are exactly reversed. Ordinary people, mere social actors, average citizens, believe that they are free and that they can modify their desires, their motives and their rational strategies at will. The arrow of their beliefs now goes from the Subject/Society pole to the Nature pole. But fortunately, social scientists are standing guard, and they denounce, and debunk and ridicule this naive belief in the freedom of the human subject and society.[505]

Imagined "Quasi-Objects", for Latour, are used as mediators between humans and things, with the effect of creating an ever-greater imaginary chasm between the human subject realm and a natural world 'out there'. And so, "The sequel to this story takes an involuntarily comic turn" Latour continues, "The further the great gap is stretched, the more the whole business looks like a tightrope walker doing the splits."[506] Latour alludes to Kant's 'synthesis': "...even while they assert that there is no task more urgent than their reconciliation [of the natural and social sciences]", it in-fact marks the starting point of their separation.[507] This, he claims, springs initially from the debate between Thomas Hobbes and Robert Boyle concerning the nature of experimental knowledge (which would ultimately define the methods of scientific rationalism),[508] and leads through to the further splitting dialectics of Hegel, then the critical theory of Jürgen Habermas[509] through

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[504] Grene 1966, 250. Original emphasis.
[505] Latour 1993, 51-53.
[506] *Ibid.*, 59.
[507] *Ibid.*, 56. Own square brackets.
[508] See Shapin & Schaffer 1985.
[509] See Larry, 2004.

to what he describes as the "hyper-incommensurability" of the post-moderns, such as Jean-François Lyotard. [510] In this schematic way, Latour describes how each in-turn widen the gap between the two poles (or the two tight-ropes) of nature and subject/society. For Latour then, "we have never been modern" because the concept of modernity as it is conceived and defined by generations of theorists who have been complicit in the same project of splitting, is based on a myth of human disenchantment from nature and the world. For Latour, if disenchantment never actually happened, then we have never been "modern", and the biggest joke is on the post-modernists! Latour's project ends-up seeking to demonstrate how humans have always lived in and with the world of things and that the "primitives" were not so mistaken in believing the world is animate, because - in recognising that things have their own agency and Will beyond human projection - things are equal and accessible to humans without any need for scholarly deconstruction or revolution to overthrow the status quo. This line of argument, in principle, seems reasonable. But the contention here is that this kind of thought is in-fact the most stealth form of Neo-Kantianism. This will be explored in more detail in the following sections.

22.2. Latour's position falls into the broad church of thought which has emerged (often inspired by Martin Heidegger) since the turn of the twenty-first century, sometimes lumped together - albeit not always willingly or voluntarily - known as "Speculative Realism,"[511] which has been so influential in the "the return to things" or in anthropology as the "ontological turn".[512] Whatever the brand of speculative realism, where they broadly agree is in attempting to exorcise from philosophical thought what philosopher Quentin Meillassoux describes as "correlationism". That is, the idea that our theoretical understandings of things create a correlative between a thing and a thought; that all our deliberations on objects have come to involve the import of a human subjective thought. In Meillassoux's own words:

> Correlationism rests on an argument as simple as it is powerful, and which can be formulated in the following way: No X without givenness of X, and no theory about X without a positing of X. If you speak about something, you speak about something that is given to you, and posited by you. Consequently, the sentence: 'X is', means:

[510] For more on Lyotard and Postmodernism see Papastephanou 2014.

[511] See Brassier *et al* 2017. With reference to Graham Harman's active espousal and promotion of Speculative Realism, Brassier - himself sometimes identified by others as a Speculative Realist - notes: "Of course, no one has ever denied the existence of talk of Speculative Realism. To ask whether Speculative Realism deserves to be treated as a cohesive philosophical movement is not to deny the existence of books, articles, and university courses that do just that. The real question is: Is this talk, and the currency of Harman's Speculative Realism brand, sufficient to justify the claim that it qualifies as a philosophically significant movement?" Brassier 2014, 410-411.

[512] See Holbraad & Pederson 2017

'X is the correlate of thinking' in a Cartesian sense. That is: X is the correlate of an affection, or a perception, or a conception, or of any subjective act. To be is to be a correlate, a term of a correlation . . . That is why it is impossible to conceive an absolute X, i.e., an X which would be essentially separate from a subject. We can't know what the reality of the object in itself is because we can't distinguish between properties which are supposed to belong to the object and properties belonging to the subjective access to the object.[513]

While such a position effectively acknowledges the same sort of issues of the distancing of the world, it goes further - and turns Heidegger against himself - by asserting that any theoretical intermediary apparatus we may formulate and deploy for understanding human relations to the world of things ultimately set up imaginary conceptual frameworks - "correlatives" - between humans and things.

Where the speculative realists agree most, then, is in the necessity of dismantling the baggage of metaphysics and deconstruction; towards a de-anthropomorphisation and de-colonisation of things and other living organisms. What they seek to do is replace these correlationalist activities with the promise of a more direct approach to the non-human realm, as a realm that is real and - depending on which 'brand' of speculative realism you choose - may or may not be entirely accessible. So, while, for Heidegger, the relationship between humans and the world is mediated, in a Euro-American context, through a modernist metaphysical enframing -an obstacle which he asserts we should strive to overcome; for Bruno Latour and his Actor Network Theory (ANT) - for example - all things, including humans, are equal actors, whose all-important actions and causes are knowable: there is no obstacle and Heidegger's apparently disenchanted modern human is an illusion.[514] Eco-philosopher Jane Bennett similarly asks the question "...what if...the world is not disenchanted, that is, not populated by dead matter and fragmented selves?".[515] In her contribution to the speculative realist canon, she reconceptualises human relations to the world in a way which seeks to enable a more environmentally sustainable future, and concludes:

The modern story of disenchantment leaves out important things, and it neglects crucial sources of ethical generosity in doing so. Without modes of enchantment, we might not have the energy and inspiration to enact ecological projects, or to contest ugly and unjust modes of commercialization, or to respond generously to humans and nonhumans that challenge our settled identities.[516]

Latour and Bennett reject the idea of disenchantment: the former discounts any need for re-enchantment and in many respects legitimises the capitalist status quo, while the

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[513] Meillassoux, 2007, 409.
[514] Latour 1993.
[515] Bennett 2001, 80.
[516] *Ibid.*, 174.

latter seeks to emphasise enchantment as the permanent state of human being, without which the necessary displacement of the status quo (of environmental degradation) would not be possible. Graham Harman's Object Orientated Philosophy similarly posits that all things (including humans) are equally a thing-in-themselves which are neither entirely distinct nor entirely unified with each other, and ultimately only knowable through allusion rather than any direct objectivising description of them (comparable to disenchantment) or direct immanent experience of them (comparable to enchantment).[517]

22.3. Through the examination of some emergent points of discourse at the intersection of the speculative realist project, its manifestation within material culture studies (in its various forms in the "return to things", the "ontological turn" or "new animism"), the recurrent impetus of the dialectic imperative discussed above, and the thought of Martin Heidegger, we come to finally laying the last foundations of the approach developed here. Although, in many ways, Dilthey's metaphysical consciousness would align with the anti-correlationalist view of the speculative realists, that there is no actual metaphysics or ontological category which can be overcome, it would insist, as we have seen, that the nature of all human *experience* is probably different from that of all non-human entities. This is not to say that humans are not natural beings -there remains no division in reality between nature and culture, as much as there remains no division between «mind» and body. Rather, the nature of human self-reflexive being in and of itself is experienced as something which perceives to be removed or distant from (simultaneously emergent) categories such as "nature" and "body". And, as Plessner's description of "excentric positionality" proposes, this defining feature of being human is also the uncomfortable sense which demands some kind of resolution, which, as we have seen, is evident in the very nature of the dialectic imperative which seems to be such a consistent tenor in the thought of philosophers who concern themselves with the nature of human experience and condition.

§23. Ontological transposition

23.1. Latour sets about removing the "quasi-object" as a vehicle for a concept "X" to correlate with some kind of state of being or reality. If Latour had left it at that, he perhaps would have been in good keeping with the anti-correlationalist objective (although as we will see, leaving it at that is not possible); but in a clever conjuring act, Latour bestows

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[517] Harman 2002; 2016a.

things with having self-determining identity and agency, as "equal actors to humans" - he would say.[518] So, in this conjuring act, the thing in itself is not left to be the thing in itself as Latour would claim, but has been *given* characteristics which corresponds with human identity and agency - *as well as* being the thing in itself. Ironically, this just turns out to be another quasi-object; but which, instead, looks *more* like humans. The very correlationalist sort of dynamic which Latour and others attempt to overcome is sustained –by merely relocating the associated (correlational) values and concepts from the shared human social realm into the thing itself, thereby giving the thing human characteristics. Seen this way, we find ourselves in the midst of - to borrow Halbertal and Margalit's terminology – a "metonymic representation", where things might allude to and be imbued with the agency of the spirit or deity (§8.2). Remember that such «representations» according to Halbertal and Margalit, can take any form, as long its supplicants do not claim or believe it to *physically* resemble the prototype. We might say that the kind of symmetry to which Latour's (and others) perspective purports to espouse[519] is tantamount to making all things mirrors of humans, as long as (for the illusion to work) we all pretend to simply not see ourselves in the mirror! We might refer to this as "ontological transposition": the projection of characteristics of human being onto non-human beings.

Numerous criticisms have been targeted here at Latour. This has been done so not without being mindful of the immense importance and artfulness of Latour's contribution; but it is also done so with a grave seriousness for all the implications his and other similar perspectives carry with them; for which we must go further to explicate.

23.2. For the "post-anthropocentrists" such as Latour and Harman, the nature of human being, is an existential quality which is not unique to humans, but extends to all things and is understandable, even if not entirely knowable. Wolfendale shows how, while discarding Heidegger's historically determined metaphysical correlationalist obstacles, Harman (and, it is argued here, other "post-anthropocentrists") still retains the purely historical being of Dasein (human being) as the basis of all being -human and non-human. The historicised existential reality of Dasein (the knowing human being) is therefore conflated with all ontology (the being of all things), extending the domain of "consciousness" into the world of things, and ultimately rendering Graham Harman (and his acolytes), as Peter Wolfendale aptly puts it, "...the weird uncle of the correlationist

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[518] Latour 2005.
[519] *ibid*, 76

family."![520] Karl Löwith, one of Heidegger's students, already anticipated the transposition of human experiential being to all things as a possible outcome of Heideggerian thought as early as 1957:

> The dictum...that life's mode of being is only accessible privately by way of existing Dasein, made it seem as if human birth, life and death could be reduced to 'thrownness', 'existing' and 'being towards the end'. In the same way, the world became 'existential'.[521]

This problem in part pertains to what philosopher Willard Van Orman Quine referred to as the question of "ontological commitment." [522] That is, in describing the being of anything, there must be clarity and consistency concerning the categorical order to which that being is ascribed. The difficulty with the ontological transposition is that significant slippage (or confusion) and incoherence has taken place in the internal structure of the argument. One cannot in any internally consistent way argue - as part of attempting to overcome anthropomorphising correlationalist colonisation of the world with false concepts ("quasi-objects") – instead that, everything in the world in-fact embodies human-like characteristics and values. *Both* these positions are anthropomorphising. The retort may (reasonably) follow, that by framing things in these terms - even if questionable in its internal consistency - it might mean that we nevertheless treat the world in a better way. The category error, therefore, the argument could go, is an innocuous one compared with the positive ethical impact it might have. Indeed, for many within the disciplines of anthropology and archaeology, the panpsychic nature of the speculative realistic approaches, has been understandably attractive for its resemblance to animistic and immanence orientated indigenous traditions and being able to apparently give a voice to indigenous perspectives in a way that offers better due respect and consideration of the environment; what has come to be known as New Animism.[523] However, all it not quite as it seems. Anthropologist Zoe Todd describes her sense of initial excitement and then disappointment at Bruno Latour's Gifford Lecture in Edinburgh in 2013, waiting "with bated breath" for some acknowledgment of "Indigenous thinkers for their millennia of engagement with sentient environments, with cosmologies that enmesh people into complex relationships between themselves and all relations..." as he spoke about Gaia.[524] But the acknowledgment never came. Indeed, it is sustained here that the philosophical origin and basis of scholarship which often underpins New Animism has

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[520] Wolfendale 2014, 6.
[521] Löwith 1957, 75. Cited in Plessner 1965 (2019), xxiv.
[522] Quine 1948;1951a; 1951b.
[523] See Struckard 2023.
[524] Todd 2016, 6.

only a coincidental resemblance to indigenous knowledge-based animism and in-fact embodies a very different internal philosophical starting point and trajectory. An examination of Latour's critique of Heidegger in the next section helps us to understand where such a pseudo-animist relational perspective truly sits.

§24. The Heraclitean fragment

24.1. In his survey of correlationalist tight-rope walkers, Latour interestingly is not able to include Heidegger's thought, but instead brackets it via other critical means. A brief excursus here of Latour's critique of Heidegger serves well to introduce some of Heidegger's allusions to belief in a god in relation to being/Being, and how new animism poses a problem rather than a solution to understanding human relations to the material realm, which, it is argued here, diminishes the value of belief (and which in-turn also raises a more ethical concern on human relationships to the environment).

Latour, then, takes on Heidegger by invoking his "apologue" on Heraclitus warming himself by the stove.[525] Heidegger quotes Aristotle:

> The story is told of something Heraclitus said to some strangers who wanted to come visit him. Having arrived, they saw him warming himself at a stove. Surprised, they stood there in consternation-above all because he encouraged them, the astounded ones, and called for them to come in with the words, "For here too the gods are present."[526]

He continues:

> The group of foreign visitors, in their importunate curiosity about the thinker, are disappointed and perplexed by their first glimpse of his abode. They believe they should meet the thinker in circumstances which, contrary to the ordinary round of human life, everywhere bear traces of the exceptional and rare and so of the exciting. The group hopes that in their visit to the thinker they will find things that will provide material for entertaining conversation --at least for a while. The foreigners who wish to visit the thinker expect to catch sight of him perchance at that very moment when, sunk in profound meditation, he is thinking. The visitors want this "experience" not in order to be overwhelmed by thinking but simply so they can say they saw and heard someone everybody says is a thinker.[527]

Heidegger notably seems at pains to labour how, for the visitors, to see "the thinker" should manifest as a striking and exceptional event. With Heraclitus' invitation "For here too the gods are present", he continues:

> This phrase places the abode (ethos) of the thinker and his deed in another light. Whether the visitors understood this phrase at once-or at all-and then saw everything differently in this other light the story doesn't say. But the story was told and has come down to us today because what it reports derives from and characterizes the

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[525] Latour 1993, 65-66.
[526] Aristotle (De parte animalium, I, 5, 645a 17), as quoted in Heidegger 1977: 256.
[527] Heidegger 1993 [1947], 257.

> atmosphere surrounding this thinker. Kai entautha, "even here," at the stove, in that ordinary place where every thing and every condition, each deed and thought is intimate and commonplace, that is, familiar [geheuer], "even there" in the sphere of the familiar, einai theous, it is the case that "the gods are present." Heraclitus himself says, ethos anthropoi daimon, "The (familiar) abode is for man the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)."[528]

Heidegger's interest in eliciting this passage forms part of his concern with overcoming Euro-American metaphysical thought away from materialistic preoccupations, by reinstituting the 'abandoned' concept of 'a god' into the basis of Being in modernity. As we have seen, Heidegger's problem with modernity is rooted in what he describes as "enframing" (*Gestell*): the techno-scientific modality which 'enframes' or in which the world is objectified as an endless resource, in a way that is particularly nocuous and dangerous .[529] As discussed earlier, Heidegger attributes this kind of being to a genealogy of dualistic thought from the pre-Socratics through to Nietzsche, which he refers to as "Onto-theological" Metaphysics. So, Heraclitus, who "...stood at the very inauguration of Western thought (c.500 BC), early enough to be irreducible to productionist metaphysics",[530] is important. Heidegger's invocation of Aristotle's description of Heraclitus warming himself is intended to summon the modality of pre-Socratic Greek thought embodied by Heraclitus as opposed to the foreign visitors, who, had they been true Heraclitans, "...would have realized that divinities reside not only in magnificent temples but also in kitchen ovens and everywhere else the Logos reveals itself to our understanding via the senses."[531] In his reading and translation of the Heraclitean fragment, as Wolfson succinctly puts it: "Heidegger retrieves from Heraclitus the idea of being as the flash of lightning that summons the presencing of all things present while itself remaining concealed from being present, an idea connected as well to Heraclitus's maxim that nature loves to hide...".[532]

So, for Heidegger, the visitors are the instantiation of Metaphysics -Latour's "moderns"; and Heraclitus is the instantiation of pre-Metaphysical thought -Latour's "primitives". While Heidegger's conception of Metaphysics, could indeed be understood

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[528] *Ibid.*, 256.

[529] This aspect of Heidegger's thought has important implications for our understanding of human relations to the environment, to which we will return in due course; and has been influential on the deep ecology movement. The deep ecology movement proposes that, if an environmental catastrophe is to be avoided, fundamental shifts in contemporary human being are necessary rather than merely through regulation and legislation, which, they argue, serve only to perpetuate and legitimise the continuation of current consumptive behaviours and the aggressive mechanised mastery of the environment and resources. On deep ecology, see: Devall & Sessions 1985; Naess 1977; On ways Heidegger's thought has been adopted by some proponents of environmentalism and the deep ecology movement see, for example: Foltz 1984; Holland 1999; Seidel 1979; Taylor 1992; Westra 1985; Zimmerman 1983; 1986; 1993a; 1993b; 1994. For a relatively recent overview of Heidegger and environmentalism see: Glazebrook 2013.

[530] Clark 2002, 81.

[531] Poulakos & Crick 2012, 297.

[532] Wolfson 2019, 5. It is worth noting here the proximity of this to Kant's concept of the noumenon.

as a kind of "disenchantment" arguably placing him somewhere on Latour's gallery of double tightrope rogue thinkers, his formulation of being/Being as always present in-the-world, poses a problem for Latour, because his thought also resists the idea of dualist moderns. Latour and Heidegger both in-fact eschew dualist metaphysics. While, for Latour, dualist metaphysics is entirely a construction only in the «mind» of certain philosophers which does not need to be overcome in any sort of way; for Heidegger dualist metaphysics - while not real as such - exists as part of certain modes of being (or ontologies), especially modern Euro-American metaphysics, and the overcoming is the challenge and the ultimate purpose of his project.

24.2. To help us understand how Heidegger poses a challenge to Latour, we will need to invoke Heidegger's later ideas of Ereignis and his more experimental methods of expression as a way of practising his ideas.[533] The literal translation of Ereignis from the German is "event". However, the term as used by Heidegger has variously been translated, predominantly as "event of appropriation",[534] and "enowning".[535] A key sentence in which Heidegger more clearly defines the term Ereignis, can be found in *Identity and Difference*: "The word Ereignis is derived from the way it has developed. Er-eignen originally means: er-äugen, i.e. to catch sight, to call to one-self in looking, to appropriate."[536] In other words, Heidegger uses Ereignis to be understood in its multiple meanings simultaneously, through its meaning in current use: Ereignis ["event"]; in its

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[533] Heidegger's ideas on Ereignis are introduced to us in *Contributions to Philosophy* (Heidegger, 1999 [1936-38]). Structured like a fugue, the work is a polyphonic composition in six (inseparable) parts with overlapping themes, adopting a poetic style which draws attention to the form of words, exploiting "the sounds and senses of German in order to create an idiosyncratic symphony of meanings" (Polt 1999, 140). As Vallega-Neu has put it: "Contributions contains Heidegger's most intimate struggle to think at the edge of words and to bring to language what remains beyond written or spoken words." (Vallega-Neu 2003, 115). Given its unusual nature, it is thought by some that Heidegger reserved its publication until after his other works, as a sort of culmination, for which his earlier works would in essence prepare the reader. See for example: Polt 1999; Schoenbohm 2001; Sheehan 1981; Thomson 2003; 2011, 169-191.

[534] For example, see: Stambaugh's translation of Heidegger 2002 [1969] {1957} and Polt 2006.

[535] See Emad and Maly's translation of *Contributions to Philosophy:* Heiddegger 1999 [1936-38], xiii-xxii.

[536] Own translation: "Das Wort Ereignis ist der gewachsenen Sprache entnommen. Er-eignen heißt ursprünglich: er-äugen, d.h. erblinken, im Blicken zu sich rufen, an-eignen." Heidegger 2002 [1969] {1957}, 100-101. The original translation of *Identity and Difference* by Joan Stambaugh rather mysteriously entirely misses out this crucial sentence. Compare the original German text in Heidegger 2002 [1969] {1957}, 100-101, with the English text translated by Stambaugh in Heidegger 2002 [1969] {1957}, 36. Polt translates the second sentence in this short passage, with some slight variation from the present author's translation: "Ap-propriating [*Er-eignen*] originally means: *er-äugen*, i.e. to catch sight, to call to one-self in looking, to ap-propriate." See Polt 2006, 73, footnote 91. The present author disagrees with the beginning of Polt's translation, however, which asserts 'ap-propriating' as the assumed meaning of *Ereignen* in the first place. However, since the purpose of this sentence is precisely to define his particularistic use of the word *Ereignen* (of which 'appropriating' is already one definition), 'appropriating' cannot sensibly already be in use as a substitute for *Ereignen* at the beginning of this sentence. One must be aware also that the term "catch sight" here is not used in the sense which has become common in the modern English language, *as in to happen to see something*, but rather more literally as a perceptive embodied experience: *to catch oneself in the act of seeing*. I am grateful to Dr Marc Heise for his insights and help with this translation.

etymological origin, as er-äugen: "to catch sight / call to one-self in looking"; and in the etymologically unrelated, yet similar form of the verb eignen: "to appropriate" and the adjective eigen: "to own", [537] hence the translation of Ereignis as 'enowning' (as in "en-own-ing").[538] In short, what Heidegger is attempting to capture through this word is a phenomenological engagement with the world in which one is arrested through a kind of communion with things arising out of a perceptual experience of them, not in a way that we experience them now as 'worldly' 'enframed' beings (objectified and thereby consumable), but rather, as earthly Beings: something to which we are bound, to which we belong and belongs to us mutually. This term, for Heidegger, then, refers to a type of experience in relation to Being (or earth, or thing) which results from a certain kind of approach to the world:

> [W]hen things are approached with an openness and respect, they push back against us, making subtle but undeniable claims upon us, and we need to learn to acknowledge and respond creatively to these claims if we do not want to deny the source of genuine meaning in the world...Heidegger sometimes calls such an enduringly meaningful encounter an 'event of enowning' (Ereignis).[539]

Young highlights how Heidegger refers comparably to the experience of Ereignis and the poet or artist's experience of the presence of the "wonderfully all-present" as "transport and enchantment" (Entrückung und Berückung).[540]

Key to Heidegger's final thoughts on the nature of being/Being relates to the way he also refers to the ultimate human experience as "the Ereignis of the holy".[541] In September 1966 Heidegger participated in an interview for the German magazine Der Spiegel, in which he unusually agreed to answer questions concerning his involvement with the Nazi regime. In keeping with his requests that the interview would not be published until after his death, it was not published until ten years later, five days after his death at the end of May in 1976. As such, the contents of the interview, which Heidegger carefully co-edited is considered by some to have been Heidegger's intended final communication.[542] During this interview, he answered questions concerning his much maligned rectorship at Freiberg University under the Nazi regime. But also, when asked whether individuals, groups of individuals or philosophers can overcome (Euro-American)

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[537] Agamben 1999, 117. See also Emad and Maly, in Heidegger 1999 [1936-38], xiii-xxii.
[538] Emad and Maly, in Heidegger 1999 [1936-38], xiii-xxii.
[539] Thomson 2011, 22.
[540] Heidegger 1977 [1936-1938], 70; 1977 [1936-1968], 54; Young 2001, 106-107.
[541] Heidegger 1977 [1936-1968], 76-77; Young 2001, 107.
[542] Macquarrie 1994, 94.

metaphysics, he answered - to paraphrase – "now only a god can save us". [543]The turn of phrase, for many, seemed cryptic, as were many of his responses in the interview. What, precisely, did Heidegger mean by this? If Heidegger postulates, as we have seen, that the theological element in onto-theology - the notion of the a god - objectifies Being (earth) as the source of being (world), and therefore 'gets in the way' of the possibility of directly accessing Being, then why does he propose that "only a god can save us"? And if "only a god can save us", but we "cannot bring him [God] near by thinking", then *how* does he propose that a "god" may "save us"?[544]

The developments in Heidegger's thoughts mark a significant departure from some of his previous reflections; one he recognises as 'a turn' which occurred sometime in 1936-38: the second of two he explicitly discusses.[545] In this second turn to 'Ereignis-thinking', Heidegger's attitude to the 'holy' and to the artwork has fundamentally changed; a change to which we would otherwise be ignorant if we confined our reading only to TOWA. He is no-longer concerned with the revival of the holy once instantiated in the destitute 'Greek-paradigm', as exemplified in the fundamental mood of Hölderlin's holy mourning (*heilige Trauer*); but instead with the thankfulness (*das Danken*) of

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[543] The Der Spiegel article itself took its title from this phrase; but a more extensive extract of the interview helps to better contextualise it:
"Journalist: 'Can any individual influence the network of forces that are controlling us, or can philosophy influence it, or can both together have an influence, with the philosophy of an individual or a group of individuals leading to definite action?'
Heidegger: 'If I may make a short and general reply, but one that comes from long pondering, philosophy can effect no immediate change in the present state of the world. This holds not only for philosophy, but for all merely human intelligence and endeavour. Now only a God can save us. The only possibility remaining to us is that in thinking and in poetry there can be prepared a readiness for the appearing of the God, or for the absence of the God in a decline: that we decline in face of the absent God.'
Journalist: 'Is there a connection between your thinking and the coming of this God? Is there, in your view, a causal connection? Do you mean that we can by thinking bring the God near?'
Heidegger: 'We cannot bring him near by thinking, at best, we can awaken the readiness to expect him.
Journalist: 'But we can help?
Heidegger: 'Preparing the readiness might be the first step in helping. The world cannot be what and how it is through human beings, but neither can it without human beings. That depends, in my view, on whether something that I call a traditional but ambiguous and worn out word, 'Being', requires man for its revelation, preservation and articulation.'" Heidegger 1976, 57-58.

[544] Heidegger's approach is not one driven by an explicit or overt 'religious' conviction, although many theologians have sought to find God in Heidegger's work. (see for example: Bloechl 2003; Kearney *et al* 2009; Macquarrie 1984, 163-170; Macquarrie 1994). Heidegger was Catholic by upbringing and a student of theology; although at a crucial stage during his studies at Freiberg, he made a decision to pursue questions of ontology rather than theology. (Macquarrie 1994, 4-5; Vedder 2007, 11-14; 2013, 330). Nevertheless, this did not simply represent a shift from theism to atheism, as many have assumed. Heidegger categorically asserts that he was neither a theist nor an atheist. (Macquarrie 1994, 60-61; 95). As we have seen, for Heidegger as well as numerous other authors, atheism as well as monotheism are equally derived from onto-theology. Indeed, Williams has observed that Heidegger should probably best be understood as a 'panentheist'. (Williams 1977, 154; Macquarrie 1994, 100; Cooper 2006, 213-215). Depending on the reader's interpretation, Heidegger, arguably may be equally or perhaps even better described as a 'pantheist'. On the rarely discussed topic of 'pantheism', see: Levine 1994a; 1994b; McFarland 1969; Spinoza 2000 [1677]. See also Dombrowski 1988.

[545] Heidegger 1977 {1969}, 344; 366; Young 2001, 3.

Hölderlin's verse,[546] firmly moving him away from his earlier Graecocentrism and views of the role of the thinker in relation to the poet and state-builder and his Nazi ideal of the neo-classical/Volk renaissance stemming out of Germany. This thankfulness or gratitude instead recognises a gift-giving character of the 'holy',[547] which at the same time - by necessity - is absent. In *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger refers to *Es gibt* (*Its gives*). 'It gives' is the ultimate source of Being and time, the ultimate presence and the source of unconcealment:[548] "To think being explicitly, requires us to relinquish Being as the ground of beings in favour of the giving...that is, in favour of the 'It gives'."[549] Young summons Wittgenstein to help us with understanding this concept of Being:

> How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world...it is not how things are in the world that is mystical but that it exists. [550]

Macquarrie on his consideration of Heidegger's thought in relation to Christianity, juxtaposes Heidegger's thought on 'It gives' in relation to a Christian God:

> When we are considering the Letter to Humanism [in which Heidegger discusses the It gives], it seemed to me that at the time it was written, Being was, for Heidegger, if not God, then a surrogate for God, for the language used in respect of Being was very much like the language of religion. Thus, although Heidegger explicitly says in Letter that Being is not God, one might argue that Being has taken the place of God. But it is the 'It gives' that is more ultimate even than Being and seems to come close to what has ordinarily been understood as God. In Christian theology, God is love. In Heidegger, 'It gives' is an act of giving or donation, and since he has told us that 'It' which gives Being is Being itself, then the act of giving is also an act of self-giving, and so not different in any major respect from Love.[551]

Heidegger's thought now resembles a form of middle or neo-Platonic mysticism;[552] and indeed Heidegger has provided inspiration to approaches developed by numerous theologians;[553] and has shifted quite radically towards the earlier thought of his teacher

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[546] Heidegger 2018 [1943] {1941-42}, 197; Young 2001, 105.
[547] Heidegger 1977 [1936-1968], 55; 1977 {1943}, 309-10. Young 2001, 108.
[548] Heidegger 1972, 5; Macquarrie 1994, 98.
[549] *Ibid.*
[550] Wittgenstein Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus 6.432-6.44; Cited by Young 2001, 109.
[551] Macquarrie 1994, 99.
[552] Macquarrie 1984, 153-155. Certainly, the influence of Saint Augustine of Hippo on his thought is well known (see de Paulo 2006) as is that of Meister Eckhart (Macquarrie 1994, 99) to whom aspects of Heidegger's own philosophy have been compared (See Philipse 1992 and Dobie 2002, respectively).
[553] E.g.: Tillich 1951-63; 1959; Jean-Luc Marion 2001 [1977] and Levinas 1969. Heidegger's influence within theology has been most notable in the work of Christian 'dialectical' theologian Paul Tillich (also compared to 'revealed' and 'neo-orthodox' theologians), who developed an approach sometimes referred to 'ontological theology', which bears some resemblance to Heidegger's formulation of Being. 'Ontological theology' considers the question of *being* in all phenomena as a whole, including the realm of the invisible or of Gods and divinities and their interrelations (the 'science' of all beings), whereas - as we have seen - 'onto-theology' reveals a modality in which the nature of the *being* of God or divinities are perceived as distinct objectified *being/s*. See: Dobie 2002: 563-564; Jonas 1963; Keefe 1971; Macaan

and doyen of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl; which espouses a realist rather than an idealist approach to phenomenology as adopted by an otherwise 'niche' group of scholars, including more spiritual proponents of phenomenology, such as Marion and von Hildebrand.[554] So, for Heidegger, Euro-American thought not only sets up and objectifies a god-like figure as the source and proto-type of all being which forms the basis of «representational» thought, but in doing so permits its location in space and time, its manipulation and control; and the inevitable mastery of the world which follows. As such, by ascribing the 'gift' to an objectified single entity which disassociates and distances it, permits simply the taking, appropriating and exploitation of the gift (as per Heidegger's concept of 'enframing', *gestell*). This condition, he would argue, is not inevitable, but a unique response arising out of onto-theological thought (or Metaphysics).

24.3. Latour, then, completes his critique in reference to Heidegger's allusion of the "gods":

> But Heidegger is taken in as much as those naive visitors, since he and his epigones do not expect to find Being except along the Black Forest Holzwege...The gods cannot reside in technology...They are not to be sought in science, either, since science has no other essence but that of technology (Heidegger, 1977b). They are absent from politics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history - which is the history of Being... The gods cannot reside in economics - that pure calculation forever mired in beings and worry. They are not to be found in philosophy, either, or in ontology, both of which lost sight of their destiny 2,500 years ago.
> ...The moderns indeed declare that technology is nothing but pure instrumental mastery, science pure Enframing and pure Stamping [Das Ge-Stell], that economics is pure calculation, capitalism pure reproduction, the subject pure consciousness.[555]

First, in the context of Heidegger's later thought, Latour has misunderstood Heidegger. Besides from this, we can glean a great deal from this for understanding what lies at the heart of Latour's thought (and a broad base of the speculative realists) and therefore -

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2007; Tillich 1959: 15. Tillich summons Augustine's postulate that "You cannot deny truth as such because you could do it only in the name of truth, thus establishing truth." (Tillich 1959: 12). Seen in this way, God is the basis of all truth, not the object or question. As such, Tillich - rather controversially stated (given his status as a Lutheran Minister) that - "God does not exist" collapsing both the onto-theological paradigm and the relativist paradox. (Tillich 1951, 205; 237). Heidegger and Tillich therefore have arrived at similar points of conclusion, from different starting points. Heidegger, with the motivation of reinstituting the 'abandoned' concept of 'a god' into the basis of being in modernity in order to deflect attention away from materialistic preoccupations; and for Tillich, with the motivation of removing the association of God from material preoccupations as an object per se - which, for him, has contributed to the corrosion of religiosity - as the basis of all being. Both, therefore, seek to dismantle the subject-object distinction and the onto-theological formulation and redefine the relationship of humans to the world. Notably, both do so without discounting the possibility of the presence of the 'god' or the 'holy'. On Tillich and Heidegger see, for example: Thatamanil 2009.

[554] See Marion 1991;2001, Von Hildebrand, 2009; 2021.

[555] Latour 1993, 66

often unknowingly - the many whose approaches have been influenced within Material Culture Studies. Latour is determined instead to assert that "...there has never been a modern world, or, by the same token, metaphysics" and that "...we have always remained pre-Socratic, pre-Cartesian, pre-Kantian, pre-Nietzschean", so "there is no need for reactionary counterrevolutions to lead us back to what has never been abandoned". [556] For Latour, we do not need to somehow find a 'god', through a shift in "ontology". What Latour seems to be alluding to in the extract above is an immanent god - a god that is not transcendent out there somewhere, but omni-present in all things, including technology, science and economics (for example). In fact, for Latour, it turns out, that god is already there to be found in our relation to all things. For a practicing Catholic (as Latour was), this would typically be deemed as "unorthodox".[557] But how Latour's faith relates to his philosophy and how it differs from Heidegger's allusion to a god or gods comes to full bloom in his 2017 essay *Facing Gaia*, based on his Edinburgh Gifford lectures.[558] In it, Latour identifies "illusions" which overarch both religion (especially monotheistic religion as manifest in the form of Christianity) and science, as ideologies concerning the source "Out-Of-Which-We-Are-All-Born" ("Oowwaab", "Cenosotone" in the original French);[559] that is: God and the Big-Bang theory, respectively. From these "illusory" ideas Latour seeks to distinguish real or true forms of religion and science which can be found in the *practice* of religion and science.[560] In this way, Latour dismisses transcendental ideas of a god, for example, in favour of valuing human actions as part of a composite of actions by human and non-human actants alike, which collectively make up 'Gaia'.[561] In this regard, Latour agrees with many before him,

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[556] Latour 1993, 67.

[557] As Graham Harman observes in a 2016 blog post: "Latour is a practicing Roman Catholic. This entails belief in God, and such belief normally entails belief in a real omnipotent entity that exists outside the «mind». Yet this is not Latour's concept of God. His concept has nothing to do with the mode of existence he calls, a scientific mode that enables us to link actors in such a way as to approach the strange and the distant. Instead, Latour's concept of God is a purely immanent one (as far as I can tell), a God that does not exist outside the processions and rituals that make God present. Now, this is a pretty huge sacrifice to make in comparison with mainstream religious belief: denying the very existence of a God-in-itself outside all networks. What could possibly lead Latour to adopt such a position? A mere methodological devotion to empiricism? Hardly. The reason is that he simply does not think that anything could exist in a non-relational sense. (Harman 2016b, original square brackets).

[558] Latour 2017.

[559] In the original French "ce dont nous sommes tous nés" ("Cenosotone"), "that from which we are all born")

[560] Latour 2017, 160-178. Suárez Müller (2023, 17, fn. 4) suggests that the English translation of "ce dont nous sommes tous nés" ("Cenosotone") to "Out-Of-Which-We-Are-All-Born" loses the essential sense of the "scientific underpinning" and suggests instead "the place we all come from". The present author disagrees with this translation and prefers the translation "that from which we are all born", which is closer to the original translation and remains faithful to the original French as a noun-phrase in reference the missing noun, which in this context would be "God" or "Big Bang". "The place we all come from" assumes the missing noun (God or Big Bang: an entity or an event) as a spatial concept ("place"), and unnecessarily replaces "born" ("nés") with "come from".

[561] Latour 2017, 204

including Heidegger, that science is derived from and reflects the monotheistic idea of a distant transcendent origin or creator entity, which (for him) are nothing short of "illusions".[562] Gaia, therefore, is likewise not a unified transcendent organism as per Lovelock's original conception,[563] but according to Latour, a conglomerate of actants which define Gaia in their not necessarily unified, indeed often random, varied actions.[564] For Latour - what Suárez Müller has referred to as his "eco-humanism"[565] - the responsibility of humans is to overcome the desacralisation of Earth derived from the Gnosticism implicit in medieval Christianity, which commodifies non-human things as lower order entities which demand control and utilisation by humans.[566] His concern here comes remarkably close to Heidegger's approach, especially his concept of *Gestell,* which Latour elsewhere criticizes.[567] His suggestion is that, through reconciliation and tolerance, scientists and religious faithfuls alike can only act co-operatively in their moral and political considerations with due regard to non-human actants as co-contributors to the Gaia composite. As Latour puts it, in a retort to Heidegger's "Only a God can save us": "only the assembly of all the gods can save us now."[568]

It is clear then, that Latour's position represents a kind of immanence manifest through being and action, which resonates in some ways with Heidegger's emphasis on the event and experience of ereignis. But for Latour the idea that Being/being are somehow conjoined poses unnecessary limitations. For him, the experience and action of being is real and affective, while the idea of Being is an illusion. The idea of the "Out-Of-Which-We-Are-All-Born" (or what is described here as "the Source/s of Life") Latour wryly mocks with his Oowwaab (Cenosotone) acronym as unnecessary and irrelevant 'baggage'. But it is precisely regarding some issue around this point which remains unresolved; to which Heidegger alludes in Being and in the *it gives*, for which Zoe Todd presumably eagerly awaited some acknowledgment from Latour at his Gifford lectures in 2013; and which is crucial to the approach developed here.

It is argued here that, while Latour - with Heidegger - importantly recognises the mutual relationships of humans and things and the role such recognition plays for envisioning and enacting more ethically responsible attitudes to earth; an inherent contradiction belies Latour's negation of what he deems as *merely* beliefs in concepts or illusions concerning "Out-Of-Which-We-Are-All-Born" or Being. For Latour, things and

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[562] Latour 2017, 200

[563] Lovelock 2009 [1979].

[564] Latour 2017, 78.

[565] Suárez Müller 2023.

[566] Latour 2017, 208.

[567] *Ibid*.

[568] Latour 2017, 288.

humans alike exist in kinds of ontological silos from which actions and ideas are spontaneously generated. For him, the problem is that among those spontaneously generated ideas, there are some erroneous ones which imagine Source/s of Life. If only we can overcome those false ideas, in order that we can get-on with getting along with each other; then the world would be a better place –so Latour's line of argument would go. In order to achieve this, what Latour has done is dispense with the age-old philosophical quandary, which Kant attempted to resolve, of the correlative division between a real world "out there" and the "internal" perception of that world; but yet at the same time asserted that humans hold "illusions", not only about their own significance in the world (as "anthropomorphising"), but also with regard to ideas concerning the source and nature of that world. But, if there is no distinction to be made between the world and how humans perceive it, where do these "illusions" to which he also refers, derive from? Indeed, on what basis and from what position would Latour determine that one description of the world is "real" and the other "illusory"? Latour's position, then, to borrow his own analogy walks precariously along two tightropes by assuming a rationalist *and* empiricist position, without resolving the inherent grievance which underlies the very reason for their distinction (or the fact of that ever-growing distance between the two tightropes!), and which Kant had tried so hard to resolve in his 'synthesis'. Latour emerges here as the meta-modern Neo-Kantian in every regard, except the neo-Kantians were much more speculative about the direct access humans have to the world. What is interesting about such a perspective, of course, is that it *itself* relies on ideas of spontaneously generated reason, and morality (and "illusions") emanating from an internally constituted rational «mind» or Will; and, despite the promise in his evocation of Gaia at Latour's Gifford lectures, in fact espouses that ultimately no change in thought is necessary for overcoming the ecological and economic status quo. Being inherently contradictory, such a position cannot sustain any serious scrutiny.

The deconstruction of Latour's significant and lively contribution to thought in the last forty years has been necessary to get at the kernel of an approach, which otherwise remains buried, obfuscated, in a myriad of what have become fashionable off-the-shelf soundbites ("asymmetry", "post-human", "actants"), perfect for re-deployment in making statements about human relations to material culture. Latour's particular wry Burgundian vernacular, of course, has made his offerings all the more compelling and persuasive. But as anthropologist Severin Fowles observes in the context of "absent things", the inadequacy of positions such as Latour's manifest themselves as a significant deficit in the resultant outcomes in material culture studies:

It makes sense that the dedicated participants in the turn toward things would have little to say about absent things. Despite their material impact and the relative autonomy they achieve, absent things fall into the blind spot...due to the stigma of their unseemly origins – their illegitimate birth in human perception. If one roundly rejects phenomenology in favour of a posthuman relational philosophy (as does Latour), then one is far more inclined to write essays about hard, metal guns as opposed to absent or banned guns. [569]

Notably, Fowles then continues:

And if one rejects idealism in favour of a new materialism (as do an increasing number of anthropologists and archaeologists), then one is far more inclined to write essays about the physicality of the decaying corpse as opposed to the strange and ghostly presence of the absent family member.

The position sustained here, quite to the contrary, is that the adoption of new materialism by an increasing number of anthropologists and archaeologists are *not* rejecting idealism but (whether unwittingly or otherwise) further entrenching the discipline(s) in idealism; and, furthermore, that an idealistic understanding of the invisible can only ever reduce "the strange and ghostly presence of the absent family member" as illusory. In this way, our experiences and memories of a real world are somehow deemed as less interesting or devoid of the kinds of mysteries which we can somehow imagine in our own «minds». The problem which Latour and others surreptitiously fudge is nevertheless certainly not an easy problem to overcome; but this should be more reason for us to not gloss over it, if we do not wish for the discipline to be built on erroneous grounds.

§25. The denial of belief

25.1. Latour's thought leads us to the question of the concept of "belief" in the social sciences and the humanities. Numerous scholars have questioned the use of the term "belief" as part of understanding the worlds and practices of divergent language groups, cultures and communities.[570] Motivations for those who argue against belief, can be broken down into three broad categories:[571]

i. those who eschew the *concept* of belief as a real social and/or internal (especially mental) state;

ii. those who consider belief as an ethnocentric concept, which, for some, is derived especially from Christian doctrine;

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[569] Fowles 2010, 31.
[570] Streeter 2022, 2023; Risjord 2020.
[571] This categorisation broadly follows those identified by Streeter 2023, 175-176.

      iii. those who assert that the attribution of beliefs involves the assumption that

      beliefs obtain from "illusory" ideas.

Latour's approach mainly falls into category iii; and as discussed here and elsewhere we have identified two objections to this position. Firstly, that asserting the invalidity of one belief, seems to involve the necessary assertion of another belief, as we can see in the ascriptions between the Dionysian, Apollonian and Secular 'categories' (see §7); and in Latour's displacement of "illusory ideas" of "quasi-objects" with arguably equally "illusory" ideas of (anthropomorphising) non-human "actants".[572] Secondly, denying what somebody holds as true (whether we call them "beliefs" or "illusions") does not in-and-of-itself invalidate or a make them unreal; since, for those person/s, those truths remain true. For something to be "illusory" means for that thing to not exist. Yet, the form and/or content of these "illusions" *do* exist for a great many people, so the question still remains hanging: *what* are they, if they are not beliefs?

      The next two subsections will discuss the first two objections and help establish whether indeed "belief" is a problematic and erroneous concept for the assertion or conviction of a given proposition as true from the emic point of view.

25.2. Concerning the first objection to belief, Rodney Needham perhaps most famously critiqued belief as a universal concept on the basis that "There is no reason to suppose that the word 'belief' refers to a single, invariant mental state in all cultures".[573] As a structuralist anthropologist, his view was that culture is ultimately linguistically determined, and that "belief" in-itself was limited to a narrow range of particular linguistic traditions. But as Philosopher Mark Risjord points out, such a critique is inherently flawed. If culture - including phenomena such as "belief" - resides in linguistically-based collective «representations» and can be accessed at an external surface level, as Needham's approach inheres, then what would these "internal" «representations» which his approach apparently does not sustain (yet which he implies do exist) be precisely? As Risjord puts it: "...while Needham rejects the representationalist concept of individual belief, he remained committed to an idealist concept of culture that could not be entirely shorn of its representationalist commitments."[574]

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[572] On Latour's "quasi-objects", see Latour 1993; and on "actants" (Actor Network Theory), see Latour 2005.
[573] Needham 1972, 45.
[574] Risjord 2020, 600.

25.3. But Needham's evocation of belief as an internal construct is beside his point as regards the question of the universality of the concept of belief, which relates more to the second objection which suggests that belief is an ethnocentric projection. There are four strands to the ethnocentric argument identified here.

The thrust of the first strand, as with Needham and numerous other anthropologists after him, is that the attribution of "belief" to others implies a distinction from "truth"; and therefore devalues the truths of those to whom "belief" is being attributed, on the basis that a given proposition (herein "*p")* "could *only* be a belief"[575] or "...a view to which we are reluctant to commit – a view we can't quite bring ourselves to take entirely seriously."[576] But this objection trespasses on a relatively well beaten ground of a philosophical problem which has come to be known, after Wittgenstein, as "Moore's Paradox". The observed paradox, first noted by Philosopher George E. Moore, is that the following statement is at once internally coherent while, at the same time, socially and conventionally absurd: *"p, but I don't believe in p".*[577] In other words, it is possible only in the first person present tense (to use the classic example) to say: "it is raining, but I don't believe it is raining" without contradicting oneself. However, when we say "it is raining, but she doesn't believe it is raining" (an equally coherent statement), contradiction and a sense of doubt concerning the cogence in the expression of the person being discussed is introduced. There is, then, an inherent and mysterious shift in meaning between the first-person present-tense and all other forms of expression concerning "belief". In this light, the very legitimate anthropologists' concern (of not wishing to mis-attribute "beliefs" to others) is therefore derived from the misalignment in meaning between a third person ascription which can coherently suggest an incommensurability between a perceived fact and an attributed belief, while a first-person equivalent statement cannot contradict itself. This objection has arisen, then, not necessarily because there is a problem with the term "belief" from the first-person point of view (which is usually the point of view anthropologists claim to be interested in), but in a neglect of a full and proper definition and interrogation of the meaning and use of the term "belief." For Wittgenstein there is similarity between the first-person assertion "I believe" and emotional states. As he puts it: "'I believe...' throws light on my state. Conclusions about my conduct can be drawn from this expression. So, there is a similarity here to expressions of emotion, of mood, etc".[578] Belief, for Wittgenstein, must be an emotional

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[575] Viveiros de Castro 2012, 137.
[576] Holbraad & Pedersen 2017, 192.
[577] Moore 1942, 1944, 1993.
[578] Wittgenstein 1986 [1953], 191.

or affected state which may or may not correlate to linguistic convention, but importantly is not *derived* from language: "...one does not infer one's own conviction from one's own words; nor yet the actions which arise from that conviction."[579]

But thought which implicitly or explicitly is committed to a rationalist perspective will tend to suggest that the absurd contradiction which arises in the first-person sense of belief can be attributed to the confusion between true (rational, idealist) knowledge and otherwise generally erroneous "beliefs" of a mysterious provenance. Philosopher Richard Moran in his extensive study on self-knowledge, suggests that the contradiction can arise only with what he describes as the self-reflexive Theoretical Condition in which beliefs come to life, which may or may not correspond with what in the (pre-reflexive, pre-theoretical) "Transparency Condition" one would simply *know*. This opens up the possibility of changing or being confused about what one does or does not believe.[580] This is not dissimilar to Sartre's view that beliefs can only become evident with self-consciousness (what he refers to as "being-for-itself"), and which are immediately and simultaneously self-negating, so all belief inheres doubt (what he calls "bad faith").[581] These sorts of formulations acknowledge the dialectic imperative (see §17), but simultaneously align perfectly with Cartesian understandings of knowledge as inherent to «mind», while any residual beliefs which do not conform to "true knowledge" are relegated to a mysterious teleological realm (Descartes's mysterious third category of knowledge embodied in the «mind»-body union, as discussed in §15.3).

For now, what is important to note it that "belief" as a concept is not in-itself problematic, but rather that the coherence of its meaning is - quite paradoxically - reliant entirely on respecting the integrity of the first person tense (Moore's Paradox, discussed above). In the Wittgensteinian sense, we might define it as a way for understanding *a sense or conviction unmediated by a linguistic concept*, which is not necessarily a fixed state, and while apparently may appear contradictory from the third person perspective cannot (unintentionally) contradict itself. So, an anthropologist's objection to the attribution of "belief" as inferring that someone "believes in something" which cannot in fact be "true" (such as ideas of shamanistic metamorphosis or shape shifting, which may be hard for some to accept as "truths"), for example, is not in fact contingent on the use of the term "belief". This is because the act or state of belief in-and-of-itself - from the first-person perspective - *inheres* truth. The problem to which the second objection leads in-fact pertains to the philosophical bases and approach of the inquirer who makes the

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[579] *Ibid.*
[580] Moran 2001.
[581] Sartre 1995 [1943], 67-70.

attribution. As such, it is the anthropologist's objection to the use of the term "belief" which itself is misdirected. A rationalist and idealistic approach, as we have seen, for example, will tend to cast doubt upon beliefs from a third person perspective, because they present as being at odds with the putative established rationalist conventions about what is true and what is not true. But an approach of a different persuasion can equally attribute "beliefs" without contradicting or casting doubt as to the truth value of those beliefs.

The second strand of the objection based on the ethnocentrism of belief is that there is not necessarily any linguistic equivalence cross-culturally for the word "belief". But, for the reasons just discussed, "belief" is merely a useful term which may be used by a third-person enquirer for describing (and a way for understanding) a certain kind of (first-person) state of knowledge. As such, whatever the terminology used, and whether there is a precise cross-cultural equivalence in linguistic terminology to describe it is inconsequential. As Streeter cogently puts it: "we understand people as expressing what they believe whenever we take them to mean what they say."[582] The same argument can be used to counter the third strand of the objection based on ethnocentrism, which argues specifically that "belief" is derived from a development of a Christian interest in "belief".[583] This does not make the use of the term invalid in the context of other cultures, especially in the context of the analysis offered above.

Finally, the fourth strand of the objection of the use of "belief" based on ethnocentrism relates specifically to one developed by Anthropologists Martin Holbraad and Morton Pedersen. Their rejection of the use of the word belief in-fact has much broader relevance. As they put it themselves, the rejection of belief "...provides perhaps the most incisive way of expressing the essential move of the ontological turn".[584] Employing linguistic logic, they distinguish between the "extension" of a concept, as its reference point (the form); and the "intension" of a concept, as the criteria for determining the extension (the content). According to them, if the anthropologist correctly translates the intensions, then they will have equally correctly translated the extension; but that this cannot be true vice versa. For Holbraad and Pedersen the use of belief is a form of translating extension, and therefore cannot be valid. In other words, cultural translation at the level of belief involves the interpretation of forms which leads to functionalist interpretations, such as explaining certain belief-like social phenomena in terms of maintaining power relations or securing a certain level of protein

[582] Streeter 2023, 58.
[583] Ruel 1982.
[584] Holbraad & Pedersen 2017, 188

consumption;[585] rather than truly understanding the values ascribed by the individual and/or group. For them, especially in the context of ethnographically distant language groups, the intension (or content) in fact belongs to another mode of being. The ontological turn for them enables recognising this and accessing these other ontological realities. For them, this is possible by "modulating" between one's own ontological reality and the ontological reality of their ethnographic subjects.[586] There are at least two problems with this. The first pertains to the way in which they have, as Risjord has pointed out, abstracted belief as in-itself constituted of extension (form) and intension (content); when in linguistic semantic terms the predicate "believes that…" can only subsist as an intension (as content). [587] Besides from the logical formulation of such an argument and whether we agree that belief can indeed be equated to "content" (in itself a formulation which has fallen back into rational idealism), we can see how the correlation of the act of belief purely with a "form" is problematic. The second problem arises with Holbraad and Pedersen's proposal to "modulate" between one's own ontology and the subject's ontology. Besides from the objections already discussed pertaining to the category error which is inherent to the assumed ontological difference in the Epistemic Fallacy (see §11); the idea that one can alter ones "ontology" or "belief", is simply not taking ontological difference [sic] or the nature of belief seriously. If it were indeed true that one could simply modulate between one ontology or belief or another, then how could we possibly explain the cohesion and integrity of any form of being or knowledge? Wouldn't everything simply fall apart? This is explored further in due course. For now, Risjord can help us with a useful parting summation. Referring to the prospect of ontological modulation, he says:

> I cannot come to live in their world simply by doing philosophy. Pace Holbraad and Pedersen, it is therefore not a matter of saying that the Ojibwa define bears or shamans in a particular way. Rather, I would have to have an ecological relationship to the environment constituted by a specific set of practices. And to have that, I would have to be raised as an Ojibwa boy. That's about as ontological as it gets.[588]

Our excursus on the denial of belief has sought to demonstrate that objections to belief appear to be based on erroneous understandings of the concept of belief; and that in-fact "belief" in the first-person - the only point of view which should matter - offers a

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[585] The examples provided of power relations or the need for protein consumption as functional explanations of beliefs are offered by the present author and allude especially to ideas of anthropologists Maurice Godelier (1986) and Marshall Sahlins (1978), respectively.
[586] Holbraad & Pedersen 2017, 188
[587] Risjord 2020, 595-596.
[588] *Ibid.*, 607.

useful tool in our lexicon for expressing something about a human state of sensing and engaging with the world, in a way which has internal coherence. Our job should be to understand as best we can the nature of those beliefs and how they relate to the material realm; and the final following chapters set about exploring this in more detail.

25.4. There remains one matter, however, which will become pertinent to the development of the approach herein, which should be mentioned. While it may be true that belief in the first-person cannot contradict itself; there is always the possibility for the subject to intentionally contradict *them*selves; that is, to *claim* to believe or to *feign* belief. Under what circumstances does this occur? And indeed how can we detect it? Does Holbraad and Pedersen's claim to ontological modulation (for example) fall into the rubric of wittingly or otherwise claiming to believe but not really believing in something? Kant invoked the analogy of the bet as the test of whether a belief is insincere (a type of belief which he referred to as "pragmatic beliefs"):

> If we imagine that we have to stake the happiness of our whole life, the triumphant air of our judgement drops considerably; we become extremely tentative, and suddenly discover that our belief does not reach so far.[589]

It will be argued in due course, that, while belief must be taken seriously; it must also be done seriously: *pretending* to believe - such as, for example, being atheist and at the same time claiming to be an animist - is not only insincere but will lead to no meaningful change in thoughts, actions or behaviours.

The next chapter argues for recognising the ways in which humans must take their cues (or signals) for action in the first place from the material realm of things not only as actants (to momentarily borrow a Latourism), but as affective actants, precisely because of their Being/being nature -their at-once revealed and concealed state which Latour denies. That all action is bound-up in a series of developed and learnt responses to the existence and intention of other entities; as an inherent feature of the state in which humans find themselves. The argument is sustained that imagining that humans (or otherwise) can have intention without an object of intention derives from and is sustained by ideas of internal «representation», which are themselves the outcome of one perspective on the location and nature of the Source/s of Life. In other words, the "illusion" is not in ideas of the Source/s of Life (or source to action) or in the concept of belief, but in ideas that one can somehow evade the *need to believe* in a Source/s of Life.

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[589]   Kant 2007 [1781/1787], B853 | A825.

It suggests that typical Euro-American contemporary approaches to understanding belief and faith, themselves steeped in idealist constructions, assert an approach which is not fit for purpose for understanding different faiths and beliefs.[590] While the position developed here disagrees with Heidegger's quest for Being – as some 'holy grail' ontology which can free us from Euro-American metaphysics, - it fully agrees with the ethical spirit of his quest; and his later invocation of "only a god can save us". In short, we must acknowledge that our enquires *must* involve belief, and we should probably strive to overcome the kind of humanist narcissism to which idealism seems to have led us (that we - through «mind» - channel the Source/s of Life). Perhaps what Heidegger was not clear enough about in his invocation of this spirit of belief, is that the alternative does not need to involve institutional dogma and patriarchy –the inherent tension, we may recall, between the Burkeian and Rousseauian approaches for a better human relationship with the world. We will return to this in due course.

What is suggested here instead, then, is that, humans cannot avoid responding to what the being of things presents and demands; that what the world of things presents and how humans respond is an inevitable exchange between them; and this is ultimately a bodily-based emotional response, not a "rational", «mind»-based one. How particular aspects of the world present as the Source/s of Life and a kind of gift-giving/exchange process with the Source/s of Life then manifests and varies will be the next and final component of the argument developed here.

Summary of Chapter 7

This chapter has sought to interrogate and challenge the bases of the kind of thought which proponents of post-anthropocentrism in material culture studies (the "return to things", the "ontological turn", etc.) espouse and embody. It has done so through a deconstruction of Latour's critique of Heidegger in juxtaposition to Heidegger's later thought; and through the broader discourse in the denial of "belief" in the social sciences and humanities. It has claimed that what the post-anthropocentrism in-fact entails is a more entrenched anthropocentrism through the perpetuation of a new-Kantian ideas of the supremacy of «mind» and "rationalism"; and misunderstandings concerning the

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[590] Such a stance would claim that even relativistic arguments that seek to promote different understandings of the world through alternate modes of 'belief' or 'religiosity', betray their good intentions from the inherent inadequacy of their starting point, which assumes the prevalence of such concepts as 'belief', 'religion' and 'ritual'. For this reason, Heidegger's philosophy is neither a relativist one, nor a form of subjectivism or pseudo-religion, although it has - understandably - been mistaken for all of these. See: Clark 2002, 11. On critiques of modernist objectifying perspectives of "belief" and "ritual", see, for example, Brück 1999, 2005; Fowles 2013; Latour 1993.

nature of belief, which "rational" idealism cannot in-fact account for. It suggests that there are ethical implications to this kind of thought, of which we must also take account and for which we must take responsibility.

CHAPTER 8: The demands of the infinite

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§26. The Promethean Complex

In Hesoid's eighth century BC account of the myth of Prometheus survives an interesting allegory for helping our understanding of Euro-American attitudes to the concept of gods and belief. The story is most often known today as the one which recounts how the gift of creativity was bestowed upon humans. But this much adumbrated version of the story belies its more complex and nuanced significance. In brief, the story begins in Mecone, where gods and humans convene to settle the question of how a sacrifice should be divided among them. Doing the bidding for humans, Prometheus deceives Zeus (so-called "the trick at Mecone") so that humans would henceforth only have to give up worthless offerings of the Ox's bones to the gods while keeping all the fatty spoils of the carcass for humans: "...and because of this the tribes of men upon earth burn white bones to the deathless gods upon fragrant altars." As punishment, Zeus takes fire away from humans, which Prometheus duly steals back to return to humans. As further punishment, Prometheus is chained up so an eagle can eat his liver by day, which would regrow by night, securing Prometheus' perpetual punishment.[591]

The Promethean myth has of course been subject to much varied historical reception and interpretation, albeit largely as some kind of legitimacy of the gift of creativity and agency given to humans. But what this story also encapsulates is a particular attitude which at once separates humans from the gods (and the world) in their previously shared communion[592] and (therefore) at the same time redeems individual

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[591] Hesoid, *Theogony* 507-570.
[592] On the Promethean story as intended to signify the splitting of humans from the gods in shared communion, see, for example: Wirshbo 1982, 103; Dietz 2004 [1989], 66-68.

humans from any direct obligation or commitment to thankfulness, except via a sacrifice made by some intermediary or proxy figure. In the case of Prometheus, the gifts are not given, but rather, appear to have been extorted through trickery; [593] for which Prometheus makes the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of humans. For Marx, the story of Prometheus offers a way out of the perseverance of mythic thought in western consciousness. [594] For him, in a way which resonates with his forebearer Hegel and the so-called Young Hegelians, [595] the truths of the Greek myths and arts in general afforded a staging point from which a higher level of thought should be achieved.[596] As Marx puts it in his doctoral thesis: "The confession of Prometheus, 'in simple words, I hate the pack of Gods', is its own confession, its own aphorism against all heavenly and earthly Gods who do not acknowledge human self-consciousness as the highest divinity." [597] Indeed, the figure of Prometheus is valorised by many as associated with human freedom from the tyranny of the institutions of religion and state. As Classicist Hugh Lloyd-Jones put it "To the Romantic poets of the revolutionary era, the Titan tortured by Zeus for his services to mankind appeared as a symbol of the human spirit in its struggle to throw off the chains which priest kings had forged for it." [598] For Marx and Latour both, these powerful external forces are constructions: while for Marx they are reflections of human power structures which can and should be overthrown through dismantling human social hierarchies; for Latour those social hierarchies will dissolve in the face of a world where people and things are understood as equal actants. But as Lloyd-Jones and others have suggested, these kinds of interpretation of the nature and function of the figures of Prometheus and Zeus in the various versions of the story, represent misguided understandings. [599]

Plato offers an insight to what is intended in this passage. While Prometheus is punished, it is understood that humans cannot form cohesive societies with the arts, creativity and craft professions alone; but a further gift of the "bonds of friendship" (philia), conciliation and justice is also needed, which Zeus bestows upon humans through Hermes. [600] As philosopher and anthropologist Marcel Henaff puts it in relation to this passage: "needs alone, and the related professions, cannot unite men. For that, a

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[593] Notably, while in Aeschylus' later *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus is presented as a culture-hero, there is significant agreement that in Hesiod's text, he presents rather as a trickster figure. See, for example: Wirshbo 1982, 107-110; Franssen 2014, 14-16.

[594] Bentley (1978, 484) cites the forward in Marx's doctoral dissertation, in which he states that Prometheus represents "the most eminent saint and martyr in the philosophical calendar".

[595] See: Massey 1976.

[596] Marx 1973, 110. Marx, Grundrisse, tr. Martin Nicolaus (1973), as cited in Bentley 1978, 485.

[597] Marx & Engels, Collected Works I, p. 30 as cited in Bentley 1978, 485

[598] Lloyd-Jones 1956, 54.

[599] Lloyd-Jones 1956; 1971; Bentley 1978.

[600] Plato, Protagoras. 4th C BC.

divine gift is necessary, an affective link that circulates among them but proceeds from a unique source." [601] Indeed, Henaff's thought provides a useful entry point for understanding the relationship between the Source/s of Life and the gift. What will be argued here is that, the principle of the gift must be an inherent dynamic in the recognition of the Source/s of Life. The reason for blindness on this important dimension in extant literature can be put down to the nature of the positioning of Euro-American thought concerning the gift - something akin to the Promethean complex briefly explored here - from which Euro-American thought predominantly operates. The next section explores the nature of the gift in relation to the Source/s of Life, as a key to understanding the way human relationships with the material world is inextricably bound up in conceptions of the Source/s of Life.

§27. The affectivity of the 'infinite'

At the 1888 Gifford Lectures in Glasgow, some 125 years before Latour's Gifford Lectures in 2013, the 'father of comparative religious studies', Friedrich Max Müller, proposed a perspective which stands in notable contradistinction to Latour's thought or indeed much «representational» thought which has otherwise dominated the social sciences and humanities since. For him, the human perception of finite things "always implies a something beyond" – the "infinite" - which are both perceived simultaneously;[602] and can only be derived from sensuous experience or external "percepts" prior to everything else.[603] This is in many ways comparable to Kant's distinction between the phenomenon and noumenon and Heidegger's being and Being (§10.4), respectively: of a physical realm that is accessible to our perceptive senses and a concealed realm which lies behind the physical realm (a concept which, as we have seen, Nietzsche and Latour – for example – both sought to dismantle in their own ways). But Müller is also intent on emphasising the point that the "infinite" is not a concept conceived spontaneously and constructed internally by humans - or as projected anthropomorphisation of the world. For Müller "...to think of energies without as energies within, is very different from seeing the sky or the fire, and conceiving and naming such beings as Dyaus or Zeus, as Indra or Agni."[604] He further proposes, in a pre-curser of Wittgenstein's thought, that the kind of consciousness of these things which humans experience is entirely simultaneously and inextricably reliant on language and the naming of things. Similarly, William James, a few

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[601] Henaff 2003, 310.
[602] Müller 1898, 123-124.
[603] *Ibid.*, 115-116, 126-131.
[604] *Ibid.*, 127.

years earlier in 1884 advanced the hypothesis, contrary to conventional wisdom at the time, that "...bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact..." leading to automatic responses which are then followed by emotional responses of fear or sadness.[605] As he puts it:

> The love of man for woman, or of the human mother for her babe, our wrath at snakes and our fear of precipices, may all be described similarly, as instances of the ways in which peculiarly conformed pieces of the world's furniture will fatally call forth most particular mental and bodily reactions, in advance of, and often in direct opposition to, the verdict of our deliberate reason concerning them.[606]

In the same year that Müller's Gifford lectures were published, 1898, Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss identified a similar dynamic between what they describe as the "profane" and the "divine". The former - that is, the practical functions of daily human life - they observe, must enter a relationship with the latter "...because it sees in it the very Source/s of Life."[607] The categorisation of an entity as the Source/s of Life brackets that entity which Hubert and Mauss call the 'divine', where different rules apply in distinction from the 'profane'. Such a dichotomy was perhaps most famously advanced by Emile Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*[608] some fourteen years later as the "sacred" and the "profane" and was generally integrated into scholarly thought, especially within anthropology, as an assumed foundational principle for defining religious-like activities and objects.[609] For Durkheim, the sacred was similarly those entities from which the Source/s of Life is perceived as emanating; as the "...guardians of physical and moral order, as well as dispensers of life, health, and all the qualities that men value" -what he defines as the "pure sacred". [610] But importantly, as Sociologist Dmitry Kurakin points out, Durkheim was also clear that the sacred and profane are not concomitant with ideas of "good" and "evil", as has often since been assumed, interpreted or confused (and which has been important for establishing the theoretical bases of structuralism and semiotics); but rather that the sacred encompasses both.[611] The sacred, for Durkheim, therefore, also manifests as the "...evil and impure powers,

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[605] James 1884, 190. Original emphasis and capitalisation.

[606] *Ibid*.

[607] Hubert & Mauss 1981 [1898], 98.

[608] Durkheim 1995 [1912].

[609] See for example: Douglas 1966; Eliade 1959 [1957]; Levi-Strauss 1969; Parsons 1973; Turner 1975. Notably, authors do not necessarily always directly attribute the observed dichotomy to Durkheim (or Hubert and Mauss) (Rothenbuhler 1992, 66; Kurakin 2015, 379); or indeed fully encompass the full import of Durkheim's argument (Kurakin 2015, 379).

[610] Durkheim 1995 [2012], 412.

[611] Kurakin 2015, 380-381 & 384. Kurakin demonstrates how the pure and impure forms of the sacred have been conflated with the pure (as sacred) and polluted (as profane) among various authors, including, for example, Alexander 2003; Kane 1998, Smith 1999; and that the confusion, he argues through Caillois (1959) and Riley (2005), can often be attributed to loss of the negative connotation of the word "sacred" in various European languages, including Greek, German, English and Russian.

bringers of disorder, causes of death and sickness...[and] The only feelings men have for them is a fear that usually has a component of horror."[612] The sacred therefore has a mercurial nature which Durkheim described as "the ambiguity of the sacred." [613] Hubert and Mauss similarly note: "If the religious forces are the very principle of the forces of life, they are in themselves of such a nature that contact with them is a fearful thing for the ordinary man...".[614]

What these thinkers at the turn of the twentieth century present is an interesting compound of ideas which speculate that, with human self-awareness, there is a simultaneous sensuously derived awareness of the mystery of the Source/s of Life or of the "infinite", which is at once benevolent and malevolent or unpredictable. This, in many ways is reminiscent of the dialectic imperative; and especially of Hegel's Gnosticism. But where these authors place more emphasis is in the affectivity of infinite or sacred qualities which present themselves in the world and in ways which demand a response. As was an explicit component of Hegel's dialectic and perhaps more implicit in the thought of, for example, Simmel and Marx; the dialectic process is a not a singular or even a sporadic event, but an ongoing backwards and forwards dynamic between the subject/s and object/s. In many ways, the more idealistic Neo-Kantian formulation of «mind» stifles the sense of affectivity of the world and of a generative process in the human-world interaction; and rather considers the nature of the interaction between the mind and world, as one of «mind» *verifying* the form and content of the world as it presents itself. The following section will explore in more detail the nature of that backwards-and-forwards dynamic in order to help us understand how human relations to the material realm does not necessarily involve an internal «mind».

§28. The Gift Contract

28.1. Having established that the divine is the source of life, Hubert and Mauss then go to propose that humans therefore have "...every interest in drawing closer to it, since it is there that the very conditions for its existence are to be found."[615] Hubert and Mauss propose this as the basis for the act of sacrifice. But their deliberations on how sacrifice precisely serve to fulfil the "interest in drawing closer" to the source of life reveals a paradox, but also some insight which will help us to elucidate the relationship between gift exchange engagements with the material realm, especially in religious-like contexts.

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[612] Durkheim 1995 [2012], 412.
[613] *Ibid.*, 415.
[614] Hubert & Mauss 1981 [1898], 98.
[615] *Ibid.*

Hubert and Mauss initially offer two ways in which an intermediary is necessary for fulfilling the function of sacrifice. The first posits that the powerful nature of divine is too dangerous "...to be concentrated in a profane object without destroying it".[616] So, they continue:

> That is why between these powers and himself [the sacrificer] he interposes intermediaries, of whom the principle is the victim. If he involved himself in the rite to the very end, he would find death, not life. The victim takes his place...The sacrificer remains protected: the gods take the victim instead of him.[617]

Secondly, where it might be deemed possible for the profane to enter a direct relationship with the divine, there is the risk that they will themselves become divine, with the effect of isolating the individual (or entity) from society and themselves not being able to benefit from the sacrifice and "...fulfil their role in temporal life."[618] These explanations have been adopted by many as the basis for understanding the dynamics underlying the complex relationships between humans and the divine.[619] However, there are two problems with adopting this approach, which will ultimately lead us to the same point. The first concerns whether a sacrifice can strictly be understood as a third-party intermediary. As something which is a part of (or belonging to) one party which is being given-up or transferred to the other party - if it is considered as a third-party intermediary - then the act could not be deemed as a giving away or a "sacrifice". In order for something to be a "sacrifice", presumably that thing must belong to (or be part of) the sacrifice. However, it could be argued that, in Mauss' model, the sacrificer's child (to take an extreme example) as a victim (and which would indeed constitute a significant "sacrifice") *becomes* the intermediary. But this does not hold in the context of the original argument which proposes that an intermediary is used to avoid destruction in attempting to draw the profane closer to the divine. If that is the case, any sort of personal sacrifice contradicts the principle of avoiding harm or destruction in the process. There is therefore an inherently contradictory dynamic in the sacrifice-substitution formulation as Mauss presents it,

The second point is that, the motivation (to have "...every interest in drawing closer to it, since it is there that the very conditions for its existence are to be found") which Hubert and Mauss offer for entering into a relationship with the Source/s of Life, in the first place, seems unclear. Indeed, why would humans want to draw closer to the

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[616] *Ibid.*
[617] *Ibid.* Own brackets.
[618] *Ibid.,* 99.
[619] See, for example: Engelke 2007; Meyer 2009; Willerslev 2009; Robbins 2017; Dapuez 2022.

source of the conditions for existence? Hubert and Mauss, as we will see, in-fact later revise their position, which partially resolves the first question by removing sacrifice as an intermediary and partially resolves the second question of motivation.

28.2. Religious Studies scholar Stephanie Frank describes a debate which ensued between Mauss and Herbert with Legal Historian Paul-Louis Huvelin leading to a change of position they take; from essays published on Magic in 1902 and 1904, in contrast to an essay published in 1909 and Mauss' later sole publication of *The Gift* in 1924-25.[620] The essence of the debate between Huvelin and Hubert and Mauss concerns the nature of ritual acts in the communication between the divine and the profane. Partly in response to Huvelin's hypothesis that Roman private law was based on magical formulas, [621] Hubert and Mauss postulated that religious ritual acts are more than merely contracts between entities; but rather "Ritual acts are, in their essence, capable of producing something other than conventions; they are eminently efficacious; they are creators; they do."[622] For them, ritual and magic - rather than an act of conforming - offered a way for individual Will to overcome social and contractual norms. But Huvelin's retort is interesting and important. Referring to civilisations where "formalism" is prevalent, he posits "In these civilizations, it is the forms alone which create or destroy rights, independent of any condition of will. Will without form produces no effect."[623] Huvelin's position is a corrective to Hubert and Mauss' understanding of the possibility that magic rituals offer individuals a way to operate that is not subordinated to "powers that overcome him and incite him to act," as they put it in 1904.[624] Frank deconstructs the way in which, in *The Gift* (1924-25), Mauss adjusts his position to argue instead that all religious acts of sacrifice and gift-making are ultimately based on juridical obligations. But Mauss frames this revised position in a way which preserves the essence of his and

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[620] Frank 2016; Huvelin 1901, 1919; Mauss 2007 [1924-25].
[621] Huvelin 1901.
[622] Hubert and Mauss 1904, 14. As cited in Frank 2016, 258.
[623] Huvelin 1906: 4-5, fn 4. As cited and translated by Frank 2016, 259. (Original text: "Dans ces civilisations, ce sont les formes seules qui créant ou éteignent les droits, indépendamment de toute-condition de volonté. La volonté sans formes ne produit aucun effet."). Frank suggests that the fragment references "juridical formalism". However, while Huvelin certainly makes reference nearby to "juridical obligation", he refers only to "...civilisations where the principal of formalism reigns." (Own translation: "...les civilisations où règne le principe de formalisme."). The present author would suggest that while the ultimate meaning between "juridical formalism" and "formalism", in this context, might arrive at the same place, the latter offers a slightly less ambiguous basis for grasping Huvelin's intended meaning. Notably, Huvelin goes on to note that formalism is in-fact widely prevalent, including in Justinian Rome and "civilizations as advanced as ours" where "we tend towards resuscitating it". Huvelin 1906: 4-5, fn 4. Own translation ("Mème sous Justinien, le droit romain n'avait pas répudié le formalisme. Et, dans des civilisations aussi avancées que la nôtre, il arrive qu'on tend a le ressusciter (thorie de la déclaration de volonté).")
[624] Hubert and Mauss 1904, 89. As cited in Frank 2016, 259.

Hubert's original position: gift making as acts which embody an endless series and network of multi-lateral exchanges between people and things. As Frank summarises it: "...rather than reflecting asymmetrical relations of authority, it materializes symmetrical relations of mutuality."[625] She goes on:

> The implicit contention is that if only we attend carefully to the exchanges that we all undertake everyday—if only we attend to things—we will see how a nonhierarchical, nonauthoritarian sociality can be conceived. If we conceive society as comprised of things together with people, we will see in gift exchange our conditioning by a field of forces determined by things as much as by people, determining people as much as things.[626]

28.3. All of this is pertinent to us here in three ways. First, the "formalist" position to which Hubert and Mauss come around, which reflects Müller's conception of the infinite as perceptible only through sensuous experience, brings us back to the importance of the idea of understanding stimuli as phenomena to which humans can only respond in some way. This pertains to the critique of Latour's position which demotes religious ideas (as opposed to actions) as entirely illusory, as somehow spontaneously generated, rather than arising as a response to *something*. Indeed, in many ways, Hubert and Mauss' original position on the spontaneous nature of ritual, that "Ritual acts are, in their essence, capable of producing something other than conventions; they are eminently efficacious; they are creators; they do",[627] relates to certain types of approach to embodied action, as expressed in Latour's prioritization of creative acts of ritual, but also as it is encompassed in practice-, action-, and doing-based approaches of numerous anthropologists and archaeologists.[628] But the difficulty of such a position, especially in the context of religious-like activities, to which Huvelin alludes, is that it assumes that humans somehow find themselves in the act of performing a ritual as purely spontaneous intentional and without reference or recourse to anything, (other than some sort of "illusory" construction, of course). But, as we have seen the act of doing is part of an interactive dialogue of actions and responses in relation to the thing or things which the person is handling, making or using. Huvelin's point which was so instrumental in changing the course of Hubert and Mauss' position was, that the *form* of something must first elict or demand action from humans to instigate a dialogue or chain of exchanges, and not the other way around.

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[625] Frank 2016, 275.
[626] *Ibid*.
[627] Hubert and Mauss 1904, 14. As cited in Frank 2016, 258.
[628] See, for example, Botwid 2016; Ferme 2021; Ingold 2013; Malafouris 2021; Shanks & McGuire 1996.

The second emergent point from our excursus on the dialogue between Hubert/Mauss and Huvelin is the implicit (or explicit) contractual nature of the act of exchange as the important dynamic mechanism in such interactions. In this regard, Mauss shifts his understanding from the sacrificial victim as being a third-party intermediary to a type of gift, as part of an exchange:

> One of the first groups with which men had to enter into contract, and who, by definition, were there to make a contract with them, were above all the spirits of both the dead and of the gods. Indeed, it is they who are the true owners of the things and possessions of this world. With them it was most necessary to exchange.[629]

He later continues:

> It is evident that here a start can be made on formulating a theory and history of contract sacrifice. Contract sacrifice supposes institutions of the kind we have described and, conversely, contract sacrifice realizes them to the full, because those gods who give and return gifts are there to give a considerable thing in the place of a small one.[630]

Thirdly, and finally, what Frank helps us to see is the agential nature which things take on for Mauss as part of a sequence of exchanges between things and humans. This is of course in many ways a pre-cursor to the thought of Gell and Latour, who both emphasise the agential nature of things and which has been so influential in the humanities and social sciences ever since. Indeed, Gell, for example, fully acknowledges the influence of Mauss' thought with regard to this in his work.[631] But, in the construction of the relationship between the triad of emergent themes identified (the formalist understanding of affective nature of sacred; the role of the concept of exchange in relations between humans and sacred; and agential nature of things), it is argued here, that there are a number of deep-rooted problems, which persist in sustaining «representational» thought in much of scholarship within material-culture studies today. The next section explores in some more depth the relationship between the gift, exchange and the "affective" nature of the Source/s of Life.

§29. The affective gift exchange

29.1. Anthropologist Philip Descola, in setting up his critique of Levi-Strauss, quite rightly asks "Is it legitimate to associate reciprocity and gift with the same set of

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[629] Mauss 1990 [1924-25 / 1950], 16.

[630] *Ibid.*, 17

[631] Gell 1998, 9: "…the anthropological theory of art…which 'considers art objects as persons' is, I hope, immediately and legibly Maussian. Given that prestations or 'gifts' are treated in Maussian exchange theory as (extensions of) persons, then there is obviously scope for seeing art objects as 'persons' in the same way."

phenomena?"[632] Levi Strauss adopted the Maussian formulation of the gift [633] as an essential component of the 'structure' of the human «mind»; "...as the most immediate form of integrating the opposition between the self and others; and the synthetic nature of the gift, i.e. that the agreed transfer of a valuable from one individual to another makes these individuals into partners and adds a new quality to the valuable transferred." [634] Descola goes on to cite anthropologist Alain Testart's distinction between a gift which is given with the expectation of reciprocity on the one hand; and the gift with no 'strings attached', such as a birthday present, where there is arguably no inherent obligation to return the gesture. [635] But such an understanding of gift-giving ignores an important question: if one is not compelled to make the gift by some kind of obligatory convention, why make the gift at all? Here we may revert again to Huvelin's statement: "Will without form produces no effect" or indeed Müller's reference to the primacy of the "percept". The point which will be explored here is the way in which, in the act of giving a gift, there are two agents which affect each other in some way in the process of the gift giving event: the process is a two-way exchange, rather than a one-sided event, as Testart would imply. First, there is the recipient of the gift, for whom the very fact of the expressive nature or "form" of the gift object or event - whatever that may be - cannot be ignored and elicits or demands *some* sort of response. Secondly, the giver of the gift must be responding to something about the *intended* recipient which triggers the gift-giving action, which may include a sensation, emotion, desire or reflex. Seen in this way, gift giving is a response to an initiatory stimulus rather than an initiatory action. The remainder of this section will explore this line of thought.

29.2. Some ten years after his publication of the *The Gift*, Mauss publishes *Techniques of the body*, in which he made yet another seminal contribution to thought; this time on the social and psychological significance of bodily gestural action. [636] Mauss' thesis is that "...man's first and most natural technical object, and at the same time technical means, is his body." [637] As such, for Mauss, "effective" movement and action - "technique" - is culturally inscribed through imitative tradition, as part of a triad of components which

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[632]   Descola 2013 [2005], 312.
[633]   Clarke 1978; Levi-Strauss 1987 [1950].
[634]   Levi-Strauss 1969 [1949], 84. In this regard, we can see how the understanding of the dialectic imperative presented here is not far away from binary dynamics of structuralism. But, while there are some comparisons between Structuralism and the approach developed, as will be discussed, Structuralism relies on a concept of «representational» correspondence between «mind» and an external world, which is rejected here.
[635]   Testart 1997, 43. As cited by Descola 2013 [2005], 314.
[636]   Mauss 1973 [1935].
[637]   *Ibid.*, 75.

constitute the "total man": the physical, the sociological and the psychological. [638] But how, for Mauss do these three interrelate and, indeed, how does this relate to his earlier contribution on the gift as exchange? In his own words:

> But what is the difference between the effective traditional action of religion, the symbolic or juridical effective traditional action, the actions of life in common, moral actions on the one hand and the traditional actions of technique on the other? It is that the latter are felt by the author as actions of a mechanical, physical or physico-chemical order and that they are pursued with that aim in view. [639]

He completes the picture for us:

> The constant adaptation to a physical, mechanical or chemical aim (e.g. when we drink) is pursued in a series of assembled actions, and assembled for the individual not by himself alone but by all his education, by the whole society to which he belongs, in the place he occupies in it.
>   Moreover, all these techniques were easily arranged in a system which is common to us, the notion basic to psychologists, particularly [William Halse] Rivers and [Sir Henry] Head, of the symbolic life of the mind; the notion we have of the activity of the consciousness as being above all a system of symbolic assemblages. [640]

To be clear, then, the body is inscribed with and is the receptor of «symbolic» action and/or object which is assembled in the «mind» and transmitted socially. This formulation has since been celebrated and adopted by some proponents of embodied approaches for understanding social phenomena,[641] many of whom would generally otherwise disavow a Cartesian dualist approach. Yet, his formulation shares much in common with the model which Descartes develops, as discussed previously. The corollary of this is the assumption that gift exchange is the manifestation of a process which at some point involves «mind» based «symbolic» and «representational» thought, which gives «meaning» to or makes sense of corporeally situated activity.

For Mauss, Gell and Latour, in the absence of the form of a discernible god with which humans are making an exchange, in order to explain this phenomenon, the agency of the absent god is transposed into the thing being exchanged OR something with agency is made to stand-in for the god. So, for Hubert and Mauss, in their original formulation of sacrifice, the sacrifice took on the form of a human, which would either have to be destroyed OR become the divine thing -neither of which, are considered desirable ends. In Mauss' later interpretation in the gift –either the things (gifts) in themselves take-on agency OR people must stand-in for the gods to receive the gift. As

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[638] *Ibid.*, 73-74.
[639] *Ibid.*, 75.
[640] *Ibid.*, 76. Original square brackets.
[641] See, for example, Noland 2009.

we saw in the ontological transposition, a third party agent –a "metonymic representation" is inserted in order to explain these beliefs and practices. It is not possible simply for there to be an exchange with *no-thing*. Therefore, if you don't believe in the god-thing - something with agency must stand-in for the "non-existent" god in order for the exchanges which readily take place between humans and the "illusory" gods to make any sense. Indeed, there is an inherent problem with the ascription of agency to things in these ways. In order to believe that something has agency surely one must be affected by it in some way to legitimately make such a claim. To give a thing which is not part of you independent agency is contradictory, because in the act of giving the thing which you claim has its own agency, you are in-fact negating its agency –unless of course you go on to claim that the thing has made a choice to give itself, in which case you are not giving it: it is giving itself! The thing given therefore either is part of you or belongs to you, and therefore at least part of its agency has been forfeited in order to be in your ownership; OR it is its own thing and able to give itself or not, as it so chooses.

However, a significant body of thought would dispute such a formulation. Around the same time that Mauss was writing, ideas that some human social behaviours can instead be understood as "intuitive" (i.e.: extra-cognitive) emotional responses to certain stimuli; as involving a direct affectivity between body and phenomena (in ways to which Müller alludes); was also being considered, albeit with far less impact on the humanities and social sciences, until more recently. There is not scope here for a full appraisal of the various nuances between various strands of thought in this regard. [642] But we will give some focus here especially to the Gestalt approach developed by Psychologist Kurt Lewin, and 'world focused emotion experience' developed more recently by

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[642] Approaches focused on affectivity may be broken down broadly into five categories, each with different theoretical premises and implications: 1) Parallelism; 2) Embodied Essentialism; 3) Adaptive Enactivism; 4) Subjective Emotional Affectivity; and 5) World Focused. Parallelist accounts are problematic in ultimately sustaining a concept of «representation» as a kind of interpretant of corporeal action and reception. Embodied Essentialism in some ways corresponds to Aristotle's hylomorphic formulation of the material realm and how psuche relates to that formulation. This sort of position is generally later assumed by philosophers who rejected Descarte's «mind»-body dualism, initially by Philosopher Maine de Biran who understands subjective experience as "immediate apperception" lived through the body. This was taken up later by Phenomenological philosophers, in particular Michel Henry, Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jan Patočka's synthesis of Maine de Biran and Martin Heidegger's thought. While claiming to give primacy of the corporeal as immersed in an interconnected world, it does so in a way which the nature of the connectedness between entities remains tacit: we might imagine that everything and everyone floats in a kind of existential soup, where interrelations occur indiscriminately. Subjective Emotional Affectivity, is more concerned with the ways in which individuals variously respond emotionally in embodied ways; which, while supporting embodied cognition, does not make any commitment to observing or explaining any sort of two-way exchange, between entities. Finally, while Adaptive Enactivism, similarly accounts for some kind of embodied cognition as part of an autopoietic organisation, it similarly does not offer a way for understanding the process at work in the exchange between entities –furthermore, in a way which is similar to parallelism, it ultimately defers to the «mind» as the ultimate location for the processing of corporeally inscribed action and experience.

Psychologists John Lambie and Anthony Marcel, and 'Field Theory' developed by Biologists Daniel McShea and Gunnar Babcock.

29.3. Psychologist Kurt Lewin proposed a unique formulation for understanding emotion as a response to objects; a contribution which - as Lambie points out - has unfortunately largely been unrepresented in thought since he was writing, especially in the 1920s/30s.[643] In contradistinction to much wisdom at the time and since, Lewin (and Kurt Koffka)[644] pushed against internalist conceptions of emotion as somehow free-floating and having no specific relation to external objects.[645] So Lewin suggests that humans have "drive-needs" which are "consummated" or "satiated" through objects and events "...which have a valence [demanding character, *Aufforderungscharaktere*] for them."[646] For Lewin, objects in the world "...are not neutral towards us in our role as *acting beings...They challenge us to certain activities*".[647] In this regard, Lambie demonstrates the important distinction between what, for example, an angry face expresses and what an angry face elicits: "...what the face demands of the viewer is different [from anger] – it is 'scariness' or 'to-be-avoidedness'".[648] This is reminiscent of William James' famous invocation of what happens when a human is confronted with a bear.[649] In this situation an action is forcibly elicited in the human, presumably driven by a survival instinct. For Lewin this would be an example of a "genuine" drive-need: the object/event of the

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[643] Lambie 2020, 4. There are some interesting socio-political reasons for the lack of recognition of the work of scholars such as Lewin, which pertains to an unfortunate appropriation of aspects of Gestalt theory by the Nazis (as developed especially by Wolfgang Metzger) and subsequent blanket discreditation, despite many of the original Gestalt theory writers, such as Lewin (as well as other early 'Gestaltians', Max Wertheimer and Kurt Koffka), themselves having been Jewish and forced to live in exile from Germany; and despite the valuable insight of these contributions. On this, see Westheimer 2023. Notably these approaches have generally continued to suffer as marginalia on the fringes of mainstream thought despite pleas by numerous authors for the rejuvenation of such approaches. As Zajonc (1980, 172) put it: "If we stop to consider just how much variance in the course of our lives is controlled by cognitive processes and how much by affect, and how much the one and the other influence the important outcomes in our lives, we cannot but agree that affective phenomena deserve far more attention than they have received from cognitive psychologists and a closer cognitive scrutiny from social psychologists." Similarly, Esra Mungan (2023) makes an impassioned plea for a re-consideration and re-integration of Gestalt Theory into the discipline of Psychology. Mungan, however, over-emphasises the importance which the Gestaltists ascribed to internal «representation» and subjectivism. Mungan's synthesis of neuro-constructivism and action fails to acknowledge the Neo-Kantian heritage of neuro-constructivist approach, predicated on the concept of «representation».

[644] Koffka 1924; 1936.

[645] On free-floating models of emotion, and what has more latterly been referred to as "core affect" theory, to some recent popular acclaim in biological circles, see, for example: Cannon 1927; MacLean 1993; Oatley & Johnson Baird 1986; Russell 2003.

[646] Lewin 1926 [1999], 94. The translation of *Aufforderungscharaktere* as "demanding character" is used here in preference to "valance" or "affordance" in agreement with Koffka 1935 and Lambie 2020. For a discussion on the reasons for this preference see Lambie 2020, 11-12.

[647] Lewin 1926 [1999], 95. Original italics.

[648] Lambie 2020, 4. Lambie provides the example of research on infant responses to facial expressions to verify this, otherwise intuitive, claim. See Haviland & Lelwica 1987.

[649] James 1884, 190.

demanding character (the bear) is very narrowly defined. But the breadth of the objects and events of potential valency and "the intensity with which objects and events challenge us varies greatly" depending on the circumstances and the strength of the urge or temptation - from "irresistible temptations" to what becomes "noticeable only when the person tried to find something to do" - and/or the urgency or force of the object/event.[650] Lewin also refers to "fixations" as occasions in which an attachment develops to specific objects or events for their demand characteristics in contrast to an otherwise much broader potential "region of objects or events which 'per se' would seem relevant", leading to repetitive and compulsive behaviours. He adds that: "such fixations result apparently in an unusually strong valence of the structure in question and have a certain *exclusive function*: Other structures lose their valence, entirely or partly."[651] He proposes that in certain circumstances "consummation" is realised via "substitutes" or proxies, for example: in the case of asking a friend to post a letter into a letter box: the intention would be to post a letter into a letter box and the letter box would be the object with a demand character; but, in this case, the tension between the need and the object has been consummated by an intermediary agent.[652] Finally, Lewin later develops the concept of "hodological space" which refers to the mapping of space as pathways within space which correspond to emotional associations with those spaces, such as "home", "safe place", "dangerous place", overriding or taking precedence over pure Euclidian spatial concerns (e.g.: relative distance). [653]

Lewin's thought provides perhaps the first comprehensive formulation of how objects external to the subject might be affective or demanding. His ideas influenced (indirectly via Koffka) Psychologist James Gibson's theory of affordances as "possibilities" for action which are offered by the environment.[654] In his ecological-realist formulation, affordances correlate to constant features in the environment to which organisms, including humans, respond through action. He was less interested in the individual intention and subjectivity which Lewin's drive-needs suggest, and more in a holistic interrelation between the subject and object, in which the subject perceives the environment in a more complete way. While influential, his insights are limited in describing the individual perceptive field embedded in an environment and does not account for human shared social, cultural and linguistic phenomena; nor explicitly offers

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[650] Lewin 1926 [1999], 94-99. Lewin distinguishes between "genuine" and "quasi" needs, although there is no absolute clarity about how he would distinguish these.
[651] *Ibid.*, 99-100.
[652] *Ibid.*, 102-104.
[653] Lewin 1938. As cited by Lambie 2020, 5-6.
[654] Gibson 1986.

a method for understanding human emotions. Psychologist Robert Withagen has more recently offered a corrective to Gibson's 'eco-centricism'; proposing instead that affordances are not constants to which humans merely respond, but dynamic relations negotiated through interaction between, first, the physical and environmental variables, "...the laws of optics [in the case of the visual field, for example] and the physical structure of the environment"; but, he goes on, "what the detection of the pattern does is a *joint product* of the pattern and the developmental history of the person who is affected by it".[655] Emotional responses, then, arise at the conjunction of the demanding nature of affordances (in objects) and the personal experiences of the subject. This pulls back once again towards Lewin's approach but emphasises more personal experiential histories.

Lambie and Marcel's model of "world focused emotion experience" ("WFEE"), while similarly giving more attention to the experience of the perceiver, is interested less in individual developmental histories, and proposes more general patterns in perceptive and emotional experiential responses to a demanding environment.[656] Key to Lambie and Marcel's approach is what they describe as "gerundival perception", inspired largely by Lewin, but also building on Psychologist Nico Frijda's understanding of emotions as a constant readiness for and attunement to the environment in relation to the perceiver's concerns.[657] Lambie and Marcel make the case for understanding gerundival perception as "...a figural object with a phenomenological property of impellingness that is the world counterpart of a self-focused action-urge."[658] That is, an object which persists in a mutual object-subject relationship -or a "reciprocal figure-ground relationship."[659] Lambie cites James to further illustrate the concept: "Gerundival perceptions were anticipated by William James who wrote 'To the broody hen...a nestful of eggs...[is a] never-to-be-too much-sat-upon object'".[660] Lambie summarises the processes underlying the WFEE model as follows:

> The environment is constantly being scanned in relation to one's concerns (Frijda, 1986), and when an event is appraised as relevant to a concern (for example,that the lion over there is dangerous), emotions arise which are "action attitudes" (Lambie & Marcel, 2002). The process of attending to the world aspect of this attitudinal state yields gerundival perception of the lion-to-be-fleed-from. (Self-focused attention to this state yields a different kind of emotion experience – a feeling of my body being ready to run...The appraisal process itself (although it may often be brief and nonconscious) also affects emotion experience. For example, let's say the situation has been assessed in terms of the lion being dangerous relative to my coping

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[655] Withagen 2018, 25.
[656] Lambie & Marcel 2002; Lambie 2020.
[657] Frijda 1986.
[658] Lambie & Marcel 2002, 239. The term "gerundival" is derived from the verb-form (as in Latin) which means "that should or must or is appropriate to be done". On this, see Lambie 2020, 6.
[659] Lambie 2020, 2.
[660] *Ibid.*, 7. Citing James 1981 [1890], 387.

resources. This appraisal shapes the hodological experience – for example, "grooves", "avenues of escape", "barriers" etc. are thereby seen in the phenomenal field as part of the emotion experience.[661]

Babcock and MacShea's field theory, which has enjoyed considerable popularity recently within the biological sciences, offers a biological equivalent to Lambie and Marcel's WFEE model. For them, all organisms reside in "fields" which may be defined as "Any physical structure that is larger than, and encompasses smaller entities lying within it..."[662] which may be a continuous ecology, such as chemical gradient or discontinuous environments where boundaries delimit another ecological field. Within and between these fields "teleological systems" determine the goal directedness of all entities. Babcock and MacShea provide examples of the way the sun guides the movement of sunflowers, magnetic fields guide sea turtles, morphogenetic gradients guide a cell in an embryo, or a sound field guides a torpedo missile.[663] While there are internal mechanisms to each of these examples which enable them to follow the light rays, magnetic fields, morphogenetic gradients, and sound fields; these structures are part of a continuous teleological system –they are constituent parts of a nested hierarchy, each equally in-turn guided by "structures that are larger than and external to them."[664] An "inhomogeneous" set of structures similarly constitute fields. So, "The food sources, climate conditions, predators, competitors, and parasites that govern an organism's reproductive success constitute a field. The system of laws, conventions, and expectations that govern paying for a pack of gum at a gas station is an inhomogeneous field, what we will call a social field."[665] Babcock and MacShea emphasise, importantly, that these processes are in no way intended to be metaphorical or to refer to anything "spooky", but are entirely "...real and fully describable in physical terms."[666]

The point of all this, then, is that there is a broad body of compelling evidence and thought to support the understanding of gift-giving as a real-world-based compulsion rather than a «mind»-based "meaningful" idea. Seen in this way, the giver of the gift has – in the "social field" - done so in response to a stimulus; and as such, a two-way exchange has taken place, even if the recipient was entirely unaware of the gift-giver and/or had no intention of attracting the attention of the gift-giver, their mere presence *gives*. Understood in this way - at the dawn of consciousness, in a way that is reminiscent of Heidegger's *Es gibt* (Its gives) (§24.2)–everything is potentially a gift. The question is, in the

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[661] *Ibid.*, 7.
[662] Babcock & MacShea 2021, 8764.
[663] *Ibid.*, 8765.
[664] *Ibid.*, 8765.
[665] *Ibid.*, 8764.
[666] *Ibid.*, 8764-8765.

social field, what and how might one decide what is and it not worthy of the gift? How and why indeed, would one be compelled to offer up a gift to a tree rather than a fish, or in the courtyard of a tabernacle complex rather than a statue of a golden calf?

§30. (External) action orientated perception

30.1. The models considered so far are helpful for understanding how humans may be compelled into relations with the material realm through externally derived corporeally engendered emotional responses. But, despite their allusions to the social dimension, they do not elucidate in what ways precisely they might help to understand human «symbolic» forms of material culture. To arrive at an understanding of this, we will first need to consider the ways in which perception, consciousness, language and thought are externally existing and interlinked attributes.

If something threatens our existence, such as William James' wild bear, the encounter with the bear - for James - triggers a cognitive impression to which we make an internal calculated response. For others, as we have seen, there must be a more immediate corporeally based response –what Lewin describes as a "genuine drive-need". But how in these circumstances is the "correct" response determined (e.g.: the one most conducive to surviving a potential bear attack); and how would this translate to the "social field"? Put another way, if there are action-responses which are more conducive to fulfilling one's needs at the biological level, how would this translate to the social realm (as Babcock and MacShea seem to suggest)? Phenomena which neuroscientist Michael Arbib describes as "action-orientated perception" can help us. Arbib discusses how, for example, a frog's attack/retreat responses to small or large flying objects (potential prey / predator) respectively are not responses based on signals sent from the retina to the brain where a course of action is determined; but involve an immediate response. On this basis, Arbib asserts that "...we are rejecting the camera metaphor of the retina relaying a photograph to the brain and instead trying to understand how the visual system starts transforming patterns as soon as they hit the retina's rods and cones in a way that will help the animal's brain find appropriate courses of action."[667] Similarly, in the case of humans, the time required to make the calculation that "this large black furry moving

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[667] Arbib 2012, 6. Zajonc (1980, 156) a makes a similar helpful observation: "A rabbit confronted by a snake has no time to consider all the perceivable attributes of the snake in the hope that he might be able to infer from them the likelihood of the snake's attack, the timing of the attack, or its direction. The rabbit cannot stop to contemplate the length of the snake's fangs or the geometry of its markings. If the rabbit is to escape, the action must be undertaken long before the completion of even a simple cognitive process—before, in fact, the rabbit has fully established and verified that a nearby movement might reveal a snake in all its coiled glory. The decision to run must be made on the basis of minimal cognitive engagement."

thing is a black bear with big claws and teeth and can eat humans" and then to recall that a black bear will run away if you shout loud, wave your arms and make yourself big, takes considerably longer than the immediate 'instinctive' response which might lead one to either the same response *or* to run away (albeit, in the latter case, not the best response for survival!).The available time to respond in the particular circumstance must be crucial for determining which response strategy is engaged. The difference between these two kinds of responses, for Arbib, is not one which involves a «mind» and another which does not; but one which involves physical memory functions of a brain[668] and another which does not.
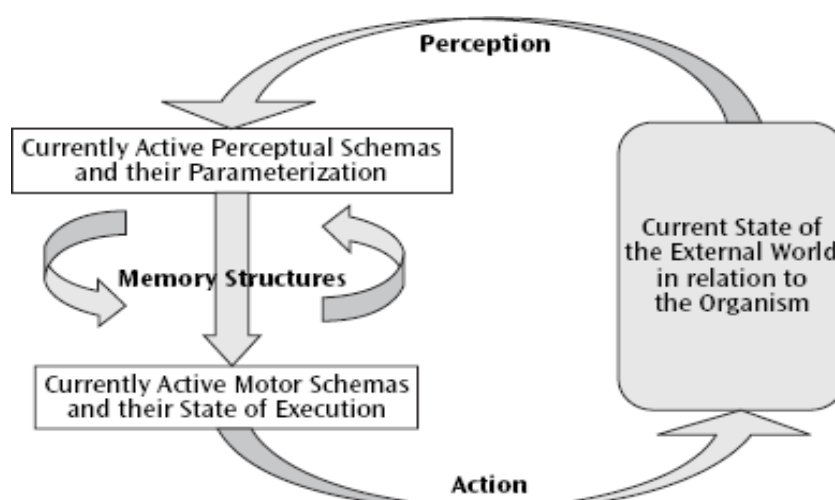

Figure 11: Model demonstrating consciousness as memory-based (after Arbib)

Furthermore, what the expanded (working and procedural) memory functions enable is an imitative action ("enhanced mirror systems"), which he (and others) argue, forms the basis (via "protosigns" and "protospeech") of human language and consciousness as co-determinate.[669]

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[668] Memory function is understood as a physical process which it is generally agreed involves a number of process which take place in various parts of the brain, in particular: synaptic plasticity (the strengthening or weakening of synapses in their connections between neurons, based on activity levels), neural network (re)organization (the organisation of networks and connections between neurons with new and changing input data); molecular chemical and structural changes (protein synthesis in the construction of synapses, development of dendritic spines on neurons in formation of memories and epigenetic changes in the regulation of the formation of connections between neurons). On this, see for example: Kandel 2001; Squire & Dede 2015.

[669] Arbib 2001, 2008, 2012, 2022, 2025; Arbib & Bickerton 2010; Arbib & Hesse 1986. On consciousness as memory-based, see for example: Budson et al 2022; Keppler 2020; Schacter & Thakral 2024. There is clearly not scope here to fully summarise and evaluate the discourse on the origins of language and consciousness, as pertinent as it is to this line of thought; but aspects will be briefly explicated here to help develop the argument.

§31. The Proximity of the Source/s of Life

31.1. We have argued so far that the gift is a two-way reciprocal exchange and that the dialectical imperative locks the subject into an intercourse with the material realm. Furthermore, that the entic imperative may be regarded as a driver in its pursuit to overcome the sense of eccentric positionality. Based on the understanding gleaned from the approach just discussed, it is further suggested that the engagement in reciprocal gift giving activity is an imitative or mirroring behaviour. If that is the case, then this would be consistent with theological ideas and ideas such as Heidegger's 'It gives' and those developed by realist phenomenologists, that the Source/s of Life (as perceived by humans) are principally gift giving. That is to say, contra to ideas of culture creation driven by death awareness and terror management, the primordial source of anxiety for humans in their self-awareness is life itself or being aware of being (although, of course, anxiety associated with death awareness inevitably must also arise) (see Appendix V). Finding themselves immediately engrossed in the dialectic imperative, then, humans engage in mimetic reciprocal activities either directly with the entities identified as the Source/s of Life or their proxies as a means of the fulfilment of the entic imperative. What is necessary for us to do now, then, is to understand the ways in which humans discern what are and what are not the Source/s of Life. Indeed, if as we have seen, the environment is constituted of competing demanding entities, then in what way/s might humans choose and differentiate between one object and another which may be identified as the Source/s of Life? What will be argued now is that any entity which is somehow *more than what it is* - entities which appear to be able to create, overpower and/or end life, especially entities to which one might be able to attribute as the origin of one's own existence - may all potentially be identified as the Source/s of Life. But importantly, what will become apparent is that both naturally occurring entities and man-made entities may end up being identified as the Source/s of Life and/or their proxies. The nature and form of the objects which humans engage with in their reciprocal relationships with the Source/s of Life, it is argued, is determined by the perceived location, in particular, the relative proximity of the Source/s of Life. This helps us to understand two things, for our purposes:

> 1) that language and actions, (such as manual, gestural and imitative inter-actions) are interrelated and must be inhered with a common 'grammar';
>
> 2) the way in which gift giving may be understood as an imitative response mechanism.

We will deal with these two points in turn.

31.2. Philosopher Gottlob Frege argued for understanding the relationship of the truth value of a linguistic proposition (or proper name) to its sense. So, unlike Peirce, for example, for whom the sign is the form of the «meaning» attributed to an object (the word "tree" is a codified lexicon and a sound which corresponds to a concept in the «mind» on the one hand and a real external object on the other hand), the sense of a word corresponds directly to an external truth value (or otherwise) which must be agreed. In other words, such a formulation depends less on a correlative between ideas of an internal «mind» and real-world objects; but more upon three external features. The first external feature is the real-world object and the second is the proposition or proper name which makes a correlative claim to the external real-world object. For the truth value of that correlative claim to be verified, a third external feature must be activated and that is the agreement that the proposition or proper name does indeed correlate to the real-world object. So, when a tree presents itself in the real-world, to which we respond sensorially, we may also utter the word "tree" or the sound "tri" and claim that this word and sound corresponds to the separate sensorial phenomenon. But these two phenomena have no existential relationship or correspondence unless a community agrees that they do. Any such agreement is what Frege refers to as a "truth value".[670] Note that Frege here is proposing that the linguistic proposition is an external rather than an internal feature. In this regard, Wittgenstein, in his late thought, agrees with Frege in his differentiation between sensuous consciousness and the "dualism of the inner and outer".[671] Wittgenstein makes the case for "...a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please." [672] Elsewhere, he explains:

> ...words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour. "So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?"—On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it.[673]

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[670] Frege 1952 [1892].

[671] Philosopher Hao Tang (2014) provides an elucidation and discussion of what he calls Wittgenstein's "dualism of the inner and outer", in distinction to sensuous consciousness.

[672] Wittgenstein 1986 [1953], 304.

[673] Wittgenstein 1986 [1953], 244. Carpendale et al (2013) explain it another way which invokes something akin to Frege's social agreement concerning truth values: "In contrast to the dualist assumption that the mind makes communication possible, from the constructivist perspective it is communication that makes the mind possible, and mind is explained as emerging within human social relations."

In this way we might understand language as externally sound-based signals which declare sensorial experiences, make responses to and acknowledge the presence of phenomena. Through memorised sound utterances we remember and communicate. But it is in dialogue with things that we comprehend. When a human and a tree meet, they both present through their very being, numerous signals. From the point of view of the human, the tree presents colours, forms, smells, sounds, textures and tastes. Having previously made the audible association of the sound "tri" with the senses it presents to us, we remember this is as a "tree". The arbitrariness of the sound to the thing is important for illustrating how thought cannot be an internal activity: the sound "tri" is not intended to represent a tree –it clearly does not. But what it does is trigger a memory of a thing to which we have attached an association with the sound "tri". The marks (written text) "tree", the sound "tri" and the image of a tree are all merely recollections - memories - they are neither "concepts", "ideas" nor «representations». For this reason, you are unable to "imagine" what a made-up word for a thing "namquot" looks like, because you have never seen one. You could repeat the sound and memorise it simply as an abstract 'noise'; but you will memorise it even better if you are told that a "namquot" is a snail with a human head. You can assemble your memories of a snail and of a human head into a collage of memories of a snail with a human head; or you might recall an image from a Hieronymus Bosch painting to conjure the image-memory of such a fantastical creature. If, however, you are told that a "namquot" is a "bamboutam moa a ratanyang" you would be completely lost. What appear to be thoughts; what appears to be "imagination" are in fact entirely sound-based (linguistically) associated memories.[674]

If indeed, things - as we have seen - have a demanding character; then linguistically they may be said to be propositional. So, in the example of a table, we might say that its very existence is declarative; but it is of course not a "table" as such until we recognise it so. Let us consider an interaction with a table. The position offered here assumes that in approaching a table, the observer will - from memory-based experience - recognise a certain object as a table. They do so because they recognise features which remind them of features of an object which they remember is referred to as a "table", and which commonly serves certain types of function, such as a solid and flat raised surface for sitting at to eat and write. In approaching the object then - all that it in fact presents, or proposes to the observer is its specific form. The object appears to be stationary and

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[674] On language as sound-based (phonology), see, for example: Bybee 2001; Zsiga 2024. On thought as speech/language, see: Kompa 2023; Kreiner & Eviatar 2024; Langland-Hassan & Vicente 2018; Morin 2022; Munroe 2023.

does not appear to pose any threat. These conditions are understood at an affective level of pre-reflexive cognition, associated with basic survival instincts. If the observer was our pet cat, he might walk under the table, sit under it or jump onto the top of it and sit on its surface. On top, it might provide a suitable vantage point from which to view birds. Underneath it might provide a suitable hiding place from which to catch birds or provide shade for sleeping. We do not believe that at any point in his interaction with the table, has he recognised it as a "table"; rather as a thing within his perceptive sphere with which he can interact relatively safely. A human on the other hand, at a pre-reflexive level, will determine the same things as our pet cat; but will also draw upon a set of memories which correspond with the features which the table presents (legs, flat surface) which as a compound constitute a "table". So, as soon as we see the table, what is in-fact presented to us is a proposition; something like "purpose-built tables usually have legs and a flat surface, therefore I am probably a table." But of course, there is always the possibility, that this object is in-fact not a table at all. Let us recall being at one end of a large green field and we can see at the other end of field something which presents the compound of features which presents as the proposition "all purpose-built tables usually have legs and a flat surface, therefore I am a table." As we walk towards the object we will process a number of evaluations to verify whether in-fact the object is a table. Can the proposition which this object presents us with be verified as indeed true? At some point, maybe halfway across the field, we may feel a little more certain that the proposition is verifiable -it seems to be certainly the shape of a table. But it might not yet be clear that it is in-fact a table: it might be something which resembles a table. As we reach within twenty meters of the proposition, we see that it appears to be made of wood. These features make us even more certain that it is probably a table. When we arrive at the object, we find that we can touch it and that it is about the right height, constructed with human-fashioned angle box joints suitable for use as a "table". The point here is that at two levels we cannot immediately trust our initial perception of the thing. There is first the risk that it might pose some threat to us; and at the level of linguistic recognition, we must go through a process of verification that the proposition presented to us is relatively reliable and/or "true". From experiential memory, we may generally be quite confident that - as along as its form seems solid, stable and constant – we can use it to write on, for example. We might be less sure about standing on it, because we may have seen another person stand on a table which then collapsed underneath them. We are less likely to not attempt to touch the table in-case it conceals a touch-sensitive explosive boobie-trap, unless we have memory, knowledge or live in a context where tables found in fields might explode on contact. The nature of the proposition is that all the conditions it offers are

independently verifiable through observation, and indeed a shared set of parameters, based on shared memory, which can help us associate the word and sound "table" with the object at hand.

31.3. We have explored the affectivity of the "infinite", the "sacred" or the "divine"; sanctified as the realm from which life emanates and to which death recedes: the Source/s of Life and the object or focus of religious practice. What these intimations allude to is that these are the most primordial and demanding of conscious experiential phenomena: life and death. An encounter with such an entity, then, is likely to be different from our encounter with the table. A thing, as it is - in no relation to other things, or in ambivalent relation or minimal impact to other things - is merely what it is. As soon as it is capable of affecting the subject significantly - by threatening to or demonstrating its ability to give, take life and/or facilitate aspects of life - it has become *more than what it is*. The bear, as far as its basic form is concerned, while going about its own business without apparent regard for anything else around it, is merely what it is. But once its eyes fix on potential prey and it begins a charge towards its prey – for that prey – is has become significantly *more than what it is*: it has become a direct threat to the prey's existence. Similarly, the water spring only becomes *more than what it is* for any lifeforms which may benefit from it. To the human, the water source is significantly *more than what it is*, especially in a context where water is otherwise scarce.

What this suggests is that most entities have the potential to be the Source/s of Life; and indeed precisely this is what is attested in some societies. Gift giving and exchange in hunter-gatherer societies especially is tightly self-regulated. Among mainly hunter-gatherer language groups, for example, the worldly realm (i.e.: forest, bush, etc.) is alive with spirits, with whom there is constant and/or punctuated, intermittent interplay. [675] But, notably, there is no constancy in which spirits are present, active or demanding attention at any one time -they are capricious, volatile and of varying perceptibility.[676] Such 'spirits' of varying status and presence - translated variously and interchangeably also as types of 'gods' and 'souls' - are activated or become present through engagement in specific actions and communications –what Anthropologist Jon Henrik Ziegler Remme has, for example, referred to as onto-praxis.[677] This sort of

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[675] Mauss 1990/2007 [1924]. See also, for example: Apffel-Marglin 2011; Århem 1996; Bird-David 1990, 1999; Brown 1985; Hubert & Mauss 1964; Levi-Strauss 1942, 1969; Maranhāu 1998; Rosengren 2006; Viveiros de Castro 1992, 2004; Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996.
[676] Sprenger 2016, 2022; Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff 1996.
[677] Remme 2016. Similarly, Sprenger (2017) has used the Sociologist Niklas Luhmann's autopoietic systems model to help understand the varying states of being and presence of spirits in human communications with them; and Anthropologist Rosalie Stolz (2018) considers the evocation of spirits through language.

immanent relationship to the world, which it is sustained here is often incorrectly described as "animism", [678] is often playful and dependent on the activities and concerns of the group or individual at the time (which in certain circumstances can also be fearful). Importantly, while the location and presence of spirits are various and not constant; they are emergent in very nearby animals, people and things. The proximity of the spirits and perpetual heightened communion with them through the physicality of the environment, interspersed with even more heightened ritual activities, arguably represents the closest most sustained form of fulfilling the entic imperative. In these contexts, the location of the Source/s of Life are always potentially everywhere at once. What is important to note is that there is no need to demarcate the presence of spirits in man-made objects or places. The 'spirits' are omnipresent and omnipotent; and humans are in *direct* intermittent and (reciprocal) gift exchanges with them.

This level of human engagement and interaction with the worldly realm, it is suggested here, is the most direct and immanent form. That is to say, the infinite or the "more than what I am" characteristic pervades all things – or, to borrow Heideggerian terminology, the world is as its most earthly; what is referred to here as "immanence orientated worldliness" (IOW).

§32. Worldly Enthymemes

32.1. Before proceeding to further explore the nature of other relationships with the infinite realm, the definition of some concepts and terminology developed here will be necessary.

Material culture studies has generally proceeded from the position that there is a distinction between material in-animate objects or things and living things. In many ways, the perspectives of Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Harman's Object Orientated Ontology (OOO) have offered a corrective to these assumptions. The approach developed here clearly does not adhere to their particular models –it does not seek to impute or suggest that we should or should not regard objects traditionally identified as inanimate as having agency, as being equal actants or even as being alive. As has been discussed, it is asserted here that in order to be able to make any such statements, one must wholly *believe* them. These are not merely matters of 'opinion' or being persuaded by the argument of one scholar or another. What it acknowledges instead is the possibility of such different understandings of the material realm. But in

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[678] With specific reference to the African colonial context Okot P'Bitek, for example, says: "'Animism,' 'Fetishism' or belief in a High God are products of the Western mind. There are no 'animists' in Africa." P'Bitek 2011, 27.

order to be able to discuss such matters in ways which do not inherently assume or unintentionally imply the appropriation of any such beliefs, an alternative vocabulary is necessary.

Religious historian Mircea Eliade referred to objects and events related to the infinite realm as "hierophanies."[679] That is, "...a manifestation of the sacred, something that reveals itself to us as wholly other — a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural 'profane' world."[680] He defines it further as follows:

> By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes something else, yet it continues to be itself. A stone remains a stone; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a religious experience has revealed its sacred nature, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a religious experience, all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality.[681]

While this terminology quite eloquently describes entities with infinite attributes, it falls short into two ways: 1) it assumes that these entities are ascribed infinite value by humans, and therefore cannot account for the declarative and demanding nature of such phenomena; 2) it assumes that these entities can only be inanimate things which have "become" something sacred.

Similarly, some have attempted to define objects in more generalist terms, as objects of «symbolic» potency. Anthropologist Edward Sapir adapted the term "condensation symbol" from Freud's original use of the term in describing dreams. For Sapir, "condensation symbols" "designate no clear referent but serve to 'condense' into one symbol a host of different meanings and connotations" with its significance to a shared linguistic group or community "...being out of all proportion to the apparent triviality of meaning suggested by its mere form. This can be seen at once when the mildly decorative function of a few scratches on paper is compared with the alarming significance of apparently equally random scratches which are interpreted by a particular society as meaning 'murder' or 'God.'"[682] Besides from the same problems identified above with Eliade's hierophanies, the term also implies a Peircian-type of understanding of «symbols» as «representational» things. Furthermore, the term has been readily

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[679] Eliade 1958, 2-4; 1959 [1957], 11-12.
[680] Eliade 1959 [1957], 11.
[681] *Ibid.,* 12. [Eliade 1959 [1957], 11.]
[682] Sapir 1934, 492-495.

adopted in «symbolic» and linguistic political theory, giving the term a more politicised connotation.[683]

What has been suggested so far is that the entities demand attention as having infinite qualities; and that the principal characteristic they display which leads to such attentions is that they somehow appear to be "more than that they are". But of course, they cannot have such characteristics devoid of the dialectic relation with another entity (human) for whom they acquire such a character. For the purposes of understanding and defining these characteristics which takes account of the demanding and propositional character of the object and the dialectic nature of the encounter, then we will tentatively refer to such entities as "worldly enthymemes" (or things which display "enthymematic worldliness"). The term starts from the position of the Heideggerian definition of "World" – that is, the realm in which all things which constitute a given person or group of persons' horizons of defined and recognisable (social or cultural) phenomena. The infinite in this context exists beyond, forms the basis of and/or is not immediately visible in the World; therefore once anything is recognised as being infinite or displaying the characteristics of the infinite, it has become "Wordly". This term avoids the use of the term "material", which might be understood as implying only inanimate material things or the various associations made with "materialism".

32.2. An enthymeme is a rhetorical device – originally discussed by Aristotle – which functions as a truncated or incomplete syllogism, usually used in persuasive discourse. A formal syllogism is usually a compound sentence where all premises and conclusions are explicitly stated; whereas an enthymeme relies on the "audience" to fill in one or more unstated assumptions, so the compound sentence ends up with "two clauses being joined by co-ordinating conjunctions."[684] There are different forms of enthymeme, but for our purposes, we will specifically use a Rhetorical enthymeme construction. So, for example:

> Premise 1:   "Most men who envy hate."
>
> Premise 2:   "This man envies."

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[683] See for example Graber 1976, 289; McConahay 1988, 44. More recently, the term has come into vogue in communication studies (e.g.: Stassen & Bates 2020, 335; Edwards, 2021) in a way which shares some concomitance with Catt's recent work on embodied communication (Catt 2023).

[684] Corbett 1971, 7. See also: Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, I.2, 1357a22; Corbett & Connors 1999, 81. As Bitzer (1959, 408) defines it, for example: "…the enthymeme is a syllogism based on probabilities, signs, and examples, whose function is rhetorical persuasion. Its successful construction is accomplished through the joint efforts of speaker and audience, and this is its essential character."

Conclusion: "∴ This man (probably) hates."[685]

In such a rhetorical enthymeme, there will usually be at least one statement (one of the two premises and/or the conclusion) omitted; and the unstated parts are assumed through common knowledge and/or agreement. The point is that the premises and/or conclusion present themselves and the audience must complete what is implicated. Importantly, rhetorical enthymemes are not absolute and often probabilistic, relying on agreement of the audience concerning what is "true", rather than predicated on any kind of formal logic. In the context of an entity which presents itself as presencing the infinite, only a single premise is presented, and the other parts are completed by the 'receiving' agent, as follows:

Premise 1:   ["Anything which is more than what it is, is (probably) the source or the presence of the source of life (and death)"]

Premise 2:   I am more than what I am.

Conclusion: ["∴ I am (probably) the source or the presence of the source of life (and death)."]

So, where the presenting entity declares "I am more than what I am", the perceiving entity – assuming, as it has been argued here, that "anything which is more than what it is, is (probably) the source or the presence of the source of life (and death)", must agree that the entity as it presents itself is indeed "(probably) the source or the presence of the source of life (and death)."

Understood in this way, we can see how the presenting entity and the perceiver are engaged in a dialectic, in which the presenting entity - through the way it presents itself as "more than what it is" - demands the perceiver to respond accordingly: usually - it is argued here - with due care and in the spirit of reciprocity. In the case of "immanence orientated Worldliness" anything and everything may present as "more than what it is", making the entire World a capricious place and needful of careful attention and mutual respect. But importantly, it is suggested, finally, that this kind of direct and consistent (even if variable from one moment to the next in terms of the specific form and location of the infinite entity) immersive engagement with the imminent entity, brings the perceivers into the most frequent state for fulfilling the entic imperative.

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[685] Example from Mansel 1862, 210. See also: https://philosophy.lander.edu/logic/enthy.html
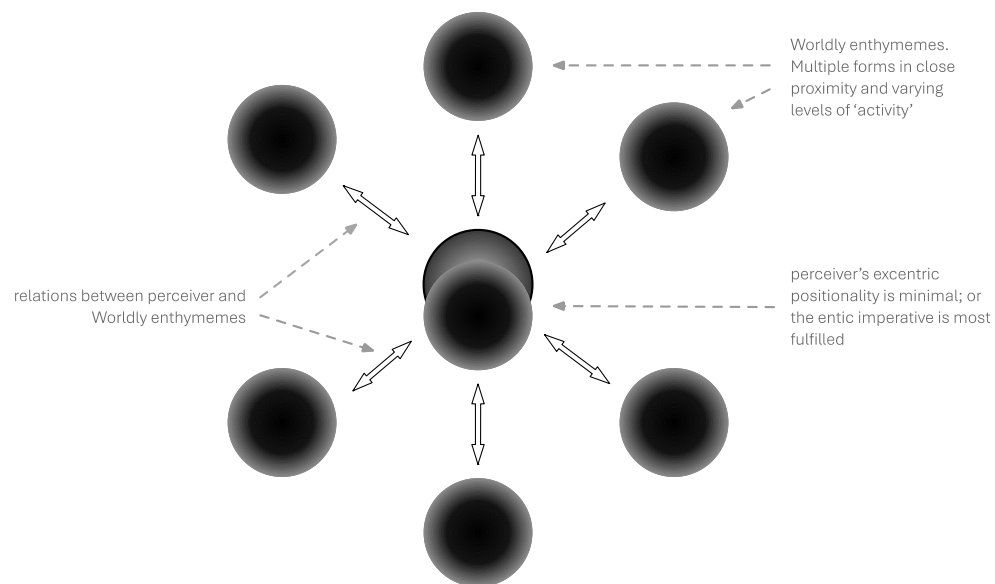
FIGURE 12: IMMANENCE ORIENTATED WORLDLINESS. SCHEMATIC ILLUSTRATION OF THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PERCEIVER/S AND "WORLDLY ENTHYMEMES" AND CORRESPONDING DEGREE OF SENSE OF EXCENTRIC POSITIONALITY (OR FULFILMENT OF THE 'ENTIC IMPERATIVE').

But, as we know, not everything for everyone always presents as "more than what I am"; and this variance, it is suggested here, is co-determinate with different types of relationship to the material realm and therefore different levels of fulfilment of the entic imperative. In a relationship to the material realm which involves the control and manipulation of the material realm, while the dialectic imperative is always operative between humans and the material realm, fewer entities will present as Worldly enthymemes -in fact anything which is under the control of humans will be unable to present as "I am more than what I am." [686]

§33. Proxy Worldly Enthymemes

In their paper "*How persons become things: economic and epistemological changes among Nayaka hunter-gatherers*", anthropologists Danny Naveh and Nurit Bird-David, make important observations on how - among the Nayaka in South India since the mid-2000s - perceptions of the environment "in terms of 'who' (i.e. co-persons) is incrementally replaced by its perception in terms of 'what' (i.e. things)."[687] They note that

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[686] To illustrate this point, we may cite Descola (2013, 38-39) who discusses the way in which, for the Achuar of the Upper Amazon, domesticated animals and cultivated gardens belong to a different category from the trees and animals of the forest, who cannot be exploited without the appeasement of a forest spirit. For a discussion on the nature of shift in relations between humans and animals/plants, see also Ingold 1994.

[687] Naveh & Bird-David 2014, 87.

this happens "most conspicuously in the adoption of cultivation and animal husbandry"[688] and they hypothesise that

> ...animals and plants – and land – can be variably treated, depending on context, in some cases with care and in others carelessly; in some cases as sentient co-dwellers and in others as objects, not depending on what they are in essence, or where they are, but corresponding with when, by whom, and for what purpose they are used. The more the consumption is delayed and at a distance, the more remote and anonymous the consumers, and the more animals and plants are treated and conceptualized as a means to get something else, the less caring and empathetic are the ways of knowing-and-being with these animals and plants.[689]

The perception of the personhood and spirit of non-human entities and corresponding interchangeability of humans and non-human entities diminishes in contexts where subsistence and economic strategies shift to more indirect market-based models. As such, they speculate (while acknowledging the potential perils of using ethnographic case-studies as analogous to prehistory) as to the potential usefulness of this insight for reconstructing "prehistoric environmental perceptions".[690] Their conclusions in-part seek to dispute Descola's model of four categories of ontology, based on differences in inter-human social relations.[691]

While the present thesis would agree that there is indeed correspondence between subsistence modes or strategies and human relationships to the environment; what is further asserted here, which Naveh and Bird-David do not quite get around to elucidating, is that there is equally a correspondence between these conditions and to the perceived Source/s of Life. Comparative religions specialist Minna Opas observes the same shift; but rather helps us understand how it is related to the adoption of Christianity; that is to say, a shift in the perceived location and nature of the Source/s of Life:

> When telling me about these vengeances of animals and about encounters with different non-human beings, the Yine – both Evangelical and Catholic – often ended their stories by saying Ya no es asi, 'It is no longer like that'. Beings do not appear to people or harm them any more as they used to do because, as the Yine said, 'now we are with the Word of God'. One woman explained that 'They no longer transform into people ... Before God existed they appeared like that, before we knew the Word of God, that is when the animals transformed into people, in those times'.[692]

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[688] *Ibid.*

[689] *Ibid.*, 88.

[690] *Ibid.*

[691] Descola 2013. Descola defines the four "ontologies" as "animism", "totemism", "analogism" and "naturalism".

[692] Opas 2008. Similarly, see also Vilaça 2015.

We may return to our analogy of the myth of Prometheus where, as Plato tells us, having dispensed with direct gift reciprocity via Prometheus' own sacrifice in his perpetual punishment, humans are compelled instead - through *philia* - to form civic society. As Henaff puts it:

> This story says it all: needs alone, and the related professions, cannot unite men. For that a divine gift is necessary, an affective link that circulates among them but proceeds from a unique source. The passage from segmentary to political society calls for capping the bilateral reciprocal link with a multilateral collective link.[693]

In the transition from direct relational obligatory reciprocity with the multiple capricious spirits which reside in all things, there is a transference to the sanctity of the collective entity in-itself. The Source/s of life are no longer immanent in the material realm; but reside somewhere beyond the material realm (transcendent). Rather, their presence is *instantiated* in specific localised objects, which embody and pervade community, as one kin. Whereas with relational obligatory reciprocity every being is its own, and cannot be owned, but may make itself available in a reciprocal exchange; in non-relational obligatory reciprocity, the area of focus of obligatory reciprocal exchange occurs within or between a closed network of relations. Legal historian Bartolomé Clavero makes the case for understanding Catholic economics as predicated on the prioritisation of charity, distributive equality and family and friends above legal and administrative authorities.[694] For Henaff, Clavero's essay "...could have been called 'Catholic ethics and the spirit of non-capitalism'"[695] –that is, an antithesis to Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*[696] in the way that it offers an understanding to the contrasts between Protestant and Catholic economics. Indeed, Henaff's synthesis of the thought of Weber and Mauss concerning the Gift, offers a compelling insight to the process of transition from the relational obligatory reciprocity to non-relational obligatory reciprocity described above:

> And thus, where the transition from a clan society to a political society occurs, as in Greece for instance, in short from a segmentary system founded on a tight network of reciprocal services to a system organized around a center—the meson of public space—we will also find a crisis in the system of the ceremonial gift exchange and ritual reciprocity, inseparable from punitive justice...Then it becomes necessary to invent a link for the new community, i.e., the polis, that will be as strong as the link provided by the ceremonial gift exchange. The answer lies in the double movement of the divine *charis* and the individual *philia*. The collectivity has to be wholly enclosed in relations that will ensure its unity...The practice of the generous act, i.e., the ethic

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[693] Henaff 2003, 310.
[694] Clavero 1996 [1991]. See also Henaff 2003, 315-321.
[695] Henaff 2003, 296.
[696] Weber 2001 [1930].

of the gift exchange, remains reciprocal. Providing a network of commitments is precisely what needs to be done.[697]

For Weber, the obligatory gift reciprocity in Protestantism is displaced and the principles of exchange are transposed to the open and free commercial realm, where predestination determines that the virtues of a strong work ethic and material wealth can only be a derived as a gift by the grace of God. What is notable about these transitions is that there is a correlative incremental physical distancing of the Source/s of Life; from immanent spirits, to localised god/s or infinite entities (in the case of Catholicism, consider Marianism and the process of canonisation) to a single and distant God. The more distant the Source/s of Life become, furthermore, the more institutional entities become proxies for those Source/s of Life. Political philosopher Eric Voegelin, explores the ways in which the state is "divinized". Citing Hobbes' assertion that "The law of nature, and the civil law, therefore, contain each other, and are of equal extent"[698]; he goes on: "Existential and transcendental representation, thus, meet in the articulation of a society into ordered existence. By combining into a political society under a representative, the covenanting members actualize the divine order of being in the human sphere."[699]

The discussion so far has sought to demonstrate the ways in which shifts in the perception of the location of the Source/s of Life corresponds to the nature of the forms of what will tentatively be referred to here as Proxy Worldy Enthymemes -entities which end-up as the focal points *in place of* the Source/s of Life in-themselves. Differences in the broader subsistence strategies seem to coincide with differences in both the location and form of the Source/s of Life. Once the Source/s of Life is no-longer (potentially) present in all things, they become entities with either a specific fixed Worldly location or non-Worldly remote location. One or a number of naturally occurring objects or stones may be identified, marked and/or raised at certain places; or objects may be made. We have briefly explored how the relatively immersive subsistence and settlement, such as a hunter-gathering community, equates to an engagement and relationship with the perceived Source/s of Life which we have called "immanence orientated". This is typified by a close relationship and a strong direct gift reciprocal relationship with the Source/s of Life (Henaff's "bilateral reciprocal links") and the use of relatively few plastic objects, if any, which themselves constitute the Source/s of Life. If the group's mode of subsistence shifts to regular long distance and/or seasonal movement or trading activity, the Source/s

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[697] Henaff 2003, 313.
[698] Hobbes 1651, 174. As cited in Voegelin 1952, 154.
[699] Voegelin 1952, 154.

of Life cannot be only in one localised place. In this case, they will either continue to present themselves throughout the landscape or the Source/s of Life must also be mobile or omnipotent. Similarly, in more sedentary social structures involving animal and crop husbandry; the "I am more than what I am" must present in a different form from the objectified forms of subsistence (such as crop and animal husbandry), but necessarily in localised centres to enable the required contact between the perceiver and Worldly enthymeme. But if the affective nature of its very presence has been thwarted, instead consumable things which can be controlled and manipulated - other types of entities - must be able to present as "more than what I am" instead. Remember that the dialectic imperative compels the perceiver in their field - like a sonar receiver - to be engaged in a perpetual dialectic dynamic with the material realm, emitting and receiving signals; with the ultimate goal of the fulfilment of the entic imperative –that is, until an entity presents itself which can effectively at least momentarily reduce the awkward sense of excentric positionality.

§34. The forms of the Source/s of Life

The more the material realm comes under the control of humans, the more difficult it becomes for entities to be persuasive as "more than what they are" -for humans to *believe in them*. As such, made objects which fall outside the usual material realm of things which are used, manipulated and objectified end-up presenting as Worldly enthymemes. In this way, such entities end-up as either figural with fantastical other-worldy features, or aniconic with features which are suggestive that they are something more than what they are. The forms of the Buddha or of Shiva, or of the Tsaaye Kidumu or the Bembe 'masks' (see Figure 13: Tsaaye Kidumu 'mask', Republic of Congo (twentieth century) Paris, Musée de l'Homme, Inv. 32 89 82. Image: Ismoon/creative commons), for example, may - to the outsider - appear to imitate, allude to or "represent" the form of an animate thing; but in all these cases, they are expressly not (originally) intended to look like or be used for their resemblance to Buddha or Shiva or any spirits. Among Yoruba and related Kwa language groups in West Africa, various types of functional ojú-ìbọ (altars) are simultaneously the "face", "surface" and "door" of the òrìṣà (deities).[700] However, although ojú-ìbọ have very distinctive physical forms with different associated òrìṣà, there is never a notion that these objects and places 'represent' or somehow 'correspond' to the particular òrìṣà. The "face" here does not refer to the òrìṣà's (deities or spirits) appearance, but rather to its

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[700] Thompson 1993, 29-29; Abiodun 1994a, 309-310; 1994b.

"plane" and its portal or boundary, as the words "surface" and "door" suggest. Instead, the ojú-ìbọ are activated with àṣẹ:

> Àṣẹ pertains to the identification, activation, utilization of the innate energy, power and natural laws believed to reside in all animals, plants, hills, rivers, natural phenomena, human beings and òrìṣà…an efficacious use of àṣẹ depends largely on the verbalization, visualization and performance of attributive characters of those things or beings whose powers are being harnessed.[701]
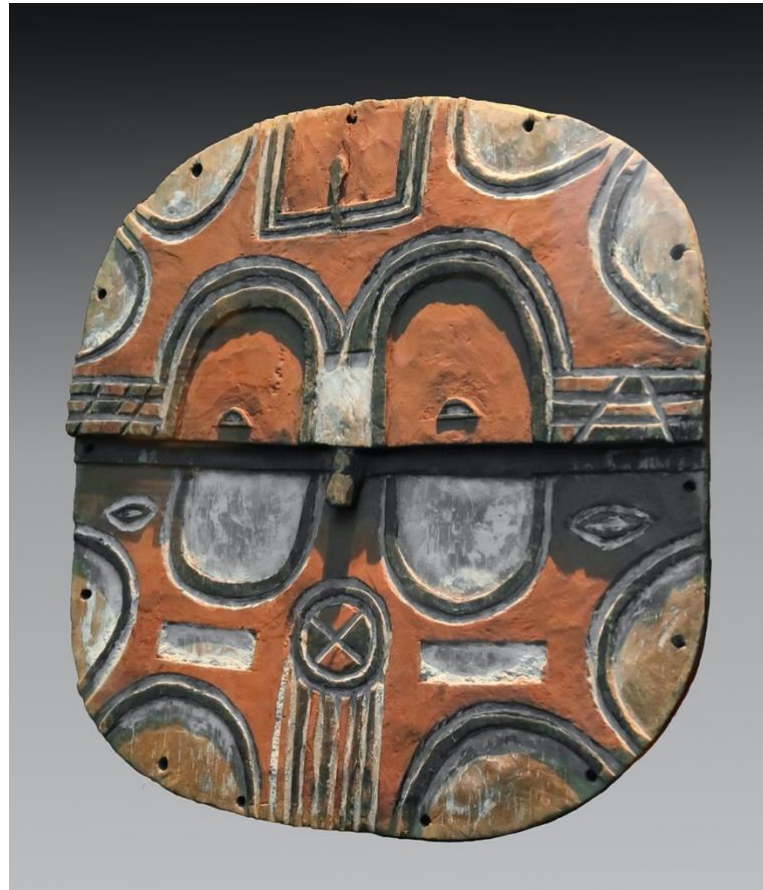

FIGURE 13: TSAAYE KIDUMU 'MASK', REPUBLIC OF CONGO (TWENTIETH CENTURY)
PARIS, MUSÉE DE L'HOMME, INV. 32 89 82. IMAGE: ISMOON/CREATIVE COMMONS

The attributive characters of òrìṣà may take on a form; but those forms are not the physical «representation» of those òrìṣà. Dupré similarly discusses how Tsaaye Kidumu 'masks' (fig. 18) are not described as portraying faces, but the movement of the soul in a circular motion between the world of the living (top half) and the world of the dead (bottom half).[702] The Bembe 'mask' known as Kalunga (meaning "ocean, completion, God") (fig. 18) does not 'represent' the face of a god, but is a "line", which demarcates the boundary of the spirit world.[703] Finally, Eck discusses how in Indian Darsan, seeing the

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[701] Abiodun 1994a ,310.
[702] Dupré 1968; 1979; 1989.
[703] Thompson 1993, 54-55.

divine image is not concerned with looking at the image as something which 'represents', but as a vehicle for seeing through to the divinity in meditative worship, who may bear no visible correlation with the divine image.[704]

§35. Types of Proxy Enthymemes

Out of our discussion so far, we may begin to identify some of the forms of Proxy Enthymemes and their associative forms of Source/s of Life (see Figure 14).

35.1. ICONISM

Iconism involves forms that are figurative with which the subjects have a regular close contact. The form may be comprised of anthropomorphic or thereomorphic forms, and may be thought to either represent, refer to, or presence a god, deities or envoy/s of a god or deities. Where the icon is thought to directly represent or embody a God or deity, however, it can never be stable or constant in its form. The practice may be associated with polytheistic, monotheistic or nontheistic traditions. It is dependent either on localised practice or a centre with localised instantiations; and scheduled to an established calendar, which provides specific times and intervals for its use and activation. It will be either based on oral-based narrative or scripture, or both. There is an inherent tension between materialism and non-materialism; between local and centre and between folk and orthodox practice.

EXAMPLES:
Orthodox Catholicism (Eastern Orthodox)
Roman Catholicism
Mithraism
Zoroastrianism

35.2. DIRECT ANICONISM

Material aniconism involves forms that generally have no directly discernible figurative form with which the subjects have a regular close contact. They may be constituted from naturally occurring features, such a rock, crevice or mountain, either as they were discovered or revealed; or they may have been modified by human hands, either through the adorning of the natural feature, or through being propped-up, carved or shaped to some extent -either to accentuate or embellish particular natural features. Generally,

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[704] Eck 1998.

those embellishments may range from polishing to giving the material a new shape, but a shape that does not directly imitate the form of any other prototype. These "simple anicons", however, may also end-up being modified to form what are defined here as "dressed anicons", "anthropomorphising or theriomorphising anicons". In some cases the form of the anicon may simply define or 'frame' a space to 'host' the presence of the Source/s of Life, which - sustaining the use of a term introduced by Mettinger - are referred to here as "empty space anicons".

The practice may be associated with polytheistic, monotheistic or nontheistic traditions. It is dependent on localised practice: to place, environment and scheduled to natural temporal rhythms; and traditionally based on oral-based narrative. These conditions, which bind it to *thingliness* prohibit and limit the extent of its materialist engagement with the world. The form is *thing-like* and does not appear to refer to anything in any objectified way; rather it draws attention to its 'thingly' quality.

35.3. REMOTE ANICONISM

Involves non-material forms referred to here as a 'proxy anicons', which invariably take a text-based or institutional form, to which subjects have frequent access in scriptural or verbal form or through legal formal procedure; which may embody the 'word' of the god and/or may be capable of invoking the presence of the god. Despite the non-material form of the proxy anicon, this is called remote aniconism, since there remains always a distant relation with a type of direct aniconic object or place located in another space-time. It may be possible that the original anicon no-longer physically survives; but may exist as a memory in the community of worshippers, for whom a place where it was once located remains a significant point of focus.

Remote aniconism is Monotheistic. Linked to one unified text and unified worship based around one ritual calendar directed toward one place thought to house the seat of the god or deity. Interpretation and administration of scripture is centralised. The absence of an immediately accessible sacred physical object or locality permits free movement; and the reliance on the word as the form projects and therefore binds it to a fixed objectified world. Materialism and consumerism therefore is acceptable in the non-sacred realm, although there is an inherent tension concerning the boundary between the sacred and non-sacred realms and the extent of acceptable materialism.

EXAMPLES:

Judaism

Orthodox Islam

Bahai (Scripture based; monotheistic; Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahji, Israel – pray in the direction of the Qiblih)

35.4. TYPES OF 'ANICONS' (See Figure 14)

Simple Anicon

Can be associated either with direct or remote aniconism. Is designated as being an object of simple non-figurative form, which may be man-made or natural.

Dressed Anicon

Can be associated either with direct or remote aniconism. Is usually a simple anicon that has been permanently, seasonally or ritually covered or dressed to fully to partially cover or adorn the form of the anicon and give it referential properties.

Anthropomorphising and Thereomorphising Anicons

Can be associated either with direct or remote aniconism. Embodies the attributes of a simple anicon, but with the embellishment of obvious human or animal features, such as eyes, ears or phallus. The form, therefore, may end up approximately *resembling* or *alluding* to an animal or human form, or particular bodily appendages, such as phallus or breasts; but may never *directly* correspond with any *explicit* intention on the part of the maker or community, but instead alludes or references possible features of the deity/ies. These include what Gaifman refers to as 'semi-iconic' and 'primitive' anicons. These can end-up being one of the most difficult forms of anicon to understand, since perception and use of them may still be related to exclusively aniconic practice, may have in themselves have become entirely iconic, or may represent a process or period of transition.

Empty Space Anicons (or Host Anicons)

Can be associated either with direct or remote aniconism. Form or place that might host a god or deity, such as a throne or room.

Proxy Anicons

The exclusive type of anicon which is direcly associated with remote aniconism and may also be used in combination with other material anicons in direct

aconcism. The proxy anicon is invariably a narrative or text (which may include a physical book or scroll) or the memorisation or expression or invocation of a narrative or text, such as a recitation, prayer or chant. The term 'proxy' here is used instead of "textual anicon" or "verbal anicon" which were also considered as alternative terms, for two reasons: 1) the model proposed here suggests that all forms of aniconism are ultimately material; therefore, whilst the text is significant in the context of remote aniconism, it is not the *ultimate* object, either materially or spiritually; but rather an intermediary which effectively 'stands in' for a formless material object; 2) whilst no examples of remote aniconism that do not use text-based media as the proxy anicon are known by the present author (leading to the possible argument that *all* remote aniconism ultimately uses the text or the word as the proxy); there remains the possibility that other forms of proxy have existed or currently exist of which the author is unaware.

Emblematic Anicons

This is an image of any other kind of anicon or item that resembles but is not in-itself the anicon, such as stelae bearing a motif of an anicon, pendant or talisman in the form of an anicon, calligraphy or a flag. These are probably rarely the focus of worship or used directly in worship, but may be used to recall, invoke or presence iconic or aniconic forms and associated activities and/or gods/deities.
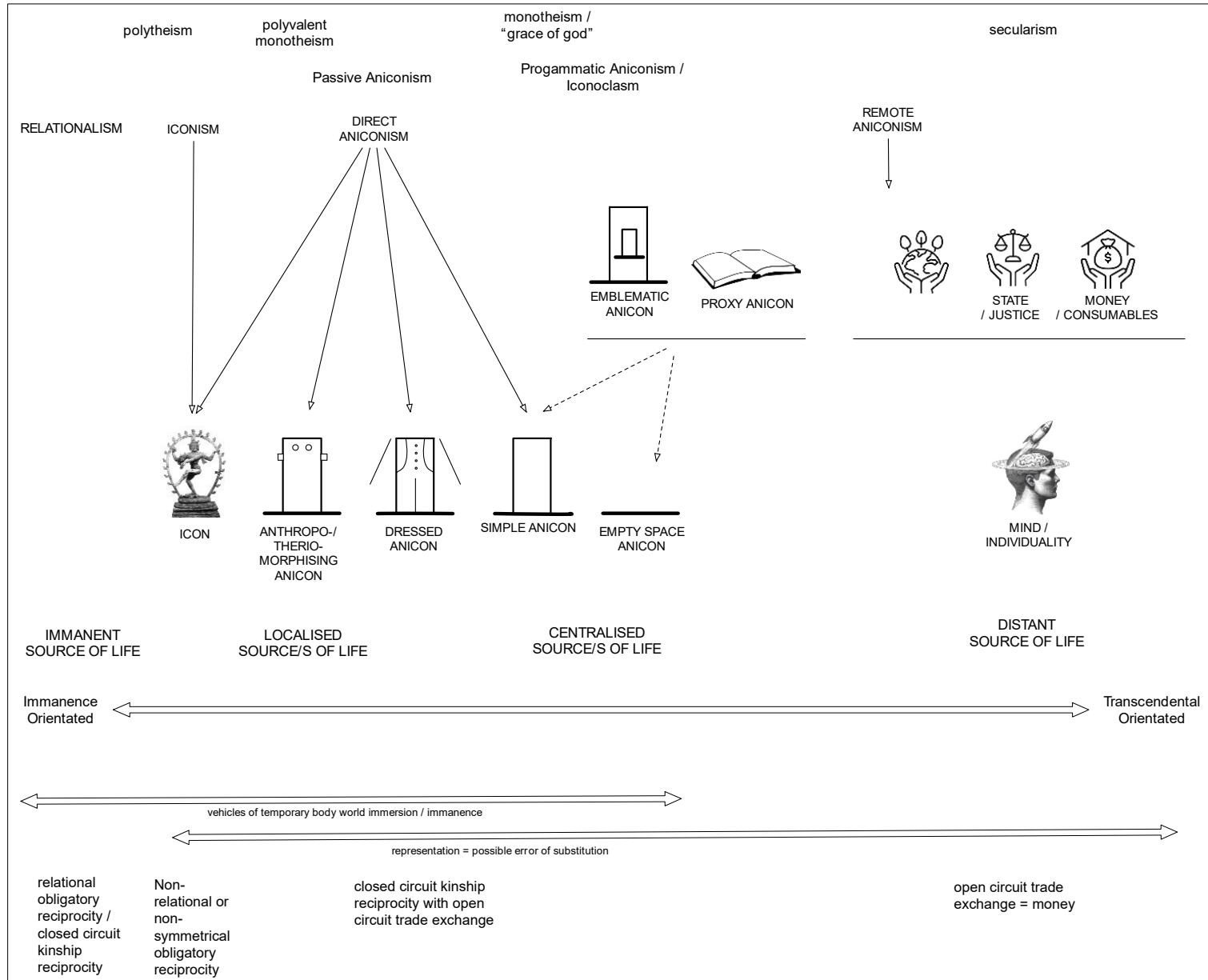
polytheism

polyvalent
monotheism

monotheism /
"grace of god"

secularism

Passive Aniconism

Progammatic Aniconism /
Iconoclasm

RELATIONALISM

ICONISM

DIRECT
ANICONISM

REMOTE
ANICONISM

EMBLEMATIC
ANICON

PROXY ANICON

STATE
/ JUSTICE

MONEY
/ CONSUMABLES

ICON

ANTHROPO-/
THERIO-
MORPHISING
ANICON

DRESSED
ANICON

SIMPLE ANICON

EMPTY SPACE
ANICON

MIND /
INDIVIDUALITY

IMMANENT
SOURCE OF LIFE

LOCALISED
SOURCE/S OF LIFE

CENTRALISED
SOURCE/S OF LIFE

DISTANT
SOURCE OF LIFE

Immanence
Orientated

Transcendental
Orientated

vehicles of temporary body world immersion / immanence

representation = possible error of substitution

relational
obligatory
reciprocity /
closed circuit
kinship
reciprocity

Non-
relational or
non-
symmetrical
obligatory
reciprocity

closed circuit kinship
reciprocity with open
circuit trade exchange

open circuit trade
exchange = money

FIGURE 14: TENTATIVE DIAGRAM OF PROXIMIST APPROACH DEVELOPED

§36. Punic infant cemetery motifs and the correlation with the de-centralisation of the Source/s of Life

Interpretations of Punic iconography from Carthage, as briefly introduced in §1, make a turn away initially from interpreting Punic iconography as mainly aniconic (derived form a Judeo-Christian heritage) to mainly iconic; which the present author has argued elsewhere are related to the initial colonial appropriation of Punic identity to a disassociation which occurs in the colonial experience.[705] Across this, there has been a prevalent assumption that the motif described here as the triangle-crossbar "represents" the deity TNT, known generally as "Tanit" (see figs in Appendix I, plates I a, b, c, g, II, a, f). This constitutes a traditional representationalist understanding that, since a female deity named "TNT" is attested in the inscriptions, so the motif which possibly resembles a female figure must "represent" TNT.

The approach tentatively developed in this thesis would suggest that all these interpretations are at best spurious and bring us no closer to understanding the nature of the way in which the Carthaginians related to the infinite realm. First, we might briefly deconstruct the reasons why these interpretations are problematic. In the large sandstone stelae considered to be from earlier periods of the infant cemetery, we can see that there are numerous examples of depictions of a female figure standing in a doorway or in front of an Egyptianising false door (for false door example, see Appendix 1, Plate II,g). For two reasons it is not unreasonable to suggest that these are more likely figurations of humans than of a female deity. The first reason is that there is no precedence in Canaanite and or Phoenician culture for depicting the deity figuratively. In other words, Phoenician culture - at least within the religious or sacred context - is largely aniconic. Secondly, we can see in other later iconography framed in a similar way, on the same register, that humanlike figures tend to be in poses of supplication or solemn adoration. Furthermore, various other nonhuman forms depicted in the repertoire may equally be understood as the proto-type forms of the triangle-crossbar motif (e.g.: see Appendix 1, Plate I,g & h).

Besides from all these objections, based on various studies, we can discern two significant trends in the iconographic repertoire, which may be broken down in the way:

i)   Cippi and stelae are used to mark the interred cremation urns beginning from around the seventh century BC, typically made of sandstone, depicting a varied (but limited) repertoire of a combination of stylised

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[705] Moussa 2007

aniconic motifs; and some renderings of female figures standing at doorways. Quality of execution is high displaying highly skilled masonry techniques (see Appendix 1, Plate I,h & i).

ii) A transition in the fourth century BC to exclusive use limestone stelae (no cippi), of more varied forms, often with acroteria with a much broader iconographic repertoire on two or three registers, including the proliferation of the triangle crossbar and figurations of numerous objects, such as animals, palm trees, lotus flowers, dolphins, pomegranates and Aleppo pinecones; often accompanied with formulaic epigraphic inscriptions. The quality of execution, relative to the previous 'phase', is much more varied, less formulaic and generally of poorer quality, certainly not executed by dedicated skilled craftsmen (see Appendix 1, Plate I,g; Plate II, h).

As such, there appears to have been a significant social and/or organisational shift in the fourth century BC. Based on the approach developed here, we might say from the nature of the change in the form of the motifs that a significant shift occurred in the perception of the location of the Source/s of Life. It is possible that the shift involved a transition period, as would generally be expected, but some evidence suggests that there may have been a relatively sharp change 'event'. Specifically, we can observe:

i) The consistency and formulaic nature in the anionic form the motifs in the first phase; and the nature of the 'empty throne' style cippi and of the emblematic style of stelae with aniconic motifs on a podium framed in stepped cornicing; suggests that the Source/s of Life are likely perceived as not readily accessible; perhaps a centrally controlled tradition.

ii) The second phase of more varied and more personalised depiction of what appear to be seasonally significant phenomena, cultic paraphernalia and multiple versions of the triangle cross-bar motif (in various states of aniconism, anthropomorphism and syncretism), coupled with the rougher execution, suggests a much stronger 'folk' tradition engaged in practices with Source/s of Life which are more localised; perhaps observable in some way.

If we are to examine the historical context during which this shift occurs, we can make two observations, especially:

i) Carthage is attested to have paid tribute to Tyre (although we have no information of when this ended)

ii) Tyre was besieged and destroyed by Alexander the Great in 332 BC

We may tentatively propose that, with the fall of Tyre, perception of the Source/s of Life at Carthage shifted from an emblematic remote aniconic tradition (probably) based in Tyre to more localised Source/s of Life, with more 'folk' influence and participation, from the fourth century BC. How such a transition might have unfolded and how it related to the broader socio-economic conditions clearly warrants further research and analysis. However, in some regards we are potentially able to begin to build a more comprehensive understanding of the social values and nature of the events taking place in this way, rather than speculating as to the possible iconographic "evolution" and associated attributes of a deity which may or may not be depicted in the repertoire of motifs.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

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§36. Summary of Thesis

This thesis has set about the rather ambitious task of interrogating the bases of thought in material culture studies. It has done so with a view to finding a better way that we might be able to understand how people relate to the material realm with regard to their beliefs. The initial observation is made that material culture studies struggles to find ways to understand the ways in which people variously relate to the material realm. Any kind of engagement with the material realm which appears to be anti-«representational», aniconic or iconoclastic is deemed as either politically motivated ("the surface issue for deeper conflicts" -in other words, the archaeologist, anthropologist art historian, for example, "knows better") or in-itself purely an act of spectacle. Furthermore, non-figurative, formless aniconic objects used in supplication, for example - where they are recognised at all - instead of being understood for what they are; are recategorised *as* and/or conflated *with* the iconic or figurative. The question is raised: if they are the same, as seems to be the claim of many, then why are they so different? In both cases of iconoclasm and aniconcism, they end up becoming part of age-old 'othering' polemical ascriptions derived from cultural and political *mis*understandings.

Integrationist and post-processual approaches are identified as aligning with epistemological and ontological hermeneutic perspectives, respectively. A 'third way' approach inspired by Wilhelm Dilthey's philosophical hermeneutic, which espouses understanding through the lens of what he suggests is common to all human experience: metaphysical consciousness, or the "riddle of life". This is juxtaposed against Martin Heidegger's thought which emphasises the ontological, which suggests that humans can overcome the Euro-American condition which seems to be so much at odds with the

earthly realm. The argument is made - *in corcordium* Dilthey, *pace* the commonly held post-processual view - that the "ontological" is a categorical error for understanding different human experiences (the Epistemic Fallacy); and that *being human* is the only ontological category which humans can truly know and the one which they in-fact hold in common. From this basis, we can establish what constitutes the conditions which humans hold in common to help us understand different human engagements with the material realm.

Two co-dependent developments in the history of thought concerning the "riddle of life" are then considered. First, the separation of being - the ontological category of things - from the ultimate Source/s of Life; what Heidegger identified as "onto-theology". Secondly, the conception of a reality in which a "god-derived" "rational" «mind» and all its institutions is disconnected from a body (and especially bodily emotions and desires, understood as having a mysterious origin) and from an "illusory" external world. Questions of aetiology (origin) and teleology (cause/drive) which previously together made up the compound concerned with the "riddle of life", have been separated; and Kant's attempt to reconcile these two elements are then wholly discarded by the Neo-Kantians to reinforce the idealist component of the division. It is argued that this has and continues to form the basis of thought in the social sciences and humanities. But the response to this, manifest in the "ontological turn", as strongly inspired by Heidegger, is equally problematic. Heidegger's emphasis on the "meaning of Being" is itself reliant on the teleological/aetiological divide in order to be able to assert that the "riddle of life" can be overcome by attending to the «meaning» of Being via an idealistically-based conception of phenomenological experience. The argument is made that the absence of direct real-world reference-points (i.e.: some kind of physicalism), leads to weak affective, emotional and ethical connective tissue between humans and the material realm / environment.

Continuing along Dilthey's 'third way' approach, Helmut Plessner's Philosophical Anthropology is introduced; and his concepts of "excentric positionality" and the "Utopia Standpoint", in particular, are used to develop two concepts: the "dialectic imperative" and the "entic imperative". These concepts advance the idea that the basis of human experience is the awkward condition of being "at odds with oneself" in a state of "mediated immediacy" - being at once embodied, yet also able to objectify oneself and the material realm. Through comparison and synthesis with models derived from dialectical materialism and *Lebensphilosophie*; and drawing upon examples of the human interest in experiences involving loss of self, the dialectical and entic imperatives

encapsulate a simultaneous dialectic tension with the material realm and desire to reduce the perceived sense therein of being "at odds with oneself".

The aestheticisation of the material realm is then explored as a significant development in the transition towards secularisation arising from the Enlightenment. This helps to expose the ways in which the foci of the dialectic and entic imperative shift to mitigate against the perceived disenchantment of secularisation. But these are equally grounded in Neo-Kantian ideas of a transcendental ideal which celebrates «mind», creativity, humanism; but yet which merely only widens the gulf between humans, the material realm and the infinite realm.

Thinkers such as Bruno Latour seek to demonstrate the faults of such constructions for overcoming what - for him - are false conceptions of "disenchantment". Yet, the solution which he and others offers appear to merely entrench yet further anthropocentrism through the perpetuation of Neo-Kantian ideas of the supremacy of «mind» and "rationalism"; and misunderstandings concerning the nature of belief, which "rational" idealism cannot in-fact account for. It suggests that there are ethical implications to this kind of thought, of which we must also take account and for which we must take responsibility.

Finally, the case is made for understanding how humans respond to a demanding infinite realm, which in its persuasiveness constitutes true beliefs and obligates humans into a reciprocal gift exchange dialectic. The entities from the infinite realm with which humans end-up in such exchanges are referred to as Worldy enthymemes. Where the material realm is perceived to be teeming with such entities, humans find themselves immersed and the entic imperative is most ably and readily fulfilled. With the distancing of the Source/s of Life there is a correlative shift in the entities with which humans engage, towards proxy worldly enthymemes in the form of plastic objects and state-like institutions.

§37. Broader application and scope for completion and further work

37.1. In the context of the polemics discussed in the Chapters 1 and 2, it is possible to see how the approach developed may be useful for helping to understand the ways in which the aniconic tradition in Judaism and the Salafist iconoclastic traditions are related to genuinely held beliefs which relate to the Source/s of Life, rather as merely polemical spectacle. In the case of the Israelite tradition, the "nomadic mood" of the Exodus narrative helps us to understand how the Source/s of Life could not be localised due to the initial itinerant nature of the Israelites; and - until the building of the temple of Solomon - the Tabernacle itself, which housed the Ark of the Covenant, was a temporary

structure. We can see here how the remote Source of Life (Yahweh), for an itinerant population necessitated the use of a scripture-based proxy anicon (a Proxy Worldy enthymeme) - as an intermediary between believers and a centralised, but moveable, aniconic entity.

The persistence of Neo-Kantianism in contemporary thought leads to the belief - as an indirect continuity of monotheistic belief - that the human consciousness and rationalism arises in a «mind»; which leads to ideas of unmediated individual and social freedoms in relation to a commodified material realm. Any number of entities which present as more than what they are - including money, state institutions, even political movements - end-up as the Proxy Worldly Enthymemes in contested discourses which assume the human «mind» (the anthropocentric and anthropogenic agent) as the indirect manifestation of the Source/s of Life. The kind of dynamic which Hegel and Marx's dialectic materialism and Heidegger's Onto-theology help us to understand is the ways in which strategies of "re-enchantment" in a secularising context have been deferred away from 'earth' - from the environment which supports us or even from any institutions which seek to safeguard the environment - to re-enchantment through commodified ideas and things. This becomes an ethical issue because as long we continue to seek re-enchantment through the commodified world of things and Source/s of Life which are/is far away (a distant god or a big bang event), then we will continue to find it acceptable to value earth purely as an objectifiable extractive commodity.

The error, then, of philosophers who attempt to animate things with agency and intentionality is to do so without any kind of meaningful commitment to their relationship with those things. If we 'believe' that that the rock is alive, then why are we not truly, deeply in awe of it or afraid of it? We may enact a ritual of making offerings to it; but in what vein are we doing so? Do we make offerings to it in a genuine and viscerally-held sense of awe and dread that if, by not doing so, we may live to regret it? Or do we make offerings to it while still 'knowing' that's it is a piece of, for example, inert basalt? The latter can only legitimately be referred to as pseudo-animism. What is proposed here is that while that pseudo-animist activity engenders the same impulse to "re-connect", without truly believing that the thing is animate, that action can only be a display and the actual events from which we derive any kind of fulfilment of the entic imperative must take place through our engagement with other Proxy Worldly Enthymemes elsewhere.

Such an approach has potentially wide-reaching implications. It helps us to understand the nature of the conflict of values in an increasingly polarised political realm: where perceptions of the location of the Source/s of Life and the affectivity of the Worldly

enthymemes to which we relate are located increasingly further and further from each-another...

37.2. Due to time and space constraints, this thesis is presented with many omissions and incomplete lines of argument. In particular:

- in relation to art, the complex relationships between Methexis (participation) and confused conceptualisations between immanence and transcendence since the Enlightenment have not been fully explored; including the persistence of these confusions in the work of scholars such as Charles Taylor.
- the contribution of radical enactivist, radical embodied cognition models and recent research on the affects of different sensory stimuli for initiating 'entic' types experiences, have not been integrated and explored;
- a full consideration of how the approach developed sits in relation to extant structuralist and formalist models (given that they share some similarities) has not been included;
- a full consideration of how various material culture studies models such as entanglement theory and material engagement theory have not been fully evaluated.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: CARTHAGINIAN ("PUNIC") INFANT CEMETERIES ("TOPHET"). ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND STELAE MOTIF INTERPRETATIONS [706]

Context

A total of nine Punic/Neo-Punic[707] infant cemeteries are known in the central Mediterranean: at Carthage and Hadrumetum in Tunisia, Motya in Sicily and at Sulcis, Tharros, Monte Sirai, Nora and Su Cardulinu in Sardinia. Various stelae without precise provenance have been found at Cirta in Algeria and Lillibeum in Sicily, leading to the general assumption that infant cemeteries also existed at these sites. Each cemetery is dated somewhere between c. 800 BC – 300 AD, and typically contains sandstone or limestone cippi (e.g. see plate I, i) or stelae (e.g. see plate I, c) which commemorate

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[706] The content of this appendix is based on some of the (unpublished) content of Moussa 2007.

[707] Since various names have currency in the literature on this subject, a justification for the use of this terminology is perhaps necessary. 'Punic' - derived from the Latin *Punicus* - is the Roman name, for the Phoenicians in the Western Mediterranean, particularly in North Africa. Similarly, 'Phoenician' is derived from the Greek given name φοινίκες (*phoiníkes*), of unconfirmed origin. Evidence suggests, however, that all Phoenicians probably referred to themselves as *Canaanites* both in the east (Genesis, 9:18; 10:15; Isaiah, 23:11; Matthew, 15: 21 – 22) and in the west (Augustine, *Patrologia Latina* XXXV, 2096) and not by the Roman and Greek given names 'Punic' or 'Phoenician', respectively. It is nevertheless accepted practise - albeit artificially - to distinguish between Bronze Age Canaanites in the east as Canaanites and Iron age Canaanites in the east as 'Phoenicians'. In the western Mediterranean context, most authors have made no explicit distinction between the designations *West Phoenician* and *Punic*, if a distinction is possible. Aubet (1987), distinguishes between pre-6th century Phoenician colonialists in the west as 'West Phoenicians', and the later period marked by Carthaginian "hegemony" in the west, as 'Punic' (Aubet, 1987: 11 - 12). This differentiation is helpful in principle, but since the actual temporal and geographical loci of the shift of influence in the west from Tyre to Carthage still remains uncertain, when it becomes appropriate to use such nomenclature remains equally debatable. For the purposes of simplicity therefore, I will refer here to all West Phoenician material culture as 'Punic' in contradistinction to the 'Phoenician' material in the east. I will refer to material specifically from Carthage among the West Phoenician settlements as 'Carthaginian' and Punic material from after the fall of Carthage in 146 BC, as 'Neo-Punic'.

burials, generally presumed to be associated with specific single, pairs or groups of interred clay urns. Each urn contains the calcined remains of infants up to the age of five years and some animals, in particular birds, kids and lambs. The cemeteries, generally assume a peripheral location to the rest of the settlement and to other necropoleis, and are identified by most scholars as *Tophets*.[708]

Stelae Iconography

Since stelae are widely published, there is also a large corpus of iconography. As such, a number of studies have been completed to interpret them.[709] Although, 3251 stelae panels are published in CIS and a few hundred more in various museum catalogues, this constitutes probably only around half of the 8000 that have actually been excavated in Carthage. Notably, those that have been selected for publication were either found in places where they re-used for masonry by the Romans, and were hand-selected by antiquarians[710] and the Peres Blancs[711], presumably for the epigraphic value. Consequently, we cannot know how representative of the diversity of iconography these various published collections are.

Below, the various dominant motifs and some of the common interpretations are introduced.

'TRIANGLE-CROSSBAR'

Perhaps the best known and most common motif on Punic infant cemetery stelae, is known in extant literature as the 'TNT' or 'Tanit' motif (see figs in plates I a, b, c, g, II, a, f) often believed to represent the mysterious divinity of the same name. Whilst there may be some evidence that this motif is significantly associated with 'TNT', there is no real evidence to suggest that it actually represents 'TNT'. Since this designation remains unconfirmed we will instead refer to this motif in a neutrally descriptive way, as the 'Triangle-crossbar'. Within the literature - as will also become apparent - three common interpretations of the triangle-crossbar emerge: as a stylised mortal or divine female figure, as an anthropomorphic baetyl or as an altar.

For Gsell, the triangle-crossbar represents the physical composite of a cultic altar and perhaps the manifestation of a divinity through its anthropomorphisation, the triangle

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[708] The Old Testament refers the Canaanites and/or Pagans who "...built the high places of Topheth... to burn their sons and daughters in the fire... [and] bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room" (Jer.: 7.31 – 32.).

[709] Gsell 1920; Hours-Meidan 1950; Picard 1959; Bisi 1967; Brown 1991.

[710] Humbert 1817 and Davis 1861 were the early collectors of funerary stelae from Carthage.

[711] See Kittler 1957.

represents the body of an altar or sacred stone, the horizontal bar represents the surface of an altar and the disk, which surmounts them, represents an astral body.[712] Hours-Miedan suggested that triangle-crossbar actually constituted a 'baetyl' - a sacred stone resembling those, she claims, found at Motya by Whitaker[713] or found on coins from Paphos, which was initially only surmounted by a separate disc-crescent motif, later taking the form of a head thereby giving it an anthropomorphic quality. As such - for her - this motif represents as an anthropomorphic baetyl.[714] That is, the Triangle-Crossbar motif only assumes its anthropomorphised form, as we know it, when the crescent-disk motive surmounts particular baetyl motifs. A comparison of the pillars displayed in plate I, h and II, a, illustrates this point. She suggested that the horizontal crossbar served as a device for separating the two places which the gods occupy - the earth and the sky - that is, separating the 'celestial' from the 'chthonic'.[715] Bisi was hesitant to interpret this motif, but suggested that the superimposition of a disk on a triangle support may imply some sort of sun-worship, and identified similarities - such as the v-neck detail - between it and the bottle motif, perhaps representing the same religious idea.[716] In contrast to the interpretations developed by Gsell and Hours-Miedan, Gilbert-Charles Picard in his own publication in 1954 and his joint publication with Colette Picard in 1958, identified this motif as representing a divinity, as 'TNT' in particular, with arms raised in a blessing similar to Cretan figurines of the 'Great Mother'.[717] Colette Picard suggested that the motif originated from Aegean Bronze Age figures - from an aniconic-anthropomorphic figure to a mystical figure of variable gender. She later changed her position, suggesting instead that the motif represented an accomplished act embodied in praying or making a vow. That is, not representing the mortal supplicant themselves, but the meaning of the action; therefore, assuming a similar associative power as the bottle motif that she interpreted as representing the actual victim.[718] Brown concluded this is most likely a divine figure of uncertain gender with arms raised in the traditional gesture of greeting.[719]

'CRESCENT-DISK EMBLEM' AND CRESCENTS / DISKS

This motif will be referred to here as the 'crescent-disk emblem' (plates I, a, b; II, a, h). Occasionally the emblem may double-up, taking an emblematic situation on the stele

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[712] Gsell 1920, IV, 383-390.
[713] Whitaker 1921 273, cited in Hours-Miedan 1950, 29.
[714] Hours-Miedan 1950, 28 - 29.
[715] *Ibid.*, 29.
[716] Bisi 1967, 209 - 210.
[717] Picard 1954, 77; Picard & Picard 1958, 78.
[718] Picard 1968, 84 - 85.
[719] Brown 1991, 125 – 131.

whilst also being incorporated to other motifs below it (e.g. see plate II, a). There are also other less frequent variations of disks and crescents: single or double disks, with a central point, with 'rays' and with 'petals' (e.g. see plates I, c; II, g, h). Needless to say, I do not mean to assume all these various motifs embody the same meaning by mentioning them here under the same heading, only that they have comparable forms.

Gsell makes the observation that the Phoenician and Punic crescent generally point downwards, whilst in Assyro-Babylonian and Egyptian iconography, the opposite is true. For Gsell therefore, the crescent-disk represents the moon in two aspects: full and crescent, and the manner in which the crescent encloses and touches the disk or a separate disk appears within the crescent enclosure, represents 'la lumière cendrée': an aspect which is observed for a number of days after the new moon when both the crescent and a silhouette of the rest of the moon is visible - representing perhaps a time of ritual pertinence.[720] Whilst a single disk with or without a point in the middle or double disks represent either one or two stars respectively, disks with rays or petals can represent either a sun or a star.[721] Hours-Miedan disputes Gsell's interpretation of the crescent disk as representing the "la lumiere cendree", but compares it to similar motifs found in Syro-Palestine; as a crescent moon and either a sun (particularly when there are rays) or a star (represented by a plain disk).[722] Bisi simply attributes this as the emblem of B'L HMN. Gilbert-Charles Picard compared this motif to Syro-Palestinian «representations» of the moon and sun, respectively.[723] Colette Picard interpreted this motif as «symbolising» immortality which both the lunar and solar aspects embodied.[724] For Brown, this motif probably originated in the Levant and is the least likely to ever be 'interpreted securely' because crescents and disks occur among many ancient civilisations with a variety of associated concepts.[725]

'CRESCENT-DISK STAFF'

This motif (plates I, d; II, f), which features commonly particularly on later Punic stelae and rarely on earlier cippi, is frequently identified simply as the Caduceus or Kerykeion carried by the Greek Hermes (Roman Mercury; Estruscan Turns) (see plate I, e). Once again, the designation used here - 'Crescent-disk staff' - is based on its form rather than an assumption which remains debated (that it represents a Caduceus or Kerykeion).

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[720] Gsell 1920, IV, 362-363.
[721] *Ibid.*, IV, 359-360.
[722] Hours-Miedan 1950, 37.
[723] Picard 1954, 78.
[724] Picard 1976, 82.
[725] Brown 1991, 136-137.

Gsell speculated as to whether this motif in fact represented the Caduceus since it never encompasses the wings often found on Greek Caducei nor serpents (see plate I, e), but ribbons instead[726] (see plate I, d). Gsell identified the motif as a staff bearing a lunar / solar disk and crescent similar to those described by Sanchoniathon[727] which can be observed on monuments from the Levant associated with the goddess Asherah[728] (see plate I, f). This may represent either a metallic or wooden (e.g. resembling a palm tree trunk) pole, surmounted by a crescent and probably a solar disk to which ribbons were occasionally tied at times of festivity or solemn adoration. She points out that similar such poles are depicted on cylinders and koudourrous in the east, as are figures of poles with one to three simple disks which are also occasionally found in Punic iconography, as found in Syria.[729] Bisi considered this motif as borrowed from the Greek and Roman staff (Caduceus) of Hermes and Aesculapius.[730] Gilbert-Charles Picard again in contrast to position of Gsell or Hours-Miedan, assumed that this motif was indeed Hermes' Caduceus,[731] although Colette Picard later questions whether it actually embodied the same meaning as Hermes' Caduceus or merely borrowed its appearance.[732] This motif for Brown must have been associated with some divinity since it features so frequently on stelae. She asserted that the Carthaginians must have been aware of Hermes' role as an intermediary between the humans and God and as a guide to the underworld - perfectly suited to transporting sacrifices from this world to the other. As such, she interprets this motif as Hermes' Caduceus.[733] Garbini interprets the motif as «symbolic» of and consort to TNT[734] and, similarly, Oden interprets the motif as a stylised date palm «symbolic» of the Syrian/ Canaano-Phoenician goddess Asherah (see below) which he asserts is comparable to or the same as the deity TNT.[735]

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[726] Gsell 1920, IV, 364.
[727] Sanchoniathon's writings (Beirut, c. 1000 BC) as translated in 'History of Phoenicia' by Philo of Byblos (1st - 2nd century AD), though incomplete, describe Canaano-Phoenician cosmology in some depth. Since the discovery of Ugaritic mythological literature and other Canaanite epigraphic material dated at around 1400 BC, its validity is no longer disputed. For Albright (1946), it confirms "...not only the [same] names of gods and mythological atmosphere, but also many details of Philo's narrative are in agreement with Ugaritic and later Phoenician inscriptions..."
[728] Gsell 1920, IV, 367-69.
[729] Hours-Miedan 1950, 30 - 36.
[730] Bisi 1967, 204.
[731] Picard 1954, 77 - 78.
[732] Picard 1976, 94.
[733] Brown 1991, 133 - 134.
[734] Garbini 1980, 180-81.
[735] Oden 1977, 141-46.

'BOTTLE'

This is also a very common motif (plates I, b, i; II, d) assuming different shapes, which might all be interpreted as bottles, vases, urns or jugs and indeed might each represent different types of vessels, with different uses. Nevertheless, all these various forms of vessel are generally interpreted as representing one type of vessel with one use and are generally referred to as 'Bottles'. Since this designation suffices as a generic term for these various forms of vessel, we will not offer an alternative designation for the motif here. The motif is commonly thought to either represent a baetyl of some form, fertility «symbol» or a sacrificial urn. Gsell hesitated to speculate as to the significance of this motif, but he did suggest that it may have represented a vase perhaps containing sacrificial offerings which, when surmounted by a crescent/disk, gives the motif a head - thereafter resembling a human figure.[736] Hours Miedan also interprets this motif as an anthropomorphic baetyl.[737] Bisi compared this motif to that found on the Phoenician stele found at Akhziv (Israel), and identified some resemblance with the triangle-crossbar motif, suggesting it may represent a baetyl, embodying 'divine presence'. She explained the cross and the eyes and nose which occasionally appear on the bottle-idol motifs as representing the crossed arms of the child and facial features of the child, respectively.[738] Gilbert Charles Picard considered the bottle motif to be an anthropomorphic baetyl,[739] whilst Colette Picard identified the bottle as a realistic «representation» of an 'aniconic' baetyl.[740] In 1968 Colette Picard again changed her position, claiming that this motif in-fact represented the 'victim' –the swaddled baby. Later, among other details and additions she made to her 1968 suggestions, Colette Picard suggested that the decline in the appearance of the Bottle motif on stelae was concurrent with the increase in substitute sacrifices such as the sheep.[741] In 1978 Colette Picard modified her position once again, suggesting that the socle which often features beneath the bottle motif represented an altar and that the juxtaposition of the bottle-idol on the altar indicated the divinization of the infant through sacrifice. Furthermore, the presence of the accompanying motifs such the pomegranate, palmettes and breasts ascribed to the motif and the related rite had some association with fertility. For Brown the bottle is most likely to represented swaddled babies as sacrificial victims: "If bottles do not represent child victims, the absence of depictions of children is in striking contrast to the presence

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[736]   Gsell 1920.
[737]   Hours-Miedan 1950, 30.
[738]   Bisi 1967, 208 - 210.
[739]   Picard 1954, 76.
[740]   Picard 1959, 23.
[741]   Picard 1976, 89.

of sheep motifs on many stelae presumably commemorating sheep sacrifices".[742] Echoing Stager's argument, she suggested that the decline in frequency of this motif in later iconography may be associated with the increased use of animal substitution sacrifices.[743]

STONES, PILLARS, LOZENGES AND OBELISKS

These motifs (plates I, g, h; II, b, c, e, h) reoccur very frequently across all periods, and the earlier cippi, sometimes themselves assume the form of - for example - a pillar or obelisk (e.g. see plate II, e). Most of these forms remain largely mysterious and, although common and obviously significant in Punic cosmology - are rarely dealt with most authors. Gsell discussed the significance of sacred stones of 'baetyls' in the Levant and North Africa and suggested all these forms may have represented variations of such sacred stones, which when occasionally surmounted by a crescent-disk or disk may also resemble human figures.[744]

RAMS, SHEEP AND BULLS

Likewise, these are relatively common motifs (e.g. see plate II, h), which have been given varied attention by the authors who have studied the stelae. Hours-Miedan explains the occurrence of these animals as representing divine animals, probably intended for sacrifice.[745] For Colette Picard this motif simply represented the sheep as a substitution sacrifice for infant-sacrifices. Brown assumed that these probably represented animals sacrificed as substitutions to children. She points out that analysis of urns from Stager's excavations provided evidence of sheep bones in one urn, but that the accompanying stele was uninscribed and further evidence of sheep being used as sacrifices is necessary. However, she also suggested that the image may have represented sacrifices in general or substitution sacrifices.[746]
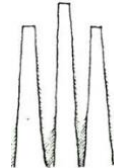
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[742] Brown, 1991, 139.
[743] *Ibid.*, 139. See also: Stager 1978; 1980; 1982; Stager & Wolf 1984.
[744] Gsell 1920.
[745] Hours-Miedan, 1950, 52 - 53.
[746] Brown 1991, 137 – 138. See also: Stager 1978; 1980; 1982; Stager & Wolf 1984.

	Triangle-Crossbar	Crescent-disk	Crescent-disk staff	Bottle	Pillars / Stones	Sheep / Rams / Bulls
Gsell (4) (1920)	Cultic altar & astral body - aniconic	Lumière cendrée - New Moon -	Staff & crescent disk Levantine Asherah pole	Vase of sacrificial remains –	Aniconic Baetyl - Levantine & N African -	/
Hours-Miedan (9) (1950)	Anthropomorphasised aniconic Baetyl	Levantine Crescent moon & sun/star	Pole surmounted by crescent solar disk	Anthropomorphic baetyl	Aniconic Baetyl	Devine animals – for sacrifice
G Picard (1954)	Divinity ('TNT')	Moon & sun	Hermes' Caduceus	Anthropomorphic baetyl	/	/
C Picard (10) (1959)	Anthropomorphic Aniconic figure	Moon & sun	Hermes' Caduceus	'Aniconic' baetyl	/	/
Bisi (14) (1967)	Hesitant to interpret Sun worship? – Often similar to bottle	Emblem of B'L HMN	Hermes' & Aesculapius' Caduceus	Baetyl	/	/
C Picard (10) (1968)	Embodiment of vow - Iconic	Moon & sun	Hermes' Caduceus	Swaddled baby as victim	/	/
C Picard (10) (1976)	Embodiment of vow - Iconic	Immortality embodied in moon and sun	Hermes' Caduceus	Swaddled baby as victim	/	Substitution for infant sacrifice
Brown (20) (1991)	Divine figure	Not interpretable - Levantine -	Hermes' Caduceus	Swaddled baby as victim	/	Substitution sacrifice mulk 'immor

APPENDIX I, TABLE 1: Chronological view of dominant Punic infant cemetery stelae motifs (Moussa 2007)

APPENDIX I - PLATE I

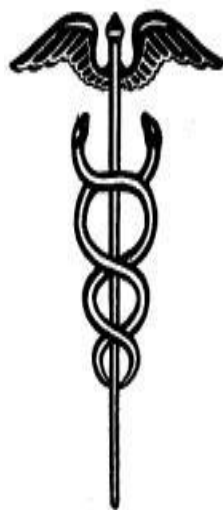a. Stele, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa
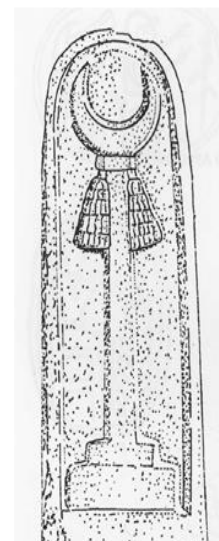

b. Stele, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

c. Stele, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

d. Crescent-disk staff, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

e. Caduceus
© F.K.Moussa

f. Emblem of Harran (after Keel, 1998)
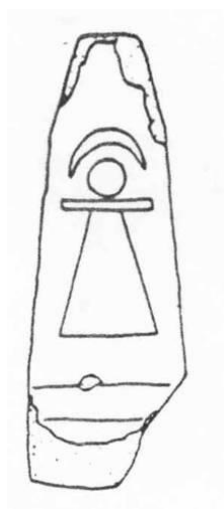© F.K.Moussa

g. Stele, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

h. Cippi, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

i. Cippi, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

APPENDIX I - PLATE II

a. Stele, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

b. Stele, Hadrumetum
© F.K.Moussa

c. Cippi, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

d. Cippi, Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

e. 'Pillar', Carthage
© F.K.Moussa

f. Stele, Hadrumetum.
© F.K.Moussa

g. Stele, female figure, Carthage.
© F.K.Moussa

h. Stele, Hadrumetum. © F.K.Moussa

APPENDIX II: EXAMPLES OF ANICONIC TRADITIONS

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In ancient Egypt, emphasis on anthropomorphic «representations» are displaced in the New Kingdom (1400 - 1100 BC), particularly during the reign of Akhenaton with a solar theology of Aten. In the Old Testament, the second commandment prohibits the making of images,[747] and Judaism continues to be an imageless religion, as does Islam. In ancient Greece the second century traveller and geographer Pausanias makes frequent references to the use and worship of "unwrought stone"[748] and Zeus is rendered in many aniconic forms, such as altars, pyramids, stele and thrones or seats.

At Paphos in Cyprus, Tacitus described a tapering cone representing the goddess, which appears to be confirmed in Cypriot coins displaying similar objects and in a stone found at the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Palaepafos (Fig. A-II.1.).[749]

Reeder provides an interesting survey of aniconism in ancient Rome, as displayed in the form of balusters.[750] In Sardinia, aniconic statues and monuments are a prevalent part of Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Age culture (Fig. A-II.2.).[751]

Early Buddhism and later Japanese Zen Buddhism, explicitly use non-figurative images;[752] in Hinduism the Linga in its original form (not a phallus, as is often misunderstood, especially in Euro-American and even in some post-colonial Indian

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[747] Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 5:8. Also: Deuteronomy 4:15-19, 23, 25, 28; 27: 15; Exodus 20:23-24; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4 and Judges 17:1-5. See section 2.1.
[748] Paus. IX. 27. 1.
[749] Tacitus, Histories 2, 3. On this, see: Myres, 1946, 97-8; Gaifman 2012, 113-114; 174-175; Mettinger 1995, 84-85.
[750] Reeder 1995.
[751] See, for example, Tanda and Luglie 2008.
[752] See, for example, Seckel 2004 [1976]; Winfield 2013.

literature) is considered the original primordial form of Shiva (Fig. A-II.3);[753] and Dean

demonstrates the prevalence of aniconic traditions in Inca civilisation (Fig. A-II.4).[754]
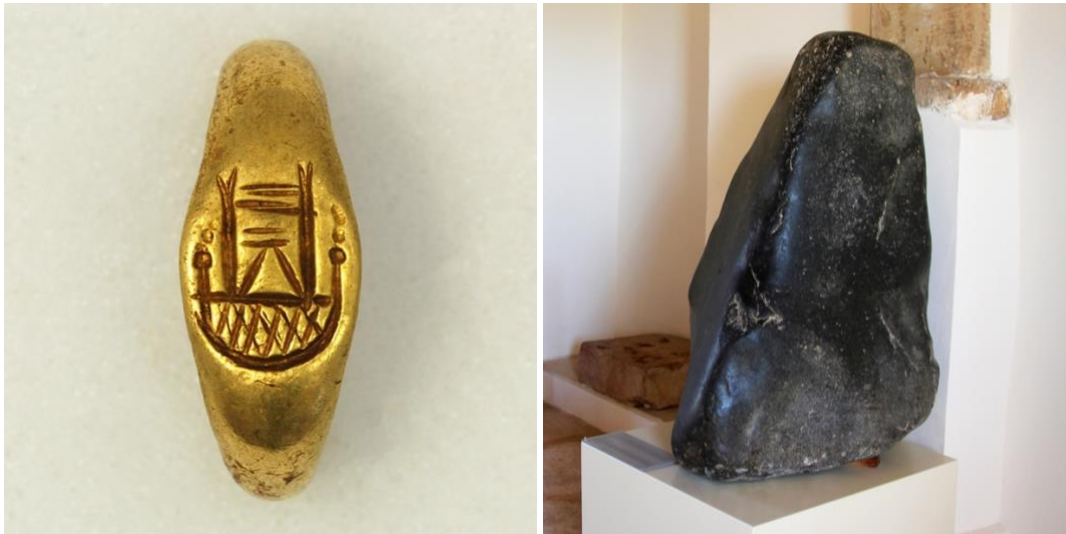

FIGURE A-II.1. L: ANICONIC SHRINE OF APHRODITE AS DEPICTED ON GOLD ROMAN FINGER RING. IMAGE: © THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM / CREATIVE COMMONS. R: STONE FOUND AT THE AT THE SANCTUARY OF APHRODITE AT PALAEPAFOS, THOUGHT TO BE THE ANICONIC 'IDOL'. IMAGE: WOJCIECH BIEGUN / CREATIVE COMMONS.

FIGURE A-II.2. ANTHROPOMORPHISING ANICONIC 'BETYLS', BRONZE AGE, TAMULI, SARDINIA. IMAGE: © F.K.MOUSSA

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[753] On the Shiva Linga, see: Fuller 2004; Kramrisch 1981, 153-196; McCormack 1973; Rao 1916, 73-102.
[754] Dean 2010.

Figure A-II.4. Inca carved stone, Saywite, Peru. Image: againerick / creative commons.

APPENDIX III: OVERVIEW OF CHARLES SANDERS PEIRCE'S SEMIOTICS

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Peirce's model of Semiotic[755] arose from his interest in Logic, which he concluded should be "...the science of the general necessary laws of signs".[756] As such, he developed a complex model for understanding the multifarious possible modes of thought and «representation», both linguistic and non-linguistic. As already briefly touched-upon Peirce identifies a model for understanding the process of what he described as 'semiosis',[757] based on three core operational elements:

1) The *sign* (or the *representamen*. From here on, the *sign*) stands for something in some way;

2) The *interpretant* is a sign in the «mind» of the person which corresponds in some way to the *sign*;

3) The *object* is the 'thing' to which the *sign* and *interpretant* ultimately refer, although not necessarily in a literal or comprehensive way. That is,

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[755] 'Semiotics' is Peirce's term for the 'science of signs' as opposed to Ferdinand de Saussure's 'Semiology' (De Saussure 1983 [1916]). Both terms emerged approximately simultaneously, the former in America and the latter in Switzerland and both terms continue to be used in America (and UK) and Europe, respectively. See: Guiraud 1975, 1-4, as cited in Hawkes 1977, 124.

[756] Peirce 1931-58, 2.227.

[757] *Ibid.*, 5.484.

the *sign* and *interpretant* may refer to the object only in part, or to a concept of it; what Peirce refers to as the *ground*.[758]

So, in other words, according to Peirce's model, things (known as *objects*) are represented physically by other objects or linguistic or pictorial «symbols» (known as *signs*), but which are given their relational meaning to the object via a conceptual sign in the person's «mind» (known as the *interpretant*). The actual concept (as opposed to the sign) in the person's «mind» is referred to as the *ground*.

This process implies the potential for a continuum of multiple interpretants. That is, an interpretant may be an interpretation of another interpretant, which may be an interpretation of another interpretant *ad infinitum*. Zeman has summarised the concept as follows: "...interpretants, or proper significate effects of signs, *constitute* the interpreter or mind; the interpreter, then, is a historically existing continuum of interpretants."[759] The *interpretant* (the sign in the subject's «mind») perceives through what Peirce calls 'trichotomies', which relate to the *sign,* the *object* and the *ground* in different ways, as follows:

I. The nature of the *sign* (the 'triadic relations of comparison'):
   a) *Qualisign*, is a sign which embodies a quality or feeling by nature or appearance;
   b) *Sinsign*, is a sign which consists of an actual individual thing or event;
   c) *Legisign,* is a sign through which a law, norm or «representational» relation operates.
II. The way the sign represents the *ground*, that is, the *nature* of the idea or *characteristic* of the object (the 'triadic relations of performance')*:*
   a) *Icon,* a sign which bears some resemblance to its object;
   b) *Index,* a sign which refers to the object in some existential causal way, e.g.: a pointing finger;
   c) *Symbol,* a sign which represents the object in some way, through some convention of association, which may be arbitrary; e.g.: a word;

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[758] Peirce 1931-58, 2.228-303.
[759] Zeman 1977, 25.

III. The nature of the object which the interpretant attributes to the sign or the "proper significant effect" of the original sign[760] ('triadic relations of thought'):

    a) *Rheme,* a sign which represents a quality which suggests the possibility of the object to the interpretant, and may stand as its object;

    b) *Dicisign,* a sign which conveys or represents information about the object, such as photograph;

    c) *Argument,* a sign which represents the object as a law (and therefore can only be «symbolic»).

	Sign's own phenome-nological category	Relation to object	Relation to interpretant	Specificational redundancies in parentheses	Some examples
(I)	Qualisign	Icon	Rheme	(Rhematic Iconic) Qualisign	A feeling of "red"
(II)	Sinsign	Icon	Rheme	(Rhematic) Iconic Sinsign	An individual diagram
(III)		Index	Rheme	Rhematic Indexical Sinsign	A spontaneous cry
(IV)			Dicisign	Dicent (Indexical) Sinsign	A weathercock or photograph
(V)	Legisign	Icon	Rheme	(Rhematic) Iconic Legisign	A diagram, apart from its factual individuality
(VI)		Index	Rheme	Rhematic Indexical Legisign	A demonstrative pronoun
(VII)			Dicisign	Dicent Indexical Legisign	A street cry (identifying the individual by tone, theme)
(VIII)		Symbol	Rheme	Rhematic Symbol (–ic Legisign)	A common noun
(IX)			Dicisign	Dicent Symbol (–ic Legisign)	A proposition (in the conventional sense)
(X)			Argument	Argument (–ative Symbolic Legisign)	A syllogism

FIGURE A-III.1. PEIRCE'S TEN CLASSES OF SIGN (FROM CP2.254-263 1903)

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[760] Peirce 1931-58: 2.228.

APPENDIX IV: HEIDEGGER'S ERROR: VAN GOGH'S SHOES

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In 1968, renowned art historian Meyer Shapiro published a critique of a passage in Heidegger's TOWA, which has come has to be known as the 'Van Gogh passage'. The basis of his criticism was to demonstrate, quite persuasively, that Van Gogh's various paintings of shoes (fig. A-V.1.)[761] were not a "farming woman's"[762] shoes, as Heidegger had asserted, but in-fact Van Gogh's own shoes![763] Shapiro's critique caused some controversy and consternation between and among art historians and philosophers alike.

For the purposes of helping us to understand the discourse which then ensued, and to illustrate the point we wish to develop here, it will be useful to reproduce an extract from the core of Heidegger's 'Van Gogh passage'. The following passage provides an answer to a question Heidegger poses concerning the concept of 'equipment' which he develops, "How shall we discover what a piece of equipment truly is?":

> We choose as example a common sort of equipment—a pair of peasant shoes...We shall choose a well-known painting by Van Gogh, who painted such shoes several times...
> As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipment in truth is. From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even

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[761] Schapiro 1968 attempts to establish from Heidegger _which_ of Van Gogh's paintings of shoes (out of five possible options) in particular he was referring to, and deduces that the 1886 _A Pair of Shoes_ was the most likely.

[762] Some translations of this have been "peasant woman's shoes". The present author follows Thomson with the term "farming woman's shoes". Where "peasant woman's shoes" is used in quotations used here, the author's original text is preserved. See Thomson 2011, 106.

[763] Schapiro 1968. See also Schapiro 1994.

tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong -only an undefined space. There are not even clods of soil from the field of the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use. A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet–

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the workless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman.[764]

Figure A-V.1. Vincent Van Gogh, A Pair of Shoes (1886). IMAGE: Van Gogh Museum / Creative Commons

The essence of Shapiro's response to this passage can be summed up from his own 1968 text:

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[764] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 32-34.

> Alas for him, the philosopher has deceived himself. He has retained from this encounter with Van Gogh's canvas a moving set of associations with peasants and the soil, which are not sustained by the picture itself. They are grounded rather in his own social outlook with its heavy pathos of the primordial and earthy. He has indeed 'imagined everything and projected it into the painting'.[765]

Shapiro here re-uses against Heidegger a turn of phrase from his TOWA text, in which he anticipates precisely this sort of critique: "It would be the worst sort self-deception to think that our description, as a subjective action, had first imagined everything...and projected it into the painting."[766] In other words, Heidegger claims that his description is not an interpretation, although that does seem, as we shall see, a difficult claim to sustain.

Thomson has argued that Heidegger's Van Gogh passage can be understood as follows: that in viewing a painting like this, we, 1) move from viewing the painting merely as aesthetic object; to 2) seeing the worldliness of the shoes against their suspension in a field of brush-strokes which are at once nothing yet also suggest the possibly of other forms; which brings us, 3) into the midst of the tension between earth and world; and finally 4) "...coming to see for oneself what it is like to walk in a farmer's shoes (by encountering for oneself, in the artwork, the same struggle to bring forth the bounty of the earth into the light of the world)."[767] Heidegger, arguably, possibly quite successfully helps to draw attention to characteristics of the painting described from steps one to three. The decontextualisation of the shoes and the impressionistic style of the work brings attention to their form beyond their function as shoes, almost - one might argue, and if one looks hard enough - to the point of abstraction, bringing world into focus and allowing earth to show through. However, how all of this can help us to achieve the significant leap which appears to occur in step four (what it is like to walk in a farmer woman's shoes), or indeed, to see the "equipmental quality of equipment" (of the farmer woman's shoes?) still seems to allude us.

Young dismisses this passage as "irrelevant" and "an anomaly" in the text, and as such gives it no attention.[768] On the other hand, Thomson in his otherwise lucid writings

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[765] Schapiro 1968, 138.
[766] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 35-36.
[767] Thomson 2011, 112.
[768] Young 2001.

on Heidegger, makes a rather bizarre claim for "resolving the controversy surrounding Heidegger's interpretation of Van Gogh"[769]:

> [I]f one attends carefully to the what emerges from "[o]ut of the dark opening of the well-worn insides of the shoes... – attending specifically to the lighter patches of color that emerge from the dark opening of the shoe on the right – one can indeed discern the head (hair bonnet and face in profile), torso, and arms of what could easily be a woman, carrying a hoe (a small shovel), with what could even be a yellow orange "fire" smoldering behind her.[770]

FIGURE. A-V.2. DETAIL OF VINCENT VAN GOGH, A PAIR OF SHOES (1886).
IMAGE: VAN GOGH MUSEUM / CREATIVE COMMONS.

Thomson appears to draw attention to this brush-stroke detail (fig A-V.2), as a 'last chance saloon' attempt to get-around an arguably otherwise irreconcilable problem with Heidegger's text which Schapiro artfully reveals. By the very necessity of 'seeing' a "farmer woman" from out of the brush strokes is the admission that without any discernible visual prompt, the farmer woman could only otherwise have been "imagined...and projected into the painting" by Heidegger; and now by Thomson, it would seem. From Schapiro and his follower's critiques, Young's off-hand denial and Thomson's fantastic formulation, we cannot escape the fact that there is probably something awry with this passage in providing us with some understanding of why - in Heidegger's terms - it should be considered a great artwork. Later in the text Heidegger attempts to clarify:

> The equipmental quality of equipment was discovered. But how? Not by a description and explanation of a pair of shoes actually present; not by a report about the process of making shoes; and also not by the observation of the actual use of shoes occurring here and there; but only by bringing ourselves before Van Gogh's

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[769] Thomson 2011, 106.
[770] *Ibid.*, 113.

> painting. This painting spoke. In the vicinity of the work we were suddenly somewhere
> else than we usually tend to be.[771]

One might read here that the supposition that these shoes belong to a farmer woman's is in-fact beside the point. Heidegger, in this paragraph, does not draw attention to a farmer woman's shoes, but rather to a "pair of shoes". This might itself be enough to overcome Schapiro's critique. However, what Schapiro's critique highlights as much as the question of where the idea of this "farmer woman" came from, is Heidegger's assumption that - somehow - we may all come to experience the "equipmental quality" of shoes "as equipment". Whether, then, he imagined a farmer's shoes, Van Gogh's shoes or a pastry chef's shoes, is, in a sense, beside the point.

Michael Kelly juxtaposes the positions Heidegger and Schapiro assume in relation to Van Gogh's shoes in order to expose the differences in the bases of their thinking.[772] He suggests that through Schapiro's critique of Heidegger's 'Van Gogh passage', what he describes as Heidegger's "iconoclasm" is revealed. Kelly identifies three essential arguments in Schapiro's critique:[773]

1) The shoes belong to the artist, not to a peasant woman;
2) There is no reason why the painting should work better than an actual pair of shoes in order to arrive at the conclusions Heidegger reaches;
3) The only 'truth' that is revealed in the painting is the presence of the painter.

For Kelly then, Heidegger's position is one of iconoclasm, since it denies the historicity of the work-of-art. He is not interested in where it came from, who painted it, what the subject matter actually is, or what the artist's intentions were:

> It turns out...that each individual work, whether of van Gogh or a Greek temple, is merely an occasion for the event of truth (of Being) to make its appearance, that is, for the truth of some being to disclose itself in a work of art and for the truth of art to reveal itself as such disclosure. Heidegger is disinterested in the historical particularities of any work because they are irrelevant to the event of this double disclosure.[774]

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[771] Heidegger 1971 [1950] {1935-37}, 35.
[772] Kelly 2003, 20-54.
[773] *Ibid.*, 44-51.
[774] *Ibid.*, 31.

On these bases, for Kelly, Heidegger is an iconoclast, and for Schapiro, he is simply wrong. What is clear, is that, for both Shapiro and Kelly - who both valorise the primacy of aesthetics - as Heidegger would predict, it is inconceivable for them to want to view the artwork in a way which disregards historical context or actual content of the work; to experience something other worldly and to effectively see nothing. Here we see very clearly the world of aesthetics (and metaphysics) colliding abruptly with that of Heidegger's. To demonstrate, Shapiro's three arguments are represented in figure A-V.3. in the left column, together with Heidegger's estimated responses in the right column.

Schapiro's objections	Heidegger's estimated responses
1) The shoes belong to the artist, not to a peasant woman.	It is irrelevant to whom the shoes belong.
2) There is no reason why the painting should work better than an actual pair of shoes in order to arrive at the conclusions Heidegger reaches.	The real pair of shoes can only be a real pair of shoes and are hard to see in any other way.
	If you present a pair of shoes instead of a work of art (like Duchamp's ready-made art), you re-present them as objects, which only blocks the potential to see them in any other way.
	In the painting of the shoes, however, you can overcome the 'aesthetics' of the painting and see beyond the painting as an object, which allows you to begin to see the image of the shoes in other ways.
3) The only 'truth' that is revealed in the painting is the presence of the painter.	The biography and subjectivity of the painter is irrelevant.

Figure A-V.3. Conflicting approaches to the artwork as exposed through Schapiro's critique of Heidegger's 'Van Gogh passage', and Heidegger's estimated responses.

But what has brought this clash of worlds to light, and indeed, still remains an unresolved problem, is Heidegger's invocation of the "farmer woman".

The answer to this unresolved problem, it is argued here, lies in the distinction between the pictorial and non-pictorial image. Despite Heidegger's various critiques of

Modern art, his relationship to the arts through his life, but especially later, seem to be contradictory to the position he sets out in TOWA, as Young identifies:

> What renders postwar Heidegger's stance to the art of his own times manifestly problematic, however, is – first, the high esteem he expresses for what turns out to be actually a considerable number of individual artists, and second, the facts of his own biography. Heidegger expressed, inter alia, great esteem for, in music, Stravinsky and Carl Orff, in poetry, Georg Trakl, Paul Celan, Réne Char, Stefan George and Rainer Maria Rilke, in architecture, for le Cobusier, in sculpture, Bernhard Heilliger and Eduado Chillida, and in painting, Van Gogh, Braque, Klee and Cézanne. And in the officially despised 'art business' of modernity he had, in fact, a considerable number of friends and acquaintances...[775]

Some "Iconoclast"! However, of the modern artists, Heidegger wrote only about Cézanne, Klee and Van Gogh. In writing about them, for Heidegger, what was important was the 'semi-abstractness' of their work; for the ability they afford to switch between seeing brush-strokes and abstract geometric shapes which can then somehow reconstitute themselves as something recognisable – a scene, a face, an object.

What Heidegger refers to here is, as Young puts it: "a flickering alternation between two states",[776] or to borrow an analogy used by Thomson, a kind of "gestalting".[777] Thomson summons Wittgenstein's version of Jastrow's gestalt figure to illustrate the ambiguity between the subject / object dialectic to which Heidegger elucidates. (fig. A-V.4.).
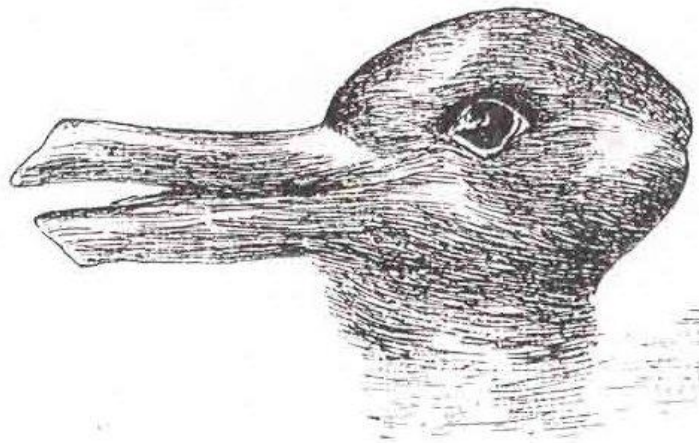

FIGURE A-V.4. THE DUCK-RABBIT GESTALT IMAGE. (1899, J. JASTROW). UNLESS THIS FIGURE HAS ALREADY BEEN INTRODUCED AS A "DUCK-RABBIT," WE DO NOT ORDINARILY NOTICE THAT IT HAS ANOTHER ASPECT (THAT IT CAN BE SEEN AS A RABBIT), BECAUSE THE ASPECT WE DO SEE (THE DUCK) STANDS IN THE PLACE OF THE ASPECT WE DO NOT SEE (THE RABBIT), AND WE CANNOT SEE BOTH THE DUCK AND THE RABBIT AT ONCE.[778]

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[775] Young 2001, 121.
[776] *Ibid.*, 155.
[777] Thomson 2011, 192-193.
[778] *Ibid.*, 192.

Young goes on to propose that, for Heidegger, it is during the transition from the first state (the abstract) to the second state (the recognisable) in viewing the image that we experience "the Ereignis or 'worlding' of world". Young's understanding then, is that the Ereignis experience takes place out of the emergence of world (and of meaning) from the abstract form or the "birth of the meaningful world of objects" out of Cézanne's "numinously meaning-less, yet structured, ground."[779] However, Heidegger's texts suggest that he means something different. In a Dialogue on Language between Heidegger and Japanese Zen Master, Hoseki Hisamatsu; in the pictorial Zen art, it is the formlessness which comes through the pictorial that is important: "the beauty of the artwork lies, for Zen, in the fact that, somehow, the formless comes to presence in the pictorial."[780] Hisamatsu goes on:

> As long as man finds himself on the way to the Origin, art, as the presentation of the pictorial, is an impediment for him. But when he has broken through to the Origin then the making visible of the eidetic is no longer an impediment; it is the appearing of the primary truth itself.[781]

The emphasis here appears to be not in the shift from the abstract to the mimetic and pictorial as Young proposes, but rather from the pictorial to beyond the pictorial. But since, as the earth can only ever be partially revealed, and Heidegger indeed never stipulates being able to permanently reside in earth or the 'Holy Chaos'[782], but rather being engaged in the equipmental quality of equipment, it must be neither dwelling in the picture, nor in the mystery of the earth; but in the condition of being engaged in the pictorial and the possibility of the mystery: not in looking at the tool itself and in its objectification, neither in thinking about using the tool, but in the process of using the tool; of being engaged with the tool un-self-consciously. It is about suspension in the moment of the 'gestalt switch' or the 'flickering between two states'. This is synonymous with Hindu and Zen Buddhist Darśan of seeing through or past the image or icon, as a means of union with the holy.[783]

Herein lies the difficulty with Heidegger's perspective on the 'great artwork'. For Heidegger, "only by bringing ourselves before" the 'great artwork', as with Van Gogh's shoes, for example, we can "discover" the "equipmental quality of equipment" and be

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[779] Young 2001, 156.
[780] Heidegger 1989, 214
[781] *Ibid.*, 213.
[782] Heidegger 1977 [1936-1968], 49; Young 2001, 102.
[783] See for example: Buchli 2010, 191-193; Eck 1998; Frank 2000, 123-133; 161.

"suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be". But only (apparently) as long as we have Heidegger, the philosopher, to make a poetic invocation of an imagined farmer woman in order to draw us in and towards something closer to the 'flickering between two states' of appearance. In both the van Gogh and Temple passages of TOWA - as Young observes - Heidegger slips into a pseudo-poetic language in order to evoke something beyond what description can offer. Heidegger's later adoption of the poetic form and structure as a primary mode of effective expression is clearly already in its embryonic stages in TOWA, although he had not yet abandoned the role of the philosopher to explicate and make intelligible the poet's (artist's) oeuvre. But to achieve this task - Heidegger quite clearly made an interpretation of his own; making something of the image that it almost certainly is not.

APPENDIX V: DEATH-AWARENESS (BUT WHAT ABOUT LIFE-AWARENESS?)

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In 1902 William James published his seminal work The Varieties of Religious Experience in which he reflects upon the "worm at the core" of all humans, which "...turns us into melancholy metaphysicians."[784] That is, "...the great spectre of universal death, the all-encompassing blackness..."[785] He goes on:

> Old age has the last word: the purely naturalistic look at life, however enthusiastically it may begin, is sure to end in sadness.
> This sadness lies at the heart of every merely positivistic, agnostic, or naturalistic scheme of philosophy. Let sanguine healthy-mindedness do its best with its strange power of living in the moment and ignoring and forgetting, still the evil background is really there to be thought of, and the skull will grin in at the banquet.[786]

James' point was that consciousness of death drives human belief systems. His ideas were later echoed in the work of anthropologist Ernest Becker's human integrative motivational analysis, especially in _The Denial of Death_[787] which inspired publications since 1997 led mainly by psychologist's Jamie Arndt, Sheldon Solomon, Jeff Greenberg and Tom Pyszczynski, in which the authors advance a model which they call Terror Management Theory (TMT). This work culminates in Solomon et al's 2015 book which borrowed James' "worm at the core" analogy for the title of the book;[788] and which has

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[784] James 1982 [1902], 140.
[785] _Ibid._, 139.
[786] _Ibid._, 140-141.
[787] Becker 1971, 1973.
[788] Solomon _et al_ 2015.

been succeeded by a flurry of research and responses papers, including the 2019 edited volume Handbook of Terror Management.[789] Solomon et al point to two unique capacities which arose from development of the human brain: self-awareness; and the capacity to think in terms of past, present and future (although to what extent these are actually cognitively different is a moot point, discussed further in section - -). And while they acknowledge the virtues of self-awareness, they also note that "...because we humans are aware that we exist, we also know that someday we will no longer exist."[790] They go on:

> This awareness of death is the downside of human intellect...it even feels like a cosmic joke. On the one hand, we share the intense desire for continued existence common to all living things; on the other, we are smart enough to recognize the ultimate futility of this fundamental quest. We pay a heavy price for being self-conscious."[791]

Solomon et al's Terror Management Theory, describe the ways in which humans manage all the problems which death-awareness presents. Their theory has two fundamental tenets: that humans need to (a) perpetuate faith in a cultural worldview "...which imbues our sense of reality with order, meaning, and permanence"; and (b) develop a sense of purpose and significance, or self-esteem.[792]

The importance of awareness of death for understanding the ways humans define, conduct and express themselves has already been broadly acknowledged within philosophy, religious studies and material culture studies. As Nirad Chaudhuri in his book on Hinduism in 1979 writes, for example: "...death is the pivot around which religious thinking invariably revolves".[793] For archaeologist Michael Parker-Pearson, 'death-awareness' can...

> ...potentially provide us with a phenomenological perspective on the changing human condition since the earliest hominids. We can attempt to follow the working through various ideas about mortality and the transcendence of death, rather than just abstracted notions of ecological adaptation, the evolution of social complexity, or the rise of civilisation. To piece together this alternative side to the human story we are heavily reliant on the archaeological understanding of funerary-related material culture – the graves, monuments and material associations which link the treatment of the dead to other aspects of social life.[794]

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[789] Routledge & Vess, 2019.
[790] Solomon *et al* 2015, 6.
[791] *Ibid.,* 7
[792] *Ibid.,* 9
[793] Chaudhuri 1997 [1979], 152.
[794] Parker-Pearson 2001, 145.

For archaeologist Timothy Insoll, referencing Chaudhuri's statement cited above, however, such sentiments cannot be "...the be all and end all of religious belief, doctrine and philosophy."[795] He furthermore critiques Parker-Pearson's stance as one governed by the bias (to some extent) of mortuary and funerary archaeology within the archaeological discipline for accessing religious life. Parker-Pearson's view that spiritual beliefs are historically contingent on social and material conditions driven to some extent by death-awareness[796] results, for Insoll in "...the creation of a metanarrative..." in which "...religion, death and society march hand in hand, but equally a narrative which is presented as devoid of spirituality, or mystery, elements which do (and have), undeniably, underpin many people's comprehension of death."[797]

There are two issues arising here. One pertains to the position which Insoll refers to as "...influenced by a hint of Marxism perhaps"; and the other concerns those phenomena which Insoll describes as "spirituality" and "mystery". If these perceptions are indeed not driven by or derived from just death-awareness, then from where do the senses of "spirituality" and "mystery" spring in the first place? Solomon et al already acknowledge that the terror of death-awareness is predicated on certain conditions which they identify as arising from the development of the human brain: the human capacities of self-awareness; and to think in terms of past, present and future. If we are to understand self-awareness as the awareness of being or the fact of being in-itself, this seems to suggest that there is something about the nature of being self-aware or aware of being which in-itself preconditions such responses to death, and/or which induces senses of "spirituality" and "mystery". From the point view of Dilthey these questions should be addressed at the level of the nature of the being of human life - "metaphysical consciousness"; and for Plessner this pertains to the nature of human "excentric positionality". Taking a Philosophical Anthropological approach, therefore, requires that we first consider what the manifest nature of human being looks like, which might suggest that what looks like the terror of human mortality derived from death awareness, in fact arises from another pre-condition. Critics of Terror Management Theory certainly suggest that it is not necessarily an entirely sustainable model.[798] However, these studies still dwell - based mainly on empirical research - at the "worldview" level of experience,

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[795] Insoll 2004, 67.
[796] Parker-Pearson 2001, 217.
[797] Insoll, 2004, 70.
[798] Heflick *et al* 2015; Hart 2019.

rather than at the level of being; although some do intimate at there being a more profound anxiety, which TMT does not account for.

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Books, articles, films

NOTE ON REFERENCING THE TEXTS OF MARTIN HEIDEGGER

To remain consistent with the citation method used here, abbreviations are not adopted for the works of Martin Heidegger, as with many philosophical texts. However, given the volume and complexity of the order of publications and the various translations, the following convention is adopted here for clarity:

- The first year cited provides the publication date of the edition cited (whether in the original language or translated).
- The second year cited (where applicable) in square brackets denotes the year of original publication. Where the edition cited is the original publication, there will be no year in square brackets.
- The third year/s cited (where applicable) in parenthesis or "curly brackets" denotes the year in which the text was first written.

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