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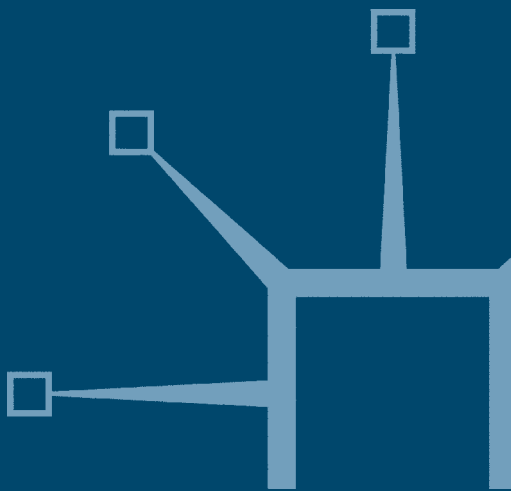
# Process, Reality, and the Power of Symbols

## Thinking with A.N. Whitehead

Murray Code



Process, Reality, and the Power of Symbols

*Also by Murray Code*

ORDER & ORGANISM: Steps to a Whiteheadian Philosophy of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences

MYTHS OF REASON: Vagueness, Rationality, and the Lure of Logic

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To my grandchildren … and the yet unborn.

‘I am not yet born, O hear me.
. . . . . .
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me
with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me,
on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.’

Louis MacNeice, ‘Prayer before Birth’

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# Contents

# Acknowledgments

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It seems gratuitous to try to name all the persons who have in one way or another influenced the writing of a book that illustrates one of its conclusions, that a work in philosophy is like a *collage* in painting. Suffice it to say that a great many writers, speakers, and friends have contributed insights and ideas whose provenance in many cases has long since vanished from my conscious memory. I must, however, make an exception in the case of the following: Arran Gare, with whom I have over many years carried on a voluminous correspondence about topics related to Whiteheadian process philosophy, its aims, and its peculiar problems; Hans Kummer, with whom I have engaged in an ongoing discussion about the problematic relationship between science, mathematics, and philosophy, and who first introduced me to the work of Wolfgang Pauli; Richard Schmitt, who drew my attention to the relevance of Hannah Arendt's writings to my central concerns in Chapter 8; Lena Meurling, whose artistically developed metaphysical imagination helped me to overcome many sticky doubts; and, last but far from least, Lorraine Code, my wife and colleague, who has provided invaluable editorial and critical advice as well as unwavering moral support. This book is therefore also dedicated to her.

# 1
# Science and the Appropriation of Reality

> 'As science grew, minds shrank in width of comprehension.'[1]

## 1. Good sense and bad sense

It has been reported that the Hurons of Upper Canada greeted the intrusion of Jesuit missionaries, who were bent on inducting them into the one true faith, with the charge that they had 'no sense.' At about the same time Descartes was preparing the ground for a conception of good sense based on another kind of faith – in the unlimited powers of systematic, and especially mathematical, methods of reasoning. The irony is that when he famously observed that Good sense or Reason 'is by nature equal in all men,' he may have been unwittingly preparing the ground for the hegemony of a virulent bad sense that is fast becoming 'of all things in the world the most equally distributed.'[2]

I am not suggesting that Descartes is the sole source of modern bad sense. Indeed, he surely comes close to wisdom when he observes that it is not enough to be 'possessed of good mental powers; the principal matter is to apply them well.' The trouble is, he appears to have helped infect this culture with a distorted conception of what it means to be reasonable. His unwarranted faith in mathematical methods appears to have led us, in an astonishingly short time, to a global destruction of numerous delicate equilibriums that have taken eons to evolve. This fact alone is perhaps reason enough to wonder whether the 'enlightened' culture of the West (and North) is perpetuating an essentially irrational reason.

I began to explore this anomaly in my *Myths of Reason*, which grew out of a gradual realization that many self-styled, 'hard-headed' thinkers

were remarkably oblivious not only to the poverty of their conception of experience but also to the extreme vagueness of their fundamental concepts.[3] My disquiet was further heightened by the writings of scientists, philosophers of science, and science journalists who appeared to accept some highly dubious assumptions about the nature of life and thought as perfectly normal. I began to suspect that 'mainstream' approaches to the problem of the meaning and scope of science were informed by an almost invisible set of bad myths that together constitute what deserves to be called a Grand Myth of Scientific Superrationality – the idea that science exemplifies the epitome of rational thought.[4]

This powerful myth appears to be the principal support for an inherently violent and imperialistic reason.[5] It would therefore be well for me to try to spell out what I mean by imperialism. Following Edward Said, I understand this to refer to 'a political philosophy whose aim and purpose for being is territorial expansion and legitimation.'[6] But he goes further and notes that the term refers not merely to a violent conquest of foreign territory; it also alludes to attempts to subjugate the belief systems of others.[7] No modern mode of thought seems more efficient in this respect than science, whose usurpation of the vital function of meaning-making tends to be legitimated by contemporary natural philosophers who style themselves as naturalists even as they turn their backs on nature and anchor their philosophical investigations in scientific theories.

A culture that is in thrall to a burgeoning technoscience recalls, in other words, the Eurocentric imperialism of the nineteenth century that, as Said puts it, granted itself the right to intervene wherever and however it chose. Acting under the assumption that they were representatives of a superior culture, its agents set out with the conviction that 'laying claim to an idea and laying claim to a territory – given the extraordinarily current idea that the non-European world was there to be claimed, occupied, and ruled by Europe – were … different sides of the same, essentially constitutive activity, which had the force, the prestige, and the authority of *science*.'[8] It is therefore 'a serious underestimation of imperialism,' says Said, to overlook the fact that a 'hegemonic imperial design' also presumes a right 'to treat reality appropriatively.'

The importance of this observation is borne out by non-Western critics of the scientistic ideology who maintain that a sanitized violence has been institutionalized on a worldwide scale in the name of scientific values (e.g., efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and economy of effort).[9] But one does not have to stray far from 'home' to see that modern science not only suppresses feelings and emotions but also tends to justify this violence in the name of common sense. Yet common sense surely refers at bottom to emotional, warm-bodied, sentient creatures who believe

that experiencing has a central core that must be made pivotal when trying to make sense of their everyday lives.

It may therefore be useful to look more closely at the way in which rationality is theorized by 'hard-headed' modern philosophers. Robert Nozick, for instance, defines rational thought in terms of a uniquely human capacity for reason which accords its bearers a special status in the universe.[10] But while it is undeniable that human agents have been endowed by nature with extraordinary mental powers that have enabled them to command a privileged position in this minute corner of the universe, it does not follow that the best way to understand human rationality is to become familiar with the details of currently dominant scientific theories. Yet such is Nozick's approach to rationality, which, as he himself describes it, is 'awash in technical details' (e.g., of decision theory, game theory, probability theory, and theories of statistical inference). Although he acknowledges that such a science-centered treatment of rationality renders debates about it inaccessible to large portions of even a well-educated population, he nonetheless maintains that there is no alternative. For the peculiar scientific climate of the present era sets it radically apart from previous eras in which such discussions were accessible to any intelligent person willing to make the effort.

Rightly noting that the problem of rationality touches upon questions of fundamental human concern, Nozick acknowledges that the search for a sound theory of rationality is necessary for the sake of 'the intellectual health of our society.' Such a theory must not evade the question of its own rationality. But he quickly defuses this potentially embarrassing observation with the assertion that 'many of the very terms and concepts of evaluation and understanding that *we* wish to use have themselves become technical' (xvi). Indeed, the emphasized word points to the heart of the matter, for it is the wisdom of *our* beliefs as to what reason can or ought to try to *do* that is surely the core of the problematic of rationality, assuming that a rational explanation is one capable of 'getting something right' about the world as we find it.

## 2. Some examples of an imperialistic bad sense

To presuppose that the scientific approach to rationality is superior to all others is, in short, to stir up a host of difficult questions relating to the meaning of good reasoning.[11] It is thus not incidental that a good deal of the discussion of the mental processes that underpin reason presupposes that it is reasonable to speak of mental phenomena in terms of the various kinds and quantity of 'hard-wirings' in the brain.[12] What else but a very powerful myth could explain the willingness of

imaginative, feeling, and ethically concerned organisms to believe that sentience can be illuminated in any significant way by this sort of explanation? That here we have evidence of a powerful myth at work, one that is capable of doing untold damage to the spiritual life of this culture, is not too hard to believe.[13] There is also plenty of evidence that the Grand Myth is behind the systematic destruction of other cultures in the name of 'objective truth.'[14] But perhaps the most troubling effect of this myth is the license it gives to the burgeoning field of biotechnology that is even now appropriating the reality of future forms of life. All over the world experiments are being conducted in which genes from one species of an organism are forcefully inserted into strands of DNA of a foreign species. Despite claims that these laboratory procedures are continuous with traditional cross-breeding practices (usually presented as self-evidently benign), it is hardly obvious that introducing unpredictable and irreversible changes into hereditary processes is a responsible practice – especially when it is viewed from the perspective of future ecologies which are totally at the mercy of current standards of good sense.[15]

It is moreover not incidental that this outstanding example of scientific 'progress' has led to a close and lucrative alliance between scientific research and a rapacious form of capitalism whose watchword is 'growth' – of secular power and material wealth.[16] When gene sequences and indeed whole organisms are transformed into a new kind of property, all nonhuman forms (but why not human forms too?) of life are in the process of being turned into commodities on the dubious metaphysical grounds that they consist only of various configurations of 'dead' or 'inert' matter.[17]

If the interventionist methods of biotechnology do not bear witness to an imperialistic reason bent upon appropriating everyone's reality, now and forever, they at least signal a systemic failure of collective imagination. For this steadily expanding field of scientific investigation is not founded on a sound, or even a steadily improving, understanding of life. On the contrary, the very quickness of Life can be counted among the many victims of an essentially irrational reason, a point I will come back to in many places in this book.

## 3. Science, culture, and myth

Briefly, then, the culture of the West bespeaks a violent, imperialistic, and perhaps ultimately self-destructive civilization that is more on the side of Death than of Life. Even many of the most prestigious educational institutions, which are ostensibly engaged in preserving and augmenting

the best of 'enlightened' thought, have endorsed, almost overnight, the mind-numbing language of the 'free market.' The celebrated freedom of Western thought has been sacrificed to a two-tiered approach to educational values that favors the interests of scientific over nonscientific academics (whose contributions cannot be assessed in terms of profitability, efficiency, productivity, cost-effectiveness, consumer satisfaction, and so on).[18]

Our intellectual leaders provide, in short, one of the more compelling reasons for suspecting that the culture of the West, as Michel Serres puts it, 'abhors the world.'[19] Indicating that our intellectual leaders are the principal culprits, Serres accuses science of leading us all toward an abyss. He notes that nature, once regarded as victorious, has been turned by science into a victim. Indeed, the entire culture has been made hostage to the whims of a triumvirate of powers that has no effective counter-power. Consisting of scientists, journalists, and administrators, and directed by 'men of the short-term,' this triumvirate has already systematically eradicated 'long-term memory, the thousand-year-old traditions, the experience accumulated by cultures that have just died or that these powers are killing.'[20] Led by clever men of 'highly focused specialization,' who think and act as though human beings were the center of the system of nature, it seems that life has been reduced to a Great Game of King of the Castle, for the desire to win at all costs in the struggle for control over nature has resulted in nature and its voiceless creatures being reduced to a 'local, vague, and cosmetic' idea (*Natural Contract*, 3). Such men seldom pause to reflect on the fact that an organism that pursues its own interests exclusively (taking everything and giving nothing back) is nothing but a parasite.

The devastation wrought by the unchecked spread of industrialization includes not only the destruction of environmental equilibriums, not to mention the legions of individual victims (such as those evoked by the names of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Auschwitz and Dresden), but also worldwide socioeconomic equilibriums.[21] Serres thus depicts a culture at war with the 'objective world,' a war characterized by an 'objective violence' that differs significantly from the 'subjective violence' that characterizes traditional wars. In the latter case, the hostilities are usually conducted in accordance with protocols that mark their beginnings and formalize their ends. Such is not the case with the war against nature, in which something entirely new has emerged: no bounds have been placed on the extent and scope of the violence.

One may thus wonder what, if anything, can be done to stop such a 'war' which, in Serres's view, is one of pure violence. But perhaps he

is simply asking too much from *homo sapiens*. It could be that an inherently violent modern reason marks only another stage in the sad history of an especially voracious and dangerous parasite – one which S. T. Coleridge, in one of his blacker moods, renamed *morbus pedicularis*.[22]

On the other hand, it is not as though this multitalented creature is completely incapable of good sense; for if the meaning of civilization is bound up with good sense (as Whitehead suggests in the Preface to *Modes of Thought*) it is not irrelevant that the West, like every other civilization before it, can boast of some remarkable achievements. It is just that some of the most celebrated of them are perhaps inimical to the values that enhance Life. It appears that the civilization of the West has allowed itself to be traduced by a nihilistic attitude of mind that betrays a deep-seated streak of irrationality that accounts in good part for its 'destructive orientation to the world,' as Arran Gare puts it. More specifically, he traces the 'triumph of nihilism,' which is the result of the post-Cartesian embrace of the metaphysics of mechanistic materialism, from a form of Platonism that encouraged an obsessive desire for absolutes. This has resulted in a denial of change, becoming, and complexity.[23] Such a desire may go a long way toward explaining the fear and hatred that Serres discerns behind the hegemonic ambitions of this technoscientific culture.

In any case, a pervasive nihilism bespeaks something deeper and darker than mere parasitical greed; it calls for a closer, psychologically oriented investigation. Indeed, when Serres likens our present situation to an ocean liner heading full speed toward a rocky bar, he is in effect alluding to the great difficulties involved in changing mental course, for nothing less than a complete overhaul of dominant modes of thought appears to be needed. It will never be enough, in other words, to make piecemeal 'local' corrections in theories or practices that evidence highly ambivalent feelings about nature and its creatures.

Hence one of the merits of Serres's response to the problem of a culture that hates the world lies in his recommendation that we should deal directly with nature. That is, he envisions a 'natural contract' modeled on the legendary social contract; a type of agreement that would grant to Nature something like legal rights. However, such a contract would require a radical rethinking of the idea and ideals of reason.[24] But to do this one may need to fashion at once a more pacific reason which would be capable of, among other things, neutralizing all the material desires that technoscience continues to stimulate and temporarily satisfy.

While there is no denying that science has contributed to the relief of numerous ills that plague and shorten the lives of human beings, it is

beginning to be admitted that some good things come at too high a cost. In Serres's view, the greatest cost is seldom noted, however, for in addition to a growing environmental pollution this culture is also responsible for a 'cultural pollution' of 'long-term thoughts' (The *Natural Contract*, 31). This 'double' pollution is especially insidious inasmuch as it covers over the pressing need to confront the difficult and complex philosophical problem of the relation between the real and the rational.

Serres thus leads us back to what I am suggesting is the core of the challenge facing the dissenter from modern rationality: what to do about the powerful Grand Myth? For this myth even denies the relevance of myth in the stories we tell about how things are in this world. Yet if meaning-making is bound up with myth-making, as witnessed by the power of the Grand Myth, Serres puts his finger on what may be the core of the irrationality promoted by the modern conceptions of rationality when he remarks that 'there is no pure myth except the idea of a science that is pure of all myth.'[25]

Pending further exploration of this convoluted situation, some insight into the way the Grand Myth works has emerged from the work of students of science, such as Bruno Latour. Approaching this culture from the 'outside,' in the manner of an anthropologist interested in the peculiar beliefs and customs of an alien people, Latour is particularly struck by the self-congratulatory praise for the 'largeness' or openness of mind that is supposedly characteristic of Western thought. However, when he follows scientists and engineers into their laboratories, he discovers that they are actually pursuing ideas and practices which prompt questions about their motives. For instead of being engaged in a mission of purification, they are really working to fill the world with impure 'hybrids' (or mixtures) of nature, culture, and narrative.[26] Furthermore, their claims to be producing pure or 'objective' knowledge are protected from serious criticism by a hidden 'modern Constitution' that 'allows what it disallows.'[27] Supported by the belief that nature and culture can be totally separated, a belief that according to Latour is characteristic of 'the moderns,' this Constitution ensures that 'the scientific power of representing things' can be isolated from 'the political power charged with representing subjects.'

If Latour is here bringing to light the principal means by which the moderns have gained control over the symbolic order, he is at the same time depicting a self-satisfied culture whose principal myth also works to cover over the moral/ethical implications of the relentless proliferation of 'hybrids.' Indeed, the hidden Constitution conceals, even from technoscience's supposedly self-critical investigators, the hypocritical

nature of a reason that feels free to shuttle back and forth across 'the divide that separates exact knowledge from the exercise of power' (*WNM*, 3). For the moderns deploy ostensibly pure forms drawn from one of two preexistent and separate realms to serve as 'mediators' between nature and culture even as these 'mediators' determine what is or is not respectable in knowledge-making.[28]

Thus Latour underscores the need to question not only the good sense of the moderns but also their good will. At the same time he raises a profoundly difficult question: whether the first task of the natural philosopher is to learn how to become truly modern or, perhaps better, nonmodern; for neither postmodernism nor antimodernism in his view are up to the task of countering the duplicity of the moderns. This is because 'postmodernism is a symptom, not a fresh solution' – since it 'lives under the modern Constitution, but it no longer believes in the guarantees the Constitution offers.' Antimodernism merely repeats the error, since it 'struggles fiercely against the effects of the Constitution, but accepts it fully.' Thus a radically new approach is needed, one that might be called nonmodern (or truly modern) since a way must be found to take 'simultaneously into account the moderns' Constitution and the population of hybrids that the Constitution rejects and allows to proliferate' (*WNM*, 46–47).

That is to say, in sum, the natural philosopher who wishes to do justice at once to nature and to culture must try to frame a type of naturalism that can merge nature, culture, and discourse into a seamless story about the world. The immensity of this task is hard to over-estimate, especially if it requires taking into account the intentions as well as the assumptions of the champions of modern reason.

## 4. Some matters that need looking into

It seems no accident that the 'free-floating and disconnected networks' of proliferating 'hybrids' are well suited to an imperialistic reason that seeks hegemony in a global arena.[29] But to obtain a clear view of the sort of mentality which underpins this project, it is first necessary to liberate reason from its kidnapping by science, or the philosophy of science. For the latter discipline, as Serres notes, emerged with the birth of epistemology – at the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment when the idea of knowledge became closely tied to the belief that 'rationality exists only in the sciences, nowhere else.'[30]

Seeking to know 'why the main current of modern thought is what it is,' the historian E. A. Burtt traces the dominant conception of rational

thought to the early moderns, who laid the ground for the widespread embrace of mathematical methods as the key to good reasoning.[31] Noting that this belief involves some very general presuppositions that are not entirely metaphysical, Burtt raises the question of what might be the source of the acritical 'mathematized' naturalism that acquired currency through the genius of men like Newton; for 'what Newton did not distinguish, others were not apt carefully to analyse' (Burtt, 35). Could it be that the early modern naturalists were merely indulging in wishful thinking, or were they indulging in a secret taste for a formal kind of mysticism? For even some of their most sophisticated successors evidence a deep reluctance to abandon the Newtonian or 'classical' mode of interpreting the deliverances of science, a mode in which useful mathematical methods tend to become transformed into what Burtt calls a normative metaphysics.[32]

Consider the popularity of those expositors of the cosmological theory that claims in effect that everything can be traced (with much help from some esoteric mathematics) to a Big Bang. Without wishing to deny the ingenuity of their contributions to the advance of scientific theory, it is worth noting that they pass very quickly over the possibility that science (as it is currently understood) is simply not equipped to address cosmic questions which bear on the meaning and origins of Life and Thought. Indeed, it is far from easy to see why anyone would *want* to believe that the feelings of warm-blooded and creative theoreticians (who surely *desire* to understand the universe) are derivable from a theory based on highly abstruse mathematical abstractions.

The very idea of a deduction of desire bespeaks, in short, a mentality mired in pure fancy.[33] It is thus more than a little ironic that science is frequently advertised as providing the best and strongest bulwark against the ever-threatening tides of superstition.[34] But, as Burtt indicates, such claims reveal that it is not enough to examine only the vagaries of history when trying to account for the anomalies of modern reason. Indeed, when he notes that a culture is a mixture of intellectual and ethicosocial beliefs, he hints that a historical-metaphysical investigation of the undercurrents of modern thought needs to be supplemented by a psychosocial inquiry into the provenance of certain myths of reason. For the moderns often appear to think that Nature ought to tailor itself to suit Science, and not the other way round.[35]

This sort of inversion seems particularly evident in neo-Darwinian interpretations of evolution which anathematize alternative approaches as 'unscientific.' Yet it is not clear whether a Darwinian approach to the problem of the meaning and origin of life is even reasonable. It is rarely

noticed that references to the 'problem of life' do not allude to a manifestly scientific puzzle; indeed it is possible that this problem is mainly a metaphysical one. It is in any case not of the order, say, of a mathematical puzzle that can be expressed by a well-formed formula that admits of a unique and definitive solution.

But this is only one of the anomalies of modern reason that proponents of the neo-Darwinian interpretation of evolution inadvertently expose while urging its capacity for giving a full explanation of Life. Why, it might be asked, would warm-blooded, sentient human beings endorse a theory that effectively robs them of their own 'quicknesses'? When it is solemnly proposed that human organisms with their great range of sensibilities can be reasonably described as 'survival machines,' it is surely time to wonder about what sort of grip the proponents of this view have on reality.[36]

I am not questioning here the claim to virtual certainty of evolution or the ability of the principle of natural selection to account for many aspects of the evolution of species. My reservations concern the good sense of those thinkers who silently import Darwinian principles into the heart of what is at least partly an ontological matter. For the most passionate proponents of this modern orthodoxy maintain that only two fundamental principles – chance and natural selection – are needed to account for the fact of life. Indeed, the very simplicity of the neo-Darwinian story is held to be one of its chief virtues.[37]

That the contingencies of Life are hostages to Chance and Accident and that the naturing of Nature (to adopt Coleridge's phrase) includes ruthless weeding-out processes, is undoubtedly the case. It is far from obvious, however, that these two simple principles can account for a complex world in which the creativity of theory-making is illustrated by the Darwinian theory itself.

Without a doubt, this suggestion, which evokes an inherently creative Nature, puts paid to the Cartesian dream of finding simple and complete solutions to a problem whose complexity is partly evident in the tendency to deploy confused and confusing metaphors. Avid proponents of neo-Darwinian theory speak, for instance, of 'a mechanism for change' that is launched into operation by 'the struggle for existence.' Confidently described as scientifically warranted, this mixing of metaphors merely reminds us of the overweening importance of finding a suitable language for describing the emergence of new forms of organization from extant forms.

A possible explanation for common sense being so willing to let itself be guided (or better, beguiled) by sophisticated experts (many of whom

happen to be Nobel laureates) may be a fear of being called stupid. This fear is exacerbated by a good many science writers who dispense a kind of scientistic propaganda.[38] Consider, for example, the accomplished writings of Stephen Jay Gould, who argues convincingly that the tendency to conflate evolution with a progressive 'upward' movement is baseless. There is no real justification for believing that the most highly evolved animal can claim a natural superiority that warrants an arrogant attitude toward other species.[39] But although Gould advertises his approach as 'hard-headed,' he uncritically endorses the orthodox (mechanistic) conception of matter. Arguing that the three main kingdoms (animals, plants, and fungi) have evolved in accordance with the two basic Darwinian principles, he appeals to a rigorous statistical argument to account for their provenance. Life, he maintains, begins at the 'left wall' of a bell curve that marks the chance emergence into the world of bacteria from a 'primeval chemical soup.' That is to say, there is a fundamental level of 'quickness' in Nature 'below' which there is only inert or dead 'stuff.' He thus reiterates the modernist credo that life can be fully explained in terms of the laws of mathematics, probability, statistics, physics, chemistry, and so on – under whose aegis living bacteria somehow came into being.[40]

It may well be true that bacteria constitute the bulk of the biomass of this planet, as Gould maintains, but this fact alone says nothing about *how* life emerged. Gould actually underscores the primacy of the puzzle of emergence when he acknowledges that evolution generally implies an increase in variation and complexity of organization, although an 'upward increase' does not necessarily imply a single path leading to a triumphant *homo sapiens*. It may also refer to an unlimited number of paths capable of splitting at any time into numerous branches terminating in multitudes of 'twigs,' some of which (as Gould points out) evidence a decrease in complexity. Yet none of these observations precludes the possibility that emergence generally bespeaks a nature suffused with creative forces or powers.

Gould illustrates, in short, an endemic tendency in modern thought to beg the most important questions when it comes to Life and Thought. Indeed, when he tries to account for the emergence of vital properties in terms of the properties of inorganic substances that are totally lacking in quickness he attests to a quasi-religious faith, for what else but such a faith could account for the mechanistic credo that the quick, *mirabile dictu*, once upon a time arose from the dead? It does not in fact seem any harder to believe that the world was created in six days than that it once upon a time blossomed miraculously out of nonlife.

## 5. Science and ideology

An aura of religious fundamentalism thus envelops current debates about evolution. It is as though the meaning of evolution can be decided in a battle involving only two contestants: Darwinism and Creationism. Thus in regard to the ideological underpinnings of modern biology, it is highly significant that Richard Lewontin notes that science has usurped the cultural function that was once the monopoly of religion; for science is now the principal institution of social legitimation.[41] Indeed, it is surely the sign of a stubborn kind of fundamentalism when the great range of possible answers to profound cosmic questions is denied even before the questions are properly asked.

However, an inherently creative Nature appears to be unthinkable for most scientific investigators and writers. Some of the more important questions that scientistic fundamentalists are inclined to beg involve recent discoveries in molecular biology. Arguing that the gene is the latest in a long string of idols that stretches back to the birth of the 'new science' in the seventeenth century, Donna Haraway charges the proponents of an exclusively physicochemical interpretation of gene and genome with propagating 'gene fetishism.'[42] For this 'master molecule' is the latest device 'man' has invented to further his ambitions to become a god-like 'master' of nature.

But the gene is as much culture-producing as a cultural product. Thus confirming the need to add a sociopolitical dimension to the already complicated metaphysical problem, Haraway raises an urgent question: what sorts of cultural forces could endow a mere molecule with the power to act as a natural, cultural, and political agent? For sequences of DNA encode only information relating to the development of potentialities for certain physical and/or mental traits that may or may not be expressed in the mature organism. And as for the peculiar characteristics of the developed organism, its form of life needs to be viewed in the first instance as the outcome of a complex interweaving of both internal and external influences.

Haraway and Lewontin thus point toward the centrality of an essentially socio-metaphysical question that concerns the fact that the burgeoning field of biotechnology is as likely to produce a proliferation of monsters as a cornucopia of benefits. Indeed, Haraway asks what may be *the* crucial question that every would-be nonmodern (or truly modern) naturalist needs to keep foremost in mind: '[w]hat counts as nature, for whom, and at what cost?'[43] And Lewontin indicates that one of the costs of refusing to seek a conception of nature that can do proper justice to

both the internal and external influences on a developing organism is a sinister ideology.[44] For he notes that sociobiologists assume, on no other basis than the authority of science, that racial and gendered differences in intellectual ability (not to mention homosexuality and even religiosity) can be explained in terms of the constitution of gene sequences – a view that may have long-term political repercussions since it is continuous with the eugenics of yesteryear (*Doctrine of DNA*, 72).

But this is not to suggest that no light whatsoever has been thrown on living processes by the discovery of DNA. This molecule does indeed play an important role in the drama of life, albeit one that pertains chiefly to the factor of heredity in reproduction, as Evelyn Fox Keller observes.[45] She may be too hasty, however, in claiming that although it is lifeless, the alleged molecular 'secret of life' poses no direct threat to life itself. She herself notes that the molecular theory has led to the disappearance of living organisms from the most up-to-date biology textbooks, which is surely a kind of indirect attack on life. That the theory it also a threat to future life is indicated by her comparison of the situation in biology with that in physics. For biologists exhibit a complacency similar to that of specialists in nuclear weaponry who strive to keep the deadly implications of the nuclear 'umbrella' that we now all live under a secret. They avoid speaking of the danger of a massive annihilation, using instead the 'concealing language of technostrategic analysis' – thereby betraying a collective mind-set that 'bespeaks a kind of ultimate psychosis' (55).

Thus alluding to a deranged collective mentality, Keller perhaps contradicts her own claim that the gene itself is 'in no sense an agent of death,' for she also notes that it has led to 'a world that has been effectively devivified.' Her point is perhaps confirmed by the publicity given to the completion of the Human Genome project. Praised effusively by both prominent scientists and politicians, this technical achievement is even advertised as promising a final solution to the problem of Life. But what it may best illustrate is the great influence enjoyed by what Serres calls 'the three powers' (scientists, administrators, and journalists), which are bent on forcing Life and Thought, regardless of the cost, to conform to technoscience's special interests.

## 6. What can we hope?

If reality, which is notoriously difficult to define, can be so efficiently appropriated by a powerful 'institution of legitimation' with the help of a Grand Myth, then Kant's famous three questions – what can I know? what must I do? what may I hope ? – acquire a special poignancy in

these critical times. The irony is that Kant perhaps ought to bear a good deal of responsibility for the great powers now enjoyed by the Grand Myth, powers that appear to be undermining the health of the entire planet.

As for what a mere philosopher might do to help counter these powers, it is not clear whether hope is even reasonable. At issue is what philosophy is and what it can hope to achieve. Latour indicates that it would be an egregious error to attempt to treat the first of Kant's three questions independently of the second, for the depredations wrought by the scientistic appropriation of reality reveal that reason has moral and ethical as well as intellectual responsibilities. Furthermore, while there is no doubt that modern science has produced much useful knowledge that we should not abandon lightly, the significance of most of this knowledge for a healthier collective mentality is perhaps strictly limited. That is, it may chiefly pertain to the fine structuring of material things while telling us little of what we need to know in order to reinvest (in the words of Serres) the word 'nature' with its original meaning: 'our natal and native conditions, the conditions in which we are born – or ought to be reborn tomorrow' (*The Natural Contract*, 44).

The sad truth is that the moderns have created circumstances that, as Latour puts it, are 'indeed terrifying: a nature and a technology that are absolutely sleek; a society made up solely of false consciousness, simulacra and illusions; a discourse consisting only of meaning effects detached from everything' (*WNM*, 64–65). But it is not as though the ingenious inventions of technoscience (such as the life-defining map of the human genome, or clever electronic devices that enormously expand the possibilities for controlling distant events) are intrinsically evil. There seems little sense anyway in accusing a tool-using animal of making instruments that can, in certain hands, extend both the range and reach of diabolical or short-sighted minds. What the nonmodern naturalist most needs is a reason that can rescue the idea of rational thought from Cartesian or Kantian prejudices. The difficulties are legion, for as Latour notes, the hall-mark of 'the critical explanation' in Kant's 'great narrative' is that it 'always began from the poles and headed toward the middle' (78). The nonmodern rationalist must on the contrary begin to think in the middle and move outward toward the poles.

The trouble is that there is no way to determine where the middle lies or in what direction(s) it might be reasonable to move. Thus the difficulties that need to be faced in becoming truly modern seem endless, for as Latour also points out, 'we know very little about what causes sciences, technologies, organizations and economics' (*WNM*, 116). Indeed, we

know very little about what causes a culture, or better a nature–culture, if it is the case that we should not forget that 'the very notion of culture is an artifact created by bracketing Nature off' (*WNM*, 104).

It is just here that one meets an even higher hurdle, for 'the West thinks it is the sole possessor of the clever trick that will allow it to keep on winning indefinitely,' says Latour, 'whereas it has perhaps lost everything' (*WNM*, 9). It seems to follow that the nonmodern natural philosopher is obliged to begin all over again with a naive attitude not unlike that of a small child who persistently asks embarrassing questions, such as

> What sort of world is it that obliges us to take into account, at the same time and in the same breath, the nature of things, technologies, sciences, fictional beings, religions large and small, politics, jurisdictions, economies and unconsciousnesses?
>
> (*WNM*, 129)

Herewith conjuring up a swarm of interlocked moral/ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual puzzles, Latour indicates that the first question the nonmodern philosopher needs to ask is what sort of reason might be able to *do justice* all at once to nature, culture, and discourse: the 'three great resources of the modern critique' (*WNM*, 64). This overarching call for justice requires that myth and mysticism be given their due. Yet these aspects of thought inspire fear and horror in self-consciously rational reasoners, as Serres points out, for modern reason's irrational fear of mysticism is analogous to that felt by the Church whose dominant role in this culture has been taken over by scientism. Science thus perpetuates an implacable hostility toward the thinking of the premoderns who may have been not far from the truth when they depicted the mysterious business of thinking in terms of 'marriages' of 'external' influences and 'inner' powers.[46]

But to determine whether or not myth, mystery, and mysticism are part and parcel of any truly rational account of the world, the nonmodern naturalist must adopt a more humble attitude toward explanation. Yet humility is not a virtue much prized in the culture of the West. Indeed, 'in Westerners' eyes the West, and the West alone, is not a culture, not merely a culture' (*WNM*, 97). But then it may still be possible to acquire enough humility and wisdom to learn to fashion a nonmodern reason free of neurotic fears and irrational hatreds – of uncertainty, insecurity, and complexity. Perhaps philosophy can still fulfill the promise of its name and teach us how to revitalize our relationships with the rest of the world.[47]

What may be most urgently needed, in short, is a kind of philosophical therapy that can break down all the protective walls that the moderns have erected to protect us 'children of anxiety' from the contingencies and uncertainties of a complex world.[48] But given the great range of difficulties that need to be faced, the nonmodern naturalist is perhaps destined to admit, sooner rather than later, that good reasoning can only be a cultivated art; that it may (as Serres suggests) depend at bottom on the quality of certain guiding myths and enabling metaphors, especially if all rational explanations presuppose a figurative basis as the *sine qua non* for communicating ideas.[49] It may even be necessary to resuscitate the sleeping gods before reason can learn humbler and wiser ways of encountering the world, for it is not as though the moderns managed to banish the gods completely, any more than managing to proceed without myths.[50] But whether or not this is the case, there is little to lose by plunging immediately into the vast and unknown 'Middle Kingdom.'[51] For neither a totally unsentimental nature nor a transcendental supra-rational power appears about to step in to save *homo sapiens* from its manifest lack of sapience.[52]

# 2
# Signs, Symbols, and Metaphysical Imaginaries

> 'A debility and dimness of the imaginative power, and a consequent necessity of reliance on the immediate impressions of the senses, do, we well know, render the mind liable to superstition and fanaticism.'[1]

## 1. Interpreting the 'raw universe'

'We are missing,' says Annie Dillard, 'a whole class of investigators: those who interpret the raw universe in terms of meaning.'[2] By 'the raw universe' she means human experience in all its breadth – 'all things cultural and natural.' Although such a broad definition might at first glance seem useless, since it leaves out nothing, it is nonetheless an excellent place to start an inquiry into meaning in the world. This is partly because the concepts of culture and nature are explanatory markers, as it were; that is, they can be used, says Dillard, to delimit 'the boundaries of interpretation which the West has accepted since the Enlightenment: man makes sense; nature does not' (*LF*, 141). She thus also elicits the problem of what to make of 'reality' – which as Bruno Latour argues, needs to be approached in the first instance as an indissociable nature-culture, or better plurality of such nature-cultures, for if there is one nature-culture there must be many of them.

Now the class of investigators who address the question whether the world has meaning is almost empty, according to Dillard, since it contains very few professional metaphysicians. This is not too surprising, however, since modern philosophers are disinclined to confront nature at all, let alone contemplate such elusive objects as the 'raw universe'; they prefer to look backward to the deliverances of 'exact' science. Among the few interpreters who do face frontward, Dillard

identifies artists as the best interpreters of the 'raw universe,' among whom she singles out lyric poets since they are the least likely to indulge in pure fancy.[3]

Such poets certainly have no compunction about keeping nature always in sight. However, there is an important difference between philosophy and poetry that relates to philosophy's need to privilege very general (but not necessarily universal) concepts or categories whose provenance is just as uncertain as their relevance. Thus philosophy's contribution to understanding the world can be minimal insofar as it renders itself inaccessible to nonspecialists, for a rational explanation that cannot be couched in human terms is a dubious candidate for advancing human understanding. Hence another of Dillard's observations is worth noting: 'it could even be that criticism is on firmer ground than physics – because cultural phenomena occur on an accessible middle ground, and human fabrications fit human understanding' (*LF*, 130). Furthermore, '[c]riticism accumulates an ordered pile of sound work behind it just as physics does' (*LF*, 130). Thus compounding the profound difficulties that modern physics has encountered in describing 'reality,' Dillard reminds us that many art critics who refuse to go along with the postmodern view that 'reality' is a vacuous and outmoded notion are not necessarily in error. They in fact often attest to a silent conviction that the world is meaningful and that it makes sense to speak, for instance, of 'great texts' while eliciting the notion of wisdom. Such critics bear witness, in short, to the possibility that the state of the souls of both critics and philosophers as well as poets may need to be taken into account when judging their pronouncements.

Indeed, Dillard explicitly endorses Octavio Paz's claim that criticism is 'the only modern idea,' while defining criticism as 'a kind of modern focusing of the religious impulse … the faith that something has meaning, and we may apprehend it' (*LF*, 127). Hence it may be instructive to begin by examining Kant's famous contribution to the critical project in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, for he indicates that the soul is involved in the first critical moments of the production of experience. But before doing this, it may be helpful to look more closely at the absence of metaphysical interpreters of the 'raw universe.'

This lack is no doubt partly due to the great influence of positivistic antimetaphysical philosophers of science such as Rudolf Carnap who dismissed metaphysics as 'concept poetry' – which may be in fact just what it is, as Dillard suggests. She indicates anyway that certain artists have a much better grasp of the task of metaphysics than, for instance, postmodern philosophers who proclaim the 'end' of metaphysics.

## 2. Metaphysics without end

For as John Sallis points out, the meaning of 'end' is highly ambiguous.[4] Does it imply that it is utterly futile to try to make sense of the 'raw universe'? Or does it rather mean that the search for a final, complete, and universally applicable system of categories, principles, and laws should be abandoned once and for all? Certainly the regularity with which such searches collapse is an indication that it is time to ring the death knell for metaphysics.

But by the same token 'end' could signify that it's time to stop misconstruing the task of metaphysics. Suggesting that this is indeed the best interpretation of 'end,' Sallis draws particular attention to the peculiar dynamic of the relations between reason and imagination in Western metaphysics. When examined in a historical light, what stands out is a 'massive repression of imagination' (*D*, 13). Traditionally viewed as a high-minded quest for a safe, solid, and secure ground where reason is protected from the vagaries of imagination, Western philosophy actually evidences a covert desire to at once embrace imagination while holding it at arm's length. Beginning with the Platonic texts (where 'imagination both empowers and inhibits the metaphysical drive to presence' [*D*, 7]), Western metaphysics is infused with contradictory impulses that can be discerned in the work of even such careful reasoners as Kant.[5] Indeed, Sallis suggests that Kant is responsible for much of the confusion surrounding metaphysics since his *Critique of Pure Reason* is 'a pivot on which modern thought turns … most decisively' (*D*, 4).

Spelling out his principal aim in the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique*, Kant states that his aim is to rescue metaphysics from being a mere battleground of opinions that stem from 'mere random groping.' He aims to provide nothing less than a 'thoroughly grounded metaphysics' that will contain 'an exhaustive knowledge of its entire field.' To achieve such an end, however, it is essential to follow the 'secure path of a science,' he says; which is to say that the metaphysician should model his/her reasonings on 'the example set by the geometers and physicists.'[6]

But with this initial statement of intent, Kant immediately puts his whole project into question. As Sallis points out, he justifies this move with a rhetoric of development. That is, he speaks of the need to repair and level a ground that has been deformed by the mole-tunnelings of misguided, warring metaphysicians. It is thus not merely ironic that Kant's aim to reform metaphysics once and for all appeals at certain crucial junctures to a privileged imagery – appeals that one might have

thought he would eschew along with all the 'fancied possessions' of the speculative reason that he wants to reform. As an act of 'metaphoring' this imagery of reconstruction cannot simply be discounted as a literary device since it raises a crucial question: 'how can critique explore the ground all the way down to the bedrock except by tunnelling down to it in a way not unlike that very mole-tunneling whose effects critique would expunge?'[7] Thus Sallis exposes Kant's excursion into metaphysics as pointing up a fundamental question: whether, and if so how, science, or any other systematic mode of thought, can help the philosopher resolve the problem of 'reason's route to itself' – a problem that, as Sallis says, forever threatens 'to produce an utter rout of reason' (*SRI*, 71).

Briefly, then, a critique of Kant's *Critique* must begin with a close look at his conception of rationality. But as Sallis points out, this is hardly a simple task since 'the critical reason traced in the *Critique of Pure Reason* … [harbors] a metaphorics … [so that] a reading of that text requires not only a hermeneutics but also a poetics' (*SRI*, 21). Of special interest here, then, is Sallis's description of Kant's acts of metaphoring, for he observes that 'the outbreak of metaphor that occurs near the end of the Transcendental Analytic is without parallel elsewhere in the *Critique of Pure Reason*' (*SRI*, 69). [Indeed,] it is also possible that this 'outbreak' is emblematic of the whole metaphysical enterprise. This is because Kant's idea of a purified reason is closely tied to the image of a sparse and isolated northern island (a 'land of truth') that is surrounded by foggy, deceptive seas in which speculative reason is forever tempted to roam and get itself lost.[8] This image of an unsullied, ascetic domain of pure reason plays a principal role in Kant's vision of a reformed metaphysics, as is partly evident from his assertion that we are 'under compulsion to be satisfied [with what this 'island of truth' contains] inasmuch as there may be no other territory upon which we can settle' (*CPR*, 257: A236/B295). Yet this compulsion owes little, if anything, to reason and a great deal to a prejudgment about the meaning of rationality.

It is thus not incidental that Michèle Le Doeuff pays a good deal of attention to this island imagery of Kant's in her exposure of 'the shameful face of philosophy,' a face which she depicts as half-aware that a supposedly rational exercise is held together at crucial junctures by a privileged imagery.[9] Such moments mark important points of tension in philosophical texts, she says, since the images 'sustain something which the system cannot itself justify, but which is nevertheless needed for its proper working.'[10] Le Doeuff thus prompts one to wonder whether the shame in Kant's case is related to his use of terroristic methods to support his basic but undeclared presupposition – that the domain of rationality

is an isolated and ascetic island – since he is especially insistent on the harm lying in wait for those who venture beyond its shores.

There is, in short, something going on in Kant's great text that cannot be criticized systematically, as Sallis hints when he notes that the 'outbreak of metaphor' near the end of the Transcendental Analytic 'offers an opening upon certain questions that secretly govern that text while remaining systematically suppressed therein' (*SRI,* 69). That is, the text actually records a 'double betrayal' that perhaps exposes the core of the bad sense which is installed at the heart of modern philosophy's conception of rationality. For it seems highly significant that philosophy continually seeks to define itself, according to Le Doeuff, in opposition to all other types of discourses that appeal to imagery in one way or another.

But this is not to imply that the legions of admirers of the *Critique of Pure Reason* are simply deluded. This 'great text' of philosophy is perhaps exemplary for a different reason; that is, it illustrates a certain depth and quality of insight that will be forever relevant to the philosophical quest for wisdom. In any case, it testifies to the possibility that an adequate metaphysics cannot help but enlist a privileged imagery, at least now and then, in order to make arguments cohere.

It may even be impossible to overestimate the importance of Kant's principal insight, if such it be, that imagination is 'a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever' (*CPR*, 112: A78/B103). For if imagination is intimately involved in the construction of experience, it may also inform the core of good reasoning. However, in the second edition of the *Critique,* Kant strives to suppress the implications of his early insight by subordinating imagination to explicit rules of the understanding, an abortive move that is closely associated in the text with appeals to the island imagery for according to Sallis, this imagery has 'a certain priority over the text and to that extent governs it – [since it expresses] in short, a prearticulation' (*SRI*, 70).

But if this is so, Kant's ambivalent attitude toward imagination and his covert use of the island imagery is perhaps one of the strongest reasons for thinking that modern thought is in thrall to a powerful myth (of scientific superrationality). It does not appear incidental that Kant is often described by feminist philosophers as helping to legitimate a coercive and controlling interpretation of reason.[11] How ironic, then, if Kant's suppression of imagination were to lead not to 'the end of metaphysics' but rather to, as Sallis puts it, 'the release of imagination into the entire field, the return of the repressed' (*D*, 15). Finally freed from its modernist straitjacket, reason need pretend no longer to be engaged in a relentless and orderly 'drive to pure presence' (or a Kantian drive to discover reason's

one true self). If any sort of drive is involved, it is that which must be linked to the desire to *do* philosophy, a drive that has been traditionally linked to the desire for wisdom and understanding, one that bespeaks in turn a yearning to become ever more present in, or less alienated from, a complex and confusing world. And the fact that a good use of imagery depends on imagination is surely reason enough to take seriously Dillard's suggestion that lyric poets, who do not doubt the centrality of imagination in thinking, make the best interpreters of the 'raw universe.'

They indicate at any rate, with some inadvertent assistance from Kant, that 'concept poets' may actually develop the best metaphysical imaginaries inasmuch as their imagery incorporates valuable insights, or perhaps better, intuitive imaginings, which actually bring us closer to 'reality.' And that if any metaphysician feels an 'end' is approaching, he/she is probably only on the verge of a new beginning. For as Kant says, 'there has always existed in the world, and there will always continue to exist, some kind of metaphysics' (*CPR*, 30).

Indeed, Kant's appeal to the image of an isolated, ascetic island of rationality shows that there are no moves in metaphysics more important than those involved in choosing an appropriate imagery as the chief guide for one's reasonings. His choice of an island imagery is therefore adequate in at least one respect; it tacitly confirms that speculative reason is only partially free – it must be 'grounded' in some worldly circumstances (e.g., those embedded in the meanings of ordinary words, in customs and cultural imperatives, in geography and history, not to mention personal preferences). The real difficulty in metaphysical reasoning perhaps comes down to what sort of imagery might enable one's own tentative venturings into the wide and stormy ocean where metaphysicians are perhaps bound to get lost, sooner or later. In any event, they need no longer be too concerned about the inescapable vagueness of the very general and apparently fundamental concepts and principles they must inevitably privilege, for these typical characteristics of philosophical discourse merely provide incentives for philosophers to try to become better 'concept-poets.' Hence instead of trying to emulate precise surveyors of a solidly planted, bounded island of truth, metaphysicians should perhaps try to act more like sensitive organisms floating in vast seas and trailing tentacles in every direction.

## 3. Metaphysics and anthropomorphic imagery

A metaphysician in search of a better imagined metaphysical imaginary would therefore do well to consider certain insights of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Sanders Peirce that point toward the need for

an anthropomorphic imagery. But since admirers of science are inclined to dismiss such an imaginary as pure fancy, it is necessary to first address the methodological question of whether this kind imagery is or is not permissible.

Clearly outlining his position in a lecture given at Harvard, Whitehead declares that 'any metaphysics is a good metaphysics which takes you a good long way without its metaphors breaking down.'[12] As for the direction in which he wants a good metaphorics to take him, this must be toward a just reconciliation of ordinary experience and 'exact' science. But in order to deal justly with experience itself, he stresses an overarching criterion that is usually ignored by the moderns. For although they are willing to see both ends of a stick they usually refuse to see the stick itself.[13]

However, Whitehead also insists that 'seeing' itself generally involves an interplay of thoughts and feelings, or emotions, and indicates that only an anthropomorphic metaphorics can take into account all the relevant factors that affect what is actually seen even in very common everyday experiences.

Hence while his general aim can be described as one of building a bridge over the chasm opened up long ago by Plato between the sensible and the intelligible, it is hardly a simple matter to determine what sort of materials might serve this purpose. Since this is an extremely complicated question, I shall be returning to it again and again in subsequent chapters. Here it must suffice to note that a self-styled empiricist who is unwilling to see the whole stick of experience is hardly an obvious candidate for the title of 'hard-headed' rationalist. By way of contrast, Whitehead is as much an empiricist as he is a rationalist and can therefore claim a certain kinship with lyric poets in as much as they too desire to 'see' both ends of the stick of experience at once.

Being among the least likely of all the investigators of the 'raw universe' to deny the centrality of the passions and imagination in experiencing, such poets may also be the first to affirm the importance of insights and instincts in good reasoning.

However, here we run up against a particularly tricky point, as I have earlier indicated, one that is connected with the possibility that the most valuable contributions to philosophy are those insights embedded in 'great texts,' such as that of Kant's, which promise deeper understandings. This matter, as it happens, recalls Peirce's observations about the need to include insights when attempting to frame a logic of discovery. He finds that the most significant achievements in the advance of science do not illustrate the power of systematic reasoning but rather the importance of a nonstandard form of inference that he calls abduction. Despite a

strong initial preference for physicistic theories, his ongoing inquiries convinced him that induction and deduction are secondary to abduction – which refers to hidden movements in thought that underpin every novel discovery in science. Essential for the initial framing of hypotheses, abductive inferences underwrite even very ordinary perceptions that involve perceptual judgments, for the latter can be regarded as extreme cases of abductive inferences that differ from conscious inferences only in that they are absolutely beyond criticism.[14]

It is thus highly significant that Peirce declares that an abductive suggestion arrives in a flash: 'It is an act of *insight*, although of extremely fallible insight' (*CP*, 5.181). He thereby not only confirms that natural philosophers need to take insights and intuitions seriously when setting out to illuminate some new or puzzling turn of events. They also need to entertain the possibility that the notion of rationality alludes to rational instincts. For abductive inferences refer to a type of guessing that is not *mere* guessing on account of the number of occasions when only a few guesses are needed before the right hypothesis is hit upon.

Thus abandoning his initial physicistic prejudices, Peirce ultimately raises the question whether the manifest successes of abductive reasoning in science reveal that 'the human mind is akin to truth.' His quest for a logic of science also induces him to express what amounts to heresy in many modern eyes – for he observes that it is merely arbitrary to hold that anthropomorphic explanations are unscientific. Indeed,

> every scientific explanation of a natural phenomenon is a hypothesis that there is something in nature to which the human reason is analogous; and that it really is so all the successes of science in its applications to human convenience are witnesses. They proclaim that truth over the length and breadth of the modern world.
>
> (*CP*, 1.316)

This observation, it should be noted, carries over immediately to nonscientific modes of thought, as is shown by the root meaning of the word:

> 'Anthropomorphic' is what pretty much all conceptions are at bottom; otherwise other roots for the words in which to express them than the old Aryan roots would have to be found. And in regard to any preference for one kind of theory over another, it is well to remember that every single truth of science is due to the affinity of the human soul to the soul of the universe, imperfect as that affinity no doubt is.
>
> (*CP*, 5.47)

But by thus hinting that the hoary idea of truth is bound up with the idea of the soul, Peirce opens up an even deeper question that modern rationalists would prefer to ignore, for he indicates that no metaphysical imaginary can hope to be adequate if it cannot show how to fit insightful souls into nature – a consideration that resonates with Dillard's suggestion that metaphysical inquiry is close kin to literary criticism, which is in turn closely related to the religious or spiritual side of thinking. The breadth and depth of the problematic of reason which Peirce helps expose cannot, in short, be overestimated. At the moment, however, I want to try to limit my inquiries to the question of how to think about the role of insights in metaphysical thinking. I want to ask in particular whether Peirce's metaphysics is up to dealing with his claim that the human mind is 'akin to truth.' For he also advocates a type of metaphysics (called 'phaneroscopy') which is based on a phenomenological analysis of experience that uncovers just three 'modes of being.' Not only are these modes sufficient for designating 'the broadest possible generalization,' they are also accessible to everyone since they can be directly discerned in the 'elements of whatever is at any time before the mind in any way.'[15]

More specifically, these modes identify three special characteristics of experiencing which Peirce calls Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. They can moreover be readily discerned in the shifting contents of 'direct appearances,' and so are 'perfectly familiar to everybody'; so it is fair to ask whether they can also take into account the abductive insights that Peirce claims underwrite, for instance, the introduction of novelty in science.

Now Firstness refers to the feelings we actually feel, Secondness to the fact that we know that something exists only if it impinges on our sensibilities in some way, and Thirdness to the fact that experience is shot through with regularities. The question is, then, are these three modes capable of doing justice to all the elements of actual awarenesses that evidence the relational character of existence?[16] This relational character implicitly accords a certain priority to the metaphysical category of Secondness, as witnessed by the everyday fact that our ascriptions of actuality bear witness that 'something, somewhere' is impinging on our sensibilities. What is not clear, however, is whether these 'somethings' take in those aspects of experiencing which are elicited by the idea of having an 'insight.'

Now a First, says Peirce, always alludes to 'something positive' (such as a peculiar quality of redness in the here-and-now of a sunset).[17] This positivity, however, is for him more appropriately associated with 'reality'

than with 'actuality' since it is essentially a definite possibility. However, since a possibility may or may not be actualized in the becoming of an actual event, a Firstness is only positive in a secondary or derivative sense even though it refers in actuality to a definite and distinctive feeling which is itself *sui generis*. There is thus an intimate but obscure connection between Firstness and potential feelings that is consonant with but subordinate to the Secondness of the dynamic action-reaction contrast which can thus be regarded as the main criterion of existence. For Peirce holds that actual existents display a 'brute' character that is familiar enough in everyday experiencing where nothing is admitted into existence if it cannot affect or resist our wills (see, e.g., *CP*, 1.419).

If this is a fair summary of Peirce's phenomenological account of reality/actuality, it may thus be asked whether his metaphysics can deal with the 'flashes' of insight that he claims can lead at times to fruitful hypotheses. It is not incidental that an insight is usually recognized as such if and only if it is capable of 'moving' someone emotionally as well as intellectually. But such is also the case with subtle hints and vague suspicions that can brutally disturb our mental equilibriums. So why not also include instincts and intuitions in the class of 'somethings' that can influence minds, for they too can be said to come before the mind in a way that illustrates the 'brute' Secondness of experiencing? But once this is accepted, Peirce's metaphysical categories cry out for inclusion in a broader metaphysical imaginary that can provide a place for these obscure mental entities, which include the operations of imagination itself, since what comes before the mind may be either immediate intuitions or vague intuitive imaginings, either of which could alter or even obliterate extant belief-habits in a manner not unlike shocking body blows.

## 4. An anthropomorphic interpretation of 'the raw universe'

It is conceivable, in short, that *only* an anthropomorphic metaphorics that recognizes the centrality of feelings and imagination in experiencing, as well as the importance of insights and intuitions, not to mention instincts, can deal justly with both the full range of human experiences and the most significant deliverances of modern science. In what follows, then, I shall attempt to construct a metaphysical imaginary on the basis of what I take to be Peirce's and Whitehead's more important insights into the nature of experiencing. For there is no way, I am claiming, to tell a reasonable rational-empirical story about 'the raw universe' except by first committing oneself to the 'rightness' of a certain privileged imagery.

Now one of the great merits of Whitehead's metaphorics of organism is that it promises to make sense of some of the most important as well as 'bizarre' results of quantum physics. This highly interpretative field of scientific inquiry, many now acknowledge, has effectively exposed the poverty of 'classical' language for dealing with the orderly aspect of natural events. It is thus worth noting that one of the leading quantum physicists of the last century, Wolfgang Pauli, while wrestling with the problem of interpretation, came to the conclusion that quantum physics reveals the impossibility of drawing 'a clear borderline between scientific and religious thought,' since 'we must always include the observer in our picture of the world.'[18] The implication is that the very idea of an 'external' or 'objective' reality is totally misleading.

Being one of the most rigorous and severely critical interpreters of quantum mechanics, Pauli's reflections on the bankruptcy of standard conceptions of 'reality' cannot be lightly dismissed. Not only does he claim that the behavior of submicroscopic events cannot be accounted for by immutable, universal 'laws of nature' (for these are essentially stochastic or probabilistic), he also urges the replacement of the notion of 'external reality' by the phrase 'reality of symbols' (See Laurikainen, 20–21 and 151–52).

At the same time Pauli indicates that individual quantum events illustrate a potential freedom or self-creativity. So I will come back in subsequent chapters to this highly controversial matter. For now, it suffices to note that his evocation of a 'reality of symbols' is consonant with the rationalist conviction that whatever one makes of the 'raw universe,' it is undeniable that it is shot through with regularities and uniformities that suggest a great range of various types of communicative relationships linking actual physical existents. That is to say, instead of being composed of impermeable, essentially isolated 'atoms' of inert 'stuff' subject to eternal and immutable laws, even the most 'elementary particles' can be viewed as only more or less localized structures of activity embedded in networks of communicative relationships.

The situation, in short, is consonant with both Whitehead's organic conception of 'mattering' (in which matter really 'matters in the sense of "things here" always having some sort of significance for "things there"') and Peirce's theory of semiosis in which communicative relationships are mediated everywhere by signs and/or symbols.[19] The point refers to what is, in Whitehead's view, the principal inadequacy of 'classical' modes of explanation which are based upon an interpretation of matter as an inert, or essentially passive, 'stuff' conceived as 'simply-located.'[20] Not only does he explicitly reject this view, he also endorses

an observation of Sir Francis Bacon that, says Whitehead, expresses 'a more fundamental truth' about the nature of matter than that adopted by his contemporaries. For Bacon writes:

> It is certain that all bodies whatsoever, though they have no sense, yet they have perception; for when one body is applied to another, there is a kind of election to embrace that which is agreeable, and to exclude or expel that which is ingrate; and whether the body be alterant or altered, *evermore a perception precedeth operation*; for else all bodies would be like one to another. And sometimes this perception, in some kind of bodies, is far more subtile than sense; so that sense is but a dull thing in comparison of it: we see a weatherglass will find the least difference of the weather in heat or cold, when we find it not. And this perception is sometimes at a distance, as well as upon the touch …
>
> (quoted from Bacon's *Natural History*, *SMW*, 41–42, italics mine)

The important point is that when speaking of an 'election to embrace,' while at the same time alluding to sentient bodies, Bacon is far from indulging in pure fancy. He is rather presenting to the natural philosopher an unignorable challenge: just *what* is being embraced, and *by* what? That the answer must involve signs and/or symbols as well as sentient organisms is partly indicated by the everyday fact (which informs Peirce's category of Secondness) that individual moments of perceptual awareness evidence an inclination to 'embrace' or 'exclude' influences that emanate from other bodies. Or, in other words, 'minding' is so closely bound up with 'mattering' that it is not going too far to say that signs (or symbols) possess a certain power or powers to instigate selective reactions that may include decisions to accept or reject certain possibilities.

It is thus highly significant that while reflecting on the role of signs in human communication, Peirce pauses to remark that 'the entire universe … is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs' (*CP*, 5.448n). He can therefore be read as hinting at a picture of the 'raw universe' as a Grand Semiosis in which meanings are constantly being precipitated and communicated by means of semiotic transactions involving feeling organisms. For a semiosis generally refers to an irreducible triadic relation involving an object, a sign, and an interpretant:

> A sign, or representamen, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity. It addresses somebody, that is,

> creates in the mind of that person an equivalent sign, or perhaps a more developed sign. … [which is called] the interpretant of the first sign. The sign stands for something, its object. … not in all respects, but in reference to a sort of idea.
>
> (*CP*, 2.228)

Since he also holds that this triadicity is irreducible, Peirce thus prompts the burning question of what exactly is being communicated in a semiosis. According to him, a sign can only be a certain possibility, or complex of possibilities; a claim that from an anthropomorphic point of view makes sense since signs by themselves are nothing unless there exist sentient interpreters capable of responding to them. Thus when Peirce suggests that the entire universe is composed of signs he also indicates that it must be replete with interpreters capable of responding selectively to the possibilities that signs convey. For an interpretant does not refer to an automatic or reflex production of a definite, predetermined meaning. Being only a possibility, a sign can only *invite* an interpretation and so can perhaps be said to possess a certain power in its own right. But perhaps it would be better to speak of a complex of powers that are somehow distributed over an entire semiotic transaction. That is to say, 'objects' perhaps connote a power to signify 'something' by means of signs while interpretants refer to power(s) to interpret these significations.

So pending further investigation, if signs convey only potential meanings, a semiotic transaction can be anthropomorphically understood as involving an agency similar to that elicited by vague or general signs in human communications. Since it is often noted that communications tend to evoke emotion-laden responses, it is conceivable that every communication involves Firsts. Indeed, as Peirce observes, whenever a certain sign is entertained as a 'something' that may be significant, its first meaning-effect (if it has any effect at all) is the feeling of a certain quality which is *sui generis* (*CP*, 5.289). This observation points up a basic consideration that is fully compatible with the notion of a sentient organism capable of feeling just whatever range of feelings its species-specific sensibilities are capable of entertaining. That is, when Peirce refers to an interpretant as 'the first proper significate effect of a sign,' while claiming that this effect is 'a feeling produced by it' (*CP*, 5.475), it is not a big leap to the view that the entire universe can be conceived as composed of different species of sentient organisms capable of responding selectively and affectively to a great variety of signs or symbols.[21]

## 5. Meaning, signs, and symbols

By thus exploiting some of the complementary elements of Whitehead's and Peirce's major insights, one arrives at a rough picture of the 'raw universe' as a Grand Semiosis; that is, an interconnected flux of communicating sentient organisms linked by signs and/or symbols that bespeak a 'raw universe' which may well be called a 'reality of symbols.' In this organosemiotic imaginary, organization refers at bottom to some aspect of this network of semioses, or semiotic transactions. In the case of human experience, a phenomenon must then allude to a product of a certain semiotic transaction. It may thus be generally referred to as arising out of an occasion of sensibility involving processes of integration of complexes of feelings that have been conveyed as mere possibilities by certain signs and/or symbols. For it needs to be stressed that feelings *qua* mere possibilities are not directly carried by signs: it makes no sense to speak of an actual transmission of feelings. There can only be more or less happy *reenactments* of feelings by (organic, embodied) interpreters of signs who may or may not respond appropriately to the invitations that signs convey (for feeling certain feelings).

The upshot is an unimaginably complex picture of the world which, assuming that it is evolutionary through and through, is the scene of a multitude of diverse ways of making meaning, where the meanings that are actually made are never fixed once and for all since they are always amenable to being adjusted and readjusted through endless successions of interpretative acts.

Dillard's question, whether the world has meaning, thus begins to look intractable, although it is by no means unintelligible. Quite the contrary, for if meaning-making refers to ongoing interpretations of signs and/or symbols, the interpretative agencies must be as 'real' as the signs themselves. But since the latter convey only possibilities, and the former are essentially jugglers of potentialities, Peirce's hint of a vast cosmic semiosis elicits a picture of the cosmos as a vast constellation of species-specific interpretative powers wielded by many kinds of fallible, sentient organisms.

In this picture, the orderly aspects of nature can be interpreted in terms of inherently unstable habits of communication which can, on occasion, be broken when new habits are formed.[22] As for the habits that inform orderly acts of minding, at this point one arrives at a, perhaps *the*, cosmic question of creativity: does the existence of phenomena *tout court* imply a hidden agent, or agencies, with creative powers? While almost completely predictable or relatively permanent reenactments of feelings may well predominate at the more primitive levels of organic existence,

where change may be largely due to chance, change cannot be reduced completely to automatic or reflex actions and reactions if the universe is conceived as a grand semiosis involving interpretative acts at every level of organization.

But without doubt this line of thought is liable to invite the charge of pure fancy, for it suggests that every instance of organization in the 'raw universe' bespeaks a vital and vitalizing agency that is akin to human imagination. One could hardly get further away from the modern dream of explaining every aspect of worldly orderliness by means of causally efficacious 'laws of nature.' So it is worth noting that both Whitehead and Peirce expressly deny the adequacy of interpretations of the 'raw universe' that presuppose causal explanations for everything, especially when it comes to dealing with the mysteries of Life and Thought. Peirce's life-long interest in the problem of how life came about in fact leads him to expressly renounce his former predilection for purely physicalistic modes of explanation.[23] Indeed, he declares that after 'forty years of questionings, [he has] been brought to the deep conviction that there is some essentially and irreducibly other element in the universe than pure dynamism' (*CP*, 6.322). As for what this 'other element' might be, he indicates that it would be more sensible to ask how genuine triadic relationships arose in the world. But more significantly perhaps, his reflections on abductive reasoning recall Kant's identification of the faculty of imagination as a 'blind but indispensable function of the soul.' Perhaps this functioning is behind the vital or creative powers of interpretation that every semiosis invokes, as well as the power that Whitehead elicits when he speaks of the 'creative advance of nature.' Indeed, according to Whitehead's theory of actuality, every act of becoming includes an element of self-determination. And self-determination is 'always imaginative in its origin' (*PR*, 245).

All told, both Peirce and Whitehead suggest that the Cosmos can be depicted as a complex of semiotic transactions that illustrate a succession of occasions of sensibility infused with various tensions between Habit and Creativity.[24] Hence I shall return to this rough picture in subsequent chapters to view it from a number of different angles. At the moment it suffices to note that this picture answers to Peirce's aim to find an alternative view of the world that can displace 'necessitarian' (or physicalistic and deterministic) doctrines that insist that causal explanations can be found for vital phenomena. In the organosemiotic picture, by contrast, the world is held together not by causal connectives which obey universal 'laws' but rather by only more or less stable habits of communication that allow for the emergence of new forms of communication. It is thus a picture that calls for a radical revision of

modern interpretations of the order in nature, such as those which embrace Hume's claim that our belief in causal necessity boils down to repeated associations of ideas in minds. So it is worth noting that it does not imply that repetition should be discounted as an important factor in accounting for the order in nature. On the contrary, it is consonant with the findings of modern physics which point to repetition as the key to understanding both change and movement, for the factor of periodicity in the structurings of 'elementary particles' is arguably the key to understanding how 'things' can change yet remain the same. That is to say, the regularities within nature may be best conceived in terms of repetitions of signings that always leave room for the introduction of novel interpretations.[25]

## 6. Imagination and meaning in the 'raw universe'

Yet some of the meanings that are precipitated in the ongoing working-out of the inherently unstable dynamic tensions between freedom (or creativity) and habits can derive from pure chance which can enter at any level or stage of organization. That is, semiotic transactions always allow for error in as much as signs carry only latent meanings and every act of interpretation is not completely determined. But once it is allowed that both chance and purpose may infuse every occasion of sensibility, the above rough picture of the 'raw universe' puts paid to common sense's desire for simple explanations. Such a desire may be artificially induced anyway by the overweening presence of a mechanistic, materialistic imaginary that dictates at present what is or is not 'serious' thinking in this culture. By contrast, the organosemiotic imaginary I have sketched can at least promise to rescue common sense from a devitalizing and tyrannical mode of thought that robs Life (and Thought) of its quicknesses. Furthermore, it accords with the fact that meanings continually evolve in most (all?) natural languages, which implies that this type of imaginary is capable of doing greater justice to the rich complexity of communication which the moderns constantly attempt to reduce to mere exchange of information. Yet everyday human communications continually give the lie to this simplistic approach that merely covers over the fact that communications between sentient human beings are suffused with insights, instincts, and intuitions, not to mention emotion-laden imaginative interpretations.

Hence the primacy of feelings and imagination in the organosemiotic imaginary I have sketched is arguably its greatest asset, for by ascribing 'Firstness' to feelings in their metaphysics, both Peirce and Whitehead

show how one can rescue the very idea of sentience from the reductionist simplifications of the post-Cartesians. Whitehead's theory of actuality in fact posits 'physical feelings' which are complements of 'conceptual feelings,' while holding that both types of feelings are involved in every act of becoming. 'A simple physical feeling,' he says, 'is the most primitive type of an act of perception, devoid of consciousness' (*PR*, 236). This suggests that simple physical feelings are equivalent in actuality to unconscious instincts. Perhaps simple conceptual feelings can likewise be identified as rational instincts, or perhaps better, intuitive imaginings, especially if all communications are mediated by interpretations of signs and/or symbols. In any event, the above imaginary promises an adequate treatment of the difference between conscious and unconscious modes of thought.

That is to say, in sum, the organosemiotic view I have sketched is amenable to a thoroughly evolutionary world, for the variety of forms of organization in nature can be understood as referring to only more or less stable habits of sign interpretation. In the case of human cognition, mainly unconscious habits can be broken to make way for the emergence of novel belief-habits. However, this only implies that 'progress' in understanding and the growth or extension of meaning is not an entirely vacuous idea. So when Whitehead speaks of a 'creative *advance* of nature' he may be misleading many of his readers, as perhaps Peirce also does when he speaks of a world suffused with an 'evolutionary love' (see, e.g., *CP*, 6.287–317), as though the evolution of meanings in the world is being guided by some super-sensible, all-wise Father-figure. But not even God – who is an actual entity in Whitehead's philosophy of organism – can guarantee that evolution will lead in the long run to the apotheosis of the Good. A plurality of processes of meaning-making can always degenerate and foster sensibilities inclined more toward evil than good. What the latter terms stand for is, of course, still a moot question. All that is clear is that evolution need not be a unidirectional process, which means that 'the creative advance of nature' does not necessarily imply progress in the sense of, say, a steady deepening of understanding of the 'true' significance of signs.

In other words, Peirce may be too sanguine in positing only three possibilities for understanding evolution: fortuitous variation, mechanical necessity, and creative love. Insofar as he is right to reject the first two as incapable of doing justice either to the indeterminacy of becoming or to the spontaneity of Life itself, one is not obliged to adopt, as Peirce does, the third kind, which he calls agapism.[26] While his idea of a guiding 'evolutionary love' is partly consonant with Whitehead's emphasis on sympathetic feelings as the key to understanding causality, the example of

Bacon suggests that sympathy is always in tension with antipathy, hence the imaginary I have sketched only confirms that the problem of meaning in the 'raw universe' *can* be illuminated in respect to *the how* of 'togethernesses' in the world but perhaps not in respect to the *why*. For although the story is without doubt creationist in flavor, it cannot be used to justify the fond, but constantly disappointed, hope that the universe is governed by an omniscient and all-loving Creator. Neither does it lend much encouragement to those who would like to think that this evolving universe is destined to become increasingly orderly, as Peirce would like to think.[27]

This conclusion seems highly pertinent to Dillard's reflections on the activity of interpretation. She notes that 'art criticism, … of all the interpretative disciplines, would seem to be best suited to interpreting the world at large' (*LF*, 143). However, she also notes that art criticism 'works only on art.' Yet in as much as an organic-semiotic imaginary indicates that the 'the raw universe' can be imaged as an immense text that is always in-the-writing, for better or for worse, natural philosophers are in the same boat as all those artists or literary critics who refuse to believe that the idea of reality is vacuous. Furthermore, if criticism *tout court* is part of the cosmic semiosis and therefore an activity deeply involved in the interpretation of signs and symbols, then criticism is as much bound up with the 'reality of symbols' as art itself.

## 7. So where is fancy bred the least?

Hence whatever else the foregoing observations are worth, they at least stand as a reminder that the vexed question of whether, and if so why, the world is meaningful is never going to go away. The problem of meaning always elicits those 'occult' aspects of mentality whose denial by modern proponents of systematic reasoning only indicate that it is an egregious modern error to think that there is but one form of reliable criticism; namely, that in which Descartes, Kant, and their followers invest so much faith. Although this faith may well exemplify the sort of religious impulse which Dillard associates with criticism *tout court* (i.e., the 'faith that something has meaning, and we may apprehend it'), Peirce shows that it lacks sufficient depth and quality to do justice even to the 'logic of scientific discovery,' never mind the 'logic' of meaning-making *tout court*. In other words, it is intrinsically incapable of coming to terms with the interpretative side of meaning-making in a world perfused with signs and symbols.

Both Peirce and Whitehead also indicate (together with Kant) that not only well-cultivated imaginations but also particularly well-developed

souls may be required for perspicacious interpretations of signs and symbols. Such souls are perhaps akin to those Dillard invokes when she identifies lyric poets as the best interpreters of the 'raw universe,' perhaps because they evidence a greater sensitivity than most interpreters to the significance of natural signs, although a certain degree of such sensitivity is evidenced by many scientific interpreters of nature. But while mathematical or logical symbolisms enhance our power to clarify ideas, as Peirce in fact maintains, he also notes that our ideas may be ever so clear without being true.[28]

Scientists can even be suspected of harboring a predilection for purely fanciful interpretations that require a special background knowledge of mathematics. In any event, it is perhaps no accident that most mathematical physicists and a good many neo-Darwinian enthusiasts evidence a complete indifference to everyday life.[29] But only physicistic prejudices, as Peirce indicates, may be able to account for the popularity and pervasiveness of materialistic imaginaries that call for a denial of the centrality of the passions and imagination in ordinary experiencing.

In short, then, if you happen to feel that certain stories about 'the raw universe' are not 'right' you may actually *be* right. However, if reason can only ever move *inside* some preferred imaginary, there can be no definitive rebuttal of the standard objection that insights and the feelings that accompany them are untrustworthy guides to deciding what is rational or not in any given explanation. If the goal of rational thought is to get something more or less right about how things are in this world, whatever 'rightness' I attach to my own speculations, it can properly be objected, may simply reflect my personal tastes. There is undoubtedly an element of circularity in the claim that feelings are 'first' when choosing and developing a metaphysical imaginary whose own 'rightness' depends on the 'rightness' of certain intuitions or insights. On the other hand, what sort of reason could justify an 'empiricist' claim that feelings and emotions are not part of experience? The imaginary I have sketched can at least claim to have passed one test of adequacy. Unless feelings and emotions are included in the warp of a metaphysical imaginary, it is not easy to see how they can be woven in later.

'Explanations' of the cosmos that hint at the possibility of a deduction of a desire to reason well are surely one of the more absurd consequences of the great influence that science has acquired in determining the nature of reason and its proper functioning. As everyday life constantly reminds us, desires as well as emotional conflicts are a fact of life. And if experience *tout court* implies a continual interplay of thoughts and feelings as well as signs and symbols, all acts of reasoning, and not only

those of physics, can be conceived as taking place in an only more or less well-coordinated 'reality of symbols.' Indeed, Peirce holds that a symbol is best understood as 'a conventional sign, or one depending on habit (acquired or inborn),' thus indicating that the search for an adequate language of interpretation in metaphysics is part and parcel of the problem of which symbolisms are truly effective and valuable in knowledge-making. So it is worth stressing that Peirce makes a special point of distinguishing between signs and symbols, where the meanings of the latter are established by consensus.[30] He also notes that the word 'symbol' has many meanings. It is therefore not incidental that he also observes that the original meaning is particularly apt since it betokens an action of 'throwing together' (*CP*, 2.297).

In the terms of the above imaginary, then, it is conceivable that some symbols can be happy products of unexpected 'throwings together' that illustrate Peirce's bold claim that the human mind is akin to the truth. Indeed, if lyric poets or their critics attest to the human need to make sense of the world by bringing apparently disparate entities together, a need that results in the creation of symbolisms far in excess of practical needs, then it would be merely arbitrary to conflate all artistic symbolisms, for instance, with purely fanciful inventions. Even the most fantastic of literary creations may be infused with insights having deep metaphysical significance, for they may testify at bottom to genuine intuitive imaginings that have interpreted correctly 'real' possibilities carried by natural signs. Perhaps the very human desire to continually create symbolisms is reason enough for thinking that criticism is as serious a business as science, if not more so. But by the same token, if criticism is also inescapably dependent on an inherently fallible and corruptible faculty of imagination, there is no reason to think that criticism does more than testify to a tenacious faith in the possibility of making better meanings than those that currently guide Life and Thought.

So one is always being invited to contemplate anew the 'Firstness' of feelings. Perhaps lyric poets make the best metaphysicians just because their interpretations are so closely bound up with their emotions.[31] But then they also show that to account for what Dillard calls the 'trick of reason' calls for a type of investigation into knowledge-making that ranges from the possibility of 'real' or genuine in-sights to 'right' cultural imperatives (many of which probably belong to the order of myths).[32] Hence it would be highly unreasonable to ask for explicit criteria for judging the adequacy of any metaphysical imaginary. At issue is whether, and if so how, it might be possible to construct a good imaginary capable of elucidating Peirce's claim that the mind is akin to truth.[33] Hence my final

claim for the anthropomorphic imaginary I have sketched only belongs to the order of a promise. It *is* possible to imagine a much better fit than we now have between the meanings established in dominant interpretations of the world and the meanings that 'the raw universe' provides *in potentia*. But as Dillard indicates, the first task in metaphysics is to cultivate what may be an innate but undeveloped critical instinct for good imagery. In any case, certain poet-philosophers (to whom I shall turn in later chapters) can be enlisted in support of one of Dillard's pet notions – that 'imaginative acts carry real weight in the universe.' Although she refers to this idea as 'a crackpot notion' (*LF*, 173–75), it is indeed one that gives the artist 'real work.' And the metaphysician too, I would add.

# 3
# Minding, Imaging, and Symbolizing

> All of us on earth are united in thought, for it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth.[1]

## 1. Reason, mysticism, and myth

If rationalism is driven by the hope that reason can in one way or another get something right, it was bound, sooner or later, to run up against the problem that Kant alludes to when distinguishing between *conceptus ratiocinati* ('rightly inferred concepts') and *conceptus ratiocinantes* ('pseudo-rational concepts').[2] In his efforts to reform metaphysics once and for all, by mapping a domain of pure reason in accordance with 'the example set by geometers and physicists,' he inadvertently shows, however, that reason is unable to determine whether there are *any* concepts that *can* be rightly inferred. More recently, Bertrand Russell has reinforced doubts about the wisdom of the Kantian approach while attempting to demonstrate that philosophical reasoning ought to be judged by its logic instead of by its metaphysic. But despite his claim that the formal symbolic language of *Principia Mathematica* is capable of eliminating vagueness and ambiguity from philosophical discourse, he merely reinforces the view that the problems of philosophy are indeed bound up with the problem of symbolism.[3] The irony is that the logicistic approach he advocates leads to a formal kind of mysticism that involves an acritical faith in the powers of science to deliver up precise atomic facts that can be systematically connected by the methods of symbolic logic.

Such a mysticism bespeaks the presence of a powerful myth – the myth of scientific superrationality – which is an essentially antirationalist belief in science as capable of providing a satisfactory model for rational

thinking.[4] That is, according to Whitehead, the logicistic-scientistic approach betrays the general aim to advance understanding. So it is important to note that he is by no means denying the cognitive powers of logical and/or mathematical symbolisms; he is rather maintaining that a properly rational explanation is one capable of doing justice to the fact that symbolisms of one sort or another always stand between us and 'reality.'[5]

This implies that the task of philosophy is bound to be partly therapeutic since the quality of its deliberations depends upon prior decisions that privilege certain symbolisms. Since the general aim of philosophy is, as Whitehead puts it, 'to understand and purge the symbols on which humanity depends' (*S*, 7), such a purging will be helpful only to the extent that it leads to an improvement in the relationships between living and thinking. Ignoring this primary consideration, philosophers under the influence of science and mathematics have had a disastrous effect on modern philosophy, for the purpose of philosophy can only be 'to rationalize mysticism: not by explaining it away, but by the introduction of novel verbal characterizations, rationally coordinated.'[6] Whitehead thus brings to the forefront of philosophy a question that Russell simply begs – how *do* symbolisms actually perform their vital work of mediation? Do they provide the means to connect what means to what is meant (to use Russell's phrase)? Or is the task of philosophy essentially therapeutic, as Whitehead seems to suggest? But if this is so, what has good reasoning to do with the search for novel verbal characterizations?

Now modern reason is disinclined even to entertain these fundamental questions, partly on account of the presupposition (which Russell endorses) that reason and mysticism are antithetical, if not enemies. However, once it is accepted that the problems of philosophy are bound up with the problem of symbolism, the sort of reasoning championed by Russell or Kant is quite unlike that which Whitehead alludes to when he notes that in doing philosophy one 'must grasp the topic in the rough, before we smooth it out and shape it,' thereby indicating that the real difficulties in rational explanation occur at the very outset in choosing appropriate smoothing and shaping tools.[7] In the previous chapter, I have in effect argued that the task of 'smoothing and shaping' requires first framing an adequate metaphorics which, since it must serve as the principal guide for the movements of reason, must be loosely grounded in certain insights, and it is hardly clear what either an insight or a good metaphor is. In other words, a proper beginning that recognizes the centrality of the problem of symbolism must not

only entertain the possibility that 'the introduction of novel verbal characterizations' must take in not only metaphors but also other mythical or poetic devices if rationalization means at bottom (as it does for Whitehead) an attempt to coordinate fundamental beliefs.

It is thus worth noting that myth has, at least on one occasion, been recognized as a form of symbolism worthy of being compared with mathematics. The historian Salomon Bochner notes that mathematics and myth have in common the fact they can only 'speak in symbols.'[8] Furthermore, both modes of thought, he says, 'are endowed with a validity that is universal and unchanging' (*RM*, 17–18). But by also admitting that 'it is nearly impossible to say what a symbol is,' Bochner acknowledges that it is necessary to look below the surface of the matter. He advocates a kind of thought-experiment to distinguish between mathematics and myth. He claims, for instance, that the symbolizations of myths are 'backward-directed' and that throughout history they have always been 'operationally inert.' Mathematical symbolizations, by contrast, are 'forward-looking'; that is to say, they are 'operationally active and fertile' inasmuch as they provide us with the means to 'look ahead' and anticipate new discoveries.

Whitehead is partially in agreement with this view, as his biographer Victor Lowe notes, for he holds that 'the truth sought in pure mathematics is necessary truth about the world.'[9] But when he asserts that seventeenth-century developments of science would have been impossible without mathematics, since it 'supplied the background of imaginative thought with which the men of science approached the observation of nature' (*SMW*, 30), he also prompts one to wonder whether symbolisms owe whatever powers they have to the powers of imagination.

At the moment, however, I want merely to note that Bochner's approach is perhaps typically, and hence fatally, modern in the sense implicit in his view that mathematical symbolisms stand 'above the cultural fray'; that the symbolizing peculiar to mathematics is not influenced by cultural imperatives. 'Explanations from sociological causes are also unavailable for problems of modern mathematics,' he declares, while drawing a sharp line between 'mathematics-to-a-purpose' and 'pure' mathematics. '[T]he "purer" mathematics is, the more it embodies *the significant designs of the texture of knowledge;* for this reason, in the past, the more significant applications to basic science came from mathematics that had been pursued for its own sake than from mathematics that had been pursued to a purpose' (*RM*, 7–8, italics mine). The emphasized words suggest that priority ought to be given to a more general question, of whether symbol-making of any kind always reflects culturally

rooted values, and hence an exploration of the powers of symbolisms needs to be framed by a metaphysics that does not separate nature and culture.

But in order to make any headway in this matter, it seems necessary to directly confront the problem of symbolizing itself. Yet it is just the need for such a confrontation that Bochner denies, for he claims that the theory sketched by Whitehead in his book *Symbolism* has 'no bearing on mathematics, which is the seat of symbolism par excellence' (*RM*, 17n). He thus articulates an egregious modern error, I am suggesting, one that (as Kant perhaps illustrates) betrays a curious reluctance to look below the surface of the activity of symbolizing which perhaps requires facing up to the possibility, denied by many scientists and philosophers of science, that the terms 'mind' and 'consciousness' refer to ultimate mysteries.

## 2. On the mystery of consciousness

Some philosophers of science even claim that science will eventually dispose of the idea of consciousness altogether. While explicitly rejecting this idea as antiempirical, since it amounts to denying the subjectivity of experiencing, John Searle argues that the existence of consciousness can be affirmed while its aura of mystery can be systematically eliminated by scientific means. Where those who simply deny consciousness go wrong is in failing to admit the empirical fact that there is 'a special qualitative feel to each type of conscious state.'[10] Searle thus insists that *qualia* are not incidental attributes or accidents of physical processes that, for the sake of brevity, are conveniently lumped together under the name of 'consciousness.' Nor will it do to try to divide the problem into two by identifying two different types of phenomena, consciousness and *qualia*: '[t]here is just consciousness, which is a series of qualitative states' (*MC*, 9).

Briefly, then, to properly address the so-called mystery of consciousness, says Searle, it is necessary to tackle the key question: 'how exactly do neurological processes in the brain cause … unified, well-ordered coherent, inner, subjective states of awareness or sentience?' But while this sort of approach has the merit of asserting what ordinary folk have no difficulty in believing, for all the subtle arguments of scientists and philosophers cannot stop them from insisting that they really feel the pains they are complaining about, it perhaps only begins to expose the real difficulty with the problem of consciousness: why think every aspect of sentience *should* be amenable to a causal explanation? Searle admits

that the question 'How do brain-processes cause consciousness?' is 'philosophically loaded,' since it presupposes a causal relationship between brain and consciousness. He also notes that some philosophers object to this approach since it seems to entail some version of dualism 'which they want to reject on other grounds' (*MC*, 4). Nevertheless he insists that a causal approach to consciousness is the only legitimate one.[11]

So let us consider a conscious visual perception. According to basic physiology and physics, such an event involves receptions and responses to transmissions of electromagnetic and electrochemical signals that launch 'interior' processes involving multitudes of different kinds of cells. Searle in fact acknowledges the immense complexity of this situation which involves signals being processed as they move through channels whose character varies between chemical and electrical, while somehow in the end giving rise to (or causing) a 'summation' that takes place in a 'cell body' (*MC*, 27). Yet such 'summing' processes often result in the production of, for instance, vivid images; it may therefore be asked how a 'summation' that results from manipulations of bits of information could produce 'something' so qualitatively different from mere information. Many of the processes involved surely also involve acts of interpretation; for the transmission of information by means of electromagnetic waves, say, can be conceived as a transmission of significant or relevant signs, which are not the same as definite meanings.

Hence before one has even begun to try to frame the problem of consciousness, a difficulty has arisen that puts into question the good sense of searching for a causal account of consciousness. In other words, it is essential to become clear about the interpretative side of the transmission of information by means of signs and signals. If this aspect of sense-making involves unconscious acts of decision-making (for interpretations of bits of potentially meaningful information presuppose acts of selecting, sorting, grading as to relevance, and so on), what could be doing all this evaluative work if not some hidden agency or agencies whose existence scientists are inherently incapable of recognizing on account of being committed to the idea that rational explanations *mean* causally based, systematic accounts?

Rather than being conceived as a definite end-product of a singular, isolated process, a visual image can generally be regarded as a more or less real 'something' that somehow emerges from an intricately connected, dynamic complex of hidden, partly interpretative processes. If this is so, there is no obvious reason why science can, in principle, provide a satisfactory account of the fundamental activity of perception. It seems more reasonable to admit at once that a visual perception

bespeaks an at once forward- and backward-oriented process, for the characters discerned in events of the very recent past appear to be intimately bound up with expectations relating to the very near future (e.g., the spatiotemporal configurations of possibly life-threatening dangers in the immediate environment). Hence the laboratory where perception can be most fruitfully studied is very likely neither private nor public – it perhaps ought to be located somewhere 'in-between' these two realms where the 'objective' methods of science preclude a just treatment.

There is good reason to think, in short, that a causally oriented framing of the problem of consciousness evades all the real difficulties. Only the myth of scientific superrationality seems able to underwrite the view that the explanatory techniques and devices of scientific investigation are up to the job of accounting for *qualia*. So despite his severe criticisms of those who do not take the existence of *qualia* seriously, Searle in fact reinforces this suspicion when he maintains that 'the right way to think' about a visual experience is in terms of photons that are reflected off objects.[12] In this process, they 'attack the photoreceptor cells of the retina and this sets up a series of neuronal processes (the retina being part of the brain), which eventually result, if all goes well, in a visual experience that is a perception of the very object that originally reflected the photons' (*MC*, 33). However, the real difficulty is concealed in the phrase: 'if all goes well,' which alludes to what might be called a 'one-way leap across a category gap' – for the feeling of a certain quality, or *quale*, must surely be assigned to the category of the actual. Yet what is carried by the transmission of light signals belongs to the category of the potential since photons carry only latent meanings, as is witnessed by the existence of color-blind perceivers. It is thus not too surprising that at this juncture, Searle's 'causal' account suddenly shifts to a different plane. In addressing the question of how conscious experiences are formed, he tacitly admits to the impotence of the 'causal approach' when he describes a conscious experience as 'a feature that arises from certain neuronal activities.' That is to say, he holds that a definite experience can be thought of as an 'emergent property' of the brain. (*MC*, 18). With this biologic turn he then proceeds to speak of consciousness as though it were no more mysterious than other 'ordinary biological phenomena comparable with growth, digestion, or the secretion of bile' (*MC*, 6). That is, consciousness can be viewed as part of 'the ordinary physical world' and is therefore amenable to the methods and techniques of natural science.

However, this sideways shift only compounds the real difficulty – unless there is a supervening causal explanation for emergence. Searle in fact seems to presuppose such an explanation since he merely assumes

that 'lower-level neurological processes in the brain cause my present state of consciousness, but that state is not a separate entity from my brain; rather it is just a feature of my brain at the present time' (*MC*, 8). He thus depicts the brain as a more or less efficient 'organic machine' that has evolved the capacity for producing qualia by systematically sifting and manipulating symbols, signs, and signals (whose provenance can ultimately be traced to 'external objects').

Searle is unequivocally opposed, however, to the idea that such manipulations can be properly modeled using the operations of a computer. 'We know from our own experience that the mind has something more going on in it … [since] minds have contents' (*MC*, 10). It is thus somewhat ironic that Searle makes a special note of the 'almost religious faith' of that large company of scientists who believe that even our deepest problems about the mind 'will have a computational solution': it is as if 'unless we are proven to be computers, something terribly important will be lost' (*MC*, 189). But his own treatment of consciousness bears witness to a worry that something terribly important will be lost if scientists abandon their Cartesian vision of an 'organic machine' that is capable of *causing* the *qualia* of consciousness.

## 3. Emergence and consciousness

Searle's denial of the mystery of consciousness points up the impotence of science in the face of certain concrete aspects of Nature, for conscious thought can indeed be regarded as a natural form of sentience. However, there is no good reason for believing, as Searle urges, that there are only two alternatives when trying to understand the production of phenomena – either search for a causal (scientific) theory or succumb to a vicious Cartesian dualism. That this is a false dichotomy is perhaps evident in Searle's abrupt switch from talk about causal processes to talk about emergence. Although emergent material brains (and nervous systems) are evidently connected to the capacity for entertaining vivid images, this elementary consideration attests only to the need to take the body as well as the mind into account when thinking about thinking itself. Furthermore, if one accepts that consciousness has emerged during the course of evolution, it is an egregious error to regard it as the paradigmatic form of sentience. As Whitehead points out, consciousness is a late, and relatively rare, aspect of a nature that could well be replete with many different forms or degrees of sentience.

In other words, the puzzle of emergence ought to be given precedence over the problem of consciousness, not brought in at a critical moment to

shore up a failing causal explanation. The plain truth is that even if science were to prove what in any case seems obvious, that consciousness is impossible without brains, it hardly follows that the physical side of brain activity *causes* conscious entertainments of *qualia*. Put in yet another way, modern science indicates that it would be wise to begin all over again with a simple analogy: that the brain is to consciousness as the eye is to seeing.[13] Visual seeing, for instance, is manifestly dependent on intact and healthy eyes as well as sufficient light, which still leaves the existence of *qualia*, or 'qualitative feels' enveloped in mystery, especially if they are accompanied by visual images and/or ideas. As Searle rightly insists, a feeling is first and foremost a subjective, embodied experience. It follows that it cannot be a property or attribute that is somehow tacked on to an inert material object, like a label on a piece of fruit. Or referred to, for that matter, as though it were an object in a container. A perception generally refers to a complex series of embodied, more or less, cooperative processes, each of which perhaps performs a definite task, so the descriptor 'qualitative feel' merely signifies a kind of becoming – something has come into the world which involves an embodied interplay of feelings.

It thus seems better to *begin* with the assumption that experience generally involves different kinds of affectively tuned capacities for feeling what goes together and what does not. But if this is so, the principal difficulty is to find a language capable of doing justice to a constructive activity of 'bringing together' 'things' whose mysterious character was long ago pointed out by Bishop Berkeley.

Indeed, his attack on materialistic approaches to the problem of mind, according to Whitehead, is still highly relevant since it goes to the heart of the puzzle of both existence and sensibility. That is, his criticisms prompt the pivotal question: 'What do we mean by things being realized in the world of nature?' (*SMW*, 67). In full agreement with the main thrust of Berkeley's criticisms, Whitehead holds that a proper treatment of perception must give certain immaterial elements of experiencing their due. For Berkeley reminds us, observes Whitehead, of 'the complete concreteness of our intuitive experience.' This element of concreteness takes in moreover to the spiritual dimension of experiencing, although Whitehead rejects Berkeley's solution in which he ascribes the unities of experiencing to ideas in the mind of God. But Berkeley is right not only in denying that ideas can be the causes of other ideas, for ideas like material atoms are also inert. In other words, as the example of Searle shows us, he also rightly underscores the importance of attending to the immaterial side of experiencing, for he is in effect asking: 'what could it possibly mean to say that ideas and images are realized in minds?'

That the answer must somehow revolve about an acknowledgement that sentient behavior has both material and immaterial dimensions is partly implicit in Whitehead's claim that matter and spirit are 'the abstractions in terms of which much of our physical experience can be interpreted' (*SMW*, 67).

But to get a better idea of what this might involve, it may be useful to turn to Kant who is likewise influenced by Berkeley (by way of Hume). Kant is also exercised by the question of what it means for 'things' to be realized in minds; 'things' that even if they cannot be linked to objects in 'external' nature, provide the only grounds we have for speaking of nature as intelligible in its own right. Indeed, Kant maintains that all our knowledge of reality consists of appearances and their relations which are not caused by 'external' forces or influences but rather arise out of variously conditioned subjective constructions.

At issue, then, is the nature of the work being done in the processes of construction. It is thus not incidental that Kant initially traced the production of knowledge to a synthesizing agency which is 'a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever' (*CPR*, 112). In the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, at any rate, he ties the making of sense to the work of a faculty of imagination while at the same time suggesting that an adequate account of experiencing needs to bring in a soul with creative powers. It is thus conceivable that such powers may be the worldly representatives of an overarching Spirit that deploys imagination to fulfill its creative purposes.

Kant however retreated from the implications of his insight in the second edition of the *Critique*, perhaps to the detriment of a good deal of subsequent philosophy. For when one examines the way Kant constructs imagination in his account of the formation of knowledge, according to John Rundell, one is contemplating a critical juncture in the history of Western metaphysics.[14] Although Kant insists that our knowledge is always of (constructed) representations, and not of objects that exist independently of our powers of representation, he fails to note that the representations must themselves be viewed as emerging from a synthesis of reason and imagination (CJ, 91). That is to say, if one pursues Kant's account of the synthetic production of knowledge far enough, imagination turns out not to be simply *reproductive* (that is, not as functioning simply in accordance with *a priori* principles which decree what and how appearances are produced and associated). It must also be viewed as *productive* in an originative sense (i.e., formative and creative in its own right).[15] But Kant balks at taking this final step, thereby

opening up a gap between reason and imagination, while evidencing perhaps a secret desire to protect his acritical preconception of rationality at all costs from a potentially anarchic and mysterious creative power. Indeed, according to Rundell, Kant found himself suddenly facing

> an abyss, where, were he to fall into it, he would confront chaos and uncertainty. He pulls back onto the ground of certitude. In so doing he circumscribes the nature and role of the imagination, especially its synthesizing power, making it dependent on the understanding.
>
> (CJ, 95)

No doubt a distaste for chaos and uncertainty is only to be expected in an attempt to reform metaphysics once and for all by providing a safe and secure haven for a purified reason. But an overweening desire for such a haven may owe a good deal to a deep-seated fear of or aversion to mysticism.[16]

Yet Kant may have put his finger, if only briefly, on the key to understanding perception when he suggested that only imagination has the power to synthesize the sensible and the intellectual. For as I have noted in the previous chapter, Kant provides no compelling reasons for believing that the faculty of imagination can be tamed by systematic means. His aim to reform metaphysics once and for all actually lends support to the opposing view – that reason *requires* insightful exercises of the imagination that can engender a cohesive imagery capable of guiding reason's most reasonable movements. Furthermore, such an approach to understanding the nature and function of reason does not require that the hoary ideas of knowledge, truth, and reality be abandoned as meaningless.

To see this, it may be useful to turn to Cornelius Castoriadis, who, in taking up the example of a visual perception, describes the apprehension of 'primary' and 'secondary' qualities as being in the first instance

> creations of the living body, that is, of the embodied psyche in humans, creations more or less permanent or transient, more or less generic or singular. These creations are often conditioned by an 'external' X – *not* 'caused' by it. Light waves are not coloured, and they do not cause the colour *qua* colour. They induce, *under certain conditions*, the subject to create an 'image' which, in many cases … is generically *and* socially *shared*.[17]

The last sentence both resonates with and deepens Kant's early view of imagination since Castoriadis associates the reactions of the embodied

psyche not with an 'idea in the mind' but rather with 'a total state of the subject ("body" and "soul").' It is an egregious error, in other words, to try to separate the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of perception.[18] The images and ideas which arise spontaneously in minds should be regarded in the first instance as *evidence* of what Castoriadis calls 'radical imagination.'

Briefly, then, instead of seeking a causal explanation for the emergence of images, the truly rational move is simply to admit at once that they 'are just what they are: images' (*RI*, 140). Noting that the idea of a 'radical imagination' is not new, since it corresponds roughly to Aristotle's notion of *phantasia*, Castoriadis observes that both Aristotle and his successors concentrated mainly on the imaginative acts that are normally associated with poetic creation. But he also discussed a completely different meaning for *phantasia,* one that deserves to be called *prime* (or primary or radical) imagination because without it 'there can be no thought' since its functioning 'possibly precedes any thought' (*RI*, 136–37). Castoriadis thus links the meaning of 'reality' to the work of a prime or primary imagination which operates '*before* the distinction between "real" and "fictitious". … it is because the radical imagination exists that "reality" exists *for us* – exists *tout court* – and exists *as* it exists' (*RI*, 138, emphasis in original).[19]

Briefly, then, Castoriadis confirms that the adequacy of any account of consciousness depends on an insightful choice of a figurative language to convey what cannot be captured in systematic (scientific) nets. If radical imagination is prior to consciousness, there is perhaps another form of imagination responsible for linking the products of radical imagination into organized and coherent systems of symbolisms. Yet another form of imagination may be needed to relate these products of imagination to the social customs and laws that mediate between individuals and the groups or societies of which they are a part. A mythopoeic imagination may then be required to bring all these factors together into a coherent and consistent story which cannot however be regarded as universally relevant since different societies privilege different systems of symbolism.

So turning once again to the problem of how to speak about the production of a visual perception, and assuming that the information carried by photons is somehow converted into images with the help of processes within the body, it is conceivable that images, some of them anyway, can be regarded as 'true' metaphors in the sense they 're-present' a 'something' (or a part thereof) that is presented *in potentia* to the perceiver. But it is important not to forget that both nature and culture

need to be given their due in an adequate account. That is to say, the processes of construction are probably always subject to 'external' influences as well as the vagaries of 'internal' factors that are *conditioned* by contingencies (as is borne out by the bizarre effects on representing of fatigue, drugs, religious fervor, neurological debilities, etc.). Yet the metaphor of a representation (or a re-presenting of a hitherto unrepresented) is still partially apt, although it can be misleading whenever it diverts attention from the possibility that no analysis of an act of perception can be adequate if it ignores the immaterial forces or powers that work at an unconscious level where they spontaneously and mysteriously generate only more or less veridical appearances or phenomena.

## 4. Perception and symbolism

The chief lesson to be learned from Berkeley, Whitehead suggests, is that a mental event needs to be conceived in the first instance as a 'process of prehensive unification' (*SMW*, 69).[20] In coining the term 'prehension' he was attempting to signal 'the essential unity of an event' (*SMW*, 72). But it is also a technical term that is designed to forestall the misleading idea that a process of perception involves a conscious apprehension. At the same time the term evokes the essentially relational nature of this activity and so can be regarded as an indication that perception holds the key to understanding his philosophy of organism.[21]

It is essential anyway to come to terms with Whitehead's framing of a theory of perception which analyzes this activity into two fundamental modes that are connected by a process he calls 'symbolic referencing' (or, alternatively, 'organic functioning'). A perception thus refers to a primary mode of awareness (called causal efficacy) which is presupposed by the secondary mode (called presentational immediacy) wherein the initial perception is somehow furnished, as it were, with the actual 'stuff' of thought. Being the more primordial form of perception, the mode of causal efficacy is thus the most likely source of immediate intuitions or genuine in-sights, since perceptions in this mode are 'antecedent to thought about [them].'[22] It is thus highly significant that this mode is characterized by vague feelings which, although they are always felt in the 'present,' refer in part to the settled past.[23]

The second mode of perception is, however, the one that has received the most attention from philosophers and scientists, since it refers to the relatively clear and definite 'contents' of consciousness, or phenomena, which everyone is familiar with. It is in this mode that we tend to anchor our references to 'reality' – that is, the allegedly 'objective' or 'external'

world.[24] But only by ignoring the ever-present possibility that perceptions can include imaginative insights as well as errors, hallucinations, delusions, and so on, can believers in an unproblematic 'external reality' persist in claiming that this secondary mode of perception is the principal, if not the only, one.

Whitehead's postulate of two distinct modes of perception points up, in other words, the immensity of the gulf that separates scientific reasoning and the aims of philosophy. The former is properly concerned with amassing detailed observations and making exact measurements of quantifiable relationships between identifiable entities located in space-time. In philosophy, on the other hand, what we really want to know about concerns perception in the mode of causal efficacy, for these refer to 'the most insistent perception of a circumambient efficacious world of beings' (*S*, 55).[25]

The problem of perception thus comes down to finding a way to speak intelligibly about the nature of our relations to these beings. Here we run up hard against the question of how to account for the efficacy of symbolisms. Whitehead's principal claim is that 'human symbolism has its origins in the symbolic interplay between these two distinct modes of perception of the external world' (*S*, 30). But it is far from clear how to speak about this vital symbolic interplay, for this question goes to the heart of the mystery of consciousness inasmuch as complexes of symbolisms always stand between us and 'reality.'

In other words, Whitehead's approach to the problem of symbolism leads to what may be an unresolvable mystery since symbolic referencing involves continual transitions from symbol to meaning, and vice versa. It is however futile to try to determine what exactly is a symbol and what is its meaning, for 'there are no components of experience which are only symbols or only meanings' (*S*, 10).

Hence it may help to clarify the matter by turning once again to a visual perception. It is clear that eyes do not themselves intuit distinct colored shapes so much as initiate chains or networks of interpretations of signs and signals that result in (but who knows how?) the production of more or less clear and definite visual images. Furthermore, since perception in the mode of causal efficacy refers to influences that are as real as the entities affected by them, to deny that the symbols are somehow intimately connected to 'reality' would be to put into question the reality, or perhaps better the sanity, of the perceiver as an embodied, sentient being.[26] The situation evokes, in other words, the need to entertain a vague image of an embodied efficacious agency capable of producing and participating in a 'reality of symbols,' as Whitehead indicates when

he observes that symbolic referencing refers to 'the interpretative element in human experience.'[27] It is moreover an agency that is capable of 'fusing' the two modes of perception into one perception which yields 'what the actual world is for us' (*S*, 18).

The trope of 'fusing' calls for a long step backward to contemplate a strange situation in which, as Whitehead puts it, 'colours, sounds, tastes, etc., … can with equal truth be described as our sensations or as the qualities of the actual things which we perceive' (*S*, 21–22). In other words, if the *qualia* that characterize conscious apprehensions of the phenomenal world arise during this 'fusing,' they cannot be mere ornaments, for they are 'relational between the perceiving subject and the perceived things,' where the perceived things 'are actual in the same sense as we are' (*S*, 21). Thus Whitehead forces his readers to face up to the possibility that there is no language capable of directly describing the mystery of perception, for he also observes that

> there cannot be symbolic reference between percepts derived from one mode and percepts from the other mode, unless in some way these percepts intersect. By this 'intersection' I mean that a pair of such percepts must have elements of structure in common, whereby they are marked out for the action of symbolic reference.
>
> (*S*, 49)

In searching for a metaphor to clarify this obscure business, Whitehead fastens upon the notion of catalysis. He observes, for instance, that 'the qualities entertained as objects in conceptual activity are of the nature of catalytic agents, in the sense in which that phrase is used in chemistry' (*MT*, 168). However, if the activity of 'marking out' has a creative dimension, a nonsystematic metaphorics is surely required, one that must be capable of doing justice to a dynamic process of 'bringing together' that involves a kind of 'fusion' of two quite different 'schemes of presentation of the *same* world' (*S*, 30, italics mine). If a visual experience, say, also presupposes healthy eyes and sufficient light, how can a quality-laden visual image arise from a catalysis involving a flood of signs that are presented in the form of, say, colorless electromagnetic 'wave-particles'? Eyes do not themselves generate spatiotemporally located colored shapes so much as provide the first links in chains or networks of interpretations that bring into play many different kinds of cells in the body, processes that eventually result in what some people refer to as a projection of visual images. But this metaphor is also misleading, as Whitehead himself notes, for '[t]here are no bare sensations

which are first experienced and then projected' since 'the projection is an integral part of the situation, quite as original as the sense-data'(*S*, 14).

A quite different use of figurative language would seem to be needed, one that is essentially indirect and/or poetic, as is indicated by Whitehead's example of a lyric poet who enters a forest in order to contemplate trees in the hope of producing not just another description of the ordinary but rather a glimpse of the extraordinary – something that would normally go unnoticed in everyday life. For he notes that the word 'tree' and the image of a tree

> enter into our experience on equal terms; … [so that] it would be just as sensible, viewing the question abstractedly, for trees to symbolize the word 'tree' as for the word to symbolize the trees.
>
> (*S*, 12)

The implication is that poets earn their keep just because they continually demonstrate the centrality of Kant's claim for the indispensability of imagination in the vital, as opposed to habit-governed, moments of fusion which result in the production of novel (as opposed to habit-governed) experiences. Or to put this another way, the fact that poetry and indeed many other types of art-form are found in all cultures worthy of the name indicates that *only* a mythopoeic approach may be able to do justice to a 'reality of symbols' whose peculiar nature may ultimately reflect the state of cultivation or health of the souls of the symbolizers.

## 5. Minding and imagining

The everyday world, in any event, can be viewed as an elaborate system of symbolic veils into which are woven a vast network of meanings; it is here that we must seek the 'objective reality' that scientistic thinkers try so vainly to pin down systematically. While it is not hard to believe that 'the object of symbolism is the enhancement of the importance of what is symbolized' (*S*, 8), it is still a moot question whether our choices of symbolisms betoken anything more than conventional means for communicating and recording whatever happens to interest us. On the other hand, the existence of art indicates that it is not incidental that human beings create symbolisms far in excess of their practical needs. Every perduring art form attests to a long history of perhaps subconscious acts of symbolizing that once upon a time involved a perspicacious capturing of 'real' or genuine insights in nets of symbolisms.

It is furthermore conceivable that the mystical/mythical elements of symbolizing were involved in this capturing at earlier times: they are in any case elicited whenever 'normal' or customary ways of 'seeing' are shaken and cracks open up, if only for a moment, in the walls of belief-habits that protect minds from having to gaze into the abyss that so frightened Kant. Such moments may signal sudden intuitions of 'natural' connections between hitherto unconnected 'objects.' This conjecture is consonant with the Heraclitean tenor of Whitehead's general approach, so it may be useful to note one of Heraclitus's more cryptic observations; namely, Diels 101.[28] This Luigi Romeo interprets as saying: 'The lord, who has the oracle in Delphi, neither discloses nor hides his thought, but indicates it through signs.'[29] The importance of this insight for understanding cognition, says Romeo, lies in its suggestion that the intimate nature of things is hidden inside all of us, so that 'each person must analyze himself on the basis of internal signs (as well as external ones that might act only as catalysts).' Or in other words, 'each human being has his own built-in oracle as part of his mind,' which he/she discovers through intuitions.[30]

This interpretation of Heraclitus's intriguing remark thus resonates strongly with Whitehead's express denial, when preparing the ground for his fundamental theory of perception, of 'the tacit presupposition of the 'mind' as a passively receptive substance' (*S*, 32). One of his most important insights may thus be implicit in the following informal observation on the relation between minds and world:

> mind is inside its images, not its images inside the mind. I am immersed in a topic of mathematics, not the reverse. We are actors in scenes, not the scenes inside us.[31]

This suggests that it would be better always to speak of 'minding' instead of 'mind.' Furthermore, if mind is inside its images, then minding must be inside its imaging, which indicates that this utterly obscure activity is the source of our most valuable concepts. Once again, we come to the possibility that, as the oracle at Delphi reminds us, only certain well-cultivated souls have the capacity to interpret signs in a manner that is in tune with the grammar of the 'reality of symbols,' a grammar that reflects a Heraclitean *Logos*.

This conjecture recalls the oft-noted remarkable effectiveness of mathematical symbolisms which indicate that particularly well-developed mathematical imaginations can indeed bring us close to 'reality' – through fashioning relatively simple (as compared with the richness of

word-symbolisms) codifications of perspicacious intuitive imaginings.[32] Indeed, the manifest ability of some gifted mathematicians, or mathematical physicists, like Whitehead himself, to become immersed in highly abstruse and apparently free-floating systems of symbols, while augmenting the scope and widening the usefulness of these systems, lends weight to the view that the most valuable acts of meaning-making take place, as it were, in the empty spaces between symbols in ways that will forever elude systematic (causal) explanations. But not only mathematicians in the West indirectly confirm Whitehead's principal claim that there is a 'type of mental functioning which by its nature yields immediate acquaintance with fact' (*S*, 7). This view is also supported by the effectiveness of natural languages, since these types of symbolism are informed by 'localized' linguistic grammars that have arguably evolved from prelinguistic imagings.[33] But if this is so, pragmatic considerations must be placed second to those that involve mythopoeic acts of symbolizing. For at this point we arrive at what may be the source of philosophy's difficulties as well as a kind of proof of the cultural significance of myth, for the importance of the latter may be reflected in the quality of the systems of symbolism that happen to predominate in the enveloping culture. As I noted earlier, philosophy's critical task is obliged, as Whitehead puts it, to begin 'in the rough' with moments of felt importance and interest. To get any further requires forming a happy alliance between imagination and certain feelings or emotions that may lead (one can only hope) to a metaphorics capable of serving as a reliable guide for the crucial choices involved in both the making of symbolisms and their assessment.[34] It is therefore small wonder that attempts to account for the activity of perception always land in a murky situation that is in fact quite familiar to everyone who admits that 'words and phrases carry with them an enveloping suggestiveness and an emotional efficacy' (*S*, 67). The implication is that responsible world-making ultimately *depends* on well-educated symbolizers who have somehow learned how to deal properly with the emotional side of thinking and perceiving, the side whose importance is emphasized by Whitehead in his discussion of the mode of causal efficacy.[35]

That is to say, Whitehead's account of perception leads in the end to the possibility that art provides the best place to study the complex business of symbolizing. Not that this resolves all the difficulties noted above; far from it, for art itself is inescapably immersed in experimental mindings that are as prone to error or muddle as they are to getting things 'right,' if not more so. Indeed, Whitehead claims that 'error is primarily the product of symbolic reference, and not of conceptual analysis'

(*S*, 19), which implies that error is just a fact of all life. Yet '[e]rror in symbolic reference,' Whitehead continues, 'is the discipline which promotes imaginative freedom' (*S*, 19).[36] But by the same token, it is the discipline that exacts a high price for failure since an uncritical imagination can result in death.

Yet when everything goes well, symbolic referencing can be justly referred to as the core of an organic functioning of reason which is a symbolizing activity that is capable on occasion of approaching the Heraclitean *Logos*.

If one adopts Whitehead's view, that 'error is primarily the product of symbolic reference, and not of conceptual analysis' (*S*, 19), to get something right implies an artful use of symbols. The implication is that that an educational system that fosters well-cultivated souls is far more important than one that develops clever minds, a possibility that seems implicit in Kant's early claim that the faculty of imagination is 'a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever.' But be this as it may, it would be a mistake to associate all error in human knowledge-making with misfortune; error attests mainly to the fact that the human animal enjoys a wider range of more sophisticated faculties than the 'lower' animals, which is consonant with the possibility that every form of life is to some degree invested with the powers that must underwrite the fostering of imaginative freedom.'

## 6. A 'reality of symbols'

Briefly, then, if good philosophical minding depends on good imaging, and this depends in turn on good imagining, the problems of philosophy may be much better understood by poets than by scientists. An outstanding exception to this rule is the physicist Wolfgang Pauli, who, being famous among his coworkers for his ruthless criticisms of their interpretative efforts, cannot be lightly dismissed. As I have already noted, he provides much support for the view that our connections to reality are mediated by hidden processes that lead to the construction of more or less perspicacious symbolisms. Furthermore, despite a reputation for being a ruthless critic, he argued for the impossibility of drawing 'a clear borderline between scientific and religious thought,' since 'we must always include the observer in our picture of the world.'[37] Hence his wide-ranging explorations of the problem of how to interpret quantum phenomena included both philosophical and historical investigations of the thought of the premoderns, which led him to the conviction that the intuitive musings of the alchemists are just as relevant to the quest

for understanding as those of modern physicists. He may thus be cited as a rare example of a scientist who managed not only to liberate himself from the notion of an 'objective' reality and the tyranny of the 'laws of nature,' but also as an especially astute interpreter of the world who had no trouble believing that the powers of reason have both an unconscious and a conscious dimension.[38] He can therefore also be read as adumbrating a thoroughly nonmodern naturalism roughly based on the idea that reality needs to be conceived as a *conjunctio* of matter and spirit.[39]

Briefly, then, Pauli helps open up the possibility that spiritual forces or powers are involved in the interplay of natural events at the quantum level.[40] That this does not entail a complete rejection of the aims of science is shown by his use of Bohr's Principle of Complementarity to predict the existence of neutrinos long before any empirical evidence was found for them. It is also worth noting that he insisted on the 'objective nature' of some of his dream experiences which were, he claimed, capable of providing a kind of 'background physics.'[41] Pauli's evocation of a 'reality of symbols' is, in short, consonant with the view which informs Whitehead's theory of symbolism, that an adequate interpretative language must be able to accommodate the 'irrational' (for want, says Pauli, of a better word). But perhaps the most significant of his claims is that it is just as important to get the psychology of inquiry right as it is to get the physics right. Indeed, this contrast can be viewed as an illustration of his general claim that Bohr's Principle of Complementarity has 'global' philosophical significance, a claim that resonates with Whitehead's essentially nonmodern and therapeutic approach to philosophy which eschews dualistic thinking. His treatment of the central question, of how to reconcile the two modes of perception wherein links are forged between images and symbols indicates that good symbolisms stem from 'primitive' occasions of sensibility which bespeak faculties of imagination exercised by well-cultivated souls. This conjecture can perhaps be extended to apply to every level of organic functioning – even to those types of organizations which are governed by rigid habits, for even here there may be primitive souls engaged in primordial acts of symbolic referencing.[42]

While undoubtedly unorthodox, this conjecture is quite compatible with the view that Nature bespeaks an evolutionary scale of degrees of sentience, one which descends from the level of conscious human organisms to virtually dead matter, and ascends in the other direction to take in the entire cosmos. Hence if the entire world can be depicted as the scene of a vast Cosmos of mindings, it can also be conceived as held together by the functionings of a plurality of different kinds of

soul. One thus arrives at the cosmic question of whether Spirit informs the whole of Nature, a question that is also suggested by the Heraclitean picture of the world as a flux of occasions of sensibility that are perhaps best modeled as embodied souls, or ensouled bodies.

But pending further investigation, it must suffice here to note that if one pursues the question of whether the world is aptly described as a 'reality of symbols' far enough, one arrives at the possibility that it is a fatal error in philosophy to dismiss the mystical out of hand. For the mystical turns out not to refer to an uncanny 'something' that is alien to everyday sense experiencing. It is always right in front of our noses, as it were, as well as in our mouths when we speak, or in our eyes whenever we open them. What the mystical is most strikingly 'other' to are those 'islanded' or solipsistic minds that strive to reduce everything, regardless of the cost to intelligibility, to the mechanical workings of an unknowable, inactive, or dead substrate that is supposedly capable of causing ideas and images.

## 7. On private and public symbolizing

If appearances or phenomena generally elicit a passing parade of images/symbols, the puzzle of consciousness thus turns out to be not a problem of *explaining* the genesis of images, ideas, and so on, but rather a problem of how to assess those symbolisms that appear to be able to help illuminate apparently important aspects of experiencing. The example of art suggests, moreover, that some images and/or symbols deserve to be called 'real' or 'true' in the sense that they can be regarded as (in Susanne Langer's words) 'primitive symbols.'[43] But the example of art also indicates that one cannot do justice to the topic of symbolism without attending to the public dimension of symbolizing; that is, to the historical, cultural, and geographical 'location' of the types of symbolization that predominate in a given culture.

This dimension also brings in imagination, as Castoriadis helps make clear. He invokes a 'social instituting imaginary' in order to account for the differences that distinguish one culture from another (*RI*, 149). Such an imaginary provides the essential public or social counterweight to private radical imaginations for the proper contrast of society is not the individual – since every individual is a product of social forces – but rather the singular psyche. Castoriadis thus implies that the quality of the productions of a singular psyche-soma is bound up with the degree of cultivation of the collective imagination of the enveloping culture.

According to him, 'social imaginary significations' create 'a "representation" of the world, including the society itself and its place in this

world; but this is far from being an intellectual construct' (*RI*, 152). But here another tricky question opens up: how should one interpret at the level of a society the '*acausal vis formandi*' which can influence, for better or for worse, the radical imagination at the level of singular psyche-somas? If the quality of the production of images and ideas by singular psyche-somas is affected by, if not utterly dependent on, the health of the relevant soul, why not think that the '*acausal vis formandi*' of the 'instituting social imaginary' is likewise affected by an only more or less healthy collective soul?

In Castoriadis's view, this *vis* of 'the significations and institutions' of a society can be traced to the 'anonymous collective and, more generally, the socio-historical field' (*RI*, 138–39). But since the latter field does not emerge out of nowhere, it is possible that the quality of a collective imagination reflects essentially spiritual forces at work in an evolving (or devolving) collective unconscious. That is to say, what is *taken* to be good reasoning in a given culture may reflect a healthy or an unhealthy collective imagination. For Castoriadis also notes that societies like individual psyche-somas are partially free creations, and thus creations *ex nihilo*, although they are neither 'creations *in nihilo*, nor *cum nihilo*. … They are creations under constraints' (*RI*, 149). Thus invoking the sort of partial freedom that belongs to radical imagination, he indicates that the quality of the creative work done by a collective imagination is similar to that of an individual imagination, which I have suggested is intimately involved with Spirit, and not just physical and mental circumstances. That is to say, if one assumes there is an ongoing reciprocal interaction between the sociocultural collective imagination and the radical imaginations of individual psyche-somas, it is possible that a culture will thrive or decline in tandem with the state of health of both the collective soul and individual souls.

One thus arrives in the end at the possibility that the topic of myth is not only relevant, it stands close to the center of would-be rational inquiry; indeed, it is conceivable that *only* myths could guide the evolution of a collective imagination and hence determine which ideologies will predominate and govern everyday living and thinking.[44] A healthy collective soul, when viewed in this light, would be one attracted to good myths, a conclusion that is fully consonant with Whitehead's claim that 'the object of symbolism is the enhancement of the importance of what is symbolized' (*S*, 63). Perhaps myth plays a role in 'culturing' analogous to the role that metaphors play in minding. And if there is a mythopoeic give-and-take in the symbolizing activities that relate the radical imaginations of singular psyche-somas to the

enveloping collective imagination, there is no escape from the mystical dimension invoked by Whitehead's story about the nature of the symbolic connections that are formed between psyches and somas in experiencing. Indeed, if myths are the ultimate supports for the ideologies or belief-systems to which individual psyche-somas are obliged by and large to subscribe, mythopoeic thinking and poetic metaphoring may be inextricably intertwined.

## 8. Symbolism and meaning

Be this as it may, while philosophy can be said to be a 'rationalization of mysticism,' it must also be a quest for a dynamic wisdom that is just as capable of 'moving on' in this evolutionary world as everything else. There is therefore no easy answer to the question whether any given mode of symbolic expression that reflects the ongoing production of meanings in the world is intrinsically meaningful. Yet Whitehead has no doubt that symbolizing is a serious business:

> We enjoy the symbol, but we also penetrate to the meaning. The symbols do not create their meaning: the meaning, in the form of actual effective beings reacting upon us, exists for us in its own right. But the symbols discover this meaning for us.
>
> (*S*, 57)

However, it may be still asked whether he has made much headway with the profound puzzle implicit in his related claim that there is 'some community between the natures of symbol and meaning' (*S*, 8).

I have suggested that our most valuable meanings arise from an essentially mythopoeic imagination exercised by well-developed souls who are particularly sensitive to all the potentialities of human thought. If this sort of functioning is dependent on prior acts of symbolizing, it may be doubted that language provides the best locale for examining the whole convoluted situation. Language provides only one means of linking image-symbol to image-symbol; which is to say that it is only half-true that, as Castoriadis puts it, 'human reason … entails radical imagination, but also would be nothing without language' (*RI*, 137). When the matter is viewed from a Whiteheadian perspective, it might be better to say not that Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato, but rather that it is a more or less successful continuation of certain insights of Heraclitus. For some of the most important of Whitehead's observations relating to the business of symbolizing recall

the oracle at Delphi, whose communications through signs imply that the *Logos* speaks as much *through* a community of interpreters as it speaks *to* them, if it speaks at all.

Evidence for this can be found in the subtleties of everyday communications which indicate that apparently isolated individual psychesomas often respond in exactly the same way to certain signs and symbols (with slight differences due to minor differences of perspective, emphasis, and so on). This consideration is merely shoved under the carpet by those who assert that there is no mystery at all to consciousness. Yet one need only consider those exclamations of pleasure that are spontaneously emitted by people marveling at the splendor of a sunset. Doubts are seldom raised whether or not *that* peculiar quality of redness is 'really' or 'objectively there.' On the contrary, it is usually tacitly agreed during the excitement of the moment that *that* particular quality is part of the normal furniture of the world. But it is perhaps better to say that *that* particular quality of red is emblematic of what is manifestly possible in human experiencing, and hence neither a 'something' imposed upon the world by independent subjective minds nor an aspect of 'objective reality' in the sense that it is 'there' whether or not there is anyone at hand to experience it.

So pending a closer look at this matter, one can at least say that if *that* sunset 'over there' is being enjoyed 'here' by both observers in a similar manner, the that of seeing is every bit as mysterious as *the how of seeing*.[45] The plain, everyday truth seems to be that human sensibility *tout court* is proof that actuality refers to mysterious meetings of 'inner' and 'outer' processes that yield partly unified and identical worlds, despite differences that reflect diverse histories, different perspectives, and so on, not to mention different degrees of cultivation of the faculty of imagination. But to recover from the modern attempt to suppress mysticism altogether, with the help of a covert form of scientistic mysticism, perhaps requires not only the widespread adoption of a more adequate metaphysical imaginary (of the sort Whitehead sketches) but also a prior mythopoeic therapy.[46]

# 4
# A Nearly Comprehensive Naturalism

> 'Let the dead bury the dead, but do you preserve your human nature, the depth of which was never yet fathomed by a philosophy made up of notions and mere logical entities.'[1]

## 1. What is naturalism?

A common response to the question of what a properly naturalistic explanation might look like is to define it as a rationalist account that, in the words of Richard Giere, 'appeals only to the naturally evolved cognitive capacities of human agents together with their historically developed cultural artifacts.'[2] This definition is apt, so far as it goes, which is often not very far since the meaning of 'naturally evolved' is usually left undefined. Or rather it is silently assumed that one or another version of the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution will justify the use of the term 'evolved.' Yet the very idea that extant forms of organization of matter have evolved from 'lesser' forms calls for an account of evolution that can take seriously the possibility that nature is self-creative; and this cries out for a metaphysical inquiry that contemporary naturalists seek to avoid, no doubt because it threatens the modernist credo that the events of Nature are controlled by rigid and immutable laws.

In direct contrast, Whitehead places creativity at the head of his naturalistic list of fundamental concepts in his attempt to depict a thoroughly evolutionary Nature that does not enlist *ad hoc* assumptions which bring in extra- or supra-natural forces, powers, laws, principles, or whatever. For while he acknowledges that mechanistic materialists have been successful in respect to achieving consistency, the materialistic doctrine falls well short of what is required from philosophy; namely, 'a

coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which *every* element of our experience can be interpreted.'[3] He thus presents the dissenting naturalist with an immense challenge: show how to frame 'a complete cosmology' capable of bringing our 'aesthetic, moral, and religious interests into relation with those concepts of the world which have their origin in natural science' (*PR*, xi–xii).

Drawing special attention to the radical nature of Whitehead's departure from the orthodox conception of a rational explanation, D. R. Griffin, as editor of a collection of essays on 'constructive postmodern philosophy,' suggests that Whitehead's approach exemplifies the best in postmodern philosophy since it involves not only a deconstruction of modernist presuppositions but also a reconstruction of the idea of rational inquiry on broader, more inclusive, and morally responsible grounds.[4] I am suggesting that, in keeping with the line of thought I have sketched in previous chapters, it would be better to describe Whitehead as attempting to frame a thoroughly nonmodern naturalism in the sense outlined by Bruno Latour, who charges the moderns with never having been truly modern since they never tried to bring all the explanatory resources of nature, culture, and discourse under one roof. They instead opened up a chasm between epistemology and ontology by tying the former to a sensationalist theory of perception and the latter to the doctrine of mechanistic materialism. However, in attempting to reverse this calamity, Whitehead is obliged to problematize the very ideas of knowledge, truth, reason, and reality while indicating at the same time that they do not need to be abandoned. Yet the relations that obtain between minds and nature cannot be analyzed in terms of either a correspondence or a coherence theory of truth, for what is required lies somewhere 'in-between.'[5] What this view entails is the need for a radically revised conception of good reasoning that does not divorce nature from culture, or knowers from known. Yet it still makes sense to speak of good reasoning which is somehow in tune with the creative forces in nature, as Whitehead indicates in the Introduction to the *Function of Reason*, wherein he declares that '[r]eason is the self-discipline of the originative element in history.'[6] He thereby brings to the fore a profound metaphysical problem: how might a would-be comprehensive Whiteheadian naturalist locate this 'originative element' *in* Nature as a natural entity in its own right?

## 2. Natural philosophy and natural entities

In his early attempt to rescue the philosophy of nature from its 'bifurcation' into an apparent one that is apprehended in awareness and a

causal one that is the reason for this awareness, Whitehead indicates the need for caution when attempting to rethink philosophy of nature. Declaring that 'a classification of natural entities is the beginning of natural philosophy,'[7] he defines a 'natural entity (or thing)' as some definite characteristic (or 'factor of fact') in an actual event.[8] But he is careful to state that he is not using the notion of an 'event' in accordance with the Aristotelian idea of a material 'substance' as the ultimate substratum carrying attributes of 'things.' At the same time he declares that natural philosophy must be distinguished from metaphysics, for the special task of the natural philosopher is to elucidate a concept of nature in accordance with the general assumption that '[n]ature is known to us in our experience as a complex of passing events' (*CN*, 166).

Thus the early Whitehead's conception of philosophy of nature is essentially of a type of inquiry that investigates the structuring exhibited by events 'in their mutual relations and [with regard to] certain characters of their own' (*CN*, 167). In this sort of inquiry, the natural philosopher should restrict himself/herself to the 'factors of fact' and the relations between them that are actually delivered up in 'sense-awareness.' This last notion can therefore be viewed as the central pivot of Whitehead's initial attempt to elucidate the idea of an event as a natural entity. He claims, for instance, that sense-awareness is 'an ingredient or factor' of sense-perception which is distinct from thought (*CN*, 4). So when the natural philosopher refers to Nature as the terminus of sense-perception, the object of attention is not sense-awareness itself, for what is perceived is 'perceived as an entity. … which for thought is *beyond* the fact of that sense-awareness' (*CN*, 4, italics mine).

Encapsulating this special circumstance in the phrase 'nature is closed to mind,' Whitehead thus prompts the question whether his first attempt at analyzing the concept of nature exposes the bare bones of what I am suggesting is *a*, if not *the*, crucial problem of naturalism: whether our awarenesses of natural events depend on spontaneous moments-of-sentience-without-thought in the sense, say, of intuitive 'graspings' of ideas. For it may be impossible to understand perception in general without appealing to such occult aspects of mentality as intuition and/or imagination. How else could one make sense of a capacity for sifting, as it were, the muddy stream of events for pure nuggets of 'factors of fact' which are apprehended as just whatever they are, uncontaminated in any way by what Whitehead refers to as 'psychic additions'? For we shall immediately go astray, he warns us, if we focus on the question of 'what nature does to the mind'; we have no alternative but to concentrate on

sense-awareness or 'what we are aware of in perception' – 'what the mind knows of nature' (*CN*, 27–28).

But even supposing he is right, how could a theory of perception be constructed on such a basis, granted the obscurity of the whole situation? How could the developing powers suggested by a dawning of sense-awareness be elucidated without appealing, if only silently, to some prior conception of mind? For Whitehead is not denying that there *are* relations between minds and nature:

> The closure of nature does not carry with it any metaphysical doctrine of the disjunction of nature and mind. It means that in sense-perception nature is disclosed as a complex of entities whose mutual relations are expressible in thought without reference to mind, that is, without reference either to sense-awareness or to thought.
>
> (*CN*, 4–5)

It cannot therefore be overemphasized that one of Whitehead's chief concerns in *Concept of Nature* is to find a way to escape from the muddles produced by the moderns when they approach the problem of perception with such queries as: what stimulates mind to sense-awareness? This question merely reduces 'the grand [i.e., metaphysical] question of the relations between natural entities and mind' to the 'petty form of the interaction between body and mind' (*CN*, 27). What the natural philosopher should ask is not: what *causes* the perception of red in the sunset but rather: 'When red is found in nature, what else is found there also?' (*CN*, 41).

Yet 'finding' presupposes a capacity to discriminate; that is, to selectively discover 'factors of fact' that are in some sense 'given.' But if this is so, a good part of the problem of perception is what to make of the factor of 'finding.' It seems undeniable that a perceptual event involves a certain capacity to recognize recurring 'things,' such as a certain sensual quality. Mind surely hovers very closely in the background if every terminus of this activity is not only 'a something for mind' but is also the locale of a discovery of, say, *that* peculiar shade of red *there*. Do we not need to speak first and last, in other words, not about passive receptors of 'external' information but always about a power or powers that are dynamically engaged in 'findings' that involve selections and evaluations? Furthermore, individual 'factors of fact' are not 'objects' that can be discerned in total isolation from other 'factors of fact': as Whitehead himself notes, when redness is found in nature, it always comes intertwined with a host of other factors of fact.

Now those factors of fact which are discerned in sense-awareness, and which Whitehead calls 'objects' (in the sense that they do not share in the passage of nature, but rather appear unchanged wherever they are needed), supply the (perhaps only relatively) permanent characteristics of natural events. It is necessary to acknowledge the existence of such 'objects' in order to satisfy the demands of 'common sense' insofar as the very notion of sensibility generally presupposes that nature is shot through with uniformities and regularities that connect some elements of the flux of events. Thus when scientists or natural philosophers set out to analyze, with varying degrees of subtlety, the orderly aspects of characters (or characters of characters) and relations (or relations of relations) that are accessible to sense perceptions, they presuppose an inherent capacity *within* certain types of events to re-cognize 'objects' (such as the redness that characterizes only some events some of the time). To assert the existence of a 'perceptual object' is thus to elicit perhaps many intricately and complexly related powers of selection, evaluation, recognition, and so on. Many, if not most, of these powers are unconscious, as Whitehead indicates with such remarks as: 'the perception of one sense-object in a certain situation leads to a subconscious awareness of other sense-objects in the same situation' (*CN*, 154).

Thus mind creeps ever closer, for recognition implies a mental capacity to respond spontaneously, unconsciously, yet differentially to certain 'factors of fact.' Indeed, recognition, as Whitehead himself stresses, is not a mere passive reception of the 'same again': it 'is in its essence sense-awareness in its *capacity of positing* before us factors in nature which do not pass' (*CN*, 125, italics mine). It is thus also worth noting that this positing capacity also 'takes place within the present without any intervention of pure memory' (*CN*, 124). Furthermore, if Whitehead is right to insist that 'all we know of nature is in the same boat, to sink or swim together' (*CN*, 148), there must be recognitions not only of characters and qualities such as redness but also of types of relations between them, such as the causal connectivities that Hume famously pointed out could not be discerned in ordinary sense perception.

Hence when Whitehead introduces the character of recognition into his story of nature and describes it as a 'non-intellectual relation of sense-awareness which connects the mind with a factor of nature without passage' (*CN*, 143), he opens up the possibility that recognition generally refers to species-specific capacities or powers for intuiting real abstract objects. This is because 'an object is often known merely as an abstract relation not directly posited in sense-awareness although it is there in nature' (*CN*, 126).

The upshot is that if what we know of nature ultimately comes down to sense-awareness (understood in Whitehead's broadest sense), his early philosophy of science gives rise to the burning question whether an attempt to frame a thoroughly nonmodern, naturalistic account of perception must be Platonistic in character, but in a sense that is quite different from traditional Platonism.

## 3. What is a naturalistic theory of perception?

Now as Whitehead, the thoroughly committed empiricist, observes, 'it is impossible to scrutinize too carefully the character to be assigned to the datum in the act of experience' (*PR*, 157). Such an inspection is however not easy insofar as every instance of 'sense-awareness' is part of a nature that is 'always moving on' (*CN*, 54). It is thus small wonder that perception poses a fundamental problem for naturalists of every stripe, but the Whiteheadian naturalist can at least begin without the burden of an incoherent set of assumptions (or prejudices) (such as those involved in sensationalist accounts of perception). For it is one of Whitehead's basic presuppositions that sense-awareness bespeaks a certain 'interaction *within* nature' (*CN*, 31, italics mine), which agrees with ordinary experience inasmuch as an apprehension means in the first instance an awareness that 'something is going on then-there.' That is to say, sense-awareness always bespeaks a certain 'situatedness' that involves recognitions of qualities or 'factors of fact' (*CN*, 75). Thus the situation calls for a new term, namely, 'percipient event' – which encapsulates the implication that an act of apprehension is a kind of focusing of awareness on a 'something' which can itself be a focus of awareness (*CN*, 107).

It would be a serious mistake, in brief, to begin by trying to separate the 'here-now' dimension of a perception from the 'then-there' aspect. Hence it seems pointless to try any longer to keep mind at arm's length. That is, one might better speak of perception in terms of a kind of 'minding' that links a focus of sensibility to other such foci. Indeed, Whitehead refers to sense-awareness in one place as 'a procedure of mind' (*CN*, 67) while also referring to a percipient event in another place as 'that in nature from which the mind perceives' (*CN*, 107). On top of that, he warns us against associating a percipient event with a free-floating mind; it should rather be referred in the first instance to 'the bodily life of the incarnate mind.'

Such observations indicate, at the very least, the need for a special language capable of doing justice to perception as an aspect of the naturing of Nature which consists of a complex, dynamic network of sentient interactions that defy simple descriptions, never mind precise

analyses. Which is to say that although Whitehead appears at first sight to be leading his readers into an impasse, this is only the case if one insists on clinging to 'classical' or modern ways of thinking about how sense is made. So at this point, it may be useful to address the question whether a percipient event *qua* 'apprehending' act is analogous in some respects to a human act of representing the world which, insofar as representing generally implies an activity of construction involving many subactivities, not least of which is imagination, cannot perhaps be justly treated without bringing in intuitions or rational instincts.

Indeed, the 'functions of the body shade off into those of other events' (*CN*, 107), according to Whitehead, which seems to imply that bodily instincts are just as respectable as immediate intuitions. Such a conjecture is fairly explicit in *Process and Reality*. In direct opposition to Hume, Whitehead holds that 'we have direct intuition of inheritance and memory. … [so that] the only problem is, so to describe the general character of experience that these intuitions may be included' (*PR*, 167). He herewith indicates the need for a theory of actuality modeled on human memory and anticipation (since the situation generally calls for a conjoining of passive bodies with active minds).

It is thus not insignificant that he allows himself in *Concept of Nature* a brief respite from the restrictions he has earlier placed on himself in doing natural philosophy. Alluding to the metaphysical problem of 'the psychological relation of subjects to objects,' he refers to the Russian philosopher N. O. Lossky who quotes an extract from Schelling who defends his claim for intuitional knowledge thus:

> In the 'Philosophy of Nature' [says Schelling] I considered the subject-object called nature in its activity of self-constructing. In order to understand it, we must rise to an intellectual intuition of nature. The empiricist does not rise thereto, and for this reason in all his explanations it is always *he himself* that proves to be constructing nature. … A *Natur-philosoph* [by contrast] raises nature to independence, and makes it construct itself, and he never feels, therefore, the necessity of opposing nature as constructed (*i.e.*, as experience) to real nature, or of correcting the one by means of the other.
>
> (*CN*, 47–48)[9]

Part I of Lossky's book is an extensive argument in support of this rejection of the narrow empiricism of the moderns who merely assume (thus paving the way for utter skepticism and the denial of certain facts of experience) that the self is completely isolated from the not-self. After

showing that many of the things that are normally assigned to the self really belong to the not-self (e.g., 'my' bodily life), Lossky suggests that the only entities that can be clearly assigned to the self in a perception are 'experiences of medium complexity' which involve the activity of constructing just *this* perception. This ineliminable element of subjectivity indicates that knowledge of the external world is knowledge of 'objects' that are 'transcendent in relation to the knowing subject but immanent in the process of knowing' (Lossky, 93). Lossky thus puts his finger on a crucial point when he concludes that 'our knowledge of the outer world in no way differs from our knowledge of the inner world, in so far as immediacy is concerned' (Lossky, 92).

Lossky indicates, in other words, that empirical knowledge is, at least in good part, intuitional knowledge.[10] Or to put this another way, the contents of veridical perceptions – that is, those that 'bear witness to the existence of the external world' – are not *merely* subjective representations of elements of that world: they must 'actually contain elements of that world' (Lossky, 96). However, it is still a moot question as to how to deal with the errors that can creep into processes which do not so much produce individual representations of reality as precipitate a network of 'mixed' representings that may include fallible intuitings. This element of fallibility is perhaps reason enough for Whitehead to say that even though the theory of perception that he is proposing is more adequate than the modern variety, it also 'admits a greater ultimate mystery and a deeper ignorance' (*CN*, 73).

It is thus not incidental that Lossky refers to his theory of intuitional knowledge as 'mystical empiricism' in contradistinction to 'individualistic empiricism' which is based on the assumption that the self is entirely isolated from the not-self. This designation is in accord, he maintains, with the fundamental principle of empiricism which is based on 'the assumption that objects can be known only in so far as they are experienced by a knowing subject.' The adjective 'mystical' is thus significant in that it implies that experiencing refers in the first instance to the possibility of grasping aspects of the world *as it is in itself* and not merely in terms of its *effects* on the self (Lossky, 100–6). This capacity for grasping takes in relations which, according to Lossky, 'always belong to the sphere of the non-sensuous':

> Relations even between sensuous elements involve over and above these elements their synthesis or unity – and no psychologist has ever yet discovered the organ of sense which brings about that unity. (Lossky, 103)

Thus Whitehead's passing reference to Schelling and Lossky is pregnant with hints that a truly nonmodern naturalism ought never to try to *define* knowledge and truth but only to look for just and adequate ways to speak about the obscure business of knowledge-making and truth-finding.

## 4. Intuition and principles of knowledge

That is to say, the early Whitehead can be read as laying a ground for a semi-Platonic naturalism in which at least some intuitions and/or insights can be regarded as legitimate candidates for the class of natural entities, for only some acts of perception may involve 'direct' but fallible intuitions not only of contingent facts but also of Platonic ideas. But the situation becomes considerably more complicated if an intuition *qua* natural entity must also be regarded as intimately involved in 'the passage of nature,' which Whitehead maintains is 'only another name for the creative force of existence' (*CN*, 73). This consideration not only requires a radical rethinking of empiricism but also of the meaning of rationalism, as indicated by his implicit endorsement in *Science and the Modern World* of a 'principle of rationalism' which for Lossky is 'indispensable to all human thinking' (Lossky, 119). More specifically, this principle asserts in effect that 'mere' thinking can lead to genuine knowledge of the uniform regularities that every naturalist assumes, more or less explicitly, to be present in the flux of events. But as Lossky observes, this principle has been seriously distorted by Kant and his followers, who have removed from the concept of appearance the idea of 'a living, though inadequate, revelation of some deeper essence' (Lossky, 125).

That Whitehead is wholly sympathetic to this investment of mere thinking with quasi-mystical powers is perhaps most evident in his declaration that

> We have to search whether nature does not in its very being show itself as self-explanatory. By this I mean, that the sheer statement, of what things are, may contain elements explanatory of why things are. (*SMW*, 92)

Telling good naturalistic stories about evolution, Whitehead herewith implies, is a serious cognitive enterprise, provided one has developed an appropriate language for the telling. This claim can also be discerned in his defense of speculative reasoning which he maintains can be 'productive of important knowledge' even though it is obliged to rely on

'imaginative generalizations' that aim to uncover the wisdom concealed in ordinary words by means of 'imaginative leaps' (*PR*, 3–5). So when this highly unorthodox view of good philosophical thinking is conjoined with the possibility that perception includes 'real' or genuine intuitions, we arrive at the possibility that knowledge *tout court* ultimately stems from perspicacious acts of intuitive imagining that are themselves always 'moving on.'

In other words, Whitehead's early philosophy of nature lends support to the view that this thoroughly evolutionary world is evolving 'real' meanings along with everything else, although such meanings can only be brought to the surface of consciousness indirectly by means of vague concepts (or word-symbols) which are mysteriously connected to 'real' ideas. This admittedly convoluted conjecture is at least consonant with the fact that experience is always made in an 'ill-defined present' where 'the past and future meet and mingle' (*CN*, 73). And that as everyday life continually reminds us, our moments of awareness bespeak a continual emergence of apparently veridical empirical 'facts' that are often infused with all kinds of errors. So perception in general probably always refers not only to 'direct' insights and intuitions but also to fallible imaginings which put paid to the pervasive myth that 'exact' knowledge is a reasonable goal. These considerations are in accord with Whitehead's respectful references to Kant, who, he says, was 'the great philosopher who first, fully and explicitly, introduced into philosophy the conception of an act of experience as a constructive functioning, transforming subjectivity into objectivity, or objectivity into subjectivity; the order is immaterial in comparison with the general idea' (*PR*, 156). But if 'functioning' refers to efforts to resolve, if only for an instant, the dynamic tensions inherent in the contrast between subjectivity and objectivity, Kant's early stress on the indispensability of imagination in performing this task deserves a special qualification in keeping with Whitehead's 'axiom' of empiricism which states in effect that all knowledge is based in direct intuitive observations, where the adjective 'direct' needs to be qualified by an allusion to the fallible powers of imagination. Hence it is better to speak more generally of a shifting ground of intuitive imaginings.

The situation, in short, points up the truth of what deserves perhaps to be adopted as a general maxim of a Whiteheadian naturalism: '[i]n the real world it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true' (*PR*, 259). For when he adds that 'the importance of truth is, that it adds interest,' the fact of the effectiveness of some highly esoteric symbolisms (such as the use of mathematics in physics), which

stem from impractical feelings of interest, indicates that if some proposition or story relating to some aspect of experiencing is *both* interesting and plausible, it may well be true, even if there is no possibility of direct confirmation or pragmatic verification.

## 5. Toward a Whiteheadian naturalism

In the foregoing discussion I have been mainly concerned with clearing a space in which to examine the naturalistic implications of Whitehead's claim that some intuitings and/or imaginings belong to the category of natural objects. For this is perhaps the principal lesson to be learned from his declaration that 'there is but one nature, namely the nature that is before us in perceptual knowledge' (*CN*, 40). The question is, then, how might one go on to elucidate the implication that at least some intuitions (insofar as they are natural entities) are 'real' or 'true,'as Whitehead indicates when he accords to intuitions a major role in the development of his philosophy of organism. Referring to the centerpiece of his categoreal scheme (as presented in *Process and Reality*) as the Category of the Ultimate (which holds that 'the production of novel togetherness' is 'the ultimate notion embodied in the technical term "concrescence"'), he notes that this ultimacy can only be justified by an appeal to intuition (*PR*, 21–22). It may therefore be a mistake when attempting to construct a Whiteheadian naturalism, as A. H. Johnson in fact suggests, to attend solely, or even principally, to the formal categoreal scheme. Indeed, Johnson describes his own approach to Whitehead's thought as an attempt to correct a common error: 'the widespread neglect of the fact that the basis of Whitehead's philosophy is a series of insights (intuitions).'[11]

But if this is so, the Whiteheadian naturalist has no alternative but to try to determine *which* insights and/or intuitions might be indispensable for a thoroughgoing Whiteheadian naturalism. Not the least of these relate to the notion of emergence, as is evident in his many references to Plato's *Timaeus*. Although Plato himself describes this myth as nothing but a 'likely' story, Whitehead indicates that it conveys his basic intuition, for the philosophy of organism is 'an evolutionary doctrine' that in some points 'only repeats' Plato's *Timaeus*. That is to say, the peculiar value of this myth is the keen awareness it evidences of the possibility that there is an intimate connection between the behaviors of 'things' and their formal characteristics – an awareness that is not exhibited by Sir Issac Newton in his equally monumental *Scholium*. For he concentrates one-sidedly on the static mathematical abstractions of

space, time, material masses, forces, etc., thereby covering over the more fundamental interplay of actual events while rendering evolution opaque to understanding.

The *Timaeus*, in other words, roughly articulates the view that order is neither monolithic nor essentially mathematical; it is rather emergent – for this is Plato's most important, albeit largely ignored, contribution to cosmology. That is, he intuitively realized that nature is intrinsically self-productive of forms of order – that emergent forms of organization refer to 'the evolution of [new types] of order based on new types of dominant societies.'[12] Unlike Newton's cosmology, then, in which the order in nature is 'merely, and completely, *there*, externally designed and obedient' (*PR*, 93), Plato's myth adumbrates an evolutionary conception of matter, an idea that had to wait two thousand years for its vindication by quantum physics.

So without downplaying Whitehead's outstanding contributions to logic, mathematics, and physics, the example of Plato confirms that the would-be Whiteheadian naturalist should begin neither with the formal arguments as laid out in *Process and Reality* nor with his special investigations of the logicomathematical concepts and theories of science. Johnson in fact suggests that some of the most important of Whitehead's ideas are expressed in the nontechnical language of *Science and the Modern World*, where the terms used (e.g., 'inter-fusion,' 'organism,' 'change,' 'endurance') are more in accord with 'the results of ordinary experience' than the technical terms of *Process and Reality* (e.g., 'actual entity,' 'eternal object,' 'prehension,' 'nexus') (Johnson, 163–65).

I shall therefore follow Johnson's lead and treat *Process and Reality* as essentially an elaboration of some of the intuitions and insights that the early Whitehead had accumulated while trying to traverse some of the thorniest thickets of natural philosophy, not the least treacherous of which is that which is concealed in the notion of emergence. Granting that Whitehead is right to credit Plato with intuitively anticipating the most significant result of modern physics, which is that (as Whitehead puts it) the notion of actuality should be tied to 'the structure of evolving processes' (*SMW*, 73), the natural philosopher in search of a Whiteheadian evolutionary naturalism is obliged to address at once an anomaly in the formal treatment of the relation between actual entities and eternal objects. The latter type of entity refers to the regular recurrence of 'objects' or 'forms of definiteness' that answer to the need to account for the uniformities that actually appear in 'the structure of evolving processes.' Yet in his formal exposition of the theory of organism, Whitehead contravenes what I take to be his guiding principle of rationality – one that is implicit in his rejection of the modernist tendency to bifurcate

Nature and in his endorsement of the Kantian idea that subjectivity cannot be divorced from objectivity, that experiencing is a constructive activity.

More specifically, if the fundamental contrast between abstract and concrete must be regarded as complementary, why not treat eternal objects (as ultimate representatives of abstract patterns of ordering) as the complements of actual entities (as ultimate representatives of the concrete)? Whitehead refers to these two primary Categories of Existence, actual entities and eternal objects, as standing out 'with a certain extreme finality,' although he also assigns a more extreme finality to Creativity, which he calls the Category of the Ultimate; for it is 'the universal of universals.' However, this last category does not take in the realm of eternal objects, for the third Category of Explanation decrees that 'there are no novel eternal objects' (*PR*, 22). Yet if novel actual entities can emerge, as a thoroughgoing Whiteheadian story of this evolutionary world must surely hold, and if actual entities march hand in hand through history with eternal objects, why not think that the latter can also emerge?[13]

## 6. Emergence and imagination

Hence the absence of a special niche for intuition/imagination as well as for emergence in Whitehead's categoreal scheme can be cited as a good reason for wanting to range more broadly through all his writings in search of insightful hints.[14] One of these links emergence to the notion of value. In *Science and the Modern World* he declares that an evolutionary philosophy

> cries aloud for a conception of organism as fundamental for nature. It also requires an underlying activity – a substantial activity – expressing itself in individual embodiments, and evolving in achievements of organism. The organism is a unit of emergent value, a real fusion of the characters of eternal objects, emerging for its own sake.
>
> (*SMW*, 107)

Thus prompting the question of how one might go about elucidating the underlying 'substantial activity,' Whitehead indicates that only an anthropomorphic imaginary can do justice to a world in which reality refers to a continual generation of values:

> the element value … must not be omitted in any account of an event as the most concrete actual something. 'Value' is the word I use for the intrinsic reality of an event. …We have only to transfer to the

> very texture of realisation in itself that value which we recognize so readily in terms of human life.
>
> (*SMW*, 93)

Noting that value is also 'an element that permeates through and through the poetic view of nature, Whitehead cites the examples of Shelley and Wordsworth, who 'emphatically bear witness that nature cannot be divorced from its aesthetic values' (*SMW*, 87). He hereby indicates that any process theory that cannot find a place for aesthetic acts of valuing in world-making cannot be described as Whiteheadian.

As for how to evaluate the acts of valuing that make up a reality that is forever 'moving on,' one must immediately question the idea of fixed or predetermined values if for no other reason than that the meaning of 'reality' cannot be pinned down; it refers essentially to 'that which communicates with immediate matter of fact,' since what does not so communicate is unknowable and thus forever unknown (*PR*, 4). Whitehead herewith elicits a need, as I have earlier argued, for an account of actuality in terms of organisms capable of acts of valuing, and this calls for a story involving acts of communication between entities having a capacity to recognize the significance of certain signs that carry only latent meanings.[15] Such a story cannot avoid becoming extremely complicated since the stimulations that give rise to moments of sensibility are only possibilities. Further complications arise if the making of sense must allow room for direct perceptions, or better, fallible intuitions as well as other nonsensuous entitities. Yet another difficulty arises in respect to the 'inner' aspects of the communicative element in acts of relating which also elicit the need for a 'principle of modification' that 'is perfectly general throughout nature.'

This principle refers to complexes of dynamic processes within processes in which

> [t]he concrete enduring entities are organisms so that the plan of the *whole* influences the very characters of the various subordinate organisms which enter into it. In the case of an animal, the mental states enter into the plan of the total organism and thus modify the plans of the successive subordinate organisms until the ultimate smallest organisms, such as electrons, are reached.
>
> (*SMW*, 79)

Indeed, as Lossky indicates, it is an egregious error, to try to draw a line between 'inner' and 'outer' when speaking of a perception, a view that

lends support to the idea that the only way to restore the living flesh to the desiccated skeletons of materialistic conceptions of organisms is to depict them as complex communities of interacting 'percipient events' which may or may not embrace or exclude certain potential influences from other members of the community; evaluations which, inasmuch as they are neither completely predetermined nor completely free, point to the existence of an agency of modification.

Alluding to the cosmic significance of this principle, Whitehead suggests that it is at least partly responsible for the production of 'novel togethernesses' in Nature, for these productions are 'more than a mere collective disjunction of component elements.' At the same time he observes that this line of thought is 'a commonplace of art' (*PR*, 229), thereby gesturing toward the possibility that the best way to understand the principle of modification, which bespeaks a certain creative force or forces inherent in nature, is to approach the whole business from the side of art.

That the principle of modification is intimately bound up with creative imagination seems implicit in Whitehead's general claim that the world exhibits 'a principle of unrest' – a generic 'appetite,' for '[a]ppetition is immediate matter of fact including in itself a principle of unrest, involving realization of what is not and may be.' Even more significantly he notes that

> All physical experience is accompanied by an appetite for, or against, its continuance: an example is the appetition of self-preservation. But the origination of the novel conceptual prehension has, more especially, to be accounted for. Thirst is an appetite towards a difference – towards something relevant, something largely identical, but something with a definite novelty. This is an example at a low level which shows the germ of a free imagination.
>
> (*PR*, 32)

Hence if the mattering of matter cannot be properly accounted for without resorting to anthropomorphic imagery, as I have earlier argued, there may be no alternative to viewing imagination as holding the key to understanding emergence *tout court*.

Not only is Whitehead's use of anthropomorphic imagery consonant with artistic behavior, which is a highly impractical activity that illustrates on a human scale that something like thirst is behind the creative urge, this also reminds us that intangible desires can encourage unconscious decisions, selections, valuations, and so on, some of which can actually lead on occasion to novel productions of values. Hence nature

too may be an artist; that is, lured ever onward by an Eros with the promise of new unities and/or harmonies, or by vague ideals in the form of visions of what is not yet might still be.

This sort of conjecture is in accord at any rate with the evolutionary view that consciousness is continuous with a great variety of sentient but unconscious awarenesses which indicate that events in this world are inherently Janus-faced – that is, tuned in part to possibilities that have been realized in 'the settled past' and in part to possibilities that *might* be realizable in the future – for every act, as act, must be directed toward some end. But to what end, if not the emergence of values that have never been realized before?

## 7. Are 'eternal objects' emergent?

No reason has surfaced, in my attempt to sketch the essential elements of a nonformal, naturalistic version of Whitehead's theory of organism, why the adjective 'eternal' should be accorded particular significance when speaking about the 'forms of definiteness' implicit in the idea of possibilities awaiting realization within an extant system of relations. Whitehead himself indicates that this notion is secondary to the consideration that 'the passage of nature' is a more 'fundamental fact' than the notion of time as it appears in science or 'civilized life' (*CN*, 54). Eternality thus refers only to an *apparent* 'factor of fact' as this is discerned in sense-awareness; that is, it is but one of the many qualifying factors in the flux of events, not all of which are recurring 'objects.'[16] Describing 'the temporal passage of nature' in terms of an overarching process in which one duration passes into another, Whitehead himself observes that this passage is not only 'an essential character of nature in its role as the terminus of sense-awareness, it is also essential for sense-awareness in itself. It is this truth which makes time *appear* to extend beyond nature' (*CN*, 54–55, italics mine).[17]

Furthermore, Whitehead calls a duration a 'definite natural entity,' which surely requires that Time (as an aspect of passage) be firmly situated *in* Nature (*CN*, 53). Hence the metaphorics of Process as first sketched in his early attempt to rescue philosophy of nature from materialistic philosophers arrives in Whitehead's mature philosophy of organism already steeped in connotations of temporality.

It may therefore be better to refer to eternal objects as 'atemporal objects' which, as Lewis Ford suggests, are essentially abstract objects that abstract in particular from time. But while challenging the alleged 'uncreatedness' of eternal objects, Ford also makes clear that he is not

questioning their role as 'objective forms' since they 'function extremely well to express the public side of things.'[18] Yet the adjective 'eternal' need only connote immortality in the sense of everlasting relevancy, for once a particular 'form of definiteness' has actually arrived in the world of events, it is thereafter available as a 'real potentiality' for inclusion in the production of 'novel togethernesses.' Thus an even better term for eternal object might be 'repeatable form of definiteness' for the character of repeatability (of a certain quality, say) would seem to hold the key to understanding the actual uniformities and regularities that nature illustrates.[19]

Once again, it is worth stressing that this view is consonant with what I take to be Whitehead's core methodological principle: it is essential to preserve the indissociability of fundamental conceptual contrasts. In the case of the abstract-concrete contrast, one must resist above all the temptation to think of eternal objects in 'complete abstraction' from the actual world whereby they are reduced, as Whitehead himself puts it, to 'mere undifferentiated entities' (*PR*, 257). Yet it is just this aspect of Whitehead's theory of organism that prompts Elizabeth Kraus to charge it with incoherence and incompleteness.[20]

According to Kraus, what is specifically lacking in Whitehead's scheme is a 'principle of concretion'; that is, a concept that can express 'the self-creative activity of an actual occasion' (Kraus, 36). This is a *substantial* activity that Whitehead himself describes as a 'synthetic activity which prehends valueless possibility into superjicient informed value' (*SMW*, 165). So the lack to which Krause is referring is bound up with the absence of a principle of limitation, one that would explain the particularity of that which actually becomes – that is to say, a principle for 'limiting the generality of the conditions for process and for realization in order to bridge the gap between the abstract and the concrete' (Kraus, 39). Yet it is not possible to bridge this gap from a standpoint located *inside* a static realm of abstract objects that is essentially isolated from the dynamic passage of events.

Kraus thus directs an especially critical eye toward Whitehead's postulate of a prior structuring in the realm of eternal objects, since this implies that every aspect of worldly organization has been anticipated as an ideal realization always already present in the primordial mind of God. According to Kraus, Whitehead proffers no clear reason for such a move; it would therefore be an improvement in his theory, she maintains, if it included some sort of creative *agency* – an agency whose presence and character can however only be inferred from the peculiar forms of expression achieved in localized, diverse acts of becoming.

Such a creative agency, I have in effect been arguing, can be inferred anthropomorphically from an examination of human perceptions and communications. One thereby arrives at the postulate that the principal means to bridge the gulf between the abstract and the concrete must be a faculty of imagination. But the direction of my approach to the problem of the uncreatedness of eternal objects has been from the outside-in, as it were. It would therefore be fitting to conclude this brief discussion with an account of Ford's more technical, or inside-out, examination of the issue, and especially Whitehead's claim for the uncreatedness, or absolute atemporality, of eternal objects.

This is not to say that inference is no longer required. As Ford is well aware, the atemporality of eternal objects is not an issue that could ever be decided from an empirical point of view since there is no way to distinguish between an atemporal object that has no origin and one which abstracts from its origin (Ford, 191). But although valid, this point raises once again the question of the proper meaning of 'empirical' and whether current philosophical language is seriously lacking in the means to do it justice.

The principal focus of Ford's argument against the uncreatedness of eternal objects is the factor of emergence. Claiming (rightly in my view) that such atemporal objects are required 'if there is to be any communication' (Ford, 193) as well as any definiteness of character in the dynamic processes of the actual world, Ford notes that the neutral term 'atemporal object' implies only that an eternal object may or may not have a history of emergence. Hence, and inasmuch as Whitehead himself says that such objects only *appear* to be eternal, Ford is quite justified in saying that it would be 'more appropriate to derive atemporal objects from determinate actuality than vice versa. … were it not for the problem introduced by novelty' (Ford, 197).

Here we touch on the core of the real difficulty: how to conceive the production of genuine novelty in an evolutionary nature. Ford rightly holds that it is not possible to derive novelty from actuality as this is ordinarily understood since novel actualizations presuppose unrealized forms (Ford, 197). Hence if there is to be any genuine novelty in the world, there must be real possibilities that have never been realized. Thus in a manner reminiscent of Kraus's concerns, Ford maintains that Whitehead did not satisfactorily resolve the problem of unrealized eternal objects by postulating their eternal presence in the primordial mind of God, for this move implies a divine envisagement of a complete realm of eternal objects in their perfect and final definiteness. His conception of eternal objects thus requires a seemingly arbitrary 'principle

of limitation,' but to focus on this aspect of the theory may actually be to follow a red herring.[21]

Ford in fact alludes more significantly to Whitehead's special effort in *Adventures of Ideas* to correct the impression of passivity in *Process and Reality* that mars the theory of the concrescence of actual entities. For Whitehead also employs many active verbs to suggest there is a 'factor of activity' in the origin of an occasion of experience (Ford, 207). Furthermore, while not being 'a free-floating creativity,' it is nonetheless an activity capable of providing initial aims for individual concrescences. These special activities, or 'vehicles of novelty,' Ford calls 'concrescent forms,' which are 'akin to eternal objects in the way subjective forms are, since they provide a formal element to concrescence' (Ford, 209).

But the very next sentence seems to go to the heart of the matter. Concrescent forms are also, says Ford,

> more like creativity, sharing in its privacy and imprehensibility. They are the forms of becoming, enabling instances of creativity to be differentiated as concrescences.
>
> (Ford, 209)

The reference to a differentiating activity implies that these 'formal elements' cannot be regarded simply as static or formal possibilities that are always already 'given' in the primordial mind of God; especially if this activity gives rise to genuine novelty in the passage of events. So once one takes proper note of the *activity* of differentiating, it is otiose to propose that all subjective aims are already given in the realm of possibilities. If genuine novelty indeed emerges in the passage of events, such an emergence bespeaks values that transcend actuality. It is just here that we see the perennial attraction of Plato's Forms, as Ford notes, for one must account for values that somehow 'come from beyond this temporal world' (Ford, 195).

However, recalling Whitehead's allusion to a 'substantial activity' behind the realization of values, this situation allows for a world invested with vague ideals that await definite realizations by means of processes that involve 'localized' forms of creative activity. That is to say, the 'substantial activity' can be understood as primarily directed toward making these vague ideals more definite. These pervasive forms of creative activity may be everywhere akin to human imagination – as Ford seems to indicate when he speaks of this activity as quite conceivably 'inherent in the subjective activity of the occasion' although it may not perish 'with the perishing of subjective immediacy in the attainment of

being' (Ford, 210). But even more significantly, he notes that here we are speaking of an activity that both 'shapes and is shaped by the process of concrescence, by what is inherited, by responses to and integrations of physical feeling' (Ford, 212).

In sum, Ford lends support to the view that nothing less than a creative (shaping) agency akin to human imagination is required to complete Whitehead's evolutionary naturalism. 'Concrescent forming' is consonant with the imaginative dimension of ordinary perception that generally illustrates the presence of an at once forward- and backward-looking agency that subsides (instead of perishing entirely) with the attainment of each unit of perception, thus leaving room for a novel conditioned creation of new unities. Hence one may ask whether each instance of 'concrescent forming' might just as well be called a 'primordial imagining,' a type of activity that can be regarded as both immanent in Nature as well as inherently multivaried in its modes of functioning; that is, capable of producing a plurality of valuations that Whitehead associates with reality itself.

This sketch of my response to the problem of the uncreatedness of eternal objects is of course influenced by my idea of what a thoroughgoing Whiteheadian naturalism ought to look like. I have enlisted a metaphysical imaginary based on what I take to be the most important of Whitehead's insights, which leads to an anthropomorphic metaphorics that illustrates a thoroughly nonmodern conception of experience which refers to nodes of awareness embedded in an immensely complex network of dynamic processes that are forever being lured onward by the mythical figure of Eros. Hence the movement implied by evolution is not necessarily 'upward and onward,' for desire is not in general specific. Yet it can imply a vague aim toward increased definiteness.[22]

Hence the above discussion only sets the stage for another, more elaborate story of evolution in which the emergence of eternal objects can be contemplated from a cosmic perspective, so to speak. As Ford observes, there is nothing in Whitehead's formal account of Process that actually stands in the way of viewing at least some eternal objects as emergent. Indeed, he maintains that Whitehead's insistence on their uncreatedness derives mainly from his theistic convictions.[23] Suggesting moreover that the atemporality of eternal objects can be projected 'back into the distant past' (Ford, 212), Ford also raises the question whether the above sketch of a Whiteheadian naturalistic story of the emergence of order in the world can, like his organic metaphysics, be stretched with the aid of imagination to a story about how

order might have emerged in the first place from an 'aboriginal chaos,' to use Peirce's term.

## 8. Life, growth, and spontaneity

For Peirce would also like to frame 'a genuine evolutionary philosophy' in which the ideas of growth and novelty are closely tied to 'spontaneous generation' as well as to 'the inexhaustible multitudinous variety of the world.'[24] Indeed, he insists that no natural or mechanical law, which is an expression of immutable regularity, is capable of explaining evolution. This stubbornly held credo of mechanical philosophy, which dominates modern evolutionary thinking, is a 'palpable falsity.' The real challenge in accounting for evolution lies in the emergence of novelty and this cannot be explained by the laws of nature:

> The endless variety in the world has not been created by law. It is not of the nature of uniformity to originate variation, nor of the law to beget circumstance.[25]

Again,

> mechanical law, which the scientific infallibilist tells us is the only agency of nature … can never produce diversification. … So if observed facts point to real growth, they point to another agency, to spontaneity for which infallibilism provides no pigeon-hole.
>
> (*CP*, 1.174)

Yet if evolution means nothing but growth in the widest sense of that word, and if reproduction needs to be thought of as more than mere increase, that is, as involving a spontaneity in its production, Peirce's language has problems of its own. He speaks almost in the same breath of 'arbitrary elements,' 'pure or absolute chance,' 'sportings of feelings,' and so on, in order to convey the idea of living spontaneity. Yet if one approaches the matter from the semiotic side of his metaphysical views of how things hold together, in which he replaces the idea of an immutable 'law of nature' by the notion of a more or less stable habit, the problem of growth involves not only the question of how organized forms of life emerged from 'lesser' forms but also how the 'laws of nature' themselves may have evolved.

It is thus highly significant that Peirce puts great stress on the need for a Platonistic framework to support his story of evolution, albeit one

that departs radically from the traditional conception of Platonic forms as both ultimate and eternally 'fixed':

> The evolutionary universe is … not a mere evolution of the existing universe, but rather a process by which the very Platonic forms themselves have become or are becoming developed.
>
> (*CP*, 6.194)

And again,

> if we are going to regard the universe as a result of evolution at all, we must think that not merely the existing universe, that locus in the cosmos to which our reactions are limited, but the whole Platonic world, which in itself is equally real, is evolutionary in its origin, too.
>
> (*CP*, 6.200)

This reference to a 'whole Platonic world' partially confirms my claim that Whitehead's realm of eternal objects needs to be regarded as evolutionary. Such a move is in keeping, moreover, with the metaphysical imaginary I have earlier sketched by juxtaposing some of his key metaphysical insights with Peirce's idea of a cosmic semiosis. One can thus recover from the arbitrary dictates of the mechanistic imaginary, which Peirce calls 'the mechanical philosophy,' whose rigid doctrine of 'necessitarianism' robs the world of living spontaneity. One can at the same time acknowledge that chance plays a significant part in evolution while dispensing with the incoherent notion that pure chance can account for 'living spontaneity.' Indeed, Peirce remarks that he makes use of chance 'chiefly to make room for a principle of generalization, or tendency to form habits, which I hold has produced all regularities' (*CP*, 6.63).

However, when it comes to accounting for this fundamental tendency to form habits, which requires that pure spontaneity or life be regarded as a character of the universe, Peirce also speaks of it as 'acting always and everywhere though restrained within narrow bounds by law, producing infinitesimal departures from law continually, and great ones with infinite infrequency' in order to account for 'all the variety and diversity of the universe' (*CP*, 6.59). While the extreme slowness of evolution warrants speaking of 'infinitesimal departures from law,' this observation applies equally to habits, so does not throw any light at all on the alleged close connection between life and spontaneity. On the other hand, a tendency to form habits is fully in accord with an 'acting'

that 'always and everywhere' can result in the emergence of new Platonic forms, for this sort of emergence is, as we have seen, compatible with the idea that evolution generally implies a movement in the process of events from the indefinite to the more definite.

In other words, Peirce's musings open up the possibility that his notion of living spontaneity requires the positing of an agency akin to the creative imagination that Whitehead all but explicitly calls forth when he identifies Creativity as the category of the ultimate. For Peirce too can be read as attempting to frame a comprehensive naturalistic story of evolution not unlike Whitehead's theory of actuality. Peirce envisages, however, a 'Cosmogonic Philosophy' which

> would suppose that in the beginning – infinitely remote – there was a chaos of unpersonalized feeling, which being without connection or regularity would properly be without existence. This feeling, sporting here and there in pure arbitrariness, would have started the germ of a generalizing tendency. Its other sportings would be evanescent, but this would have a growing virtue. Thus, the tendency to habit would be started; and from this, with the other principles of evolution, all the regularities of the universe would be evolved. At any time, however, an element of pure chance survives and will remain until the world becomes an absolutely perfect, rational, and symmetrical system, in which mind is at last crystallized in the infinitely distant future.
>
> (*CP*, 6.33)

Putting aside the dubious idea that a final crystallization of mind makes sense in a world that is evolutionary through and through, and interpreting 'pure chance' as merely another name for 'living spontaneity,' what is chiefly at issue is whether an originary tendency to form habits is compatible with the notion of a 'chaos of unpersonalized feeling.' One approach is to link the word 'tendency' to the inherently nondeterministic character of an acting that is bound by habits of feeling certain feelings which are definite when actually felt but which are otherwise merely virtual:

> Indeterminacy is really a character of the first. But not the indeterminacy of homogeneity. The first is full of life and variety. Yet that variety is only potential; it is not definitely there. … [T]he notion of explaining the variety of the world … by non-variety [is] quite absurd. How is variety to come out of the womb of homogeneity;

> only by a principle of spontaneity, which is just that virtual variety that is the first.
>
> (*CP*, 1.373)

Hence Peirce's story is still in need of an account of how a 'germ of a generalizing tendency' could emerge in the first place out of a virtual sporting of pure feelings. If one agrees with him that feelings are metaphysically first not only in the sense of being *sui generis* but also in the abstract sense of being real possibilities for being felt, would it not make more sense to say that the emergence of certain feelings-in-relationship comes about not by chance but rather by some vital agent or agency that is capable of introducing living spontaneities that lead to the emergence of various modes of togetherness? While the idea of a 'virtual variety' suggests that every mode of togetherness does in some sense preexist the possibly aleatory moment when they *actually* come together, there is still no hint of necessity that they should come together in just the way they do.

One thus comes face-to-face with a cosmic puzzle and perhaps an everlasting mystery: how could one speak about a leap to Something from a 'nothing-in-particular-ness' which is not absolutely nothing except by referring to some creative agency?

> We start, then, with nothing, pure zero. But this is not the nothing of negation. … It is the germinal nothing, in which the whole universe is involved or foreshadowed. As such, it is absolutely undefined and unlimited possibility – boundless possibility. There is no compulsion and no law. It is boundless freedom.
>
> (*CP*, 6.217)

But 'boundless freedom' does not sit easily with a 'germ of a generalizing tendency.' So must we simply accept that

> the very first and most fundamental element that we have to assume is a Freedom, or Chance, or Spontaneity, by virtue of which the general vague nothing-in-particular-ness that preceded the chaos took a thousand definite qualities?
>
> (*CP*, 6.200)

The trouble is, Peirce is promising an account of how 'the general vague nothing-in-particular-ness' began to gel into habits of relationship between mere possibilities, habits that then acquired a certain

permanence or stability. One wants to know why these generative moments are not followed by spontaneous dissolutions back into the 'aboriginal chaos' of unpersonalized feeling. This puzzle is deepened still further when Peirce brings in the notion of an individualized event:

> The second element we have to assume is that there could be accidental reactions between those qualities. The qualities themselves are eternal possibilities. But these reactions we must think of as events. (*CP*, 6.200)

On the other hand, it is perhaps just at this moment that Whitehead can help avoid all the difficulties that Peirce encounters, provided one begins not with eternal possibilities as the basis for constructing concrete events but rather with the events themselves. And insofar as his story is thus tied down to the actual or concrete world, and that one has chosen a good imaginary which infuses actual events with characteristics of experiencing organisms that bring in an interplay of imagination, emotions, and re-enactments of feelings, the idea of a world ordered by a tendency to form habits is quite compatible with an ontology of sentient beings capable of habitually feeling the feelings that they are actually capable of feeling. In this view, then, it is quite possible that the connections that are established between qualities or feelings are not necessarily purely accidental but nevertheless are partially controlled (in accordance with the category of Thirdness) by intuitions about which of these elements of experience properly or 'naturally' go together.

In any event, Peirce's story about a tendency in the world to form habits cries out for an agency capable of envisaging how certain feelings *may* become 'lawfully' related in new events. Such an agency allows for a world in which relatively fixed laws (habits) co-exist with chance contingencies and living spontaneities. But in such a world, it would be better to speak not of 'boundless freedom' but rather of qualified or constrained freedoms that are always hedged about by inescapable contingencies, as well as useful habits that ensure that life will thrive if current conditions remain unchanged.[26]

In sum, if feelings are indeed first, as both Peirce and Whitehead hold, and if it makes sense to speak of an 'aboriginal event' (although it may be aboriginal only in respect to a newly dawning cosmic epoch, to use Whitehead's term) it must surely refer to a novel way of feeling the potential relatedness of certain qualities *qua* mere possibilities; that is, it must presuppose an agency capable of entertaining novel relationships between certain qualities whose potentiality is already present in the

vague 'nothing-in-particular-ness' of the aboriginal chaos. The upshot is that if the key to completing Peirce's story of evolution lies in elucidating the 'germ of a generalizing tendency,' this can be done by augmenting his story with Whitehead's evocation of the existence of a 'germ of a free imagination' in which he invests every becoming with appetites that may be quickened by what amounts to restless contemplations of what is not but yet could be.

# 5
# In Search of a 'True Naturalism'

> 'The Truths of Reason, as distinguished from the Truths of History, are all anonymous.'[1]

## 1. 'Whatever is, *lives*'

Attempting to swim against the tide of modernity, and in particular against contemporary naturalisms that degrade Life and deaden Thought, Coleridge sets out to frame a 'true naturalism.' His goal is to displace materialistic approaches to Nature that strip it of its 'quicknesses' by rendering its forms of organization into mere abstractions. No problem of philosophy is liable to generate more confusion or obfuscation, he suggests, than such questions as 'What is life?' unless it is the question, 'What really *is* the problem of life?' For Life does not present a problem in the modern sense of a puzzle awaiting an ingenious scientific resolution:

> Analyse the seed with the finest tools, and let the solar microscope come in aid of your senses, what do you find? Means and instruments, a wondrous fairy tale of nature, magazines of food, stores of various sorts, pipes, spiracles, defences – a house of many chambers, and the owner and inhabitant invisible![2]

But never entirely absent. For his reflections on Life lead Coleridge to the conclusion that 'Whatever is, *lives*.'

Now this summary remark, which appears to fly in the face of common sense, can be interpreted in a number of ways. Owen Barfield suggests one possible reading: 'One should ask, not: What is life? but what is *not* life?' (*WCT*, 44). Coleridge himself proffers what seems at first glance a

merely riddling version: 'What is *not* Life that really *is*?'[3] But he is in effect giving notice that the very fact of Life poses a fundamental challenge to any would-be naturalist who has not already closed his/her mind to the mystery that *existence* itself presents. Thus a skeptic who is inclined to dismiss Coleridge's cryptic observation out of hand – by observing, for instance, that stones and bones obviously exist yet are clearly not alive – can be stayed, at least for the nonce, by the no less obvious (but frequently overlooked) observation that there are of course any number of material 'things' that are manifestly devoid of *visible* (or more generally, sensual) signs of quickness. It is just that, if you look hard enough you will find everywhere in Nature signs of 'quicknesses' whose 'owners' happen to be absent.

Thus an immediate rejection of Coleridge's summary account of Life would only bear witness to the choke hold that materialistic imaginaries have on modern imaginations. Coleridge is not in fact attacking the scientists who are very good at inventing ingenious devices and clever methods for investigating the contents of what might be called the House of Past Quicknesses. He would very likely have been much intrigued by esoteric descriptions of the probable contents and designs of hidden chambers that cannot be inspected even with the aid of powerful techniques for extending the ranges of the senses (e.g., microscopes or telescopes).[4]

What Coleridge is maintaining in effect is that in order to come to terms with Life, one must first acquire an immunity against all the temptations provided by the 'abstracting intelligence' which is tempted to ignore the tangle of puzzles evoked by the innocuous little word 'is.' These revolve about a fundamental question that is often simply begged; namely, the meaning of organization in nature. As a consequence, things are often put back to front: it is as though 'a building with all the included handicraft of plastering, sawing, planing, & c., was the offspring of the house and that the mason and carpenter were the [result of a suite of chambers, with the passages and staircases that lead to them.]'[5] That is to say, it is an egregious error to treat organization as if it referred to a stable and orderly arrangement of parts, as in a watch or steam engine. One only needs to point to a living organism to show that organization generally bespeaks 'an interdependence of parts, each of which in its turn being means to an end, *as arises within*' (*PL*, 354, italics mine).

Thus implying that Nature bespeaks a great variety of forms of dynamic self-organization, Coleridge rejects modern approaches to naturalism as totally misguided; he envisages a 'true naturalism' that can overcome the incoherent and destructive doctrines of mechanistic

materialism that presuppose that inert matter can explain the vital aspects of Life and Thought.[6] So Coleridge's quest for a true naturalism is essentially a *cri de coeur* – for a means of rescuing Life and Thought from an unjust treatment that concentrates on mere 'outnesses.' There are 'inner' forces or powers that cannot be explained in a physicalistic manner. One can only try to give an *account* of Life since it is a part of Nature that cannot be explained (TL, 503).

The point is so crucial that a brief digression is in order. Coleridge's general aim, as expressed in *Biographia Literaria*, is to frame a 'transcendental or intelligential' philosophy that must be carefully distinguished from the sort of transcendental idealism that approaches Life as though it belonged to a Platonic, otherworldly, transcendental realm of Ideas; that is, as if it belonged to the same remote plane as Beauty or Justice.[7] However, Life does not refer to an abstraction but rather (in Barfield's words) a 'factually antecedent unity' (*WCT*, 42). As for Thought, this is another aspect of Nature in which connections are somehow made between what Coleridge calls 'spontaneous consciousness' and 'transcendental consciousness,' which refers to an activity that is going on beneath the surface of conscious thought. Thus the reason why most modern philosophers have done gross injustices to Thought itself is that they have arbitrarily restricted their thinking about it to 'mere reflection and *re*-presentation.'[8]

So it is also important to note that when Coleridge links his quest for a true naturalism to a search for a 'true and original realism,' which 'believes and requires nothing more nor less than that the object it beholds or presents to itself is the real and very object,' he is not urging a kind of naive realism (*BL*, 149).What he is saying is that the would-be true naturalist should not think he/she is engaging in a mere intellectual quarrel over how to approach Life or Thought as though they were problems requiring solutions. The challenge is to show that they have been dealt with unjustly in a context informed by a false and misleading conception of reality.[9] This consideration alone may explain why so few modern philosophers take Coleridge seriously. He is in effect charging modern thought with evading all the real difficulties in naturalistic story-telling by allowing reason to become subservient to a 'despotism of the eye' – the dogma that nothing ought to admitted into 'reality' which cannot be rendered, at least in principle, into an object of sense.[10]

In other words, the sort of 'rational explanations' that the moderns deem acceptable are based on a narrow and self-limiting idea of reason which recognizes only the passive side of experiencing – that is, only that which 'appertains to the perception considered as passive and

merely recipient' (*BL*, 92). Hence the question *how* one might go about dealing with the active side of reason is one of Coleridge's chief concerns, for he has no doubt that there are 'spontaneous movements of thought' which call for the recognition of an inherently obscure 'transcendental consciousness' which is capable of exercising 'living' powers.

Briefly, then, Coleridge's philosophical writings are aimed at restoring to Nature what has been arbitrarily and violently torn from it by the moderns. That this exercise has an important cultural significance is implicit in such remarks as, '[i]t does not … by any means follow that opinions fundamentally false are harmless' (*BL*, 71). Indicating that a good deal of the damage done is spiritual in nature, Coleridge cites Hume as a typical offender, for he 'degraded the notion of cause and effect into a blind product of delusion and habit, into the mere sensation of proceeding life (*nisus vitalis*) associated with the images of the memory' (*BL*, 70). But this move not only does an injustice to ordinary experience, Coleridge continues, it undermines the spiritual side of existence since it 'must be repeated to the equal degradation of every fundamental idea in ethics and theology.'

Hence an approach to experience that would be more in accord with a true naturalism, in Coleridge's view, would acknowledge at once the 'two-fold' nature of its responsibilities, for a full-bodied reason should strive 'to reconcile reason with common sense and to elevate common sense into reason' (*BL*, 151). Such a convoluted view of the task of reason might well be regarded as tantamount to heresy in the eyes of many contemporary naturalists since it implies that any reason that restricts itself in the Humean manner is at best half a reason. Reason must serve a more general law than the regnant 'laws of nature' – namely, the Law of Polarity – which is however not so much a law as a guiding principle in Coleridge's approach to Life, Thought, and Reason. These great themes need to be viewed in the first instance as referring to elements of a Nature that is in desperate need of being rescued from the depredations of materialists.

It therefore should not be surprising that Coleridge's references to both Life and Thought are extremely allusive. He states, for instance, that Life bespeaks a power 'which discloses itself from within as a principle of unity in the many' (TL, 510). Rejecting the tendency of materialists to assume that there is a difference in kind between the organic and the inorganic, he states as a general principle that 'there is a tendency throughout nature perpetually to individuate … which is harmoniously counter-acted by an attempt of nature to recall [individuality] again to the common organization' (*PL*, 357).[11]

The implication is that a true naturalist ought to *begin* with a Heraclitean view of the world that depicts it as a restless struggle of

opposing forces or powers whose meetings and minglings are neither purely accidental nor meaningless. The world is informed by a *Logos*, one whose elucidation calls for a 'Polar Logic' that is required in order to reconcile the regnant metaphysics of quantity with a metaphysics of quality. Indeed, the natural philosopher should pay more attention to qualities than quantities.[12] In any case, assuming that a polar logic is needed to deal with this sort of metaphysics, it is important to become clear about what it might look like. The matter must however be approached indirectly; by noting, for instance, that the mechanistic materialist, who gives priority to quantitative principles, cannot deal justly with the phenomenon of growth, such as that exemplified by the development of a plant from a seed. Such growth is not merely a process of unfolding of an actual plant form but rather the development of a potentiality that leads, if all goes well, to a well-formed actual entity (i.e., plant). Coleridge thus evidences an acute awareness of the difference between actuality and potentiality, a consideration that is arguably pivotal when seeking a true naturalism.

For one implication of Coleridge's principal assumptions is that the development of an organism deserves as much attention as the occasion of its emergence into this evolutionary world, a consideration that is in full accord with his insistence on the necessity for preserving the medieval distinction between *natura naturans and natura naturata*.[13] It is also fairly explicit in his claim that 'the relation between nature and the human mind, as we have it, is one that gradually evolved to be what it is today' (*WCT*, 68). It is perhaps especially evident in his fundamental belief that Nature bespeaks a hierarchy of forms of organization:

> from its utmost *latency*, in which life is one with the elementary powers of mechanism, that is, with the powers of mechanism considered as qualitative and actually synthetic, to its highest manifestation, (in which as the *vis vitae vivida*, or life *as* life, it subordinates and modifies these powers, becoming contradistinguished from mechanism, *ab extra*, under the form of organization), there is an ascending series of intermediate classes, and of analogous gradations in each class.
>
> (TL, 511)[14]

## 2. Life and Thought

I shall henceforth assume that the importance of Coleridge's quest for a true naturalism lies in his basic assumption that Life and Thought should be regarded as concrete aspects of an evolutionary Nature. Furthermore, he maintains that Nature bespeaks powers that reflect a

tendency to at once individuate and connect; a tendency which is 'operant, as the agent of process, at every stage of the process; from the origin of matter itself, through the evolution of matter into vegetable life, of vegetable life into sentience, and of animal instinct into understanding' (Quoted in *WCT*, 67). Thus even to begin to think about Life or Thought is to find oneself in the middle of a profound puzzle that involves a Nature in which the emergence of organizational novelty stems from 'a tendency to the ultimate production of the highest and most comprehensive individuality' (TL, 517).

Nothing could be more misleading, in this view, than the conception of a thought as a static 'thing.' 'What is a Thought,' Coleridge asks, 'but "I" thinking?' thus implying that when the natural philosopher takes up the great theme of Thought, he/she is bound to confront 'inner powers' that are not unlike those whose existence can be inferred by contemplating the traces of Life left behind in the House of Past Quicknesses.[15] So it is important to note that although Coleridge appears at first glance to acknowledge the existence of two different types of awareness that elicit two basic assumptions – 'there exist things without us' and 'the awareness that I am perceiving these things' (*WCT*, 63) – he is in fact maintaining that this is a pernicious duality that reflects a common prejudice. The general character of the 'thinking I' is quite different from that usually associated with an isolated Ego. But he is not denying that these apparently different types of awareness can be distinguished; only that they are separate and distinct: they are 'one' in the sense that the first assumption is, as Coleridge puts it, '*unconsciously* involved in the latter' (*WCT*, 64, the stress is Barfield's).

This last declaration encapsulates the challenge Coleridge is presenting to the would-be true naturalist. Simply put, he is asking what is the best way to overcome the modern tendency to separate subjects and objects. This tendency is legitimated with the help of the 'despotism of the eye,' which entrenches the false belief that reality can be sharply distinguished from appearances.[16] But one of Coleridge's primary assumptions is that the 'outness of phenomena is a law of our nature [although] we are not conscious of it *as* law' (*WCT*, 66). With this eccentric use of the word 'law,' Coleridge signals a profound, perhaps unresolvable, puzzle, for he is at the same time maintaining that both the percipient and the perceived must somehow be conceived as united in units of experiencing.[17]

Briefly, then, a good part of the difficulty in assessing Coleridge's notion of a true realism involves finding a suitable language or vocabulary for dealing with a paradoxical (to modern eyes) situation which Muirhead neatly summarizes thus: 'Percipient subjects, one and all … imply a

*perceptum*.' That is to say, the real difficulty is how to speak about 'that strangest and most challenging of facts, the power of the first [i.e., percipients] to respond to the second [i.e., percepta] and of the second to satisfy the demands made upon it by the first in the name of coherence and unity' (*CaPh*, 94–95). It is thus small wonder that so many self-styled contemporary naturalists are inclined to ignore Coleridge's efforts to frame a true naturalism. It is easier to entirely dismiss his views as being of interest only to poets or other 'soft' thinkers who know little 'hard' science. But what Coleridge is saying in effect is that even the most rigorous scientists who focus their inquiries into the nature of perception on one or the other pole of what is an indissociable polarity are already mired in error. Indeed, both idealism and materialism are extreme examples of a pernicious mode of thought that perpetuates the same error; for both views are

> grounded in the impossibility of intermutual action between things altogether heterogeneous … it is assumed by both parties that *perception* is but a sort of, or at least an immediate derivation from, *sensation* – so that the changes or modifications of the percipient's own being are exclusively the objects of his perception. But is not this gratuitous? Is not sensibility just as mysterious … as percipiency?
>
> (quoted by Coburn, *PL*, 60–61)

The point is that perception alludes to an inescapable mystery, as we have seen in previous chapters. What Coleridge is bravely and honestly confronting is the profound difficulty signaled by the very idea of 'reality.' However, it is not as though he is turning his back completely on Kant and his followers.[18] For although Coleridge's approach to reason implies that Kant's grand project to theorize a pure reason and a restricted domain of rationality was misbegotten, he is nonetheless in full agreement with Kant's general claim that judgment is 'the power of determining this or that under the condition of some rule' (*CaPh*, 74). What Kant failed to recognize is that the notion of power is central to an inquiry into the nature and scope of metaphysical or speculative reasoning.

## 3. Subjects, objects, and imagination

More specifically, Coleridge can be read as striving to expand on the early Kant's hint that there is a productive or creative agency involved in the construction of experience; for he agrees that 'there must be an element in experience that cannot be derived from experience, as Hume

interpreted it' (*CaPh*, 81). Hence his principal quarrel with Kant concerns the latter's attempt to systematically tame the faculty of imagination.[19] But while it is certainly permissible in philosophy to distinguish aspects of Nature (such as subjects and objects, phenomena and noumena), it is an egregious error to divide them. At the same time Coleridge indicates that certain conceptual contrasts deserve to be regarded as truly fundamental, so it is fair to say that his philosophy stands or falls on whether he can deal justly himself with the pervasive tendency to adopt some form of Cartesian dualism.[20] Put another way, the real difficulty in coming to terms with his quest for a true naturalism involves his attempt to account for the 'unities' in experiencing, which in his view requires a law or logic of trichotomy (as opposed to a Kantian logic of dichotomy which divorces phenomena from noumena). That is, there must be in experiencing a third factor or agency capable of conjoining the poles of subjectivity and objectivity.

This third factor, according to Muirhead, is basically in agreement with Kant's evocation of a faculty of imagination that enters 'into the very constitution of the object, without which there could be no experience even of the most elementary kind' (*CaPh*, 67). However, in Coleridge's view, the operations of this faculty are *not* strictly bound by definite rules. Hence his approach to experience reflects a general principle that posits a 'substantiating power – that by which we attribute substance and reality to phenomena, and raise them from mere affections into objects communicable and capable of being anticipated and reasoned of' (quoted in *CaPh*, 67). This reality-producing power recalls, however, the early Kant's claim, in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, that experience involves a synthesis performed by a faculty of imagination which is 'a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever' (A78/B103).

It is therefore not merely incidental that Coleridge brings in the soul when attacking materialistic treatments of perception. He notes, for instance, that 'percipiency *in genere* is an attribute of the soul, and that sensation is nothing more than a species of perception modified by the object (just as colours, and sounds difference it, while they realize it) which in this instance is the percipient's own existence' (see *PL*, 61). This heretical suggestion that the qualities that we see, hear, smell, etc., are not secondary attributes of things, but rather arise from 'inner' processes of production that attest to souls in contact with the only kind of 'reality' that we could reasonably ask for, ultimately elicits a profound mystery that modern rationalists seek at all costs to avoid by

assuming, for instance, that systematic reasoning has an unlimited capacity to explain everything worth explaining.

## 4. Philosophy and method

That Coleridge himself may not have completely escaped this trap of modern reason is indicated by the discontinuity in the thirteenth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* where he cuts short a discussion of his theory of imagination with a promise of a future deduction of the theory. Returning abruptly to his starting point – which is a debate with Wordsworth about the true nature of poetic imagination – he leaves his readers dangling; or at least those readers who believe in the possibility of *deducing* a theory of imagination in the manner, say, of a geometrician proving a theorem on the basis of self-evident axioms.

More in keeping with his claim for the necessity of a polar logic is his insight that imagination can operate in at least three modes, only one of which is amenable to the methods of systematic thinkers. This last mode, which Coleridge calls 'fancy,' is however the least significant form of imagination from the point of view of the true naturalist. Its operations pertain mainly to conscious manipulations of phenomenal 'things,' for it 'has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites' (*BL*, 167). That is, it is confined to the realm of established concepts and principles that have grown out of prior acts of reasoning.

These acts may or may not arise from the work of 'primary imagination' which is essentially 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception' (*BL*, 167). As such, it evokes both unconscious and 'essentially vital' movements below the surface of thought which are constantly shaping and reshaping our worlds. Hence primary imagination can also be called 'esemplastic imagination' (*BL*, 91 and 166). But this 'shaping power' does not necessarily lead to 'true' or genuine aspects of reality, as is partly implied by Coleridge's insistence that reason needs to be clearly distinguished from understanding. The meaning of the latter term derives from applications of rules and methods that are used to organize the 'stuff' of thought into systems. Not reason proper, then, but rather a relatively superficial understanding is what informs much scientific knowledge. That is to say, when Kant set out to reform metaphysical reasoning using a conception of reason modeled on that of 'geometers and physicists,' he in effect put things back to front. For a sound understanding of reality presupposes that primary and secondary imagination have done their work well. But secondary (or poetic) imagination is an 'echo' of the primary kind and so can also

be viewed as belonging to the active side of thinking in the sense that it is needed to lift the products of primary imagination into the light of consciousness. Hence it is perhaps best exemplified in the works of poets and artists who discover/create effective symbols that are capable of expressing what primary imagination produces. However, their work does not necessarily exemplify merely 'true' systems of reasoning, for all systems of symbolism may incorporate purely fanciful elements. Hence, Coleridge's theory of imagination ultimately gives rise to a sticky question: does his search for a 'true realism' exemplifies merely wishful thinking? If the core meaning of 'reality' lies hidden in unconscious processes that may or may not result in effective systems of symbolism, there is no reason to think that primary imagination is capable of inducing secondary imagination to produce 'true' symbols that correspond precisely to 'real' entities in Nature.[21] That is to say, Coleridge helps to both resolve and deepen the central puzzle of how we find, map, and shape 'reality.' He passes too quickly over some of the implications of his own discoveries – as when he promises a future systematic deduction of his theory of imagination. But it is not really surprising that he never got around to fulfilling his promise of such a deduction. That he chose to present his views in an autobiographical (really a literary/critical) form is in itself significant, for his insistence on the need to distinguish reason from understanding exposes a profound difficulty that every philosopher is bound to run up against insofar as he/she acknowledges that symbolisms always stand between ourselves and 'reality.'

At the core of the problem of what a true naturalism might look like, in other words, stands an unignorable question that Coleridge himself draws attention to while musing upon his own encounters with Nature. For these induce in him an 'inner' production of symbols. Consider, for instance, the following famous passage:

> In looking at objects of Nature while I am thinking, as at yonder moon dim-glimmering through the dewy window-pane, I seem rather to be seeking, as it were asking for, a symbolical language for something within me that already and for ever exists, than observing anything new. Even when the latter is the case, yet still I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phenomenon were the dim awakening of a forgotten or hidden truth of my inner nature. It is still interesting as a word – a symbol. It is *Logos*, the Creator, and the Evolver.'
>
> (quoted by Barfield in *WCT*, 231)[22]

He herewith suggests that a 'good' symbolism both arises from and wields a certain power that brings its users into closer contact with 'reality,'

which implies in turn that the only 'method' that a reason guided by a polar logic can hope to develop amounts to a poetic cultivation of a Heraclitean 'philosophic imagination.'

Now Coleridge in fact maintains that 'there is a philosophic, no less than a poetic genius, which is differenced from the highest perfection of talent not by degree but by kind' (*BL*, 164). Yet if symbolisms are the indispensable mediators between minds and 'reality,' why not think a philosophic imagination is the same as a poetic or secondary one, especially if both kinds rely on metaphors for bringing the fruits of primary imagination to the surface of consciousness? It may thus be worth pausing to reflect on some of Coleridge's musings on method in philosophy. Stressing the literal meaning of the original Greek meaning of this word, he notes that 'method' refers to a mapping of a way or a path of transit (*Inquiring Spirit*, 175). Would not any method do then, so long as it cleared a way for reason to link, express, and communicate whatever insights into 'reality' it has achieved?

Coleridge's conception of method derives from his belief in the primacy of relations over things, which is a belief that is in accord with the view that a symbol refers to a certain power to 'bring things together.' Furthermore, method according to him becomes natural to the mind which has become accustomed to contemplate not *things* only, or for their own sake alone, but likewise and chiefly the *relations* of things, either their relations to each other, or to the observer, or to the state and apprehension of the hearers. To enumerate and analyze these relations, with the conditions under which alone they are discoverable, is to teach, he says, the science of Method (*Inquiring Spirit*, 168).

But if the words 'teach' and 'science' along with 'reason' and 'understanding' need to be clearly distinguished from modern interpretations of these terms, it would be better to speak not of 'enumeration' or 'analysis' but rather of the sort of 'metaphoring' that Coleridge associates with the thinking of especially gifted poets or artists. In his evaluation of Shakespeare's works, for instance, he remarks that these exemplify 'that just proportion, that union and interpenetration, of the universal and particular which must ever pervade all works of decided genius and true science' (*Inquiring Spirit*, 175). But are not such 'interpenetrations' achieved by means of tropes that, as powerful symbols, are somehow capable of expressing at once the universal in the particular, and vice versa? It seems highly significant that Coleridge subscribes to the view that in their original usage words were essentially metaphors. If this is so, even some very ordinary word-symbols can be viewed as having evolved from primordial insights that once upon a time could only be communicated by symbol-images.

Indeed, according to Coburn, Coleridge maintains that 'the concept must be distinguished from the image, the core of rational meaning from the peripheral sensations and emotions,' which suggests that a good method is one that involves a special 'feel' for the significance of certain word-symbols. So when Coleridge observes that

> in disciplining the mind, one of the first rules should be, to lose no opportunity of tracing words to their origin; one good consequence of which will be, that he who does so will be able to use the *language* of sight without being enslaved to its affections,[23]

he is warning us that a rebellion against the despotism of the eye is not tantamount to a denial of the usefulness of sensuous metaphors. On the contrary, he reminds us that the origin of the word 'theory' is linked to *contemplari*, which is 'to see, as from an immense distance, a number of objects together in such a manner as to perceive their relations to each other' (*PL*, 359).

So why not think, then, that good metaphors refer to real 'in-sights' in the sense of genuine 'seeings-into'? Since an 'insight' generally betokens an 'inward' movement of mind in which 'something' significant (i.e., carrying perhaps the aura of an important symbol) floats unbidden into consciousness (usually after a period of hard thinking). It is not a big leap from this observation to the view that the only method that the transcendental philosopher could reasonably hope to develop is one that most poets regularly employ when they contemplate some aspect of the world and produce (but who knows how?) suggestive images. When these 'insights' induce novel uses of standard word-symbols while exemplifying integrative powers that connect hitherto apparently disparate entities, we have perhaps an illustration of the best that reason can do.

Briefly, then, Coleridge's reflections on method open up the possibility that a philosophic imagination is one that is capable of discovering significant images that, when absorbed into accepted symbolisms, are capable of reducing, if not eliminating, the gaps that separate minds and Nature. He himself illustrates the point when he depicts the complex dynamic of the subject-object relation by likening the work of imagination to the movements of 'a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets.' Referring to this figure as 'an emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking,' he notes how the insect

> wins its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in

> order to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. … [T]here are evidently two powers at work which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive … [and which] we must denominate … in all its degrees and determinations the *imagination*.
>
> (*BL*, 72)

This picture of *how* imagination works ties the 'forward' motion of the insect to the immense effort needed to think something new or to rethink the 'normal.' It is a well-known fact that the boundaries of established systems of symbolism are not easily stretched, which amounts to saying that thinking tends to resume its former shape as soon as primary imagination relaxes. Thus the 'backward' motion (or rather state of rest relative to the current) of the water-insect confirms that fancy (or mere understanding) tends to take over when primary imagination has done its best.[24]

If this reading of Coleridge's image of the pulsating movements of the insect captures the essence of philosophic imagination, such a capacity can be likened to the rapid alternation of creative and critical moments in the work of a poet, or any other artist for that matter. By the same token, passive belief-habits generally predominate in everyday efforts to understand. Yet breakthroughs in understanding can on occasion occur on account of reason's vital powers. But if this is the case, it seems misleading to say that fancy and imagination are 'two distinct and widely different faculties, instead of being, according to the general belief, either two names with one meaning, or at furthest the lower and higher degree of one and the same power' (*BL*, 50).

It is doubtful, in short, whether sharp boundaries *can* be drawn between the operations of the various forms of imagination. So one further complication perhaps deserves notice, for the possibility now arises that, insofar as the world is evolutionary through and through, nothing may be more natural than that reason is constantly 'on the move' evolving new, and possibly better, meanings.[25] Which is to say, that the *Logos* too may be evolving.

## 5. Reason and morality

Coleridge thus brings out many of the profound difficulties involved in trying to define good reasoning, difficulties that have from the very outset of Western philosophy haunted the fundamental themes of Truth,

Knowledge, Wisdom, and so on. He indicates that reason as practiced 'locally' is only ever a more or less adequate reflection of a cosmic Reason, which generally refers to 'the power by which we come possessed of principle' (*Inquiring Spirit*, 135). Good reasoning can nonetheless be nurtured, for Coleridge is basically in agreement with Kant, who maintains that the mind is naturally furnished with the 'instincts and offices of Reason' (*CaPh*, 101). However, he also indicates that the 'goodness' of reason must depend to a considerable extent on rational instincts, for what else could guide poetic or secondary imagination in the creation of efficacious symbolisms?[26] It is thus conceivable that human rational instincts are akin to the natural wisdom exhibited by most of Nature's creatures, although wisdom is more likely to be found in animal populations than concentrated in isolated human beings.[27] In any case, the best in human reasoning may illustrate the flowering in a certain collective unconscious of an instinctual wisdom, a view that seems implicit in Coleridge's observation that 'the common consciousness itself will furnish proofs by its own direction, that it is connected with master-currents below the surface' (*BL*, 139).

It cannot be denied, however, that Nature has produced in the species *homo sapiens* an only intermittently wise creature who appears prone to subverting its vital powers. Hence Coleridge may be going much too far when he observes that Nature 'is essentially one with the intelligence in us' (*WCT*, 66). Whether or not *this* assumption comes close to the truth requires further investigation, one that will face up to the problem of the relation between reason and morality, as is indicated by Coleridge's complaint about materialistic reasoners who strive to reduce both reason and understanding to shadows of themselves.

In his attack on materialistic modes of thought, he in fact maintains that the materialist who clings to the hypothesis of sensationalism 'cannot have a theory' – unless he at the same time indulges in what amounts to a superstition: that all things can be explained as modes of sensation, that even thoughts and the will are 'determined by accidental copulations of certain internal stimuli.' The implication is that reason proper is always in danger of being subverted by 'mean spirits' and stunted souls informed by an ill will. Indeed, Coleridge declares that materialistic philosophers 'need discipline, not argument; they must be made better men before they can become wiser' (*BL*, 71).[28] But 'better' in exactly what sense?

This question complicates considerably Coleridge's quest for a true naturalism. Not only does this involve framing a true realism, which is hard enough to define, it would seem to call also for a true morality.

As for what 'true' might mean in either case, Coleridge indicates that thought in this culture has been so traduced by false assumptions and misleading principles that it is in urgent need of therapeutic attention, for a healthy reason is one that is above all capable of distinguishing between knowing for the sake of knowing (which is Science a good deal of the time) and knowing for the sake of being. Furthermore, the latter kind of knowing calls for wise souls who have somehow cultivated their living powers of reason, as distinct from the inferior powers of understanding; a point whose centrality in Coleridge's thought is implicit in his summary observation that 'all men live in the power of Ideas which work in them.'[29] The quality of this working depends on the will to truth which is quite different from 'that empirical phaenomenon of the will which we express by the word *choice*' (*BL*, 167). The latter form of willing Coleridge associates with fancy since it deals mainly with 'ready-made' materials. By contrast, reason 'in its aspect of will – and the *life* of nature, and of man with it' elicits a *Logos*-driven Heraclitean Will that can give 'birth to understanding both in the higher animals and in man' (see *WCT*, 150).

However, as Heraclitus well knew, not all men sincerely will the truth, especially those who have stopped trying to listen to the *Logos*.[30] So it is important to note that a will presupposes a motive and, as Coleridge notes, a motive is not a thing, but rather the thought of a thing. Thus a motive should be defined as a determining thought, for not all thoughts have motives. But if this is so, a thought can be generally conceived as 'a mind thinking in some direction' (*CaPh*, 145). As for what direction a mind ought to try to move in, this question was long ago answered by both Pythagoras and Plato. Coleridge describes the latter as the spiritual father of all those thinkers who down through the ages have been inclined to emphasize the creative over the regulative side of thought. At the same time he maintains that Pythagoras is the most important precursor of Plato. This is because mind is an *act* for Pythagoras and thus in Coleridge's view (as Coburn puts it) 'an Idea is its law, as it was for Plato, not a result' (*PL*, 52).

Hence Coleridge closely ties the notion of a Platonic 'idea' to that of a natural 'law' that guides the activities of a (well-developed) creative mind informed by a genuine will to the truth. Such a will can, if only on occasion, engender efficacious symbolisms intimately connected to the Idea.[31] The Pythagorean numbers, for example, can be regarded as 'symbols of ideas' and as such are (in Coburn words) 'indicative of the powers of the mind that are constitutive and, as such, one with the laws of the created universe' (*PL*, 52).[32]

Hence Coleridge's numerous expressions of respect for Pythagoras; for it was he who first held that questions about reason cannot be divorced from questions about morality (*PL*, 118). That is to say, Pythagoras showed that the laws of morality are not wholly different from the laws of arithmetic – which implies that a moral sense is involved in any act of reasoning that aims to apprehend Ideas in a way analogous to a Pythagorean divination, as it were, of the nature and properties of numbers. This line of thought thus elicits a type of moral intuition that involves discerning 'a proportion, a harmony, a something which, containing no principle of contradiction in itself, was susceptible of becoming the law of every rational being in whatever circumstances' (*PL*, 118).

However, Pythagoras also realized (Coleridge continues) that this observation is of little practical importance since in order to bring men into a moral state they must be introduced to the practice of virtue: for 'there is no power of educing virtue out of anything but itself (*PL*, 118–19). Being informed by an especially good will, Coleridge suggests, Pythagoras 'remains to us … highly estimable,' although he does so 'chiefly as a moral character' (*PL*, 119). That is to say, in short, the example of Pythagoras is especially important just because he shows that moral ideas must be viewed as directly involved in the struggles of reason to approach the *Logos*.[33]

## 6. Reason, intuition, and spirit

Thus Coleridge perhaps comes closest to defining good philosophical reasoning when he suggests that it depends upon the cultivation of a 'philosophic imagination.' The goal is 'a knowledge of Ideas [which] is a constant process of involution and evolution, different from the concepts of the understanding in this respect only that no reason can be brought for the affirmation, because it *is* reason' (quoted in *CaPh*, 107). As for the hoary notion of truth, Coleridge points toward the view that the quality of the true thoughts human beings are capable of willing/discovering is dependent on the state of development of their only more or less well-cultivated and willing souls. The point applies even to speculative reason's search for the 'food' for inductive science, for the value of 'exact' scientific knowledge ultimately depends on the quality of the primary work done by the 'transcendental consciousness' which can, but perhaps only at times, acquire 'real' intuitions in the sense of 'graspings' of genuine Ideas.[34]

Hence there appears to be nothing except perhaps rational instincts that can justify the musings of a transcendental philosopher. Once one

acknowledges that the distinction between fancy (which skates over the surface of thought) and a reality-producing form of imagination (which works beneath its surfaces) is not sharp, any act of reasoning may be suspected of being infected, if only unconsciously, by an ill will, or by self-serving and/or narrow interests, not to mention fond hopes and foolish desires. The upshot is that Coleridge's efforts to frame a true naturalism in the end point to the conclusion that philosophy can only be a therapeutic exercise whose main purpose is to help engender a healthier reason.

Barfield in fact notes that Coleridge's principal aim is to inculcate

> a fuller awareness of the presence of reason within us. … It is meaningless for the understanding to go on and ask: why should, or how can, that be the nature of reason? All the understanding can hope to do is to remove the obstacles which its own confused conceptions have interposed; and that is just the task Coleridge sets himself.
>
> (*WCT*, 117)

But if this is so, the biggest hurdle that the would-be true naturalist must surmount may be the pervasive tendency to divorce intellectual from moral/ethical and aesthetic considerations.[35] The intimate connection between the 'goodness' of good reasoning and moral or ethical 'goodness' cannot be easily discounted once one acknowledges that reason bespeaks a power or powers, and that a power presupposes a will to exercise it. One is always driven back to the question whether good reasoning in a Heraclitean universe bears witness to an overarching Will that works *through* the 'little' wills of individual souls. This overarching Will bespeaks perhaps a not necessarily benevolent Spirit which is represented 'locally' by a variety of only more or less well-cultivated souls. In fact, this possibility appears adumbrated in Coleridge's remark, quoted above, that percipiency is 'an attribute of the soul.' Very ordinary examples of perverse forms of percipiency (for we tend to see only what we want to see) indicate that souls are at the mercy of fondly embraced illusions and willed delusions, which indicates that there is no reason to believe in a loving Spirit that is constantly willing the best of all possible worlds.

Nonetheless, Coleridge claims that it is possible to ground his theory of imagination in an axiom 'which not only claims but necessitates the admission of its immediate certainty … namely [the intuition] *I am*' – that is, a pure or absolute intuition which is groundless 'because it is itself the ground of all other certainty' (*BL*, 148). On this basis he hopes to be able 'to demonstrate [that the subject-object] … identity is the

office and object of [the transcendental philosopher's] philosophy.' But talk about such an identity as well as an 'absolute truth' which is 'self-grounded, unconditional and known by its own light' (*BL*, 150) goes directly against the grain of the Heraclitean tenor of Coleridge's approach to natural philosophy. If a true naturalism calls for a just balancing of the competing claims of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, an intuition refers in the first instance to a dynamic relation between a conscious mind and 'that which is in itself unconscious.'[36] It is moreover far from obvious that such relations are formed instantaneously, as when Coleridge suggests that '[d]uring the act of knowledge itself, the objective and subjective are so instantly united that we cannot determine to which of the two the priority belongs' (*BL*, 145). That it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish clearly between these two poles is suggested moreover by his own example of the embodied water-insect whose movements (which reflect the movements of imagination) obviously take time.

It may be wondered, in short, whether the notion of a pure intuition is simply a red herring that stems perhaps from Coleridge's theological convictions and/or from an overestimation of the importance of Schelling's ideas.[37] On the other hand, if it is granted that Coleridge's Heraclitean approach vindicates the importance of Kant's early insight concerning the indispensability of imagination in the construction of experience, it is not without significance that he maintains that the principle which 'manifests itself in the Sum or I am' can be 'indiscriminately express[ed] by the words spirit, self and self-consciousness' (*BL*, 151). Indeed, why not think that these three factors of experience merely indicate that a thoroughgoing naturalism must be able to reconcile Nature and Spirit, as Coleridge himself indicates in the following summary observation:

> all the organs of sense are framed for a corresponding world of sense; and we have it. All the organs of spirit are framed for a correspondent world of spirit: tho' the latter organs are not developed in all alike. But they exist in all, and their first appearance discloses itself in the moral being.
>
> (*BL*, 139)

He herewith implies that the sensuous world (that is, the world that is 'given' to us by our senses as phenomena) is partly informed, or better shaped, by an elusive spiritual force or forces that work through intuitive imaginings. This consideration is consonant not only with his

account of 'minding' but also with his conception of 'mattering' that allows for both mechanical constraints and a certain freedom that is akin to that enjoyed by the 'inward' powers of thought.[38] The idea that novelty in world-making depends on acts of intuitive imagining resonates strongly with the idea of an interpenetration of the 'two conflicting principles of the Free Life and the Confining Form' (Miller, 81). For the tension between these fundamental principles can be regarded as the mainspring of Coleridge's quest for a true naturalism since they inform his interpretation of the 'mattering' of matter. This is because the very idea of matter invokes a nonmaterial 'something' that belongs to the order of energies or forces which are, as Barfield puts it, 'the 'insides' of anything to which we can apply the noun *matter* or the adjective *material*. That is to say, the term 'matter' refers to the 'constituent powers' of *natura naturans* that are 'suspended and, as it were, quenched in the product' (quoted in *WCT*, 33).[39] Hence the apparent 'deadness' of certain forms of matter signifies only the virtual absence of a 'free life' and the predominance of 'confining forms.' But the presence or absence of either is never absolute.

It is thus worth noting that this consideration is in accord with Coleridge's belief in the moral dimension of reasoning, for minding becomes virtually moribund whenever thinking allows itself to be constrained by the habitual interplay of fancies, or 'fixities and definites,' which suppresses the soul's yearnings for free or vital movements. Hence every new-born self must learn how to exercise this freedom properly, which means learning how to find its own 'true' self. This is because a self, according to Coleridge, must be conceived in the first instance as *anterior* to phenomena.[40] But if every self is only ever a potential or nascent 'true' self, there seems nothing that could justify his claim that 'the act of self-consciousness is … the source and principle of all our possible knowledge' (*BL*, 154). Indeed, when he tries to support this statement with the claim that 'I know myself only through myself,' he brings to mind the enigmatic response of Heraclitus to the challenge to explain his philosophical views; namely, that he had looked into himself. But he did not find therein the key to a perfect selfhood. Indeed, how could a dynamically evolving (or devolving) self know itself except by means of the very movements of the thinking 'I' which Coleridge himself problematizes?

Perhaps all that one *can* say with any confidence about the phenomenon of self-consciousness is that the theme of Self is just as important for the would-be true naturalist as the themes of Life and Thought. A self refers in the first instance to a succession of fleeting quicknesses in

Nature that leave only traces of their passage in the form of tangled histories of active thinking – that is, fleeting images, ideas, concepts, and representations which form and dissolve like the vapor trails of barely visible airplanes. Such traces recall Coleridge's description of the House of Past Quicknesses which ultimately bears witness to a world composed of inherently unstable blendings of Life and Death, so that every self at every moment of its existence can perhaps be ranked in respect to degree of vitality – with 'dead' or virtually inert selves at one end of the spectrum and vitally self-conscious selves at the other. In any case, every self attests to the existence of an at least partially free will which, as Coleridge indicates, is generally bound up with spirit; and spirit bespeaks in turn a partially free imagination. He thus adumbrates a profound puzzle related to the question of how to *do* philosophy when he notes that 'the self-conscious spirit … is a will; and freedom must be assumed as a *ground* of philosophy, and can never be deduced from it' (*BL*, 153).

## 7. Conclusion: on how to frame a true naturalism

As noted at the outset, Coleridge begins his search for a true naturalism with the promise of a 'true or original realism' – whose primary character he locates in the famous saying of Plotinus: 'Never could the eye have beheld the sun, had not its own essence been soliform.' He suggestively adds: 'i.e. pre-configured to light by a similarity of essence with that of light' (*BL*, 67), thereby indicating that the productive powers of imagination can result in the expression of essences.[41] Thus the ancient problem of essences is for the true naturalist bound up with contemplations that can awaken the powers of reason, which 'are in their essence the same as those powers which in nature produce the objects contemplated.'[42]

To convey some of the implications of this highly convoluted view of contemplation, one might say that two contemplating minds do not necessarily refer to two singular, independent selves confronting two distinct worlds – the situation is better imaged as two individualized exemplars of Reason more or less in touch with the same Idea.[43] For all its apparent eccentricity, this reading of the situation is in fact not foreign to anyone who has paused to admire a work of art, say, in company with someone who responds in a similar manner to certain subtle details. It is thus not insignificant that, according to Miller, Coleridge takes painting as an example for elucidating the 'copula' of 'opposite energies'; that is, the 'two conflicting principles of the Free Life and the Confining Form' (Miller, 81). A parallel situation is also evoked by Coleridge's suggestion that the intuitions of geometricians attest to the

fact that 'the act of contemplation makes the thing contemplated' (*BL*, 144). It is thus conceivable that consensual agreements as to the beauty as well as the importance of an esoteric theorem in mathematics are akin to the judgments of 'modern' artists or art critics who agree that to be designated as art a work should at least illustrate an interesting blend of free creative imagination constrained by a certain structure or structures. It is thus not too hard to think that a reasoning self is ultimately dependent on instincts and intuitions which are not so much inherited or taught as nurtured by an education of the faculties that begins at birth. Hence the philosopher who is attempting to cultivate a 'philosophic imagination' would do well to think long and hard about the relation between learning and art, which is therefore a topic I will return to later. For now it must suffice to note that for Coleridge a good education, in keeping with the etymological meaning of the word, involves an 'education' of all the faculties not least of which is the faculty of imagination.[44] The trouble is, talk about faculties has long since been banished from much of modern philosophy. Apart from reversing this error, a good philosophical education may need to strive to overcome the relentless modern pressure to choose between idealism and realism. Coleridge by contrast holds that both 'isms' must be given their due. He holds that every realistic philosophy must include an idealist component, as he indicates in a rewriting of Locke's phrase: 'the ideas being *derived* from the senses or *imprest upon* the mind, or in any way … brought in' as follows: 'there are no conceptions of our mind relatively to external objects but what are *elicited* by their circumstances and by what are *supposed* to be correspondent to them' (*PL*, 378).[45] In thus defending the realistic claims of philosophical idealism, Coleridge is in effect arguing for 'real' essences, although he is not advocating a type of Platonism that posits a realm of Absolutely Pure or Transcendental Essences. The meaning of essence, as we have seen, is closely bound up with the living powers of reason that give us just that world we happen to find ourselves living in.[46]

The little word 'we' reminds us that it would be a serious error to overlook the public dimension of reasoning which once again reminds us that, whatever essences are, they can only be conveyed by symbols. Coleridge in fact employs the symbol of a quadrivium to summarize the four interacting factors of experience to be found in all modes of existence, although their general character can be most clearly discerned in the lives of human beings: '[man] sees himself as an individual apart from others, and at the same time he regards himself as a member of many groups; he has feelings which center on himself as well as feelings

which go out to other people; and he is aware that these four attachments or poles are involved in every moment of consciousness.' [47]Thus experiencing in general alludes to an integrated, double polarity which can perhaps *only* be mediated by an artistically fashioned symbolism; that is, as Barfield notes, by a certain choice of figurative language (*WCT*, 117).

It may thus be useful to conclude with a brief sketch of Coleridge's attempt to depict the connections between ideas and images, for these he claims 'are the negatives of each other' (quoted in *CaPh*, 97). However, granted the Heraclitean tenor of his quest for a true naturalism, this relationship may be better conceived not as a contrariety but rather as a complementarity, for his postulate of a reality-shaping imagination elicits an ongoing production of images that may constitute a ground of 'primitive' symbols (a view that is consonant with Whitehead's theory of perception) that enables communications of 'true' ideas. It is thus highly significant (from the point of view of a believer in the possibility of a 'true realism') that Coleridge maintains that 'an idea in the *highest* sense of that word, cannot be conveyed but by a *symbol*.'[48]

In denying that an image is an object in the mind conceived as a container ('a vessel or at best a mould'), Coleridge suggests moreover that we are in a position to 'see' how certain images can give us a sense of *how* an Idea acts on the mind. To this end he invokes the elusive symbols of music that can make us feel that 'our being is nobler than its senses,' which suggests that the chief aim of a free creative imagination is to produce 'this same sort of a something which the mind can know but which it cannot understand, of which understanding can be no more than the symbol and is only excellent as being the symbol' (*PL*, 168).

Once again, he indicates that the best place to examine the links between ideas and symbols is in the realm of art where images evidently take precedence over concepts.[49] But if good reasoning in philosophy is akin to the sort of thinking pursued by serious artists, philosophic reason is fated to fall well short of what Coleridge envisages. As I have already suggested, a good deal of art indicates that it is highly misleading to say that 'all knowledge rests on the coincidence of an object with a subject' (*BL*, 144); or again, that 'the truth is universally placed in the coincidence of the thought with the thing, of the representation with the object represented' (*BL*, 144). The word 'coincidence' is particularly unfortunate in that it diverts attention away from the real difficulty, which Coleridge himself shows revolves about the problem of finding a just way to speak about the relations between symbolizers and 'reality.' Or perhaps better, actuality, for he can be read (as we shall see) as an important precursor of Whitehead's attempt to frame a theory of actuality in which perception

plays a key role in holding things together while imagination does the work of transforming images into symbols.[50]

In other words, Coleridge's evocation of a 'philosophic imagination' leads in the end to the possibility that good reasoning refers at bottom to a well-developed capacity to intuit the symbolic value of certain images, which is a conclusion that is perhaps implicit in his general claim that the aim of philosophy is 'to render the mind intuitive of the spiritual in man' (*BL*, 139). The point is that only artists may be capable of showing how to reconcile imagination, intellect, and spiritual intuitions – where the latter refer to a force or power that dwells both inside and outside the body. As for Coleridge's promise to frame a true naturalism that includes a true and original realism, he in effect raises the question whether a would-be true naturalist requires a 'mixed' immanent-transcendent theory of actuality informed by a morality bent on doing justice to a 'will to the truth.'[51] The means he himself uses (through adopting an autobiographical style) to express his philosophical views in fact confirms that the would-be true naturalist would be wise to look to art when trying to frame an adequate theory of 'reality,' or better actuality, which can do justice to the multi-dimensional functionings of imagination.[52]

# 6
# Putting Life Back into Nature

> Body my house
> my horse my hound
> what will I do
> when you are fallen …
> How will I know
> in thicket ahead
> is danger or treasure
> when Body my good
> bright dog is dead[1]

> 'We philosophers are not free to divide body from soul as the people do; we are even less free to divide soul from spirit.'[2]

## 1. Returning to Heraclitus

The hallmark of Whitehead's naturalistic storytelling is the famous saying of Heraclitus: 'All things flow.' But many other observations of this enigmatic pre-Socratic philosopher appear to be just as relevant to Whitehead's attempt to frame a comprehensive naturalism. His criticisms of Hume, for instance, recall Heraclitus's remark: 'Eyes and ears are bad witnesses, especially if we have souls that do not understand their language.'[3] While he praises Hume for insisting that we see with our eyes, hear with our ears, etc., he nonetheless puts both Hume's and Locke's commitment to rationalism and empiricism into question, since for Whitehead a rational explanation must above all be a concerted attempt to coordinate fundamental beliefs. And Hume hovers near 'the high watermark of anti-rationalism in philosophy' insofar as

he 'is to be construed as remaining content with two uncoordinated sets of beliefs.'[4]

Both these celebrated 'empiricists' may be suspected, in short, of helping to entrench a quasi-empirical science as the chief guiding light for a reason that operates under a 'strange contradiction' – that is, 'a faith which is impervious to the demand for a consistent rationality.'[5] It is thus important, as Whitehead indicates, to trace and root out the antecedents of this faith. Hinting that something more pernicious than 'a bad attack of muddle-headed positivism' is afoot, Whitehead identifies a pervasive tendency to promote a 'sharp division between nature and life [which] has poisoned all subsequent philosophy.'[6] What sort of remedy might alleviate this sort of poisoning is therefore a question of considerable importance for natural philosophers who, like Whitehead, believe they have a duty to try to conciliate 'philosophical conceptions of a real world with the world of daily experience' (*PR*, 156).

But it is not simply a sign of intellectual failure that there is 'no proper fusion of [Nature and Life] in most modern schools of thought' (*MT*, 150). Insofar as modern thought is greatly influenced by science, the latter can be accused of betraying the 'quicknesses' of both Life and Thought; for scientific reasoning, as Whitehead points out, 'is completely dominated by the presupposition that mental functionings are not properly part of nature' (*MT*, 156). Such a perverse belief is a sign of a decadent culture, Whitehead suggests, since 'the degeneracy of mankind is distinguished from its uprise by the dominance of chill abstractions, divorced from aesthetic content' (*MT*, 123). He thus brings to the foreground of philosophy of nature a number of tricky questions of a 'mixed' philosophical-psychological nature that bear directly on the *ur*-question of philosophy: what is it, what can it reasonably hope to achieve, how might it best be done?

Whitehead's short answer is that philosophy should seek above all a just and balanced account of experience – which for many people refers not only to bodies and minds but also to souls. Yet modern philosophers have on the whole shunned the question of how to fit souls along with minds and bodies into nature – which perhaps goes a long way toward explaining why philosophy has had 'a negligible influence in the formation of contemporary modes of thought' (*PR*, 156). It is at any rate not surprising that Whitehead is persistently ignored by academic philosophers who think that good philosophizing ought to illustrate a systematic, dispassionate reason. Thus his references to the antirationalism of modern thought probably give additional offence to those who conflate 'the advance of understanding' with 'the relentless progress of

science.' As a result, modern science has been allowed to take control of the definitions of fundamental concepts such as matter, mind, time, and so on. This scientistic 'appropriation of reality' has helped install in common sense the belief that science is merely another name for philosophy of nature.[7]

Summarizing some of the many problems of a metaphysical nature that as a consequence are in urgent need of being addressed, Whitehead spells out (in *Adventures of Ideas*) a list of seven Platonic generalities that deserve special attention: The Ideas, The Physical Elements, The Psyche (or Soul), Eros (or the urge toward the realization of the Ideas), The Harmony, The Mathematical Relations, and The Receptacle, where the Psyche refers to the spiritual or immaterial side of experiencing; that is, 'the Soul entertaining ideas.'[8] One may thus characterize his aim to construct a comprehensive naturalism as a nonmodern attempt to recover the insights of Heraclitus, who depicts nature as a flux of mind-body-souls. This flux, in Whitehead's view, is forever being lured onward by 'an indwelling Eros' that seeks ever more satisfactory Harmonies between the Physical Elements and Ideas.[9] He thus elicits the need for a nonmodern philosophy of nature that can take both the material and immaterial sides of experiencing into account at the same time, for he also holds that philosophy *tout court* is 'the most effective of all the intellectual pursuits' just because it is 'the architect of the buildings of the spirit' (*SMW*, viii). Hence the figure of Heraclitus also stands as a constant reminder that the philosopher perhaps ought to keep the question of the health or vitality of reasoning souls (as representatives of Spirit) foremost in mind, for reason is continually being diverted or corrupted by narrow, prejudiced, or half-asleep souls who promote and protect self-serving beliefs and restrictive principles that degrade Life and Thought.[10]

The complexity of the task Whitehead sets for himself and his readers is thus enormous. If one assumes that every embodied soul mirrors to some extent the collective soul of the culture in which it is embedded, he indicates that the poisoning of thought in the culture of the West has a good deal to do with the elevation of 'practical intelligence' at the expense of what might be called 'affective intelligence.'[11] For Whitehead is especially critical of the suspicion with which symbolisms *tout court* are viewed in this culture (with the exception of logic and/or mathematics, which the moderns have rendered into a kind of fetish). Yet it is no more possible to escape the problem of symbolism than to ignore the problem of culture, for '[n]ature is patient of interpretation in terms of Laws that happen to interest us' (*AI*, 136). Our interests are

therefore always leading our reason, for symbolism as such is 'inherent in the very texture of life' (*S*, 61–62). But one can perhaps go further and say symbolism is inherent in the meaning of reality since, like nature, '[h]owever you may endeavour to expel it, it ever returns.'

In any event, the role of symbolisms in establishing the intricate relations between the natural and the cultural sides of knowledge-making indicate that the would-be nonmodern naturalist would be well advised to begin all over again with an undivided nature-culture and the vague idea that symbolisms can only ever prove their worth by showing that they can mediate effectively between minds and the rest of the world. That this is not a bad way to begin is evidenced by the remarkable efficacy of mathematical symbolisms in investigating remote corners of the physical universe. As for other, less formal, types of symbolism, Whitehead's theory of organism can be complemented by Peirce's theory of semiotics to produce an organosemiotic metaphysics that is capable of dealing with the world viewed as a vast network of signings and symbolizings.[12] In this world of signs and symbols, another of Heraclitus's intriguing hints becomes relevant – for knowledge perhaps ultimately stems from the signs emitted by the oracle at Delphi.[13]

However, it is not possible to assess such a conjecture directly, if only because, as Whitehead points out, meaning-making in general involves a 'chain of derivation of symbol from symbol whereby finally the local relations, between the final symbol and the ultimate meaning, are entirely lost' (*S*, 83). Furthermore, chains of derivation are prone to being stopped by reflex actions that interrupt the flow of meaning. He thus indicates that '*only* active thought can save symbolically conditioned action from quickly relapsing into reflex action,' for there may be no other means in a 'reality of symbols' for rescuing reason from impotence (*S*, 82, italics mine).

The burning question for the would-be Whiteheadian naturalist is therefore: how might one best incorporate the 'active' side of thought in a theory of actuality that revolves about interpretations of signs and symbols? As I have earlier indicated, Whitehead's theory of perception as presented in *Symbolism* includes an operation of 'fusing' of the two principal modes of perception (causal efficacy and presentational immediacy). This requires an agency that he calls 'symbolic referencing' (*S*, 8), which links signs and/or symbols to images, and vice versa. Furthermore, as the example of poetry bears witness, this agency is close kin to poetic imagination. So if one grants with Whitehead that perception is the means by which the world holds itself together, the situation calls for a theory of actuality that recognizes imagination as a natural entity; that

is, as a concrete element of experiencing and, hence, of Nature. The trouble is, Whitehead's categoreal scheme as laid out in *Process and Reality* contains no explicit directions about how to think about the workings of imagination as a central feature of actuality.

It is therefore highly significant that in summing up his lifetime of philosophical musings, Whitehead indicates that a truly vitalistic naturalism must take into account the powers of souls: 'nature in general and the body in particular provide the stuff for the personal endurance of the soul' (*MT*, 162). Again, 'our experience of the world involves the exhibition of the soul itself as one of the components within the world' (*MT*, 163). So when he adds that '[a]ll the emotions, and purposes, and enjoyments, proper to the individual existence of the soul are nothing other than the soul's reactions to this experienced world which lies at the base of the soul's existence,' he opens up the possibility that the key to understanding not only 'active thought' but also good reasoning lies in healthy, perspicacious souls that possess a well-cultivated faculty of imagination.

## 2. On where and how to begin

But without doubt it is not easy to see how one might deal with such a highly convoluted conjecture, although Whitehead proffers a strong hint when he includes a chapter on the so-called romantic poets in his discussion of *Science and the Modern* World. He is especially interested in those poets who are acutely aware of science's debilitating influence on how we think and live. Citing key passages from Wordsworth and Shelley that invest Nature with hidden, spiritual powers, he brings out one of the most important challenges facing the nonmodern naturalist, one that inspired Coleridge to seek a dynamic philosophy capable of reconciling the conscious and unconscious dimensions of thought.[14] It is thus somewhat puzzling that Whitehead, in his search for a comprehensive naturalism, makes no reference to Coleridge's quest for a 'true naturalism.'[15] Yet this poet-philosopher's interpretation of the naturalistic project is, as we have seen, in many respects consonant with Whitehead's attempt to put Life (and Thought) back into Nature. He lends ontological support in particular to Coleridge's call for a 'true naturalism' based on a non-Aristotelian 'polar logic' which is designed to preserve the indissociability of fundamental polar contrasts. Whitehead declares, for instance, that '[t]hroughout the universe there reigns the union of opposites which is the ground of dualism' (*AI*, 190). At the same time, he shows how to frame a nonmodern naturalism with an

artful reason that promises to achieve the general goal of the naturalist, which may well be described as a 'cosmological construction' wherein 'the final opposites' (e.g., good and evil, flux and permanence, greatness and triviality, freedom and necessity, God and the world) are united in experience 'with a certain ultimate directness of intuition' (*PR*, 341).

The streak of antirationalism in modern thought that Whitehead deplores is furthermore of a piece with the mentality that promotes the 'despotism of the eye' which Coleridge associates with the tendency of modern empiricists to privilege the deliverances of the 'organs of sense' at the expense of the 'organs of spirit.' Thus when Whitehead declares (in the Preface to *Science and the Modern World*) that 'the spiritual precedes the material' he at the same time indicates that an adequate theory of actuality must pay special attention to the need to reconcile Spirit and Nature, just as Coleridge does; a task whose importance is not only implicit in his references to the romantic poets but also in his accompanying praise for Bishop Berkeley, who, along with Wordsworth and Shelley, is 'representative of the intuitive refusal seriously to accept the abstract materialism of science' (*SMW*, 86).

These representatives of the romantic tradition underscore in particular the need for the 'true naturalist' to come to terms with 'direct intuitions.' Whitehead defines intuition in accordance with the ancient ideas of 'inspectio' or 'intuitio,' which do not carry a sense of *judicium* since they are prior to any inferences. That is to say, at human levels of awareness, an intuition can be understood as a tentative 'looking into' which can become 'final for belief' (*PR*, 64), though 'finality' by no means implies infallibility, let alone exactness or certainty. Hence although Whitehead upholds the priority of 'direct perceptions' – such as, for instance, intuitions of causal relationships – he indicates that knowledge-making generally refers to a complex interplay of 'conscious discriminations' and nonsensuous perceptions – the 'most compelling example' of the latter being 'our knowledge of our own immediate past' (*AI*, 181).

But the vagaries of memory warn us against accepting at face value Whitehead's observation that we perceive just what we perceive – that we can assume as an 'ultimate fact' that we have a 'direct perception, via our senses, of an immediate extensive shape, in a certain geometrical perspective to ourselves, and in certain geometrical relations to the contemporary world' (*PR*, 64). The apparently straightforward notion of 'contemporary' perceptions in fact conceals a profound difficulty – which Whitehead himself draws attention to when he interprets the theory of relativity as showing not only that space and time are intimately related but also that time must be invested with a radical heterogeneity.[16]

But if the meaning of contemporaneity is impossible to elucidate in terms of a single or absolute Time, a good many 'obvious' presuppositions concerning the nature of reality take on a different hue, as Whitehead indicates with such arresting declarations as that an actual entity 'never really is.'[17] While this statement is unintelligible from a common sense point of view, it only flies in the face of materialistic metaphysical imaginaries that cleave to the Aristotelian subject-predicate logic. When viewed under the aegis of a Coleridgean 'polar logic,' this statement alludes to the need to preserve the indissociability of Being and Becoming when contemplating existence.

What is needed, in short, is a theory of actuality that is capable of doing justice to both Life and Thought in a context that refuses to separate complementary or mutually significant factors of existence. In respect to life, for instance, the natural philosopher must aim to develop a vitalistic theory of nature in which 'the deficiencies in our concept of physical nature should be supplied by its fusion with life … [while] on the other hand, the notion of life should involve the notion of physical nature' (*MT*, 150). This calls for a more humble approach to life than that promoted by the moderns. Yet it is surely 'more sensible, more truly empirical, to allow each living species to make its own contribution to the demonstration of factors inherent in living things.'[18] The standard approach, Whitehead adds, tries to construe the later forms of life 'by analogy to the earlier forms,' thus bearing witness to an 'anti-empirical dogmatism arising from a successful methodology.'

He thereby brings to the foreground of epistemology the question of what to do about living bodies with all their feelings and instincts when trying to account for actual experiences. The situation breeds such a swarm of problems and questions, however, that it seems wise to step well back and start with some very general observations about experiencing which everyone might accept. Whitehead himself suggests that human experience not only provides 'an example upon which to found the generalized description required for metaphysics' (*PR*, 112), it may also provide all the intuitions one needs. And one of these is that 'as a first approximation the notion of life implies a certain absoluteness of self-enjoyment.' Indeed, a moment's reflection on one's own awarenesses is surely enough to convince most people that Life implies

> a certain immediate individuality, which is a complex process of appropriating into a unity of existence the many data presented as relevant by the physical processes of nature.
>
> (*MT*, 150)

In any event, with declarations such as these, Whitehead indicates that the real difficulty in framing a nonmodern naturalism lies in choosing an appropriate language for giving a just *account,* rather than a complete *explanation,* of Life in all its variety, just as Coleridge urges when trying to articulate his own theory of Life.

In choosing an autobiographical setting as the background for his philosophical musings, Coleridge also shows that the only way forward is one that few contemporary naturalists will want to endorse. This is because one cannot assess the value of any truly naturalistic project without engaging in an exercise of criticism, for what is at stake is in effect the adequacy of the language chosen to express one's findings. And the best sort of language will revolve about an anthropomorphic imaginary, Whitehead suggests, for one must be able to do justice to all aspects of experiencing, the 'animal' as well as the 'human' (for he unapologetically uses such words as 'appropriate,' 'appetite,' and 'satisfaction'to convey his metaphysical insights).[19]

## 3. On experience-events

Thus, while the categoreal scheme of *Process and Reality* might give the impression of being modeled on the structure of *Principia Mathematica*, Whitehead's treatment of actuality can be regarded as an exploration of an organicistic imaginary which is based on certain insights that I have suggested are informally expressed in *Science and the Modern World*. Here Whitehead declares that his 'organic starting point' is the intuition that the world is 'the realization of events disposed in an interlocked community' – where an event is understood as a 'unit of things real' (*SMW*, 152). The theory of organism can thus be described as an event-metaphorics which proffers a skeleton of a complicated story about the evolutionary procession of the flux of worldly events, where an event is generally a 'something' that happens – in accordance with the root meaning, *e-venire*. Thus, Whitehead's conception of an event may be extremely vague, but it is fully consonant with ordinary experience (as indicated by the German word *erlebnis).*

That is, an event can be understood in general as an integral but non-localized happening that is being lived through. Hence when Whitehead ascribes an 'essential unity' to an event and insists that it is not 'a mere assemblage of parts or of ingredients' (*SMW*, 72), he can be understood as turning his back completely on the 'classical' idea of an event as a point-particle. The point is worth stressing since in his development of the theory of organism he at times evokes a fundamental

class of microscopic actual entities which are the ultimate constituents of every actual event. At the moment, however, I want to concentrate on his informal description of actual entities as 'drops of experience, complex and interdependent' (*PR*, 18).

It seems agreed on all sides that human experiencing is shot through with gaps and interruptions, as well as continuous and repeating units, or 'drops,' a fact that is perhaps at the bottom of Whitehead's declaration in *Process and Reality* that an actual entity 'perpetually perishes' (*PR*, 29). But this general description of an actual entity, as a 'something' that both becomes and perishes, suggests that actuality can in general be conceived as an intricate network of event-happenings that might also be called an interconnected flux of occasions of sensibility, for no actual entity lives and dies in isolation from everything else.

One advantage of stepping back to this high level of generality (which is not the same thing as a high level of abstraction) is that nonspecialized thinkers may even have a distinct advantage over trained philosophers and scientific experts when it comes to judging the adequacy of Whitehead's story about actuality. They are at least more likely to acknowledge the ebbs and flows in their own sensibilities, which continually alter their relationships with the rest of the world, a circumstance that many will readily associate with the dynamic vitality of their embodied souls. Indeed, if an actual entity is modeled as an ensouled, sentient body of the kind that human beings are most familiar with, one is surely in tune with at least one version of the Ontological Principle: 'actual entities are the only *reasons*; so that to search for a *reason* is to search for one or more actual entities' (*PR*, 24). Ordinary human experience indicates it would be perverse to ignore the contributions of the body when speaking of actuality, for, as Whitehead notes, the hand is manifestly the *reason* for the projected touch-sensum and the eye is the *reason* for the projected sight-sensum (*PR*, 176). Why not think, then, that the whole living, ensouled organism contains all the reasons one needs to tell an adequate story about actuality?

When actual entities are viewed as experience-events and modeled by sentient bodies, one can at least hope to come up with an intelligible story about experience which everyone can understand. However, as I earlier noted, to pursue this line of thought is to find oneself in conflict with Whitehead's own formal exposition of the theory of organism. In spelling out the role of eternal objects in the production of actuality, he injects what appears to be a distinctly nonnaturalistic element into his theory of organism. He associates eternal objects with a 'Platonic world of ideas' which are 'components of the primordial nature of God' (*PR*, 46);

at the same time he categorically declares that the realm of eternal objects is not evolutionary, that 'there are no novel eternal objects' (*PR*, 22).

Yet if eternal objects (universals) and actual entities (particulars) should be viewed as representatives of the overarching polar contrast of abstract-concrete, one may conceive every 'form of definiteness' as the result of an actual becoming that not only draws upon the reservoir of 'real potentialities' provided by the past but is also capable of adding to this reservoir. That is to say, 'eternal objects' may be best interpreted not as atemporal Platonic forms of definiteness but rather as indefinite possibilities out of which can emerge more definite forms that forever after are available for all new acts of becoming.

This adjustment to the theory of eternal objects spawns a host of difficult metaphysical questions, however, although it is fully in accord with the Heraclitean spirit of Whitehead's theory of organism, for there seems no good reason to think that a *Logos* could not evolve. Furthermore, by modeling actual entities on sentient or feeling bodies, a theory of actuality can now be formulated which is consonant with the everyday fact that there are many types of experiencing in this world that bespeak in turn many different kinds of becoming with different aims. This consideration is fully in accord with the everyday fact of human life in which many intangible goals (e.g., wisdom or justice) are extremely vague.[20]

But perhaps most significantly, this suggested adjustment respects the indissociability of what must surely be the primary fundamental conceptual contrast, namely, that of immanence-transcendence. The overweening importance of this contrast is borne out by Whitehead's recognition of the need for a moral dimension in a theory of actuality, for he explicitly describes an actual event as 'an activity of concern' that involves a 'conjunction of transcendence and immanence' (*MT*, 167). He thus indicates that the fundamental complementarity of abstract-concrete calls for a theory of actuality whose organizational principles are at once transcendent and immanent.[21]

The model of an ensouled living body is also able to take into account one of the more salient aspects of actual experiencing, which elicits an interdependence of memory and anticipation where memory refers to the way the past inevitably haunts 'present' acts of becoming. But the future can also influence acts of becoming in the sense that anticipation can entertain the possibility of new, and perhaps better, ways of being in the world. Thus the factor of recollection in perception illustrates the pole of immanence, which in the formal theory of organism is expressed in the dictum that an actual occasion never arrives in the world out of nowhere: 'Each occasion presupposes the antecedent world as active in

its own nature' (*MT*, 166). Holding that this assumption founds the only intelligible doctrine of causation (*MT*, 165), Whitehead thus suggests that memory should be regarded as the complement of anticipation, where the tension between them illustrates the complementarity of the immanent and the transcendental sides of a becoming. Hence the model of a sentient or living body with all its dynamic equilibriums, allows for both the organs of sense and the organs of spirit to inform all elements of actuality. This consideration opens up even unto the horizons of the cosmos the possibility implicit in Whitehead's claim that experiencing means 'constructive functioning.' He associates this phrase with Kant's insights into experiencing which involves synthesizing operations that depend on the powers of the faculty of imagination which he describes as an 'indispensable function of the soul.' This great insight, if such it be, suggests that the entire cosmos is replete with a great variety of souls capable of wielding imaginative powers; that imagination, in short, holds the key to the making of meaning in the world.

However, not only imagination but also feelings or emotions must be acknowledged as elements of experiencing. It is thus an irony that the self-consciously rational empiricist Hume appears to have realized the centrality of the passions and imagination in experiencing, although he failed to see the implications of this insight. For according to Genevieve Lloyd, in his attempt to locate the unity of consciousness 'nearer the surface of everyday thought,' while trying to be a better empiricist than Descartes, Hume realized that this unity 'has less to do with intellect than with passions and the imagination.' It is thus worth repeating Hume's intriguing declaration:

> Let us fix our attention out of ourselves as much as possible. Let us chace [sic] our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear'd in that narrow compass. This is the universe of the imagination, nor have we any idea but what is there produc'd.[22]

But what for the 'strict' empiricist Hume became a source of despair can just as easily be viewed as an invitation to rethink the meaning of experience, which Kant in fact attempted, although his attempt to systematically tame imagination vitiated (I am suggesting) one of his best insights.

Claiming that he was greatly influenced by Hume's reflections on experience, Whitehead agrees that perceptions or sensations do indeed illustrate a certain force or vivacity. By contrast, there is patently a lack

of vivacity in remembered ideas which, to use Hume's terms, are but faint images of impressions. As for the ideas that are consciously entertained, they may be simple (derived from simple impressions, 'which are correspondent to them, and which they exactly represent') or complex. But in attempting to elucidate this complexity, Hume's 'admirable clearness partially deserts him' (*PR*, 131), as when he declares that 'the idea of a substance … is nothing but a collection of simple ideas, that are united by the imagination, and have a particular name assigned to them' (*PR*, 131).

Thus Hume skates over the real difficulty, which is, according to Whitehead, to give a plausible account of the *unifying* or conjunctive operations of imagination. He clings to a superficial view of imaginative freedom; indeed, his doctrine 'would debar imagination from the free conceptual production of any type of eternal objects, such as Hume calls "simple"' (*PR*, 133). However, Whitehead goes on, 'we may doubt whether "simplicity" is ever more than a relative term, having regard to some definite procedure of analysis.'

Suggesting that a more empirically sound analysis would begin by noting that

> imagination is never very free … but such freedom as it has seems to establish the principle of the possibility of diverse actual entities with diverse grades of imaginative freedom, some more, some less,'
>
> (*PR*, 132)

Whitehead herewith gestures toward an inescapably complex world in which imagination always operates under constraints. That is, the operations in sense-making are at once free and constrained, as is indicated by Hume himself when he notes that simple ideas do not always arise from correspondent impressions. As Whitehead points out, Hume's own observation, that it is possible to perceive a particular shade of blue that has never before been met with in perception, yet whose quality can nonetheless be supplied by imagination, implies a free imaginative capacity to 'fill in' extant gaps, as it were, in the 'givenness' of ordinary sensa.[23] Thus Hume illustrates, in short, that even great philosophers can start to open up important lines of thought, only to close them down again immediately; by choosing, for instance, to cling to fond presuppositions just because they prove useful in 'practice.' Which is to say that the poisoning of thought that the early moderns introduced into Western philosophy involves a stubborn inclination to opt for 'pragmatic justification, without metaphysical reason' (*PR*, 133).

## 4. Bodies and matter

To acknowledge the centrality of the passions and imagination in experiencing is to affirm that feeling or sentient bodies are perhaps the loci, so to speak, of occasions of sensibility in the Heraclitean flux of experience-events that constitutes the world. But here one must move directly against the grain of the modern metaphysical tradition, which tends to link the notion of body to the idea of an inert, unchanging substance. The notion of body has, in fact, undergone a series of transformations that Ivor Leclerc has examined while attempting to fill in the historical background of the modern conception of matter. His important work brings to the foreground the problem of how best to think and speak about matter, mind, substance, and related aspects of actuality. Indeed, recent developments in physics, he says, call for 'a profound change in contemporary philosophy, not only in respect of subject matter but also in respect of fundamental theory.'[24]

Stressing in particular the dramatic change that took place in the seventeenth-century Renaissance revival of Neoplatonism, which led to a complete displacement of Aristotle's theory of matter in which ultimate substances were associated with living bodies, Leclerc is especially concerned with the modern tendency to subsume the idea of matter under a conception of being that effectively denies becoming. The modern conception of matter, in other words, has almost entirely eclipsed Aristotle's important distinction between actuality (*energeia*) and potentiality (*dynamis*) – a circumstance that has led to the erasure of the parallel distinction between the mathematical and the physical. During the course of this radical change in the meaning of substance, Aristotle's depiction of matter in terms of a living body was, so to speak, divided in half, and the vital half was thrown away. Imbued with lifeless passivity, the notion of body has thus been rendered unintelligible from the point of view of ordinary experience, for it is totally incapable of change, either in respect to a capacity to induce changes in other bodies or to undergo internal changes of its own.

Leclerc also brings out an even more serious, because more far-reaching, consequence of this reinterpretation of matter – the accompanying suppression of ontology and the elevation of epistemology to pride of place in natural philosophy. That is to say, in the eyes of contemporary naturalists a body is viewed as a 'something' having only the *appearance* of a homogeneous whole – which is to say that its essential meaning must be sought in the realm of the phenomenal. Here perhaps we have a fine illustration of the quasi-mystical faith in the powers of mathematics to

reveal the 'real.' It is a nice irony anyway that twentieth-century physics has shown (with much help from mathematics) that the modern conception of matter as essentially inert or 'dead' was only ever a Pyrrhic victory. And it is to Whitehead's everlasting credit, as Leclerc points out, that he very early on realized that advances in physics obliged philosophy to return to Aristotle so as to acquire a better conception of the physical, which means taking seriously Aristotle's linkage of ultimate substance to a living body.

Briefly, then, developments in science itself point up the need to tie the meaning of substance to an *activity of relating*. Whitehead thus indicates a way to reverse all the dramatic reversals of the 'scientific revolution' that were entrenched by the early moderns. Arguing that a body needs to be viewed in the first instance as organic, Whitehead himself raises the question whether the flux of experience-events would be best modeled in terms of living bodies. For as Leclerc points out, it is necessary to stress that, in view of the current situation in biology, the meaning of 'living' is itself at issue. That is, the phrase 'living body' is not a pleonasm, since 'certain particular features are necessary for an organism to be regarded as "living"' (*PN*, 178).

But at this stage of my discussion, it is very much a moot question what these features might be. Not least among the complicating factors that Whitehead introduces is the evaluative aspect of experiencing. One need only consider the behavior of threatened animal organisms who act as though their lives were intrinsically valuable. Indeed, it would seem that all living organisms illustrate a 'great philosophic truth,' that '[a]ll ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at value. A dead nature aims at nothing. It is the essence of life that it exists for its own sake' (*MT*, 135).

To introduce the factor of value, however, is to negate the value of the Newtonian metaphysical doctrine that not only does not take the notions of value and meaning seriously but also passes lightly over the need to make sense of the related ideas of force, power, stress, or tension.[25] It is also to make central the question whether an actual entity is best modeled by a living body, for as a first approximation, says Leclerc, 'living' should be understood as referring to the plan of the whole or compound body, which is capable of influencing and being influenced by the characters of its constituent bodies. He thus stresses the importance of the discovery of modern physics, that if there are such 'things' as ultimate substances, they should be regarded as bodies in the sense of self-subsistent centers of activity.

The central question is, then, why not think that the plan of every natural actual entity refers to a unique character of its living body and

not merely to the sum of the characters of its constituent bodies? In other words, the real difficulty in overcoming the materialistic conception of matter as inert 'stuff,' as Leclerc points out, revolves about the question of the ontological status of compound bodies; that is, bodies that can be analyzed into more fundamental constituents. For according to Leclerc, Whitehead never fully renounced the dubious assumption underlying the 'classical' idea of a compound body – which was generally conceived as a composite or mere aggregation of more fundamental or ultimate bodies:

> Bodies, along with all compounds, are for Whitehead, quite explicitly on a different ontological level from actual entities. Bodies, and all compounds, are 'societies' of actual entities. A 'society' is a derivative entity constituted by a plurality of actual entities which are in a genetic interrelatedness, by virtue of which they have some particular feature or form in common, this common form being the 'defining characteristic' of the relevant society.
>
> (*PN*, 119)[26]

Thus Whitehead's overturning of the mechanistic conception of matter does not go far enough, in Leclerc's view, for the theory of organism includes a dubious and unnecessary presumption to the effect that there is a fundamental class of actual entities which alone have the character of self-subsistent active entities in their own right. The implication is that Whitehead carries over to the philosophy of organism one of the worst ontological assumptions of the moderns.[27] For them, a compound body is indeed capable of 'acting' – but 'only in a sense derivative from the individual actings of the constituents' (*PN*, 160). But if an elementary body should be conceived as a center of action in the sense of 'a single integral whole … [which] constitutes a continuous magnitude' (*PN*, 174), a compound body should likewise be conceived as a unit of actuality in its own right. That is, as a socially integrated network of interacting bodies wherein any change in the complex of relations involved can 'make a difference to the respective essences of the entities, i.e., to what each *is*, in itself (*PN*, 147).[28]

Following this line of thought, then, one can arrive at a thoroughly nonmodern conception of actuality that promises to be as applicable to cultural entities as to natural entities. It resonates with the everyday fact that a living animal attests to a dynamic complex of various forms of relationship both within itself and with everything else.[29] Hence if there are good metaphysical reasons, as Whitehead himself indicates, for

depicting actual entities as only more or less 'localized' experience-events, or bodies-in-relationship, why not model all actual entities as nodes in an immensely complex, dynamic web of embodied occasions of sensibility in a Heraclitean flux? Both ordinary and modern physics can then agree that bodies are 'essentially active' and 'necessarily by their acting in relation with one another' (*PN*, 141).

When viewed in this light, it is also highly significant that in his early formulation of the theory of organism Whitehead boldly declares that '"value" is the word I use for the intrinsic reality of an event' (*SMW*, 93). Indeed, if 'reality' refers to a dynamic web of relationships that forms between selectively interacting living bodies whose existence bespeaks ongoing actualizations of potentialities, there must be a telic dimension to every actualization, as Leclerc points out.[30] For every actualization must presuppose some vague goal or aim, where vagueness is only to be expected when one uses the model of an ensouled, living body whose evaluative aims can vary from occasion to occasion – inasmuch as its constitution is continually being influenced not only externally but also internally – through acts of willing, desiring, selecting, rejecting, entertaining, and of course, imagining.[31] It is thus conceivable that all that is required to overcome the modern poisoning of thought, which includes an arbitrary anathematizing of anthropomorphic imaginaries, is an acknowledgement that one of Whitehead's greatest insights is his summary observation that 'self-determination is always imaginative in its origin' (*PR*, 245).

## 5. Bodies, life, and societies

But before taking this thought any further, it may be useful to consider the relation between the metaphor of a society and the idea of an acting compound body. Perhaps the model of a living body can be applied to whole cultures, and even to the cosmos itself. For a culture can be conceived as a dynamic network of interconnected occasions of sensibility which is marked by distinctive types of communication. The metaphor of a society thus plays a key role in a Whiteheadian naturalism since it allows for a great variety of complex forms of organization in Nature, none of which need be fixed, once and for all. Indeed, this character of dynamic change is pivotal when trying to elucidate the meaning of order and disorder, for order is primarily social; chaos means lack of order relevant to dominant modes of social organization.[32]

From an abstract point of view, it is therefore necessary to dispense with the notion that the perduring forms of organization exemplified

by a living organism can be properly described in terms of a 'defining characteristic' that Whitehead formally identifies as a complex, eternal object. This move is counterproductive if, as Whitehead himself notes, life 'cannot be a defining characteristic. It is the name for originality [or 'novelty of appetition'] and not for tradition' (*PR*, 104). Those 'inorganic' bodies that seem to be completely lifeless exemplify only those types of societies which do not incorporate an 'entirely living nexus'; such bodies Whitehead refers to as 'material societies.' But he also makes it quite clear that a living nexus is 'not itself a society' (*PR*, 103), although a living nexus (however else it might be defined) cannot be thought independently of material societies: 'we do not know of any living society devoid of its subservient apparatus of inorganic societies.'

The matter indicates that it might be useful to distinguish between an actual entity and an actual occasion on the basis of the presence or absence of a certain quickness. Put another way, an actual occasion is perhaps best understood as an actual entity less the vitality implicit in the idea of a living body.[33] This move is consonant with the ontological principle, for actual occasions now provide the firm ground required by descriptions of a world in process of being continually constructed, while allowing for the fact that we can never fully grasp what is actually happening in the processes of construction. Whitehead himself gestures toward this distinction when he notes that his use of the word 'object' is consonant with the meaning of 'object' in the ordinary sense of an unalterable 'thing' that is, like a concrete building block, part of the fixed furniture of the world. As such, it can participate in Process only as 'a determinant of the definiteness of an actual occurrence' (*PR*, 243) – that is, as a 'something' that can influence subsequent acts of becoming.

Thus if the organization exemplified by a living organism entails a society of structured societies, where each structured society may shelter a different type of living nexus, it follows that the quickness exemplified by any mode of organization is always a matter of degree. It is merely one of the more insidious of modern prejudices that one can distinguish sharply between the organic and the inorganic. The kind and degree of vitality evidenced by different species of organism clearly attenuates as one descends the hierarchies of worldly forms of organization, from animal life forms to plants, to single cells, to crystals, and even beyond. Yet at no point can one assert that one has finally arrived at an absolute zero of quickness.

It is therefore not utter nonsense to speak of the experiencings of a stone, for if an analysis of the components of a stone is pushed far enough, modern physics assures us that what remains is not a mere

aggregate of 'inert atoms.' At this low level of quickness, we are speaking of entities that follow trajectories through the world that are so very different from those traveled by embodied human sensibilities that to understand a stone one would have to leap an enormous temporal chasm, as it were. It would therefore not be far wrong to say that the 'lives' of stones are beyond the ken of most human beings since they involve temporal durations immeasurably different from those familiar to human experiencers.[34]

That is to say, in short, neither at the level of stones nor at the level of the 'infinite' cosmos can one escape the mystery of quickness. Indeed, in his concluding work Whitehead claims that 'the body is merely one society of functionings within the universal society of the world. We have to construe the world in terms of the bodily society, and the bodily society in terms of the general functionings of the world' (*MT*, 164). This interactive, organicistic view thus points up the inexhaustibility of the meaning of 'complexity' as this applies to evolving modes of organization, while putting paid to the modern faith that a full understanding of complexity awaits only the development of more sophisticated methods of scientific investigation. The complexity of a 'higher' organism bespeaks a greater range, and hence wider field of interaction, of the quicknesses implicit in a living body. A plant illustrates a relatively low degree of complexity, as Whitehead points out, which is not, however, minor, since it contains millions and millions of vital centers in its individual cells but no central authority or focal point of unification. As we ascend the hierarchy of organisms, there is a progressive increase in centrality of control, as well as capacity to influence others, although no organism exhibits an absolutely dominant organ of central control. Each cell- or organ-body within an animal body, such as the heart, for instance, has a life of its own in the sense that it can go on beating even when it is removed from the body. It is thus not insignificant that some observers have maintained that the brain goes on functioning for a short while in a severed head.

In general, the model of a living body is quite compatible with Whitehead's observation that the type of organization exhibited by a highly complex 'higher' animal is more like an aristocracy than the sort of democracy that a plant exemplifies. When the organic world is viewed from this perspective, animal bodies can be likened to basal cells in an immense 'cosmic body' whose skeleton is discernible in the 'rocks of ages' which are not absolutely dead; for they contain the germs of a future cosmos in which Life could evolve into something quite unlike this one. Indeed, in keeping with the view that the world is evolutionary from

bottom to top, Whitehead suggests that the cosmos we live in is merely one of an endless series of evolving cosmic epochs wherein dominant modes of structuring of the material world delimit the possible kinds and degrees of quickness that can emerge in different species of living bodies.

## 6. Science and life

To follow Whitehead's Heraclitean beginnings is thus to arrive at the outlines of a cosmological theory that seems so remote from current scientific accounts of nature that the question of what natural philosophy actually obtains from science in its quest for a deeper understanding of Life can be postponed no longer. Whitehead in fact observes that although one can arrive at his organicistic conception of the world either by starting out from psychology and physiology or from modern physics, he himself came to his philosophical convictions 'by reason of my own studies in mathematics and mathematical physics' (*SMW*, 152). Being an important and innovative contributor to logic, mathematics, and physics, and especially relativity theory, as well as conversant with at least the early stages of development of quantum theory, his philosophical reflections on what science has to tell us about the matterings of matter thus command a certain authority. And Whitehead's early systematic explorations of fundamental scientific concepts evidence is marked by a profound 'inner' disquiet with regard to modern approaches to the physical world that omit the all-important factor of change.[35]

It may therefore be helpful to begin with one of his favorite examples of scientific progress which concerns the discovery of what in this cosmos bespeaks a totally enveloping society; namely, an 'electromagnetic field of activity pervading space and time.' He points out that the laws that condition such fields refer to 'the general activity of the flux of the world, as it individualizes itself in the events. … [but] the science ignores what anything is in itself' (*SMW*, 153). The notion of 'laws,' in other words, alludes only to the systems of symbolisms that we have devised for expressing and exploring 'the conditions of relationship' between and within such fields. Furthermore, 'the intrinsic reality' of the recorders must also be taken into account, for the acts of symbolizing actually performed by observers tacitly refer to the 'objective life histories' of the active agencies which determine 'the routes in space and in time of the life histories of enduring entities' (*SMW*, 153). These agencies are mainly concerned with revealing 'the spatio-temporal specifications of the life histories of other things.' One may thus wonder whether scientific observers do much more than limn the bare bones of a story

about how the physical aspects of events in Nature happen at present to be organized.

That science has nothing substantial to say about Life itself is implicit in Whitehead's cryptic observation that 'life is characteristic of ''empty space'' and not of space occupied by any corpuscular society. … Life lurks in the interstices of each living cell, and in the interstices of the brain' (*PR*, 105–6). However, to grasp the import of this remark, an interpretation of 'empty space' is required, which means dispensing at once with the possible objection that the very idea of an 'empty space' is unintelligible – by recalling that the notions of space and time in a Whiteheadian cosmos are abstractions from the more fundamental community of relationships that constitute the orderings within nature. Hence an empty space can be regarded as an abstraction from an empty event. As such it can be viewed as the complementary contrast of an 'occupied event.' For the former type of event is 'devoid of electrons, or protons, or of any other form of electric charge' (*SMW*, 153).

Hence insofar as an 'occupied event' can be modeled by a living body, an 'empty event' is quite different in the sense that it does not contribute to the 'solidity' of the world. Or as Whitehead puts this crucial point, an empty event is 'something in itself, but it fails to realise a stable individuality of content' (*SMW*, 154). Yet such ephemeral entities nonetheless perform an important function in the network of relationships that link occupied events because they supply the means for storing and transporting energy from one place to another – 'for receiving, for storing in a napkin, and for restoring without loss or gain' (*PR*, 177).

Of special interest here, then, is Whitehead's analysis of an empty event. While lacking individuality of content, an empty event plays a positive role in the flux of events in at least three ways: (1) as 'the actual scene of an adventure of energy, either as its habitat or as the locus of particular stream of energy'; (2) as 'a necessary link in the pattern of transmission, by which the character of every event receives some modification from the character of every other event'; or (3) as 'the repository of a possibility' (*SMW*, 153). The third alternative suggests that empty events ultimately refer to the 'invisible' aspects of the becoming of actualities in which such immaterial factors as selectivity in the communications that actually take place between occupied events are enacted. For if each occupied event betokens a more or less localized center of structured activity, it must be capable of selective decisions in respect to what can act upon it. One thus arrives at the question (assuming that indeterminacy refers to communications by means of indefinite signs or symbols) of what could perform the 'replacement of possibility

by actuality' if not some imaginative/interpretative agency capable of recognizing and interpreting the significance of relevant signs *qua* mere possibilities. It is not hard to think that such an agency is close kin to human imagination since there is no escape through shifting the focus of attention to the 'adventures of energy' – as if energy were a kind of ultimate 'stuff.' If the world consists of active structurings in relationship, energy seems best understood as the quantifiable aspect, or the 'quantity of action,' of a peculiar form of structured activity. Yet such structurings are in fact what science is obliged to concentrate all its attention upon when trying to understand the matterings of matter, and it cannot be doubted that it has invented ingenious methods for dealing with the purely physical side of the structuring of events. However, insofar as physicists' descriptions of the physical world as structurings of structures of activity are 'right,' their successes attest only to the possibility that some very primitive forms of minding are capable of intuitive imaginings that belong to the order of 'direct perceptions.'

## 7. Immanence and transcendence

Before exploring this possibility, it might be useful to look briefly at its germination in Whitehead's early philosophy of nature wherein a natural entity or event is conceived in terms of a 'percipient event' which is 'roughly speaking the bodily life of the incarnate mind' (*CN*, 107). Observing that 'the distant situation of a perceived object is merely known to us as signified by our bodily state, i.e. by our percipient event' (*CN*, 188), he lays the ground for a cosmic theory of perception based on a theory of significance, for 'our percipient event is saved from being the whole of nature by this fact of its significations.' And when he later analyzes perception into two modes (causal efficacy and presentational immediacy), while linking them by an agency he calls 'symbolic referencing,' which I have argued is close kin to imagination, he indicates that insofar as the world is held together by a network of communications it can be viewed as a 'reality of symbols' shot through with a great variety of perceptual (i.e., interpretative) powers.[36]

That perception and power are intimately connected is fairly explicit in Whitehead's praise for the 'admirable adequacy' of Locke's empirical observations that concern the changes in our 'perceivable ideas.' Locke is adumbrating the ontological principle of the philosophy of organism, he says, 'when he asserts that "power" is a "great part of our complex ideas of substances"' (*PR*, 18). It may therefore be useful to pursue his accompanying observation that 'the perceptive constitution of the actual entity

presents the problem' – which might well be called *the* cosmic problem of organization in the cosmos inasmuch as perception holds the key to understanding 'the solidarity of the universe' (*PR*, 56).

Whitehead is particularly impressed by Locke's distinction between active and passive powers, so it is also worth repeating parts of the following excerpt from Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding:*

> for we cannot observe any alteration to be made in, or operation upon, any thing, but by the observable change of its sensible ideas. … Power thus considered is twofold; viz. as able to make, or able to receive, any change: the one may be called 'active,' and the other 'passive,' power. … I confess power includes in it some kind of relation, – a relation to action or change; as indeed which of our ideas, of what kind soever, when attentively considered does not? For our ideas of extension, duration, and number, do they not all contain in them a secret relation of the parts? Figure and motion have something relative in them much more visibly. And sensible qualities, as colours and smells, etc., what are they but the powers of different bodies in relation to our perception?
>
> (quoted in *PR*, 57–58)

Indeed, it is not hard to believe that, if 'actual entities' can be modeled by living bodies-in-relationship, then living animal bodies bear witness to the principle that 'the "power" of one actual entity on the other is simply how the former is objectified in the constitution of the other' (*PR*, 58). It is thus worth noting that when Locke claims that figure and motion 'have something relative in them,' his remark recalls the now-obsolete (but in this light highly significant) meaning of 'relative' – a capacity or capacities in some things to *produce* certain relationships and figurations, as well as to be influenced by them. For according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), 'relative' once referred to an antecedent event as a 'something' which is *concerned* in what it is related to or is capable of influencing.

While Whitehead may or may not have been aware of this definition, it accords well with his philosophy of organism, whose alternative name is philosophy of concern. He claims, for instance, that 'each occasion, although engaged in its own immediate self-realization, is concerned with the universe' (*MT*, 167). Hence when he states that 'concernedness is the essence of perception' (*AI*, 180), he at the same time brings out the special significance of powers of decision that range from virtually 'blind' reflexive reactions to creative responses to signs

and symbols. This power of decision, it would seem, even supervenes over the principle of relativity, for Whitehead also suggests that Locke is adumbrating another expression for the ontological principle which

> asserts the relativity of decision; whereby every decision expresses the relation of the actual thing, *for which* a decision is made, to an actual thing *by which* that decision is made. … where 'decision' constitutes the very meaning of actuality.
>
> (*PR*, 43)[37]

Putting the whole complex business into a nutshell, Whitehead declares that 'the problem of perception and the problem of power are one and the same' (*PR*, 58). Philosophy, he at the same time suggests, went off the track long ago when it turned its back on the idea of a faculty as the seat in a body-mind of a certain power or complex of powers. While it is true that he explicitly rejects the faculty psychology of bygone times, his opposition to this notion pertains chiefly to the tendency to turn faculties into 'very abstract notions'; that is, into 'mere awareness, mere private sensation, mere emotion, mere purpose, mere appearance, mere causation' (*PR*, 18) – which amounts to committing the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness. So when he ascribes great importance to Locke's insight that power is the key to understanding perception, he in effect underscores the possibility that the notion of faculty ought to figure centrally in a thoroughgoing account of perception inasmuch as the great variety in types of perception bespeaks many different faculties, or capacities.

It might be objected here that this line of thought does not accord with all of Whitehead's expressions of the ontological principle, such as the following: 'the reasons for things are always to be found in the composite nature of definite actual entities' (*PR*, 19). But as Leclerc makes clear, this statement is misleading insofar as the idea of 'composite nature' carries with it the modern connotation of a mere aggregation of elements instead of an integral whole having its own peculiar capacity for substantial activity. The perduring integrity of such an activity suggests moreover a supervening power of composition which Whitehead himself notes is missing from Locke's account of perception, for he fails to explain what sustains the 'togetherness' of the ideas that 'constantly go together.' There must be, in other words, a primordial power which 'dwells,' so to speak, behind the becoming of novel events, and which is responsible for the continuance of the habits and beliefs that control almost everything that is still to come (a power that Whitehead refers

to as 'causal objectification'). Put another way, the 'past' can be interpreted as having the power to ensure conformity to an already established regime of symbols which guide, but do not entirely govern, what symbols will acquire meaning in future experience-events.

At this point the scales seem to tip in favor of the model of a living body. Insofar as an act of becoming involves selections, evaluations, gradations of importance, and so on, and these refer to an ongoing adjustment of certain feelings, this model can also take into account all the limited freedoms implicit in the notion of a given species of organism. Indeed, an act of becoming, says Whitehead, is

> finally governed by its datum; whatever be the freedom of feeling arising in the concrescence, there can be no transgressions of the limitations of capacity inherent in the datum. The datum both limits and supplies.
>
> (*PR*, 110)

Yet a 'freedom of feeling' surely also evokes 'internal' powers of decision that can override or alter the limitations decreed by the datum. That is to say, a 'freedom of feeling' presupposes a capacity to *decide* which novel feelings, if any, ought to be included in a new concrescence. The word 'supplies' is thus misleading if it is interpreted in any way that deflects attention from the internal power(s) of decision implicit in the very idea of an act of becoming.

Once again, one may wonder whether Whitehead is right to assert that 'there is no general fact of composition, not expressible in terms of the composite constitutions of the individual occasions' (*PR*, 147). When he alludes to the 'root meaning' of composition, as a coming together in one place, does he not elicit a 'power of composition' which is neither a 'law of nature' nor a summing up of the characters of constituent bodies? One cannot attribute the perdurance of any particular composition to mere repetition for Whitehead himself stresses that one goal of his theory is 'to rescue actual entities from being undifferentiated repetitions, each of the other, with mere numerical diversity' (*PR*, 148). It seems undeniable, on the other hand, that 'general states of nature recur, and … our very natures have adapted themselves to such repetitions' (*SMW*, 5). Does this not imply that the idea of repetition is tightly bound up with the idea of experiencing ('Tear "repetition" out of "experience," and there is nothing left' [*PR*, 136]) – which means that an evolutionary cosmos of experience-events implies an ever-present potentiality for introducing differences into extant, repetitive forms of organization.[38]

## 8. From powers to more or less perspicacious souls

Although Whitehead praises Locke for the 'admirable accuracy' of some of his observations, and Hume for recognizing the indispensability of the body and its various organs of sense (we see with our eyes, etc.), he suggests that both philosophers failed to do justice to their best insights. Indeed, he in effect urges his readers to turn a good many of the presuppositions of the moderns on their heads – for much of their work is vitiated by perverse inversions of important relations and principles. When Locke, for instance, addresses the problem of how to explain the unities within experiencing, he focuses initially on the universals that can be predicated of 'objects,' thereby passing over the real difficulty – which is how to explain the constant 'togethernesses' that the universals presuppose.[39] Locke, however, is to be congratulated for his inconsistency in bringing out the centrality of power in perception. And to give Hume his due, Whitehead notes that he states with great clarity the importance of repetition when analyzing experience. But he errs in putting all the stress on repetition of 'impressions' since repetition itself cannot be an impression.

As for the undoubted importance of Kant for understanding experience, if one accepts that the unities that arise within experiencing involve (as Hume partly realized) the passions as well as the power of imagination in bringing together the simple ideas that 'constantly go together' into *enduring* relations of complex ideas, while his justly celebrated Copernican revolution corrected many of Hume's errors, he went too far in the opposite direction.

The lesson that Whitehead is urging, in short, is one that is easy to tell but hard to learn: it is above all necessary, when attempting to analyze experience, to seek a balanced account which can locate Life and Thought *in* Nature.[40] One must do justice to the fact that life exemplifies 'flashes of conceptual originality' – since whatever becomes is never completely bound by 'the shackle of reiteration from the past' (*PR*, 105). Such 'flashes' cannot escape, however, the factors of necessity imposed by the past. This feature alone bespeaks a need to recognize an overarching reciprocity of transcendence and immanence which means acknowledging the indissociability of a host of lesser contrasts, such as subjectivity and objectivity. Indeed, the subject-object relationship, according to Whitehead, is 'the fundamental structural pattern of experience' (*AI*, 175). So if neither pole deserves to be privileged, his attempt to frame a 'reformed subjectivism' needs to be complemented by an 'intuitional objectivism' that must bring in some kind of unifying agency.

This agency is surely present when 'the subject emerges from the world' by means of 'inner' processes that transform the 'outer' objective data, or 'potentials for feeling,' into new objective data. The situation thus warrants inventing a new term, 'superject,' with which Whitehead hopes to prevent the common mistake of thinking of an actual entity as 'the unchanging subject of change.' But more importantly, he is here putting his finger on the primary characteristic of every experience-event; that is, its 'dual character,' for it is 'at once the subject experiencing and the superject of its experiences' (*PR*, 29). Thus when Whitehead stresses the complementarity of the 'subject-superject' contrast, it is not incidental that he at the same time alludes to another cryptic remark of Heraclitus: 'no one crosses the same river twice.'

That is to say, 'no subject experiences twice,' which implies that there is no such thing as a self-identical Self. Indeed, no fact of life seems more certain than that Life generally refers to individualized, partially self-determining processes that ring numerous changes as they proceed ineluctably from the womb to the tomb. Although certain abstract features in a given trajectory may be repeated exactly, the actual self they belong to is never the same. Hence if every embodied self bespeaks a more or less sensitive soul capable of exercising more or less well-developed powers, then souls too must partake of all hazards that attend the struggles of the self to balance the immanent and transcendent aspects of experiencing.[41]

As if this strange (to modern eyes) condition of selfhood were not complication enough, a further implication is that every self is an actor in a complex project of world-making that bespeaks an evolving (or devolving) Spirit, or *Logos*. It is no secret that life is shot through with deadening habits, yet in the Heraclitean world that Whitehead outlines, every habit is saved from death by a complementary factor of creativity. Thus life can be said to be a 'bid for freedom' (*PR*, 104), although this freedom is inherently limited. What, then, could ultimately account for the limitations on freedom if not a more or less benevolent Spirit which is represented in every occasion of sensibility by a more or less well-developed soul? Imagination can thus be regarded, as Coleridge in fact indicates, as an agent or organ of spirit, one that launches, or fails to launch, the power or powers of decision that only more or less freely determine the actual course of evolution. Hence the picture of the world as an evolutionary cosmos of sentient, ensouled bodies is compatible with either growth, stasis, or degeneracy. At both the lowest and the highest levels of organic existence, habit probably overwhelms most creative or vital impulses except on extremely rare occasions – a situation

that is in fact not unfamiliar in human communities whose souls appear eminently corruptible by alliances of over-bearing, mean, or stunted individual souls whose uncultivated imaginations work to undermine the vitality of both Life and Thought.[42] A thoroughgoing naturalism that is also a 'philosophy of concern' cannot therefore ignore the question whether every living community exemplifies a more or less healthy soul that reflects and is reflected by the state of the souls it happens to include.

Going one step further, it is conceivable that the entire cosmos is endowed with a cosmic Soul that should not be conflated with an absolute Good. For the upshot is that although Whitehead points toward a way to reinvest the world with both meaning and value, he at the same time raises the question whether meaning-making is always at risk of becoming subservient to base projects and questionable valuings that are in the long-run destructive.[43] Indeed, it is quite conceivable that the world as we now find it has reached a temporary plateau with the emergence of an especially unwise and parasitic *homo sapiens*.

But be that as it may, there is no reason to think that the 'creative advance' of Nature should lead to a steady 'upward progress.' The tensions between the immanent and the transcendental sides of worldly organization, which are forever being worked out, reflect much more than an interdependence of the physical and the mental. 'An organism is "alive,"' says Whitehead, 'when in some measure its reactions are inexplicable by *any* tradition of pure physical inheritance' (*PR*, 104). But a complete absence of signs of originality attests not to an absence of conceptual novelty but rather to a vestigial or a moribund soul, which is one reason why a Whiteheadian naturalism needs to be distinguished from every modern naturalism that either denies the existence of souls or invests mind-bodies with immortal souls. Indeed, '[t]he doctrine of the enduring soul with its permanent characteristics is exactly the irrelevant answer to the problem which life presents' (*PR*, 104). On the other hand, if life, as Whitehead claims, '*means* novelty' (*PR*, 104, italics mine), this definition requires qualification by a reference to 'potentiality.' The category of the ultimate, which states that Nature is essentially creative, is incomplete without a tacit acknowledgment that the creative activity which belongs 'to the very essence of each occasion [of sensibility]' (*MT*, 151) is liable to be corrupted or traduced by bad or destructive habits that betray or block the realization of beneficial potentialities.

The real difficulty in accounting for life turns out to be how to frame a plausible account of the conditions for 'originality of response to stimulus' (*PR*, 104). Positive signs of originality of response attest to the

presence of a vital, constructive soul. On the other hand, as Whitehead points out, 'the soul need be no more original than a stone' (*PR*, 104). So whether or not predominant souls are in a healthy state turns out to be a matter of cosmic significance since the quality of all their contributions to world-making ultimately depends on the concerted efforts of fleeting 'selves' who may or may not be deploying their powers properly and responsibly, since the exercise of any kind of power can vary in quality from place to place, moment to moment, and occasion to occasion, in accordance with the degree to which these powers have been (to use Coleridge's term) educed.[44]

# 7
# On Learning Good Sense

> 'How else can one write but of those things which one doesn't know, or knows badly?'[1]
>
> '[G]ood sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each.'[2]

## 1. What is the meaning of good sense?

Much of what passes for good sense in the culture of the West may be suspected of harboring a pernicious bad sense. Grounds for this suspicion can be found, for instance, in the persistence, in one form or another, of the sort of faith that infuses Descartes' grand project. He states, at the very outset of his *Discourse on Method,* what appears to have since become a silent scientistic credo, that 'the sciences taken all together are identical with human wisdom.'[3] Not wisdom, however, but something very like its opposite may shore up the widespread belief that the best reasonings are those exemplified in scientific methods that are modeled on precise, mathematical systems.

For even if Descartes were right and the sciences *could* be taken all together (although it is hardly clear what this might mean, since there are many different types of scientific inquiry, not to mention a variety of ways in which science itself can be defined), why think this would bring us any closer to wisdom? The real difficulty is adumbrated by Descartes himself in Rule I for the Direction of the Mind:

> The end of study should be to direct the mind towards the enunciation of sound and correct judgments on all matters that come before it.[4]

The very idea of study presupposes minds or, perhaps better, souls bent on learning. Yet it is not at all clear what constitutes good learning, especially in an intellectual climate in which certain aspects of experiencing, such as the passions and imagination, tend to be discounted. Yet Descartes himself cannot avoid alluding to an early riot of feelings and imaginings that somehow issue in a flowering of reason of which every 'good man' partakes; for every man

> comes into the world in ignorance, and as the knowledge of his earliest years rests only on the weakness of the senses and the authority of the masters, he can scarcely avoid his imagination being filled with an infinite number of false ideas, before his reason has the power of taking his conduct into its own hands.[5]

It cannot be doubted that infants arrive in the world knowing next to nothing and that as they grow into little children they are instilled with ideas and beliefs that are not necessarily conducive to good sense but which nonetheless become stubbornly implanted. There is plenty of evidence, on the other hand, that during the maturation of the human animal various capacities or abilities essential to reason may be neglected, traduced, or only partially developed, since good sense is clearly not equally distributed among adults.

In other words, what goes on in learning from the cradle to the grave is surely of primary interest to at least every philosopher who is concerned with the meaning of good sense. One need only note the astonishing capacity of very young children to learn a language, or even two or three at once, without first having to learn the rules of grammar(s); a capacity that may have inexhaustible philosophical significance since it involves learning how to grasp and express universals and particulars at once. Furthermore, if learning how to do this begins at birth with the education of the senses, it is not too hard to believe that learning involves the whole body. Perhaps there is incorporated in at least every human body an innate desire to think which is not unlike the desire to breathe.

In any case, a philosophical desire for wisdom must surely involve a need to know something about the desires that inform learning. But all that is clear is that a desire to learn good sense, assuming it exists, varies widely from person to person and perhaps even from culture to culture. There are no grounds whatever for believing that every maturing adult finally arrives at a plateau when the light of reason is, as it were, suddenly switched on. If learning involves, as I have earlier argued, developing a capacity or capacities for interpreting signs and symbols, this business

goes on for the most part beneath the surface of conscious thought. That is to say, Gilles Deleuze could be uttering an inescapable truth when he suggests that the best learning 'always takes place in and through the unconscious, thereby establishing the bond of a profound complicity between nature and mind,' thus indicating that the problem of learning has cosmic as well as 'local' implications.[6] Hence one may well wonder whether this 'bond' is ultimately what the hoary idea of 'truth' boils down to in the end. There is, however, no systematic way to determine whether or not this is so, according to Deleuze, for '[t]here is no more a method for learning than there is a method for finding treasures' (*DR*, 165). Yet treasures evidently can be found, for the very idea of good sense clearly makes sense to him.

Deleuze shows, in other words, that when seeking good sense there is no alternative except to plunge immediately into the middle of a vast, inherently open problematic of sense, for every question asked sends forth new little shoots in every direction – like rhizomes (to use one of his favorite tropes) – which constantly transgress the boundaries the moderns have tried to establish between the intellectual, moral and/or ethical, and aesthetic domains of thought.[7] He implies at the same time that modern philosophy can be charged with a certain laxity insofar as it has failed to take the immense scope of this problematic into account, for philosophy is surely concerned first and last with the problem of goodness in sense-making and reasoning and hence with the meaning of goodness itself. This laxity is especially evident whenever philosophy advertises itself as a 'discipline' on the level of science, thus erecting a barrier for any thinker who wishes to entertain ideas and topics that have not been approved by professional leaders in the field.

Indeed, the history of philosophy, says Deleuze,

> has always been the agent of power in philosophy, and even in thought. It has played the represser's role: how can you think without having read Plato, Descartes, Kant and Heidegger, and so-and-so's book about them? A formidable school of intimidation which manufactures specialists in thought – but which also makes those who stay outside conform all the more to this specialism which they despise. An image of thought has been formed historically and it effectively stops people from thinking.[8]

He thus invites his readers to begin again and think hard about thinking itself without worrying too much about what everyone else thinks, for no one has really come to terms with the problem of the genesis of

thought. At the same time he puts into question received views of what philosophy is, how it should be done, and what it can reasonably hope to achieve. He accuses modern reason in general of covering over some very common 'misadventures of thought' – chief among which is the 'terrible Trinity of madness, malevolence and stupidity.'[9] He thereby underscores the need to think about the intimate connections between the problem of error, the problem of evil, and the problem of learning, while at the same time gesturing toward a source of the failures of modern philosophy:

> Does not the fault first lie with philosophy, which has allowed itself to be convinced by the concept of error even though this concept is itself borrowed from facts, relatively insignificant and arbitrary facts? (*DR*, 151)

The first task of the nonmodern philosopher is thus to clear away all the obstacles to good reasoning that stem from a pervasive misconstrual of the notion of error. Hinting that one of the largest of these pertains to the great influence that science enjoys in this culture, Deleuze notes that '[e]very time science, philosophy, and good sense come together it is inevitable that good sense should take itself for a science and a philosophy (that is why such encounters should be avoided at all costs)' (*DR*, 224). But in seeking to avoid such encounters, where should the nonmodern philosopher begin his/her search for a better good sense?

The worst place to begin is with those presuppositions of a good many self-consciously rational modern philosophers who presume that 'everyone knows, independently of concepts, what is meant by self, thinking, and being' (*DR*, 129). Such philosophers begin, in other words, with 'the idea of a common sense as *Cogitatio natura universalis*' (*DR*, 131). However, this 'implicit presupposition of a pre-philosophical and natural Image of thought, borrowed from the pure element of common sense' (*DR*, 131), effectively renders thinking nonphilosophical; for it is as though '[n]atural good sense or common sense are … determinations of pure thought. Sense is able to adjudicate with regard to its own universality, and to suppose itself universal and communicable in principle' (*DR*, 132–33).

Thus inscribing a giant question mark over modern philosophy's conception of its proper task, Deleuze problematizes every type of inquiry that presumes it already knows what good reasoning is and what it should aim for. However, he is not claiming he knows himself the answer to this central puzzle of philosophy whose profound depths he

in fact reveals step-by-step. What he is attempting to do is find a way to reverse all the damage that has been done by a misguided modern conception of reason that has helped spread a virulent bad sense by, for one thing, conflating good sense with common sense. But in order to see this, it is necessary to inquire into the hidden side of sense-making, which means that one must first liberate oneself completely from the dogmatic (or orthodox, or moral) image of thought which assumes that

> there is a natural capacity for thought endowed with a talent for truth or an affinity with the true, under the double aspect of a *good will on the part of the thinker* and an *upright nature on the part of thought*.
> (*DR*, 131)

The power of this image is evident in a tendency to beg the most important questions, a tendency that bears witness to an 'Image [of thought] which already prejudges everything.'

In sum, then, the problem of the genesis of thought in Deleuze's view is not concerned so much with *where* a particular philosophical inquiry actually begins (e.g., either with the subject or the object, with Being or with beings) as with *how* or in what manner it proceeds. And in the case of modern thought, one may suspect that it proceeds under the aegis of an image of thought that betrays 'the very essence of thought as pure thought' (*DR*, 133).

Now by 'essence' Deleuze is referring here to a certain 'quickness' that the dogmatic image 'crushes' in various ways that are underwritten by eight hidden postulates. One of these is especially designed to perpetuate a stunted and self-serving conception of error. That is, there is a special postulate 'of the negative' according to which error 'expresses everything which can go wrong *in* thought, but only as the product of *external mechanisms*' (*DR*, 167).[10] This postulate of the negative thus allows philosophers to believe that common sense can ignore the possibility of internal sources of error, for it is not that error is not recognized as a fact; it is just that under the dogmatic image error is viewed *only* as a fact.

However, in linking the problem of error to a dogmatic image which profoundly betrays what it means to think, Deleuze brings to the forefront of philosophy an especially difficult question: could it be that the standard conception of error is an egregious error in the sense that it undermines philosophy's very *raison d'être*, which is not only to throw a little light on thought but also to illuminate in specific instances the relations between the activity of thinking and wisdom? Perhaps the most pernicious effect of the dogmatic image is to prevent

us from even contemplating this question, especially if the dogmatic image of thought

> supports itself with psychologically puerile and socially reactionary examples (cases of recognition, error, simple propositions and solutions or responses) in order to prejudge what should be the most valued in regard to thought – namely, the genesis of the act of thinking and the *sense* of truth and falsehood.
>
> (*DR*, 158)

The very idea of a *'sense* of truth and falsehood' is surely a timely reminder that philosophers have serious work to do, even if it is not clear what exactly this is, so that covering over the problem of the genesis of thought perhaps amounts to a crime committed against thought, as Deleuze at times seems to suggest. In any case, he makes it clear that one of philosophy's responsibilities is to address this puzzle whose profound depths he brings out by deploying various tropes such as that of 'complicity,' for this trope suggests the existence of hidden powers beneath consciousness which are capable of forming secret alliances between nature and mind, or the real and the rational.

## 2. On the necessity for a doctrine of faculties

But the example of Descartes stands as a warning – that not good sense or wisdom but rather a kind of clever stupidity vitiates a good deal of the 'enlightened' thought of this culture. This may derive in good part from Descartes' blind faith in Method which prevents us from taking the multi-dimensional nature of the problem of stupidity (and hence also of wisdom?) seriously. For such appears to be Deleuze's hint: '[i]t is always our belief in the postulates of the *Cogitatio* which prevents us from making stupidity a transcendental problem' (*DR*, 151). His choice of adjective is especially significant since his efforts to redress all the injustices done by the dogmatic image of thought revolve about the claim that it is necessary to resurrect the discredited doctrine of faculties.[11] A faculty refers moreover to a certain 'transcendental operation' that 'in no way … addresses itself to objects outside the world but, on the contrary … grasps that in the world which concerns it exclusively and brings it into the world' (*DR*, 143). That is to say, the functionings of a faculty are chiefly directed toward the immanent Idea, or Ideas (for Deleuze uses these terms interchangeably). So it is important to note that it would be futile to ask for an exact account of *how* the transcendental operations of

the faculties relate to the realm of Ideas, as common sense might be inclined to do. Indeed, to follow Deleuze is to be obliged to reject at once all those traditional Platonisms that appeal in one way or another to common sense.[12]

Thus one of the more important consequences of Deleuze's reintroduction of a doctrine of faculties is that the search for truth and knowledge needs to be regarded in the first instance as 'a matter of production, not of adequation' (*DR*, 154). But to understand this cryptic dictum it is first necessary to face up to the problem of what is actually going on beneath the surface of conscious thought when sense is being made. It is at this point that one begins to realize the extent of the problem of good learning since in order to understand how the linkages between nature and mind are formed one must relinquish all yearnings for definite, pre-existent meanings, as Deleuze indicates with such remarks as: '[to] learn is to enter into the universal of the relations which constitute the Idea, and into their corresponding singularities' (*DR*, 165). As for what 'entering' might mean, one must attempt to decipher such enigmatic hints as: 'we always have as much truth as we deserve in accordance with the sense of what we say' (*DR*, 154), which implies that the *how* of entering may make all the difference to what one finds.

It might therefore appear at first glance that the problematic of sense is haunted by an unresolvable conundrum: how can one say anything sensible about the making of sense without presupposing an initial good sense? That it is nonetheless possible to at least begin on a reasonably sound footing is evident from what I take to be one of Deleuze's most fundamental assumptions: '[s]omething in the world forces us to think' (*DR*, 139). This 'something' however, cannot be identified exactly since it cannot be traced to the empirical conditions of the functioning of any set of faculties: the matter calls for a more indirect approach. Evoking Plato's account of the genesis of thought in Book VII of *The Republic*, Deleuze insists (against Plato) that the 'something' which 'forces' thought is not an object of recognition (e.g., a definite quality or essence). On the contrary, the genesis of thought refers to a tension-filled *ur*-event (or 'encounter') in which the 'object of encounter'

> really gives rise to sensibility with regard to a given sense. … [However it] is not a quality but a sign. It is not a sensible being but the being *of* the sensible. It is not the given but that by which the given is given.
>
> (*DR*, 139–40)

We could hardly move further away from those post-Cartesian thinkers who envisage a systematic explanation for every aspect of sensibility in terms of automatic or predictable reactions to signals which carry definite bits of information. The idea of cognition rather elicits a strange meeting in no-man's-land between wary creatures whose differing intentions and/or desires are communicated by exchanges of looks, gestures, grunts, and moans. The uncertain consequences of such little dramas indicate moreover that the transcendental operations of the faculties perhaps always lead to a 'mixture' of good and bad sense, probably leavened by a dash of nonsense.

That the goodness of good sense cannot at any rate be clearly defined appears evident enough anyway from everyday communications where it cannot be denied that many signs carry a variety of potential meanings. This has not prevented many 'hard-headed' philosophers, however, from thinking that the problematic of sense can be dealt with properly in what Deleuze calls the world of representation.

## 3. On the world of representation

Deleuze thus understandably takes great pains to reveal the inadequacies of approaches to the problematic of sense that restrict themselves to the world of representation. His critique of this world begins with an attack on Plato's theory of reminiscence which he charges with encouraging a myth – the myth of instantaneity – which Descartes embraced when fashioning his theory of innate ideas.[13] But perhaps the greatest damage has been done to time, Deleuze suggests, since from the very outset of Western philosophy, this myth has suppressed the temporal side of sense-making. The theory of reminiscence presupposes a 'first time' when the soul learned the essence of what it then forgot, and then a 'second time' of reminiscence when the soul recovered what it had forgotten. But it is futile to try to found a theory of time on the basis of a transcendental memory – since such a memory can only grasp 'that which from the outset can only be recalled, even the first time' (*DR*, 140).

Hence Deleuze's rejection of Plato's theory of reminiscence is closely bound up with his main aim to rescue the vitality of thought from its violent suppression by the dogmatic image. For it was Plato who first introduced the model of recognition which led to the installation of 'the dogmatic and moralizing image of thought. … [which] prepared the way for the world of representation' (*DR*, 142–43). However, '[t]he form of recognition has never sanctioned anything but the recognisable and the recognised; form will never inspire anything but conformities'

(*DR*, 134). Yet from Plato through Descartes to Kant this model of recognition 'remains sovereign and defines the orientation of the philosophical analysis of what it means to think' (*DR*, 134).

Briefly, then, Deleuze's rejection of the world of representation revolves about its tendencies to 'crush' the quicknesses which are vital to thought by making everything conform to the 'form of the Same.'[14] The world of representation is especially marked by 'its inability to conceive of difference in itself; and by the same token, its inability to conceive of repetition for itself' (*DR*, 138). While neither difference nor repetition is totally erased, they are reduced to skeletal shadows of themselves.[15] As a particularly important example, Deleuze cites the Humean interpretation of causality which ties this aspect of nature to the abstract sequence AB, AB, AB, A … , whereby repeated appearances of A supposedly induce automatic expectations of B. Hence whenever or wherever this ubiquitous image is deployed, a violent suppression of the living side of repetition is perpetuated. In this way, the quicknesses of both Life and Thought are sacrificed to expediency with the result that a great many misadventures of thought are simply dismissed, despite the manifest evidence that they 'can no more be reduced to [Cartesian] error than they can be reduced to any form of the same' (*DR*, 149).

It may still be objected, however, that philosophy cannot get very far without privileging *some* representations since conscious thinking always requires a platform of concepts to stand upon, if only to prepare for new acts of representing. So why not think that some elements of the world of representation are as indicative of as good a sense as can possibly be made under prevailing circumstances? One always comes back, in other words, to the question of the quality of sense-making; which is haunted by the fact that 'we can never say what is the sense of what we say' (*DR*, 155). But by the same token, we can never say that we are making only nonsense. There is nothing to prevent thinking that *some* products of acts of representing are akin to essences. For although Deleuze insists that an essence 'is precisely the accident, the event, the sense' (*DR*, 191), his evident belief in the existence of good sense tacitly affirms that it makes sense to hold onto the hoary ideas of truth, reality, and wisdom.

What is most problematic about the world of representation, in other words, concerns the tendency of its most staunch defenders to entrench belief-habits that quickly ossify into a complacent common sense. That is why Deleuze is right to insist on the need to distinguish between good sense and common sense. He maintains, for instance, that whenever good sense and common sense are viewed as complementary aspects of the *Cogito*, thinking and reasoning are made subservient to the dictates of a 'common sense become philosophical.'[16] Thus good sense and common

sense are made to constitute 'the two halves of the *doxa*' (*DR*, 134). What ensues is a tyrannical ideal orthodoxy which encourages the sanguine view that sensibility arises from an unproblematic and harmonious collaboration of all the faculties where common sense supplies the 'form of the Same' in accordance with the transcendental model of recognition.

But it is not just Thought that is degraded in this orthodoxy, for Life too is devivified whenever the Self is subordinated to the form of the Same. For Deleuze also accuses modern philosophy of promoting the self as naturally upright because it is not a mere faculty; it is rather the unity of all the faculties in the subject:

> For Kant as for Descartes, it is the identity of the Self in the 'I think' which grounds the harmony of all the faculties and their agreement on the form of a supposed Same object.
>
> (*DR*, 133)

The crime is that when singular and vital selves become ensnared in this orthodoxy, they are violently rendered into soulless, valueless, and isolated egos.[17]

Hence the ideal orthodoxy is really the enemy of the quicknesses of Life and Thought since it tends to cover over the fact that every self is a fleeting actuality, despite the daily flood of reminders that from birth to death every self is always in the process of making and remaking itself in response to both 'inner' and 'outer' pressures. Deleuze's critique of the world of representation thus converges with the views that I have explored in previous chapters which indicate that an essential first step in liberating oneself from the most debilitating assumptions of modern thought is to free one's self from the myths and dogmas that tend to belittle or degrade the peculiar vitality of a self. These myths include the idea of an eternal or immortal, essentially otherworldly soul that happens to have had the bad luck to be trapped in a mortal, erring body. But no more acceptable to an aspiring 'free spirit' (to use Nietzsche's phrase) is the assumption that souls are the sole property of their 'owners.' For a soul ultimately elicits hidden powers that conceivably belong neither to the organism nor to its environment, but rather to the entire cosmos.

## 4. Wisdom and stupidity

But to see this, one must leave the world of representation behind, while entertaining the possibility that sensibility is produced by temporally bound, ever-changing, embodied souls (for where else could

passionate faculties dwell if not in feeling, sensitive bodies?). It is thus not surprising that Deleuze holds that it was not in philosophy but rather in literature that thinkers first realized that 'the properly transcendental question' to ask is: 'how is stupidity (not error) possible?' (*DR*, 151). If the correlative of this question is: 'how is wisdom possible?' Deleuze's association of the best in literature with such writers as Flaubert, Baudelaire, and Bloy (who reveal that literature is 'haunted by the problem of stupidity') suggests there is more wisdom to be found in the 'great texts' of literature than in most post-Cartesian philosophical texts.

In any case, a major fault of modern philosophy, in Deleuze's view, is that it has ignored the problem of stupidity. It is therefore essential to become clear what kind of stupidity he has in mind. Suggesting at one point that stupidity is a 'faculty for false problems,' he also refers in the same context to 'an inability to constitute, comprehend or determine a problem as such' (*DR*, 159). The stress on problem-finding perhaps comes closest to defining the kind of stupidity he is trying to overcome, since he is not speaking of that dullness of mind exhibited by the so-called lower animals. The day-to-day survival of nonhuman animals testifies in fact a certain in-built or natural wisdom.[18] By contrast, the lack of wisdom exemplified by a good many 'serious' human thinkers who propagate false or nonsensical problems bespeaks a failure to see or a refusal to face up to the great variety of powers (and thus possible misadventures of thought) possessed by the human animal.

Indeed, the great range of powers enjoyed by human beings indicates that a theory of stupidity (or wisdom?) must have, as Deleuze holds, cosmic, encyclopedic, and gnoseological dimensions (*DR*, 151). The encyclopedic dimension, for instance, appears to address the fact that human beings are capable of producing a wider range of knowledge than the 'lower' organisms; knowledge that is however always problematic since the greater number of faculties involved, the more they can compete, as well as cooperate, since they cannot be presumed to work together in perfect harmony. On the other hand, even if the faculties do cooperate and succeed in producing good sense, there is no guarantee that the mode of production will remain consistently good.

This last point appears to bear on the gnoseological dimension of a theory of wisdom for it is conceivable, as we have seen in earlier chapters, that only especially perspicacious souls can cultivate their powers to a degree sufficient for a consistent production of good sense. No doubt there are also other possibilities that deserve consideration, but enough has been said to indicate that an inquiry into the production of sense needs to be carried out (like every other philosophical inquiry) in a

much more extensive region than that provided by any world of representation. In keeping, then, with my earlier discussion, there appears to be no better approach than one that commits itself to a suitable metaphysical imaginary that is capable of guiding reason in a more or less reliable way through the blurry intersection of nature and culture. The essential point is, if the best locale for framing a theory of stupidity (or wisdom) is a 'good' metaphorics, this cannot itself be 'grounded' in anything more solid than intuitions and insights. So not only is there no method for finding the treasures of good sense, there is no way to even begin an inquiry into the meaning of good sense without making a risky commitment to an inevitably uncertain choice of guiding imagery.

I have earlier argued that an organosemiotic metaphorics is especially suited to making sense of sense-making if this is generally conceived as taking place in floods of signs and symbols. In this imaginary, it is at least possible to explore Deleuze's claim that the 'something' in the world which 'forces' us to think belongs to the order of signs. It is moreover not incidental that his own exposition of this pivotal idea deploys a metaphorics of event-encounters which is, so to speak, the tropic sword with which he hopes to defeat the tyrannical dogmatic image in order to let thought fly once again.[19] While it is true that one of his severest criticisms of the orthodox world of representation involves its tendency to misuse analogies, it is no accident that every page of his writing is enlivened by striking and insightful metaphors. A claim for the indispensability of metaphors can even be discerned in his express aim (as stated in the Preface to *Difference and Repetition*) to rescue the concepts of difference and repetition from the deadening world of representation. But for this to happen, he declares, it is necessary to revitalize the tools of philosophy (i.e., concepts) by using 'all the possibilities of language.'[20] What other 'possibilities of language,' one wonders, besides metaphors can swiftly carry meanings from place to place?

More specifically, then, both Whitehead and Deleuze indicate that a satisfactory account of good sense requires a vitalistic naturalism that can deal with an immeasurably complex world of signings, signalings, and symbolizings – a world that might well be called a 'reality of symbols.' For inasmuch as symbolisms of various kinds always stand between minds and nature, such a reality is consonant with Deleuze's evocation of a certain 'complicity' between nature and mind. It is also consonant with his suggestion that concepts cannot do justice to the vital side of thinking, for he holds that there is an inexhaustible 'excess in the Idea which explains the lack in the concept' (*DR*, 220). The word 'lack,' in other words, throws a penumbra of vagueness around every

concept which 'refers more profoundly to what is inside the Idea.' Thus the very obscurity of the idea of a creation of concepts indicates that the secret to making good sense may lie in the realm of art; that is, in the realm of the imaginal instead of the conceptual, especially when what is at issue is the genesis of thought. For even if it is true that philosophy is chiefly concerned with the creation of concepts, one cannot account for the creative activity itself by appealing only to concepts.[21]

The central problem of learning in philosophy revolves, in other words, about the question not only of how to find one's way about in the realm of word-symbols but also, and perhaps more importantly, in the realm of image-symbols. Indeed, it is arguable that not signs but rather certain images are more likely to 'force' us to think, provided the requisite faculties have been sufficiently educated to respond appropriately, for these capacities are very likely 'given' at birth only in a state of latency. Furthermore, before a faculty can be launched into operation, there must surely be a will to do so, which means that the power of a sign cannot be viewed as automatic or fully determined.

It is therefore highly significant that when Deleuze describes a sign as a *sentiendum*, or the being of the sensible, he also describes it as capable of *moving* the soul in the sense that it

> 'perplexes' it – in other words, forces it to pose a problem: as though the object of encounter, the sign, were the bearer of a problem – as though it were a problem.
>
> (*DR*, 140)

Signs, in short, are nothing like 'signifiers' carrying clear and definite meanings; that is, 'signifieds.' Hence they cannot 'force' an interpretation so much as arouse a desire to respond to them, as Deleuze himself suggests when he rhetorically asks:

> On the basis of which signs within sensibility, by which treasures of the memory, under torsions determined by the singularities of which Idea will thought be aroused?
>
> (*DR*, 165)

Thus hinting that the genesis of thought is sparked by 'perplexities' and desires, Deleuze indicates that a sign 'forces' at best a contemplation, if it forces anything at all. For he brings to mind the etymological meaning of 'to contemplate' which, according to the OED, evokes the image of a seeker of a temple or 'open place' for 'looking.' An act of contemplation thus presupposes a more or less adventurous soul, one that may or may not have the will to respond properly to certain signs or symbols.

It is just at this point that we perhaps come face-to-face with the gnoseological dimension of the problem of stupidity (or wisdom). Hence it may be useful to explore a little further Deleuze's allusion to Plato's views on what actually prompts thought to move in the first place. In one place (Book VII of *The Republic*) Plato notes that 'some things are provocative of thought and some are not,' where those 'things that impinge upon the senses together with their opposites' can be defined as provocative of thought while those that don't so impinge 'do not tend to awaken reflection' (524 d). But he also alludes to a 'natural indwelling intelligence of the soul' (530 c) while at the same time indicating that it is misleading to speak of something that 'compels' the soul to contemplate 'essences' (the invisible 'beautiful and good'). For he also speaks of promptings, or invitations, that 'compel the soul to be at a loss' (524 e) and thus entertain perplexities that may indirectly arouse thought. This complication is in fact implicit in Deleuze's approach which recalls Plato's famous image of thinkers who are released from their chains only to be blinded when they emerge from their cave into the Light. Their moments of 'perplexity' bespeak souls who have failed to learn how to exercise the transcendental powers of relevant faculties, for these must be sufficiently educated in order to deal with hitherto unencountered signs. Indeed, this is a crucial consideration inasmuch as thought is prone to being lulled into a comfortable complacency by a conservative common sense that shuns the new.[22]

The trope of invitation is fully consonant with one of Deleuze's principal aims – to decouple the notion of good sense from the Good. For the former notion must not, he insists, be conflated with any kind of absolute; good sense evinces rather the vague ideal of justice, as he indicates with such musings as the following:

> What is it that can only be sensed, yet is imperceptible at the same time? We must pose the question not only for memory and thought, but also for the imagination – is there an *imaginandum*, a *phantasteon*, which would also be the limit, that which is impossible to imagine?; for language – is there a *loquendum*, that which would be silence at the same time?; and for the other faculties which would find their place in a complete doctrine – vitality, the transcendent object of which would include monstrosity; and sociability, the transcendent object of which would be anarchy – and even for faculties yet to be discovered, whose existence is not yet suspected?
>
> (*DR*, 143)

Why not posit, then, a moral and/or ethical faculty (a *moralendum?*) whose peculiar passion is for justice. For each faculty has its own 'unique passion' to grasp and bring into the world 'that … which concerns it exclusively' (*DR*, 143). And what else but a moral/ethical faculty could incorporate a passion for properly distributing the contributions from all the other faculties? Pursuing this thought one step further, perhaps *only* a dynamic wisdom could guide such a passion for justice given that thought must constantly strive to balance changing conditions with fleeting desires for better conditions.

It seems a great wonder anyway that the desire for good sense is not always swamped by 'misadventures of thought,' given the complexity of the operations involved and the fact that they are inescapably caught up in an onrush of event-encounters. But assuming that good sense is produced on occasion, nothing stands in the way of believing that thought can at times muster a sufficient good will (not to subvert the passion for justice) and a potentially upright state (in which all the faculties have been properly educed). It is still a moot question, however, whether it is better to think of good sense in terms of a capacity to grasp something like real meanings, or essences. What the doctrine of faculties puts paid to is only the Platonic dream of a dialectic that can yield 'an exact account of the essence of each thing' (534 b).

The question is, does the Platonic idea that turning, or better, learning *how* to turn, toward the Light holds the key to understanding good sense? But here another difficulty arises which involves the question of judgment, of what decides that a particular 'turning' should come to a halt; a question whose obscurity is not alleviated by Deleuze's declaration that an 'object of encounter' is 'not a quality but a sign' in the presence of which sensibility 'finds itself before its own limit, the sign' (*DR*, 140).[23] The very idea of a sign containing its own limit does not sit easily with an evocation of hidden 'forces' (or invitations, or promptings) that awaken 'unconscious desires, and only desires' (*DR*, 106). Indeed, if the problem of the genesis of thought leads to contemplations of 'living acts of the unconscious' which involve 'a questioning, problematizing and searching force,' it is not even clear that the idea of a limit can be brought in at all without also bringing in mysterious immaterial or spiritual beings.

## 5. 'All is contemplation'

According to Deleuze, whatever it is that induces movement in thought, it has something to do with an urge to draw meanings from the Idea. He also alludes in this context to processes of 'contraction' which evoke an efficacious, embodied soul (or ensouled body) whose powers are

imbued with temporality. That is to say, one of the more important consequences of Deleuze's insistence on the need for a doctrine of faculties is that the making of sense is a mainly unconscious activity that does not take place in time, it also puts paid to the very idea of a universal Time. Every event-encounter has its own peculiar temporal dimension which is bound up with operations that lead to differentiations in the Idea that give rise to differences that repeat, and repetitions that may be either mechanical or living (that is, capable of introducing novel differences that lead to new forms of repetition).

Deleuze's evolutionary vitalistic ontology of differences and repetitions, in other words, resonates with Whitehead's theory of actuality in which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the notion of repetition is fundamental. Thus both Whitehead and Deleuze sketch a vitalistic ontology of events involving processes of becoming that do not move in time to the same beat. That is to say, both philosophers allow for different time-series in a Heraclitean flux of interconnected experience-events that effectively partition the world along both temporal and spatial lines in ways that reflect different types of habits of sign-interpretation. Deleuze gestures toward such a view when he refers to habits of sign-interpretation as 'the foundation of time' (*DR*, 79), for different habits allow for not only different extensities of space and time but also different intensities in the introduction of significant differences and their repetitions. Hence inasmuch as intensity is the complement of extensity, and insofar as this complementarity reflects that of immanence and transcendence, one is ultimately brought up short by a, perhaps *the* cosmic question: where do habits originate?

Maintaining that it is because 'it is simultaneously through contraction that we are habits, but through contemplation that we contract,' Deleuze declares that

> no one has shown better than Samuel Butler that there is no continuity apart from that of habit, and we have no other continuities apart from those of thousands of component habits.
>
> (*DR*, 75)

Each habit is moreover the product of a contraction performed by a 'contemplative soul,' so that 'the primary habits that we are' are the results of 'thousands of passive syntheses of which we are organically composed' (*DR*, 74). That is to say, at the bottom of the production of differences and repetitions one finds a plurality of acts of contemplation:

> Underneath the self which acts are little selves which contemplate and which render possible both the action and the active subject. We

> speak of our 'self' only in virtue of these thousands of little witnesses which contemplate within us: it is always a third party who says 'me.' (*DR*, 75)

What else could this 'third party' be, then, if not Spirit or some agency thereof, which distributes its powers to contract meanings unevenly among a plurality of 'little contemplating souls'? Spirit is also close at hand when Deleuze observes that 'we do not contemplate ourselves, but we exist only in contemplating – that is to say, in contracting that from which we come.' Indeed, a 'contemplative soul' does not refer to an independent, isolated, and self-identical self; there is no such thing for anyone who has renounced the world of representation. A self refers rather to an integral and interactive 'something' whose character cannot be pinned down exactly since it belongs as much to the world as to the singular individual who supposedly owns it.

In other words, when Deleuze insists on the need for a doctrine of faculties as the key to framing a semi-Platonic Platonism in which transcendence and immanence are complementary, overarching factors in a vitalistic ontology, the repercussions are not only cosmic and encyclopedic in a literal sense, they are essentially gnoseological in the sense encapsulated in his summary conclusion: 'all is contemplation.'[24] For this 'all' invests the entire cosmos with contemplative souls, for 'a soul must be attributed to the heart, to the muscles, nerves and cells, but a contemplative soul whose entire function is to contract a habit' (*DR*, 74). Hence souls are present wherever habits are contracted; that is, everywhere, especially if the cosmos is replete with habits of sign-interpretation. One thus arrives at the burning question whether the cosmos is essentially an imaginative production of habits by contemplative souls which possess (in perhaps only a rudimentary or latent form) creative or reality-producing powers. Furthermore, as Coleridge and Whitehead indicate, these powers are very like human imagination. For without such a creative agency contemplation could contract nothing whatever from the virtuality of the Idea.

## 6. Learning in the 'theatre of repetition'

Summing up a story that without doubt promises to become ever more complicated, Deleuze states that contemplation means 'to draw something from.' Since the activity of 'drawing' is as much production as it is adequation, the situation elicits the picture of the world as a vast and

complex 'drama of ideas' that takes place in a 'theatre of repetition.' He singles out Nietzsche and Kierkegaard for special praise in this regard just because they stress the importance of repetition. In fact they invent 'an incredible equivalent of theatre within philosophy' for not only do they bring new means of expression to philosophy: 'in all their work, movement is at issue. … [t]hey want to put metaphysics in motion, in action' (*DR*, 8). They also lend support to the image of the cosmos as a living theatre, as opposed to the dead or 'false theatre' (of Hegel, for instance) in which the drama of ideas is reduced to 'an abstract movement of concepts.'[25]

This image of a revitalized and dynamic cosmic space can also be called, I am suggesting, a 'theatre of the imaginal,' for in it thought is reinvested with all its imaginative powers and hence with the quicknesses that have been crushed in the 'theatre of representation.' Indeed, what else but imagination could deal with a drama of ideas that provides for the experience of

> pure forces, dynamic lines in space which act without intermediary upon the spirit, and link it directly with nature and history, with a language that speaks before words, with gestures which develop before organized bodies, with masks before faces, with spectres and phantoms before characters – the whole apparatus of repetition as a 'terrible power'?
>
> (*DR*, 10)

But to understand what this 'terrible power' might signify, it is necessary to look more closely at Deleuze's praise for Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. According to him, in respect to their attempts to reintroduce movement into the drama of ideas, both these philosophers make repetition a 'fundamental category of a philosophy of the future' (*DR*, 5). However, Deleuze expressly denies any resemblance whatsoever between Nietzsche's Dionysus and Kierkegaard's God, since their respective conceptions of movement elicit an opposition between the 'spiritual' and the 'logical.' However, he also indicates that the heart of the issue concerns the cosmic question:

> Is repetition supernatural, to the extent that it is over and above the laws of nature? Or is it rather the most natural will of Nature in itself and willing itself as *Physis*, because Nature is by itself superior to its own kingdoms and its own laws?
>
> (*DR*, 11)

Deleuze's story becomes somewhat equivocal at this point, for he also notes that Nietzsche 'discovers in the *Physis* something superior to the reign of laws: a will willing itself through all change, a power opposed to law, an interior of the earth opposed to the laws of its surface' (*DR*, 6). Maintaining moreover that Nietzsche's discovery of this will is one of his most important contributions to philosophy, he herewith thus also raises the profound question of how best to understand the expression 'world of the "will",' for it is hardly clear that it makes sense to speak of a will that can will itself without alluding to an overarching Spirit. Indeed, Deleuze affirms that '[t]he domain of laws must be understood, but always on the basis of a Nature or a Spirit superior to their own laws, which weave their repetitions in the depths of the earth and of the heart, where laws do not yet exist' (*DR*, 25). Hence Nature, Will, and Spirit would seem to be intimately related; but if this is so, why think that it is necessary to choose between Nietzsche's and Kierkegaard's differing approaches to the cosmic question? That is, it is conceivable that they are contemplating the same topic (of repetition) from different, complementary perspectives in which the greater emphasis is accorded either to Nature or to Spirit in accordance with the predilections of the viewers.[26]

In other words, if one can image the world as a theatre of repetition in which an immensely complex drama is continually taking place, and where all the actors can be conceived as mutually influencing, contemplative souls who bear witness to a Nature informed by Spirit, such a world might well evoke an overarching Will, or perhaps a multitude of little wills. The doors of philosophy have been thrown wide open anyway to possibilities that are arbitrarily banned from the world of representation. Among the many unorthodox participants admitted into the cosmic dance by Deleuze, perhaps none is as important as the oracle at Delphi, who communicates only by means of signs. Indeed, signs, says Deleuze, are the 'true elements of theatre.' That is, signs testify

> to the spiritual and natural powers that act beneath the words, gestures, characters and objects represented. They signify repetition as real movement, in opposition to representation which is false movement of the abstract.
>
> (*DR*, 23)

Why not think then that signs ultimately attest to the presence of Spirit which is the ultimate 'terrible power' behind repetition. Put another way, if the world can be imaged as an ongoing, tension-filled, Dionysian-Apollonian dance of differences and repetitions that is forever caught up

in the immanent-transcendent Heraclitean struggle between opposites, it can also be imaged as a cosmic drama of ideas that illustrates the complementarity of Nature and Spirit.[27]

The question is, then: does this cosmic drama hold the secret to the philosophical search for wisdom? It is not incidental that Deleuze not only brings in the oracle at Delphi, he at the same time makes room for myths which remind us that there is always

> a further task to be performed, an enigma to be resolved. The oracle is questioned, but the oracle's response is itself a problem. The dialectic is ironic, but irony is the art of problems and questions. Irony consists in treating things and beings as so many responses to hidden questions, so many cases for problems yet to be resolved.
>
> (*DR*, 63)

Indeed, irony can be regarded as a rhetorical device of last resort, since it gestures silently toward 'things and beings' that lie well beyond the purview of those cautious and fearful souls who refuse to look beyond the boundaries of the world of representation. Such souls are especially wary not only of myths but also of the gods, whom they would like to banish to the realm of pure fiction with the help of what Deleuze maintains is a false dialectic. He thus indicates that the questions and problems that the oracle prompts reveal philosophy to be a serious business just because it is a search for good problems and questions, and that such a search will not succeed without first fashioning an artful dialectic.

## 7. Enter the gods

When Deleuze invokes a certain 'complicity' between nature and mind, he is not only rejecting the popular image of a correspondence type of mapping between mental 'things' and 'real' things, he is also suggesting more profoundly that to grasp the relationship between the real and the rational it is necessary to somehow make room for spiritual powers that launch into operation the faculties that contract meanings from the *virtuality* of the Idea.[28] The possibility that things can go wrong, that more bad than good sense may issue from such operations must not be overlooked. Indeed, the frequent emergence of bad sense indicates that it would be wise to leave room even for the entrance into sense-making of those ancient gods whose antics once upon a time infused the world from top to bottom with an ongoing drama of natural passions and spiritual powers. Deleuze lends support to this line of thought when he

notes, for instance, that to ask 'what is sense?' or 'what does it mean to think?' is to allude only to the *possibility* of capturing 'the genius of the Idea' which cannot in fact be grasped, although without it philosophy sinks into 'the greatest monotonies' (*DR*, 195). He herewith opens up a very tricky question, for he also maintains that 'sensibility, in the presence of that which can only be sensed (and is at the same time imperceptible) finds itself before its own limit, the sign' (*DR*, 140). Perhaps only the gods could provide indeterminate signs with limits, especially if signs are only 'points of departure' from the Idea while being capable of eliciting responses that do not resemble the signs themselves (*DR*, 141). In any case, it is surely not signs (or symbols) that have limits but rather the ability to interpret them which is limited. The question is, then, what determines the limits of this or that interpretative capacity if not a possibly capricious agency not unlike some god of old?

To view the cosmos as consisting of interconnected semiotic transactions calls at any rate for a multitude of interpreters of signs and hence godlike powers of decision which bear witness to a plurality of wills and hence desires to respond (or not) to the oracle. The upshot is that when Deleuze declares that 'we are contemplations, we are imaginations, we are generalities, claims and satisfactions,' he at the same time indicates that a certain 'natural wisdom' is perhaps the best philosophy can hope to achieve, a wisdom that is equally at home with natural and spiritual powers that are not completely controllable since they can be traduced by ill-formed, malformed, or stunted souls whose faculties have not been properly educed.

That there are some souls who do indeed operate on a godlike plane seems implicit in his rhetorical question: '[d]id not mathematicians declare themselves to be descended from the gods?' (*DR*, 197). He herewith brings to mind Descartes' assertion that 'the human mind has in it something that we may call divine, wherein are scattered the first germs of useful modes of thought.'[29] Although a mathematician might at first glance be mistaken for an inspired Pygmalion whose moving chisel is slowly uncovering a shy Galatea already formed and patiently waiting in the stone, the actual work of mathematicians testifies to only more or less well-developed mathematical imaginations. That is, success in this field seems to depend on the proper exercise of a mathematical faculty which is not unlike the linguistic faculty with which nature (according to Noam Chomsky) has endowed human beings.[30] That is to say, the development of novel mathematical theories bears witness to perspicacious imaginations which overlap at certain points with the imaginings that underpin the enveloping 'reality of symbols' in which

we live and have our being. It is thus significant that mathematicians frequently indicate that progress in this notoriously impractical region of inquiry depends on learning how to ask good questions which may lead (but who knows how?) to a framing of good problems.[31] Deleuze in fact declares that 'problems are inseparable from a power of decision, a *fiat* which, when we are infused by it, makes us semi-divine beings' (*DR*, 197). Why not think, then, that the gods are always hovering in the wings, waiting for just the right moment to exercise their powers of decision? Not that this possibility resolves the matter, for Deleuze also notes that the powers involved in sense-making are 'grounded in the nature of the problems to be resolved, since it is always in relation to an ideal field added by the mathematician that an equation turns out to be reducible or not' (*DR*, 197).

Complicating the matter still further, Deleuze traces the genesis of good problem-Ideas to 'a throw of the dice.'[32] Yet one may still ask who could be doing the throwing, if not the gods. However, Deleuze explicitly maintains that the semi-divine nature of the power of decision does not involve the gods, for 'the gods themselves are subject to the ... sky-chance.' Yet at the same time he indicates that the power of decision always involves an overarching, or underlying, Spirit – as when he claims that '[t]he imperatives and questions with which we are infused do not emanate from the I: it is not even there to hear them' (*DR*, 199).

That is to say, whether the 'ultimate origin' of good sense should be 'assimilated to a solitary and divine game' is a moot question. This game cannot be likened to ordinary dice-throws since the 'divine game' requires a peculiar conception of chance; for chance now needs (Deleuze insists) to be made into 'an object of *affirmation*' (*DR*, 198). Claiming that 'chance is arbitrary only in so far as it is not affirmed or not sufficiently affirmed,' he prompts the question whether only an affirming agency can make an affirmation. Have we not already met the worldly representatives of such an agency in the form of ensouled bodies who incorporate the necessary faculties for finding solutions that ensure the continuance of the life of those bodies? The very survival of an organism, in other words, can be regarded as a kind of affirmation that *testifies* to the effectiveness of the powers of decision that are presupposed by the organism's very existence.[33]

Perhaps the situation can be clarified a little by recalling those problems connected with the production of a visual experience using the organosemiotic imaginary that I earlier sketched. Here an organism can be viewed as a sign-interpreter embedded in an intricate network of habits of interpretation involving various species of signs. In this

picture, then, sentient organisms are essentially problem-solvers; an idea that Deleuze in fact endorses. For him '[a]n organism is nothing if not the solution to a problem, as are each of its differenciated organs, such as the eye which solves a light "problem."'[34] Yet there is still considerable leeway when it comes to trying to account for the actual forms of solutions since eyes only *help* to solve a light problem inasmuch as these organs do not all by themselves fill the world with visual images. So while it may be quite apt to say, as Deleuze does, that 'the eye is an implicated light, or the expression of a possible light, while the ear is that of a possible sound' (*DR*, 260), it would not follow that the brain is an 'implicated image,' or even an implicated complex of ideas and images. Once one has acknowledged the need for a doctrine of faculties that elicits transcendental powers capable of drawing meaning from the Idea, one must admit that meanings can arrive in the world in many different and unpredictable guises – which may include images (or symbols) intimately bound up with 'real' ideas, or essences. Furthermore, since the organs referred to above presuppose a living body, to say that an organism is a 'solution' to a flood of ongoing problems posed by its environment is to acknowledge that the whole cosmos may be implicated in any individuated occasion of sensibility, especially if this is immersed in a flood of signs and symbols.

So if a living organism can be viewed as a kind of affirmation, why not think that the cosmos of contemplations that can produce a web of differences and repetitions is being moved ever onward by something more positive than dice throws? When Deleuze claims that 'the disparates which emanate from a throw begin to resonate, thereby forming a problem,' he is surely enlisting incompatible metaphors (*DR*, 198). And when he speaks of his eccentric interpretation of chance in terms of 'a calculation of problems,' he is perhaps only reminding us that the idea of a calculation properly belongs to the static world of representation.

Assuming, then, that novelty arises from a power of decision that leads to significant changes in the world of differences and repetitions, such a power bespeaks not only an underlying will to cast dice but also a desire to make good casts. No doubt the meaning of 'good' is still obscure, but now the situation is amenable to the introduction of more or less wise spiritual agencies which render otiose the need to speak, for instance, of an 'aleatory original point … at which powerlessness is transmuted into power.'[35] A more promising way to come to terms with the problem of stupidity (or wisdom) is provided by the god-like figure of Eros, who Deleuze in fact evokes while referring to him as 'the noumenon' (*DR*, 85), thus indicating that the best way to approach

the 'something' in the world that 'forces' us to think is to imagine a god who scatters invitations.

Indeed, when Deleuze poignantly asks: '[w]hy is it that Eros holds both the secret of questions and answers, and the secret of an insistence in all our existence?' (*DR*, 85) one can reply that if there is a 'something' that invites us to think, it attests to the existence of powers of decision that must be as much a part of Spirit as they are of Nature. Furthermore, this 'something' recalls Whitehead's claim that Creativity is the category of the ultimate, which indicates in turn that not chance but the desires of imaginative souls are ultimately responsible for the 'contractions' that draw meaning from the Idea.

Deleuze suggestively describes Eros as Mnemosyne's 'companion' or 'fiancé,' thus bringing to mind the tension between immanence and transcendence that both Whitehead and Coleridge associate with the imaginative activity of construction that underpins the becoming of units of experience. They also show, as ordinary perception bears witness, that sense-making occurs in an open space between past and future and therefore invokes the trope of nuptials that unite memory and anticipation. So why not trace the cosmic 'dice-throws' to Eros who, being poised between what is and what is not (yet could still be), represents a cosmic Will that perpetually dreams of another world lying beyond its 'present' state, whatever this happens to be? Such a cosmic Desire would naturally require myriads of more or less willing souls, so that Eros testifies to the presence of an overarching Spirit or Will which is tolerant of both conflict and cooperation, as well as chance and error. Furthermore, if Eros is essentially a scatterer of invitations to the cosmic Dance, such lures (as Whitehead calls them) are 'things' that can after all be declined, misconstrued, or ignored, as well as embraced.

In sum, then, Deleuze can in the end be read as eliciting a cosmos of semidivine agents who are responsible for the powers of decision that can induce at times a positive 'complicity' between minds and nature. This conclusion accords with the stress that he puts on error as an ever-present possibility, as when he observes that '[t]he world "happens" while God calculates; and if the calculation were exact, there would be no world' (*DR*, 222). Indeed, an exact calculation would nullify the need for interpreters of signs and indeed would render the very idea of a world of organic event-encounters otiose. This conclusion also indicates that the creation of problems, or problem-Ideas, is part and parcel of the task of Eros in the ongoing struggle between Mnemosyne and Habitus, whose relation is like 'the alliance of the sky and the ground' (*DR*, 80); which is to say that philosophy is part of an endless Heraclitean struggle to

engender well-cultivated souls, a struggle that may be guided, but not governed or controlled by a *Logos* that reflects an omnipresent but not necessarily benevolent Spirit.

## 8. Learning an artful dialectic

If 'all is contemplation,' then philosophy too is part of this 'all'; indeed, perhaps nothing but an expanding network of contemplations whose primary purpose may be to relieve a few receptive souls of their perplexity, if only temporarily. Deleuze suggests, in any case, that philosophers are inescapably caught up in a 'drama of ideas' that takes place in a 'theatre of problems and always open questions which draws spectator, setting and characters into the real movement of an apprenticeship of the entire unconscious' (*DR*, 192). Thus hinting that good learning in philosophy is closely tied to finding good problem-Ideas, he also indicates that such learning depends on first framing a nonstandard or artful dialectic.

As for the question of what such a dialectic might look like, it may be useful to note that the genesis of philosophical contemplation, as Whitehead points out in his last writings, begins with awakened feelings of interest and/or importance (see, e.g., *Modes of Thought*, Lecture one). Thus also linking the desire to do philosophy to 'perplexed souls,' Whitehead lends support to Deleuze's claim that contemplation proceeds from 'the problematical to the question.' The apprentice philosopher would therefore be wise to renounce at once the 'philosophical illusion' that good problems can be traced from propositions. This illusion is, however, the cornerstone of the standard dialectic which stems, according to Deleuze, from Aristotle who began 'the history of the long perversion' which has entrenched the belief that 'problems are given ready-made and that they disappear in the responses or the solution' (*DR*, 158).

The only reasonable place to begin to do philosophy, in other words, is with what is actually going on in front of one's nose, so to speak. The trouble is, it is not a simple matter to determine what this is, as is evidenced by the tendency in philosophy to fasten onto pseudo-problems. As an example of such a problem, one might cite the so-called problem of other minds. To maintain that this puzzle deserves to be taken seriously is to presuppose there are other minds already present and prepared to acknowledge that here is a puzzle worth contemplating. More tellingly perhaps, it presupposes that everyone already knows what knowledge means. For this pseudo-problem amounts in effect to asking how we can know with apodictic certainty that other

minds exist, as though knowledge is not knowledge unless it can be proven to be certain.

This example, I am suggesting, warrants the stress that Deleuze puts on the problem of learning which in philosophy means learning the 'art of problems and questions' (*DR*, 157). More specifically, he is rejecting the common belief that the proper way to proceed in philosophy is from the hypothetical to the apodictic.[36] But in looking for a more positive characterization of what philosophy is and can do, he leads his readers into the middle of an open problematic where everything hinges on learning how to learn to do justice to the vital powers which underwrite thinking *tout court*. [37]

That such powers are akin to those which infuse the quicknesses of life is evident from Deleuze's accompanying observation that philosophers need to learn to 'animate ideal problems, determining their relations and their singularities' (*DR*, 283). This allusion to structures and singularities that are only latent in the Idea indicates moreover that there is no way to determine what may or may not deserve to be called a 'true' problem-Idea. Nonetheless, there is still 'a difference in kind between problems and propositions' (*DR*, 162). For propositions 'whether general or particular, find their sense only in the subjacent problem which inspires them.'[38] But if this is so, there is also no quick way to learn an artful dialectic, except perhaps in the realm of art.

For we have arrived at a conclusion to which both Whitehead and Coleridge point. It is also one similar to that which Nietzsche gestures when he sets out to determine what it might mean to think with a good conscience – that there is an intimate connection between philosophy and art. It is thus worth noting here that Deleuze draws special attention to Nietzsche's attempt to outline 'an absolute anti-dialectics' that exposes 'all the mystifications that find a final refuge in the dialectic.'[39] He thereby suggests that the mystery of sense-making, which he helps expose, requires not just one counter-dialectic, but perhaps many artful dialectics before thought can be freed from all 'the burdens which are crushing it.' Whether or not this is so is thus my chief concern in the next chapter.

# 8
# Against 'Conceptual Idolatry'

> 'I asserted that the world was mad,' exclaimed poor Lee, 'and the world said that I was mad, and confound them, they outvoted me.'[1]
>
> 'That mankind should have taken seriously the brain-sick fancies of morbid cobweb-spinners!'[2]

## 1. Thinking with a bad conscience in philosophy

That the culture of the West is very far from exemplifying good sense is implicit in Nietzsche's accusation that modern philosophers have failed to take up 'their hard, unwanted, unavoidable task … in being the bad conscience of their age.'[3] If they had performed this vitally important cultural task properly and responsibly, he seems to suggest, they would have long ago rejected epistemologies that center the meaning of knowledge on that which is produced in science. For here reason functions under a 'master-illusion,' as Daniel Breazeale sums up the matter; that it is the duty of modern 'enlightened' man 'to banish every vestige of illusion from himself and his world' (which 'is above all the world of "science"').[4] The first step toward a more reasonable conception of epistemology, Nietzsche suggests, is therefore to divest reason of its primarily judgmental function; for modern reason acts as though (in Breazeale's words) 'everything must be brought before the bar of conscious reflection and there tried' (*PT*, xxvi). The next step is a good deal harder since it involves scrutinizing the motives behind the 'knowledge-drive' of science, for this is based on illusions and delusions.

So it is worth stressing that Nietzsche's condemnation of the dishonesty and self-deception that he discerns in the thought of his

contemporaries does not amount to a blanket denial of the value of science or the meaningfulness of either knowledge or wisdom.[5] He rather indicates that in order to think with a good conscience one must first learn how to be selective: '[o]nce and for all, there is a great deal I do *not* want to know. – Wisdom sets bounds even to knowledge' (*TI*, 33).

Nietzsche points up, in short, a pressing need to rethink standard conceptions of goodness in both reasoning and knowing. As to the question of where to begin, Nietzsche's answer is contained in the ironic observation that it is 'precisely the best knowledge that wants most to hold us in this *simplified*, altogether artificial, fabricated, falsified world' (*BGE*, 37). That is to say, he is urging us to face squarely the question of not only the meaning and scope of science but also its proper place in a healthy culture. For science is quite capable of promoting 'the *most stupid* of all possible interpretations of the world.' Indeed, among all the possible interpretations of the world, modern science, as I have earlier argued, does indeed favor the 'one … poorest in meaning.' When its supposedly self-critical and paradigmatically rational practitioners apply what Nietzsche calls their 'square little reason' to the 'world of truth,' thought is forced to run in narrow channels under the illusion that knowledge of 'the rich ambiguity' of existence can be gained by 'counting, calculating, weighing, seeing, and touching, and nothing more – [which] is a crudity and naiveté, assuming that it is not a mental illness, an idiocy.'[6]

That the dominant conception of reason may in fact illustrate a collective mental illness can thus be viewed as one of Nietzsche's primary concerns. According to Breazeale, he often alludes in his private correspondence to a long-term plan to produce a treatise with the title (one of many proposed) 'The Philosopher as Cultural Physician.'[7] Another proposed title, 'The Struggle Between Science and Wisdom,' indicates his belief that philosophy has much to do with the quest for wisdom which has not been well-served, for '[i]n every age the wisest have passed the identical judgment on life: *it is worthless*.' Not a sickness of the understanding (to adopt Wittgenstein's phrase) but something deeper and darker perhaps justifies Nietzsche observation that '[h]ere … there must be something sick' (*TI*, 39). For his diagnosis of this sickness evokes a collective neurosis which is partly the reason for this culture's lack of genuine organic unity – since a healthy culture must display, as Breazeale puts it, a 'unanimity of living, thinking, seeming, and willing.'[8]

Indicating a gloomy prognosis for this ailing culture Nietzsche even conjectures (in his notebooks) that 'the goal of science is the destruction

of the world.'[9] This shocking prophecy has in fact been partly borne out by the rapidly deteriorating conditions for living and thinking on this planet since the advent of modern science. Its relentless 'progress' affords ample reason to ponder the (for the moderns) deeply disturbing question: '[w]hat is the *value* of truth?' Nietzsche compounds this discomfort by forcing his readers to look inwards and confront what may be an unresolvable mystery: '*[w]hat* really is it in us that wants "the truth"?' (*BGE*, 15). For self-consciously rational and 'hard-headed' thinkers go to considerable lengths to avoid facing up to these crucial questions, which suggest that conscious, rational thought is at bottom guided by hidden, 'irrational' powers or 'forces' that may not be entirely benign.

In any case, Nietzsche is in no doubt about the irrationality of the post-Cartesian tendency to eliminate the body (that 'pitiable *idee fixe* of the senses!' [*TI*, 45]) when theorizing reason. He invites us to face squarely the possibility that 'the greater part of conscious thinking must still be counted among the instinctive activities.' Indeed, as I have argued in earlier chapters, he has good reason to hold that 'most of a philosopher's conscious thinking is secretly directed and compelled into definite channels by his instincts' (*BGE*, 17).[10] The trouble is, if one grants that it is no more reasonable to ignore the role of mental insights and imaginative intuitions than it is to deny bodily instincts, the doors of philosophy must be thrown wide open to a great many nonsystematic thinkers whom science would like to consign to the periphery of 'serious inquiry,' if not banish beyond the pale. This attitude, Nietzsche suggests, merely testifies to an endemic nihilism that in one way or another degrades both Life and Thought. It is therefore worth stressing that nihilism has for him both a passive and an active sense.[11] His own active nihilism involves a concerted attack on the passive nihilism which informs the standard conception of rationality, one that I have maintained is in thrall to the Grand Myth of scientific superrationality – the idea that science exemplifies a superior form of rationality. This myth, Nietzsche in effect suggests, is another symptom of a sick culture: 'rationality at any cost … in opposition to the instincts … has itself been no more than a form of sickness, another form of sickness' (*TI*, 44).

But he is very far from writing this culture off as hopelessly deluded. In many places he evidences a certain optimism, as in the following passage: 'I am still waiting for a philosophical *physician* in the exceptional sense of that word – one who has to pursue the problem of the total health of the people, time, race or of humanity …' (*GS*, 35). However, the kind of physician he has in mind must possess a rare

combination of skills and virtues which, with reference to his own needs, calls for a will 'to muster the courage to push my suspicion to its limits and to risk the proposition: what was at stake in all philosophizing hitherto was not at all 'truth' but something else – let us say, health, future, growth, power, life.' Yet in view of his excoriating criticisms of the self-deceptions and dishonesty endemic in modern thought, he prompts one to wonder whether modern philosophy is in any shape to produce cultural physicians.

## 2. Scientific thinking with a bad conscience

More specifically, Nietzsche indicates that those philosophers who try to fit their thinking about truth, knowledge, and so on into the skewed interpretations of the world promoted by modern science are probably thinking with a bad conscience. It is thus something of an irony that the Darwinian theory of evolution, which has received almost world-wide approval by leading scientists and philosophers of science, appears to have been what caused Nietzsche himself to think that a bad conscience is endemic to modernity. With evident discomfort, he forces both himself and his readers to confront the unsettling implications of the theory of evolution for human self-evaluation.[12] But at the same time, he pulls the props from under those scientists who regularly appeal to the Darwinian theory of evolution to reinforce whatever theory they are promoting that happens to bear in one way or another on the meaning of Life or Thought.[13] No doubt recent advances in molecular genetics have helped clarify one of the outstanding problems that Darwin left unresolved – the problem of heredity. The significance of the molecular genetic theory for Darwinian interpretations of evolution is comparable, however, to Newton's 'solution' to the problem of gravitation – which 'explains' with great accuracy the motion of macro-physical objects (such as the planets) by means of a relatively simple mathematical theory (of central forces) – while leaving gravity itself shrouded in mystery.

As I noted at the outset, the most fervent neo-Darwinian interpreters of evolution manifest an ideological commitment to an incoherent set of metaphysical assumptions that arbitrarily preclude the possibility that Nature is inherently self-creative. Yet it is not at all hard to think that Nature is shot through with both creative powers and habitual or 'law-like' modes of organization. Indeed, the mechanical type of organization, in Nietzsche's view, is the *exception*; that is, it signifies 'a temporary restriction of the will to life' (*GS*, 292). Stressing moreover

that this 'will to life' needs to be clearly distinguished from a 'will to survive' (which is but the faint shadow of a more vital will to power), Nietzsche indicates that the core of modern nihilism is an acritical desire to exclude, whatever the cost to intelligibility, the possibility that nature is imbued with dynamic, creative vitality. For 'the essential thing [when pondering evolution] … is precisely the tremendous shaping, form-creating force working from within which *utilizes* and *exploits* "external circumstances"' (*WP*, 344).

Both Coleridge and Whitehead, I have tried to show, can be enlisted in support of this summary account of evolution which indicates that *only* a vitalistic account of the naturing of Nature is capable of doing justice to the fact that living organisms are the dynamic resultants of 'internal drives' and 'external circumstances.' But before trying to go deeper into this controversial matter, it is first necessary to engage with the metaphysical question whether something like the 'true' naturalism envisaged by Coleridge is required, one that revolves about a 'true' realism that does not divide knowers from known. For both philosophers also indicate the need to rethink the relation between the rational and the real in order to correct the worst excesses of the abstract theorizing that informs so much of modern thought. This prior need is in fact stressed by that Whitehead who holds that it is impossible to do justice to ordinary concrete experiences if you base your rational explanations on abstract entities. An acute awareness of this tendency to commit 'the Fallacy of Misplaced Concreteness' is also discernible in Nietzsche's exasperated complaints about the thinking of his contemporaries, who have a perverse tendency to view the world from upside down, as it were. More specifically, they take 'the last for the first': they put 'the "highest concepts," that is to say the most general, the emptiest concepts, the last fumes of evaporating reality, at the beginning as the beginning' (*TI*, 47). He thus suggests that this 'enlightened' civilization is in an advanced state of decay – as Whitehead also intimates when he observes that 'the degeneracy of mankind is distinguished from its uprise by the dominance of chill abstractions, divorced from aesthetic content.'[14]

## 3. Reason, appearances, and reality

The burning question for the would-be cultural physician is, then, what can a mere natural philosopher do to help a diseased, perhaps self-destructive, collective mentality whose cleverness may be its own worst enemy. Hope is not unreasonable, for it is surely undeniable that

the human organism has been endowed by Nature with remarkable capacities and powers that warrant the belief that future representatives of *Homo sapiens* may actually learn to become wise. For the sad truth seems to be that much of the thought of this creature at present does not exemplify wisdom so much as its opposite; that is, a perverse inclination to ignore, deny, abuse, or subvert its vital capacities or powers, often in the name of reason.

Nietzsche in fact maintains that 'Reason' is 'the *cause* of our falsification of the evidence of the senses' (*TI*, 46, italics mine). Noting that 'what we *make* of the evidence [of the senses is what] first introduces "a lie" into it' (*TI*, 46), he points out that our senses continually bear witness to a world shot through with change and becoming. Hence one of the most invidious 'idiosyncrasies' of modern philosophers is their 'hatred of even the idea of becoming': 'What is, does not *become*, what becomes, *is* not …' (*TI*, 45).

Such a hatred might well account for an endemic tendency to lie, for 'in so far as the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie …' (*TI*, 46). Expressing a 'high reverence' for Heraclitus on account of his insistence on the primacy of becoming, Nietzsche even declares that 'Heraclitus will always be right in this, that being is an empty fiction' (*TI*, 46). But here he is perhaps going too far – so I will return to this point below. At the moment, I want only to note that Nietzsche's frequent expressions of disgust recall many of Heraclitus's references to the somnolence of most people most of the time.[15] Which is to say that as cultural physician Nietzsche evidently sees his principal task as prodding people to try to think. He thus puts himself at odds with all those modern philosophers who think they know very well what good thinking means. Indeed, he throws down a gauntlet, declaring that

> [a]ll that philosophers have handled for millennia has been conceptual mummies; nothing actual has escaped from their hands alive. They kill, they stuff, when they worship, these conceptual idolators. … Death, change, age, as well as procreation and growth, are for them objections – refutations even.
>
> (*TI*, 45)

As an example of the pervasiveness of this idolatry one might cite the widespread faith in the powers of highly abstract theories of mathematics to force nature to reveal its secrets in accordance with the reductive methods of scientific investigation. Referring to this coercive attitude

of mind as Egyptianism, Nietzsche also links the endemic hatred of becoming to a wholesale dehistoricization of the world.[16] Indeed, the fundamental notion of time can be counted first among the many victims of Egyptianism since it is violently 'flattened' by physicists whenever they reduce it to the abstract properties of the linear mathematical continuum.

The repressive violence that goes hand in hand with conceptual idolatry is of a piece with the tendency to install sharp divisions between useful distinctions, a practice that includes divorcing appearances from reality. But rightly insisting that appearances are as real as anything can be, Nietzsche declares that '[t]he grounds upon which "this" world has been designated as apparent establish rather its reality – *another* kind of reality is absolutely undemonstrable' (*TI*, 49). With growing exasperation he adds: 'The "apparent" world is the only one: the "real" world has only been *lyingly added* …' (*TI*, 47).

## 4. Seeking a more just and honest reason

Indeed, a kind of unconscious lying would seem to explain, at least in part, modernity's faith in reductionist methods, a faith that frequently testifies to a superstitious belief in the occult powers of mathematical reasoning.

This faith points, at any rate, to a less than rational reason; indeed it may be a symptom of a cultural disease that is fueled by an obsessive desire to subordinate all aspects of existence, even desire itself, to systematic modes of thought. This overweening desire is marked, I have argued in previous chapters, by a compulsion to divide. Even Nietzsche at times shows signs of this compulsion, as in his dismissal of being as an 'empty fiction.' However, if he is right to insist that Becoming must be given its due, it is surely an egregious error to dismiss Being altogether.

That is to say, if a well-rounded reason is one that is above all capable of overcoming the temptation to divide, it must first look for a way to reconcile the great themes of Being and Becoming. This consideration is consonant with Nietzsche's great respect for Heraclitus, which is partly due to the fact that he leads us, as Deleuze puts it, 'to the threshold of the obscure.' That is, Heraclitus forces us to face up to the mystery of 'the being of becoming.'[17] This intimation of a close bond between Nietzsche and Heraclitus also reflects a passionate desire to do justice to existence; indeed, according to Deleuze, 'the problem of justice runs through [Heraclitus's] entire work,' [he] is the one for whom life is radically innocent and just' (*Nietzsche*, 23). Nietzsche's dismissal of being

as an 'empty fiction' can thus be regarded as an outraged protest against all the injustices that have been done to existence in the service of conceptual idolatry.

As Deleuze sums up the situation, Nietzsche's battle against nihilism is based on a 'double affirmation' – of becoming and the being of becoming. He is also motivated by the vision of a new, essentially vitalistic form of naturalism which can be called a 'philosophy of concern.'[18] Determined to reverse the judgment of 'the wisest in every age,' that life as worthless, Nietzsche is in effect bent on showing, Deleuze suggests, that 'the highest question of philosophy' is: '[h]as existence a meaning?'[19]

Nietzsche's way of responding to this question of questions focuses on the being of becoming, which leads him to invoke an overarching Will. When the world is viewed 'from "within,"' he says, 'when it is described and defined according to its "intelligible character" – it would be "will to power" and nothing else. – ' (*BGE*, 49). This will to power, it is important to note, is quite unlike the secular kind which seeks political or ideological hegemony as well as unlimited material wealth. The Nietzschean association of the being of becoming with a will to power evokes rather Whitehead's theory of becoming, which depicts the world as a flux of self-determinative, creative processes that are lured forever onwards by Eros. That is to say, Whitehead proffers the main outlines of the sort of vitalistic naturalism that Nietzsche is calling for. More specifically, he shows how to deal with one of Nietzsche's most challenging questions, which is: does existence have any value? For Whitehead, every act of becoming must be conceived as driven by an aim to realize a certain value, so that the entire cosmos can be regarded as illustrating a restless production of values. But since the values that are realized in individual becomings are not predetermined, it is not enough to trace this production to the lures provided by Eros. That is to say, Whitehead's picture of the cosmos both supports and is supported by Nietzsche's evocation of an overarching will to power in which individualized becomings bespeak a plurality of little wills to power that may compete as well as cooperate.

Furthermore, once we follow Heraclitus's lead and acknowledge that the world is composed of struggles between opposites, it is only to be expected that values are in constant conflict, which perhaps partly explains why it is so hard to think with a good conscience. And why it is so hard to conceive a vitalistic naturalism that can do justice to all the valuings that make human experience so complicated. But all that is really clear is that it is an egregious error, as Nietzsche puts it, to look

for the 'things of the highest value' 'in the womb of being … in the intransitory, in the hidden god, in the "thing in itself"' (*BGE*, 16). But by the same token, there is nothing to prevent anyone from thinking that the highest values produced in the flux of actual becomings are somehow connected with a hidden power or powers that can forge more or less beneficial alliances between the internal and external influences that all living bodies are subject to.

It is therefore worth noting that Nietzsche observes that 'our body is only a social structure composed of many souls' (*BGE*, 31), a remark that resonates not only with Whitehead's theory of actuality but also with Deleuze's Nietzschean inquiries into the problematic of sense which lead him to the conclusion that 'all is contemplation.'[20] When juxtaposed with the picture of a Heraclitean cosmos informed by a plurality of interacting powers, this claim prompts what may be the ultimate cosmic question: what are ensouled bodies *for* anyway?

According to Deleuze, one of Nietzsche's most important comments regarding this matter is: 'Perhaps the body is the only factor in all spiritual development' (*Nietzsche*, 39). Perhaps, but then if every living body is an ensouled body, as both Deleuze and Whitehead indicate, every contemplating soul in a World of the Will may bear witness to an overarching Spirit that *needs* bodies to … what, if not find out what it can do? A profound wisdom, in other words, may have inspired Nietzsche to denounce the tendency to link wisdom to 'the worst, most wearisomely protracted and most dangerous of all errors … a dogmatist's error, namely Plato's invention of pure spirit and the good in itself' (*BGE*, 14).

As Heraclitus seems to have been well aware, a World of the Will is one that may or may not be infused with wise, benevolent, and perspicacious souls that, as representatives of Spirit, or the *Logos*, have no natural or inherent claim to be creators of purity or goodness in either thought or action.[21] But they nonetheless *can* claim to be engaged in a serious business – of willing a world filled with values and meaning.

## 5. 'Vital illusions' and good myths

This brief excursion into the ontological dimension of the problematic of reason indicates that there is probably no end to the difficulties that the would-be cultural physician must confront. Perhaps only a few intrepid and insightful souls, such as Nietzsche himself, may be able to do justice to 'the supreme problems' of culture, especially insofar as they are intimately bound up with the equally profound problem of nature.[22] It is not as though he is claiming, at any rate, that in order to learn to think with a good conscience it is necessary to shake oneself

free of every illusion. On the contrary, one of Nietzsche's principal beliefs, according to Breazeale, is that a healthy culture *needs* 'vital illusions.'[23]

To see why this might be so, let us contemplate some of the ideological obstacles that each sensitive soul must inevitably confront when trying to make sense of the neurotic culture of the West. If myths ultimately guide the evolution of a given nature-culture, then this culture may be suspected of being in thrall to a bad myth (the Grand Myth of scientific superrationality). Indeed, ideologies presuppose mythologies, says Northrop Frye, so an ideology can be called 'an applied mythology.'[24] Hence if the scientistic ideology that is spreading an imperialistic bad sense over the globe stems from a bad myth, this culture can be viewed as harboring a particularly insidious 'devitalizing illusion.'

In direct contrast, a 'vital illusion' can be regarded as a good myth in the sense that (to use Frye's words) it fosters 'life in more abundance.' So if the Grand Myth is more on the side of Death than of Life, as I have earlier argued, it may be suspected of being the principal motor driving the essentially nihilistic 'European spirit' which, as Nietzsche puts it, *teaches* 'the *narrowing of perspective*, and thus in a certain sense stupidity, as a condition of life and growth' (*BGE*, 93–94, emphasis in original). Indeed, what else but a very powerful bad myth (or 'devitalizing illusion') could explain a purportedly self-critical, but actually self-serving, mode of thought which advertises itself as capable, at least in principle, of finding solutions to cosmic problems without needing to engage directly with the deep problems of metaphysics?

'For thousands of years,' says Nietzsche, 'European thinkers thought only so as to prove something … they always knew in advance that which was *supposed* to result from the most rigorous cogitation' (*BGE*, 93). So given the overweening desire in this culture to shun vitalistic accounts of Life (and Thought), it is perhaps especially noteworthy that Nietzsche also accuses 'the European spirit' of implanting 'the *need* for limited horizons and immediate tasks' (*BGE*, 94, italics mine). That such a need is not only neurotic but also psychotic is not at all hard to believe. Enormous amounts of talent, energy, and natural resources have been invested by very clever people not only in a delusory quest for completeness, certainty, and security in knowledge-making, but also in the invention and propagation of diabolical devices capable of obliterating all life on earth. Nietzsche's criticisms of German science are thus more pertinent than ever. For 17 years, he says, he has striven to expose

> the despiritualizing influence of our contemporary scientific pursuits. The harsh Helot condition to which the tremendous extent of

> science has condemned every single person today is one of the main reasons why educations *and educators* appropriate to fuller, richer, *deeper* natures are no longer forthcoming. … Our universities are, *against* their will, the actual forcing houses for this kind of spiritual instinct-atrophy.
>
> (*TI*, 73, emphasis original)

But perhaps Nietzsche is being overgenerous in excusing the leadership of this culture's institutions of higher education from contributing substantially, albeit perhaps unconsciously, to the subversion of Life and Thought. One need only consider the speed with which academics have adopted the language of 'the free market.' This language valorizes short-sighted, utilitarian projects which bespeak deep-seated materialistic values that foster spiritual suicide. It is therefore small wonder that despite his constant urgings to 'stay cheerful' ('when involved in a gloomy and exceedingly responsible business of reevaluating all values'[25]) Nietzsche occasionally lapses into moments of sheer disgust.[26]

## 6. Cultural therapy and naturalism

But Nietzsche at the same time declares that 'I take care not to make mankind responsible for its insanities.'[27] By thus indicating that the kind of physician this culture needs is close kin to the personal psychotherapist who has some firsthand acquaintance with the devitalizing effects of neurotic obsessions, Nietzsche can be credited with inventing cultural therapy. For as Deleuze notes, Nietzsche is 'the opposite of the neurotic' – since he is seeking new modes of Thought in which Life is not 'constantly mutilated, debased, personalized, mortified.'[28] As for the peculiar nature of Nietzschean cultural therapy, I have already indicated that it resembles in broad outline Coleridge's vitalistic vision of a 'true naturalism.' For Nietzsche too abhors the modern tendency to try to separate the moral/ethical side of reasoning from the intellectual dimension. More specifically, he describes all 'anti-natural' moralities ('that is virtually every morality that has hitherto been taught') as nihilistic.[29] At the same time he envisions a new type of naturalism which will protect Life from its detractors. Hence his famous diatribe against Christian morality, which in his view is essentially anti-Life; for here 'we revenge ourselves on life by means of the phantasmagoria of "another," a "better" life' (*TI*, 49).[30]

That is to say, in sum, Nietzsche envisages a new naturalistic philosophy that is both comprehensive and vitalistic (for '[a]ll naturalism

in morality, that is all *healthy* morality, is dominated by an instinct of life' (*TI*, 55). His famous pronouncement of the death of God is not therefore tantamount to a denial of the spiritual dimension of existence. On the contrary, he holds that there has been in fact at least one genuine Christian, which indicates that his principal quarrel with Christianity (or any other life-denying monotheism, for that matter) is with the priestly class, which presumes it has been granted the right to define the meaning of morality for everyone. This class seems close kin to those scientistic ideologists who, as I suggested at the outset of this essay, evidence a belief in their right to appropriate everyone's reality. It would not be surprising, then, if they were also guilty of moral arrogance of the sort Nietzsche alludes to: 'the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy have every time constituted the real germ of life out of which the entire plant has grown' (*BGE*, 19).

It is therefore a duty incumbent on the philosopher-physician to be 'untimely' – which means 'to look afresh at something of which our time is rightly proud.' At the same time Nietzsche evidences a certain optimism, for he notes that in striving to act 'counter to our time,' the philosopher is really working 'for the benefit of a time to come.'[31] As for the question whether, and if so how, a mere philosopher can enhance life in the future, one obvious contribution would be to teach thinkers to leap nimbly among an indefinite number of perspectives, while declining the almost irresistible temptation to become too enamored of some favorite. This requires unlearning what has perhaps already been learned too well at the feet of the European spirit.

It may be on this account that Deleuze locates the problem of learning at the very center of his inquiry into good sense. He shows anyway that the cultural therapist must first learn how to educate *all* his/her faculties. Indeed, as the *OED* reminds us, being in a stupor is a condition of being deprived of the faculties. And no deprivation seems more likely to induce a collective stupor than a system of education that robs thought of its freedom of movement through a systematic narrowing of perspectives, for this is bound to lead to impoverished interpretations of the world. But this is perhaps only to reiterate the common belief that the principal task of the educator is to teach the young how to *learn* to think. That is, it is perhaps educators who are now most in need of this sort of instruction.[32]

That our current educational systems have failed to identify the secret of good thinking, which is arguably a well-cultivated imagination, is partly borne out by the preponderance of narrowly focused intellectual, political, economic, and religious leaders who acritically presume that

the culture of the West is superior to all other cultures. Such people have a vested interest in the teaching of narrow perspectives that entrench a kind of stupidity.[33] Not even self-consciously rational philosophers can be excepted from this charge inasmuch as they have worked to preserve the false boundaries that separate the intellectual, ethical, and aesthetic domains of thought.[34] Thereby pandering to the neurotic *need* for simple answers to complex questions, they betray the quest for wisdom, especially if their investigations perpetuate the sort of conceptual idolatry that Nietzsche alludes to. For neither wisdom nor stupidity are, strictly speaking, concepts; they are more like vague attractors for ideas that may or may not be conducive to thinking with a good conscience.

Everything depends, in other words, on the state of health of the souls involved. That is to say, the matter bears directly on the need, stressed by Deleuze, for a doctrine of faculties, which always leads to questions about *how* one's vital powers have been educed. So if one assumes that among all the faculties there are moral and/or ethical faculties that are only ever more or less well-developed, it may be helpful to distinguish these two capacities as follows. A moral faculty is arguably enlisted by private or individual efforts to think with a good conscience; that is, it is closely bound up with what that individual *feels* is owing to his/her conscience. On the other hand, the domain of the ethical can be conceived as referring to the public dimension of thinking (that is, to what an individual feels is owing to the enveloping community). This distinction is thus able to accommodate the overriding consideration that every failure or perversion of the quest for justice at the public level has the capacity to affect and be affected by the quest for justice at the personal level, and vice versa.

This line of thought, it is worth stressing, presupposes that no human being is born with all his/her faculties intact and fit for immediate use. Neither does it afford any comfort to those proponents of the doctrine of original sin – which brands every infant in the cradle with the marks of a future criminal. The plain truth is that all human beings are destined to be raised and educated by other human beings, for better or for worse, and this is why the torturer, the rapist, and the murderer need to be regarded as human too, indeed all-too-human.

It is thus possible that the most pernicious form of stupidity is that which arises out of a general failure to educate the moral/ethical faculty(s) in tandem with the faculty of imagination. A good example is therefore that which Hannah Arendt provides in her justly celebrated study of Adolph Eichmann. Having chosen to attend his trial in order to learn

something about the state of his conscience, Arendt was struck not so much by Eichmann's lack of conscience as by his inability to imagine or reflect on the implications and consequences of his actions.[35] For she discovered not a twisted or psychotic monster but rather a severely stunted or vestigial sensibility marked by 'sheer thoughtlessness.' Eichmann's *dummheit*, in other words, was strangely lacking in purpose: 'except for an extraordinary diligence in looking out for his personal advancement, he had no motives at all. … He merely … never realized what he was doing' (*Eichmann,* 287).

Arendt thus directs our attention to the circumstances of Eichmann's education. His inability or refusal to think betrayed a kind of mindlessness shared by millions whose imaginations were chiefly engaged in shielding themselves 'against reality and factuality by exactly the same means, the same self-deception, lies, and stupidity that had become ingrained in Eichmann's mentality' (*Eichmann,* 52). Thus the chief lesson to be learned from his example is that intelligent but unimaginative and thoughtless (i.e., essentially stupid) members in good standing of a supposedly advanced culture are an everpresent danger to its present and future health. Or as she famously sums up the matter, Eichmann bears witness to 'the banality of evil': the fact that the greatest of evils can be perpetrated by upright and law-abiding citizens who are 'terribly and terrifyingly normal' (*Eichmann,* 276).

Thus vindicating Nietzsche's suspicions of the 'herd mentality,' Arendt also justifies his abiding interest in 'moral and intellectual hygiene,' to use Tanner's words (*TI*, 17). She also underscores the possibility that in order to learn to think with a good conscience, philosophers ought to try to think within a thoroughly naturalistic setting which aims above all to do justice to thought itself, for a refusal to think may be an offence against Nature – since 'thinking in its non-cognitive, non-specialized sense [is] … a natural *need* of human life … [and it is] an everpresent faculty of everybody; by the same token, inability to think is … [an] everpresent possibility for everybody – scientists, scholars, and other specialists in mental enterprises not excluded.'[36] Which is to say that no amount of clever mental acrobatics can make up for the sort of *dummheit* exemplified by Eichmann and his like who show that people who have 'no special motives … [are] capable of *infinite* evil.' Put yet another way, Arendt's study of Eichmann's conscience indicates that the worst aspects of the nihilism that Nietzsche is combating have a great deal to do with the sort of evil that Arendt traces to the unfortunately common inclination to shun 'that intercourse with oneself whose possibility and importance Socrates first discovered.'

Thus indicating that the meaning of 'to think with a good conscience' is implicit in the etymological meaning of 'conscience,' which is 'inward' knowledge, or knowing within oneself, she also brings to mind the teachings of Heraclitus who suggests that those who make a living by thinking are especially obliged to look to the state of health of their own souls.[37]

Nietzsche's chief worry, that he lives in a self-destructive civilization informed by a degenerate mode of thought, has since been vindicated by the spread of an Eichmann-like mindlessness in schools, universities, governments, and multinational corporations which scorn any kind of thinking that is not motivated by utilitarian values.[38] Yet the situation does not preclude hope, for moral instincts surely exist in everyone, as is constantly evidenced by spontaneous reactions of horror and disgust at spectacles involving gross injustices or monstrous crimes (e.g., those associated with the name of genocide). It is thus not a minor point that Arendt is making when she remarks (in response to certain angry criticisms of her book) on the 'quite extraordinary confusion over elementary questions of morality – as if an instinct in such matters were truly the last thing to be taken for granted in our time' (*Eichmann,* 295).

## 7. On learning how to be a cultural therapist

The kind of stupidity that Nietzsche refers to does not therefore brand common or garden stupidity as an unalloyed evil. On the contrary, although stupidity 'constitutes the greatest weakness of thought,' says Deleuze, it is also 'the source of its highest power in that it forces [thought] to think' (*DR*, 275).[39] But insofar as this power is both hidden and presupposes an instinctive desire or will to think, philosophy must be in good part misosophy:

> Not being a power, philosophy can't battle with the powers that be, but it fights a war without battles, a guerrilla campaign against them. ... Since the powers aren't just external things, but permeate each of us, philosophy throws us all into constant negotiations with, and a guerrilla campaign against, ourselves.[40]

Yet in order to conduct such a campaign, it seems that nothing less than a kind of dynamic wisdom is needed, one that is capable of sustaining a guerrilla campaign against a frequently devious and dishonest self. For it is hardly a secret that most people expend a good deal of energy in seeking ways to avoid looking beneath the surface of thought. In any

case, what is discernible in even the most conscientious inspection may be like the traces of Life found in empty shells of sea creatures which build beautiful little monuments to quickness as they move from Birth to Death.

In other words, would-be cultural therapists can perhaps learn more from the instinctive learning of little children who have not yet been taught how to be stupid. But if this is the case, the philosopher-therapist who wants to learn from little children has to move quickly – that is, before they have been trained to become clever players in the game of words and concepts.[41] It is moreover not insignificant that little children bear witness to the fact that thinking begins with a play with images, that 'true' learning may be better achieved through playing games with images rather than with concepts. This possibility is also borne out by the ubiquity of dreaming which takes up a remarkably large portion of human life. It is often noted that the mental health of dreamers depends to a considerable extent on regular encounters with dream-images, a consideration that is reinforced by the ubiquity of art in every culture.

Little children not only attest to an instinctive desire to think, they also frequently evidence a passionate concern for fairness – which is in accord with Deleuze's analysis of the making of good sense which bespeaks an 'inner' or unconscious desire for justice at those final stages of integration of the contributions from all the faculties. This desire, like all other desires, is however easily traduced or deflected by a great variety of 'misadventures of thought'; or better, thought-becomings that can involve malevolent- or mad-becomings as well as stupid-becomings.[42] Lending considerable support to this line of thought, Nietzsche in fact suggests that the imaginal ought to take precedence over the conceptual when thinking about the genesis of thought:

> To the concept there corresponds, in the first place, the image. Images are primitive thoughts; i.e., the surfaces of things combined in the mirror of the eye.
>
> (*PT*, 20)

Again evoking the authority of Heraclitus ('who can never be obsolete') he observes that '[p]hilosophy is invention beyond the limits of experience; it is the continuation of the *mythical drive*. It is thus essentially pictorial' (*PT*, 19). He thereby brings to the fore the question whether naturalistically inclined philosophers should first frame their deliberations in an appropriate 'image-language' whose suitability depends in good part on whether the privileged imagery is capable of reconciling

the rhetorical and the mythical drives. For a rhetorical drive is always on the verge of being launched whenever reason feels a lack in the literal meanings of words, and hence the inadequacy of accepted means of expression and communication. But although Nietzsche observes that 'the word contains nothing but an image; from this comes the concept' (*PT*, 20), he unfortunately weakens this dictum with a dubious rider: 'thinking thus calculates with artistic magnitudes' (*PT*, 20). The words 'calculate' and 'artistic' clash while threatening to lead us back into conceptual idolatry instead of toward a brighter future in which the feeling side of thinking is seen to be as vitally important as the imaginal side.

Nietzsche, can be read, in short, as holding that the best 'cure' for the intellectual dishonesty that is destroying this culture lies in recognizing that good thinking involves an interplay of imagery and feelings.[43] At this point, however, it might be objected that the aspiring cultural therapist would be better advised to turn to psychoanalysis where an examination of actual case-studies can tell us more about what may be going wrong beneath the surface of consciousness. However, the first lesson to be learned from psychoanalysis is surely of the order of a truism – the workings of the unconscious are not transparent to conscious scrutiny – while the second lesson (as Deleuze shows) is that it is very likely impossible to do justice to the undercurrents of thinking outside of art. That is to say, although Deleuze is no friend of psychoanalysis, his criticisms of this field do not pertain to what *kinds* of interpretations are favored here but rather to the tendency to deny that interpretation is *essentially* an art.[44] Hence he can be read as claiming in effect that *only* an artful reason can learn the art of interpretation that the cultural therapist requires.

But now an even more troublesome objection may arise: if there is a tendency toward self-deception in ordinary (i.e., undisciplined) interpretative activity, why think matters will improve when the focus is shifted from reasonings based in relatively stable conceptual systems to an artful play with fleeting imagery? Furthermore, if Nietzsche is right to insist that a healthy culture *requires* 'vital illusions,' a thoroughgoing analysis of knowledge-making must not only take into account the 'drive toward the formation of metaphors,' it must also look behind this drive to whatever is guiding the choice of guiding imagery; that is, to another, perhaps even more obscure drive that involves the creation of myths.[45] For even if Nietzsche is right and 'language is rhetoric,' it can also be viewed as constantly in motion; that is, stirred up from below by hidden 'words of power,' like ripples

on the surface of a pond.[46] Hence to develop a truly artful reason in philosophy, one must not only find a way to reconcile the rhetorical and mythical drives, one must also find a way to encourage the creation of better or more vital myths.

A good cultural therapy, in short, bespeaks an artful reason that is somehow infused with enough dynamic wisdom to assist in the evolution of more vital private and public imaginations. That is to say, in sum, if good myths ('vital illusions') provide the main supports for healthy belief-systems or ideologies, it is conceivable that good myths are indispensable to the quest for wisdom just because they guide indispensable acts of metaphoring even as they inescapably 'localize' thinking within culturally imposed limits. The implication is that nothing less than a 'doubly artful' reason is needed to encourage the birth of a better good sense.

## 8. So what does it mean to think with a good conscience?

According to Breazeale, Nietzsche believes that the battle against nihilism calls for a new form of mastery.[47] However, this suggests that the free spirits he wants to coax into the world arrive with an innate ability to think with a good conscience. Yet even the most fearless of free spirits cannot escape 'local' influences or valuings that are ingested very early in life. Furthermore, if each self possesses a soul which may be (as Heraclitus reminds us) asleep a good part of the time, there is no reason to believe that the flux of experience-events is capable of spontaneously generating particularly wise individuals with a prior knowledge of *how* to impose new and better values from 'above.'

This anomaly, I have in effect been arguing, can be resolved if the term 'mastery' is understood in the light of one of Nietzsche's most important insights: that the being of becoming gestures silently toward an underlying will to power. If there is such a thing as good sense or good learning, such a will must be involved in the desire to integrate properly the products of the transcendental powers that the faculties may or may not have been educated to exercise well. It cannot therefore be too greatly stressed that the sort of will that Nietzsche has in mind is quite different from the secular kind – which, he says, *'makes stupid.'*[48] But by the same token it is conceivable that a good will can also 'make wise.' No doubt this sort of making elicits extremely tricky questions which are nonetheless unignorable, for there is plenty of evidence that the wrong kind of 'coming to power' can be 'a costly business'; indeed, it can 'lay waste' most if not all our powers.[49]

So how, it might now be asked, could mere apprentices in philosophy learn to cultivate and nurture their natural powers in an intellectual climate that shuns talk about powers, not to mention instincts, intuitions, and the like? Indeed, 'the entire West,' says Nietzsche, 'has *lost* those instincts out of which institutions grow, out of which the future grows' (*TI*, 105, italics mine).[50] Yet he also indicates that nothing but good myths can provide both the impetus and direction for positive cultural growth, for such myths are akin to the 'vital illusions' that he holds no culture can do without. At the same time he indicates that a philosopher can help foster such illusions by studying the 'willed illusions' produced by artists. Indeed, some 'modern' painters may be cited as prime examples of how to think with a good conscience when they set up their easels 'in-between' their selves and their 'objects' of interest. In so doing, they demonstrate that necessity and 'freedom of the will' are at 'one in them' (*BGE*, 126). It is thus highly significant that although they may appear on the face of it to be creating esoteric 'conscious illusions' (*PT*, xiv), their productions often confirm that philosophers too can learn, as Nietzsche suggests, to be 'artists of values.' Indeed, it is conceivable that *only* in the realm of art can the apprentice philosopher learn how to balance values with desires.[51]

In any case, assuming that the imaginal needs to be given precedence over the conceptual, philosopher-therapists must somehow learn to glean meanings from the continual interplay of images, symbols, ideas, and feelings. Thus art critics can also teach philosophers how to cultivate the hidden powers of imagination without which it is impossible to read 'between the lines' of great texts.[52] So if there is indeed such a thing as good art, the continual production of great works of both art and criticism attest to a tacit and stubborn conviction that an artistic production of 'willed' or 'conscious' illusions can reconcile us with the 'real,' for Nietzsche is only partly right to denounce talk about a 'real world' - 'an idea no longer of any use, not even a duty any longer – an idea grown useless, superfluous, consequently a refuted idea' (*TI*, 50). So long as it is generally believed that the production and criticism of art performs an invaluable cultural service, then cultural therapy is possible. Hope for a better future may be forever deferred, but it can never be entirely quenched. Who knows but that future generations may learn, before it is too late, to think (imagine) in wiser, less neurotic ways which can do proper justice to the quicknesses of Life and Thought; thereby at last leading this sick, devitalized culture into 'broad daylight; breakfast; return of cheerfulness and *bon sens* …' (*TI*, 51–52).

# 9
# Epilogue: Notes for a Cultural Therapy

Oh Rose, thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.[1]

## 1. Philosophy and cultural therapy

To raise the question whether modern philosophy has helped arrest or has instead inadvertently contributed to the spread of an imperialistic bad sense is to run up hard against the *ur*-question of philosophy: what is it, how is it best done, and does it help to foster a better good sense? Philosophers are, after all, generally regarded as experts in the business of reasoning. It would therefore be well for me to justify my doubts about modern philosophy's conception of reason by rehearsing a few of the highlights of my exploration of the idea of good sense.

Foremost among the anomalies of the 'enlightened' thought of the West is the apparent hypocrisy of an allegedly superior rationality that bespeaks a powerful myth which is more on the side of Death than of Life. This suspicion, which is reinforced by Coleridge, Whitehead, and Nietzsche, is given a substantial boost by Deleuze, who accuses modern thought of betraying the essence of thought, which is movement. For the moderns, he argues, have embraced a dogmatic image of thought that effectively arrests and imprisons thought in a world of representation where everything is made to conform to the form of the Same.

In this tyrannical world, the 'quicknesses' not only of Thought but also of Life are tamed and captured in deadening systems of static concepts. Thus the moderns can also be charged with practicing what Nietzsche calls 'conceptual idolatry,' a charge that Deleuze in effect elaborates in his analysis of how sense is actually made. He brings out, in particular, the extent of the damage resulting from the neglect of the problem of learning in modern philosophy. This neglect, he suggests, has been disastrous for understanding the meaning of good reasoning, a view that is confirmed by all the other philosophers I have discussed who in one way or another reinforce Nietzsche's charge that the thinking of his contemporaries is infused with dishonesty and self-deception. Indeed, his critique of the thought of the moderns reveals a sick culture infused with a fear and/or hatred of both the complexity and quicknesses of Life and Thought. This diagnosis is consistent with his more specific charge that the 'European spirit' teaches a kind of stupidity through inculcating a need for narrow perspectives and shallow interpretations of the world. To recover from this neurotic condition, he suggests, this culture is in urgent need of the services of cultural physicians, or perhaps better cultural therapists who, with the aid of a new, vitalistic naturalism, may be able to alleviate some of the nihilistic tendencies of modern thought.

Whitehead can thus be read as attempting to frame such a cultural therapy since one of his main goals is to prepare a thoroughly naturalistic ground for the emergence of healthier relations between thinking and living, as he indicates in his summary remarks at the end of a lifetime of philosophical inquiries, when he emphasize the intimacy of the connection between Life and Thought which need to be viewed first and last as concrete elements of Nature. He can thus also be read as extending and deepening Coleridge's quest for a 'true' naturalism, one of whose goals is to find a way to defeat the modern 'despotism of the eye' which perpetuates the egregious error that experience can be fully understood by restricting the meaning of empirical evidence to that which can be verified by the senses.

Coleridge also envisages a 'true realism' in which thinking generally refers to a dynamic give-and-take between the conscious and the unconscious sides of actual experiencing. Whitehead shows how to conceive such a realism in his attempt to frame a theory of perception that recognizes that ordinary sense perceptions presuppose a more primordial and essentially intuitive mode of perception that he calls causal efficacy. He thus turns his back entirely on contemporary, science-oriented naturalisms which associate the proper functioning of reason with the search for definite causes, objective truths, and apodictic knowledge.

That is to say, reason is only working well, according to Whitehead, when it can help promote the art of life – thereby implying that reason too is essentially an art. His vision of an 'artful reason' thus runs directly against the grain of modern thought inasmuch as this has surrendered to science the task of clarifying the meaning of rational, or 'serious,' thinking. In other words, while Whitehead reaffirms philosophy's commitment to rational inquiry and the traditional goal of wisdom, he also stresses the elusiveness of reason, for the purpose of philosophy can only be, as he puts it, to 'rationalize mysticism.' It therefore needs to be stressed that it would be a gross injustice to describe Whitehead's approach as irrational; he is rather drawing attention to the profound difficulties involved in determining what it means to be reasonable. He is also giving notice that a good many presuppositions of modern philosophy need to be turned on their heads. For one of his explicit goals is to provide a remedy for the poisoning of thought introduced by the early moderns who cleared the ground for the reductionistic doctrines of scientific materialism which have led to the denaturing of Nature, the devivification of Life, and the degradation of Thought.

Not the least of the problems that the aspiring cultural therapist must tackle, then, concerns the tendency of modern philosophers to turn useful conceptual contrasts (such as body-mind, subject-object, and so on) into vicious dualisms. That is to say, Whitehead can also be said to be attempting to construct a thoroughly nonmodern naturalism in the sense outlined by Bruno Latour in his book *We Have Never Been Modern*. For a characteristic assumption of the moderns, as Latour points out, is that nature and culture can be totally separated. He thus implies that in order to become truly modern (or nonmodern) the philosopher-therapist must first find a way to conceive an undivided nature-culture using an artful reason guided by a nonmodern principle of rationality. Such a principle in fact informs Coleridge's thinking: he holds that while it is permissible to distinguish for the sake of analysis, it is fatal in philosophy to divide the results. He thereby offers would-be nonmodern philosophers a special challenge: to show how to fashion what he calls a 'polar logic,' which is a type of reasoning capable of doing equal justice to both poles of fundamental conceptual polarities.

## 2. Philosophy as a *collage*

If the raison d'être of philosophy lies in its promise to help alleviate some of the bewilderment felt by human beings at discovering that they are inexplicably alive yet fated just as inexplicably to pass away, philosophy must be able to at least indirectly elucidate some very general questions

of fundamental human concern; such as: who are we? where do we come from? and what should we be doing while we are here? These questions indicate both the vastness and the openness of the problematic of sense; that inexhaustibly complex network of problems and questions that one is bound to encounter when pursuing the question of what good sense means and whether we can learn to increase the store or production of it. The uncertainties attendant on venturing into this murky domain warn us that in order to learn what it means to be reasonable, it is essential to have an at least rough understanding of what philosophy is and what it can hope to achieve.

Although there is no general image of thought which can replace the traitorous dogmatic image of thought, Deleuze indicates that the task of philosophy itself can be more or less well imaged.[2] One of the worst images promoted in modern philosophy is that of a 'discipline' on the model of a science. In direct contrast, one of the best images would seem to be that which is implicit in his observation that the history of philosophy 'should play a role roughly analogous to that of a *collage* in painting' (*DR*, xxi).

But why only the history of philosophy? Deleuze's own adventurous and wide-ranging explorations of the problematic of sense actually show that a philosopher can only ever aspire to emulate a painter of *collages* who seeks to add something of value to an immense work-in-progress. That is to say, a writer of philosophical texts can only aspire to frame a coherent and plausible account of some interesting aspect of 'reality,' an account that like most literary or poetic creations is bound to draw heavily upon the insights and intuitions of other writers.[3]

Seen from this point of view, then, the burning question is whether or not a philosophical *collage* can be so fashioned as to do proper justice at once to experience and to a forever elusive 'reality.' The image of philosophy as a *collage* that is forever-in-the-making at least dispenses with the misbegotten Cartesian dream of a final triumph over bad sense. It also vindicates Whitehead's presupposition that an artful reason needs to be embedded in a comprehensive naturalism that can reconcile the full range of experience with the best of science. Although his magnum opus *Process and Reality* appears at first glance to be modeled on *Principia Mathematica*, he is really proffering an organicistic metaphysical imaginary as a viable alternative to dominant materialistic imaginaries. This imaginary is essentially a metaphorics of experience-events which resonates strongly with Deleuze's metaphorics of event-encounters, for both thinkers lend support to each other's quest for a vitalistic naturalism capable of rescuing both Life and Thought from the depredations of the moderns.[4] They also illustrate a type of reasoning that answers to

Coleridge's demand for a 'polar logic' that can do justice to both sides of indissociable polarities (or conceptual contrasts such as immanent-transcendental, subjectivity-objectivity, abstract-concrete, and matter-spirit). It is thus not incidental that Whitehead explicitly calls his 'method' of philosophical reasoning 'imaginative generalization' – which is based on the assumption that there is wisdom concealed in ordinary words that can be imaginatively 'stretched' to take very general metaphysical considerations into account. He thereby attests to the good sense of Coleridge's related claim that imagination must be located near the heart of a polar logic. For in his attempt to frame a (nearly) comprehensive naturalism, which aims to put both Life and Thought back into Nature, Whitehead extends and deepens Coleridge's quest for a true naturalism while indicating that every actual event can be modeled as a living ensouled body embedded in a restless Heraclitean flux of occasions of sensibility which are Janus-faced, since each actual event has one face turned toward the past and the other toward the future. That is, he sketches a rough picture of the cosmos which leaves plenty of room for the possibility that the soul (or the ensouled body) is the focal point of all the powers that are elicited by the idea of a world composed of a Heraclitean flux of occasions of sensibility. He thereby shows, in brief, that the greatest emphasis in naturalistic philosophy ought to be placed on the notion of power.

In stressing the need to resurrect the notion of power, Whitehead also receives valuable support from Deleuze, who claims that a doctrine of faculties is 'entirely necessary' for making sense of sense itself. That is, the actual production of sense involves more or less just integrations of the contributions from the 'transcendental operations' of the faculties which can 'contract' or 'draw' meaning from the immanent Idea. Deleuze thus sketches the outlines of a semi-Platonic form of Platonism that links good sense to vague desires that may or may not lead to a beneficial 'complicity' between nature and minds. To reach this elusive goal, however, it is essential to *learn* how to justly balance the transcendental and immanent aspects of sense-making. This is because each faculty must be educated to a level where it can grasp those meanings with which it is passionately concerned; not from a reservoir of predetermined meanings but rather from the virtuality of the Idea.

Deleuze thus confirms Whitehead's principal claim that feelings and emotions are involved in this mysterious grasping; indeed they need to be located close to the heart of good reasoning. It is thus highly significant that Deleuze refers to *Process and Reality* as 'one of the greatest books of modern philosophy' just because Whitehead puts not concepts but rather percepts and affects at the head of 'the conditions of real

experience' (*DR*, 284–85). It is also significant that Deleuze points to the conclusion (in his own monumental *Difference and Repetition)* that anyone who seeks to rescue the quicknesses of Life and Thought from the deadening world of representation would be well advised to begin his/her attempt to learn an artful reason in the realm of art itself.[5]

## 3. Symbolism and the 'drama of ideas'

Briefly, then, by conjoining various insights of a number of philosophers I see (in retrospect) that I have been all along trying to construct what is undoubtedly a highly convoluted addition to the *collage* of Western philosophy. What has emerged in my explorations of the problematic of sense is the crucial importance of choosing a suitable imagery when beginning to contemplate the nature of the Heraclitean flux of events. As for the act of contemplation itself, Deleuze proffers the important insight that the actual doing of philosophy can be imaged as a participation in an ongoing 'drama of ideas' in which every actor possesses, at least *in potentia*, sense-making powers that reflect universal conditions. That is to say, the trope of a drama of ideas can be extended to take in the entire cosmos since Deleuze's analysis of sense-making evokes a vast and intricate network of contemplations of the Idea (for Deleuze concludes that 'all is contemplation'). Coleridge can also be enlisted in support of this radical conclusion, since he holds that imagination is the most important of the powers that the activity of contemplation presupposes. Hence it is small wonder that the moderns not only ignored his philosophical musings but also erected high protective walls around the orthodox world of representation to exclude any similar thinker who threatens to displace Aristotelian logic with a polar logic.

The upshot is that the defenders of this fortress are making the whole world pay a high price for their false sense of security by rendering the future of the entire planet hostage to a narrow conception of understanding that suits the dubious goals of antirational scientists and unimaginative empiricists, as Whitehead maintains. His damning charge, that science is a 'smug endeavour to view the universe as the incarnation of the commonplace' (*MT*, 19) is especially resonant with the image of an immensely complex drama of ideas that allows for a tragic view of history. For there is no reason whatsoever for thinking that a 'drama of ideas' ought to be moving toward a better world. Perhaps this culture has, as Nietzsche's critique suggests, degenerated to the level of replaying the tragedy of King Lear, whose fate was to grow old before he grew wise. Indeed, the teaching of stupidity by the 'European spirit' appears

to have been taken over by the currently dominant 'American spirit,' which is now producing on a global stage a drama that reenacts Lear's hard times – in which 'madmen [led] the blind.'

But be that as it may, if the drama of ideas takes place, as Deleuze holds, in the 'theatre of repetition,' it can also be regarded as one that is being produced in a 'realm of the imaginal.'[6] This pivotal consideration is consonant with Coleridge's suggestion that whatever is being enacted on the world-stage is not only dependent on the degree of development of the powers of imagination of all the participants, but is also dependent on the states of health of their souls. For in arguing that the agency of 'primary' imagination is needed to account for the unity of an experience, he not only brings to mind the early Kant's claim that this faculty is 'a blind but indispensable function of the soul' without which there could be no experience whatever. He also intimates that primary imagination is not totally blind (that is, under the complete control of explicit rules and regulations of the understanding) since its operations are closely bound up with a 'secondary' (or poetic) form which raises the primordial products of imagination into the light of day by means of symbols.

Coleridge thus helps to fill in the picture of the cosmos as a 'reality of symbols,' where the term 'reality' is now completely divested of the connotation of fixed, monolithic Being. That is, this phrase refers to a vast complex of interlocked hidden forces and interpretative powers that operate in a bath of signs and symbols, a view to which Deleuze lends support when he speaks of a 'something' in the world which 'forces' (or better invites) us to think, for this 'something' belongs to the order of signs. He thereby helps erase the sharp division that the moderns have established between ontology and epistemology, while at the same time undermining the 'ideal orthodoxy' which the world of representation institutes. His approach to ontology is moreover consonant with Whitehead's view of actual events, which I have argued are best modeled as ensouled living bodies, since an actual event for him is not only a repeated enactment of feelings, it is partly self-determinative and hence partly imaginative. The upshot is a highly complex picture of the cosmos that illustrates one of Coleridge's boldest claims, that whatever exists is alive. That is to say, existence *tout court* alludes to latent powers that may remain moribund for eons in the 'rocks of ages' yet may nonetheless carry seeds out of which new life can spring.

For Life, as Whitehead claims, is virtually synonymous with originality. Claiming that it is essentially a 'bid for freedom,' Whitehead confirms that not only ordinary human experience but also all experience-events

(i.e., the entire cosmos) is infused with powers of imagination which are akin to human imagination. He thus points us in the direction of the general conclusion that the practice of philosophy illustrates a cosmic desire to perpetuate a drama consisting of an interplay of signs and symbols, a desire that seeks, as Deleuze puts it, to make 'all the elements of a non-homogeneous set converge, [make] them function together.' But if this is so, and philosophy is engaged in the creation of 'assemblages of heterogeneities,' Deleuze's image of a drama of ideas ultimately reinforces Peirce's view of the world as a Grand Semiosis which is 'perfused' with exchanges of natural signs and cultural symbols; hence it must also be perfused with interpretative agencies having the power to decide which signs and symbols properly belong together.[7] Such a view ultimately vindicates the belief that the world is meaningful, while confirming Whitehead's claim that philosophy can only rationalize mysticism. For what else but imagination could operate effectively 'in the middle'; that is 'on the line of encounter between an internal world and the external world' (*Dialogues*, 52)? Thus when Deleuze adds that the assemblage is the 'minimum unit of reality,' he too can be read as suggesting (along with Coleridge and Whitehead) that no naturalism will be adequate unless it can first frame a just way of dealing with the powers of imagination that are presupposed by the interplay of signs and symbols that mediate between us and the rest of the world.

The phrase 'reality of symbols,' in brief, encapsulates the germ of truth in Peirce's claim that the human mind is 'akin to truth' while helping to elucidate Deleuze's allusive claim that good learning involves a certain 'complicity' between nature and minds (which elicits in turn the possibility that thinking can lead to a harmonious relationship between sense-making and the *Logos*). It is also compatible with Whitehead's choice of perception as the key to understanding what holds everything together. But to assess the degree of plausibility of any of the above claims, it is necessary for the philosopher to first become truly modern and renounce the persistent Cartesian dream of discovering a universal (e.g., mathematical) symbolism that can reveal the secrets of an 'external' reality which is just 'there,' whether or not there is anyone there to know it. The shocking (to the modern mind) conclusion is that truth itself is, as Deleuze says, always a matter of production, not adequation.

## 4. Is imagination everything then?

Thus the Deleuzian picture of the cosmos as a drama of ideas can also be imaged as an immensely complicated dance of not necessarily benevolent or responsible meaning-makers who are engaged in generating and

deploying a great variety of symbolisms whose quality is always problematic. For even if philosophy bears witness to an instinctive desire for truth and/or wisdom, the philosopher can only ever hope to engender reasonably good concepts.[8] The meaning of 'reasonable,' in other words, always lies buried much deeper than thinkers can think using *only* concepts. However, even though they are obliged to remain close to the surface of thought, the above sketch shows that they can still respond positively to Latour's rhetorical question: 'What sort of world is it that obliges us to take into account, at the same time and in the same breath, the nature of things, technologies, sciences, fictional beings, religions large and small, politics, jurisdictions, economies and unconsciousnesses?' (See page 15). It is a sort of world, in short, in which the nurturing of imagination can make all the difference, a response that recalls the alleged irrational or 'outlandish' views of the poet- philosopher William Blake. So it might be both fitting and instructive to round off this sketch of the obscure business of sense-making with a brief look at his philosophical musings. Indeed, he can be viewed as a pioneer cultural physician who has perhaps an even stronger claim than Nietzsche to the title of Father of Cultural Therapy. More specifically, he too feels trapped in a sick culture which is suffering from, as Northrop Frye puts it, a 'nihilistic psychosis.'[9] Furthermore, while maintaining a great interest in the intellectual problems of philosophy, Blake belongs to the company of poets, says Frye, where he stands out primarily as myth-maker. If this is so, his troubling image of a 'worm that flies in the night' is perhaps best understood as anticipating Nietzsche's chief concern, that he is living in a terminally ill civilization that has sacrificed its 'vital illusions' (or life-enhancing myths) to expediency. For Blake is especially critical of the 'Lockian universe' wherein reason is subordinated to a 'Cloven Fiction' that encourages the pervasive tendency to render the vital movements of thought subservient to abstract ideas ('spectres,' or shadowy memories of concrete experiences) while systematically suppressing imagination (*FS*, 19).

Thus Blake is especially critical of Locke, Bacon, and Newton, who are for him, as Frye puts it, symbols 'of every kind of evil, superstition and tyranny' (*FS*, 14). But Blake's criticisms, in Frye's view, apply to both reactionary and radical forces alike. That is to say, he too can be read as anticipating the need for a thoroughly nonmodern naturalism informed by an artful reason capable of resuscitating moribund imaginations.[10] Blake asserts, for instance, that to be perceived 'means to be imagined' (*FS*, 19), thereby lending important support to Coleridge's theory of imagination in which 'seeing' is conceived as an active process involving hidden operations that involve the organs of spirit as well as

the organs of sense. For as visual seeing reminds us, eyes themselves are not solely responsible for the generation of 'forms' or 'images': '[t]he eye does not see: the eye is a lens for the mind to look through' (*FS*, 19). The implication is that 'reality is as much in the eye of the beholder as beauty is said to be.' But Blake is not saying that 'reality' is cut arbitrarily from the whole cloth; neither is he implying that everyone ought to see exactly the same things and to think precisely the same thoughts. Indeed, there can be no denying the differences in what individuals are actually capable of seeing; such differences are only to be expected, however, if choice of perspective and artfulness of interpretation are the determining factors in whatever is actually 'seen.' Or to put this another way, you and I are capable of understanding each other perfectly, at least in principle, provided that our powers of imagination (which are only ever given *in potentia*) have been developed to a similar state of preparedness.

Hence it is not a sign of eccentricity, let alone madness, when Blake insists that he sees not merely a 'guinea-sun' but also an 'Innumerable company of the Heavenly host.'[11] If 'seeing' generally presupposes more primitive acts of 'minding,' as Whitehead claims, and if minding is in its 'imaging,' and hence in its imagining, then what we actually 'see' belongs to the surface of thought dressed up in appropriate symbols that are equally available to all. That is, when ordinary folk claim they are perceiving the same shade of color in a sunset, say, they can be regarded as participating in the same 'reality of symbols.' But Blake is also saying, in effect, that some acts of minding enlist more cultivated powers of imagination than other acts of minding. Furthermore, it is necessary to nurture one's soul in order to 'see' better and further. Or to put this yet another way, each individual soul is far from being a lonely, isolated island cut off from all other islands of sensibility. On the contrary, says Blake, 'all of us on earth are united in thought, for it is impossible to think without images of somewhat on earth' (*FS*, 20).

However, as Blake also points out, there is no easy escape from the 'Cloven Fiction' of the Lockian universe since reason must first liberate itself from oppressive modes of thought which try to 'bind up with briars' our joys and desires.[12] It is thus especially significant for the cultural therapist that, according to Frye, Blake held that culture or civilization is 'the totality of imaginative power, of which the matrix is art' (*FS*, 89).[13] Indeed, it is not hard to think that the play of feelings and desires is central to the sort of good imaging that good art implies. For artists regularly confirm that desire itself may eventually open up avenues of escape from reason's self-designed strait-jacket,

perhaps justifying at the same time Blake's claim that (in Frye's words) 'the world we desire is more real than the world we passively accept,' for desire is 'a part of imagination' (*FS*, 27).

## 5. Philosophy and art

Briefly, then, Blake reminds us that it is impossible to avoid the perennial question of whether or not existence is meaningful; as well as the question whether philosophy can help overcome a pervasive nihilism 'for the benefit of a time to come,' to adopt Nietzsche's words. He also brings to the fore the question whether the best place to take up this remedial task is in the realm of art.

But not everyone, it might be objected at this point, is or can learn to be an artist. Gesturing toward a more mundane starting place that is accessible to everyone, Whitehead remarks: 'Hang it all. *Here we are*! We don't go behind that; we begin with it.'[14] Indeed, it is surely undeniable that every human being must begin to learn to think as an infant-member of a family, group, or community whose very cohesiveness testifies to an overarching 'mental commons' of myths, customs, laws, and belief-habits; which implies at the very least that it is an egregious error to begin in the Cartesian manner by focusing on an isolated thinking 'I' as though it were not always already embedded in a 'We.' Yet if the 'We' can be imaged as a vast company of participants in an ongoing 'drama of ideas' which is both authorless and undirected (since it is composed of a Heraclitean flux of ensouled, interconnected, and embodied occasions of sensibility), the entire cosmos may be infused with more or less intense desires to make good sense. It is just that in the realm of philosophy, such desires can lead to the creation of only more or less adequate concepts, where adequacy is no small thing if such a creation bespeaks partially successful interweavings of material and spiritual powers.[15] But then philosophers must be in the same boat as artists and their critics who devote their energies to the nonutilitarian practice of producing and/or assessing various assemblages of symbols that seldom, if ever, contain clear and definite meanings. That their productions are not on that account meaningless is regularly confirmed by art critics who refuse to relinquish their faith in the existence of truth, reality, wisdom, and, above all, 'great texts.'[16] The trouble is, even writers of great texts are like painters who are obliged to face over and over again a blank canvas with no preconception of how exactly to begin, let alone how to go on, except to strive to respond appropriately, even if only playfully, to the first and all subsequent marks. Since the complexities and nuances

mount inexorably as the marks multiply, it is a lasting wonder that anything of value is ever produced. But who really believes this never happens?

It is thus not incidental that Deleuze refers to philosophy as a 'divine game,' and that he evinces the names of not only Nietzsche and Heraclitus but also major writers and poets, such as Flaubert and Mallarmé, when alluding to outstanding players of this game.[17] He even suggests that *only* philosopher-poets (or poet-philosophers) are capable of playing the game well; for this 'most difficult game' is lost before it has scarcely begun if one tries to play it in the world of representation – since the game 'includes its own rules.' (*DR*, 283). Indeed, if choosing a good imagery based on what *appear* to be important insights requires a well-cultivated imagination capable of 'seeing' *which* figurative elements of thought go well together, it is conceivable that learning how to move about artfully in all kinds of assemblages of symbols, and especially those that acknowledge the relevance of myth and mysticism to philosophical inquiry, can only be achieved in the realm of art.

This last point indicates that it should not be surprising that the moderns have achieved so little in alleviating the bewilderment that overcomes most thinking human beings in those rare moments when the sheer fact of their existence overwhelms their ordinary habits of thinking. Such moments remind us that philosophy not only begins in wonder, as Whitehead claims, it cannot help but end in wonder (*MT*, 168). Yet he also shows that it is possible for every new beginning to lead to a better 'grasp of the immensity of things,' which is surely a hope that motivates, if only tacitly, the efforts of most, if not all, artists.

So it needs to be stressed that to entertain a desire to participate in an artful dialectic of problems and questions (which Deleuze associates with good philosophical practice) is not equivalent to a rejection of the ideals of coherence and consistency in favor of the so-called romantic ideals of beauty and harmony. Quite the contrary; it is rather to bear witness to the irrepressible hope that it is indeed possible to see a little further into the 'blindness of activity,' as Whitehead puts it, which characterizes everyday living and thinking.[18] And when he concludes his own adventurings in what Latour calls the 'Middle Kingdom' with the observation that philosophy is akin to poetry, he is by no means denying the manifest differences between these two modes of thought.[19] Philosophers are close kin to artists in the sense that both are deeply engaged in nurturing their powers of imagination which continually promise new insights into the intimate relations between the spiritual, moral, aesthetic, and intellectual dimensions of existence.[20]

But while both types of worker depend at bottom on an artful deployment of images, ideas, and symbols, these two modes of thought can be roughly distinguished on the basis of their different uses of imagination.[21]

So turning at last to the unresolvable question whether the hope of cultural therapists for a better future is merely wishful thinking, the plain fact is that the problems and questions that an artful reason must engage with cannot be assessed directly, let alone overnight. It seems that only time will tell whether artist-cultural-therapists can help bring about those necessary changes that Deleuze so vividly evokes with the rhetorical question: '[t]o what are we dedicated if not to those problems which demand the very transformation of our body and our language?' (*DR*, 192).

## 6. Conclusion

It thus seems appropriate to give the last word to Deleuze. In answer to the possible objection that the highly unorthodox and extremely convoluted story I have sketched is so foreign to common sense that it can be regarded as a *reductio ad absurdum* of process thought, one need only recall one of Deleuze's major lessons: that common sense is a bad counselor when it comes to deciding what is or is not good sense. As for what is going on in the production of sense *tout court*, he also shows us how to avoid becoming an accomplice in the sort of teaching of stupidity that Nietzsche identifies with the 'European spirit.' It is only necessary to adopt a doctrine of faculties which allows for a great variety of both happy and misguided adventures of thought. Such a move also opens wide the possibility that existence does indeed have meaning. Since the making of sense depends on the transcendental operations of faculties that are continually poised to contract meanings from the immanent Idea, this activity is part and parcel of the restless evolution of modes of organization which are composed of unstable repetitions and novel differentiations. In such a world, there is no need for the dubious Cartesian idea of an 'eikastic' power of decision – a purely Platonic capacity to grasp pure or exact essences – for there are innumerable occasions in which hidden 'esemplastic' or shaping powers can perform their magic.

Also suggesting that the degree of closeness of approach to Truth depends on depth of learning, Deleuze expressly denies that we learn by acting, as modern psychology and pragmatic thinkers would have it; acting alone can never account for the acquisition of habits. Indeed, this sort of approach betrays an 'unreasonable fear of introspection,'

a kind of fear that no doubt goes a long way to explain the widespread tendency of modern philosophers (such as Kant) to shy away from any hint of mysticism, although there is an unavoidable mystery in 'what is "habitually" called habit' (*DR*, 73). One need only venture a short distance into the problematic of sense before one runs up against the question: where do habits come from? Go a little further and you come to a still deeper question: 'whether we can learn, from behavior and from ourselves other than through contemplation.' So if Deleuze is ontologically justified in claiming that 'all is contemplation,' the powers evidenced by habits attest to the fact that thinking is both fallible and very hard work, perhaps the hardest work there is; especially if an act of contemplation presupposes an only more or less healthy soul bent on overcoming dominant habits and drawing new meaning from the Idea. This requires launching appropriate transcendental powers, which brings to mind that elementary law of physics in which power refers to a capacity to do work. Since work always involves an expenditure of energy, what expenditure could be more exhausting than that in which reality itself is being 'shaped' by an 'esemplastic' imagination?

In any event, if 'fatigue marks the point at which the soul can no longer contract what it contemplates' (*DR*, 77), everything points toward the need to nurture the soul's powers of imagination, for a contemplating soul can be expansive and generous, or tiny, twisted, and mean. Hence Deleuze's choice of the trope of a long apprenticeship to dramatize the nature of learning is arguably one of his most important contributions to epistemology. Not that this trope clears up the central problem of *how* anyone learns. If 'true' learning involves a search for good problem-Ideas, philosophers are perhaps at a serious disadvantage compared to artists whose daily efforts involve an ongoing attempt to acquire a 'practical familiarity with signs,' for such a familiarity is far from being an innate ability. It rather depends on raising each faculty 'to the level of its transcendent exercise (*DR*, 23 and 165). Since the goal of this educational task is to bring some sort of harmony into the complex of passions that inform all the faculties, how else could this be achieved except through a long apprenticeship in interpreting signs which may or may not be informed by the kind of dynamic wisdom that the production of good sense ultimately depends on?[22]

Although a perverse if not stupid suppression of the interplay between imagination and feelings, or emotions, is not explicitly identified by Deleuze as one of the more pernicious effects of the dogmatic image of thought, his critique of the eight postulates that underpin this tyrannical image indicates that these salient aspects of experiencing are

the principal victims of the world of representation. The eighth postulate, for instance, ensures 'the subordination of learning to knowledge, and of culture to method' (*DR*, 167). It thus also ensures that learning will always remain superficial.[23]

Good learning, on the other hand, can be regarded as a natural, if easily traduced, activity which takes place primarily in the unconscious. Hence Deleuze may well say that the subject of philosophy dwells 'in the air' where it is chiefly concerned with 'the discovery in a variety of fields [of] a power peculiar to repetition, a power which also inhabits the unconscious, language and art' (*DR*, xix). Herewith confirming that power holds the key to both reason and the secret of good philosophy, he links the creation of good problem-Ideas to a power of decision.[24] Such a power reminds us once again of the indispensabilty of imagination in the production of differences and repetitions. Indeed, as Deleuze says,

> even if the production of difference is by definition 'inexplicable,' how can we avoid *implicating* the inexplicable at the heart of thought itself? How can the unthinkable not lie at the heart of thought? Or delirium at the heart of good sense?
>
> (*DR*, 227)

If the ultimate 'esemplastic' power is imagination, it surely deserves to be called 'inexplicable.' And artists undoubtedly confirm that imagination is needed to think the 'unthinkable' at the heart of thought itself, especially if the genesis of thought turns on fruitful imagings, as Whitehead holds. Good thinking in philosophy may therefore be close kin to the best thinking in art, although 'best' can on occasion turn out in retrospect to look like the residue of a delirium. Yet even if good learning is impossible to pin down, art can still teach a philosopher how to begin to think. Or to put this another way, it is indeed reasonable to hope that philosophy can assist in birth of a better good sense, provided the apprentice philosopher can learn to cultivate an artful reason

> which crosses domains, order and levels, knocking down the partitions coextensive with the world, guiding our bodies and inspiring our souls, grasping the unity of mind and nature; a larval consciousness which moves endlessly from science to dream and back again.
>
> (*DR*, 220)

# Notes

## Chapter 1 Science and the appropriation of reality

1. Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1966), 44.
2. Descartes writes: 'Good sense is of all things in the world the most equally distributed, for everybody thinks himself so abundantly provided with it, that even the most difficult to please in all other matters do not commonly desire more of it than they already possess. It is unlikely that this is an error on their part; it seems rather to be evidence in support of the view that the power of forming a good judgment and of distinguishing the true from the false, which is properly speaking what is called Good sense or Reason, is by nature equal in all men.' *Discourse on Method*, 'Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking for the Truth in the Sciences,' in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (1628), Vol. I, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 81–82.
3. Murray Code, *Myths of Reason: Vagueness, Rationality, and the Lure of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995).
4. Even Thomas Kuhn, who is often cited as having undermined positivistic doctrines of scientific theory and explanation, holds that (as 'a matter of principle') 'scientific behavior, taken as a whole, is the best example we have of rationality' (quoted in a discussion of the so-called science wars in the *New York Review of Books*, February 18, 1999, 49).
5. For a more extended discussion of the violence of modern reason, see my article 'Reason and Violence' in *The Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, 2nd edn (San Diego: Elsevier, forthcoming).
6. Edward Said, 'Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims,' in *The Edward Said Reader* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 131.
7. See Ashis Nandy, ed., *Science, Hegemony and Violence: A Requiem for Modernity*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), which brings out the remarkable willingness of non-Western peoples to make enormous sacrifices in the name of Western scientific values; sacrifices that tend not only to weaken local cultures but also to render whole populations powerless by undermining their systems of values.
8. 'Zionism,' 131. Elsewhere Said notes that 'in biology, philology, and geology the scientific consciousness was principally a reconstituting, restoring, and transforming activity … [that turns] old fields into new ones … [so that] the link between an outright imperialistic attitude toward distant lands in the Orient and a scientific attitude toward the "inequalities" of race was that both attitudes depended on the European *will*, on the determining force necessary to change confusing or useless realities into an orderly, disciplined set of new classifications useful to Europe.' See also Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994) in which he notes that the deployment of invasive forces by Western imperialists is unprecedented in the special case of Britain, France and, later, the United States, as contrasted with

the different brand of imperial ambitions exemplified by Rome, Spain, Baghdad, or Constantinople (7).

9. See Nandy, *Science, Hegemony and Violence*. This collection of essays is mainly concerned with the destructive impact of modern scientific techniques on 'little cultures.' In 'Reductionist Science as Epistemological Violence,' Vandana Shiva, for example, argues that monocultural practices (which are taking over farming and forestry in India) evidence an inherently violent and monopolistic reductionism. This has led to the spread of health problems which are accompanied by a displacement of natural products by synthetic drugs. Such practices acquire their legitimacy from the twin myths of progress (i.e., material prosperity) and a superior rationality.
10. Robert Nozick, *The Nature of Rationality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
11. This crucial point has been made by many critics of modernity in a variety of ways, but mainly by thinkers who have been consigned to the margins of the mainstream of Western philosophy, if not beyond the pale. Numerous feminist philosophers, for example, have drawn attention to presuppositions about the nature of reason which are concealed in the 'masculinist' language that ties rationality to rigor and 'hard-headed' logicality. Genevieve Lloyd, for example, argues that European philosophy, right down to its very roots, deploys a 'masculinist' imagery that promotes exactitude and control while at the same time associating 'feminine' thinking with imprecision, vagueness, and irrationality. See *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
12. It is seriously maintained, for instance, that science is in principle capable of accounting for the emergence of religious impulses, even though the domain of religion is at the same time recognized as lying outside the purview of scientific inquiry – which is acknowledged as dependent on methods designed to deal specifically with the exteriority of natural phenomena. Hence one might have thought that science is inherently incapable of addressing questions that relate to the interiority of sentient beings. See, e.g., Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006).
13. For a good historical account of 'the appalling spiritual damage that science has done and how much more it can do,' see Bryan Appleyard, *Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of Modern Man* (London: Pan Books, 1992), xiv. It seems highly significant that at least one otherwise astute reviewer has described Appleyard's book as 'anti-science.'
14. See, e.g., Patrick Tierney, *Darkness in El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated the Amazon* (New York: Norton, 2000) for an account of how a group of scientists (funded by the US atomic energy commission) dealt with unlucky tribe of South American Indians whose way of life became a focus of interest just because it had up to then remained 'untouched' by Western culture. One aim of this study was to test the theory of natural selection. This testing involved manipulations of the allegedly pronounced aggressive tendencies of the members of this culture, on the assumption that they could be treated like specimens in biological laboratories. For a brief report on this scandal, see Clifford Geertz, 'Life Among the Anthros,' *New York Review of Books*, February 8, 2001, 18–22. Although uneven, says Geertz,

Tierney's book makes the case that 'something was seriously amiss in the relation between these confident and determined soi-disant "scientists" with their cameras, their vials, their syringes, and their notebooks and the beset and puzzled, put-upon "natives" to whom they looked for facts to fill them with' (20). Indicating that Western culture itself ought to be made to stand in the dock, Geertz notes that a combination of both scientific and political forces transformed, in the space of 'hardly more than one generation,' an 'untouched control group' into a people 'at the edge of destruction' (21). It is perhaps not surprising that representatives of the University of Michigan (the home base of the project's leading geneticist, James Neel), together with a large company of anthropologists, defended Neel's aim to show the existence of a 'leadership gene' by accusing Tierney of 'pursuing an anti-science agenda.'

15. Item: An Australian scientist is reported as being amazed that an experiment in genetic engineering accidentally resulted in the creation of an especially lethal virus ('Laboratory Workers Create Killer Virus by Accident,' *The Guardian Weekly*, January 18–24, 2001). While worrying that this sort of lethal creature might get into the hands of some 'idiot' terrorist or rogue state, he seems indifferent to the possibility that the most dangerous rogues may be even now creating similar 'monsters' in legitimate laboratories all over the world.
16. Questioning the purity of the motives of allegedly objective, responsible, and disinterested scientific inquirers who claim to be working for the long-term public good, Mae-Wan Ho and colleagues examine the relation between 'big science' and 'big business' in a series of articles that can be found on the Internet at www.i-sis.org. They at the same time provide detailed scientific critiques of a growing body of 'bad science' now being practiced on a global scale.
17. The highest legal authorities of the land have become complicit in this transformation. One of the more notable cases concerns the question whether or not Harvard Medical School has the right to patent 'Oncomouse,' a laboratory animal genetically engineered to develop breast cancer. The Canadian Federal Court of appeal, for instance, has ruled that human beings have the right to patent all nonhuman organisms since they count as property. Thus the right to patent 'Oncomouse' is defended on the grounds that for something to be an 'invention' the main criterion is that it should be a non-naturally occurring 'composition of matter.' In overturning this decision, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that patents cannot be taken out on 'higher' life forms, but 'lesser' ones can still be treated as 'compositions of matter.' It is thus noteworthy that this ruling both alludes to and passes over the key metaphysical question of what 'matter' means, thus testifying to the strength of the grip that scientific materialism has on thought in this culture.
18. For a good short account of how the 'market-model university' has resulted in two-tiered institutions of higher learning with rich departments and poor departments, see Ibrahim Warde, 'For Sale: US Academic Integrity,' *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2001, 13.
19. Michel Serres (1992), *The Natural Contract*, trans. Elizabeth MacArthur and William Paulson (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 3 and 11.
20. Ibid., 30.
21. 'Our peacetime economic relations,' says Serres, 'working slowly and continuously, produce the same results as would a short global conflict' (ibid., 32).

22. Commenting on a contemporary's suggestion, that 'the Moon may be inhabited but has … perhaps a different Furniture of Animals,' Coleridge remarks: 'But why, of necessity, any? Must all possible Planets be lousy? None exempt from the *Morbus pedicularis* of our verminous man-becrawled Earth?' S. T. Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), 257.
23. Arran Gare, *Nihilism Inc.: Environmental Destruction and the Metaphysics of Sustainability* (Como, NSW: Eco-Logical Press, 1996), 308–9.
24. 'We need to invent a reason that is both rational and steady, one that thinks truthfully while judging prudently' (Serres, *Natural Contract*, 93).
25. As Serres notes, 'there is no pure myth except the idea of a science that is pure of all myth.' See Michel Serres with Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture, and Time*, trans. Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 162.
26. See Bruno Latour, *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers through Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).
27. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 29 (hereafter referred to as *WNM*).
28. 'Native Americans were not mistaken when they accused the Whites of having forked tongues. By separating the relations of political power from the relations of scientific reasoning while continuing to shore up power with reason and reason with power, the moderns have always had two irons in the fire. They have become invincible' (*WNM*, 38).
29. One of Latour's detailed studies concerns the invention of cartography and the concomitant invention of instruments of navigation. These 'hybrids' enabled their European owners to act at a distance – to manage and control far-off events, peoples, and places without having to leave the centers of decision. See Latour, *Science in Action*, esp. Chapter 6.
30. 'This is neither rationalism nor a valid and faithful description of rationality, but simply a hijacking, or what I would call publicity [for scientism]' (Serres and Latour, *Conversations*, 128).
31. E. A. Burtt, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954).
32. That a mystical awe of mathematics is still widespread is indicated by Steven Wineberg, who claims that physicists 'have been steadily moving toward a satisfying picture of the world … based on a few simple principles, laws of nature, from which all other regularities can be deduced.' Steven Wineberg, 'Can Science Explain Everything? Anything?' *The New York Review of Books*, May 31, 2001, 47–50.
33. Stephen Hawking, for example, holds that 'the eventual goal of science is to provide a single theory that describes the whole universe.' His esoteric, mathematically guided speculations are even capable, he suggests, of revealing the mind of God. See *A Brief History of Time* (London: Bantam Books, 1988), 11. For a more extensive exploration of this issue, see my 'Science Tells Us …: Ontology, Ideology, and Narrative in Science Writing,' *Event Horizon*, 1, Fall 1999, 27–47.
34. An especially fervent defense of this notion is provided by Carl Sagan, *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), esp. 6–7.

35. Hawking, for instance, suggests that his cosmological theory will even be able to explain the desires of warm-blooded mathematical physicists to fashion such a unified theory. While acknowledging the hint of self-serving circularity, this is not for him a problem since the anomaly can be resolved with the help of another scientific theory; namely the neo-Darwinian evolutionary theory which is based on the principle of natural selection that applies even to the patterns of thought processes as they evolve along with populations of human organisms. Thus included among the fittest of those who survive are some individuals who are better able than others to draw the right conclusions about the world and hence will be able to acquire a greater influence on succeeding generations, with the result that their patterns of behavior and thought will eventually come to dominate (*Brief History*, 13–14).
36. See, for instance, the writings of Richard Dawkins (Professor of Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University) who teaches that 'we – and that means all living things – are survival machines programmed to propagate the digital database that did the programming. Darwinism is now seen to be the survival of the survivors at the level of the pure, digital code.' Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 19.
37. 'Never,' says Dawkins, 'were so many facts explained by so few assumptions.' *The Blind Watchmaker* (New York: Norton, 1986), xi. See also Steve Jones, *Darwin's Ghost: The Origin of Species Updated* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 1999), who states categorically that 'there is no mystery to Darwin's machine: it is no more than genetics plus time' (xix).
38. A typical example is afforded by the award-winning science writer Tim Radford (in 'A Glimpse into Time's Tunnel,' The *Guardian Weekly*, July 18–24, 2002, 19) who claims that science represents 'the greatest intellectual adventure of all time.' This is 'precisely because [science] opens up all time itself to human inquiry,' a statement that presupposes that the long and varied history of philosophical and literary musings on the meaning of time can be brushed aside since they are rendered superfluous by scientific theories (of, presumably, evolution).
39. See Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996).
40. Cf., e.g., Steve Jones who (in *Darwin's Ghost*) assures his readers – while setting out to update 'Darwin's great idea' – that life can be explained in terms of a 'series of successful mistakes' – that recent advances in molecular genetics can allow for inevitable errors in copying of elements of DNA. These errors are sufficient, he argues, given the great expanses of time in which natural selection operates, to account for the emergence of novel species from more primitive species.
41. See R. C. Lewontin, *The Doctrine of DNA: Biology as Ideology* (London: Penguin, 1993).
42. See Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
43. Haraway illustrates her critique with the history of 'Oncomouse' – that creature of nature which has been turned by genetic engineers into a marketable commodity and the precursor of a growing class of monsters.
44. Lewontin notes that 'a living organism at any moment in its life is the unique consequence of a developmental history that results from the

interaction of and determination by internal and external forces' (*Doctrine of DNA*, 118).

45. Evelyn Fox Keller, *Secrets of Life/Secrets of Death: Essays on Language, Gender and Science* (New York, Routledge, 1992), 52.
46. See Serres and Latour, *Conversations*, 163. As I shall argue in subsequent chapters, a truly modern naturalism calls for a theory of perception in which appearances arise out of a constructive activity that takes place somewhere *between* the two poles of the individual (subjectivity) and the collective (objectivity).
47. Especially critical of the 'hemiplegic tendencies' of the human and social sciences, Serres accuses thinkers in this area of talking about the world as if 'groups were suspended in a vacuum.' See Serres and Latour, *Conversations*, esp. 132–43.
48. Singling out the particularly valuable contributions of Whitehead and Leibniz to philosophy, since they proffer 'antidotes against certain poisons' which mar the Western philosophical tradition [which, if not criminal, is 'full of crimes'], Isabelle Stengers observes that 'we are the children of anxiety, and we should not anxiously disclaim this fact.' Isabelle Stengers, 'Beyond Conversation: The Risks of Peace,' in *On Process and Difference: Between Cosmological and Poststructuralist Postmodernisms*, ed. Catherine Keller and Anne Daniell (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 246–47.
49. Serres argues that myths are indispensable to the aim to describe the world in its totality. This is because a rational account of events requires a means of communication that can connect a great variety of domains of inquiry which do not all overlap, which implies that epistemology in a nonmodern setting must be both relativistic and pluralistic. See the introductory essay to Michel Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, and Philosophy*, ed. Josue V. Harari and David F. Bell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1982), where Harari and Bell fill in the background of Serres's 'favorite thesis' that 'myth informs science' (xxi).
50. Referring to 'our unslakable thirst for human sacrifice to the gods,' Serres holds that 'our god is the machine, the technical object, which stresses our mastery of our surroundings …' (Serres and Latour, *Conversations*, 141).
51. In summing up the explanatory difficulties of the nonmodern naturalist, Latour evokes the image of an almost blind adventurer in a 'Middle Kingdom, as vast as China and as little known' (*WNM*, 48).
52. For a vivid depiction of an utterly unsentimental nature, one that blithely hands over at birth the destinies of all its creatures to an indifferent fate, see Annie Dillard, *For the Time Being* (Toronto: Viking, 1999).

## Chapter 2 Signs, symbols, and metaphysical imaginaries

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent, 1956), 16.
2. Annie Dillard, *Living by Fiction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 145 (hereafter cited as *LF*).
3. 'For lyric poetry, of all the arts – of all human endeavor – does this very thing [interpretation], first and best. Throughout its long history all over the world, lyric poetry has been less fanciful than fiction. A book of lyric poems is most often a collation of interpreted facts' (*LF*, 147).

4. John Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2nd expanded edition, 1995) (hereafter cited as *D*).
5. The 'very constitution of metaphysics,' says Sallis, 'is drive to presence, drive to ground, and the repression of imagination belongs integrally to it' (*D*, 14).
6. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (trans. Norman Kemp Smith, New York: MacMillan, 1965), 23–26 (hereafter cited as *CPR*).
7. John Sallis, *Spacings – of Reason and Imagination: In the Texts of Kant, Fichte, Hegel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 7 (hereafter cited as *SRI*).
8. The territory of pure understanding, says Kant, is 'an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth … surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion' (*CPR*, 257: A236–37/B295–96).
9. Michèle Le Doeuff (1980), *The Philosophical Imaginary*, trans. Colin Gordon (London: The Athlone Press, 1989), 3.
10. Ibid.
11. In the Preface to the second edition of his *Critique,* Kant endorses this kind of imagery when he maintains that reason needs to take the lead in the study of nature 'with principles of judgment based upon fixed laws, constraining nature to give answers to questions of reason's own determining. … [thus acting like] an appointed judge who compels witnesses to answer questions which he himself formulated' (*CPR*, 20).
12. See Lewis S. Ford, *The Emergence of Whitehead's Metaphysics: 1925–1929* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 297–98.
13. This evocative trope, which bears on the nature of the fundamental relation between knowers and known, or subjects and objects, is reported by A. H. Johnson as having emerged in one of Whitehead's lectures. See A. H. Johnson, *Whitehead and His Philosophy* (New York: University Press of America, 1983).
14. See C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vols I–VI, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; Vol. VII–VIII, ed. Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960). References to the Collected Papers will be given in the usual manner; e.g., *CP*, 5.506. For a more extended exploration of this topic, see Chapter 6 of my *Myths of Reason* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995).
15. See *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), 74–75.
16. 'The actuality of the event seems to lie in its relation to the universe of existents' (*CP*, 1.24).
17. 'Firstness is the mode of being which consists in its subject's being positively such as it is regardless of aught else' (*CP*, 1.25).
18. See K. V. Laurikainen, *Beyond the Atom: The Philosophical Thought of Wolfgang Pauli* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1985), 162–63. In Laurikainen's view, Pauli (the co-creator with Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg of quantum mechanics) 'from the beginning, saw deeper than both Bohr and Heisenberg in philosophical questions. … [H]e was the most consistent representative of the philosophical attitude which can be discerned behind the original

Copenhagen interpretation and which I shall call the Copenhagen philosophy' (158).

19. Pauli's claim that the 'laws of nature' allude to statistical mean values, or the average behavior of large aggregates is also fully in accord with both Whitehead's view of physical law and Peirce's antinecessitarian convictions, as we shall see.
20. 'To say that a bit of matter has simple location means that, in expressing its spatio-temporal relations it is adequate to state that it is where it is, in a definite finite region of space, and throughout a definite finite duration of time, apart from any essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and other durations of time.' Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 58 (hereafter cited as *SMW*).
21. This line of thought is consonant with Whitehead's theory of actuality insofar as the actual entities of Whitehead's formal theory of organism can be modeled as living, sentient bodies. This is a controversial matter, however, and so I will come back to it in a later chapter.
22. Peirce holds that qualities *qua* pure possibilities must be taken just as seriously as the particulars they qualify, if not more so, which implies that at least some possibilities (or generals, as he calls them) must be regarded as real. But he also distinguishes carefully between reality and existence, for he reserves the latter term for 'things' that act and are acted upon (in accordance with the category of Secondness). As for Whitehead's conception of reality, as presented in *Process and Reality,* this must be clearly distinguished from actuality since the former term refers to a preexistent realm of possibilities, called eternal objects, a view that is only partly compatible with the picture sketched above – so I will come back to this matter in a later chapter. See Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, eds. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978) (hereafter cited as *PR*).
23. 'No explanation has ever been offered except that of pure chance, which we must suspect to be no explanation, owing to the suspicion that pure chance may itself be a vital phenomenon' (*CP*, 6.322).
24. The word 'cosmos,' Owen Barfield notes, was once a synonym for the whole universe, but has come more and more to mean 'the universe as seen and felt by a particular individual or body of individuals – "the cosmos of our experience."' See Owen Barfield, *History in English Words* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1967), 105.
25. For further discussion of this matter, see my *Order and Organism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), esp. Chapter 6, in which I explore Whitehead's idea that stability in the physical world is best understood in terms of what he refers to as enduring 'vibratory entities' whose characteristic patterns can be revealed by mathematical methods that are especially designed to express periodic phenomena.
26. He states, for instance, that 'in genuine agapism … advance takes place by virtue of a positive sympathy among the created springing from continuity of mind' (*CP*, 6.304).
27. See, e.g., *CP*, 1.409: 'At present, the course of events is approximately determined by law. In the past that approximation was less perfect; in the future it will be more perfect. The tendency to obey laws has always been and always will be growing. We look back toward a point in the infinitely distant

past when there was no law but mere indeterminacy; we look forward to a point in the infinitely distant future when there will be no indeterminacy or chance but a complete reign of law.'

28. See my *Myths of Reason*, esp. Chapter 2.
29. Consider the modern version of Genesis, which posits a 'Big Bang singularity' as the dramatic point of origin of the Cosmos in which everything of substance is theorized as stemming from a nonentity – a mathematical point-instant of Creation. To endorse such a story requires investing a good deal of faith in the metaphysical powers of mathematics, for it means accepting an impossible image: an infinitesimal point at which the space-time curvature of the universe is infinitely large.
30. He maintains, for instance, that the idea of symbol, like that of sign, carries no connotation of predetermined meaning since it is of the nature of a law, or 'rule that will determine its Interpretant' (*CP*, 2.292).
31. Artists, as Susanne Langer points out, are experts in feeling. See Susanne K. Langer, *Mind: An Essay in Human Feeling*, Vol. I (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967). Artists have 'a naive but intimate and expert knowledge of feeling. … [Their] entire work is the making of forms which express the nature of feeling' (64).
32. 'The trick of reason is to get the imagination to seize the actual world – if only from time to time.' Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 19.
33. 'If man had not had the gift, which every other animal has, of a mind adapted to his requirements, he not only could not have acquired any knowledge, but he could not have maintained his existence for a single generation. But he is provided with certain instincts, that is, with certain natural beliefs that are true. They relate in part to forces, in part to the action of minds' (*CP*, 5.603).

## Chapter 3 Minding, imaging, and symbolizing

1. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947).
2. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 309 (hereafter referred to as *CPR*).
3. In his famous lecture on 'Vagueness,' Bertrand Russell claims that many more questions in philosophy than is generally acknowledged are connected with the problem of symbolism. For a longer discussion of this abortive episode in the logicistic campaign to control reason, see my *Myths of Reason: Vagueness, Rationality, and the Lure of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995), esp. Chapter 2.
4. Cf. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 16 (hereafter referred to as *SMW*): '[s]cience has never shaken off the impress of its origin in the historical revolt of the later Renaissance. It has remained predominantly an anti-rationalist movement based upon a 'naive faith'.... Science repudiates philosophy. In other words, it has never cared to justify its faith or to explain its meanings; and has remained blandly indifferent to its refutation by Hume.'

5. For a concise account of Whitehead's treatment of the problem of symbolism, see Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (New York: Macmillan, 1959) (hereafter cited as *S*).
6. The key to Whitehead's belief in the importance of philosophy for a healthy culture is implicit in his summary declaration: 'as we think, we live.' Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 63 (hereafter referred to as *MT*).
7. Both the grasping and the smoothing, being inspired by feelings of interest and importance, are therefore anchored only in a 'loose' or shifting foundation of large, qualitative generalities.
8. Salomon Bochner, *The Role of Mathematics in the Rise of Science* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 17–18 (hereafter referred to as *RM*).
9. Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work*, Vol. II, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1990), 94.
10. John R. Searle, *The Mystery of Consciousness* (New York: NewYork Review Book, 1997), 8 (hereafter referred to as *MC*).
11. Searle states with considerable confidence that the problem of consciousness is 'a scientific research project like any other' and that 'our sense of mystery. … is a genuine obstacle to getting an answer to the causal question' (*MC*, 3).
12. It is therefore somewhat ironic that he is especially critical of Daniel Dennett's denial of the existence of conscious states. This, he maintains, is an 'obvious and self-refuting falsehood' that involves a misuse of two explicit assumptions: 'first, that science uses objective or third-person methods, and second, that nothing exists which cannot be verified by scientific methods so construed' (*MC*, 122). Yet Searle himself appeals to similar 'axioms' in shoring up his insistence on the need to look for a causal (biological) explanation of consciousness.
13. Such is the approach advocated by Rudolf Steiner, according to Owen Barfield, who also links this way of thinking about consciousness to Goethe. It is thus worth noting that Steiner generally argues for a noncausal approach to mind and consciousness that engages directly not only with the evolution of consciousness but also with the evolution of meaning. See Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Paperback, 1977).
14. John Rundell, 'Creativity and Judgement: Kant on Reason and Imagination,' in Gillian Robinson and John Rundell eds, *Rethinking Imagination: Culture and Creativity* (London: Routledge, 1994), 87–117 (hereafter referred to as CJ).
15. Ibid. Rundell claims that Kant's analysis of imagination reveals a tension between reason and imagination that remains unresolved in all his critiques. For Kant rejects the possibility that imagination in its own right could be 'a creative force and source of reflexivity' (CJ, 8).
16. That Kant's ambivalent attitude toward imagination was bound up with his wish to distance himself from Berkeley is indicated by his misinterpretation of the latter's idealism, according to Colin Turbayne (see 'Kant's Relation to Berkeley,' in *Kant Studies Today*, ed. Lewis W. Beck [La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1969]). Turbayne in fact links Kant's 'animus' toward Berkeley to his dread of mysticism (115).
17. Cornelius Castoriadis, 'Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary,' in *Rethinking Imagination*, 136–54, 140 (hereafter referred to as *RI*), emphases in original.

18. Stressing the indissociability of psyche and soma, Castoriadis claims that 'there can be no question of eliminating or "solving" the time-honoured enigmas of this relation' (*RI*, 147).
19. Castoriadis reads Aristotle's treatment of imagination as dealing mainly, but not entirely, with 'what I have called second (secondary) imagination, imitative, reproductive or combinatory imagination,' i.e., that which has passed for centuries as the meaning of imagination (*RI*, 136).
20. See, e.g., Ernest Wolf-Gazo, 'Whitehead and Berkeley,' in *Whitehead's Metaphysics of Creativity*, F. Rapp and R. Wiehl eds (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990) who holds that Berkeley's influence on Whitehead's development was crucial in that it led to not only a rejection of empiricist doctrines of sense perception but also to his realization of the need for a theory of prehension.
21. It is perhaps for this reason that Victor Lowe admits to having reservations about parts of Whitehead's major philosophical books but none about the first two chapters of *Symbolism*. See Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead: The Man and His Work*, Vol. II, ed. J. B. Schneewind (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1990), 212.
22. *S*, 39. See also *S*, 45. This mode of perception involves a 'primitive functioning of "retreat from" and of "expansion towards",' which is a type of functioning that allows for an interplay of bodily instincts and genuine intuitions.
23. Whitehead insists, for instance, that '[t]he *how* of our present experience must conform to the *what* of the past in us' (*S*, 58). To speak of an objective or external reality is merely to affirm the 'stubborn fact that whatever is settled and actual must in due measure be *conformed* to by the self-creative activity' (*S*, 36–37, italics mine).
24. It is thus not surprising that scientists are reluctant to abandon these terms, for as Whitehead puts it, 'all observation, scientific or popular, consists in the determination of the spatial relation of the bodily organs of the observer to the location of the "projected" sense-data' (*S*, 56).
25. Whitehead speaks of them as 'controlling presences,' or 'sources of power,' which must have an 'inner life' of their own in so far as they keep 'the destiny of the world hidden in their natures' (*S*, 57).
26. Whitehead significantly notes that 'every actual thing is something by reason of its activity' (*S*, 26). Furthermore, a living organism, such as a man, is 'one occasion of his experience. Such an occasion, or act.... is the most concrete actual entity, and the life of man from birth to death is a historic route of such occasions' (*S*, 27).
27. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 173 (hereafter cited as *PR*).
28. Whitehead states, for instance, that 'the flux of things is one ultimate generalization around which we must weave our philosophical system' (*PR*, 208). Furthermore, no event in this flux, and hence no reflection in any philosophical musing on the nature of the flux, 'can be divorced from the notion of creativity' (*PR*, 213). For the very idea of process, or 'passing on,' is bound up with the meaning of *creare* ('to bring forth, beget, produce'). I will return to the matter of the relevance of Heraclitus to Whitehead's aims and ideas in a later chapter.

29. See Luigi Romeo, 'Heraclitus and the Foundations of Semiotics,' in *Frontiers in Semiotics*, ed. John Deely, Brooke Williams, and Felicia Kruse (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 224–34, esp. 232.
30. Ibid. 233. Romeo links this fragment to Diels 116: 'Every human being has the faculty not only of knowing himself but also of reasoning rightly.'
31. Quoted by W. E. Hocking (from a recollected conversation) in 'Whitehead on Mind and Nature,' in P. A. Schilpp ed, *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (New York: Tudor Publication, 1951), 383–404, esp. 385.
32. I discuss this possibility at greater length in 'On Mathematical Naturalism and the Powers of Symbolisms,' in *Cosmos and History: Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2005) [to be found at www.cosmosandhistory.org].
33. It can be argued that the mathematical language of any culture mirrors the logic(s) that happen to prevail in the speech of that culture-logics whose structure can be discerned in peculiar speech patterns and which therefore conceivably reflect different species of the organic functioning that links images to symbols, and vice versa. See Helen Verran, *Science and an African Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), who maintains that worlds are generated in the collective enacting of the inhabitants of a culture, which is as likely to be nonhuman as human, for this enacting is at once material and symbolic.
34. In one of his many references to this fundamental problem of verification, Whitehead remarks that 'symbolic reference is the acceptance of the evidence of percepta, in the mode of immediacy, as evidence for the localization and discrimination of vague percepta in the mode of efficacy. So far as bodily feelings are concerned, there is some direct check on this procedure; but, beyond the body, the appeal is to pragmatic consequences, involving some future state of bodily feelings which can be checked up' (*PR*, 179).
35. 'What is already given for experience can only be derived from that natural potentiality which shapes a particular experience in the guise of causal efficacy' (*S*, 50).
36. It does not seem difficult to find instances of symbolic referencing in at least the higher animals which reveal that their lives are not completely controlled by habits or reflex actions. A fish, for instance, can be easily fooled by an artificial fly, whereas a rat is notoriously harder to deceive.
37. See K. V. Laurikainen, *Beyond the Atom: The Philosophical Thought of Wolfgang Pauli* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 1985), 162–63.
38. Ibid., 148–54.
39. See the introductory essay, 'Jung and Pauli,' by Beverley Zabriskie in C. A. Meier, ed (1992), *Atom and Archetype: The Pauli/Jung Letters 1932–1958,* trans. David Roscoe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), xxi. There is a 'subtle and profound link between the intuitive if clumsy probings of alchemy and Pauli's work,' says Zabriskie. This can be illustrated by one of his major theoretical contributions to quantum physics, the 'exclusion principle,' which testifies to the importance of alchemy inasmuch as this 'offers the basis for the structure of periodic table of chemical elements' that informs in turn science's realization of the alchemical goal [which involves finding a way to transform one element into another] (xxxv–ix). Zabriskie also notes that the core of Pauli's collaboration with Jung is the aim to reconnect 'the meditative and scientific strands in serious alchemy' with

modern theories and experiments, thus uniting the interior search of reflective depth psychology with the outward gaze of scientific inquiry (xlii).

40. Pauli speaks at times of an 'anima' which mediates between matter and spirit – and between inner and outer – which he explicitly ties to a spiritual element in experiencing that Heraclitus was aware of but which Plato and subsequent philosophy forgot. But 'forgetting' is perhaps too polite a term. For Pauli also hints at the prevalence of darker desires behind the reluctance of some of his colleagues to acknowledge this possibility. He refers, for instance, to Schrödinger's 'neurotic desire' to return to his [classical] roots, a desire that reminds Pauli of Morgenstern's satirical quip: 'Weil – so schliesst er messersharf – Nicht sein kann, was nicht sein darf!' (See Laurikainen, *Beyond the Atom,* 31).
41. Zabriskie observes, for instance, that Pauli believed 'the appearance of quantitative terms and concepts from physics [can be linked to] spontaneous fantasies in a qualitative and figurative – i.e., symbolic – sense' (see his essay on this topic in *Atom and Archetype*, 179–96). In sum, then, Pauli came to believe that we are only now beginning to frame a 'future description of nature that uniformly comprises physis and psyche' (180).
42. Whitehead observes that 'symbolic reference is still dominant in experience when … mental analysis is at a low ebb' (*S*, 19). But as we descend the organic scale there is less and less conceptual analysis. When we come to the most primitive forms of organization, where the dominant society 'bends its individual members to function in conformity with its needs, … symbolic reference gives way to vast systems of inherited symbolisms that result in automatic or reflex action' (*S*, 73).
43. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art*, 3rd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 263. Peirce also expresses a similar idea: 'Every symbol is, in its origin, either an image of the idea signified, or a reminiscence of some individual occurrence, person or thing, connected with its meaning, or is a metaphor.' See C. S. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 2.222.
44. As Northrop Frye sums up the matter, '[t]he mythology, good or bad, creates the ideology, good or bad.' Northrop Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature* (London: Penguin, 1992), 25.
45. The allusion is to Wittgenstein's famous conclusion of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: 'Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but *that* it is.'
46. 'The father of European philosophy … laid down the axiom that the deeper truths must be adumbrated by myths' (*MT*, 10).

## Chapter 4 A nearly comprehensive naturalism

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria: or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent, 1975), 149.
2. Richard Giere, 'The Feminism Question in the Philosophy of Science,' in Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Jack Nelson eds, *Feminism, Science, and Philosophy of Science* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 14.

3. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929), corrected edition, eds David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherbourne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 3 (italics mine, hereafter cited as *PR*). The general aim, in other words, is to avoid introducing *ad hoc* hypotheses – in order, as Whitehead puts it, 'to eke out the collapse of an explanation.' Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 73 (hereafter cited as *SMW*).
4. David Ray Griffin, John B. Cobb Jr., Marcus P. Ford, Pete A. Y. Gunter, and Peter Ochs, *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy: Peirce, James, Bergson, Whitehead, and Hartshorne* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1993).
5. As Griffin points out, a constructive postmodernism is not obliged to abandon such traditional notions as 'rationality, empirical givenness, and truth as correspondence – without which a worldview is impossible' (*Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy*, 4). By a correspondence theory of truth he means a way of speaking about reality that allows for certain linguistic statements to be classified as 'true,' for 'language has the capacity to express and evoke modes of apprehending nonlinguistic reality that can more or less accurately correspond to particular features of that reality' (26). But this sort of approach to truth, as we have seen, cannot be upheld in a Whiteheadian naturalism on account of the inherent obscurity of perception and the problem of symbolism.
6. Alfred North Whitehead (1929), *The Function of Reason* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), Introduction.
7. Alfred North Whitehead (1920), *Concept of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 49 (hereafter referred to as *CN*).
8. Ibid., 12–13.
9. Quoted from N. O. Lossky, *The Intuitive Basis of Knowledge*, trans. N. A. Duddington (London: Macmillan, 1919), 169. Whitehead's approach to natural philosophy thus resonates with that of Lossky, who holds that in epistemology one 'ought simply to investigate the way in which the objects of knowledge become differentiated, and their relation to the process of knowing, without referring the differentiating activity or its objects either to the self or the not-self' (Lossky, 105).
10. Lossky refers, perhaps too loosely, to 'a complete unity of the self and the not-self' arising in perception (93). Since this unity is similar to that 'which subsists amongst the different mental processes within the self,' the discontinuities, disjunctions, spontaneous couplings, and so on, of the latter still need to be taken into account.
11. A. H. Johnson, *Whitehead and His Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), ix and 151ff.
12. This means that 'the origin of the present cosmic epoch [can be] … traced back to an aboriginal disorder, chaotic according to our ideals' (*PR*, 95). Thus chaos is never absolute; it means only an absence of order relative to predominant forms of order and these are social in character.
13. I began to explore this question in *Order and Organism: Steps to a Whiteheadian Philosophy of Mathematics and the Natural Sciences* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985). What follows is a departure from the position I take in this book on the theory of eternal objects in which I accept Whitehead's dictum that eternal objects do not emerge.

14. Cf. Johnson, who reports that Whitehead acknowledged that he had no category that would allow for the emergence of novel qualities 'applicable to the organism or society as such, i.e., which are not found in one component actual entity (or in each of a series of actual entities)' (Johnson, *Whitehead*, 53). Johnson adds that Whitehead tried to approach this problem in his formal theory with the doctrine (category) of transmutation, but didn't succeed. Yet Whitehead acknowledges the need for an explicit treatment of emergence, as is evident from his succinct summary of the problem of evolution: 'Bringing rabbits out of a hat is exactly the meaning of Emergent Entities. One must so describe ultimate facts as to make emergent evolution possible' (4).
15. See Chapter 2. The early Whitehead in fact indicates a need for a theory of significance in his discussion of the idea of a 'percipient event': he states, for instance, that 'perception requires sense-awareness of the significations of our percipient event together with the sense-awareness of a peculiar relation (situation) between certain objects and the events thus signified' (*CN*, 188).
16. It has been pointed out by Lewis Ford that the eternality of eternal objects did not appear in Whitehead's thought until *SMW* and was not anticipated by him in the sense objects of *CN*. But my intention here is only to suggest that his first intuition, concerning the temporality inherent in the 'passage of nature,' is the best guide to developing a thoroughly naturalistic Whiteheadian imaginary.
17. For a recent attempt to defend the absolute eternality of eternal objects, see Jorge Luis Nobo, Experience, Eternity, and Primordiality: Steps Towards a Metaphysics of Creative Solidarity, *Process Studies*, Vol. 26/3–4, 1997: 171–204.
18. Lewis Ford, 'The Creation of "Eternal" Objects,' *The Modern Schoolman*, LXXI, March, 1994: 191–222, esp. 211.
19. 'If there is to be any communication, any interrelatedness of [unrepeatable individual actual] occasions with one another, there must be repeatables as well as unrepeatables' (Ford, 193).
20. Elisabeth Kraus, *The Metaphysics of Experience: A Companion to Whitehead's Process and Reality* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 36–39.
21. This is perhaps a key point that is often missed. Johnson, for example, despite his own emphasis upon imagination ('unless imagination can produce a picture of what might be … creation is impossible' (*Whitehead*, 17) hints that creativity is an eternal object. But he also observes that 'it may be necessary to claim that some EOs are more eternal than others' ( 30).
22. Vague ideals appear to be close kin to what Peirce calls 'real vagues,' an idea I explore in my *Myths of Reason* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995), esp. chapter 6. An interpretation of evolution as a process of 'explication' of vague ideals is moreover in accord with Whitehead's understanding of the growth of complexity, which means 'an increase in the types of objects directly sensed' (*CN*, 63). This situation is perhaps even discernible in the actual development of mathematics wherein theories tend to evolve by means of intuitions of ever 'higher' abstractions embedded in increasingly general systems.
23. Whitehead's conception of God 'depends essentially on [eternal] objects being uncreated' (Ford, 192). Yet a reform of Whitehead's theory of eternal objects is not possible if 'we remain within the context of Whitehead's theism' (Ford, 206). Ford's essay is part of a larger project in which he seeks to show that 'all actuality, including God, falls within the horizon of time' (Ford, 197).

24. 'When we gaze upon the multifariousness of nature we are looking straight into the face of a living spontaneity. A day's ramble in the country ought to bring that home to us' (*CP*, 6.553). *See Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vols I–VI, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss; Vol. VII–VIII, ed. Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960). (References to the *Collected Papers* will be given in the usual manner, thus *CP*, 6.553).
25. That is, we require a theory that 'makes the principle of growth a primordial element of the universe' (*CP*, 6.157). For only by 'admitting pure spontaneity or life as a character of the universe, acting always and everywhere though restrained within narrow bounds by law … [can one] account for all the variety and diversity of the universe, in the only sense in which the really *sui generis* and new can be said to be accounted for' (*CP*, 6.59).
26. Hence the freedom inherent in a generalizing tendency may reflect an ongoing struggle to shrink the domain of chaos while trying to stave off the fatal moment when it slides back into oblivion. Cf. Whitehead's interpretation of the telic element in evolution: '[I]f there is to be progress beyond limited ideals, the course of history by way of escape must venture along the borders of chaos, in its substitution of higher for lower types of order' (*PR*, 111).

## Chapter 5 In search of a 'true naturalism'

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit: A New Presentation of Coleridge from His Published and Unpublished Prose Writings*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), 257.
2. Quoted by Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971), 44 (hereafter referred to as *WCT*). In much of what follows, I am greatly indebted to Barfield's account of Coleridge's quest for a true naturalism.
3. See 'Theory of Life' in *S. T. Coleridge: Shorter Works and Fragments, Collected Works*, Vol. 11.1, H. J. Jackson and J. R. de J. Jackson eds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 485–557), 506 (hereafter referred to as TL).
4. See Craig W. Miller, 'Coleridge's Concept of Nature,' *in Journal of the History of Ideas* (January–March 1964), 77–96, for a discussion of Coleridge's great interest in current advances in science.
5. See *The Philosophical Lectures of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Pilot Press, 1949), 353 (hereafter referred to as *PL*).
6. 'But how any affection from without could metamorphose itself into perception or will, the materialist has not only left comprehensible as he found it, but has made it a comprehensible absurdity' (*PL*, 351).
7. Citing C. S. Lewis, Barfield notes that when most people speak of life they have dimly in mind a transcendent entity of the kind to which Plato gave the name 'idea' (*WCT*, 41).
8. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent, 1956), 137 (hereafter referred to as *BL*). We may divide, says Coleridge, 'all the objects of human knowledge into those on this side, and those on the other side of the spontaneous consciousness,' where the latter side is the proper domain of pure or transcendental philosophy. Referring to his own rebellion against a prison in which 'all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook

of death,' Coleridge attributes his own escape to his reading of mystics such as Jacob Boehme (*BL*, 83).

9. See also *BL*, 77, where Coleridge describes in greater detail his aim to develop a theory about the relation between thoughts and images which can be called 'the productive Logos human and divine' and which involves 'the hypothesis of an external world exactly correspondent to those images or modifications of our own being.' Thus part of the challenge he presents is what to do about the adverb.
10. This tyrannical doctrine has entrenched the prejudice that metaphysical systems should be evaluated 'not for their truth but in proportion as they attribute to causes a susceptibility of being seen, if only our visual organs were sufficiently powerful' (*BL*, 62).
11. Again, Coleridge alludes to an ongoing strife between two counter-powers: 'and in their reconciliation it at once dies and is born again in a new form, either falling back into life of the whole, or starting anew in the process of individuation' (*TL*, 520).
12. Barfield notes that this idea, that qualities should be regarded 'as the basic and constitutive principles of the universe' can be traced to the influence of Giordano Bruno (*WCT*, 184). See also John H. Muirhead, *Coleridge As Philosopher* (London: Geo. Allen & Unwin, 1930) (hereafter referred to as *CaPh*). Muirhead notes that Coleridge himself claims that his leading principles, which radically distinguish his thought from that of both Kant and Schelling (namely, the law of polarity, or essential dualism) can be traced either to Greek philosophy or to thinkers in pre-eighteenth-century Europe. He states, for instance, that the first principle was 'first promulgated by Heraclitus, 2000 years afterwards republished and made the foundation both of Logic, of Physics, and of Metaphysics by Giordano Bruno' (*CaPh*, 85n). See also Miller, 78, who quotes a passage from a letter in which Coleridge refers to himself as a '*Heraclitus redivivus*.' For an illuminating discussion of the doctrine of polarity and its possible sources, see the 'Appendix on Polar Logic' in *WCT*, 179–93. Barfield suggests that Coleridge received more from Heraclitus and Jakob Boehme than from Bruno (who appears never to have used the phrase 'law of polarity'). Boehme's importance for Coleridge resides in his hints relating to the need for a metaphysics of quality, a need that acknowledges that the immediate world of experience consists of qualities and not quantities, so that it is a serious error to view the former as mere supplementations of the latter. Coleridge's belief in the priority of quality over quantity, according to Muirhead, is evident in his earliest (ca. 1800) philosophical investigations which revolve about the epistemological problem of determining what are the 'laws' by which our feelings form affinities with each other and with words (See *CaPh*, 50).
13. It is somewhat odd, as Barfield notes, that 'so many millions should have come to feel that the existence of, say, a poppy *as well* as a rose is a mystery deserving the closest attention, whereas the transformation of a minute poppy-seed into a full-blown poppy can be comfortably taken for granted' (*WCT*, 45).
14. In attempting to summarize the most important aspects of Coleridge's views of evolution, one must select from among a number of possible insights that appear to be central to his quest for a true naturalism, for his observations

on evolution conflict at times with his theological convictions. Cf. Muirhead (130ff.) who notes that although he generally advances the view that Nature continually strives towards unity and continuity in spite of apparent 'chasms,' he rejects the idea that 'the human Race … [has] been gradually perfecting itself from the darkest Savagery [so that man can be viewed as], the last metamorphosis, the gay *Image*, of some lucky species of Ape or Baboon.' This conjecture is contrary to experience and common sense. He even claims that '[t]he History I find in my Bible' confirms that 'Man first appeared with all his faculties perfect and in full growth, the anticipation exercised by virtue of the supernatural act of Creation.' This statement is at odds, however, with what I take to be a principal tenet of his psychology – that the faculties are powers which cannot be sharply distinguished one from another since they interpenetrate each other (see *WCT*, 92–93).

15. See Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit*, 15.
16. As Barfield puts it, the problem is how to rethink the 'outness' of things; which means finding a way to overcome the 'sophisticated and unreal realism of appearances-of-things versus things themselves' (*WCT*, 66).
17. Thus while appearing to be at first glance a naive realist, Coleridge is really putting the problem of the genesis of phenomena at the very center of his interpretation of the problem of perception: 'I apply the categoric forms of a tree. Well! but first what is this tree? How do I come by this tree?' (quoted in *CaPh*, 92). Underscoring his disbelief in the adequacy of Kant's treatment of this ur-question of philosophy, Coleridge notes that Kant allows for a manifold of sense that is the only thing that is 'not of our making'; but this amounts to saying that the mind is initially presented with a 'mere sensation which may be anything or nothing' (quoted in *CaPh*, 93).
18. It is worth noting that the oft-repeated allegation that Coleridge plagiarized the work of the post-Kantian philosophers, Fichte and Schelling, does him an injustice. According to Muirhead, Coleridge's chief aim is to develop a system of philosophy as an organic whole which would be a synthesis of the realism of Schelling with the idealism of Kant, a task that Muirhead claims involves a 'deepening and expansion of a single principle which he had made his own' (*CaPh*, 59). This principle not only asserts the interconnectedness of Reason and Experience but also embeds them firmly in the unity of the World. According to Muirhead, it was not until March 1801 that Coleridge began his close study of Kant and the post-Kantian philosophers who laid special stress on the active nature of mind. Here he found that Schelling's *Natur-Philosophie* confirmed much of that which 'I had toiled out for myself' (as he remarks in *BL*, 86). Maintaining the 'entire baselessness' of the view that Coleridge's philosophy was 'little more than a transcript from the German of Kant and Schelling, from whom he selected what happened to suit him,' Muirhead notes that his subsequent disillusionment with Schelling stemmed from the latter's 'gross materialism' (*CaPh*, 55). (See also *Inquiring Spirit*, para. 98, where Coleridge explicitly deplores the 'false opposition of Real and Ideal which embarrasses Schelling' – an opposition I shall say more about below)
19. As Coburn points out, one of Coleridge's chief aims in presenting his lectures on philosophy was to overcome 'the obstacles to just reasoning' (*PL*, 51). His approach thus has a psychological dimension that stems from 'his acute sense

of the experiencing, integrating self, the complex human personality,' a sense that 'makes [him] a questioner rather than a systematizer' (*Inquiring Spirit*, 20).

20. As Barfield notes, the fact that, 'for some decades now, 'dualism' has been something like a dirty word in philosophy has not prevented its remaining as a foundation on which the whole edifice of natural science is erected' (*WCT*, 208n).
21. As Barfield puts a similar point, 'the only thing that could be called the "expression" of primary imagination as such is the familiar face of nature herself' (*WCT*, 77).
22. See Raimonda Modena, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature* (London: Macmillan, 1985), who maintains that Coleridge 'gave the symbol privileged status in his writings, and regarded it not only as a literary trope, superior to allegory, but as an elevated means of attaining self-knowledge and moral values' (66). The oft-quoted passage may thus be regarded as expressing one of Coleridge's more important insights, since it implies that symbol-making is 'an innate function of the mind coinstantaneous with the act of thinking' (72). In other words, 'the symbol represents the means by which the phenomenal world can be redeemed of its otherness and its forbidding physicality and brought into closer communication with the self' (67).
23. Quoted by K. Coburn in the 'Introduction' to *PL*, 49.
24. One of Coleridge's more striking examples is his evocation of the strained expression on the face of his young son when he was induced to contemplate in a mirror the reflection of a familiar but now strangely displaced landscape.
25. That the powers of reason evolve along with language can be seen, Coleridge holds, in changes in meanings that stem from a natural propensity to desynonymize, which may include the invention or borrowing from other languages of a new word in order to express a newly realized signification – as when, for example, the word 'propriety' acquired a distinction that detached it from the earlier meaning of 'property.' Thus 'fancy' and 'imagination' can themselves be regarded as examples of desynonymization, which is an ongoing process that Coleridge expressly associates with 'an instinct of growth' that exists in all societies; that is, in 'a certain collective unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning' (*BL*, 50).
26. Barfield thus neatly sums up the matter: '[j]ust as understanding cannot be explained without our seeing it as developed instinct, so instinct itself cannot be explained without our seeing it as potential understanding' (*WCT*, 98).
27. Coleridge remarks, for instance, that 'Instinct is the wisdom of the species, not of the individual' (*Inquiring Spirit*, 244).
28. In this context, he quotes Francis Bacon's observation (in *Novum Organum*) that '[k]nowledge has suffered from littleness of spirit … and the triviality of the tasks which human industry has set itself. And the worst of all this littleness of spirit is accompanied by arrogance and superiority' (*BL*, 78n).
29. Quoted in *CaPh*, 99. Again, '[y]ou may see an Idea working in a man by watching his tastes and enjoyments, though he may hitherto have no consciousness of any other reasoning than that of conception and facts.'
30. See R. Geldard, *Remembering Heraclitus* (Lindesfarne Books, 2000), 156: 'When they are spoken to, the ignorant are like the deaf: they bear witness to the proverb that when present they are absent.'

31. He observes, for instance, that '[i]n all inevitable Truths, e.g. that the two sides of a triangle are greater than the third, I feel my will active: I seem to *will* the Truth as well as to perceive it' (quoted from one of his notebooks; see *WCT*, 14).
32. In her Introduction to *PL*, Coburn notes that, in throwing in his lot with Plato, Coleridge was not disparaging the genius and achievements of Aristotle, although this 'parent of science' committed the error of confounding science with philosophy (*PL*, 55). Occupying a position somewhere in between Plato and Aristotle, Coleridge is perhaps closest to Francis Bacon who, despite his Aristotelian sympathies, also upholds the Platonic view that the Laws of Nature refer at bottom to Ideas (i.e., they express aspects of Ideas which underpin the forms of organization in the physical world). For a more extensive discussion of this important point, see Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 126.
33. Hence 'moral acts form an object of philosophic contemplation equally with all other acts' (*PL*, 118).
34. See also Muirhead who notes Coleridge's intriguing conjecture that scientific theory in general, insofar as it turns away from sensory imagery and becomes mainly mathematical, may at times still approximate to the Idea, for he even 'goes so far as to ask whether the hypothetical atoms of physics are not mere symbols of algebraic relations "representing powers essentially united with proportions of dynamic ratios – ratios not of powers but that are powers"' (*CaPh*, 98n).
35. Indeed, one of Coleridge's convictions is that one cannot 'prescribe a law of moral action for any rational being, which does not flow immediately from that Reason, which is the fount of morality' (*Inquiring Spirit*, 411).
36. The matter, as Coleridge notes, calls for a different conception of intuition than that proposed by Kant who reserves the word 'intuition' 'exclusively for that which can be represented in space and time' (*BL*, 157n).
37. Cf. Modena, who notes that despite his debts to Schelling, Coleridge came to regret his extensive use in *Biographia Literaria of his System of Transcendental Idealism* (*Coleridge*, 168), which presents not a 'true' realism but rather stresses the 'unreality of the objective' (171).
38. As Coleridge sums up the matter, 'whatever is organized from without, is a product of mechanism; whatever is mechanized from within, is a production of organization' (TL, 511n).
39. In a letter also to Tulk, Coleridge refers to the matter as involving a principle of 'essential dualism' which holds that 'matter is a Product – coagulum spiritûs, the pause, by interpenetration, of opposite energies,' so that 'there is no matter without Spirit' (although he at the same time distances himself from pantheism by adding that there is 'on the other hand … a spiritual World without a material' (quoted by Miller, 'Coleridge's Concept,' 81).
40. That is, it comes before 'all our sensations and to all objects towards which they are directed' (quoted in *CaPh*, 143).
41. Coleridge observes, for instance, that 'sensation itself is but vision nascent, not the cause of intelligence but intelligence itself revealed as an earlier power in the process of self-construction' (*BL*, 155).
42. Again, Pythagoras aimed to show 'that there was one principle which produced the object of perception and that the same principle at the other pole produced the contemplation of that object' (*PL*, 116).

43. Cf. Barfield, who notes that Coleridge 'on one occasion beautifully christened our unspoken but obsessive, presumption that the same concept in two minds is two concepts and not one, as "the queen bee in the hive of error"' (*WCT*, 108).
44. See Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit*, esp. paras 64–68.
45. Again, 'we are all collectively born idealists, and therefore and only therefore are we at the same time realists' (*BL*, 149).
46. 'Essence, in its primary signification, means the principle of individuation, the inmost principle of the possibility of any thing as that particular thing' (*BL*, 204). Barfield notes that Coleridge was well aware of the 'heavy difficulties that weigh on the doctrine of Ideas or Knowledges that are supersensuous and yet truly objective' (*WCT*, 177). This is perhaps evident in his explicit denial of Plotinus's notion of an 'intellectual intuition'; if this is interpreted to mean 'gazing in imagination on Being as a vast Panorama' (*CaPh*, 106–7).
47. Miller, 'Coleridge's Concept,' 84. Miller notes in passing that Coleridge makes use of a 'cluster of images' to illustrate his concept of Nature.
48. Barfield, *WCT*, 117. That is to say, Barfield adds, 'so far as language is concerned, in figurative language,' thus indicating that for Coleridge a good metaphor could be said to belong to the order of 'real' or 'true' symbols. Coleridge explicitly elicits a close connection between some symbols and reality when he defines a symbol 'as part of the reality it represents' (quoted by Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning*, 69).
49. Cf. Coleridge, *Inquiring Spirit*, 45: 'Conception is consequent on Perception. What we cannot imagine, we cannot, in the proper sense of the word, conceive.' This observation can be invested, as we shall see, with a cosmic significance if, following Whitehead, the word 'conceive' is replaced by 'perceive.'
50. For Coleridge, an actual event may also be a symbol, says Barfield; 'so that, in dealing with an event recorded in an historical narrative, we are not necessarily bound to choose between "taking it literally" and taking it metaphorically. It may be both; because the event itself was both' (*WTC*, 154).
51. It is thus worth noting that, according to Coburn, '*Biographia Literaria* has been called the best piece of literary criticism in English and the most annoying book in any language' (*Inquiring Spirit*, 147). Perhaps its irritating elements are related to the frustration art critics feel when they try to defend the view that good art has something important to tell us about 'reality.' For Coleridge expressly links 'positive knowledge' to a 'reciprocal concurrence' of the conscious and the unconscious which is somehow 'founded in nature' (*BL*, 145).
52. Cf. Barfield's summary of what Coleridge shows is chiefly at issue, which is 'the problem – or mystery – of will, and with that of all actual *origin*. In order that it may be at all, *ipseity* must will *alterity*' (*WCT*, 164).

## Chapter 6 Putting life back into nature

1. May Swenson, 'Question,' in *The New Poets of England and America* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 301.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974).

3. See Richard Geldard, *Remembering Heraclitus* (Lindisfarne Books, 2000), 92, Fragment 5. The meaning of this enigmatic statement, according to Geldard, is that it is essential for good reasoning to acquire a 'properly aligned soul.'
4. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (1929), corrected edition, David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherbourne eds (New York: Free Press, 1978), 153 (hereafter cited as *PR*).
5. Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 4 (hereafter cited as *SMW*).
6. Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 149–50 (hereafter cited as *MT*).
7. 'It has been a defect in the modern philosophies that they throw no light whatever on any scientific principles. Science should investigate particular species [of organisms], and metaphysics should investigate the generic notions under which those specific principles should fall' (*PR*, 116).
8. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Free Press, 1967), 275 (hereafter cited as *AI*).
9. Whitehead somewhat problematically, as we shall see, conceives the 'Divine Eros' as 'the active entertainment of all ideals' (*AI*, 277).
10. According to Geldard, the task philosophy for Heraclitus is to teach half-awake souls how to become more attuned to the *Logos*, for the soul possesses 'generative and transformative powers' (4). See Fragment 1: 'For although all things happen according to the Logos, many act as if they have no experience of it. … they fail to notice what they do after they wake up, just as they forget what they do when they sleep' (156).
11. See Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1959) (hereafter cited as S), esp. Section 4 of Chapter 3 wherein it is suggested that meaning-making hinges on the quality of the interplay of percepts and affects.
12. See Chapter 2, Section 4.
13. 'The divine one whose oracle is in Delphi speaks neither directly or obscurely, but rather gives a sign' (Geldard, 161).
14. Wordsworth alludes, for instance, to hidden 'presences' and Shelley to 'secret springs' of thought (see *SMW*, 85).
15. He observes that 'we may neglect Coleridge's attempt at an explicit philosophical formulation. … For our purposes [he] is only important by his influence on Wordsworth' (*SMW*, 82–83).
16. Whitehead's conception of time, it is sometimes suggested, was inspired by relativity physics which generally indicates the existence of different temporal systems; that is, this theory indicates that is, 'contemporaneity' cannot be elucidated in terms of a single homogeneous reality which permits a single meaning of Time. See Niels Viggo Hansen, 'Spacetime and Becoming: Overcoming the Contradiction between Space Relativity and the Passage of Time,' in Timothy E. Eastman and Hank Keeton eds, *Physics and Whitehead: Quantum, Process, and Experience* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2004), 136–63. Taking note of Whitehead's insistence on the fact of temporality, or rather on temporal facts, Hansen discusses the various ways scientists have dealt with the problem of temporality and contrasts them with his radical resolution of the problem which is, in effect, a recognition of the obvious; for it is only

prejudice that supports the common view that one must either come up with a theory of universal temporality or acknowledge that there are no temporal facts (such as those that give meaning to past and future). Whitehead's radical insight is, as Hansen puts it, that 'a concrete temporal fact is not global but local' (150), an idea that is consistently overlooked because of deep-seated, theologically inspired prejudices in favor of an absolute or global time – 'the ideal, positive, and unmediated existence of a universal present' – which derives, in Hansen's view, from a pervasive faith in an omnipotent and omniscient Being (162).

17. This allusion stems, as Whitehead says, from a sentence in Plato's *Timaeus*: 'But that which is conceived by opinion with the help of sensation and without reason, is always in a process of becoming and perishing and never really is' (*PR*, 82).
18. Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason* (Princeton: Beacon Press, 1958), 15.
19. Noting that his use of formal notions, such as 'conceptual prehension,' present difficulties to understanding, Whitehead explicitly endorses the use of 'equivalent terms which have about them the suggestiveness of familiar fact' (*PR*, 33).
20. The point is that the subjective aim of an act of becoming may be inherently vague – i.e. not necessarily a definite eternal object – which means that the completion of an act of becoming can result in the emergence of a novel, hitherto unrealized ideal.
21. This view, that actuality needs to be viewed in general under the aegis of the contrast immanence-transcendence also surfaces in other places. See, e.g., *PR*, 93–94.
22. See Genevieve Lloyd, *Being in Time* (London: Routledge, 1993), 61 and 66 (the passage quoted is from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Book I, Part II, Section VI). The source of Hume's despair, says Lloyd, is that 'he seems to have found an absurdity in the intellectual world, an absurdity which seems indeed to undermine the very existence of that world and hence the very possibility … [of a coherent] story of how we come by a belief' (that is, how we arrive at the concepts we do have and the independent objects of knowledge they supposedly refer to).
23. See *PR*, 86–87. Whitehead implies that Hume is acknowledging, even as he ignores it, a point that ought to be regarded as one of the key assumptions of a genuine empiricism. As for the need to recognize the passions, 'the immediate, first-handed fact [of experiencing]' is that 'the actual world is an immediate complex of feeling' (*PR*, 136).
24. Ivor Leclerc, *The Philosophy of Nature* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 207 (hereafter referred to as *PN*).
25. Noting that 'the notion of stresses, as essential connections between bodies, was a fundamental factor in the Newtonian conception of nature, Whitehead observes that Newton 'left no hint, why by the nature of things there should be any stresses at all' (*MT*, 134).
26. Leclerc refers in this regard to *PR*, Part 1, Chapter 3, Section 2. See also *PR* 19 where Whitehead explicitly links the scheme of the philosophy of organism to 'one type of actual entities.'

27. Leclerc alludes in this context to the following statement: '[t]he presumption that there is only one genus of actual entities constitutes an ideal of cosmological theory to which the philosophy of organism endeavours to conform' (*PR*, 110).
28. Whitehead does indeed note, in *Modes of Thought* for instance, that an electron in a molecule is different from a 'free' electron.
29. An animal body is clearly 'something' for itself as well as a 'something' for others, which means it must have 'a unity and thereby a determinate character' (*PN*, 167).
30. For an extended discussion of this important point, see Ivor Leclerc, *The Nature of Physical Existence* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1972), 315–17.
31. Noting that the etymology of entertain is to hold, possess, guard, maintain, and so on, Leclerc points out that if an acting presupposes an 'end-cause' which is only a possibility, then a value in the first instance can only be entertained. See esp. Chapter 25 of *The Nature of Physical Existence*.
32. 'This doctrine, that order is a social product, appears in modern science as the statistical theory of the laws of nature, and in the emphasis on genetic relation' (*PR*, 92).
33. See, e.g., *PR*, 29: 'actual occasions are complete and determinate matter of fact, devoid of all indecision.'
34. Nonetheless, there is nothing to stop someone from claiming that stones too are deserving of respect and even compassion. The so-called primitive customs and beliefs of some indigenous societies which invest geophysical peculiarities with spiritual significance is consistent with the centrality of imagination in the self-determinations of world making; for I am suggesting that it is not merely superstition which prompts the Australian aboriginal artist to intone compassionately, while painting a bright red band across a smooth stone, 'paint 'im flash, poor bugger.'
35. Cf. Hank Keeton, 'Whitehead as Mathematical Physicist,' in *Physics and Whitehead*, 31–46. Keeton suggests that Whitehead's initial aim as a philosopher of science was to show that symbolic logic and mathematics could be usefully employed as a tool for generalization and interpretation of physical relationships, and the relations between experience and space-time in particular. At the same time, however, he insisted that the results must be consistent with the fact, regularly confirmed by ordinary experience and sense-perception, that no part of the universe is exempt from change.
36. See Chapter 2, Section 4.
37. Anticipating one of Whitehead's central beliefs, that '[a]ctuality is the decision amid "potentiality",' Locke also indicates that a power of decision is presupposed by the exercise of both active and passive powers.
38. An evolutionary cosmos of experience-events implies an ever-present possibility for the production of novel differences that displace the repetitions of extant forms of organization. This line of thought is well explored in the vitalistic ontology of Gilles Deleuze (as presented in his *Difference and Repetition*) which aims to rescue the vitality of thinking from the static world of representation. His approach also complements Whitehead's aim to put Life back into Nature, for Deleuze can be read as bringing in a doctrine of faculties in order to reconcile the immanent and transcendent aspects of

experiencing – which leads him to frame a type of naturalism that can be described as an anti-Platonistic Platonism. So I will examine his approach in the next chapter.

39. Whitehead draws special attention to three allied errors whose combined influence he believes goes a long way toward accounting for the chasm that currently separates materialistic and nonmaterialistic philosophers, errors that underwrite reductionist explanations of experience: (1)the substance-quality doctrine of actuality in which ideas are reduced to qualifications by universals of an underlying, primeval substance; (2) the sensationalist doctrine of perception, which makes sensations or sense-data primary in experience and downgrades the 'inner' play of feelings, imaginings, and intuitions; (3) and the Kantian doctrine of an 'objective' world which is the 'apparent' product of subjectivity and which therefore gives precedence to concepts over percepts in accounts of knowledge-making (*PR*, 156).
40. This is also the gist of Ivor Leclerc's response to some of Whitehead's proposals, which indicates that a Whiteheadian naturalism must find a place to stand somewhere 'in-between' Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism.
41. This tension is formally recognized by Whitehead in the crucial twenty-first category of explanation which asserts that 'an actual entity has significance for itself. … [and so it] functions in respect to its own determination. Thus an actual entity combines self-identity with self-diversity' (*PR*, 25).
42. 'There is no reason to hold that confusion is less fundamental than order' (*MT*, 50). That is to say, it would be a serious error for the naturalist to overlook disorder, evil, and error as ever-present possibilities.
43. That world-making always gives rise to moral problems that may be unresolvable is indicated if the functioning of any kind of power involves an expenditure of energy, which means that Life presupposes a constant need to replenish spent energy. Hence Life, as Whitehead says, supports itself by means of robbery; which does not pose a moral problem so much as a need to recognize the inevitable conflict of natural drives in the real world. Or as Whitehead sums up the point, 'the sense of reality is the sense of effectiveness, and the sense of effectiveness is the drive toward the satisfaction of appetition' (*MT*, 122).
44. I am grateful to Lewis Ford for some helpful comments on an earlier version of this chapter.

## Chapter 7 On learning good sense

1. Gilles Deleuze (1968), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 131 (hereafter cited as *DR*).
2. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent, 1956), 174.
3. See René Descartes, 'Rules for the Direction of the Mind,' in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, Vol. I, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 1.
4. Ibid.
5. Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, Vol. 1, *305*.
6. *DR*, 165. It thus worth noting that Deleuze sums up his approach to the problem of learning by urging the metaphor of a long apprenticeship which

involves bringing in the unconscious dimension of thought and hence the whole body. It is therefore essential to fashion an ontology in which bodies take time, as we shall see.

7. '[T]he use of the word "problematic" as a substantive,' says Deleuze, 'seems to us an indispensable neologism' (*DR*, 323).
8. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet (1977), *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: The Athlone Press, 1987), 13.
9. *DR*, 149. Again, '[c]owardice, cruelty, baseness and stupidity are not simply corporeal capacities or traits of character or society; they are structures of thought as such' (*DR*, 151).
10. It is as though error 'were a kind of failure of good sense within the form of a common sense which remains integral and intact' (*DR*, 149). The conflation of good sense with common sense is urged, for example, by W. V. Quine: see my *Myths of Reason* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1995).
11. Such a doctrine, he states, is 'an entirely necessary component of the system of philosophy' (*DR*, 143).
12. That is to say, the Idea, or Ideas, must be thought in such a way, says Deleuze, that 'we do not reintroduce any form of common sense' (*DR*, 193). Again, '[i]t is correct to define metaphysics by reference to Platonism, but insufficient to define Platonism by reference to the distinction between essence and appearance' (*DR*, 264).
13. 'Innateness is a myth; no less than reminiscence' (*DR*, 87).
14. See, e.g., *DR*, 137. The world of representation in general is defined by four basic elements: 'Identity with regard to concepts; opposition with regard to the determination of concepts; analogy with regard to judgement; resemblance with regard to objects.'
15. This situation seems well illustrated by the logicistic assaults of analytic philosophers on the problem of vagueness and ambiguity using the logical principle of identity, as though these characteristics of all natural languages were a natural enemy of thought. I explore this anomalous situation in my *Myths of Reason*, passim.
16. As Deleuze puts it, common sense contributes 'the norm of identity from the point of view of the pure Self and the form of the unspecified object which corresponds to it, good sense is the norm of distribution from the point of view of the empirical selves and the objects qualified as this or that kind of thing (which is why it is considered to be universally distributed). Good sense determines the contribution of the faculties in each case, while common sense contributes the form of the Same' (*DR*, 133–34).
17. Thus 'the whole image of thought as *Cogitatio natura* bears witness to a disturbing complacency' (*DR*, 135). Alluding to the not always beneficial influence of Kant on the way the moderns treat thinking itself, Deleuze notes in particular Kant's failure to recognize that 'values play a crucial role in distributions undertaken by good sense.' That is, whenever thought is subordinated to the model of recognition, 'what is recognized is not only an object but also the values attached to an object' (*DR*, 135). To ignore the evaluative dimension of thinking is thus to ensure the perpetuation of the dogmatic image of thought, for this 'more or less implicit, tacit or presupposed image of thought … determines our goals when we try to think' (*DR*, xvi). Cf. Paul Patton ed, *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996),

who reads Deleuze as upholding a continuity with classical philosophy, for even when he claims that the purpose of philosophy revolves about the creation of concepts, the main thrust is ethical rather than epistemological.

18. 'The animal is protected by specific forms which prevent it from being "stupid" [bête]' (*DR*, 150).
19. He declares, for instance, that '[o]ne's always writing to bring something to life, to free life from where it's trapped, to trace lines of flight.' Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972–1990, trans*. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 141.
20. *DR*, xv. See also *Dialogues*, in which Deleuze adumbrates a conception of thinking which elicits, as Clare Parnet puts it, the trope of 'a nomadic power' (32). Noting that he also links the notion of an encounter to 'a becoming, or nuptials' (6 ), Parnet describes the place where these nuptials are performed as 'a plane of immanence or consistence [which] includes fogs, plagues, voids, jumps, immobilizations, suspensions, hastes' (94); that is, a world of 'hecceities' which are 'simply degrees of power which combine, to which correspond a power to affect and be affected, active and passive effects, intensities' (92).
21. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1991), *What is Philosophy?* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 2: 'philosophy is the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts.'
22. In Deleuze's view, even the 'existence of a bad nature and an ill will … must be shaken by signs from without' (*DR*, 142).
23. He thus recalls Plato's problematic suggestion that it is possible by means of the faculty of dialectic to grasp 'the limit of the intelligible' (533 d). That is, he also draws attention to the need to re-examine the notion of dialectic.
24. Waxing lyrical, Deleuze illustrates the point thus: 'What we call wheat is a contraction of earth and humidity, and this contraction is both a contemplation and the auto-satisfaction of that contemplation. By its existence alone, the lily of the field sings the glory of the heavens, the goddesses and gods – in other words, the elements that it contemplates in contracting. What organism is not made of elements in cases of repetition, of contemplated and contracted water, nitrogen, carbon, chlorides and sulphates, thereby intertwining all the habits of which it is composed? Organisms awake to the sublime words of the third *Ennead*: all is contemplation!' (*DR*, 75).
25. That is to say, the drama in the 'false theatre' only 'represents concepts instead of dramatizing Ideas' (*DR*, 10).
26. There is, says Deleuze, both a 'literal and spiritual primary sense of repetition. The material sense results from this other, as if secreted by it like a shell' (*DR*, 25); a remark that recalls Coleridge's definition of matter as coagulum spiritûs.
27. Lending support to both Coleridge's and Whitehead's Heraclitean approach to this fundamental contrast, Deleuze intriguingly observes that '[m]atter is, in effect, populated or covered by [contemplative and contracting] souls, which provide it with a depth without which it would present no bare repetition on the surface' (*DR*, 286).
28. It is thus worth noting that, according to the OED, one of the older meanings of 'virtuality' involves powers that are both natural and capable of exerting influence.
29. Descartes, *Philosophical Works*, 10.

30. See my 'On Mathematical Naturalism and the Powers of Symbolisms,' in *Cosmos and History: Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2005) (to be found at www.cosmosandhistory.org).
31. The late Paul Erdös was famous in this regard, for he built his reputation as a creative mathematician on his ability to formulate good mathematical problems.
32. 'Ontology is the dice throw, the chaos from which the cosmos emerges' (*DR*, 198–99).
33. As Deleuze himself notes, an individuation 'emerges like the act of solving … a problem' (*DR*, 246).
34. *DR*, 211. Again, 'individuals are signal-sign systems' (*DR*, 246). Thus an organism can be regarded as the dynamic resolution of multi-layered forms of repetition of differences belonging to different orders, for the "sum" reached at any stage involves 'levels of passive synthesis and the combination of these levels with one another and with active syntheses' (*DR*, 73).
35. *DR*, 199. Deleuze cites this phrase as stemming from certain observations of Maurice Blanchot concerning the imperatives that prompt thought to move.
36. He cites the examples of Descartes, Leibniz, Hegel, Kant, and Fichte while accusing modern philosophers of helping to perpetuate a 'scientistic hypotheticism and …rationalist moralism [which] render unrecognizable what [these procedures] approximate' (*DR*, 197).
37. Deleuze declares, for instance, that 'dialectic loses its peculiar power when it remains content to trace problems from propositions' (*DR*, 157).
38. Again, '[o]nly the Idea or problem is universal. It is not the solution which lends its generality to the problem, but the problem which lends its universality to the solution' (*DR*, 162).
39. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* (1962), trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 195.

## Chapter 8 Against 'conceptual idolatry'

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent, 1956), 148–49.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1968), 47 (hereafter referred to as *TI*).
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 1972), 124 (hereafter referred to as *BGE*). In the world of 'modern ideas,' this would entail a rejection of the tendency 'to banish everyone into a corner and "speciality."'
4. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, ed. and trans. by Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979), xxvi (hereafter referred to as *PT*). Breazeale defends the publication of these excerpts from Nietzsche's Notebooks on the grounds that they contain important first sketches of ideas that he intended to develop more fully in his published writings. He claims, furthermore, that 'the notebooks of this period contain the closest thing Nietzsche ever wrote to a coherent and sustained exposition of his 'theory of knowledge' (*PT*, xxvii).

5. See Michael Tanner, who notes in the Introduction to *TI* that throughout his life Nietzsche 'remained aghast at and incredulous of the degree of self-deception and willingness to believe what suits them that almost everyone routinely practises' (17).
6. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882), trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974), 335 (hereafter referred to as *GS*).
7. See (*PT*, xxi). In planning this treatise, says Breazeale, Nietzsche's aim was to cover a great range of topics which bear on the problems of philosophy, culture, and knowledge and their relations; problems which have both a historical side (centered on early Greek thought) and a philosophical thrust (where the aim is to determine the proper relation between culture and knowledge).
8. (*PT*, xxiii–vii). In claiming that he lives in a 'false or counterfeit culture,' Nietzsche is but a short step away, in Breazeale's view, from forecasting the imminent collapse of Western civilization. For one of the most audible themes in everything that Nietzsche wrote is 'the meaning of culture and the problem of civilization: what is it? how has it been achieved? how can it be preserved?' (*PT*, xxiii).
9. See *PT*, 156n9. This is not a spontaneous exaggeration, Breazeale suggests, since it derives from Nietzsche's conviction that the nihilistic character of science reflects a prolonged cultural decline (and a related increase in mendacity) that began with the pre-Platonic philosophers (see also xxxiv–vi).
10. For a more extensive discussion of the idea of rational instincts, see my *Myths of Reason: Vagueness, Rationality, and the Lure of Logic* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1995), esp. Chapter 6 in which I explore some of Peirce's reflections on the instinctual basis of reasoning. Nietzsche seems very close to expressing Peirce's belief in the abductive (i.e., insightful) heart of the 'logic' of scientific discovery when he claims that 'of all forms of intelligence discovered hitherto, "instinct" is the most intelligent' (*BGE*, 130).
11. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (1901), trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1968), esp. Book I (hereafter referred to as *WP*).
12. See, e.g., R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* revised edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), who remarks that the consequences of Darwinism for Nietzsche were 'momentous' since the theory presented a correct but disastrous picture of the world. He was thus stimulated to try 'to produce a new world-picture which took Darwinism into account but was not nullified by it' (73).
13. It seems that Darwin himself ought to be excepted from this charge, in view of the final sentence of *The Origin of Species* in which he observes that life represents 'several powers, having been originally *breathed* into a few forms or into one …'. Few of his followers, however, have paid much attention to this hint of vivifying powers that arguably permeate all forms of organization.
14. Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 123.
15. See, e.g., Fragment 6, in Richard Geldard, *Remembering Heraclitus* (Lindisfarne Books, 2000), 156: 'when they are spoken to, the ignorant are like the deaf: they bear witness to the proverb that when present they are absent.' Geldard also brings Nietzsche to mind when he describes Heraclitus as 'fundamentally an instigator. … whose mission is to prod sleeping minds to the waking state' (2).

16. *TI*, 45. That virtually the whole of Western philosophy (with the exception of a few followers of Heraclitus) has been misled by a hatred of becoming is the main theme of Arran Gare's historical article: 'Mathematics, Explanation and Reductionism: Exposing the Roots of the Egyptianism of European Civilization,' in *Cosmos and History*, Vol. 1., no. 1 (2005). In addition to Nietzsche, Gare names Peirce, Bergson, and Whitehead as belonging to the small number of dissenters from Egyptianism, which still reigns supreme – as is evident, for instance, in Einstein's denial of real temporality.
17. See Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* (1962), trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 24.
18. He thus brings to mind Whitehead's alternative name for the philosophy of organism. See Chapter 6, Section 7.
19. This question is, says Deleuze, 'the most empirical and the most "experimental" because it poses at one and the same time the problems of interpretation and evaluation' (*Nietzsche*, 18).
20. Gilles Deleuze (1968), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 74 (hereafter referred to as *DR*).
21. Deleuze points toward a similar conclusion in his ontology of event-encounters wherein each individual event-encounter embodies a fallible contemplative soul which may be striving in its own small way and perhaps only at times with a fitful good will that may or may not contribute positive values to the ongoing rush of events of which it is but a tiny part.
22. 'In the last resort there exists an order of rank of states of soul with which the order of rank of problems accords; and the supreme problems repel without mercy everyone who ventures near them without being, through the elevation and power of his spirituality, predestined to their solution' (*BGE*, 126).
23. '[E]very past culture seemed to Nietzsche to have drawn its driving energy from an unconscious and unexamined *center of vitality* and to have propagated itself largely by means of illusions' (*PT*, xxvi).
24. See Northrop Frye, *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of the Bible and Literature* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 1992).
25. A reevaluation 'under whose novel pressures and hammer a conscience would be steeled' (*BGE*, 108).
26. 'There are days when I am haunted by a feeling blacker than the blackest melancholy-*contempt of man*' (TI, *161* [The Anti-Christ, para. 38]).
27. Cf. Tanner, who calls *The Anti-Christ and Twilight of the Idols* 'the two greatest documents of ambivalence that we possess' (*TI*, 9).
28. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet (1977), *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 6.
29. In this context, he has in mind the 'drive to knowledge' which for some is 'the father of philosophy'; however, it is really an indication of 'another drive … [that has] only employed knowledge (and false knowledge!) as a tool' (*BGE*, 19).
30. Cf. also Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, esp. Chapter 1, who reads Nietzsche as chiefly bent on freeing philosophy from nihilism in all its forms, such as the tendency to oppose knowledge to life in order to be able to judge life in the name of a suprasensible world; a type of judgment that often amounts to a condemnation of existence itself as unjust (35).
31. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (*1873–6*), ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 60.

32. '*Learning to think*: our schools no longer have any idea what this means.' Quoted by Deleuze, *Nietzsche*, 109 (where he gives three references for this claim).
33. See Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002). Ronell considers a broader spectrum of critics and writers who, while not claiming to be philosophers, are deeply involved with the problem of stupidity. She cites R. Musil as particularly concerned with the 'depressing conjunction of stupidity and politics – a conjunction that remains to this day irrefutable' (22). This apparently invincible alliance is also related to the 'intellectual stupidity' that Gramsci associates with capitalism 'where "intelligence" functions actually as a cover-up for stupidity, being part of a dialectics of perpetual takeover' (59). (My thanks to Richard Schmitt for bringing this work to my attention).
34. Ronell notes that, with the exception of Deleuze, 'stupidity has largely escaped the screening systems of philosophy' (20). It is thus worth recalling that he believes that a theory of stupidity of cosmic, encyclopedic, and gnoselogical dimensions is required.
35. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking, 1963, revised and enlarged edition, 1965).
36. Hannah Arendt, 'Thinking and Moral Considerations,' *Social Research*, 38, 1971, 445 (italics mine).
37. Nietzsche appeals explicitly to Heraclitus in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where he reminds us of this ancient's claim that his philosophical insights stemmed from looking into himself. It is thus also worth noting that Freud, according to Tanner, described Nietzsche 'as the person who knew more about himself than anyone else ever had or ever would.' Tanner himself describes Nietzsche as 'unexampled in his honesty in spelling out the reasons for and against adopting [fundamental attitudes toward life]' (Introduction, *TI*, 9).
38. In 'Philosophy in Hard Times,' Nietzsche is especially scathing about the current state of education; he notes that there are symptoms of decay everywhere, for even 'the learned classes are in every respect a part of this movement. … Everything, art as well as science, serves the approaching barbarity. … Where should we turn?. … Since we really have nothing whatsoever with which to defend ourselves and are all part of this movement. … [E]very alliance with the "educated" is to be rejected. That is the greatest enemy, for it hinders the physician and would disavow the disease' (*PT*, 102).
39. Schlegel, according to Ronell, continually wrestles with this problem: 'Is nonunderstanding, then, something so evil and objectionable?' (*Stupidity*, 144–45). Recalling Deleuze's suggestion that 'true' learning takes place in the unconscious, Ronell adds that 'pure dumbness, neutral and blank, keeps open an unsketched territory that Schlegel recognizes as unconscious.'
40. See the epigraph to Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations* (1972–90), trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).
41. As Ronell notes, when educational psychologists construct 'tests such as those administered to children,' a false situation is created in which 'in the instance of producing an answer, the intelligent examinee has to *play* stupid' (*Stupidity*, 43).
42. Deleuze cites schizophrenia, for example, which 'is not only a human fact but also a possibility for thought' (*DR*, 148). Nietzsche can thus be read as

diagnosing a collective schizophrenic-becoming that cherishes illusions and delusions.

43. See Chapter 2, section 2 in which I discuss Le Doeuff's critique of Kant's attempt to map precisely an 'islanded' domain of pure reason. She notes that his famous third question, What can I hope? is 'the stumbling block to the critical method,' just because the Analytic erects an impassable barrier between speculative reason and practical reason. From a Nietzschean point of view, this artificial barrier attests to the power of a pervasive 'conceptual idolatry' that is bent on suppressing the imaginal. See Michèle Le Doeuff, *The Philosophical Imaginary* (1980), trans. Colin Gordon (London: The Athlone Press, 1989), 17.
44. See Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, esp. Chapter 3. Deleuze in fact holds that psychoanalysis deserves to be honored for making the unconscious respectable, yet it nevertheless treats it as the enemy. Thus his quarrel with psychoanalysis chiefly concerns the misguided efforts of Freud and many of his followers to turn it into a science.
45. According to Breazeale, Nietzsche's primary epistemological belief lies in the rhetorical question: 'What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms.' This notion refers, in short, to 'a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding' (*PT*, 84).
46. Breazeale neatly sums up Nietzsche's view on language thus: 'In concepts and words, men construct a second, more human, nature for themselves – an artfully constructed world which is the greatest testimony to the fundamental human power of imagination' (*PT*, xxxi).
47. Nietzsche's first conclusion concerning culture, says Breazeale, is that it is 'impossible without some form of mastery' (*PT*, xxiv). It is thus worth noting that Deleuze claims this does *not* mean that 'the philosopher must add the activity of the legislator to his other activities. … [for] the point is a completely different one. … that the philosopher as philosopher … destroys old values and creates new ones' (*Nietzsche*, 92). It is in this sense, he thinks, that Kant can be criticized as having gone only half way to becoming a true liberator.
48. *TI*, 71. Although Nietzsche is speaking of his German contemporaries, this assessment applies with even greater force to the leaders of the currently most powerful nations on earth: 'Nowadays the Germans are bored with intellect, the Germans mistrust intellect, politics devours all seriousness for really intellectual things ….'
49. 'The world is too much with us; late and soon, /Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers' (Wordsworth, 'The World is Too Much with Us').
50. Referring to his own hard times, Nietzsche observes that 'that which *makes* institutions institutions is despised, hated, rejected' (*TI*, 105).
51. Ronell notes that 'the more successfully repressed philosophy is, the closer it comes to the core stupidity,' while maintaining that only art can resist stupidity.
52. See, e.g., Ronell's perceptive discussion of Dostoyevsky's 'The Idiot' (in *Stupidity*, esp. pp. 198ff.), a text with which Nietzsche appears to have been familiar. As Ronell tells it, this is a story of a truly just and honest man whose fate runs parallel to that of Christ since he is virtually crucified for being an 'idiot' who cannot bring himself, in good conscience, to think and act like

'normal' people. That is to say, he persists, despite extreme provocations, in wishing everyone well, while bearing no grudges and never taking offence – but at the cost of his own sanity. It appears moreover highly significant that Dostoyevsky's novel ends with a scene that resonates strongly with Nietzsche's attack on the European spirit. For one of Dostoyevsky's main characters (who happens to be most in sympathy with the Prince) declares enigmatically that Europe is to blame for his final collapse.

## Chapter 9 Epilogue: notes for a cultural therapy

1. William Blake, 'The Sick Rose,' in *Selected Poems* (London: J. M. Dent, 1993).
2. There is no general image of thought, Deleuze maintains, that would constitute 'the subjective presupposition of philosophy as a whole.' Gilles Deleuze (1968), *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 132 (hereafter cited as *DR*).
3. This idea is not new; it is floated by Coleridge, for example, who cites Leibniz as describing 'the criterion of a true philosophy; namely, that it would at once explain and collect the fragments of truth scattered through systems apparently the most incongruous.' Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria,* ed. George Watson (London: J. M. Dent, 1956), 140–41.
4. See, e.g., Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations: 1972–1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (NewYork: Columbia University Press, 1990), 143: '[e]verything I have written is vitalistic … and amounts to a theory of signs and events.' See also p. 141: 'I've tried in all my books to discover the nature of events; it's a philosophical concept, the only one capable of ousting the verb "to be" and "attributes."'
5. See also Deleuze, *Negotiations*, 136–37: 'affects, percepts and concepts are three inseparable forces, running from art into philosophy and from philosophy into art.'
6. He declares, for instance, that '[t]he role of the imagination, or the mind which contemplates in its multiple and fragmented states, is to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it. For that matter, repetition is itself in essence imaginary, since the imagination alone here forms the "moment" of the *vis repetitiva* from the point of view of constitution: it makes that which it contracts appear as elements or cases of repetition' (*DR*, 76).
7. Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet (1977), *Dialogues*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 51–52. It is thus worth noting that Whitehead also identifies the 'primary stage' of philosophy with the making of an assemblage. See Alfred North Whitehead, *Modes of Thought* (New York: Free Press, 1968), 2 (hereafter cited as *MT*).
8. Consider, for instance, the concept of a concept – which was not a gift to philosophy from a munificent heaven but rather a result of hard work on the part of the frequently maligned 'scholastic' philosophers. See Owen Barfield, *History in English Words* (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, 1967), 139.
9. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 14 (hereafter referred to as *FS*). This assessment, says Frye, is most powerfully presented in the mythopoeic 'Jerusalem.'
10. Or as Frye puts a similar point, Blake gives the impression of being 'peculiarly modern and relevant to the twentieth century': that is, '[w]hat Blake

demonstrates is the sanity of genius and the madness of the commonplace mind, and it is here that he has something very apposite to say to the twentieth century, with its interest in the arts of neurosis and the politics of paranoia' (*FS*, 12–13).

11. Blake reiterates this crucial point in many ways. He remarks, for example, that 'The Sun's Light when he unfolds it Depends on the Organ that beholds it.' Summing up the matter, Frye notes that Blake 'sees all that he can see of all that he wants to see; the perceivers of the guinea-sun see all that they want to see of all that they can see' (*FS*, 21).
12. The irony of modern physics is that when the 'classical' or Newtonian interpretation of rational explanation is pushed beyond its limits, it becomes mired in 'paradoxes' that perhaps illustrate the wisdom of one of Blake's more cryptic observations: 'If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.' Or to put this point more politely, modern physics can be said to have returned modern thought to 'precisely the point where the non-Western [indigenous] people began'; that is, with a refusal 'to allow artificial divisions of subject-object, mind-matter, and space-time to lead us astray' (Vine Deloria, Jr., *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* [New York: Harper & Row, 1979] 39).
13. This wisdom is also promised by the liberating possibilities of art, for Wisdom, as Frye puts it, is 'the application of the imaginative vision taught us by art' (86).
14. As reported by William E. Hocking in his essay 'Whitehead as I Knew Him,' in George L. Kline ed, *Alfred North Whitehead: Essays on His Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1963), 717.
15. See Barfield (*History in English Words,* 139) who notes that the modern philosopher is 'consuming the fruits of a long, agonizing struggle to state the exact relation between spirit and matter, every time he uses such key-words of thought as *absolute, actual, attribute, cause, concept, deduction, essence, existence* …'[the list is impressively long]. The contributions of both Whitehead and Coleridge to the quest for a true naturalism are thus especially important just because they point up the need for a theory of actuality capable of bridging the gap the moderns have reopened between matter and spirit.
16. See, e.g., Harold Bloom, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?* (New York: Penguin, 2004).
17. Deleuze notes that Nietzsche's interest in Heraclitus derives in part from his belief that Heraclitus is a model of the tragic thinker who 'understands existence on the basis of an *instinct of play.*' Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche & Philosophy* (1962), trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 23.
18. 'We are here to witness,' says the poet-metaphysician Annie Dillard. For the little role that human beings play in Life is not, as is commonly believed, to explain the world so much as it is to watch the 'whole inhuman array.' See *Teaching a Stone to Talk* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1982), 90.
19. After a lifetime of musing on the relations between logic, mathematics, science, and philosophy, he concludes that 'philosophy is akin to poetry, and both of them seek to express that ultimate good sense which we term civilization' (*MT*, vii).
20. Cf. e.g., Owen Barfield, *Rediscovery of Meaning and Other Essays* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 63. Barfield claims that 'an apparent intercommunion between things utterly heterogeneous is the true mark of metaphor and may be significant of spiritual substance.'

21. As the poet Joseph Brodsky puts it, poetry illustrates 'accelerated thinking.' Philosophy, by contrast, always includes a touch of misosophy (to use Deleuze's term), for it involves a slow and dogged wrestling with extant concepts and theories.
22. The trope of apprenticeship informs Deleuze's reading of Marcel Proust's great text *In Search of Lost Time*, which for him is a record of a prolonged apprenticeship in the art of interpreting signs. See Gilles Deleuze (1964), *Proust & Signs*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
23. Indeed, '[l]earning is the appropriate name for the subjective acts carried out when one is confronted with the objecticity of a problem (Idea), whereas knowledge designates only the generality of concepts or the calm possession of a rule enabling solutions' (*DR*, 164).
24. This power thus warrants speaking about the 'objecticity' or the 'positivity' of the Idea; which suggests once again that philosophy is not a *mere* game, especially if 'problematic Ideas are precisely the ultimate elements of nature and the subliminal objects of little perceptions' (*DR*, 165).

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