

THE ARRIVAL OF MIMESIS AND
METHEXIS IN THE ENQUIRIES
OF JEAN-LUC NANCY

N I ALDRIDGE

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THE ARRIVAL OF MIMESIS AND
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NICHOLAS IAIN ALDRIDGE

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Abstract

This thesis advances from the conjecture that Jean-Luc Nancy's work demands to be interpreted according to the logic it describes. For Nancy unity is irreducible from exposure, because a distinct entity cannot be abstracted from its boundary conditions. It is my contention, therefore, that Nancy's work must be treated accordingly, as a syntactic unity that can only be understood in its exposure to other syntactic unities. Two interrelated claims are therefore made. First: that the current literature on Nancy's work fails to identify that an inheritance from Plato and from Greek philosophy more widely is a key to the specificity of Nancy's thinking, and second that only by retrieving this connection can Nancy's contribution to contemporary ontological debates be made out.

The thesis attempts to take a preliminary step in this direction by positioning Nancy's work within a contemporary philosophical scene definitively characterised by its exposure to Ancient Greek philosophy. This investigation places a conceptual focus on the Platonic terms *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, terms which bear a rich history of implications in philosophies of immanence, transcendence, production, and art. I argue that in showing that there is never *μίμησις* without *μέθεξις*, and vice versa, Nancy shows that there is never immanence without transcendence, and vice versa. Furthermore, I argue that this mutuality places sensibility at the core of Nancy's thought, and determines the artwork to be a privileged site at which the reciprocity of immanence and transcendence is presented. In this much, I suggest Nancy's work offers an alternative to the demand for some mutually exclusive decision between immanence and transcendence.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

With regard to the *μέθεξι*ν it was only the term that he changed; for whereas the Pythagoreans say that things exist by *μιμήσει* of numbers, Plato says that they exist by *μεθέξει* - merely a change of term. As to what this *μέθεξι*ν or *μίμησι*ν may be, they left this an open question.¹

ARISTOTLE, *Metaphysics*

That no *mimesis* occurs without *methexis* (under threat of being nothing but a copy, a reproduction): here is the principle. Reciprocally, no doubt, there is no *methexis* that does not imply *mimesis*, that is, precisely production (not reproduction) in the form of a force communicated in participation.²

NANCY, *The Image: Mimesis and Methexis*

¹ Aristotle, *Aristotle in Twenty-Three Volumes*, xvii: *The Metaphysics*, trans. by Hugh Tredennick (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1989) (Greek elements from: Aristotle, *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, ed. by William David Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924)), 987b.

² Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis and Methexis' (2007), trans. by Ron Estes & Jean-Christophe Cloutier, in *Theory@Bufallo*, 11 (2007), 9-26 (pp. 10-11).

1.1 Introduction: the arrival of μίμησις and μέθεξις

The concepts of μίμησις and μέθεξις³ first appear in combination in Nancy's work in 1980, in 'Le mythe nazi' ['The Nazi Myth'], a paper co-authored with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe⁴ and delivered at Schiltigheim that May, at a colloquium entitled *Les Mécanismes du fascisme*.⁵ There the two thinkers state:

German tradition adds something to the classical, Greek theory of mythic imitation, of *mimesis* - or develops, very insistently, something that, in Plato for example, was really only nascent, that is, a theory of fusion or mystical participation (of *methexis*, as Lucien Lévy-Bruhl will say), of which the best example is the Dionysian experience, as described by Nietzsche.⁶

The word μίμησις, literally "imitation" or "mimicking", is already a loaded term at this juncture, both for Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, and for the wider conversation in which they are working.⁷ In their co-authored 1978 work *L'Absolu littéraire: theorie de la litterature du romantisme allemand* [*The Literary Absolute: The*

³ Due to the many different ways in which Greek terms are transliterated throughout the literature, including in many of the quotes I have embedded within this thesis, I have opted to write them in Greek wherever they appear in my own prose to avoid confusion.

⁴ The concept of μίμησις is a central theme of Lacoue-Labarthe's work, but what I am pointing to here is the inflection it takes on when said alongside μέθεξις. See for example: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (1979), ed. by Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁵ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth' (1980), trans. by Brian Holmes, *Critical Enquiry*, 16.2 (Winter 1990), 291-312 (p. 291).

⁶ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', p. 302.

⁷ At least since its central place in 1972's *La dissemination*, the word μίμησις implicates a conversation with Derrida. Indeed in 1975, both Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy contributed essays to the collection *Mimesis: des articulations*, which contains Derrida's essay 'Economimesis'. Nancy's paper, 'Le ventriloque (A mon père, X.)', sets the tone for his future interrogations by approaching the status of the concept in the dialogues of Plato. See: Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (1972), trans. by Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone, 1981); Various, *Mimesis: des articulations* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1975); and the English translation: Jacques Derrida, 'Economimesis' (1975), trans. by Richard Klein, in *Diacritics* 11.2 (Summer 1981), 2-25.

Theory of Literature in German Romanticism], for instance, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe had already pursued what they refer to there as the mimetic ‘ambivalence’⁸ that problematises literature’s and philosophy’s mutual reliance upon one another, an ambivalence that Nancy asserts, many years later, is given rise to for the reason that in *μίμησις* ‘the non-given must be sought through the given’.⁹ For ‘[a]s Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has repeated and articulated throughout all his work’, Nancy goes on, ‘the true character of mimesis is to be *without model*,¹⁰ that is, a copy or a copying without an original.

The word *μέθεξις*, literally rendered “participation” or “sharing”, invokes a family of problematics as old as philosophy, particularly when said in combination with *μίμησις*. Two years after the 1980 seminar paper, in a rich text entitled *Le Partage des voix* [‘Sharing Voices’], Nancy asserts of Plato’s dialogue *Ion* (a dialogue which, in fact, never explicitly names *μίμησις* within its concerns¹¹), that it demonstrates the way in which *μίμησις*, copying, when bereft of a given original, is revealed as ‘active, creative, or re-creative’,¹² which is to say, it re-produces only insofar as it produces both itself and an original, neither of which pre-exist the operation, and this means that *μίμησις* ‘proceeds from *methexis*’, participation, or conversely, that ‘*mimesis* is the condition of this participation’.¹³

⁸ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (1978), trans. by Philip Barnard & Cheryl Lester (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 68.

⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing* (2007), trans. by Philip Armstrong (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), p. 61.

¹⁰ Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, p. 61.

¹¹ Plato, ‘Ion’, in *Plato With an English Translation*, III: *Statesman, Philebus, Ion*, trans. by Walter Rangeley Maitland Lamb (London: Heinemann, 1962), pp. 407-47 (including parallel Greek text).

¹² Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’ (1982), trans. by Gayle L. Ormiston, in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, ed. by Gayle L. Ormiston & Alan D. Schrift (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), pp. 211-60 (p. 238).

¹³ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 238.

This moment signals the entrance of a specific trajectory in Nancy's work, one which, I would like to suggest, constitutes a response to the extensive ontological determinations given to both *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* throughout the entire tradition of philosophy, and a response to an ambiguous connection between the terms which is already documented in the texts of philosophy's nascency. To understand Nancy's response, this history requires charting, up to its arrival and interpretation in Nancy's work. However this thesis would fail if it attempted to fulfil such a grandiose challenge. Instead, I will focus on the way in which these concepts and the questions surrounding them have already been reactivated within a contemporary philosophical scene fundamentally oriented towards its own history, and given over to Nancy's interrogations already full with meaning.

The next chapter of this thesis attempts to set the scene of this reactivation by focusing on two contemporary philosophers, Martin Heidegger and Gilles Deleuze, who, I argue, not only maintain very specific orientations to the history of philosophy, but, in specific relation to this thesis' questions, also offer strong interpretations of the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*. This chapter reveals an unlikely agreement between the two thinkers, through which a notion of the contemporary context of a reception of Greek philosophy may be constructed. Such a construction enables the next chapter to locate Gadamer's and Nancy's responses to the inheritance of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* in a space of contemporaneity which opens out between Heidegger's (1889-1976) and Deleuze's (1925-95) responses to the Greeks. Both, I will suggest, replace *μέθεξις* with *μίμησις*, albeit in different ways. Even in light of the brief allusions to Nancy just made, it is already clear that for Nancy there will be no such exclusive choice between the two. Furthermore, I will argue that both Heidegger and Deleuze reject *μέθεξις* for what

they interpret as its Platonic implication of a transcendent or dualistic ontology, replacing it with *μίμησις* for the reason that, they claim, *μίμησις* describes the distribution and connection of beings on an immanent horizon. In light of Nancy's affirmation of the mutuality of the two concepts, this thesis' argument, concomitantly, is that the newly interpreted concepts form a central part of the apparatus with which an idiosyncratically Nancean ontology of mutual immanence and transcendence is described.

In chapter three, an alternative, affirmative account of *μέθεξις* is documented in the texts of an equally historically-oriented philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer. I will suggest that this account, in which Gadamer affirms the transcendent aspects of *μέθεξις* and instead rejects *μίμησις* as a deficient concept with which to make ontological descriptions, represents an alternative trajectory in the thinking of *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις*. In this chapter too, I aim to show that Nancy responds by demonstrating the impossibility of disconnecting *μίμησις* from *μέθεξις*, or transcendence from immanence. Unlike Heidegger's and Deleuze's accounts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, however, I will suggest that Nancy does not outright reject, but rather radicalises Gadamer's account. Namely, I will suggest that Nancy completes and totalises Gadamer's reorientation of the vertical *μέθεξις* of a dualism between the sensuous and suprasensuous, into a horizontal *μέθεξις* between beings. Gadamer's accommodation of transcendence within an immanent horizon, I will suggest, in this way forms an incomplete prototype for Nancy's ontology of mutual immanence and transcendence.

Finally, chapter four approaches from the contraposition by investigating what in turn becomes of mimetic theories of art, once the concept of *μίμησις* has been shown to be entirely inseparable from *μέθεξις* and its ontological force. Focusing

specifically on those philosophies of art that assign the artwork a foundational role in the formation of political or ideological identities, that is, those that make art the principle of a people's communal immanence, I will suggest that because for Nancy this *μίμησις* is inseparable from *μέθεξις*, Nancy therefore reconceives of this aesthetic origin as inherently plural. As such, I suggest, the repeated turns to considerations of art within the Nancean corpus can be understood as ways in which Nancy's work approaches the question of origin without reducing the necessarily multiplicitous nature of a mutually transcendent and immanent ontology.

Here in this introductory chapter I would like only to introduce the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, their history and their appearance in Nancy's work, in a very general way. Beginning by marking out the terminological transformation of the everyday Greek concepts in the formative texts of philosophy, I note in a preliminary way the objections levelled at the terms, namely that *μέθεξις* is either logically inconsistent, or that it is only ambiguously and problematically differentiated from *μίμησις*. I then trace the way the two concepts are invoked together across diverse texts in the Nancean corpus, and point out that their uses in his work are always linked to Nancy's long running interrogation of the opposing topological figures of immanence and transcendence.

Proceeding to note the central place an encounter between these tropes takes within contemporary philosophical debate, I suggest that Nancy's analyses of the natures of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, and immanence and transcendence, therefore constitute a contribution to this recent dialogue by connecting its terms back to their Ancient Greek inception. The focus brought about by the terminological lens of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, however, also concomitantly brackets the discussion. As

such, the thesis makes no claim to directly tackle the broader questions of immanence and transcendence which are ever present throughout the various strands and histories of philosophy. Rather, I make a more localised claim concerning Nancy's interpretation of immanence and transcendence. I claim that for Nancy, at their most simple and fundamental level, the terms operate as relational topological concepts for describing the separation of beings or lack thereof, and, moreover, are but dual facets abstracted from one primordial figure.

This figure Nancy introduces in 1993's *Le sens du monde* [*The Sense of the World*] under the neologism 'transimmanence',¹⁴ Nancy's word for an ontological law of spacing wherein the shared boundaries that distinguish all beings from one another determine both their extension and exposure along the same border, such that separation is always mediated and contact is always exclusive. This notion of a transimmanent world that is the sum total of exposed surfaces, in which immanence is the touch of that which transcends, and that which transcends is never out of touch, is introduced in more detail in section (1.4). By focusing the discussion on those places in the Nancean text that enquire around *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* and their deployment in the philosophical scene, Nancy's notion of transimmanence as an elemental topological law is not situated within the broader debate on transcendence and immanence, but rather in the context of a series of specific territories.

The next section of this introductory chapter concerns one of these territories. I argue there that Nancy's affirmation of the inseparability of immanence and

¹⁴ Here the French term is incorporated in the English translation. See for comparison: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le sens du monde*, (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1993), pp. 91 & 94; and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (1993), trans. by Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 55.

transcendence from the limit at which they meet and codetermine places the study of the aesthetic sensibility, the limit that connects human immanence and transcendence, at the heart of Nancy's philosophical investigations. The upshot of this for Nancy, I argue, is that not only does the obstinacy of *μίμησις* interrupt the ontological discourses whose interrogations of *μέθεξις* had always fallen exclusively on one side of the division between immanence and transcendence, but in philosophies of aesthetic sensibility as well as aesthetic projects and philosophies of art, *μέθεξις* for Nancy stubbornly imposes upon any theory in which *μίμησις* would have been the law of a unilateral operation of copying or representing. Moreover, in this parallel an important principle that recurs throughout the thesis is exposed, that for Nancy the study of the aesthetic cannot be separated from the study of the aesthetic sensibility, which is to say, the essence or singularity of art cannot be disconnected from the plurality of sensuous events and contacts that, for Nancy, constitute it.

In the remaining sections of this introductory chapter, I indicate the place at which this thesis enters the extant literature on Nancy's work, and, furthermore, argue for its necessity. After noting the lingering impression precipitated by an early phase in Nancy scholarship, I suggest there are three key themes around which the commentary is currently structured: community, writing, and emergent accounts of ontology, art and the connection Nancy identifies between them. After describing the agreements and disagreements both within and between these regional dialogues, I state that this thesis is largely in conformity with the available texts on Nancy's ontological and aesthetic commitments. My contribution to the current body of knowledge, I maintain, comes in initiating a project of tracing these commitments back to the birth of philosophy in Ancient Greece, via the genealogy of thoughts borne by the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, specifically, in the

instance of this thesis, in their reawakened form handed over for interrogation by certain contemporary philosophies. This chapter then closes by outlining the structure of the forthcoming chapters.

1.2 A terminological background of μίμησις and μέθεξις

The common usage of the word μέθεξις and its derivatives is recorded in the plays of Euripides, an immediate predecessor of Plato, and also of Aristophanes, Plato's contemporary. In Euripides' *Helen*, the Dioskouroi, Kastor and Polydeukes, declare to Theoklymenos that Helen, their sister, his runaway fiancée, will be taken by fate and made a goddess and 'shall partake [μεθέξεις] with us the rich oblations, and receive the gifts of men: for thus hath Jove decreed'.¹⁵ Likewise in his *Ion*, the word again refers to a shared reception, when an attendant of Creusa, the raped mother of Ion, warns her fellow attendants that they will all 'share [μεθέξεις] the punishment'¹⁶ of stoning, for conspiring with Creusa to poison Ion, ignorant that he is in fact her son. In the *Ecclesiazusae*, written after Plato's death, Aristophanes satirises a sexually socialist Athens in which all men can claim their 'share [μεθέξει] of the common property', the women, but only on the proviso that they first take a share of the 'ugliest and the most flat-nosed'.¹⁷

With Plato, μέθεξις takes on a philosophical weight. In the early dialogues,¹⁸ in which, according to Vlastos, Plato depicts Socrates as an exclusively moral

¹⁵ Euripides, 'Helen', trans. by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Henry Hart Milman, Robert Potter & Michael Wodhull, in *The Plays of Euripides*, vol. I (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1910), pp. 100-158 (Greek elements from: 'Helen', in *Euripidis Fabulae*, ed. by Gilbert Murray, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902)), 1668.

¹⁶ Euripides, 'Ion', trans. by Deborah H. Roberts, in *Euripides*, ed. by David R. Slavitt & Palmer Bovie, vol. IV (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 1-92 (Greek elements from: 'Ion', in *Euripidis Fabulae*, ed. by Gilbert Murray, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913)), 1115.

¹⁷ Aristophanes, 'Ecclesiazusae', trans. by anonymous, in *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. by Whitney J. Oates & Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), pp. 1007-62 (Greek elements from: 'Ecclesiazusae', in *Aristophanis Comoediae*, ed. by Frederick William Hall & William Geldart, vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907)), 612.

¹⁸ Vlastos' list of early dialogues is: *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Protagoras* and *Republic I*. See: Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 46.

philosopher,¹⁹ μέθεξις is used concordantly, with all the emphasis placed on the word's second element εξις,²⁰ the word Plato uses for human habit in the *Republic*,²¹ and Aristotle uses for disposition in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.²² In the *Charmides*, for instance, Socrates asks Charmides if he considers himself to 'partake [μετέχειν] sufficiently of temperance'.²³ In the *Laches* also, Socrates announces that if judged 'in deeds I think anyone would say that we partook [μετέχειν] of courage',²⁴ and in the *Gorgias*, Callicles speaks of education requiring one 'to partake [μετέχειν] of philosophy'.²⁵ But in the *Protagoras*, the concept of μέθεξις is given its strongest ethical definition, when it is used to describe the disposition that is fundamentally definitive of the human, the very fact that the human is dis-posed at all.

Protagoras relays the story that Epimetheus implored his brother Prometheus to let him allocate every living creature its proper δύναμιν εἰς σωτηρίαν, the innate strengths, camouflages, speeds, buoyancies, or armours that will allow the creature to survive, and that when he was granted his wish he forgot about the human, forcing Prometheus to compensate by stealing ἔντεχνον σοφίαν σὺν πυρί,

¹⁹ Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, p. 47.

²⁰ We see in chapter three that Gadamer translates and transposes this etymology from μετά-εξις into *Mit-Dasein*.

²¹ Plato, *The Republic*, vols. I-II, trans. by Paul Shorey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937) (including parallel Greek text), 433e & 435b.

²² Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by James Alexander Kerr Thomson (London: Penguin, 2004) (Greek elements from: *Aristotle's Ethica Nicomachea*, ed. by Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894)), 1098b & 1103a.

²³ Plato, 'Charmides', trans. by Rosamond Kent Sprague, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), pp. 639-63 (Greek elements from: 'Charmides', in *Platonis Opera*, ed. by Burnet, vol. III, pp. 153-76), 158c.

²⁴ Plato, 'Laches', trans. by Rosamond Kent Sprague, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, pp. 664-686 (Greek elements from: 'Laches', in *Platonis Opera*, ed. by Burnet, vol. III, pp. 178-291), 193e.

²⁵ Plato, 'Gorgias', trans. by Donald J. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, pp. 791-869 (Greek elements from: 'Gorgias', in *Platonis Opera*, ed. by Burnet, vol. III, pp. 447-527), 485a.

technical wisdom and fire, from Hephaestus and Athena, and allocating them to the human creature.²⁶ Protagoras tells Socrates that this stolen gift gave the human a 'share [μετέσχε] of the divine [θείας] dispensation'.²⁷ This share, Protagoras explains, situates the human in a between place, facing the gods in one direction although only able to worship them by proxy through 'sacred images [ἀγάλματα θεῶν]',²⁸ and in the other direction facing the surroundings with which he or she can again only interact at a remove, dividing his or her surroundings linguistically by taxonomy,²⁹ and dwelling with the technical objects he or she creates.³⁰ Here, then, even in an early dialogue, μέθεξις is already tied up with the fact that to be human is to find oneself somewhere between heaven and earth, between the immanent and the transcendent, with only a mediated relation to each.

From the middle dialogues onwards,³¹ Vlastos explains, Socrates is portrayed as the exponent of an all-encompassing philosophical system, 'a grandiose metaphysical theory of "separately existing" Forms and of a separable soul which learns by "recollecting" pieces of its pre-natal fund of knowledge'.³² In perhaps the most unsubtle presentation of the dualism that has become synonymous with

²⁶ Plato, 'Protagoras', trans. by Stanley Lombardo & Karen Bell, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, pp. 746-90 (Greek elements from: 'Protagoras', in *Platonis Opera*, ed. by Burnet, vol. III, pp. 309-62), 320e-1d

²⁷ Plato, 'Protagoras', 321d.

²⁸ Plato, 'Protagoras', 322a.

²⁹ 'φωνήν καὶ ὀνόματα ταχὺ διηρθρώσατο τῇ τέχνῃ'. Plato, 'Protagoras', 322a.

³⁰ 'οἰκήσεις καὶ ἐσθῆτας καὶ ὑποδέσεις καὶ στρωμνὰς καὶ τὰς ἐκ γῆς τροφὰς ἠὔρετο'. Plato, 'Protagoras', 322a.

³¹ Vlastos lists: *Cratylus*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic* II-X, *Phaedrus*, *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* as middle dialogues, with *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Philebus* and *Laws* constituting the final sequence. Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, p. 47.

³² Vlastos' divisions are not as sheer as I have portrayed them above, because his reading emphasises that the philosophical opinions ascribed to Socrates in the dialogues receive strong qualification by way of the dialogues' narrative quality, opening a dialogical space between Socrates' speeches and his interactions. Vlastos, *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, p. 48.

Plato's philosophy, in the *Phaedo* a strong differentiation is drawn between, on the one hand, those who accept that their souls partake [μετέχειν] in embodiment (an ontological determination of the concept), but nevertheless choose not to partake [μετέχειν] in the pleasures this offers (an ethical determination of the concept), and on the other, the hedonist who cares only for these pleasures [ἡδονὰς].³³

In line with the broadened terms of Socrates' engagements, in the *Phaedo* the concept of μέθεξις describes not only a human disposition, but now also the connection between the sensible entities the human encounters and their metaphysically ideal counterparts. For Socrates asserts to Cebes, quite definitively, 'if anything is beautiful besides absolute beauty it is beautiful for no other reason than because it partakes [μετέχειν] of absolute beauty; and this applies to everything'.³⁴ In this way, the μέθεξις that names the human's limited access to the divine, given in recompense for Epimetheus' error, mirrors the μέθεξις by which sensible entities are what they are by their limited participation in perfection.

In the *Cratylus*, Socrates even goes as far as to discuss the very terminology of this dualism. Suggesting that the wise ancients who first named the goddess Hestia derived her name in accordance with her theological supremacy, from an etymological association with concepts of being, Socrates states:

Well, it's obvious to me that it was people of this sort who gave things names, for even if one investigates names foreign to Attic Greek, it is equally easy to discover what they mean. In the case of what we in Attic

³³ Plato, 'Phaedo', in *Plato With an English Translation*, trans. by Harold North Fowler, 1: *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus* (London: Heinemann, 1914), pp. 193-404 (including parallel Greek text), 64e-5a.

³⁴ Plato, 'Phaedo', 100c.

call 'ousia' ('being'), for example, some call it 'essia' and others 'ōsia'. First, then, it is reasonable, according to the second of these names, to call the being or essence (*ousia*) of things 'Hestia'. Besides, we ourselves say that what partakes of [μετέχοντι] being 'is' ('*estin*'), so being is also correctly called 'Hestia' for this reason. We even seem to have called being 'essia' in ancient times. And, if one has sacrifices in mind, one will realize that the namegivers themselves understood matters in this way, for anyone who called the being or essence of all things 'essia' would naturally sacrifice to Hestia before all the other gods. On the other hand, those who use the name 'ōsia' seem to agree pretty much with Heraclitus' doctrine that the things that are are all flowing and that nothing stands fast - for the cause and originator of them is then the pusher (*ōthoun*), and so is well named 'ōsia'.³⁵

However, the concept of *μέθεξις* is not always afforded an uncritical presentation in Plato's texts. In both the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*, Plato subjects his ontological hierarchy of perfection, and the concept of *μέθεξις* that connects its degrees, to lengthy dialectical investigations designed to draw out the aporetic. In the *Sophist*, the Stranger shows Theaetetus that logical troubles arise when one apparent thing is said to partake in contradictory modalities, for instance, when non-existence is predicated in the plural,³⁶ or when motion, under examination, reveals itself as relationally transient but autonomously self-same, such that 'motion would be at rest and rest would be in motion; in respect of both, for whichever of the two became "other" would force the other to change its nature into that of its opposite, since it would participate [μετασχόν] in its opposite'.³⁷

Parmenides raises similar challenges to the character of the young Socrates in the

³⁵ Plato, 'Cratylus', trans. by C. D. C. Reeve, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by Cooper, pp. 101-56 (Greek elements from: 'Cratylus', in *Platonis Opera*, ed. by Burnet, vol. 1, pp. 383-440), 401b-d.

³⁶ Plato, 'Sophist', in *Plato With an English Translation*, II: *Theaetetus, Sophist*, trans. by Harold North Fowler (London: Heinemann, 1914), pp. 259-459 (including parallel Greek text), 238a-e.

³⁷ Plato, 'Sophist', 255a-b.

Parmenides, adding to them a question of how a plurality of sensible entities sharing similar attributes could all be said to partake in the same ideality, if this ideality, as a perfect original, is by definition singular.³⁸³⁹ The internal tension of a dialogical text, that is, the difference between the content of the speeches recorded by Plato, and the space opened in the interlocution, gives these interrogations to interpretation, opening up the possibility of the rich history of responses, affirmations, and objections that follows.

One of the many objections raised against Platonic *μέθεξις* is that it has an ambiguous relationship to the concept of *μίμησις*. As Jaspers points out, in some places Plato describes *μέθεξις* as the quasi-presence of the Form and corresponding sensible being in one another, their *παρουσία*,⁴⁰ an intimate connectivity, but in others,⁴¹ ‘the Idea is likened to an archetype or prototype

³⁸ Plato, ‘Parmenides’, in *Plato, IV: Cratylus, Parmenides, Greater Hippias, Lesser Hippias*, trans. by Harold North Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), pp. 193-332 (including parallel Greek text), 131a-d.

³⁹ This aporia, first raised by Plato, goes on to be the basis of two closely related critiques of Platonic philosophy. The first, Aristotle’s so-called “Third Man Argument”, asserts that if many things partake in one form, then for Plato the singularity of a higher form must not be individual but instead generic, which, for Aristotle, means that a higher form will always require a yet-more perfect form to account for its identity, thus leading to infinite regress. The second, Plotinus’ development of the “Sailcloth Dilemma”, implies instead that separating one level of perfection from another in turn creates internal separations mirroring the individuation of sensible things. We will see in chapter 3 that Gadamer offers a different interpretation of this “dilemma”. See: Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 990b; and: Plotinus, *On the One and Good being the Treatises of the Sixth Ennead*, trans. by Stephen Mackenna & B. S. Page (Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, 1928), 4.7.

⁴⁰ See for example: Plato, ‘Sophist’, 247a, and: Plato, ‘Phaedo’, 100d.

⁴¹ See for example: Plato, *Plato With an English Translation*, ix: *Laws in Two Volumes*, vols. I-II, trans. by Robert Gregg Bury (London: Heinemann, 1914) (including parallel Greek text), 2.668b & 7.817b, and: Plato, ‘Timaeus’, trans. by Donald J. Zeyl, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper (Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), pp. 1224-92 (Greek elements from: ‘Timaeus’, in *Platonis Opera*, ed. by Burnet, vol. iv, pp. 17-105), 39e.

(*paradeigma*), [and] the thing to a copy or imitation (*mimēsis*)'.⁴² This reservation dates back to Aristotle, who, in the *Metaphysics*, asserts that *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, according to their deployment in Plato's philosophy, are but two words for the same thing.⁴³ For Aristotle, the ambiguity of the terms reflects the ambiguity of the philosophical system under examination.⁴⁴ Yet, as with *μέθεξις*, *μίμησις* already has a pre-philosophical semantic content. Herodotus, an immediate predecessor to Plato, records forms of the word in his historical chronicles as used in reference both to the imitative arts, when writing of the Egyptians' 'painted likenesses [*γραφῆ μιμημένα*]',⁴⁵ and also to cultural emulation, such as when he finds the Asbystae to 'imitate [*μιμέσθαι*] most of the Cyrenaean customs'.⁴⁶ Moreover, in Aristophanes we find these two usages combined in the theatrical, the artistic emulation of playing a role, donning the 'trappings [*σκευῆν*]',⁴⁷ or the 'outfit [*στολή*]',⁴⁸ in order to 'imitate [*μιμήσομαι*]'.⁴⁹

These employments are not replaced in the Platonic text, only enriched, for while, as Jaspers suggests, Plato does indeed in some places refer to *μίμησις* as an ontological function akin to *μέθεξις*, he more often speaks of it as something the human *does*. Indeed, the oft-cited example, from Book X of the *Republic*, in which

⁴² Karl Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine* (1957), trans. by Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), p. 30.

⁴³ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

⁴⁴ 'As to what this "participation" or "imitation" may be, they left this an open question'. Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

⁴⁵ Herodotus, *Herodotus with an English translation by A. D. Godley*, ed. by Alfred Denis Godley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920) (including parallel Greek text), 2.86.

⁴⁶ Herodotus, *Herodotus with an English translation by A. D. Godley*, 4.170.

⁴⁷ Aristophanes, 'Frogs', trans. by Gilbert Murray, in *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. by Oates & O'Neill, Jr., pp. 919-1006 (Greek elements from: Aristophanes, 'Frogs', in *Aristophanis Comoediae*, ed. by Hall & Geldart, vol. II), 110.

⁴⁸ Aristophanes, 'Thesmophoriazusae', trans. by anonymous, in *The Complete Greek Drama*, ed. by Oates & O'Neill, Jr., pp. 867-918 (Greek elements from: Aristophanes, 'Thesmophoriazusae', in *Aristophanis Comoediae*, ed. by Hall & Geldart, vol. II), 851.

⁴⁹ Aristophanes, 'Thesmophoriazusae', 850.

Plato banishes the *μίμησις* of the painter and poet from the ideal city state for producing deficient copies distant from the ideal,⁵⁰ is prefaced in Book III by a much more balanced critique of the theatrical version of *μίμησις*. As Gebauer and Wulf show, the purpose of Plato's criticism in this earlier passage is not to pass judgment over *μίμησις* qua *μίμησις*, but rather to identify whom the best role-model should be if we accept that *παιδεία*,⁵¹ education, does often happen by way of emulation and role-playing. On Gebauer's and Wulf's reading, the clear answer Plato gives is that the philosopher, rather than the poet, should take up this position.⁵²

Why the object of emulation should be the philosopher rather than the poet, Plato attempts to demonstrate in a thought experiment: if we take away the poet's multi-voiced style, that is, remove the way he or she speaks in character, but leave the words, then 'simple narration results', but take away the words and leave the 'alternation of speeches' and 'the opposite arises.'⁵³ Plato makes it clear that it is not in the words of the poet that Athenians should fear for the corruption of their students, but the way in which they are said. That is to say, the content of the poetry might be entirely accurate and just as enlightening as the teachings of the philosopher (just as the works of the photo-realist artist might be indiscernible from the "real" thing), but so long as the poet speaks in multiple voices while concealing their own, 'effect[ing] their narration through imitation [*μιμήσεως*]',⁵⁴ their teaching remains deficient.

⁵⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, 597c-e.

⁵¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 416c.

⁵² Gunter Gebauer & Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society* (1992), trans. by Don Reneau (California: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 33-7.

⁵³ Plato, *The Republic*, 394a-b.

⁵⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, 393c.

By Plato's account it is therefore not theatrical or educational *μίμησις* in itself that is problematic, but rather, for the same reason that in Book X the artist is accused of failing to copy the ideal directly, the entire critique stems from the subjugation of *μίμησις* to *μέθεξις*. The only reason *μίμησις* is judged to be inauthentic in each case is that it has no *μέθεξις*, whereas to copy the philosopher, or to copy the ideal is a different story entirely, for there the imitation's meaning is firmly oriented toward perfection, rather than deferred along a chain of further copies. As much as Aristotle criticises Plato's reasoning on this point, he nevertheless echoes its imperative in his *Politics*, when he states that 'The Directors of Education, as they are termed, should be careful what tales or stories the children hear, for the sports of children are designed to prepare the way for the business of later life, and should be for the most part imitations [*μιμήσεις*] of the occupations which they will hereafter pursue in earnest'.⁵⁵

In his *Poetics*, aside from classifying a number of different genres of *μίμησις*, 'Epic poetry and Tragedy, as also Comedy, Dithyrambic poetry, and most fluteplaying and lyre-playing',⁵⁶ according to the ways in which they exaggerate or exemplify, mock or exalt, Aristotle makes the rather more general claim that the pleasure [*εὐφράνειν*] we find in art is a direct result of its mimetic quality.⁵⁷ What this means, first of all, is that for Aristotle the pleasure of art has little to do with beauty:

though the objects themselves may be painful to see, we delight to view
the most realistic representations of them in art, the forms for example

⁵⁵ Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926) (Greek elements from: Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politica*, ed. by William David Ross (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957)), 1336a.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, trans. by Ingram Bywater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920) (Greek elements from: Aristotle, *Aristotle's Ars Poetica*, ed. by Rudolf Kassel (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966)), 1447a.

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, 1450b.

of the lowest animals and of dead bodies. The explanation is to be found in a further fact: to be learning something is the greatest of pleasures not only to the philosopher but also to the rest of mankind, however small their capacity for it; the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning - gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-so; for if one has not seen the thing before, one's pleasure will not be in the picture as an imitation of it, but will be due to the execution or colouring or some similar cause.⁵⁸

Not only does art have little to do with the beautiful then, for Aristotle, imitation, *μίμησις*, also has little to do with the imitated. Rather, in something like a piece of tragic theatre, Aristotle explains, its characters and plot constitutes 'an imitation [*μίμησις*] not of persons but of action and life [*βίου*]',⁵⁹ such that one does not need to recall its characters or happenings as people or events already experienced, rather 'the reason of the delight in seeing the picture [*εἰκόνας*]'⁶⁰ comes not from recollection or even direct comparison, but from *μανθάνειν*, learning, in the form of *συλλογίζεσθαι*, the syllogistic reasoning by which the audience makes the connection, transforming an artistic implication into a determinate representation, thus making representation an internal cognitive function rather than a genuinely existing relationship between entities.⁶¹

Although Aristotle can stay with Plato's definition of the emulative, educational mode of *μίμησις*, stating that '[i]mitation [*μιμεῖσθαι*] is natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative [*μιμητικώτατόν*] creature in the world, and learns at first by imitation

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, 1448b.

⁵⁹ Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, 1450a.

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, 1448b.

⁶¹ Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, 1448b.

[μιμήσεως],⁶² he cannot qualify it by or analogue it to μέθεξις, because for Aristotle there is no original, perfect or otherwise, to which the mimetic correlates. The audience is the correlate, but only insofar as they project themselves upon the artwork and delight in the way it modifies and reflects them back: a hermeneutic circle. Here then, in philosophy's formative years, the mimetic ambivalence Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe affirm is already presented.

In 1983's 'Le mythe interrompu' ['Myth Interrupted'] Nancy draws the conclusion from mimetic ambivalence that '[t]he myth of myth', that is, the story we tell ourselves of an outmoded epoch of stories, which in its own way becomes our own founding myth, our narrative of the absence of grand narratives,⁶³ 'is in no way an ontological fiction; it is nothing other than an ontology of fiction or representation', because '[m]imesis is the *poiesis*⁶⁴ of the world as true world of gods, of men, and of nature'.⁶⁵ What this means is that our myth, the myth of the absence of myth, in which the very word "myth" comes to 'mean the negation of something at least as much as the affirmation of something',⁶⁶ for example, when we recount Protagoras' story of Prometheus and Epimetheus as, in the same breath, a lore for one world and an obsolete fable for another, misses the fact that 'to speak of myth has only ever been to speak of its absence', because, like

⁶² Aristotle, *On The Art of Poetry*, 1448b.

⁶³ This is a reference to Lyotard's definition of the postmodern. See: Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), trans. by Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, pp. 37-41).

⁶⁴ This seems to be a mistake in the English translation of 'Myth Interrupted', as Nancy spells the word *poiesis* in the original, see: Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Communauté désœuvrée* (1983) (Paris: Christian Bourgois éditeur, 1999), p. 139.

⁶⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Myth Interrupted' (1983), trans. by Peter Connor, in *The Inoperative Community*, ed. by Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 43-70 (p. 55).

⁶⁶ Nancy, 'Myth Interrupted', p. 52.

μίμησις, 'the word "myth" itself designates the absence of what it names'.⁶⁷ We know nothing of what it would have been like to live in a time of myth because at that point our word "myth" becomes inadequate. As Nancy puts it three years later in *L'oubli de la philosophie* [*The Forgetting of Philosophy*]:

There was *another* day, then, upon which we cannot confer the meaning of any of our days or nights. The question of an order exterior to signification cannot be posed under the conditions or in the terms of signification (thus all our conceptions of "myth" have never made us accede to a "life in myth," if this expression means anything; or else, on another level, all our thoughts of *mimesis* set themselves the task of thinking the fact that it is impossible to signify what the West's first models were, or, more radically, whether there was or is a model for the logic of *mimesis*).⁶⁸

What this amounts to for Nancy is that the mythical worldview is not determinable as that which has been left behind, for what is exterior to our epoch simply cannot be spoken of without determining it as a negative correlate, projecting upon it a fullness of meaning that would simulate a dialectical counterpoint to mimetic ambivalence. But it is precisely the unspeakability or unknowability of origin that in turn defines our (and Aristotle's) *μίμησις*, both in its instances (as we saw in Aristotle's theatrical hermeneutics, wherein the given gestures towards the non-given), and its general logic, according to a "myth of myth", by which *μίμησις* determines itself as deficiency, according to the nostalgia it projects. In 'Myth Interrupted', Nancy goes on:

⁶⁷ Nancy, 'Myth Interrupted', p. 52.

⁶⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Forgetting of Philosophy' (1986), trans. by François Raffoul & Gregory Recco, in *The Gravity of Thought* (New York: Humanity Books, 1997), pp. 7-74 (p. 28).

Myth is not simple representation, it is representation at work, producing itself - in an autopoietic mimesis - as effect: it is fiction that founds. And what it founds is not a fictive world (which is what Schelling and Lévi-Strauss challenged), but fictioning as the fashioning of a world, or the becoming-world of fictioning. In other words, the fashioning of a world for the subject, the becoming-world of subjectivity.⁶⁹

In 1990's 'L'insacrifiable' ['The Unsacrificeable'], Nancy ties together his analyses of myth and *μίμησις* with the critique of communitarianist and immanentist politics he had presented in the principal essay⁷⁰ of *La communauté désoeuivrée* [*The Inoperative Community*]. There he points out that in the same way that the impossibility of recovering original myth tempts us to conceive it as the polar opposite of our rational logos, that is to say, something in which meaning is wholly given and lived in immediacy, likewise, 'we know precisely nothing about early sacrifice',⁷¹ and the attendant provocation is again to imagine something has been lost, or, according to a Christian eschatology, that something has been gained – an authentic Christ-like self-sacrifice which retrospectively denotes the bloody variety of sacrifice as a weak precursor, but which is, nevertheless, entirely incomprehensible. Whichever way you wish to look at it, that is, whichever is considered a *μίμησις* of its more authentic counterpart, Nancy asserts that the presupposition in each case is that that which the sacrifice mimes is a communion,

⁶⁹ Nancy. 'Myth Interrupted', p. 56.

⁷⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community' (1983), trans. by Peter Connor, in *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Connor, pp. 1-42. The English translation replaces chapter four, 'L'être-en-commun', and chapter five, 'L'histoire finie', with 'Shattered Love', a translation of 'L'amour en éclats', from 1990's *Une pensée finie*, and 'Of Divine Places', from 1987's *Des lieux divins: Suivi de Calcul du poète* (Mauvezin: Trans-Europ-Repress). The lost chapters from *La communauté désoeuivrée* show up as 'Finite History', trans. by Brian Holmes, in *The Birth to Presence*, pp. 143-66, and 'Of Being-in-Common', trans. by James Creech, in *Community at Loose Ends*, ed. by The Miami Theory Collective (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 1-12.

⁷¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable' (1990), trans. by Richard Stamp & Simon Sparks, in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. by Simon Sparks (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 51-77 (p. 73).

a transgression of boundaries between the people and each other and between the people and their gods, the miming of the presence of each in the other, *μέθεξις* as *παρουσία*, the miming of an immanent participation of a community by way of a transcendent transgression of the absolute boundary between the finite and infinite. But, Nancy asks:

why shouldn't we grasp mimesis on the basis of a *methexis*, a communication or contagion that, outside the West, has perhaps never had the meaning of a communion, which we have tended to give it? What escapes us, and what "Western sacrifice" at once misses and sublates, is an essential *discontinuity of methexis*, an in-communication of every community.⁷²

A participation by imitation then, which modulates the intimacy of *μέθεξις* against the externality of *μίμησις* by taking seriously a claim Nancy attributes to Bataille, explored at length in *The Inoperative Community*, that the "co" of community is not that of communion, a subsumption of all into each other or the one, but the "co" of communication, an activity that is predicated upon heterogeneity, a movement of meaning between distinct parts.⁷³ Grasping *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* on the basis of discontinuity means conceiving of an intersubjective relation constituted neither by transmissions across a gulf of absolute disconnection, and nor as an absolute immediacy and indiscernibility in which everything is given and nothing happens.

Nancy describes this discontinuity in *The Inoperative Community* as 'the sharing [*partage*⁷⁴] that divides and that puts in communication bodies, voices, and

⁷² Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', 327 n. 30.

⁷³ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community', p. 12.

⁷⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Communauté désœuvrée* (1983) (Paris: Christian Bourgois éditeur, 1999), p. 25.

writings',⁷⁵ and in the 'Unsacrificeable' as '[t]he horizon [that] holds existence at a distance from itself'.⁷⁶ It is the thought, as Nancy puts it in the community essay, that 'singularity never has the nature or the structure of individuality',⁷⁷ a thought that I will suggest connects the long heritage of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, the terms' many varying invocations of a relationship between matter and meaning, via their transformation in Nancy's work, to a contemporary discussion over the priority of immanence, or transcendence in philosophy, which I would like to introduce in the following section.

⁷⁵ Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community', p. 6.

⁷⁶ Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', p. 76.

⁷⁷ Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community', p. 6.

1.3 Immanence and transcendence as contemporary philosophical themes

To transcend means to climb (*scandere*) beyond (*trans*-). To be immanent means to dwell (*manere*) in. Not only do these antithetical images move us into a Latin based etymology, but according to Giorgio Agamben they govern two distinct trajectories in the genealogy of twentieth century thoughts about the nature of life. As advocates of the centrality of the transcendent, Agamben names Derrida⁷⁸ and Levinas, whose emphases on the primacy of an ethical responsibility to other persons organises their philosophical investigations around the irreducible transcendence of ethical alterity. On the immanent path are Deleuze and Foucault. Deleuze, Agamben explains, separates a transcendental horizon from any 'cent[re] of individuation'⁷⁹ or consciousness, rendering it an 'impersonal zone'⁸⁰ immanent only to itself. Foucault, according to Agamben, separates life from 'confrontation with death',⁸¹ drawing it back from the moment of absolute transgression.

In a diagram, Agamben illustrates the passage of these thoughts into the contemporary, the transcendent schema travelling via Kant and Husserl, and the immanent via Spinoza and Nietzsche. At the centre of the diagram, the name through which nearly all of Agamben's trajectories pass into the contemporary, and the sole name to take up a position between transcendence and immanence,

⁷⁸ In a footnote to the opening section of 2005's *Déconstruction du christianisme: Tome 1, La Déclosion* [*Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*], Nancy suggests that Derrida knew 'despite himself' that the core philosophical difference that lead to so many of their more minor disagreements was a disagreement over the nature of immanence and transcendence. Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Opening' (2005), trans. by Bettina Bergo, in *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 1-13 (176-7 n. 15).

⁷⁹ Giorgio Agamben, 'Absolute Immanence' (1996), trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen, in *Potentialities*, ed. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (California: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 220-242 (p. 225).

⁸⁰ Agamben, 'Absolute Immanence', p. 225.

⁸¹ Agamben, 'Absolute Immanence', p. 238.

is “Heidegger”.⁸² It is the contention of this thesis that Nancy’s thought should also be understood as positioned on this middle path, the path that refuses an exclusive choice between the immanent and the transcendent. As has already been stated, I am going to argue that a negotiation between immanence and transcendence can be traced all the way to philosophy’s Ancient Greek origins, and that in order to fully understand Nancy’s commitments, his work requires positioning in relation to this long problematic, specifically in light of Nancy’s use of the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*.

In 1990’s ‘L’amour en éclats’ [‘Shattered Love’], Nancy writes that ‘[t]ranscendence is the disimplication [*désimplication*]⁸³ of the immanence that can come to it only from the outside’.⁸⁴ Implication, in both English and French, is rooted in *implicare*, the verb for entwining. To implicate is to bring something other into a necessary involvement. It forms an inductive proposition. Disimplication, the reverse, describes the dialectical process of the disentwining or *diaeresis* of terms whose mutuality is already latent. Castoriadis, for example, writes of the analytic connection between cause and effect, that ‘[i]t is self-evident and well known that logical implication is an elaborated identity, that the conclusion is simply a disimplication of what is already in the premises’.⁸⁵

⁸² Agamben, ‘Absolute Immanence’, p. 239.

⁸³ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘L’amour en éclats’, in *Une pensée finie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), p. 248.

⁸⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Shattered Love’ (1990), trans. by Lisa Garbus & Simona Sawhney in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. by Sparks, pp. 245-274 (p. 261).

⁸⁵ Cornelius Castoriadis, ‘The Social Imaginary and the Institution’ (1975), trans. by David Ames Curtis, in *The Castoriadis Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 196-217 (p. 212).

Lyotard demonstrates this with reference to Hegel. For Hegel, who, Lyotard writes, 'understands meaning as signification',⁸⁶ the triangular image of the Christian Trinity is ambiguous because it both signifies and symbolises simultaneously⁸⁷ and 'does not carry with it the index of its functions or the formula for its usage'.⁸⁸ For Hegel, by Lyotard's account, it is in the discursive '*désimplication*',⁸⁹ that the mingled metaphor of God and triangle, problematically '*intertwined* in the symbol' [my italics],⁹⁰ is translated into simile as 'two concepts laid out on the surface of the linguistic order'.⁹¹ 'Thus truth is placed into discourse as discontinuous',⁹² that is, Lyotard explains, the identity of the symbol is represented under the regime of signification as externally related elements, and the disimplicated, the figurative, is placed under a negative determination.

For Nancy, the transcendent and the immanent are dichotomous elements produced by the disimplication of the limit that simultaneously distinguishes and exposes all beings from, and to, one another. Nancy's is a thought 'of a world whose matter is the very fraying [*frayage*] or fractality of fragments, places, and takings-place',⁹³ a world of objects divided by (transcendent to) an intricately folded limit that is also the site of their touch (immanence), a world that is nothing before or beyond the sum total of these divisions and exposures. This does not mean, as Harman incorrectly asserts, that in a Nancean ontology, all objects are reducible to the function of their relations, that for Nancy 'there can be only

⁸⁶ Jean François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure* (1971), trans. by Antony Hudek & Mary Lydon (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 46.

⁸⁷ Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, p. 45.

⁸⁸ Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, p. 46.

⁸⁹ Jean François Lyotard, *Discours, figure* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1971), p. 49.

⁹⁰ Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, p. 47.

⁹¹ Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, p. 47.

⁹² Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, p. 47.

⁹³ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 58.

relational forms, not *substantial* forms'.⁹⁴ Rather, for Nancy objectuality and relation are absolutely unthinkable in abstraction from their pairing.

For Nancy, objectuality is distinction, and distinction is distinction from other distinct beings, and thus a relation to other beings. Neither is appended to the other, because enclosure and exposure happen at the same boundary. Harman's definition of the object as 'a concrete reality that has specific determination or form quite apart from its relations with anything else, and quite apart from its purely accidental way of being on the stage at any moment',⁹⁵ is unintelligible according to the tenets of Nancy's topology, for it demands the distinct be distinguished from nothing. And the 'pure immanence of a pure transcendence', Nancy writes in *The Sense of the World*, 'does not even go so far as to take place'.⁹⁶

For Nancy there is nothing other than beings, no indeterminate substratum from which they arise or within which they chance upon one other, for as Nancy puts it in a lecture of 2000, '[t]he singular implies its limit. It does more than implying it: it posits it with itself; it posits itself as *its limit*, and it posits the limit as *its own* [...a]n interval separates the singular in order for it to be singular'.⁹⁷ And in 1996's *Être singulier pluriel* [*Being Singular Plural*], Nancy writes:

From one singular to another, there is contiguity but not continuity. There is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up. All of being is in touch with all of

⁹⁴ Graham Harman, 'On Interface: Nancy's Weights and Masses', in *Jean-Luc Nancy and Plural Thinking: Expositions of World, Ontology, Politics, and Sense*, ed. by Peter Gratton & Marie-Eve Morin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), pp. 95-107 (p. 103).

⁹⁵ Harman, 'On Interface', p. 102.

⁹⁶ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 30.

⁹⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Banks, Edges, Limits (of Singularity)' (2000), trans. by Gil Anidjar, in *Angelaki*, 9.2 (2004), 41-53 (p. 43).

being, but the law of touching is separation; moreover, it is the heterogeneity of surfaces that touch each other. *Contact* is beyond fullness and emptiness, beyond connection and disconnection.⁹⁸

Consider the equal and adjacent checkering of squares on a chessboard. Fold the edges of the chessboard together to form a sphere, the two dimensional surface of which is entirely populated by contiguous squares, cleaved by one continuous boundary-line interlaced in a web. Every square is immanent to its four neighbours; it touches them, is enclosed by them and exposed to them. As gestalt theory tells us, each square's inside is in fact a function of its exposure to the other squares, and theirs to its, for they are each each-other's backgrounds, mutually. Adjust this externally shared limit and the very internal constitutions of the neighbouring squares are reconfigured. They are intimately connected, immanent, and yet nevertheless transcendent, separate in their contact.

No square escapes exposure, that is, there is no absolute transcendence, but neither is every square exposed to every other square, that is, there is no absolute immanence. This is what Nancy means when he demands immanence be wrenched away from its confusion with immediacy.⁹⁹ The squares are all in-touch, but this touch is mediated, not by some substratum or *milieu*, but by each other. There is no unclaimed territory between the squares, no neutral space, because space (or time¹⁰⁰) is not something that lies in wait for objects to enter it, it is opened by the limits that share it out. Neither does the chessboard have an

⁹⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural' (1996), trans. by Robert D. Richardson & Anne E. O'Byrne, in *Being Singular Plural* (California: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 1-100 (p. 5).

⁹⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Heart of Things' (1989), trans. by Brian Holmes & Rodney Trumble, in *The Birth to Presence* (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 167-88 (p. 182).

¹⁰⁰ See for example: Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 61.

outside edge, an absolute circumscription from being, the ideal, or oblivion, rather, the totality of squares is contained only by the internal border of each one upon the other:

What is a singularity? It is that which occurs only once [*c'est ce qui n'a lieu qu'une fois*], at a single point (out of time and out of place, in short), that which is an exception. Not a particular, which comes to belong to a genre, but a unique property that escapes appropriation - an exclusive touch - and that, as such, is neither extracted or removed from, nor opposed to, a common ground.¹⁰¹

The common for Nancy is nothing beneath, before, between or beyond the plurality of singulars in touch with one another, the '*transimmanence*, or more simply and strongly, [the] existence and exposition'¹⁰² of the world. Unlike Agamben's examples of Derrida, Levinas, Deleuze and Foucault, all of whom Agamben cites as connecting the figures of immanence and transcendence to human life, for Nancy, "that which occurs only once", the singular that is both enclosed and exposed by its transimmanence, by 'the original singularity of being',¹⁰³ applies just as much to humans, dogs, and stones,¹⁰⁴ as it does to 'the first stone that's thrown, a sheet of paper, galaxies, the wind, my television screen, a quark, my big toe, a trapped nerve, prostheses, organs planted or grafted beneath my skin, placed or exposed inside, all things exposing themselves and exposing us, between them and between us, between them and us, together and singularly'.¹⁰⁵ The whole world, human and inhuman, is made up of its own transcendence of its own immanence. When it comes to being, to the stubborn but

¹⁰¹ Nancy, 'Banks, Edges, Limits', p. 41.

¹⁰² Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 55.

¹⁰³ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 18.

¹⁰⁴ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 18.

¹⁰⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Res ipsa et ultima' (1999), trans. by Steven Miller, in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. by Sparks, pp. 311-28 (p. 316).

shared resistance of limits that distinguish and expose, 'a mere rock "responds" just as much as a man named Peter: there is being-exposed in a crowded world',¹⁰⁶ the rock pushes back against Peter's touch, asserting itself, articulating itself as one necessary part of the incalculably complex and vast network of mutual exposures that makes 'the world as the network of all surfaces'.¹⁰⁷

Nancy's example of a rock is meant to recall Heidegger's famous assertion that 'the stone is worldless, the animal is poor in world, man is world-forming'.¹⁰⁸ Earlier in *The Sense of the World*, before the discussion of Peter's encounter with the rock, Nancy writes of Heidegger's words:

These statements do not do justice, at least, to this: that the world beyond humanity - animals, plants, and stones, oceans, atmospheres, sidereal spaces and bodies - is quite a bit more than the phenomenal correlative of a human taking-in-hand, taking-into-account, or taking-care-of: it is the effective exteriority without which the very disposition of or to sense would not make... any sense. One could say that this world beyond humanity is the effective exteriority of *humanity itself* if the formula is understood in such a way as to avoid construing the relation between humanity and world as a relation between subject and object. For it is a question of understanding the world not as man's object or field of action, but as the spatial totality of the sense of existence, a totality that is itself *existent*, even if not in the mode of *Dasein*.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 71.

¹⁰⁷ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (1929-30), trans. by William McNeill & Nicholas Walker (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 185.

¹⁰⁹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, pp. 55-6.

In 'Of Being Singular Plural', Nancy writes that *Dasein* is not differentiated from other beings as a 'true existence' opposed to 'a sort of subexistence',¹¹⁰ because *Dasein* only exists inasmuch as it has a body, meaning that it is a singularity, transimmanently distinct and exposed, in accordance with the same logic of being that governs every object. But it is, nevertheless, differentiated. While Nancy avoids making any definitive claims about a hierarchy of awareness that might classify *Dasein*, different species of animals, or indeed rocks, he does venture to echo Aristotle¹¹¹ in stating that "articulated comprehension" is exclusively a property of *Dasein*.¹¹² But the comprehension articulated is a comprehension of the pre-articulated sense of the world, which is precisely the constantly circulating and fluctuating renegotiation and reconfiguration of the shared limits of transimmanence, to which, as a singularity, *Dasein* is also subject. *Dasein* experiences and comprehends singularities as singularities, and thus comprehends the pre-linguistic configuration of the world, but *Dasein* is one singularity of this world, and this world of singularities, while it is in no place interrupted by an absolute transcendence, nevertheless stretches far beyond *Dasein's* immediate access, so that the meaning *Dasein* attempts to articulate always exceeds the articulation. It is in this sense that Nancy can claim, in 'Of Being Singular Plural', that 'humanity speaks existence, but what speaks through its speech says the whole of being'.¹¹³

Insofar as *Dasein* is, by Nancy's account, a singularity, and as such implies, posits, or simply *is* its limit, the limit that encloses and exposes, Nancy is able to

¹¹⁰ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 18.

¹¹¹ In the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle differentiates humans from other animals, not by denying animals *αἰσθητική*, sensibility, but the means to communicate it, *λόγον ἔχοντος*. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098a.

¹¹² Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 56.

¹¹³ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 17.

say that while ‘Heidegger clearly states that being-with¹¹⁴ (*Mitsein*, *Miteinandersein*, and *Mitdasein*) is essential to the constitution of *Dasein* itself’,¹¹⁵ ‘[i]n his analytic of *Mitsein*, Heidegger does not do this measure justice’.¹¹⁶ Because he holds to the disimplicated opposition of absolute immanence and absolute transcendence, for Nancy, Heidegger leaves himself only two options by which to conceive of the community of *Dasein*, either as the mere contingency of wholly distinct agents chancing upon each other within a pre-existing world, an “uncircumspective tarrying alongside”,¹¹⁷ or, as Nancy puts it in 2003, the opposite, ‘a Being-with unlike the putting together of things, but an essential *with* [...] introduce[d by] the category of *the people* which will come to crystallize the possibility of *Dasein* to historicize itself’.¹¹⁸

In other words, we have pure exteriority and pure interiority at both extremities. Between those two another regime appears, one that is hard to name. However, one must immediately note that the two extreme regimes are *a priori* at least potentially detracting from the principle of the essentiality of the *with*: the former insofar as it seems to fall back into the simple contiguity of things, the latter one insofar as it seems to suppose a single communal *Dasein* beyond the singulars. In fact, it is exactly this double potentiality that is mobilized in *Being and Time*, and this happens precisely because the intermediary regime remains underdeveloped in this work and will remain so in the rest of Heidegger’s work.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927), trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 149-68.

¹¹⁵ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 26.

¹¹⁶ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 82.

¹¹⁷ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 82.

¹¹⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘The being-with of being-there’ (2003), trans. by Marie-Eve Morin, in *Continental Philosophy Review*, 41 (2008), 1-15 (p. 3).

¹¹⁹ Nancy, ‘The being-with of being-there’, p. 4.

The long-running interrogation of community, being-with and being-together which thematises an extensive portion of the Nancean text pursues the “hard to name” middle ground between the two regimes of absolute immanence and pure interiority, and absolute transcendence and pure exteriority. Understood as a singularity, subject to the complex network of transimmanence distinguishing and exposing all things, for Nancy *Dasein* quite simply *is Mitsein*. Returning to Nancy’s lecture on singularity, there he asserts that ‘[t]o be *jemeinig* is to be “mine” or “one’s,” not “each time” in the sense of all the times and of always, but on the contrary according to the discontinuity and the discretion of times [*fois*], of space-times [*espaces-temps*] or of taking-places [*des avoirs-lieux*].¹²⁰ Existing through and as its limit, both spatially and temporally, *Dasein* is exposed at this limit, and is as such nothing reducible from its exposition or openness to others. Absolute transcendence would withdraw the resistance against which *Dasein* encloses itself as singular; absolute immanence would empty-out every *Dasein’s jemeinigkeit* in sacrifice to total communion. ‘[B]eing-in-common’, is thus neither exclusively a relation of exteriority nor interiority, it is ‘what makes us and founds us’, such that the question of the “social nature of man” is for Nancy neither a question of ethics nor politics, it is a question of ontology, for being-with is not added on to being, it is its fundamental condition, plural singularity’s adherence to the law of the limit that encloses and exposes:

"Self" does not mean in itself, or by itself, or for itself, but rather "one of us": one that is each time at a remove from immanence or from the collective, but is also each time coessential to the coexistence of each one, of "each and every one."¹²¹

¹²⁰ Nancy, ‘Banks, Edges, Limits’, p. 43.

¹²¹ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 66.

The questions of community, being-in-common, and being-with, arrive early in the eighties in Nancy's work and have been ever-present since, and are treated at length in the secondary literature.¹²² Here, however, the focus on Nancy's mediated relation to Greek philosophy precludes any detailed review of the commentary's rich moments.

¹²² Beyond the two texts just referenced, see also Nancy's 'Of-Being-in-Common' and *The Inoperative Community*, which prefigure their direct interrogation of Heidegger. For a full-length exploration of these themes and their context in the secondary literature, see: Ignaas Devisch, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Question of Community* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

1.4 Sense

When next Nancy appeals to the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, in the main essay of 1994's *Les muses* [*The Muses*], 'Pourquoi y a-t-il plusieurs arts et non pas un seul?' ['Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?'], they are written as a pair, '*mimēsis/methexis*',¹²³ signifying that Nancy's accounts of the equiprimordiality of singularity and its limit, presented in the texts leading up to 1994, have rendered untenable any fully separating distinction between externality and intimacy. Particularly in 1988's 'Le rire, la presence' ['Laughter, Presence'¹²⁴], 1990's *A Finite Thinking*, 1992's *Corpus*,¹²⁵ and 1993's *The Sense of the World*, Nancy develops a description of sensibility to match the transimmanence of singularity, a description of the organs of sense, the bodily apparatuses by which we are exposed to the world, as obeying the law of the limit, which determines them to be irreducible from that which they expose.

By rethinking sensibility as the transimmanent limit that encloses and exposes the human body, and thus also as an aspect of the excessive limit that is unendingly

¹²³ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?' (1994), trans. by Peggy Kamuf, in *The Muses* (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 1-39 (p. 24).

¹²⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Laughter, Presence' (1988), trans. by Emily McVarish, in *The Birth to Presence*, pp. 368-92.

¹²⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Corpus' (1992), trans. by Richard A. Rand, in *Corpus* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 1-121. A much shorter version of 'Corpus' was presented in 1990, before the International Association of Philosophy and Literature at The University of California, Irvine. When this version came to be published some years later, it appeared only in English translation, included in the first Anglophone collection of Nancy's essays, *The Birth to Presence*. By this point, however, a lengthier version bearing the same title had already spent a year in circulation as a standalone issue in its native French. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (Paris: Diffusion Seuil, 1992). It was this version that went on to be updated in a second edition in 2006 with the inclusion of adjoining work and commentary, taking an opportunity to bring together Nancy's writing on the body with a piece he had penned recounting the experience of his own embodiment during the near-terminal illnesses which punctuated the separating years. The 2006 structure provides the template for the 2008 translation cited here. These translations are henceforth referred to in chronological order as versions (a) and (b).

redistributed in the circulation of pre-linguistic meaning that constitutes the world as the sum total of exposed surfaces, Nancy can load the French word *sens*, which is even more homographic than its English counterpart, with all of the connotations of its various everyday uses at once: sensuousness and sensation, meaning and common-sense, and, exclusively to the French word, direction and directedness, which is to say, the ‘*being-to or being-toward [être à]*’¹²⁶ each other of singularities. In this way, both hermeneutics as the study of *sens* (meaning), and ontology as the study of *sens* (being-toward, the exposure that singularises), become fundamentally connected to aesthetics as the study of *sens* (sensibility or *αἴσθησις*¹²⁷) in Nancy’s philosophy:

The general rhythm¹²⁸ of the sensuous or of sense is the movement of this *mimēsis/methexis* “among” forms or presences that do not pre-exist it, definitively, but that arise from it as such. It is, right at [*à même*]¹²⁹ the forms or the presences, the mobility that raises them up as such – and that raises them much less in relation to a “ground” (perhaps there is no ground for all these figures, no other “ground” than their differences) than it raises some in relation to others, all of them being thus grounds or figures for one another.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 8.

¹²⁷ See for example: Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1047a.

¹²⁸ In a footnote Nancy points the reader towards Émile Benveniste’s structural analysis of the word “rhythm”, which raises its deployment in the Pre-Socratic atomism of Leucippus and Democritus, where it is a mode in which atoms differ from each other by way of the internal fluctuation of the world, against Aristotle’s teleological locomotion and Plato’s reduction of rhythm to measure. See: Émile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics* (1966), trans. by Mary Elizabeth Meek (Florida: Miami University Press, 1971), p. 287; Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1073a, and: Plato. *Laws in Two Volumes*, 728e.

¹²⁹ Raffoul notes that Nancy’s ‘attempt to think a radical immanence to this movement of an existence (transcendence) passing to the limit is conveyed by Nancy’s frequent use of the expression *à même*-which could be rendered as “at the very level of,” “right at,” “right on,” “in the same element as,” or “immanent to,” that is, not taking place before, beneath, or beyond that to which it is related, but “at” it.’ François Raffoul, ‘Translator’s Preface’, in Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Gravity of Thought* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 1997), pp. vii-xxxii (p. xvi).

¹³⁰ Nancy, ‘Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?’, p. 24.

The play of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, the interdependence of external exposure and internal intimacy fluctuating at the limit all singularities share, describes the sensuously structured human body as something that happens, a 'return of the "outside" that is to this "inside" that it isn't',¹³¹ the ec-stasis of that which does not pre-exist its dichotomous exposition, and the "raising" of forms and presences that do not pre-exist the body's contact. It is, Nancy writes in *The Muses*:

neither a relation of external homology nor an internal osmosis, but what might be described, with the etymology of *re-pondere*, as a pledge, a promise given in response to a demand, to an appeal: the different touchings promise each other the communication of their interruptions; each brings about a touch on the difference of the other (of an other or several others, and virtually of all others, but of a totality without totalization).¹³²

Moreover, Nancy writes, in *The Sense of the World*, '[t]he five senses are not the fragments of a transcendent or immanent sense', rather, '[t]hey are the fragmentation or the fractality of the sense that is sense only as fragment'.¹³³ This *μίμησις/μέθεξις* across presences, at the sensuous limit, does not resolve the many sensory organs to form one discrete unity modulated at the limit of other singularities, rather the 'general play' is 'mixed together across all the senses',¹³⁴ and 'synesthesia' is precisely *not* a synthesis,¹³⁵ for each sense is singular only insofar as it is one of many,¹³⁶ and in their interlacing and inter-exposure, a

¹³¹ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 67.

¹³² Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 23.

¹³³ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 129.

¹³⁴ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 24.

¹³⁵ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 23.

¹³⁶ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 13.

multiplicity of registers invoke one another in making a 'dis-located generality'¹³⁷ of *αἴσθησις*.

The philosophy of art emerging from Nancy's transformation and prioritisation of sensibility, is likewise governed by 'the truth of the singular plural',¹³⁸ but not at all in the sense that the truth or essence of art is given as a homological principle tying the spectrum of disciplines to the distribution of human senses. Not only, Nancy points out, is there no such correlation between traditional genres and traditionally defined senses (where, for example, would the difference lie between painting and sculpture, if both kinds of artworks are made to be seen by the eye?), but furthermore, there are long and not entirely determinable lists both of leftfield art practices ('cooking, perfumery'...¹³⁹) and non-traditional forms of sensibility ("thermoreceptors," "photoreceptors," "chemoreceptors," "electroreceptors,"...¹⁴⁰), not to mention the fact that for Nancy the senses come to be what they are only in their dynamic heterology, their *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*. To the contrary, Nancy writes, 'the truth of the singular plural of art [is] in the fact that the arts are themselves *innumerable*, and of their forms, registers, calibers, touches, exchanges through *mimēsis* and *methexis*'.¹⁴¹ Which is to say, the arts are not plural instances of an artistic essence, conversely, the plural is the principle of art.¹⁴²

However the importance of art for Nancy goes far beyond its irreducibility from the multiplicity of its instances (which could be seen as nothing more than another application of the laws of singularity), by providing a privileged site for a

¹³⁷ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 16.

¹³⁸ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 32.

¹³⁹ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 12.

¹⁴¹ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 32.

¹⁴² Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', pp. 1-2.

transgressive phenomenological enquiry. Nancy criticises phenomenology for stopping short of the excess it opens onto, that while it crucially 'opened up to us a new access to the world', by 'delineating it as the absolute horizon of sense that is no longer subordinated either to a beyond-the-world or to mere representation', nevertheless in approaching the phenomenon always according to 'a "subject" of the vision of *phainein*' (*Dasein*'s un-concealing or the Ego's apperception), the absolute horizon reinstalls the absolutely transcendent as a correlate of the immanent moment of phenomenological disclosure.¹⁴³ '[A]ll types of phenomenology', Nancy writes, 'indeed all types of beyond-phenomenology, do not open sufficiently to the coming of sense, to sense as a coming that is *neither immanent nor transcendent*'.¹⁴⁴

There are times, however, Nancy observes, that 'phenomenology itself reaches its limit and exceeds it',¹⁴⁵ as, for example, when Husserl asserts in the *Cartesian Meditations* that the '*temporal co-existence*'¹⁴⁶ of monads engaged in their own independent temporalizing activities, is guaranteed by 'the intrinsically first being, the being that precedes and bears every worldly Objectivity [...] transcendental intersubjectivity'.¹⁴⁷ However, for Nancy, the phenomenological transgression of the phenomenon is all too often annexed by a compensatory move, such as when Husserl determines this intersubjectivity as 'transcendental solidarity rather than [as] empirico-transcendental simultaneity'.¹⁴⁸ Nancy's countermove is to pursue these moments, moments in which the sensibility gestures beyond its immediate

¹⁴³ Nancy, *The Sense of The World*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁴ Nancy, *The Sense of The World*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', 200 n. 53.

¹⁴⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (1931), trans. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 139.

¹⁴⁷ Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, p. 156.

¹⁴⁸ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 76.

exposure, not, of course, to the absolutely transcendent, but to the transimmanence that exceeds, but indirectly bears on, every contact.

In the analysis of the audible¹⁴⁹ provided by Nancy in 2002's *A l'écoute* [*Listening*], he makes the claim that 'the visual is tendentially mimetic, and the sonorous tendentially methexic (that is, having to do with participation, sharing, or contagion)'.¹⁵⁰ Although quick to remind the reader that this metaphorical distinction cannot obscure the necessarily mutual *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* of sensory registers with each other, it does nonetheless point to a certain access point for a transgressive phenomenology, because while on the optic register, the *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* of sensory exposure happens both instantaneously, and without trace of hiatus or transmission (we perceive the light of the television as a phenomenon on the screen, not as a beam that connects us to it), the sonorous quite literally resonates and echoes, disclosing the distinction of singularities along with their communication:

Sensing (*aesthesis*) is always a perception, that is, a feeling-oneself-feel: or, if you prefer, sensing is a subject, or it does not sense. But it is perhaps in the sonorous register that this reflected structure is most obviously manifest, and in any case offers itself as open structure, spaced and spacing (resonance chamber, acoustic space, the distancing of a repeat), at the same time as an intersection, mixture, covering up in the referral of the perceptible with the perceived as well as with the other senses.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Nancy discussion here also opens onto a discussion of Husserl, this time the lectures on time consciousness.

¹⁵⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening* (2002), trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 10.

¹⁵¹ Nancy, *Listening*, p. 8.

A sonorous phenomenology therefore holds a latency for disclosing not only how the phenomenon presents itself for itself, but how the exposure of singularities that constitutes the arrival of a phenomenon is also constitutive of a “subject”, a sensing and referring between two singularities that are irreducible from their exposure. That is to say, rather than the phenomenological reflection finding that ‘the subject is referred back to itself as object’, stable recipient of an optical image, it rather finds that it is ‘to itself that the subject refers’, which means, a referring to a referring, a reflection upon the constitutive reflecting of *aesthesis*.¹⁵² Such a phenomenology opens up to the transimmanent dynamics of sense that is always closed down in an opticentric analysis.

Art, for Nancy, operates in a very similar way to the sonorous, for it does not simply show the experiencer a meaning, it ‘makes us feel [...] a certain perception of self in the world’,¹⁵³ that is, the artwork does not signify, but ostends towards the networking and circulation of meanings and possibilities, the fluctuation of the limit of singularity, a circulation in which the viewer is implicated, not as a spectator, but as a player. In 1994’s ‘Peinture dans la grotte’ [‘Painting in the Grotto’], Nancy describes the birth of humanity in the caves of Lascaux as consisting in just such an act, of making an image that refers to a referring, showing the world and the human in exposure to one another, which means a presentation of a separation, but a separation in touch, that allows things to be what they are. ‘For the first time’, Nancy writes, the human ‘touches the wall not as a support, nor as an obstacle or something to lean on, but as a place’.¹⁵⁴ What art comes down to, then, is not a presentation of the trace of the auteur, nor of a specific meaning or formation of

¹⁵² Nancy, *Listening*, p. 10.

¹⁵³ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Art Today’ (2006), trans. by Charlotte Mandell, in *Journal of Visual Culture*, 9.91 (2010), 91-99.

¹⁵⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Painting in the Grotto’ (1994), trans. by Peggy Kamuf, in *The Muses*, pp. 69-79, (p. 75).

the world, but simply 'the fact *that there is* world',¹⁵⁵ which means, that singularities are exposed and continue to be so.

Earlier in *The Muses*, in its principal essay, Nancy writes quite simply, art is 'presentation of presentation'.¹⁵⁶ Art does not present a presence, it just keeps presenting, it never settles down into a fixed signification, for on every viewing, every time, it announces that it is not usual, that its meaning exceeds any one description, or one time, or one place. Indeed, the art of the sonorous provides a paradigmatic example of the phenomenological privilege of the artwork for Nancean ontology:

The musical score (text?) including the words, whenever there are words, is inseparable from what we call, remarkably, its interpretation: the sense of this word oscillating then between a hermeneutics of sense and a technique of "rendering". The musical interpretation, or execution, the putting-into-action, or entelechy, cannot be simply "significant": what it concerns is not or not merely sense in this sense. And reciprocally, the execution cannot itself be signified without remainder: one cannot say what it made the "text" say. The execution can only be executed: it can be only as executed.¹⁵⁷

When Nancy calls on the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* in 1999's 'L'image - le distinct' ['The Image - the Distinct'], it is to describe a different kind of presentation of presentation, the image. The image, Nancy writes there, is 'the separate, what is set aside, removed, cut off'.¹⁵⁸ This is not to say that an artwork cannot be an image, it certainly can, but nonetheless, not all images are artworks. The image is

¹⁵⁵ Nancy, 'Painting in the Grotto', p. 76.

¹⁵⁶ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 34.

¹⁵⁷ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 86.

¹⁵⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Image - the Distinct' (1999), trans. by Jeff Fort, in *The Ground of the Image* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), pp. 1-14 (p. 1).

the presentation of singularity, which is to say, the ‘distinction of the distinct’.¹⁵⁹ The image, Nancy writes, following his understanding of *μίμησις*, strikes us as a resemblance, but in a ‘dissimilarity that inhabits resemblance’, the image ‘resembles itself and says (mutely) of itself: I am this thing’,¹⁶⁰ but this thing is thereby invoked as absent by the mimetic announcement:

What is distinct in being-there is being-image: it is not here but over there, in the distance, in a distance that is called “absence” (by which one often wants to characterize the image) only in a very hasty manner. The absence of the imaged subject is nothing other than an intense presence, receding into itself, gathering itself together in its intensity. Resemblance gathers together in force and gathers itself as a force of the *same*—the same differing in itself from itself: hence the enjoyment [*jouissance*] we take in it.¹⁶¹

In raising the image from the ground, however, something else happens, for this ‘cutout or clipping creates edges in which the image is framed’.¹⁶² As such, the ground, which in contrast to the image is defined by its inconspicuousness, for it has ‘no face or surface’,¹⁶³ is drawn into the ambivalence of the mimetic by being gestured to as a background at the edges of the image. In this way, the image’s ‘detach[ment] from a ground’ is simultaneously a ‘cut out within a ground’,¹⁶⁴ as in Nancy’s example of a Roman augur reading prophecies from birds in the sky, which by making the birds sacred, which is to say, distinct, in turn renders the sky (as the relief from which the distinct is distinguished) itself also distinct and conspicuous. ‘Thus *mimesis* encompasses *methexis*’, Nancy writes, ‘a

¹⁵⁹ Nancy, ‘The Image – the Distinct’, p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ Nancy, ‘The Image – the Distinct’, p. 9.

¹⁶¹ Nancy, ‘The Image – the Distinct’, p. 9.

¹⁶² Nancy, ‘The Image – the Distinct’, p. 9.

¹⁶³ Nancy, ‘The Image – the Distinct’, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Nancy, ‘The Image – the Distinct’, p. 7.

participation or a contagion through which the images seize us'.¹⁶⁵ Both the artwork and the image seize us by way of a transimmanent gesture beyond themselves, at their own very limits, invoking a field of singularities that presses upon them and against which they shine in relief.

The most unambiguous statement regarding the mutuality of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* comes in 2007's 'L'image: Mimesis & Methexis' ['The Image: Mimesis and Methexis']:

Mimesis and *methexis*: not in the sense of a juxtaposition of concepts to confront and dialecticize, but in the sense of an implication of one in the other. That is, an implication – in the most proper sense of the word, an enveloping through an internal folding – of *methexis* into *mimesis*, and a necessary implication, fundamental and in a certain sense generative. That no *mimesis* occurs without *methexis* (under threat of being nothing but a copy, a reproduction): here is the principle. Reciprocally, no doubt, there is no *methexis* that does not imply *mimesis*, that is, precisely production (not reproduction) in the form of a force communicated in participation.¹⁶⁶

Here, finally, Nancy explicitly returns the question of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* to Plato, raising his texts against the Aristotelian reduction of *μίμησις* to a cognitive function.¹⁶⁷ For to render *μίμησις* a mere imitation, 'presupposes the abandonment of that which is inimitable'.¹⁶⁸ In other words, to think *μίμησις* as imitation, for Nancy, would mean to disregard the excess of sense and singularity from which any image arises, the conditions that are not absolutely transcendent but neither absolutely immediate, conditions that play on the image just as much as one who

¹⁶⁵ Nancy, 'The Image – the Distinct', p. 9.

¹⁶⁶ Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis and Methexis', pp. 10-11.

¹⁶⁷ Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis and Methexis', p. 14.

¹⁶⁸ Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis and Methexis', p. 11.

witnesses it. Where Heidegger points out that the representational function of truth as adequation relies on the prior disclosure or presentation of that against which the representation is adequated,¹⁶⁹ Nancy points further, beyond the moment of the phenomenon's presentation, to the incomprehensibly complex web of interrelations and interactions that are implicated in any presencing. Recalling that 'Plato does not want to banish *mimesis*, but he does want it to be regulated according to the true', Nancy states that Plato's word for the dynamic mutuality of image and ground is '*beauty*', a reference to the *Phaedrus* to which we will see Heidegger and Gadamer both turn, and defines sublimity as nothing other than the fact that the beautiful is more than beautiful, because the image it raises is always a gesture to an excessive ground given as its relief.¹⁷⁰ For Nancy, *μίμησις* is *μέθεξις* in Plato, because *μίμησις* only refers to an original insofar it raises a ground against which it resembles itself, a ground which is precisely not for attaining, an excess of sense.

In the remaining sections of this introduction I would like to note the key themes in Nancean scholarship, in order to demonstrate where our focuses on Greek philosophy, *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, and aesthetics, sit within the conversation and to what necessity this thesis responds.

¹⁶⁹ See: Martin Heidegger, 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth' (1931/2-1940), trans. by Thomas Sheehan, in *Pathmarks*, ed. by William McNeill (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 155-82.

¹⁷⁰ Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis and Methexis', p. 11.

1.5 Themes in the critical reception of Nancy's philosophy

In O'Meara's review of a recent edited collection of essays on Nancy's political thought, in an even more recent edition of *French Studies*, she ponders 'how many more anthologies of essays explaining Jean-Luc Nancy's thought are needed before we reach a certain saturation point, or indeed get the point'.¹⁷¹ Yet the reinforcement and repetition of what appears to be only a preparatory or introductory stage in Nancy scholarship has been necessitated, I would argue, as a corrective measure, particularly in the context of Nancy's political thought, to redress the biases of an even earlier phase in the uptake of Nancy's work.

Nancy's first two books were published in the same year his doctorate was awarded, 1973, and on February 20th of that year the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan advised his seminar audience:

read a book regarding which the least one can say is that it concerns me. The book is entitled *Le titre de la lettre*,¹⁷² and was published by the Galilée publishing company, in the collection *A la lettre*. I won't tell you who the authors are - they seem to me to be no more than pawns in this case.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Lucy O'Meara, 'Review: *Jean-Luc Nancy: Justice, Legality and World*. Edited by Benjamin Hutchens. (Continuum Studies in Continental Philosophy). London: Continuum, 2011. X + 230 pp.', in *French Studies*, 67.2 (2013), 278-9 (p. 278).

¹⁷² Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le titre de la lettre; une lecture de Lacan* (Paris: Galilée, 1973). Available in translation as: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Title of the Letter: A Reading of Lacan* (1973), trans. by Francois Raffoul & David Pettigrew, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

¹⁷³ Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX, Encore* (1973), trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), p. 65.

The pawns (or as James translates – ‘underlings’¹⁷⁴) in question, are Nancy and collaborator and co-author Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The master beneath whom Lacan subjugates their text, other than the psychoanalyst of course, is Derrida. Now the fact that fifteen years later, in 1988, Badiou still says the two thinkers’ names in the same breath, and again domesticates their work beneath the weight of another celebrity name, claiming they merely ‘*delimit* Heidegger’,¹⁷⁵ speaks of a longstanding misalignment between Nancy’s work and an image portrayed of it. By this point Nancy had already been awarded the title of *Docteur d’État*,¹⁷⁶ enjoyed a rich engagement with the notoriously un-provocable Maurice Blanchot,¹⁷⁷ and published numerous works on Descartes,¹⁷⁸ Hegel,¹⁷⁹ and Kant,¹⁸⁰ amongst others. Now it is indeed true that during Nancy’s early student years at the Sorbonne, where he went from undergraduate to aggregated professor between

¹⁷⁴ Ian James, *The Fragmentary Demand* (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 49.

¹⁷⁵ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (1988), trans. by Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2007), 482-3 n. 15.

¹⁷⁶ Nancy was awarded the distinction in 1987 in Toulouse by a jury including both Derrida and Lyotard. The major thesis, written under the supervision of Gérard Granel was published in 1988 with an extra chapter as *L’expérience de la liberté* and is available in a slightly reorganised translation as: Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Experience of Freedom* (1988), trans. by Bridget McDonald (California: Stanford University Press, 1993).

¹⁷⁷ Nancy’s 1983 work *La communauté désœuvrée* met with Blanchot’s response *La communauté inavouable* the same year. Blanchot’s text is available as *The Unavowable Community*, trans. by Pierre Joris (New York: Barrytown Ltd., 2000).

¹⁷⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ego Sum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979).

¹⁷⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *La Remarque spéculative (Un bon mot de Hegel)* (Paris: Galilée, 1973). Available in translation as Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Speculative Remark: One of Hegel’s Bons Mots*, trans. by Celine Surprenant (California: Stanford University Press, 2001). This work assigns a not inconsiderable degree of centrality to Hegel’s concept of plasticity, a concept that has benefited from intricate and rich development by Catherine Malabou in recent times. See, for example, her 1996 *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, trans. by Lisabeth During, (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁸⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le discours de la syncope* (Paris: Flammarion, 1976). Available in translation as: *The Discourse of the Syncope: Logodaedalus*, trans. by Saul Anton (California: Stanford University Press, 2007).

1960 and 1964,¹⁸¹ Derrida was also present, teaching a general course in philosophy and logic,¹⁸² and assisting Paul Ricoeur with his phenomenology course.¹⁸³ And it is also well known that when Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe created the *Centre de recherches philosophiques sur le politique* in 1980 it was at Derrida's behest, and that its aim was to continue the research begun at the Cerisy colloquium that sought to take Derrida's 1968 work 'Les fins de l'homme' ['Ends of Man']¹⁸⁴ as a jump-off point for rethinking the political.¹⁸⁵ Yet Derrida never actually taught Nancy,¹⁸⁶ and in the two decades in question it was in fact Ricoeur, himself in the midst of the hermeneutic upheaval of his phenomenology,¹⁸⁷ who supervised both Nancy's *maîtrise*¹⁸⁸ while still at the Sorbonne, and his doctorate, awarded in 1973.

When Derrida's full-length book on Nancy's philosophy was published at the turn of the millennium,¹⁸⁹ the only extended studies of Nancy's philosophy in circulation were collections and special issues of journals, and moreover, they were only

¹⁸¹ In the French academic system, one can become a professor before attaining a doctorate or serving as a *maître de conférences* by passing the *agrégation*, a competitive examination opening the door to distinguished positions for the upper percentiles.

¹⁸² Alan D. Schrift, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy: Key Themes and Thinkers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 120.

¹⁸³ Schrift, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy*, p. 173.

¹⁸⁴ Available as: Jacques Derrida, 'Ends of Man' (1968), trans. by Edouard Morot-Sir, Wesley L. Piersol, Hubert L. Dreyfus & Barbara Reid, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 30.1 (1969), 31-57.

¹⁸⁵ Nancy's and Lacoue-Labarthe's core commitment during this project was to differentiate between *la politique*, politics, which is merely the management of capital and administration of policy, and *le politique*, the political, meaning the way the common is distributed in-common prior to any determination as a common property. Much of this work is collected in: Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe & Jean-Luc Nancy, *Retreating the Political* (1981), trans. by Simon Sparks (London: Routledge, 1997).

¹⁸⁶ Marie-Eve Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), p. 19.

¹⁸⁷ Bernard Dauenhauer & David Pellauer, 'Paul Ricoeur', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <<http://plato.stanford.edu>> [accessed 14 May 2013].

¹⁸⁸ The *Maîtrise* is French academia's equivalent to an MA.

¹⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Le toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Galilée, 2000).

available in English and Italian.¹⁹⁰ And although it could be argued that by his own standards Derrida's treatment of Nancy's work in that text is rather sympathetic, it was another five years before a general introduction appeared that sought to present Nancy's thought on its own terms, Hutchens' *The Future of Philosophy*.¹⁹¹ Insofar as O'Meara is correct in pointing out that since then there have been two more introductory books on Nancy, James' *The Fragmentary Demand*,¹⁹² and Morin's *Jean-Luc Nancy*,¹⁹³ with only Armstrong's *Reticulations*¹⁹⁴ marketing itself as something other than a guide for new readers, it is necessary to note that far beyond being mere classroom aids, each of these three introductions has, in its own way, succeeded in demonstrating the originality and internal coherence of Nancy's philosophy. Without such guidance the primary texts can appear at best intimidating and at worst fragmented.

Loosely speaking, each of these three introductions, Hutchens', James', and Morin's, correspond to what I would argue are the three prevailing themes in Nancy scholarship: community and politics, literature and writing, and art and ontology. Hutchens' book places emphasis on the question of community and traces Nancy's criticisms of various isms toward their contribution to 'a fascinating depiction of humanity as many finitudes that are, singularity by singularity, relation

¹⁹⁰ See for example: Elisabetta Nudi. 'Il percorso filosofico di J.L.Nancy tra l'interrogazione etica e il gioco di linguaggio' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Naples Federico II, 1992); Peggy Kamuf, ed. *Paragraph*, 16.2 (July 1993); Juliet Flower MacCannell & Laura Zakarin, eds. *Thinking Bodies* (California: Stanford University Press, 1994); Darren Sheppard, Simon Sparks & Colin Thomas, eds. *The Sense of Philosophy: on Jean-Luc Nancy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1996) and Jennifer Hansen, ed. *Studies in Practical Philosophy*, 1.1 (1999).

¹⁹¹ Benjamin C. Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2005).

¹⁹² James, *The Fragmentary Demand*.

¹⁹³ Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*.

¹⁹⁴ Philip Armstrong, *Reticulations: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Networks of the Political* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).

by relation, vulnerably exposed to a future'.¹⁹⁵ James maintains the conjecture throughout his text that the fragmentary written style of Nancy's corpus constitutes a response to the fragmentary nature of what is given to be thought.¹⁹⁶ Morin argues that Nancy's 'logic of exposition',¹⁹⁷ that is, the law of singularity and its limit, of enclosure and exposure, is the central ontological commitment according to which every other branch of Nancy's thought is governed, that is, his metaphysics. Of course all three texts and all three themes overlap immensely, especially considering the role I have just suggested sensibility plays in Nancy's work as the crux of a number of philosophical sub-disciplines. Moreover, one of the most successful aspects of Morin's text is that it demonstrates the inseparable interconnection of the three themes, by showing that the stylistic rubric James uses to organise Nancy's work, and the political one Hutchens uses, are both regional versions of the same basic ontological commitment, that is, revealing one as the exposition of sense and the other as the exposition of bodies. I would like to introduce these trends in the secondary literature one by one.

1.5.1 Community, or the exposition of bodies

Peter Hallward's 2005 essay 'Jean-Luc Nancy and the Implosion of Thought' is a near-definitive formulation of the question facing political interpreters of Nancy's work: can it be applied? Hallward takes the following to be the central commitment of Nancean thought, before working through its implications for the ethico-political:

Nothing can be presented of a presenting. All of Nancy's philosophy relies on this basic ontological rule: every presenting, or presencing,

¹⁹⁵ Hutchens, *Jean-Luc Nancy and the Future of Philosophy*, p. 160.

¹⁹⁶ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁷ Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 145.

whatever it presents, itself withdraws from every possible presentation. It withdraws, to begin with, from any presentation of itself. Presenting, or presencing, can only be said as a verb without a subject; presencing is what will come, and what has always been coming, both before and after the subject.¹⁹⁸

Although Hallward conflates a Nancean notion of transimmanent mediated withdrawal with a Heideggerian one structured by ontological difference,¹⁹⁹ the point he draws stands nonetheless. What, he wonders, can be said of a people who are not a people, since the:

Singular presentings have nothing in common and share no presentable project, place or identity; they compear or come into being together only in the withdrawing of any “common being, spaced apart by the infinity of this withdrawal — in this sense, without any relation, and therefore thrown into relation”²⁰⁰

For Hallward, therefore, the “with” of being-with, which, as we just saw, is the key term in Nancy’s understanding of the human being, is the same element that restricts the possibility of constructing a political system or project on the basis of Nancy’s analyses, since the “with”, on Hallward’s account, is only a relation insofar as it is an interruption.²⁰¹ Nancy is absolutely clear on this question, stating that it is precisely interruption that he seeks, for ‘[w]ithout anger, politics is

¹⁹⁸ Peter Hallward, ‘Jean-Luc Nancy and the Implosion of Thought’, in *Oxford Literary Review*, 27.1 (2005), 159-80 (p. 161).

¹⁹⁹ ‘In every possible situation of thought, it boils down to the simple distinction, which he adapts from Heidegger [...it]s derivation from Heidegger’s conception of the ontological difference and its proximity to familiar Heideggerian notions of *Ereignis* and the giving or disclosing of be-ing (as primordial verb) in infinite excess of any given or disclosed being (as derivative noun) need not detain us here’. Hallward, ‘Jean-Luc Nancy and the Implosion of Thought’, pp. 160-1.

²⁰⁰ Hallward, ‘Jean-Luc Nancy and the Implosion of Thought’, p. 175.

²⁰¹ Hallward, ‘Jean-Luc Nancy and the Implosion of Thought’, p. 176.

accommodation and trade in influence',²⁰² and that he 'should be ashamed to speak of politics in terms of management', that is, 'management of justice, equality, the rule, etc.',²⁰³ because what is at stake is neither a 'philosophical politics', nor a 'political philosophy', but rather an attempt to 'think being-in-common as distinct from community', as 'the constitutive separation of disposition'.²⁰⁴ Nancy's thought, by his own account, does not lend itself to a political interpretation because it constitutes 'a reconsideration of the very meaning of "politics"'.²⁰⁵

The ethico-political commentary on Nancy's work therefore fluctuates between, on the one hand, those invested in the possibility of its practicability for a constructive political enterprise and those who understand the work as a resistance to the very possibility of such a project, and on the other hand, those who praise Nancy for this resistance²⁰⁶ and those that chastise him for it.²⁰⁷ The question of politics is not a central concern of this thesis, and this silence speaks implicitly of a refusal to

²⁰² Jean-Luc Nancy, 'La Comparution /The Compearance: From the Existence of "Communism" to the Community of "Existence"' (1991), trans. by Tracy B. Strong, in *Political Theory*, 20.3 (August 1992), 371-98 (p. 375).

²⁰³ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Love and Community: A Roundtable Discussion with Jean-Luc Nancy, Avital Ronell and Wolfgang Schirmacher' (2001), <<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/love-and-community/>> [accessed 31 May 2011].

²⁰⁴ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 24.

²⁰⁵ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 25.

²⁰⁶ See for example: Benjamin C. Hutchens, 'Archi-Ethics, Justice, and the Suspension of History' in *Jean-Luc Nancy and Plural Thinking*, eds. Gratton & Morin, pp. 129-42, and: Marie-Eve Morin, 'Putting Community Under Erasure: Derrida and Nancy on the Plurality of Singularities', in *Culture Machine*, 8 (2006) <<http://www.culturemachine.net/index.php/cm/article/viewArticle/37>> [accessed 12 July 2012].

²⁰⁷ See Simon Critchley's various criticisms: 'With Being-With: Notes on Jean-Luc Nancy's Rewriting of *Being and Time*', in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas & Contemporary French Thought* (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 239-53; *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (Wiltshire: Cromwell Press / Purdue University Press, 1999), pp. 207-19, and: 'Re-tracing the political: politics and community in the work of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy', in *The Political Subject of Violence*, ed. by David Campbell & Michael Dillon (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 73-93.

place Nancy's ontology of the "with" at the ground of a systematic procedure that contradicts its very logic.

1.5.2 Writing, or the exposition of sense

Much has been written of the question of style in Nancy's texts. The dominant readings in the secondary literature, which I wish to affirm and to which I wish to contribute, are, firstly, that Nancy's writing is organised by a strong and original concept of the written fragment, and secondly, as Derrida puts it, by '*Words Beginning with 'ex-'*'.²⁰⁸ We will begin with the former. In one of Nancy's early collaborations with Lacoue-Labarthe, 1978's *The Literary Absolute*, the two authors lay out the blueprint for a different notion of the written fragment, in an examination of the Jena Romantics' ideal of the fragment as a piece of writing that 'like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself',²⁰⁹ free of author, context or external support, an ideal work form reflecting the idea of absolute writing, absolute literature. Extending a trajectory embarked by Walter Benjamin,²¹⁰ the two thinkers point out that to the contrary of the Romantic formulation, while the fragment does indeed distil something of the nature of literature, this something is not the unconditioned self-presence of a self-enclosed truth, but the opposite, that like a tile in a mosaic (this is Benjamin's analogy), the fragment is nothing if not its own transgression, its being outside of itself, its gesturing towards other fragments, from the incommensurability of which emerges a picture. Radicalising Benjamin, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe go further and add that the picture that emerges never forms a

²⁰⁸ Jacques Derrida, *On Touching: Jean-Luc Nancy* (2000), trans. by Christine Irizarry (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 20.

²⁰⁹ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenaeumsfragment 206', in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 40.

²¹⁰ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1925), trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 28-9.

whole, produced or averaged across the totality of fragmentary differences, that there is no totalising picture or absolute literature, because 'the *Gattung* [genre/form] of the work is incessantly un-worked within it.'²¹¹

The kind of fragment Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy describe is neither anything in itself, nor does it accede to a whole of which it is the part; the mosaic is never produced as a work, but neither does the fragment mean anything in isolation from its exposure to other fragments. The Nancean fragment is a part that presents itself as a part, but crucially a part of that which excludes the concepts of totality, absoluteness, or wholeness. Both James and Morin, albeit in differing ways,²¹² have placed this interpretation of the fragment at the centre of Nancy's stylistic approach. And while at the macro level this fragmentary logic evidences in Nancy's work as the disordering of chapters²¹³ and the unstructured collection,²¹⁴

²¹¹ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 123.

²¹² James writes in his introduction to Nancy that the writing style Nancy employs is a fragmentary response to an experience of fragmentation. James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, pp. 1-10. James adds the suggestion in a paper of 2011 that Nancy builds mosaics from other philosophies by rendering them figures rather than discourses, and thus transforms them into new figures. Ian James, 'The Style of Thought' (paper given at Dundee University, 13 May 2011). Morin, on the other hand, thinks that what she names the 'logic of the fragment' allows Nancy's writing to do something more systematic, albeit while reimagining what it means for anything to in fact be systematic. Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 145.

²¹³ In the preface to *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy writes: 'The first and principal essay of this book, which gives it its title, was not composed in an altogether sequential manner, but rather in a discontinuous way, repeatedly taking up several themes. To a certain extent, then, the sections can be read in any order, since there are repetitions here and there. But this is the result of a fundamental difficulty. This text does not disguise its ambition of redoing the whole of "first philosophy" by giving the "singular plural" of Being as its foundation. This, however, is not my ambition, but rather the necessity of the thing itself and of our history.' Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Preface' (1996), trans. by Robert D. Richardson & Anne E. O'Byrne, in *Being Singular Plural*, pp. xv-vi (p. xv).

²¹⁴ In Nancy's acknowledgements to the English translation of *The Birth to Presence*, he writes: 'You sometimes have to take books out of libraries, and sentences out of books; that's a way of giving them another chance or letting them run another risk. Some texts in this collection have been deliberately conceived that way'. Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Acknowledgements' (1993), in *The Birth to Presence*, pp. vii-iii (p. viii).

at a deeper more intricate level this special notion of the fragment determines a particularly powerful notion of the double genitive.

In the first book of English language essays on Nancy's thought, the editors point out that Nancy's work should not be understood as a work, in the sense of an oeuvre or something composed; rather, 'Nancy's is a thinking that refuses to settle down'.²¹⁵ Nancy's thought, they tell us, is not a thought unto itself but always a thought 'of', and in particular a thought of the kind of transcendental signifiers that Nancy regards as exhausted, for example, sense, art or freedom. Nancy's thought is therefore not a thought in itself, but nor is it a thought of something stable or concrete, but rather, the editors write, by paying attention to the double genitive that connects the thinking and the thought, made explicit in phrases like 'the sense of the world',²¹⁶ 'the deconstruction of Christianity',²¹⁷ or 'the vestige of art',²¹⁸ the texts can be seen to enact the oscillation between the two, the *of* that constantly

²¹⁵ Darren Sheppard, Simon Sparks & Colin Thomas, 'Introduction: The sense of philosophy', in *On Jean-Luc Nancy: The Sense of Philosophy*, ed. by Sheppard et al, pp. 1-3 (p. 2).

²¹⁶ 'The out-of-place term of sense can thus be determined neither as a property brought from elsewhere into relation with the world, nor as a supplementary (and problematic or hypothetical) predicate, nor as an evanescent character "floating somewhere," but as the constitutive "signifyingness" or "significance" of the world itself. That is, as the constitutive *sense* of the fact that there is world.' Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 55.

²¹⁷ 'Christianity is in itself essentially the movement of its own distension, because it represents the constituting of a subject in the process of opening and distending itself. Obviously, then, we must say that deconstruction, which is only possible by means of that distension, is itself Christian. It is Christian because Christianity is, originally, deconstructive, because it relates immediately to its own origin as to a slack [*jeu*], an interval, some play, an opening in the origin.' Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Deconstruction of Christianity' (1995), trans. by Michael B. Smith, in *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 139-57 (p. 149).

²¹⁸ 'The vestigial is not an essence – and no doubt this is what puts us on the track of the "essence of art." That art is today its own vestige, this is what opens us to it. It is not a degraded presentation of the Idea, nor the presentation of a degraded Idea; it presents what is not "Idea": motion, coming, passage, the going-on of coming-to-presence.' Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Vestige of Art' (1992), trans. by Peggy Kamuf, in *The Muses*, pp. 81-102, p. 98.

mediates and modifies the unstable pairing. The Nancean text is therefore fragmentary in that it does not compose a whole, and is always a thought of something else, yet this something else offers no stability, for as an exhausted signifier (the type of word that Derrida would rather avoid using altogether²¹⁹), the object of thought is likewise only maintained insofar as it is engaged by that thought. Both the thought and its object are fragments with no meaning outside of their contact, they are singularities.

Now, as a thinking of all text as exposure, a gesturing that does not signify but touches that upon which it borders, that which encloses the text through its exposure to it, this kind of thinking is marked over and over again by the prefix “ex”. The most frequent word beginning with ‘ex-’, *excrit*, or *excription*, rendered *exscription* in translation, is explained by Nancy in an interview of 2000:

The word (*excrit*) came to me in reaction to a whole infatuation with *écriture*, text, salvation through literature, etc. There is a phrase of Bataille’s: “Only language can indicate the sovereign moment when it is no longer valid (*où il n’a plus cours*)”... There is only language, sure, but what language refers to is the non-linguistic, things themselves, the moment when language is no longer valid. It reminds me of a conversation with (Paul) Ricoeur long ago at his house in Chatenay. He had just read my first book on Hegel and, opening the door to his garden, he said: that’s all fine, but where’s the *garden* in it? I never forgot: the *excrit* is the garden, the fact that *écriture* indicates its own

²¹⁹ Derrida worries that in some instances Nancy’s employment of transcendental signifiers gets him in trouble, for instance, quoting Nancy’s statement “Sense is touching”, Derrida warns that Nancy risks reducing the absolutely other to a function of the touch of the same. ‘Come now, show some tact’, Derrida scorns, ‘[!]et’s leave it be.’ Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 298.

outside, decants itself (*se transvase*), and reveals *thing* [*montre les choses*].²²⁰

That there is only language for Nancy does not mean that there are only as many things as there are names, it means that only by language can we communicate the non-linguistic, which is to say, that language is the relation, it marks out the limit at which the linguistic and non-linguistic touch. 'Writing touches', Nancy writes, '*along the absolute limit separating the sense of the one from the skin and nerves of the other*'.²²¹ As a separation from one and the other, the *ex-* of *excrit* is not only the *ec-* of a being-outside-itself, touching the outside of language, it is the *ex-* of a "from", as Nancy puts it in a lecture of 1994, 'projected out of the body - *ex corpore*, as in *ex cathedra*'.²²² All writing *excribes* because it goes from a body to other bodies, things, singularities, tracing the shared outlines of finite objects in their contact. As such, neither the body that writes nor the body that is written are *in* discourse,²²³ but rather writing is the delineation of the limit of the two, it touches both, writes both – again then, a double genitive. Although there is only language, nevertheless, this language is not linguistic, it is the limit that mutually implicates the linguistic and the non-linguistic in the mode of a double genitive.

What is special about the way Nancy uses double genitives is this combination of the *ex-*, the *ec-*, and the *of*. For while the double genitive *of* sets the subject and object into oscillation, releasing them from tautological relation into mutual implication, transformation, interaction and intercession, the *ex-* on the other hand

²²⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Le partage, l'infini et le jardin' (2000), partially trans. by Richard Terdiman, in *Body and Story: The Ethics and Practice of Theoretical Conflict* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 168.

²²¹ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 11.

²²² Jean-Luc Nancy, 'On the Soul' (1994), trans. by Richard A. Rand, in *Corpus*, pp. 122-35 (p. 124).

²²³ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), pp. 17-19.

determines that the presentation of this relationship *never* contains either the subject or object, but always draws the point of contact between the two, a dark orbit only detectible as its gravitational interaction. Nancy's double genitive, in this way, neatly side-steps the paradoxical constructivist²²⁴ formula of a subject that both writes and is written, but necessarily pre-exists itself as the surface upon which the writing is inscribed.²²⁵ For embodied *Dasein*, by Nancy's account, is nothing apart from its exposure, its relation, and the writing that traces this relation, this exposure or contact, comes neither before nor after that which is traced, for *excrit* is contact and exposure - it is the garden, as Nancy's puts it; if being is in relation then writing is one way this relation happens. Therefore, Nancy writes, '[w]hat we call writing and ontology are concerned with just one thing'.²²⁶

Implicitly invoking Nietzsche's claim that grammar is inherently metaphysical,²²⁷ Nancy defines the verb "being" in *The Sense of the World* as a relation of

²²⁴ Both James and Heikkilä have argued that constructivism is the principal target of much of Nancy's work on the body. See James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, p. 114 & 249 n.2, and Marta Heikkilä, *At the Limits of Presentation* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2007), 117 n.547.

²²⁵ Foucault, for instance, writes in 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire' [Nietzsche, Genealogy, History], '[t]he body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body.' Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' (1971), trans. by Paul Rabinow, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), pp. 76-100 (p. 83). As Butler has pointed out, such a position leads to a negative ontology of the body, for 'to speak in this way invariably suggests that there is a body that is in some sense there, pregiven, existentially available to become the site of its own ostensible construction'. Judith Butler, 'Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions', in *The Journal of Philosophy*, 86.11 (Nov 1989) 601-607 (p. 601).

²²⁶ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), pp. 14-5.

²²⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 20, 35 & 49. Nietzsche's judgment concerns the way that speech not only fools us into believing that words correspond to objects in the world, but that the causal structure of grammar is suggestive of a corresponding causal relation between these objects. Nietzsche

'agrammatical transitivity',²²⁸ agrammatical in that it does not entail the action of a subject upon an object. For being, whether the being of *Dasein*, a rock, or a text, is always a matter of being-conditioned, being in relation, but in relation to each other, 'neither extracted or removed from, nor opposed to, a common ground',²²⁹ a melee that occurs without either mingling²³⁰ or milieu,²³¹ or as Nancy phrases it in *The Sense of the World*, a 'being-toward [*l'être-à*]' that is not toward the world but is instead the being of 'existents to each other' that makes the world.²³² Agrammatical transitivity is thus the ideal of a writing that functions largely, according to Martinon, as a Stoic avoidance of copulas:

that is, verbs that link the subject and the predicate, such as 'is' in 'the tree is green'. They (Stoics) prefer to say that 'the tree blossoms' or 'the tree greens' as Deleuze remarks. When copulas are avoided, the sentence takes a performative resonance that aims to evade the subject–object dichotomy (and therefore the one *on* one or the one *to* one rapport) and the associated (Platonic) issue of concepts. Their aim, in accordance with the idea that incorporeals can only be conceived *by* transition, is to focus, through the use of verbs *combining* predicates and copulas, on the *relation* itself, the *movement* of that which is said or enunciated and heard or perceived (blossoming).²³³

This absolute focus on the verbal action of a relating between subjects and objects that do not have an existence claim beyond their relating is not so much an attempt on Nancy's part to make his writing mirror the laws of singularity and

compares a belief in grammar to a belief in the soul, because when the pronoun is placed in its nominative case, for example in Descartes' "I-am," what is implied is that there is a stable subject, I, that causes the predicate, in this case, its own existence.

²²⁸ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 13.

²²⁹ Nancy, 'Banks, edges, limits', p. 41.

²³⁰ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 29.

²³¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 5.

²³² Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 8.

²³³ Jean-Paul Martinon, *On Futurity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 85.

exposure that prevail in his basic ontological commitments, as an acceptance that writing is something that happens in the world, rather than in a restricted linguistic realm, something that goes from one body to another, and is as such *subject* to the basic ontological law of singularity-as-exposure.

1.5.3 Exposition qua exposition: from art and ontology to methodology

Ian James, alongside fellow Cambridge scholars Martin Crowley²³⁴ and Christopher Watkin,²³⁵ have played a crucial part in the project of locating Nancy's work within the broader philosophical scene and resisting the domestication of his work to a mere application of a Derridean semiotics. James and Crowley in particular have shown that Nancy's philosophy of art,²³⁶ contributions to gallery catalogues²³⁷ and discussions²³⁸ and collaborations with artists,²³⁹ have a systematic place within Nancy's general schema of thought. Although isolated papers had appeared on the topic prior to this,²⁴⁰ James, in *The Fragmentary Demand*, for the first time attempts to position the work on art within the broader

²³⁴ See for example: Martin Crowley, 'The human without', in *Oxford Literary Review*, 27.1 (2005), 67-81.

²³⁵ See for example: Christopher Watkin, *Phenomenology or Deconstruction: The Question of Ontology in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Luc Nancy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

²³⁶ See for example: Nancy, *The Muses*.

²³⁷ Many of which are collected in the final section of: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Multiple Arts: The Muses II*, ed. by Simon Sparks (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 131-248.

²³⁸ See for example: Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Evidence of Film: Abbas Kiarostami*, trans. by Christine Irizarry & Verena Andermatt Conley (Bruxelles: Yves Gevaert Editeur, 2001).

²³⁹ As Beugnet points out, Nancy's exchange with filmmaker Clare Denis is more about 'adoption' than 'adaptation'; Nancy does not simply write about Denis' films any more than Denis' simply films Nancy's writing, their responses to each other rather form a dialogical collaboration. Martine Beugnet, 'The Practice of Strangeness: *L'intrus* – Clare Denis (2004) and Jean-Luc Nancy (2000)', in *Film Philosophy*, 12.1 (April 2008) 31-48.

²⁴⁰ See for example: Kalliopi Nikolopoulou, 'L'Art et le gens', in *College Literature*, 30:2 (Spring 2003), 174-93.

context of Nancy's thought, and the broader philosophical context generally. Implicitly highlighting the importance of art to the entirety of Nancy's thought by placing the chapter "Art" at the final, almost concluding stage of *The Fragmentary Demand*, and noting that it is the one constant within all of Nancy's various writings, James' explicit commentary makes an important, if preliminary, step towards indicating art's centrality to Nancy's philosophy. Not only underlining the subtlety and idiosyncrasy of Nancy's reading of Hegel's *Aesthetics*, James also points out that the artwork and image have a special status for Nancy in that they both disrupt the stagnancy of fixed signification in their unceasing presenting, and at the same time imply the ontological framework from out of which they manifest. 'In this sense art, for Nancy', James writes, 'not only disrupts, interrupts, or suspends already existing discourses and representations, it exposes the real of the world which those representations leave behind, elide or omit'.²⁴¹

The following year Alison Ross' *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy*, and Marta Heikkilä's doctoral study *At the Limits of Presentation*, furthered the understanding of Nancy's aesthetic thought in their shared focus on the rubric of presentation, the very same aspect of Nancean thought which for Hallward renders it politically ineffectual. Against Hallward, Heikkilä affirms the fact that for Nancy 'all presentation proves to be the presentation of a limit within presentation',²⁴² because, in agreement with James' interpretations, this renders art a kind of deconstructive partner to thought, a parallel and continuous interruption that philosophy cannot escape because it is tied by *Darstellung* to literature, a constant invocation of the limit and the excess it touches upon. Ross maintains the strength

²⁴¹ James, *The Fragmentary Demand*, p, 230.

²⁴² Marta Heikkilä, *At The Limits of Presentation: Coming-into-Presence and its Aesthetic Relevance in Jean-Luc Nancy's Philosophy* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Printing House, 2007), p. 306.

of the connection between Nancy's aesthetics and ontology, however placing more focus on the types of artwork one finds in a gallery, argues that Nancy's work in general owes less to *Being and Time*, than it does to Heidegger's aesthetics, quite literally translating Heidegger's definition of art into a 'general ontology'.²⁴³

The very fact that Ross can speak of Nancy's work in terms of a "general ontology" demonstrates the commitment in recent times to approaching Nancy's work as a coherent, or even systematic, whole. Indeed, in Morin's 2012 introduction to Nancy, she suggests that Nancy's work is systematic, with the qualification that its 'logic of exposition'²⁴⁴ transforms the very notion of systematicity: a conclusion to which I subscribe. For to say that all singularities obey the logic of exposition, of the singular plural, of the limit of enclosure and exposure, is to suggest that singular syntactic elements – sentences, books, a whole corpus – need not be systematised in any specific order of exposition, for example, from first principles to conclusions, from antithesis to synthesis, or even from beginning to end, according to a logical, narrative, or temporal arrow, but rather that meaning arrives in every distribution or ordering of exposures conceivable.

What this means, I would suggest, is that Nancy's philosophical "methodology", if one can call it that, operates in a way akin to what Heidegger calls *Auseinandersetzung*, 'a debate or contention', Nancy writes in 1982, in which parties are placed in conflict not to resolve their differences but 'in order to implicate and to exclude each other reciprocally'.²⁴⁵ *Auseinandersetzung* literally means *setzung*: setting, *aus*: apart from, *einander*: one another. Gasché writes

²⁴³ Alison Ross, *The Aesthetic Paths of Philosophy: Presentation in Kant, Heidegger, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy* (California: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 157.

²⁴⁴ Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 145.

²⁴⁵ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 212.

that the word suddenly breaks into Heidegger's work in the latter part of the 1930s as a term for a mode of relation between the thinker and what is to be thought that allows the matter to dictate the terms of the engagement according to its own structure as something to be thought.²⁴⁶ *Auseinandersetzung* maintains rather than resolves the difference inherent in a conflict.

As Caputo notes, we Anglophones are fooled by the translation of *Being and Time*'s '*Wiederholung* as "retrieval"', as if the project of repeating the history of ontology were engaged in 'recovering something hidden, lost, or fallen'.²⁴⁷ For the object of retrieval for Heidegger is not the accurate portrayal of an originary philosophical foundation, and nor is Heidegger's purpose 'to bury the past in nullity'²⁴⁸ in the name of a radically new beginning that would transgress the traditional linguistic apparatus available to us. 'The "other beginning" of thought is so named', Heidegger contends in *Beitrage Zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* [*Contributions to Philosophy: of the Event*], 'not because it is simply different in form from all other previous philosophies but because it must be the only other beginning arising in relation to the one and only first beginning'.²⁴⁹ That is to say, the other beginning is only "other" insofar as it can only be thought in relation to another beginning to which it is other, reciprocally. The object of retrieval is thus neither beginning nor end proper, but the relation between the two. The task of philosophy, of 'inceptual thinking', Heidegger continues on in the *Contributions*, is

²⁴⁶ Rodolphe Gasché, *The Honour of Thinking: Critique, Theory, Philosophy* (California: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 104.

²⁴⁷ John D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 60.

²⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 44.

²⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy: Of the Event* (1936-38), trans. by Richard Rojcewicz & Daniela Vallega-Neu (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012), p. 7.

of 'setting the other beginning in motion as confrontation with the first beginning in its more original repetition'.²⁵⁰

In 'Sharing Voices', in specific reference to Heidegger, Nancy accordingly compares two ways in which to conceive of the philosophical "return" to Greece, a differentiation that gets lost in the English translation of two different French words as "return". The first way relies upon 'the possibility of returning [*la possibilité du retour*²⁵¹] from (or to) an origin', and a 'dialectical recovery (*relève*: negation and recuperation)', in which 'the immediacy of a participation in meaning is cancelled and conserved'.²⁵² The second, is a 'return [*renvoi*²⁵³]' which, while also 'charged with furnishing the primordial meaning', nevertheless, 'has in truth a function other than the simple appeal to the authority of an authentic origin'.²⁵⁴ The words *retour*,²⁵⁵ *relève*,²⁵⁶ and *renvoi*,²⁵⁷ have a long and complex terminological history documented in the Derridean text which would require a lengthy treatment beyond our current scope. Here I will defer to McKeane's translation of Nancy's use of *renvoi* in 2010's *Adoration*:

²⁵⁰ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, p. 47.

²⁵¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le Partage des voix* (Paris: Galilée, 1982), p. 19.

²⁵² Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', pp. 213-4.

²⁵³ Nancy, *Le Partage des voix*, p. 53.

²⁵⁴ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 230.

²⁵⁵ Derrida uses the phrase *question en retour*, to translate Husserl's *Rückfrage*, indicating that by doing so he is invoking a "postal" metaphor, an implication of both post- as the prefix that designates distance, and of the correspondence of letters by post, in a "zigzag" of responses. See: Jacques Derrida, *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* (1962), trans. by John P. Leavey Jr. (USA: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), pp. 50-1.

²⁵⁶ 'The word "*relève*" Derrida explains, is 'a tentative translation of *Aufhebung* [and] cannot be translated into English. It means both to elevate, and to replace as in "to relieve one of one's functions'. See: Derrida, 'Ends of Man', 40 n. 8.

²⁵⁷ 'Everything begins by referring back [*par le renvoi*], that is to say, does not begin; and once this breaking open or this partition divides, from the very start, every *renvoi*, there is not a single *renvoi* but from then on, always, a multiplicity of *renvois*, so many different traces referring back to other traces and to traces of others'. See: Jacques Derrida, 'Sending: On Representation' (1980), trans. by Peter & Mary Ann Caws, in *Social Research*, 49.2 (Summer 1982), 294-326 (p. 324).

sense understood as repetition, transferral, or deferral is present in the French as *envoi* and *renvoi*. The English translations available - “echoing,” “referring,” “sending,” and “dispatching” - cannot reestablish the proximity, itself an echoing, of course, between the two terms. In order to reproduce some of the movement conveyed by *renvoi* in particular, “referring” has often been chosen in place of “reference.”²⁵⁸

As such, in regards to this thesis’ twin suggestions that the specificity of Nancy’s ontological commitments can only be properly comprehended in light of the heritage recalled in his concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, and that, concomitantly, Nancy’s place within the contemporary philosophical scene is only fully articulated in accordance with this recollection, it must be understood that for Nancy, the ancient and the contemporary are not determinate or isolatable, but rather, in accordance with the laws of singularity, are codetermined in their mutual exposure as it is enacted by a philosophical investigation, a referring of each to the other, rather than a unilateral reference, combining and deploying the Heideggerian and Derridean modes of engagement with an inheritance of philosophy to produce a definitively trans-temporal notion of contemporaneity. Indeed, as Nancy puts it in a short essay on Deleuze:

A contemporary is not always someone who lives at the same time, nor someone who speaks of overtly ‘current’ questions. But it is someone in whom we recognize a voice or gesture which reaches us from a hitherto unknown but immediately familiar place, something which we discover we have been waiting for, or rather which has been waiting for us, something which was there, imminent. We know immediately that this is

²⁵⁸ John McKeane, ‘Translators Note’, in *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II* (USA: Fordham University Press, 2012), pp. ix-x (p. x).

a possibility which constitutes the presence of the present, and must do so.²⁵⁹

Morin suggests that Nancy's masterword *sens*, which, as we have seen, evokes sense, sensory registers, meaning, and directedness, can be understood as the name for this contiguous, performative semantics, denoting a rejection of the verticality of signification, in favour of the horizontal relation 'between things, ideas, bodies, and people in their encounters, their movements of attraction/repulsion'.²⁶⁰ Paralleling Morin's claim, I suggest that this reorientation of sense, from transcendent verticality, to lateral contiguity, also manifests in Nancy's reorientation of the concept of *μέθεξις*. Nancy, I argue throughout this thesis, reorients the transcendent *μέθεξις* between the apparent and ideal, into a horizontal relationship between all singular things in their ontic or factual contact, as a *μέθεξις* that is always also a *μίμησις*. As we will see, unlike Hans-Georg Gadamer, who also conceives of *μέθεξις* as horizontal, Nancy's reorientation does not constitute a flattening-out of the heterogeneity *μέθεξις* traditionally implies, but rather recasts the infinite difference between the immanent and transcendent as the indefinitely plural reiteration of the finite difference, that is, transimmanence.

In regards to the thesis' task, of tracing Nancy's ontological commitments via the long heritage of the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, back to Ancient Greek philosophy, there is currently a definite want in the secondary literature. Both Michaud²⁶¹ and de Beistegui²⁶² have offered accounts of the way Nancy often

²⁵⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Deleuzian Fold of Thought', trans. Tom Gibson & Anthony Uhlmann, in *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 107-13 (p. 108).

²⁶⁰ Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 5.

²⁶¹ Ginette Michaud, 'Outlining Art: On Jean-Luc Nancy's Trop and Le plaisir au dessin', in *Journal of Visual Culture*, 9.77 (2010) 78-90.

invokes *μέθεξις* alongside *μίμησις*, and their articles each claim that the concepts both mutually implicate and disrupt one another, showing that for Nancy imitation and participation each presuppose the other. However, each reading remains localised to the immediate concerns of the Nancean text interrogated, namely the figure/ground binary in the former and an encounter with Bataillean sacrifice in the latter. The question of the place of the concepts, their heritage and interpretation within Nancy's conceptual framework remains underdeveloped. Although this thesis concurs with the articles' findings, it makes the necessary move towards identifying the core function of the concepts in the Nancean philosophical framework, and locating this function in terms of the long dialogue surrounding them. I would like next to lay out the structure of this investigation.

²⁶² Miguel de Beistegui, 'Sacrifice Revisited', trans. by Simon Sparks, in *On Jean-Luc Nancy: The sense of philosophy*, ed. by Sheppard et al, pp. 152-67.

1.6 Thesis structure

The thesis advances in three moves, following three distinct but interwoven trajectories in the philosophical treatment of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*. Moreover, the thesis develops in quite a traditional way across these three chapters, from one form of a problematic, through an alternative interpretation or indeed contestation of it, to Nancy's radicalisation and implementation of this alternative.

Chapter two indicates the contemporary reception, in Heidegger and Deleuze, of a long philosophical lineage in which *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* are tightly bound to questions of immanence and transcendence. In this way, the two central concepts of the thesis are demonstrated to bear strongly on both ancient and contemporary issues, namely, the *de facto* withdrawal of the transcendent at the birth of philosophy, and the exhaustion that reveals metaphysical signification as the very mirror of this withdrawal. In each of the treatments presented in this chapter, *μέθεξις* is conceived as the relational principle binding the realms of a hierarchically fractured ontology, correlating with a hermeneutics of deficiency and imperfection. *Μίμησις*, on the other hand, is raised by Heidegger and Deleuze in place of *μέθεξις* as a heterarchical relationship between things, or humans, on a singular immanent plane.

I argue that by Nancy's account, these interpretations reflect a failure to conceive of immanence as anything but a privation of the transcendent, a shortfall according to which all of these thoughts remain trapped within the binary they attempt to overcome. According to the thought of transimmanence, the law of singularity in which the one, the limit, and the other, are all said in the same breath, I argue that Nancy's philosophy provides an alternative to this trajectory. Because for Nancy

the immanent is structured by its internal transcendence, it need not be conceived as a privation of transcendence, and *μέθεξις* can be affirmed as a principle of that internal transcendence and multiplicity.

Chapter three engages with an alternative thought of *μέθεξις* outlined in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, a thought I suggest Nancy radicalises. Not only does Gadamer's account of *μέθεξις* differ from those outlined in chapter two by affirming the concept's invocation of plurality and hiatus, which is to say, its accommodation of the transcendent within the immanent, it also articulates a horizontal interpretation of the concept, a dimension of lateral interrelations added on to the traditionally vertical model, although, as we will see, on Nancy's account Gadamer fails to afford horizontal *μέθεξις* the same radical heterogeneity he affirms of its vertical counterpart. For Nancy, Gadamer's understanding of horizontal *μέθεξις* as a way to understand *Mitsein* tends too much towards immanence, reducing or dissolving singular *Dasein* into an indeterminate homogenous communion. Moreover, Gadamer's critique of *μίμησις* likewise prioritises the immanent political and hermeneutic essence of a people.

Following Nancy's critique of Gadamer's understanding of certain essential Heideggerian concepts, and the interpretation of the roles of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* in Plato's *Ion* that follows in 'Sharing Voices', I show that Nancy offers a strong interpretation of *Dasein* in which the radical hiatus of vertical *μέθεξις* is reoriented onto a horizontal, or horizontal dimension, radicalising the alternative trajectory Gadamer has opened. In doing so, I show, Nancy demonstrates that when understood in accordance with the laws of singularity and limit, there can be no Gadamer's definitions be no *μίμησις* without *μέθεξις*, and vice versa, for the togetherness of *μέθεξις* can only happen at the external limit of parts, in *μίμησις*.

In chapter four, I pursue the philosophical pairing of concepts from the counterposition, noting the deployments of *μίμησις* within philosophical approaches to art and the aesthetic, in order to demonstrate that Nancy's reception and tethering of the concepts is just as informative for his work on art as it is for his ontology, precisely because the two are bound together by the irreducibility of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, and immanence and transcendence, from one another. Noting that in the works of both Heidegger and Gadamer *μίμησις* and the aesthetic in general is definitively uncoupled from the aesthetic, that is, sensibility, I present their thoughts on art in order to bring out their subjugation of artistic *μίμησις* to communal *μέθεξις*, making of art an operation by which a community is unified and presented back to itself.

After following Nancy's critique of the nostalgic appeal evident in examples of sacrificial and theatrical *μίμησις*, wherein the absence of model always found in the mimetic process is interpreted as indicative of a lost immediacy or communion vanished into the mists of time, a communion we can now only play at or represent, I then outline Nancy's affirmation of Adorno's aesthetics for his treatment of mimetic absence as absence, and, moreover, his treatment of art's *μέθεξις* in the continued formation of world as indissociable from the multiplicity of its technical events. I then present Nancy's determination of the artwork and the image as self-transgressing phenomena, that is, singularities which in their sensible apperception refuse to settle down into an immediate unity between observer and observed, instead presenting this very exposure, that is, presenting *Dasein* and world in the transimmanent exposure. In this way art's *μίμησις* is for Nancy a presentation of the very negotiation between *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, the praxical relating between singularities, a presentation of nothing but presentation itself.

CHAPTER TWO

Immanence with or without transcendence: the contemporary reception of an
ancient problematic

We have left the land and embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us – indeed, we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now, little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realize that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh, the poor bird that felt free now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you feel homesick for the land as if it had offered more *freedom* – and there is no longer any “land.”²⁶³

NIETZSCHE, *The Gay Science*

What was called “the death of God” and later “the end of metaphysics,” or even “the end of philosophy,” consisted in bringing to light the following: there is no first or last condition; there isn’t any unconditioned that can be the principle of the origin. But this “there isn’t” is unconditioned, and there you have, if I dare say, our “human condition”.²⁶⁴

NANCY, *Philosophical Chronicles*

²⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (1882-87), trans. by Walter Kaufman (New York & Toronto: Random House, 1974), pp. 180-1.

²⁶⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Philosophical Chronicles* (2004), trans. by Franson Manjali (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 5.

2.1 Introduction: The end of transcendence and the birth of philosophy

For Nancy, the “end” he describes in our epigraph holds a twofold significance, as both the first and the last determination of metaphysical philosophy. As the first determination, for Nancy the “end” names an event in Greece two and a half millennia past, when, Nancy writes, ‘[o]ne day, the gods retreated. On their own, they retreated from their divinity, that is to say, from their presence’.²⁶⁵ As de Beistegui describes it in 2010, the retreat is an empirical fact of the Greek empire around the sixth century B.C., that not only had the universe come to be seen as one whole, a *kosmos* governed by physical laws immanent to it, but so too the *polis* came to allow the people to ask questions of that *kosmos* independently of the monarch or the priest.²⁶⁶ This retreat of the transcendent from the immanent was as such simultaneous with the emergence of the discipline of philosophy

Historically or empirically speaking then, de Beistegui goes on, ‘[t]he birth of philosophy thus coincided with the substitution of a plane of transcendence for a plane of immanence’, as the engenderment of a mode of thought from a novel set of social conditions that had opened up a view of the world as ‘a unified and homogeneous universe that co-existed on a single plane’.²⁶⁷ But this substitution and concomitant emergence, Nancy asserts, is far more than a *de facto* historical concurrence, rather it has the epochal status of an initiation or opening, ‘a subtraction, to borrow from Badiou; a withdrawal, to borrow from Heidegger; an inscription, in the case of Derrida’.²⁶⁸ For Nancy, these ends are beginnings and

²⁶⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Between Story and Truth’ (2000), trans. by Franson Manjali, in *The Little Magazine*, 2.4 (Summer 2001) <<http://www.littlemag.com/jul-aug01/nancy.html>> [accessed 5 September 2013].

²⁶⁶ Miguel de Beistegui, *Immanence – Deleuze and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 19.

²⁶⁷ de Beistegui, *Immanence*, p. 19.

²⁶⁸ Nancy, ‘Creation as Denaturation’, p. 85.

this opening is quite decisively ‘the event that constitutes metaphysics’, opening up the program of the ‘articulation of [...] the very incommensurability of being in-itself’,²⁶⁹ the project of conceiving of what “is”, without hierarchical, authoritarian, theological, or mythical appeal, which is to say: only on its own terms, in relation its-self. The “meta” here simply designates the parallel.

The “end” that as such constitutes the start, engenders metaphysics as a path of enquiry charged with thinking the ‘being which *ex-ists* to itself’,²⁷⁰ that is, Nancy explains, of modelling, conceptualising and interrogating the self-relation or ecstasis of an immanent horizon uncoupled from the objects of its absolute signifiers, ‘Truth, Goodness, Value, Humanity...’²⁷¹ etc. Indeed, in the early Socratic dialogues, these kinds of grand universal signifiers are the explicit objects of enquiry. For example, Socrates requests of Laches ‘try to state what I ask, namely, what courage is’,²⁷² and petitions Euthyphro, ‘[w]hat do you say is the nature of piety and impiety?’²⁷³ In the *Charmides*, as has already been noted in flagging up Plato’s use of the word *μετέχειν* to denote an ethical disposition towards one of the transcendent objects in question, Plato has Socrates ask Charmides shortly after ‘what, in [his] opinion, temperance is’.²⁷⁴ As is well known, in each case the narrative first visits an example of a particular instance of the

²⁶⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Creation as Denaturation: Metaphysical Technology’ (2000), trans. by François Raffoul & David Pettigrew, in *The Creation of the World or Globalization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 75-90 (p. 85).

²⁷⁰ Nancy, ‘Creation as Denaturation’, p. 85.

²⁷¹ Nancy goes on, ‘State or Value, Right, Force, Will, Work, Freedom, Art, Man ... ; like the dead incarnate God in the mad Nietzsche, it bears "all the names in history" because it accomplishes all significations in the infinite subjectivity and inertia of signification.’ Nancy, ‘The Forgetting of Philosophy’, p. 44.

²⁷² Plato, *Laches*, 190e.

²⁷³ Plato, ‘Euthyphro’, in *Plato With an English Translation*, trans. by Harold North Fowler, 1: *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, pp. 1- 60 (including parallel Greek text), 5c-d.

²⁷⁴ Plato, ‘Charmides’, 159a.

ideal object under scrutiny, before producing a seemingly irreducible set of dialogical oppositions, thus allowing Socrates each time to demonstrate the linguistic and conceptual functionality, but concrete absence of the transcendent.

The project of metaphysics, for Nancy, never stops repeating this restricted gesture towards the subtracted. For as a project charged with describing being in-itself, metaphysics continually exposes the tension between the immanence of metaphysics' object and conditions, and the transcendent structure of its conceptual apparatus. It comprises an intellectual struggle to come to terms with an immanence it is unable to describe as anything but a subtraction of the transcendent. It is shot through with the figure of the end that conditions its birth. 'Philosophy', de Beistegui adds, 'always falls short of total immanence', because 'it is always somewhat tainted with transcendence'.²⁷⁵ And it is something, Nancy writes, 'that is still taking place today [...as] the event of metaphysics in its completion, that is, in its exhaustion',²⁷⁶ which means 'the total accomplishment of what one might call the signification of signification, or the presentation - that is, the representation - of meaning present-at-a-distance.'²⁷⁷ It is in this sense that the "end" for Nancy constitutes both the first and the last determination of philosophy: the first end, of a certain transcendence that marks metaphysics as a description of the self-relation of the immanent within an ill-suited apparatus, and the last end, philosophy's casting-off of its naivety regarding its metaphysical tendencies.

Philosophy, for Nancy, lingers on as a metaphysics engaged in self-reflection, a metaphysics musing upon the absence of orientation concealed in the ostensive structure of its significations and representations. The structural tension remains.

²⁷⁵ de Beistegui, *Immanence*, p. 20.

²⁷⁶ Nancy, 'The Forgetting of Philosophy', p. 44.

²⁷⁷ Nancy, 'The Forgetting of Philosophy', p. 43.

For metaphysics still appeals to the absent transcendent in its attempts to approach the immanent in itself. But now, doubled over in metacognition, metaphysical philosophy draws significations regarding its own signifying nature, it begins to present itself *according* to the absence it has discovered within itself, and, as we have been warned many times,²⁷⁸ it therefore risks presenting its own exhaustion as an overcoming, wherein the withdrawal of truth can be presented by formulations of truth-as-withdrawal, the negative concealed under the positive. It is not enough, Nancy demands, to make ‘the annihilation of significations the resource of a superior signification’.²⁷⁹ ‘And yet’, Nancy writes, ‘it is indeed with this loss that we have to do. It is this loss that is happening to us’.²⁸⁰ The question then, is of thinking this immanence that has happened and is happening to us, as something other than a remainder or correlate of a withdrawn transcendence.²⁸¹

Without suggesting that the problematic relationship between immanence and transcendence is reducible to a purely onto-theological question, Nancy’s reference to Nietzsche in the epigraph is telling. As Nietzsche was so careful to warn, abolishing the ideal world does not free the apparent world from its referential binding to its negated partner,²⁸² and likewise, for Nancy, it is no good to conceive of the immanent by reference to a subtracted transcendence. To do so

²⁷⁸ See for example: Jacques Derrida, ‘Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy’, in *Oxford Literary Review*, 9.1 (1984) 3-37; Dominique Janicaud, *On the Human Condition* (2002), trans. by Eileen Brennan (London: Routledge, 2005); and: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche: Writings from the Late Notebooks*, ed. by Rüdiger Bittner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 205.

²⁷⁹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 10.

²⁸⁰ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 7.

²⁸¹ If we are to cease conceiving of the *kosmos* and *polis* by reference to the privation of the transcendent, there will be repercussions for the study of “cosmopolitanism”. As Nancy writes in ‘Corpus’, ‘we’ll never get past racism until we stop saying generic human brotherhood is its contrary’. Nancy. ‘Corpus’ (b), p. 35.

²⁸² Friedrich Nietzsche, ‘Twilight of the Idols’ (1888), in *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*, trans. by Reginald John Hollingdale (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 29-122 (pp. 50-1).

would be to confuse immanence with the sheer 'absence of exteriority'²⁸³ of a horizon thought as the immediacy of what is present to itself by virtue of not transcending itself. Such an inert homogeneity recuperates the unconditioned nature of the negated transcendent partner. Rather, by reformulating the philosophical tropes of "the death of God" and "the end of philosophy" in our epigraph as the "*end* of the *unconditioned*", Nancy underscores that what is at issue for him in this oft repeated rubric of limitation is not just an "end", but the end of an end, a privation of a privation, in the sense that for Nancy, an "end" precisely does not *end*, it borders-upon and shares a limit. The end, in the Nancean text, ceases to end.

Nancy's challenge is to think the withdrawal of the transcendent without marking it as a cessation, which is the same as saying, of thinking an immanent world without a world's end, or, of conceiving of the absence of the unconditioned, which is to say, conceiving the absence of the absolute, the ideal, substance, or ground, as nothing other than an indication of the absolutely conditioned nature of what is, of immanence in touch with itself, transcending itself in every finite moment and contact, to think the final remaining transcendental as the law of the limit that encloses and exposes irreducibly. Nancy's "end" is an end of the disimplicated figures of absolute, or rather, *unconditioned* immanence and transcendence. For Nancy, to end is to end-on and thus is to be conditioned, which is to say, to exist transimmanently, enclosed into singularity by the border that is always shared.

²⁸³ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 68.

Returning to our epigraph once more, by separating out the grammatical privation “there isn’t” [*il n’y a pas*²⁸⁴] as the subject of a further proposition, a proposition concerning our human condition, Nancy recalls and negates the Levinasian *il y a*, what Nancy calls the ‘desperately poor *there is*’ of a “brute givenness” of Being,²⁸⁵ the ‘anonymous generality’,²⁸⁶ or as Levinas puts it, ‘the sheer fact of being’ which ‘cannot disappear’, even in the ‘[t]he disappearance of all things and of the I’.²⁸⁷ For Nancy the end of the unconditioned is not just the end of a simple choice between immanence and transcendence, but by bringing the outside inside, by marking the transcendent as a function of the immanent (and vice versa), there can no longer be a border that does not border-on, no isolated being that hovers in ontological difference, no beyond or between all things and the I, for, Nancy writes, ‘God filled the intervals; he was himself without interval’.²⁸⁸ In asserting that *there isn’t*, Nancy asserts that being is nothing outside of, in-between or underneath the conditioning of all of the things by all of the I’s, that if they were to disappear, being would disappear with them. The *there is* is not the condition of the human, rather the *there isn’t* determines the human as the condition of being. The immanent therefore demands to be thought as the ‘interval, the space between *us*’ [my italics].²⁸⁹

As Fischer puts it, Nancy’s ‘ontology is the ontology of being abandoned to the finite singularity of an existence, an existence itself open and breached in

²⁸⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Chroniques philosophiques* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2004), p. 13.

²⁸⁵ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p.2.

²⁸⁶ Lisa Guenther, ‘Levinas on Individuation and Ethical Singularity’, in *Epoché*, 14. 1 (Fall 2009) 167-87 (p. 171).

²⁸⁷ Emmanuel Levinas, *Existence and Existents* (1946), trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht, Boston & London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), p. 53.

²⁸⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy & Ann Smock, ‘Speaking Without Being Able To’ (1989), trans. by Brian Holmes, in *The Birth to Presence*, pp. 310-8 (p. 318).

²⁸⁹ Nancy, ‘Speaking Without Being Able To’, p. 318.

abandonment to the world and to the in-common – not an “individuality”, but punctuations, encounters, crossings.²⁹⁰ “We”, not a communal “we” remaining in immediacy beyond the withdrawal of the transcendence that once circumscribed us, but a “we” of existences existing ‘between the disintegration of the “crowd” and the aggregation of the group’,²⁹¹ Nancy writes in ‘Of Being-in-Common’. We each “are” and, in some way, we “are” together, but in a way that constitutes an immanent horizon that is nevertheless shot through with division - finite, ontic, transcendental²⁹² limits that hold each self to itself while also in contact with others, without substratum.²⁹³ Nancy writes in *Being Singular Plural*:

"The horizon of the infinite"²⁹⁴ is no longer the horizon of the whole, but the "whole" (all that is) as put on hold everywhere, pushed to the outside just as much as it is pushed back inside the "self." It is no longer a line that is drawn, or a line that will be drawn, which orients or gathers the meaning of a course of progress or navigation. It is the opening or distancing of horizon itself, and in the opening: us. We happen as the opening itself, the dangerous fault line of a rupture.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁰ Francis Fischer, ‘Jean-Luc Nancy: the place of a thinking’, trans. by Richard Stamp, in *The Sense of Philosophy: Jean-Luc Nancy*, ed. by Sheppard et al, pp. 34-9 (p. 36).

²⁹¹ Nancy, ‘Of Being-in-Common’, p. 7.

²⁹² That is, pertaining to limits between the immanent and the transcendent. As Kant puts it: ‘We shall entitle the principles whose application is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience, *immanent*; and those, on the other hand, which profess to pass beyond these limits, *transcendent*. In the case of these latter, I am not referring to the *transcendental* which refers rather to ‘the bounds of the territory’. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781-7), trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Palgrave, 2003), pp. 298-99.

²⁹³ It is from this position that Nancy pursues his famous work on community and it is for this reason that reading the work on community purely as a political contribution is misguided.

²⁹⁴ This is a reference to: Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, pp. 180-1.

²⁹⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Forward’ (1996), trans. by Robert D. Richardson & Anne E. O’Byrne, in *Being Singular Plural* (California: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. xi-xiv (p. xii).

Fischer's reference above to an "ontology of being abandoned" draws on Nancy's 1981 'L'être abandonné' [Abandoned Being],²⁹⁶ where Nancy suggests how the Aristotelian-Scholastic precept that "'being" is said in various senses [τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς], but always with reference to one principle',²⁹⁷ demands to be interpreted in the wake of the withdrawal, subtraction, or *Seinsverlassenheit* that places immanent being in abandon. Although, as Raffoul acutely observes, Heidegger's concept of *Seinsverlassenheit*, is probably not on the periphery of Nancy's essay, as the German text of Heidegger's *Contributions* was not published until eight years after Nancy's essay,²⁹⁸ nevertheless, as will be made clearer in the section immediately following, by approaching the question of the plural enunciations of "being," Nancy is very much entering into a Heideggerian conversation, around an Ancient Greek problematic reactivated by Heidegger for the contemporary.

The many modes in which existence is predicated within speech are not, for Nancy, merely analogous to one unitary principle of being in the way, for instance, Thomas Aquinas interprets the Aristotelian text.²⁹⁹ For '[i]f being has not ceased to speak itself in multiple ways – *pollakōs legetai* – abandonment adds nothing to the proliferation of this *pollakōs*'.³⁰⁰ That is to say, the withdrawal of transcendence and ontological difference, the withdrawal of the being that would be the principle of each saying, does not constitute the absolution of all saying as an immanent and immediate totality liberated from a hierarchical ontology, because 'the speech

²⁹⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Abandoned Being' (1981), trans. by Brian Holmes, in *The Birth to Presence*, pp. 36-47.

²⁹⁷ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1003b. Translation modified.

²⁹⁸ François Raffoul, 'Abandonment and the Categorical Imperative of Being', in *Jean-Luc Nancy: Justice, Legality and World*, ed. by Benjamin C. Hutchens (London: Continuum, 2012), pp. 65-81 (80 n. 33), and Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, p. 417.

²⁹⁹ See section (2.7) of this chapter.

³⁰⁰ Nancy, 'Abandoned Being', p. 36.

of being is not appended to being itself. Being is not, has never been – if it has ever been – anything but the *pollakōs legemenon*, the spoken-in-multiple-ways',³⁰¹ the multiplicity of sayings articulating the heterogeneity of the immanent but non-immediate relations of the speakers in their transimmanence and sharing: us. But what the “us” consists in, and therefore, what structures the immanent as its transimmanent ec-stasis and self-relation, revolves around yet another kind of end, '[t]he “end” in question corresponds to the closure of a world, of “our” world, of the sense of sense, and of the Greco-Judeo-Christian-Islamic world'.³⁰²

Another end of an end, then, this time of the geographical/ideological boundaries of the world or the West. For Nancy, the whole problematic set up thus far must be understood as coloured through and through by the technological conclusion of metaphysics that has succeeded in globalising de Beistegui's “plane of immanence”. That is, the question of immanence and transcendence, unlike its prototypical form, is no longer asked within the confines of the city-state. Nancy explains in 2001:

it is no longer possible to identify either a city that would be "The City"- as Rome was for so long - or an orb that would provide the contour of a world extended around this city. Even worse, it is no longer possible to identify either the city or the orb of the world in general. The city spreads and extends all the way to the point where, while it tends to cover the entire orb of the planet, it loses its properties as a city, and, of course with them, those properties that would allow it to be distinguished from a "country." That which extends in this way is no longer properly "urban"- either from the perspective of urbanism or from

³⁰¹ Nancy, 'Abandoned Being', p. 36.

³⁰² J-L. Nancy – 'Interview with Jean-Luc Nancy' in *Jean-Luc Nancy and Plural Thinking* eds. P. Gratton & M-E. Morin, New York: State University of New York Press, 2012, p. 237

that of urbanity but megapolitical, metropolitan, or co-urbational, or else caught in the loose net of what is called the "urban network."³⁰³

In the wake of the technological interconnection of the entire globe, the "becoming-worldwide" that no longer leaves any "outside" and consequently no longer leaves any "inside",³⁰⁴ the question of the immanent, of what is given to be thought in the withdrawal of the transcendent, must be phrased as an investigation of what becomes of the same when it can have no recourse to the other, what an inside could be without an outside to delimit it, what a figure would be without a ground, which is to say, what the immanent is without recourse to a set of definitions based upon the privation of the transcendent.³⁰⁵ How can the one world, our world, this world, be thought without delimiting it from another, or thinking of it as the remainder of the withdrawal of another?

Concomitant to the empirical or ontological question is the second issue, of *how* philosophy thinks. If, Nancy asks, '[p]hilosophy begins from itself', able only to 'represent to itself what precedes its own beginning as an early stage [...] or else as simple exteriority',³⁰⁶ and if 'there is no sense except in relation to some "outside" or "elsewhere" *in the relation to which sense consists*',³⁰⁷ then how is it possible to reconcile the sense philosophy attempts to think, with the withdrawal of an outside or elsewhere that constitutes its *de facto* historical genesis, but is an outside against which and to which the philosophical apparatus orients itself in its significations? How does philosophy approach the sense of the immanent if the

³⁰³ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Urbi et Orbi' (2001), trans. by Francois Raffoul & David Pettigrew, in *The Creation of the World or Globalization*, pp. 33-55 (p. 33).

³⁰⁴ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 7.

³⁰⁵ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 6.

³⁰⁶ Nancy, 'Creation as Denaturation', p. 77.

³⁰⁷ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 7.

very operation of philosophical sense proceeds according to a definitively transcendent linguistic structure? How are we to rein in sense from signification?

It is the aim of this thesis to draw out Nancy's answers to these questions, which are, in brief: that "'immanence," however, is not a vague coagulation; it is nothing more than its own horizon',³⁰⁸ that is, immanence is its own transcendence, for the world '*has its outside on the inside*',³⁰⁹ which is to say, the borders that distinguish every being from every other being determine the world's immanence as conditioned only by the infinitely folded web of outsides or exposures that composes it, "transimmanently". And secondly, that as such 'sense opens itself *within* the world',³¹⁰ the relationship of transcendent signification is brought inside, maintained as a relation, as a being-toward, but a "'being-toward-the-world"' of itself to itself, prior to any signification, a being-toward the world wherein the world is nothing but the sum total of being-toward-one-anothers in finite relation, rendering 'sense a coming that is neither immanent nor transcendent',³¹¹ but transimmanent, oriented not to the infinitely other, but across the shared finite hiatus.

As such, Nancy's idiosyncratic inflection of the phenomenological term "*toward*" [*'zum*³¹² or *'à*³¹³] speaks of both a loyalty to and divergence from Heidegger. On the one hand, as already mentioned in section (1.3), for Nancy, '[t]o be *jemeinig* is to be "mine" or "one's," not "each time" in the sense of all the times and of always, but on the contrary according to the discontinuity and the discretion of times [*fois*],

³⁰⁸ Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', p. 76.

³⁰⁹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 54.

³¹⁰ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 55.

³¹¹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, pp. 16-7.

³¹² Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927) (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1967), p. 236.

³¹³ Nancy, *Le Sens du monde*, p. 55.

of space-times [*espaces-temps*] or of taking-places [*des avoirs-lieux*].³¹⁴ Which is to say, where for Heidegger *Dasein*'s Being-towards-death is its 'ownmost, non-relational, and not to be outstripped [...] potentiality-for-Being',³¹⁵ in the sense that *Dasein*'s impending but indeterminate temporal limit is both the absolute possibility of its unfinishedness and openness (or the impossibility of its completion) and that which it can never share with other *Dasein*, for Nancy, as he writes in 'Corpus':

*existence isn't "for" death [...] "death" is the body of existence, a very different thing. There's no "death," taken as an essence to which we've been consigned: there's the body, the mortal spacing of the body, registering the fact that existence has no essence (not even "death"), but only ex-ists.*³¹⁶

That is, Nancy is in agreement with Heidegger that "'death" [is] the *being-toward-infinity* of what does not have its end *in* itself - does not contain its end',³¹⁷ but for Nancy, once the notion of death is disconnected from 'the fantasy of abolished space',³¹⁸ this being-toward refers to the spatio-temporal ec-stasis of the body, which is 'toward itself insofar as it is being-toward-the-world, and toward the world insofar as the world is the configuration or constellation of being-toward in its plural singularity'.³¹⁹ This alignment, in Nancy's text, of the relational and non-relational senses of the *toward*, is treated at length in section (3.7) in light of Nancy's descriptions of absolutely conditioned finitude, that is, shared finitude.

³¹⁴ Nancy, 'Banks, Edges, Limits', p. 43.

³¹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 295.

³¹⁶ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 15.

³¹⁷ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 32.

³¹⁸ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 55.

³¹⁹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 33.

Yet on the other hand, the world's being-toward-itself represents, in Nancy's words, 'a geared down *being-toward*, where *toward* has less the connotation of a mere opposition to *in* than the connotation of sense disengaged and delivered from *in*.'³²⁰ Recalling from section (1.4) that Nancy word *sens*, as well as invoking registers of meaningfulness and sensibility, also implies directedness, specifically in the sense of the '*being-to or being-toward [être à]*'³²¹ each other of singularities, this geared-down *toward* opens up the possibility for Nancy to declare, 'thus, *world* is not merely the correlative of *sense*, it is structured as *sense*, and reciprocally, *sense* is structured as world. *Clearly*, "the sense of the world" is a tautological expression.'³²² Thinking this *sens*, the fluctuating lattice of this self-relation of all beings, which is prior to signification and unreliant upon anthropocentric orientation,³²³ is the challenge of Nancy's philosophy:

World means at least *being-to or being-toward [être à]*; it means rapport, relation, address, sending, donation, presentation *to* - if only of entities or existents *to* each other. We have known how to categorize being-*in*, being-*for*, or being-*by*, but it still remains for us to think being-*to*, or the *to* of being, its ontologically worldly or worldwide trait.³²⁴

³²⁰ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 61.

³²¹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 8.

³²² Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 8.

³²³ See section (1.3).

³²⁴ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 8.

2.2 Chapter Structure

The purpose of this chapter is to set up the contextual and conceptual framework in which to approach Nancy's thoughts on the nature of immanence and transcendence, and *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, by introducing the contemporary domain into which Nancy steps and to which his work responds. It is a field, I will contend, defined not only by the relation it maintains with the history of philosophy, but also by its tendency to treat the immanent as the privative correlate of the transcendent. The principle figures to be investigated are Heidegger and Deleuze, both of whom, despite their differences, I suggest tender a strong reading of Plato and Platonic *μέθεξις* that sets up a treatment of the immanent as the remainder of a transcendent subtraction, and as such, binds the two terms in the secrecy of an exclusive affirmation. The presentation of these treatments thus lays out the scene against which an alternative trajectory of thought might be understood, one that I argue in the next chapter becomes evident in the work of Gadamer before being radicalised by Nancy, a group of thoughts about the immanent that do not negate but instead affirm the transcendence that structures it internally.

Beyond our introduction, then, this chapter proceeds across three parts broadly defined. First of all, it will be necessary to outline the way in which contemporary respondents can to a certain extent take as given certain questions, contexts, and concepts that have been retrieved from Ancient Greek philosophy. To do this, I will refer to two books on Heidegger's reading of the Greeks, by Walter Brogan and David Webb, suggesting that in light of the Heideggerian reactivation of Greek philosophy they present, it becomes clear that the Nancean interpretation of Greek philosophy with which this thesis is concerned is clearly a response to this already available relatedness of the contemporary philosophical scene to the ancient.

Specifically, I will suggest that Nancy follows Heidegger's reading of Aristotle in understanding the singularity of being as verbal and comprising a negotiation of forces of production, but that, crucially, Nancy blurs the boundaries between the Aristotelian divisions of the natural and the technical in regards to this negotiation. Furthermore, I argue, by conceiving ontological difference as the horizontal sharing of beings, Nancy inverts the syntax of ontological difference entirely, determining being to be nothing other than the *plurality* of beings, that is, transforming it from a principle of the plural to the plural as principle. The assertion that "being" is said in many ways, for Nancy, refers to the heterogeneity that both individuates and transimmanently mediates all things.

In the middle section I focus specifically on Heidegger's interpretation and rejection of the concept of *μέθεξις*. Here I contend that Heidegger again aligns himself with Aristotle by echoing Aristotle's criticisms of Platonic *μέθεξις* from the *Metaphysics*. Indeed, for Heidegger, I aim to show, *μέθεξις* is a theory of connection between two realms that ceases to have any meaning when those two realms turn out to be nothing but an exteriorisation of the psychological division between experience and reflection, that is, merely symptoms of a psychologistic ontology. I suggest here that Heidegger's interpretation of the cave allegory from Plato's *Republic* presents an outright rejection of the verticality of *μέθεξις*.

However, unlike Nancy, who realigns *μέθεξις* onto a horizontal axis as the sharing of limits between beings, I will argue that Heidegger's response is to remove *μέθεξις* altogether, replacing it with *μίμησις*. I suggest that the further interpretation of Plato's *Republic* during Heidegger's considerations of art and *μίμησις* in the Nietzsche lectures between 1936 and 1937, replaces the function of *μέθεξις* in determining what is genuine and true, with the ability of a craftsperson or artist to

observe the prevailing cultural modes that govern a people's way of disclosing beings, and moreover the artisan's mimetic ability to copy these ways of being, bringing them forth in media that are or are not their own respectively. On Nancy's reading, I claim, this entails a conception of immanence as a privation of transcendence, for as was just the case with de Beistegui's account of the socio-political immanence at the birth of philosophy, a Nancean critique could here accuse Heidegger of replacing a vertical transcendent participation in meaning, with the contract of a people sharing a cultural space.

Then, in the final section, I suggest that Deleuze follows a similar pattern, only to a much more radical extent. After noting Nancy's lack of sympathy towards Deleuze's mode of philosophising, in contrast to his respect for Heidegger's, I argue that Deleuze's project of "reversing Platonism" repeats Heidegger's replacement of *μέθεξις* with *μίμησις*, albeit in an entirely different way. I aim to show in this section that Deleuze not only interprets Heidegger's notion of ontological difference as the description of a homogenous plane of immanent being, but that he marks it as derivative to the work of Duns Scotus, who Deleuze attempts to install as the foremost thinker in the history of ontology. Deleuze's turn from *μέθεξις* to *μίμησις* runs deeper than Heidegger's, because for Deleuze *μίμησις* is not bound to phenomenology, quite the reverse in fact, because Deleuze's exclusive privileging of images or simulacra on a single immanent plane, and the relations of *μίμησις* between them, releases them from a dative relationship to an observer. All of which, I would like to show, sets a precedent against which the following chapter's introduction of an alternative trajectory in the work of Gadamer and Nancy, who affirm the heterogeneity and transcendence of *μέθεξις*, can be located.

2.3 Heidegger on the Greeks

In his 2005 book *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being*, Walter Brogan succeeds in demonstrating the contemporary rejuvenation of Ancient Greek philosophy in a quite particular way. For Brogan does not centre his discussion on the recuperation or application of Greek thought as it is made manifest in the Heideggerian corpus. While the former consideration is indeed present, the real force and focus of Brogan's text is not so much Heidegger's reading of the Greeks, as it is Brogan's reading of the Greeks via Heidegger. Brogan's fidelity to Heidegger is therefore evidenced not in a commentary, but by charting a course back to the Greeks along paths Heidegger has opened, while all the way acknowledging Heidegger's work as that which has made such an investigation possible.

The book owes its achievement of an original interpretation of Aristotle (as well as Antiphon and Parmenides) explicitly to Heidegger, and implicitly to the subtlety with which the author balances his own analysis of the philosophy of Aristotle with a simultaneous demarcation of the field of possible accesses Heidegger has given to contemporary philosophy. It is within this already staged scene or freed opening, I would like to point out, that Nancy articulates his questioning around Greek philosophy. That is, Nancy interrogates Greek thought via its already-reinvigorated place in modern philosophy for which Heidegger is largely responsible. Brogan's text describes the shape of this landscape.

For the purposes of this thesis, however, Brogan's text has a second, or rather, more precise bearing. For in pursuing a reading of Aristotle opened up by Heidegger's quite well documented assertions of the centrality of *φρόνησις* and

production to Aristotelian philosophy,³²⁵ Brogan shows that the Nancean commitments to which this thesis attempts to assign principality, namely singularity, limit, and transimmanence, all respond directly to a problematic reactivated by Heidegger from out of the very source of philosophy. In investigating the way in which Aristotle conceives of being as production, Brogan's book presents a number of discoveries. The most fundamental kind of production, we find, is φύσις, nature, the name for beings that have their own why, their own teleology, their own limit,³²⁶ that are not occasioned by external factors, but come to be what they are from out of themselves only (the blossoming of a rose as opposed to, say, the tool that is produced by τέχνη, occasioned from without).³²⁷ Beings produced in this way are fundamental in the sense that they do not compose a restricted economy or regional ontology, rather, the horizon of beings produced in φύσις is precisely the background against which all regional ontologies stand in relief, a horizon with which technical objects only relate in a secondary manner, a horizon in which the human is always already embedded and involved pre-reflectively and pre-technically.³²⁸ The way we still use the word synonymously with "essence", in denoting the "nature of" something, still transmits some of this fundamentality.³²⁹

Crucially, beings produced in φύσις, for Aristotle, Brogan explains, are not units but unities. That is to say, the fundamental way for a being to be is not as a

³²⁵ See for example: Franco Volpi, 'Being and Time: A "Translation" of the Nicomachean Ethics?', trans. by John Protevi, in *Reading Heidegger from the Start*, eds. Theodore Kisiel & John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 195-212; Jacques Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); and Joanna Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1995).

³²⁶ Walter A. Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle: The Twofoldness of Being* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 66.

³²⁷ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, pp. 30-3.

³²⁸ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, pp. 21-7.

³²⁹ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 25.

στοιχεῖον, an irreducible elemental or atomistic building block, but as a unified or 'folded' manifold,³³⁰ 'folding [*Faltung*]'³³¹ being a term Heidegger uses in a summer 1931 lecture course on Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (which Brogan in fact translated³³²) to refer to Aristotle's great transformation of Parmenides' words, his pronouncement that 'being as one is in itself many'.³³³ Indeed, Heidegger states, while Plato had taken the first steps down this path in determining that not only being, but also non-being, that is, the transitory and the false, also *is*, it was Aristotle, for Heidegger, who recognised that as such, being and non being, potential and actual, singular and multiple, all belong together, each folding into their opposites and, furthermore, into each other.³³⁴ In this much, for Heidegger, Aristotle transformed Philosophy from a system, that is, a structure extrapolated from a basic commitment to the oneness of being, into a task,³³⁵ the task of thinking the oneness of being as the necessity of its manifold.³³⁶

That which is 'in the truest sense substance [*οὐσία*]',³³⁷ Aristotle writes in the *Metaphysics*, is the 'primary substrate [*ὑποκείμενον πρῶτον*]',³³⁸ and as candidates for the position, he first names ὕλη, matter, second μορφή, form, and

³³⁰ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 109.

³³¹ Martin Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3: on the Essence and Actuality of Force* (1931), trans. by Walter A. Brogan & Peter Warnek (USA: Indiana University Press, 1995), p. 9.

³³² Furthermore, in an article on Nancy, Brogan locates Nancy's concept of *partage* (the sharing-out of being that marks objectuality as not an expression of an essential oneness, but as irreducible from the networks of distinction and separation that enclose and expose beings) within this family of thoughts broadly taken, noting the similarity of Nancy's topological descriptions to those of Heidegger's characterisations of folded, imparted partitions. See: Walter A. Brogan, 'The Parting of Being: On Creation and Sharing in Nancy's Political Ontology', in *Research in Phenomenology*, 40 (2010), 295-308.

³³³ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3*, p. 22.

³³⁴ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3*, p. 22.

³³⁵ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3*, p. 10.

³³⁶ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics Θ 1-3*, p. 22.

³³⁷ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1029a.

³³⁸ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1029a.

thirdly a hylomorphic combination of matter and form.³³⁹ Before entering a complicated and possibly self-contradictory³⁴⁰ set of definitions, Aristotle rules out the possibility that *ἄλη* is the truest substance, due to its not being *τόδε τι*, “this”, an individual.³⁴¹ While matter is indeed found at the ground of every substance, once stripped of all its forms, what is left is an undifferentiated homogeneity. This would not be governed by *φύσις*, but *στοιχεῖα*. Which is to say: that in reference to which every enunciation of being is made is not the contingently indivisible and simple, but the held-together-in-unison, the work of being in the maintenance of balanced singularity, not a mere default position of collapsed brute “stuff”.

On this, Heidegger is clear: the analogous character of a multiplicitous predication of oneness is not to be understood as offering a direction for a reductive or derivative enquiry in the way that, for example, some medieval thinkers³⁴² interpret it as a way to connect philosophical accounts to theological principles.³⁴³ Rather, ‘[t]he analogy of being – this designation is not a solution to the being question [...] but the title for the most stringent aporia’.³⁴⁴ ‘For Antiphon’, Brogan writes, ‘it was the elements that are untouched by division; for Plato it is the *eidos*. For Aristotle it is the *tode ti*, the individual being, which is present as a whole and holds itself there as such’.³⁴⁵ The guiding question for Aristotle, then, according to Brogan, is ‘[h]ow can there be a singularity of being when being is manifold’?³⁴⁶

³³⁹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1029a.

³⁴⁰ See the intricate analyses in: Michael Woods, ‘Problems in Metaphysics Z, Chapter 13’, in *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Julius Matthew Emil Moravcsik (New York: Anchor, 1967), pp. 215–238.

³⁴¹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1029a..

³⁴² We have named Aquinas in this regard, and in section (2.7) will have cause to delve deeper.

³⁴³ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* Θ 1-3, p. 38.

³⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Aristotle's Metaphysics* Θ 1-3, p. 38.

³⁴⁵ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 62.

³⁴⁶ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 118.

The upshot and guiding thread of Brogan's text in its entirety, as its title would suggest, is that Heidegger has reopened Aristotle's philosophy in such a way that for us it can be discerned that Aristotle conceives of being as twofold, a *στέρεσις* of generation and decay, presence and privation, being and non-being, 'a continuity that has rupture belonging to its very core'.³⁴⁷ In the summer of 1924, in the lecture series on the *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, Heidegger refers to the concept of *στέρεσις* in the *Physics*, as precisely the concept for the 'new phenomenon of being'³⁴⁸ that would complete the Platonic introduction of non-being into ontology. Heidegger strongly asserts here that what is not in question is a merely logical form of negation dissociated from a real distribution of the ontos:

When we say that non-being is a way of being, it sounds formal-dialectical. But one must see that it is interpreted on the basis of the sense of being: non-being in the sense of a *definite there*, the *there of absence*. On the basis of this being-that-is-not, the there is in the character of a determinate being-absent, from which "something can become".³⁴⁹

'The being that is brought forth', Brogan explains, 'is singled out, selected, gathered into a unity. It stands there in relation to other beings in such a way that it holds its own relation to them.'³⁵⁰ As we have seen Nancy emphasise, the distinct can only be so by being distinguished from something else distinct, that is, being is relational both for Nancy and, on this interpretation, for Aristotle. And being as relation, or relating, is explained in the thought of Aristotle, Brogan explains, as primordial movement.

³⁴⁷ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 37.

³⁴⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy* (1924), trans. by Robert D. Metcalf & Mark B. Tanzer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 202.

³⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, p. 202.

³⁵⁰ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 128.

Beyond the emphasis on the concrete specificity, the *τόδε τι*, that renders metaphysics for Aristotle a science of being *qua* being, *ὄντος ἢ ὄν*³⁵¹ (and as such, Brogan emphasises, not really a meta-physics in the scholastic sense at all), the thinking of twofoldness pertains largely to a thinking of movement as fundamentally ontological rather than ontic, and, in reverse, a thinking of the ontological as kinetic, rather than stable. That is, when Aristotle asserts in the *Metaphysics* that the primary form of motion is circular locomotion,³⁵² Brogan can add that this is only, for Aristotle, the primary form of motion *in space*, but that space itself already presupposes being, and that the *place* or *τόπος* of a being, the place opened by the boundary at which being maintains itself in *στέρεσις* as a tense, kinetic conflict with non-being, is governed by a wholly more fundamental, ontological movement that opens place along the limits of the thing:³⁵³

the Greeks had no notion like our modern notion of “location of a mass in space.” Space rather is understood as the “place” of a being [...] Place is not an indifferent container that defines the being. Rather, the being arrives in its place and thereby its place first comes to be [...] The place is the limit of a separate, embodied being. This is why Aristotle speaks of relations such as contact, touch, and succession whenever he discusses place. Only an embodied physical being is capable of touching and reaching out toward its proper realm.³⁵⁴

In the natural kind of being, *φύσις*, the ontological kinesis is the being’s own, and furthermore it is just as much its yet-to-be and its struggle as it is its presence,

³⁵¹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1026a.

³⁵² Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1072b.

³⁵³ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, pp. 35-8.

³⁵⁴ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 36.

unlike the technical object, occasioned as it is from without by a movement from elsewhere. Brogan quotes Heidegger's *Being and Time*:

When, for instance, a fruit is unripe, it "goes towards" its ripeness. In this process of ripening, that which the fruit is not yet, is by no means pieced on as something not yet present-at-hand. The fruit brings itself to ripeness, and such a bringing of itself is a characteristic of its Being as a fruit. Nothing imaginable which one might contribute to it, would eliminate the unripeness of the fruit, if this entity did not come to ripeness of its own accord. When we speak of the "not-yet" of the unripeness, we do not have in view something else which stands outside [*aussenstehendes*], and which - with utter indifference to the fruit - might be present-at-hand in it and with it.³⁵⁵

Being, for Aristotle, Brogan finds by way of Heidegger's opened paths, is indeed presence or being-present, but in a specifically verbal form, as a presencing or enduring, a constant movement of coming-to-presence, an ontological kinesis, a flow of preservation or sustenance of objectuality. Ontological production, then, is always a confluence of forces, the being is the fluctuating moment of resistance formed by the playing-off of the one against the other.³⁵⁶ What this means is that being is not simple oneness for Aristotle, but rather that being is a balanced tension between parts, which do not form or total, but are preceded by, a unifying whole.³⁵⁷

Although it is certainly not the intention here to mark a Nancean critique (this would misunderstand that Brogan presents a space of possibility Heidegger opens and hands over, not a determinate set of philosophical propositions), it is worth

³⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 287-8.

³⁵⁶ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, pp. 76-7.

³⁵⁷ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 67.

commenting on certain homologies that are clear. Nancy, like Aristotle, conceives of singularity as unity rather than unit, and understands presencing as twofold, as the negotiation of a unifying or distinguishing limit between (at least) two opposing factors. Moreover, as Malpas puts it, for Aristotle 'to unify is to limit',³⁵⁸ just as is the case for Nancy, being conceived as unity is equally being conceived as the function of a limit, a topological limit that dissects and opens space, rather than entering an already available Cartesian plenum.

Furthermore, the conceptual framework Aristotle uses to describe the ways in which these forces come about and interact in the production of beings, limits, and space, provides a powerful tool for discerning a novelty in the Nancean text. Specifically, in light of Aristotle's differentiation between the internal *ἐντελέχεια* of *φύσις*, and the external *αἰτία* of *τέχνη*, Nancy's understanding of the coming-to-presence of objectuality and singularity, is revealed as referring *both* to *φύσις* and *τέχνη*.

Being, the presencing of the *τόδε τι* or the singularity, is, for Nancy, shared; it is still a twofoldness, but for Nancy this twofoldness does not span an ontological difference between being and non-being, it is the twofoldness of beings bordering one another, co-articulating their shared limits without remainder, jostling for position, fluctuating and presencing as mutual resistance and endurance: a logical conclusion of Aristotle's conception of *τόπος*. The production of beings is, for Nancy, occasioned from without and within, not as an antagonism between the natural and the technical, but as a negotiation of a shared limit that is simultaneously natural and technical, for the internal and external are only

³⁵⁸ Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place: Explorations in the Topology of Being* (London: MIT Press, 2012), p. 84.

disimplicated from the limit in the abstract. In the world, on the other hand, there is only limit and sharing. To speak with Aristotle of teleology reveals that for Nancy the boundary and the *telos* are again abstractions of the same figure, the necessary and the contingent are both at play in coming-to-presence as the sharing that disentwines into a tension between blossoming and causing.

Not only are these rediscovered philosophical materials, spaces, and paths, made available to Nancy in the pre-staging of the contemporary, but so too are certain methodological or meta-philosophical attitudes. Phenomenology, Brogan emphasises, in the way Heidegger conceives it as less an invention than a rediscovery of an essentially Greek mode of philosophising, is to be understood as the 'self-address of factual life'.³⁵⁹ It involves another kind of twofoldness, a 'doubling of the regard',³⁶⁰ of the human being always already embedded pre-reflectively in the world it reflects upon. The regard falls not only upon the revealed, but also on the revealing in which the human observer is involved prior to any reflection upon what is revealed. Phenomenology regards both what is revealed, and that it is revealed. We have already seen Nancy echo this understanding in his determination of metaphysics as the enquiry into (and from) 'being which *ex-ists* to itself'.³⁶¹ What I would like to do in the remaining half of this section is to again introduce the way this philosophical disposition, already available to Nancy's enquiries, connects Nancy's work, via Heidegger, to Ancient Greek thought.

David Webb's *Heidegger, Ethics, and the Practice of Ontology* takes as its starting point the very same issue as Brogan's book, the many ways in which "being" is

³⁵⁹ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 12.

³⁶⁰ Brogan, *Heidegger and Aristotle*, p. 16.

³⁶¹ Nancy, 'Creation as Denaturation', p. 85.

said, and the 'various paths' of response ranging from advocations of principles of unity to disputations that the manifold of 'experience may be accommodated within a single form'.³⁶² In this much, the book pronounces its similar importance not only to the historical context but also the specific problematics with which this thesis is concerned. The distinction of Webb's approach is to place methodological concerns at the forefront of his investigation, specifically, sounding out the possibility that ontology is a practice, that is, like a doctor's practice, something that moves forward in such a way that theory and application are constantly modulated by one another, so that, therefore, the philosophical sub-disciplines of ontology and ethics are fundamentally mutually inclusive.³⁶³

For the insight that philosophy is a self-address of factual life and a questioning of the being that ex-ists to itself, leads directly to a realisation that an understanding of disclosure in general can never be disconnected from the moment of disclosing, which is to say, that a general ontology can never be installed once and for all because it is always 'founded' in the ontic moments of the human's everyday dealings.³⁶⁴ For instance, while categories such as singularity and opposition can be the elements of an all-encompassing ontological taxonomy, nevertheless these categories are not pure logical forms mapping onto a chaotic manifold of sensory data, but are rooted in the already formed arrangements of beings loaded with practical, human concerns.

In his book, Webb again presents a Heideggerian reactivation, this time of Aristotle's practical philosophy, though placing much more emphasis on the question of how Heidegger transforms and applies Aristotle's texts. A key point

³⁶² David Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 1.

³⁶³ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 8.

³⁶⁴ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 20.

here, Webb states, is that while Heidegger applauds Aristotle's acknowledgement of the ontological difference between beings and their being (a difference that is missing in Plato's hierarchical ontology of perfection³⁶⁵), and eagerly takes up the conceptual tools Aristotle bequeaths, he refuses the methodological direction according to which Aristotle organises them. In Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes *φρόνησις* from *ἐπιστήμη* [science] since the former deals with variables and the latter laws, and from *τέχνη* [craftsmanship], since *φρόνησις* is neither applied nor has ends beyond its own practice.³⁶⁶ Heidegger, Webb explains, takes up Aristotle's analyses of *φρόνησις*, the practical pre-reflective disposition that guides the disclosure of each part of the whole, the part which, Heidegger asserts in the 1924-25 lectures on Plato's *Sophist*, 'can also be otherwise, but [...] has a relation to the deliberator himself', and, furthermore, 'contributes to the deliberator himself',³⁶⁷ rendering *φρόνησις* a prudence or practical wisdom that contains no content as such, but bears on the disclosure of what "is", and in such a way, Hodge writes, that it allows Heidegger to unpick the 'presumption that identity is defined by metaphysics in advance of ethical questioning'.³⁶⁸

Heidegger, Webb points out in agreement with Hodge, disagrees with Aristotle regarding the task of philosophy, because for Aristotle, *σοφία*, the generalised kosmotheoretical knowledge of the whole, what Heidegger, in 1922, refers to as 'authentic understanding [...] concerned with the ultimate viewpoints [...] in which

³⁶⁵ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 27.

³⁶⁶ Aristotle, *Aristotle's Ethica Nicomachea*, VI. 5.

³⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist* (1925), trans. by Richard Rojcewicz & André Schuwer (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 34.

³⁶⁸ Hodge, *Heidegger and Ethics*, p. 4.

beings can in themselves be defined',³⁶⁹ is always its final goal.³⁷⁰ Which is to say, while the philosophical approach is for Aristotle founded in the mortal realm of practical concerns and culturally-prejudiced disclosures which undercut the grand metaphysical determination of the being of beings, the philosophical maxim demands a unidirectional path from the mortal to the divine. While for Heidegger Aristotle does understand ontological difference, he fails to think according to it, for when it comes to the philosophical objective Aristotle privileges the kosmotheoretical whole over the phenomenologically engaged part, rather than thinking the two in their cyclical modification of one another, their difference as difference,³⁷¹ rather than a difference requiring philosophical resolution.

The point Webb makes is that Heidegger offers not only a strong ontological interpretation of the Aristotelian dictum, that "being" is said in many ways or senses but always with reference to one principle, but also a strong methodological definition that follows from it. In agreement with Brogan, whose book he in fact cites, Webb underscores that the principle of unity in question is indeed a unity of opposing forces, not an elemental or analogical simplicity.³⁷² But further, Webb emphasises that the rootedness of metaphysics in physics, the ontological movement of the being of beings, also dictates a route of enquiry for philosophy. Which is to say, Webb highlights that upon the ontological *στέρεσις* Heidegger discovers in Aristotle, Heidegger adds a methodological *στέρεσις* as its necessary correlate.

³⁶⁹ Martin Heidegger, 'Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation' (1922), trans. by John van Buren, in *Supplements*, ed. by John van Buren (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 111-46 (p. 138).

³⁷⁰ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 27.

³⁷¹ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 30.

³⁷² Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 66.

It would be impossible for the human, always already pre-reflectively involved in the disclosure of beings in accordance with everyday concerns, to engage a philosophical movement unidirectionally from the perception and apperception of beings out towards a general ontological overview, as if to leave those everyday regional disclosures behind. Rather, methodological *στέρεσις*, or the hermeneutic circle, emphasises a constant philosophical conversation between part and whole, between the concrete givenness of the lived situation that is not a manifold of data but a horizon of always already meaningful beings and relations, and the kosmotheoretical overview in which general laws and principles are extrapolated.³⁷³ The former cannot be left behind by any partial access to latter because the former is entirely bound up with cultural and epochal transformations.³⁷⁴ The understanding of the production of beings as *φύσις*, ontological movement and negotiation of opposing forces rather than stable presence, must not simply blot out and replace the many senses of being, because those senses are cultural variables. If “being” is said in many ways but always with reference to one principle, then this principle is just as contingent upon the sayings as they are upon the principle. The task of philosophy for Heidegger, Webb asserts, is to think being within this reflective dynamic, not to just hypothesise the ontological difference, but to philosophise with it, to think it as difference.

In light of Webb’s analysis, I would suggest that Nancy’s interrogation of the many ways being is said, already mentioned in section (2.1), turns out to be an extension or radicalisation of the path Heidegger has already trodden from Aristotle’s texts into the contemporary. For as already noted, Nancy writes in 1981

³⁷³ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 62.

³⁷⁴ Webb, *Heidegger, Ethics and the Practice of Ontology*, p. 5.

that 'the speech of being is not appended to being itself. Being is not, has never been – if it has ever been – anything but the *pollakōs legemenon*, the spoken-in-multiple-ways'.³⁷⁵ Which is to say, a three stage transformation is discernible across the three philosophers in question. First, the principle of being, while tied to the everyday disclosure of beings, is the exclusive target for philosophy (Aristotle). Second, the principle of being is to be thought in constant mediation with the disclosure of beings, in a two-way dynamic (Heidegger). Third, with Nancy, a principle of the plural is no longer relevant at all; the plural is the principle, for both the dynamic of ontological forces, and the dynamic of human methodological access, takes place *between* beings, as the inside, outside, exposure and sharing.

³⁷⁵ Nancy, 'Abandoned Being', p. 36.

2.4 Heidegger's rejection of μέθεξις

What neither Brogan nor Webb mention explicitly, and what I would like to introduce here, is Heidegger's quite adamant rejection of the concept of μέθεξις, and his affirmation of μίμησις in its place. In doing this, the aim is to indicate another element of the mediated conversation between Nancy, Heidegger, and the Greeks. In *Being and Time* Heidegger directly asserts that 'the ontological meaning of the relation between Real and ideal (μέθεξις)', relies on 'the ontologically unclarified *separation* of the Real and ideal' [my italics].³⁷⁶ In this regard, Heidegger once again demonstrates his alliance with Aristotle, who, Vlastos writes, 'makes the "separation" (χωρισμός) of the Forms the most objectionable aspect of the Platonic theory'.³⁷⁷

Indeed, in the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presents Plato's philosophy as a generalised version of Socrates' commitment to the universality of 'ἠθικὰ', ethics.³⁷⁸ Socrates, Aristotle writes, brackets all but the universal from his studies, discounting physical explanation and seeking the 'ὀρισμῶν', the definition, the unchanging moral law that applies unvaryingly to the indefinite variation of human affairs.³⁷⁹ Since for Plato there can be 'no general definition [κοινὸν ὄρον] of sensible things which are always changing',³⁸⁰ according to Aristotle, Plato applies the Socratic approach to his general ontology, discounting the ephemerality of the sensible, and seeking instead the universal forms 'that all sensible things are named after',³⁸¹ and in which they participate. In this way, Plato is for Aristotle the 'first philosopher to

³⁷⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 259.

³⁷⁷ Gregory Vlastos, 'The Third Man Argument in the Parmenides', in *The Philosophical Review*, 63.3, (July 1954) 319-49 (p. 333).

³⁷⁸ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

³⁷⁹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

³⁸⁰ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

³⁸¹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

posit a duality',³⁸² and therefore requires the remedial concept of *μέθεξις* to bridge the hiatus of being. If it is indeed the case, Aristotle writes, that Plato determines that 'things which bear the same name as the Forms exist by *μέθεξιν* in them',³⁸³ then this represents the patching over of an untenable dualism, for it is 'impossible that the substance and the thing of which it is the substance exist in separation [*χωρίς*]'.³⁸⁴ In the *Contributions*, Heidegger writes further of the *χωρισμός* between the real and the ideal:

The "between" of Da-sein overcomes the *χωρισμός* ("separation") not by slinging a bridge between being (beingness) and beings as if they were two objectively present riverbanks but by transforming together, into their simultaneity, both being and beings.³⁸⁵

What Heidegger's Aristotelian rejection of *μέθεξις* amounts to, I will show in this section, is a charge of psychologism. The notion of a participation or *μέθεξις* between the ideal and the real, for Heidegger, becomes extraneous as soon as one discounts the separation or *χωρισμός* between ideal and real to which it is derivative. But, I will argue, for Nancy *χωρισμός* and *μέθεξις* are not to be understood on the basis of a division between real and ideal, nor between being and beings, but simply between beings. Or, more precisely, separation and participation are not for Nancy only between beings, as if only contingent to those beings. Rather, for Nancy, separation and participation are the between itself, the functioning of the shared limit that distinguishes only by intimately connecting. What this means is that for Nancy *μέθεξις* is not vertical or transcendent, but rather lateral, contiguous, horizontal, and, in fact, horizontal. It is in this regard that the

³⁸² Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

³⁸³ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

³⁸⁴ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 991b.

³⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy*, pp. 13-14.

emergent ontological interpretation of Nancy in the secondary literature owes so much to Morin, who, as I stated in the first chapter, points out that Nancy's *sens* is a fundamentally horizontal concept.³⁸⁶ I am, in this chapter, laying the groundwork to understand in what way this constitutes a response to the reactivated Greek problematics of contemporary philosophy. In the next chapter we follow the alternative trajectory in the thought of *μέθεξις* as a horizontal relation.

Van Buren notes that Heidegger was consistently troubled throughout his developmental years by the binding of the logical and the psychological,³⁸⁷ having been 'awakened' to philosophy, as Gasché puts it, by Franz Brentano's 'analysis of the multiple ways in which being is expressed'.³⁸⁸ Heidegger was awarded a post-doctoral scholarship in 1913 on the proviso that he 'would remain true to the spirit of Thomistic philosophy', and it was then extended in 1915, with Heidegger promising that 'his academic life's work [would be] oriented to making the wealth of ideas inherited from Scholasticism applicable to the future intellectual struggle for the Christian ideal of life in Catholicism'.³⁸⁹ This study culminated in Heidegger's *Habilitationsschrift*, 'Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus' [The Theory of Categories and Meaning in Duns Scotus].³⁹⁰

In Scholastic metaphysics Heidegger was searching for a pre-epistemological theory of meaning, that is, a 'disposition for attentively listening in on the

³⁸⁶ Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 5.

³⁸⁷ John van Buren, *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (U.S.A.: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), p. 86.

³⁸⁸ Rodolphe Gasché, 'Quasi-Metaphoricity and the Question of Being', in *Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, ed. by Hugh J. Silverman & Don Ihde (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), pp. 166-191 (p. 169).

³⁸⁹ John van Buren, 'Chronological Overview', in *Supplements*, pp. 17-34 (pp. 20-21).

³⁹⁰ Partially translated as: Martin Heidegger, 'Conclusion: The Problem of Categories' (1916), in *Supplements*, ed. by van Buren, pp. 62-68.

immediate life of subjectivity and its immanent contexts of sense without having acquired a precise concept of the subject'.³⁹¹ Heidegger writes in 1912 that '[t]here is good reason to see the true *spiritus rector* of contemporary philosophy in Hume',³⁹² since in Heidegger's view, it is in the first place the empiricist restriction of a transcendent connection between the ego and the real that, via its perfection in Kant's transcendental philosophy, had brought about the current state of philosophy's entrapment between '*conscientialism* (immanentism) and *phenomenalism*'.³⁹³ By immanentism, Heidegger means solipsism, the interpretation of Kant's critical philosophy as a pure apriorism; by phenomenism, the interpretation of the real world as something never fully knowable in itself, on the thither side of sensibility. As Heidegger writes in the Scotus dissertation, '[i]mmanence and transcendence are relational concepts that acquire a clear meaning only by establishing that *with reference to which* something is thought of as immanent or transcendent'.³⁹⁴ The Greeks, on the other hand, as well as 'the Neoplatonists' and 'the philosophers of the middle ages', all provided Heidegger with texts concerned with a thinking of the real, either critically or as the 'trans-subjective'.³⁹⁵ That is to say, not as the transcendental epistemological architecture of the Kantian mind, but as the remainder for which no single mind can account.

Crucially however, Heidegger's want for a non-epistemological philosophy is occasioned by the influence of Husserl, and it is in Heidegger's reading of

³⁹¹ Heidegger, 'Conclusion: The Problem of Categories', p. 63.

³⁹² Martin Heidegger, 'The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy' (1912), in *Supplements*, ed. by van Buren, pp. 39-48 (p. 40).

³⁹³ Heidegger, 'The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy', p. 41.

³⁹⁴ Heidegger, 'Conclusion: The Problem of the Categories', p. 65.

³⁹⁵ Heidegger, 'The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy', pp. 40-41.

Aristotle, not Scotus,³⁹⁶ that Heidegger discovered something of what he was looking for:

What occurs for the phenomenology of the acts of consciousness as the self-manifestation of phenomena is thought more originally by Aristotle and in all Greek thinking and existence as *aletheia*, as the unconcealedness of what-is present, its being revealed, its showing itself. That which phenomenological investigations rediscovered as the supporting attitude of thought proves to be the fundamental trait of Greek thinking, if not indeed of philosophy as such.³⁹⁷

As has just been noted in our sections on Webb and Brogan, in Heidegger's lecture course of 1924-25, a reading of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is expounded in which the intellectual virtues are rendered definitively non-epistemological, and are introduced as pre-reflective affinities between thought and fields of being, that is, as non-epistemological categories of a relatedness that is not separable into the simple opposition subject-object. In the lecture course on logic taught the same year, and continuing into 1926,³⁹⁸ Heidegger blames 'the Platonic [distinction] between sensible being, the *αἰσθητόν*, and the being that is accessible through reason or *νοῦς*: the *νοητόν*,³⁹⁹ for the forgetting of this deep identity between thought and its object, a forgetting that has since lead to the 'psychologism' that confuses 'what is thought as such [with] thinking as empirical

³⁹⁶ As it turns out, not even the Scotus dissertation was a work on Scotus, but rather a text by Thomas of Erfurt popularly misattributed to Scotus. John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (USA: Fordham University Press, 1986), p. 145.

³⁹⁷ Heidegger, 'My Way to Phenomenology', p. 254.

³⁹⁸ Available as: Martin Heidegger, *Logic, The Question of Truth* (1925-6), trans, by Thomas Sheehan (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012).

³⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Logic, The Question of Truth*, p. 44.

and mental', an attitude unaware that 'logic is constructed on an ontological basis'.⁴⁰⁰

Recalling the classic logical example of the principle of contradiction, Heidegger asserts that 'its validity is completely independent of a possible change in the mental nature of human beings', a point which is meant to highlight the absurdity⁴⁰¹ of a philosophy in which the 'matter under investigation is determined according to the kind of science related to it, rather than vice versa'.⁴⁰² 'The inquiry today', Heidegger writes, 'takes up again the question of the *μέθεξις*, the participation of the real in the ideal, and it is up for grabs whether or not we can get clear on the phenomenon of thinking, of the thought, and more broadly of truth, by stating the problem in these terms'.⁴⁰³ In the 1926 lecture course on Ancient Greek concepts⁴⁰⁴ Heidegger was no more open to the possibility of restoring the thought of *μέθεξις*, and is recorded as saying, '[t]he fact that this connection [*μέθεξις*] is unresolved must make philosophy wonder. Was not the entire approach perhaps too hasty?'.⁴⁰⁵

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger is no longer so coy. As we saw in the passage cited above, Heidegger is wholly committed in that text to the thought that *μέθεξις* has nothing to do with ontology, but is symptomatic of a representational epistemology which hypostatizes the split between the intellect and its adequations into a determination of the nature of beings. The *χωρισμός* diagnosed by Aristotle, for

⁴⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Logic, The Question of Truth*, p. 42.

⁴⁰¹ In section (3.3) we will see that Nicolai Hartmann parallels this critique, rejecting the reduction of logic to a realm unto itself.

⁴⁰² Heidegger, *Logic, The Question of Truth*, p. 42.

⁴⁰³ Heidegger, *Logic, The Question of Truth*, p. 44.

⁴⁰⁴ Available as: Martin Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy* (1926), trans. by Richard Rojcewicz (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008).

⁴⁰⁵ Heidegger, *Basic Concepts of Ancient Philosophy*, p. 177.

Heidegger, comes about when thought, which is always a thought-of-being, confuses itself with the empirical act of thinking, forgetting its relatedness to its object, being, and taking itself for an ideality abstracted from objects over there, in the world. In what follows I would like to show how Heidegger's close reading of Plato's cave analogy from the *Republic*, in 'Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit' [Plato's Doctrine of Truth], a concise essay that forms the culmination of the first part of a lecture course Heidegger delivered between 1931-32,⁴⁰⁶ renders it a microcosm of the psychologistic mistake, before showing in the final section how Heidegger reimagines *μίμησις* as a special concept once freed from the schema of *μέθεξις*.

The cave allegory from Plato's *Republic* is an analogy in which *παιδείας* and *ἀπαιδευσίας*, education and its lack, are compared.⁴⁰⁷ Taking Vlastos, again, as representative of the most thoroughly thought-through and articulately expressed interpretation of the standard translations of the *Republic*, the cave allegory is said to demonstrate the analogical homology of two relationships, that is, an analogy in the form A is to B as C is to D. The Platonic Ideas, Vlastos explains, are 'to their sensible instances', what 'the figurines in the Cave [...] are to their shadows on the wall'.⁴⁰⁸ Enlightenment therefore is not described as a state of achievement, but an awareness that the sensible entities one encounters are mere shadows of something 'more real'.⁴⁰⁹ On Heidegger's reading however, there are four main steps or stages in the narrative of the allegory,⁴¹⁰ and crucially, the final one

⁴⁰⁶ Available as: Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth: On Plato's Parable of the Cave and the Theaetetus* (1930-31), trans. by Ted Sadler (London: Continuum, 2002).

⁴⁰⁷ Plato, *The Republic*, 514a.

⁴⁰⁸ Gregory Vlastos, 'Degrees of Reality' (1965), in *Platonic Studies* (USA: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 58-75 (59 n. 5).

⁴⁰⁹ Vlastos, 'Degrees of Reality', p. 60.

⁴¹⁰ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, p. 17.

definitively departs the Parmenidean identity of being and thought, by setting up an understanding of truth as a measure of tessellation between what is presented and what is represented, and in doing so, hypostatizes this psychologistic differentiation into an ontological division between subject and object.

Stage one:⁴¹¹ the human born bound and desensitized in the dark of the cave believes that reality [ἀληθές] consists in σκευαστῶν [artificial objects] and σκιάς [shadows].⁴¹² Stage two, when he or she is freed to see the fire that casts the shadows in the cave, the human recoils, seeking the solace and familiarity of the shadows that are still assumed to be the most real.⁴¹³ In stage three, the human, dragged out into the sunlight, is awakened to the possibility not only that there is something more real than the world he or she was accustomed to, but that whatever his or her current position, there might always be something more real [ἀληθέστερα]⁴¹⁴ to strive for, something still yet hidden that might become revealed. The enlightened, freed human therefore strives for the ἀληθέστατα,⁴¹⁵ the glorious sunlight of the true world.⁴¹⁶ Finally, in stage four, the enlightened human turns liberator, re-entering the cave to tell the other captives what he or she has seen, and in doing so, for Heidegger, demonstrates that the lesson of the allegory has already been forgotten, for the ἀληθέστατα has already taken on a

⁴¹¹ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, pp. 18-23.

⁴¹² Plato, *The Republic*, 515c.

⁴¹³ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, pp. 23-4.

⁴¹⁴ Heidegger, 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth', p. 169.

⁴¹⁵ Heidegger, 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth', p. 170. Heidegger seems to be pushing his reading a little here, as although Plato often uses this word to denote the affirmative reply of a dialogical partner, he does not do so in the cave allegory. Heidegger admits as much and points the reader to the 'equally important' discussion at *Republic* 484c.

⁴¹⁶ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, pp. 24-58

normative status, but that, importantly, this introduces a further allegorical element into the story, the danger of the sovereign philosopher.⁴¹⁷

There are three regional ontologies on show in the cave allegory: the realm of shadows, the dynamic world of light and shadow, and the pure region of daylight, indicating for Heidegger ‘the different kinds of ἀληθές normative at each level, that is, the different kinds of “truth” that are dominant at each stage’.⁴¹⁸ According to Heidegger’s interpretation of the Greek word for “truth” however, which he pointedly places in scare quotes in the citation above, the third stage within the allegory’s narrative represents a denaturation of a pre-epistemological concept of truth. As he puts it in *Being and Time*, ‘[t]o translate this word as “truth”, and, above all, to define this expression conceptually in theoretical ways, is to cover up the meaning of what the Greeks made ‘self-evidently’ basic for the terminological use of ἀλήθεια as a pre-philosophical way of understanding it.’⁴¹⁹ ‘[E]verything depends’, Heidegger writes much earlier on in the text, ‘on our steering clear of any conception of truth which is construed in the sense of “agreement”,⁴²⁰ that is, as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, the accurate correspondence between thought and thought’s object,⁴²¹ as if the two were not always already, as Heidegger has it, one thought-of-being. As we saw earlier, this is for Heidegger to confuse a differentiation between reflection and thought for a differentiation between thought and its object.

⁴¹⁷ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, pp. 58-68.

⁴¹⁸ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s Doctrine of Truth’, p. 168.

⁴¹⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 262.

⁴²⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56.

⁴²¹ For example: ‘the agreement of knowledge with its object’: Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 97.

As Reiner Schürmann puts it, the dynamic of *ἀλήθεια* pertains to ‘a redistribution of shade and light [...] a rearrangement of the “clearing” within which life and thought are possible for a while.’⁴²² That is to say, the properly Greek definition of truth for Heidegger is described in the middle step of the cave allegory, as the play of fire and shadow, the reality in which neither is everything shrouded, nor totally revealed, the alpha-privative of *ἀ-λήθεια* designating the flux of hidden, and unhidden, *ἀληθές*.⁴²³ As such, in *Being and Time* Heidegger determines ‘[α]ἴσθησις, the sheer sensory perception of something’ to be “true” in the Greek sense’,⁴²⁴ for ‘[j]ust as seeing aims at colours, any *αἴσθησις* aims at its *ἴδια* (those entities which are genuinely accessible only through it and for it); and to that extent this perception is always true.’⁴²⁵ The concept of the *ἀληθέστατα*, the most unhidden, simply does not tally with this thought of truth as the dynamic ratio of disclosure and covering over of the phenomenon, for it sets an absolute standard for the genuinely revealed, against which the play of *ἀλήθεια*, of fire and shadow, can only be adequated. As such, Wolz explains:

The notion of truth inherent in the theory of ideas, together with its corresponding attitude of mind, seems in fact to be the very opposite of *aletheia*. Instead of turning to things, to the concrete situation, the inquirer turns to the ideas; instead of flexibility and malleability, there is now rigid adherence to set standards.⁴²⁶

⁴²² Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (1982), trans. by Christine-Marie Gros (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 217.

⁴²³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56.

⁴²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 57.

⁴²⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 57.

⁴²⁶ Henry G. Wolz, ‘Plato’s Doctrine of Truth: Orthotes or Aletheia?’, in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 27 (1966), 157-182 (p. 163).

The *ἰδέα*, which for Heidegger 'is the visible form that offers a view of what is present', becomes subjugated to 'something else (behind it) that shines through it,⁴²⁷ or shines on it, the *ἰδέα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*, the idea of the good, the sun that *illuminates*. Whether or not the source of truth is transcendent, its division, its *χωρισμός*, is for Heidegger an epistemological division, not ontologically representative. In the final section I would like to show how Heidegger goes on to invert Platonism, rejecting *μέθεξις* as an epistemological fracturing of the priority of thought and being, and escalating *μίμησις* to a privileged position.

⁴²⁷ Heidegger, 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth', p. 173.

2.5 Heidegger's affirmation of μίμησις

Heidegger never mentions *μίμησις* in *Being and Time*, or the Plato essay, but it is an important concept in one of the Nietzsche lectures delivered during the time the Plato essay was being redrafted, in the Winter semester of 1936-37.⁴²⁸ This lecture too focuses on Plato's *Republic*, and focuses in on the threefold hierarchy of production described in Book X. Highest in Plato's thread of productions is the *θεός* [divine], the highest point from which the singular universal forms flow. Next comes the *τεχνίτης* [artisan], who is the one capable of reproducing sensible instances which partake in the forms, specified in Plato's text by the examples of *κλινοποιός* [bed-maker] and *τέκτων* [carpenter]. The artisan is not divine, yet has some kind of access or relation to the immutable and the ability to invest it in his or her work. Last ranks the *μιμητής* [imitator], the agent 'three removes from the king and the truth,'⁴²⁹ who in creating works of art offers nothing but a copy of the already second-order objects of craft and nature. The work of the *μιμητής* is, as a result, judged deficient for his or her remoteness from the truth of the pure forms of the *θεός*. This type of activity is exemplified by the *ζώγραφος* [painter] and *τραγωδοποιός* [tragic poet].⁴³⁰ While the *θεός*, *τεχνίτης* and *μιμητής* are all said by Plato to *ποιεῖ* [produce], the verb *μιμεῖσθαι* [imitate] is reserved for the *μιμητής* alone.⁴³¹

Heidegger announces emphatically at the beginning of the lecture that '[a]rt is *mimēsis*. Its relation to truth must be ascertainable in terms of the essence of

⁴²⁸ I am here using the translation of GA 6.1, Brigitte Schillbach's edited collection of lectures from the series, rather than the lengthier originals: Martin Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*: The Distance of Art (*Mimēsis*) from Truth (*Idea*)' (1936–1939), in *Nietzsche*, ed. by David Farrell Krell, vol. I-II (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), pp. 171-187.

⁴²⁹ Plato, *The Republic*, 597e.

⁴³⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, 597c-8c.

⁴³¹ Plato, *The Republic*, 601a.

mimēsis'.⁴³² We will return to the question of the relation between art and truth in chapter four of this thesis; all I would like to do here is demonstrate the way in which Heidegger privileges *μίμησις* as a phenomenological concept. Given that Heidegger discounts the illumination of *μέθεξις* and conceives of the ideal in terms of the shining of the being in the 'eidos [...] the outward appearance of something',⁴³³ the question becomes one of interpreting the nature of the tripartite chain of production, *θεός-τεχνίτης-μιμητής*, outside of a top-down definition of their work by degree of participation in the idea. For 'we may be tempted to [say] that for a multiplicity of individual things, for example houses, the Idea (house) is posited'.⁴³⁴

But on Heidegger's reading the methodological stance of the *Republic* aims at no such universalization, and points the reader to the same section of the *Republic* that Tredennick cites as a paradigmatic statement about *μέθεξις* in the standard translation: '[w]e are in the habit, I take it, of positing a single idea or form in the case of the various multiplicities to which we give the same name [*εἶδος γὰρ ποῦ τι ἐν ἕκαστον εἰώθαμεν τίθεσθαι περὶ ἕκαστα τὰ πολλά, οἷς ταῦτὸν ὄνομα ἐπιφέρομεν*]'.⁴³⁵ But Heidegger translates this as: "'[w]e are accustomed to posing to ourselves (letting lie before us) one *eidos*, only one of such kind for each case, in relation to the cluster (*peri*) of those many things to which we ascribe the same name"'.⁴³⁶ What is at stake is phenomenology, it is a case of using language to 'let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way that it shows itself from itself',⁴³⁷ as Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time*, or in this interpretation of

⁴³² Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 171.

⁴³³ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 172.

⁴³⁴ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 172.

⁴³⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, 596a.

⁴³⁶ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 172.

⁴³⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 58.

Socratic method, '[t]he procedure is therefore a mutual accommodation between the many particular things and the appropriate oneness of the "Idea," in order to get both in view and to define their reciprocal relation'.⁴³⁸

How then, can Heidegger reconcile the oneness of the Idea, if the Idea is always the one that shines through the multiplicity of beings that do not partake in it as a transcendent unity, but share in it as outward appearance? Heidegger's answer is to give the Platonic Idea a fundamentally political definition. For beings appear as what they are, not because they are 'simply at hand, but are at our disposal for use,⁴³⁹ or are already in use. They "are" with that end in view'.⁴⁴⁰ The *τεχνίτης*, as such, is not one with privileged access to a divine realm of ideas, but one who 'keeps an "eye" on the outward appearance of tables [for instance,] in general'.⁴⁴¹ He or she neither produces the idea nor accesses it from elsewhere, for the *τεχνίτης* is a '*dēmiourgos*', that is, 'a maker of something for the sake of the *dēmos*',⁴⁴² the *polis*:

The realm of a workshop extends far beyond the four walls that contain the craftsman's tools and produced items. The workshop possesses a vantage point from we can see the outward appearance or Idea of what is immediately on hand and in use.⁴⁴³

Insofar as the *θεός* is discounted and the *τεχνίτης* given an entirely novel definition, it remains to be seen what Heidegger makes of the *μιμητής* and their *μίμησις*. For Heidegger's redetermination of the *ποιεῖν* of the *τεχνίτης* as the

⁴³⁸ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 172.

⁴³⁹ See: Heidegger, *Being and Time* §15, pp. 95-102.

⁴⁴⁰ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 174.

⁴⁴¹ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 175.

⁴⁴² Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 174.

⁴⁴³ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 175.

production of the outward appearance of that which appears to the craftsperson as what it is, in the sense of what it does, in the shared in-order-to structure of the *dēmos*, is not the same as affirming the mimetic object as unreliant upon a model, there is still a relatedness to a model here, albeit the model is itself constantly produced as part of the work of the *polis*, a work for which the *τεχνίτης* has an eye. The difference between *ποίησις* and *μίμησις* for Heidegger, when thought outside of a schema of *μέθεξις*, is that while they both act in some sense like a mirror, producing by ‘bringing forth⁴⁴⁴ the Idea (bringing the outward appearance of something into something else, no matter in what way)’, nevertheless, *ποίησις*, like phenomenology, brings together the ‘what-being of the bedframe’,⁴⁴⁵ the *eidos* or self-showing of the bedframe, (which is not created as such) with a particular bedframe, that which is produced or manufactured in the modern sense, while *μίμησις*, on the other hand, ‘cannot at all produce any particular usable table [or bedframe]’.⁴⁴⁶ That is, *μίμησις* does not reveal in the sense of *ἀλήθεια*, but only brings forth the *φαινόμενον* in a medium that is not its own.⁴⁴⁷ Yet, as we will explore in more detail in chapter four, the distance of *μίμησις* from the real, from the ratio of hidden and unhidden, is actually its power, for Heidegger finally affirms the proximity of *μίμησις* to the shining of the Idea in the *φαινόμενον* as that which makes ‘Being itself visible’:

⁴⁴⁴ Here Heidegger’s reading of Aristotle on *τέχνη* informs his interpretation of Plato. On Heidegger’s account, what we nowadays call production was originally thought as allowing something to become what it is, in the same sense that we say Michelangelo does not carve an angel, but sees him trapped in the marble and sets him free. See: Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’ (1953), trans. by William Lovitt, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc, 1977), pp. 3-35.

⁴⁴⁵ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s *Republic*’, p. 180.

⁴⁴⁶ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s *Republic*’, p. 186.

⁴⁴⁷ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s *Republic*’, p. 178.

by showing a particular thing from any given angle, he, Dürer the painter, brings to the fore not only one single isolated view which offers itself to the eye [as the disclosure of *ἀλήθεια* at play in *αἴσθησις* does]. Rather - we may complete the thought in the following way - by showing any given individual thing as this particular thing, in its singularity, he makes Being itself visible: in a particular hare, the Being of the hare; in a particular animal, the animality.⁴⁴⁸

In chapter four of this thesis we will return to Heidegger's understanding of art and *μίμησις* in a discussion of Nancy's invocation of both *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις* at work in art, and moreover, the aesthetic in the sense of general sensibility. Here though I would like to close by again reasserting that here in Heidegger, the rejection of *μέθεξις* precisely follows the logic of privated transcendence outlined in the introduction to this chapter. In rejecting the hierarchical, vertical concept of a *μέθεξις* between ontologically discrete realms, Heidegger is left requiring a reinforcement of the immanent realm that remains. Without the guidance of a perfect model, the people from whom the model has withdrawn are required by Heidegger to come together in an immediate communion of shared disclosure. The unity of a being in this instance is guaranteed not by its participation in the ideal, and neither by its sharing and negotiation of limit, but by the mystical communion of a people engaged in a unitary life, swapping absolute transcendence for absolute immanence. We will pick back up on this notion of political immanence in chapter four, when it reappears as an important element in Nancy's interpretation of the political force of the Athenian theatre.

⁴⁴⁸ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 187.

2.6 Deleuze on Heidegger

It has already been noted in a number of ways in this thesis that Nancy is an extremely sympathetic reader of Heidegger, and that both the methodology of Nancy's philosophy, as a form of *Auseinandersetzung*, and the content, as conversant with the reactivated Greek scene, owe a great deal to Heidegger. Deleuze's work, to the contrary, Nancy is deeply critical of, and in one of his few explicit treatments of Deleuze, Nancy notes the incompatibility of their philosophical methods:

For me, it was rather others who wove the backcloth: they shared the Germanic and metaphysical origins of my present in thought. But Deleuze traversed this cloth with a singular, less familiar, fold. He never turned to Hegel, was never tied to a dialectical continuity woven at once from the logic of a process (from an origin towards an end) and from the structure of a subject (an appropriation, an intention, a being-in-itself or a lack-of-being-in-itself). I had to discover, little by little, that it is precisely along these major lines that Deleuze was creating a fold - as if by the flick of a fingernail (Deleuze's nails...) he raised or lowered another, heterogeneous dimension, that of a plane or a network, which was neither being nor process, but rather composed of points, distributions, referrals, spaces.⁴⁴⁹

As we have noted, Nancy's philosophical style mirrors its content, its syntactic singularities making sense within a continuum composed materially and temporally around a limit that swaps absolute transcendence and immanence for a strong notion of mutual mediation. Because philosophy happens in the world, it is subject to the laws Nancy attempts to document within it. And within this continuum, there are, for Nancy, singularities with more exposures than others, singularities that could otherwise be called influential, but here might well be named confluent,

⁴⁴⁹ Nancy, 'The Deleuzian Fold of Thought', p. 108.

singularities upon which whole fields of philosophical singularities border and are in turned marked as their shared point of bifurcation. Nancy's account of Deleuze's commitment to a 'plane' of semi-homogenous distributions, on the other hand, implies that Deleuze excuses his philosophy from paying any respect to what Nancy considers to be the most singular texts of the tradition, by smoothing out their singularity. For Nancy, Deleuze organises his philosophical style upon the same immanent plane expounded by Deleuzian ontology, thus dodging responsibility towards the alterity of that to which all thought is exposed, refusing the other's singularity, deeming it instead a varied modulation or swelling of the same.

In this section I will introduce Deleuze's commitment to this plane of immanence, again noting his contribution to a conversation between the contemporary, Heidegger, and the Greeks, and again, noting the way in which his work formulates a problem around the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*. What I want to relay in this section is the way Deleuze's commitment to the 'ontological precomprehension of Being as One',⁴⁵⁰ as Badiou puts it, strongly informs his critique of Platonic *μέθεξις*, which Deleuze puts as follows in *Logique du sens* [*The Logic of Sense*]:

"to reverse Platonism" means to make the simulacra rise and to affirm their rights among icons and copies. The problem no longer has to do with the distinction Essence-Appearance or Model-Copy. This distinction operates completely within the world of representation. Rather, it has to do with undertaking the subversion of this world – the "twilight of the idols." The simulacrum is not a degraded copy. It harbors a positive power which denies *the original and the copy, the model and*

⁴⁵⁰ Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being* (1997), trans. by Louise Burchill (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 19-20.

the reproduction. At least two divergent series are internalized in the simulacrum - neither can be assigned as the original, neither as the copy.⁴⁵¹

As with the overall structure of this thesis, here the investigation of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* in Deleuze provides focus at the expense of bracketing broader issues. So while the following sections will approach Deleuze's project within the established context of *μίμησις*, *μέθεξις*, and *χωρισμός* in Heidegger's Plato, the contention here is certainly not that Deleuze's '*renversement du platonisme*'⁴⁵² is entirely reducible to the frame in which I am presenting it. Indeed, as Williams argues, the operative term here, *renversement*:

has at least two possible senses. The first sense is that of a reversal or inversion. The second is that of an overturning. If the line is read in terms of overthrowing or wiping out Platonism or if it is understood as positioning Deleuze as straightforwardly opposed to, or even as distant from Plato, then the consistency of the arguments of *Difference and Repetition* and the detail of Deleuze's definition of difference will have been missed.⁴⁵³

The key point, Williams asserts, is that for Deleuze a reversal in this instance does not entail replacing Platonic structures, but rather maintaining them and "tweaking" them to reverse certain results that have emerged in error. Moreover, although the name invoked is Plato's, Colebrook emphasises that what Deleuze is doing really needs to be understood in terms of his broader critique of phenomenology. For

⁴⁵¹ Gilles Deleuze, 'Appendix I: The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy', in *The Logic of Sense* (1969), trans. by Mark Lester (London: The Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 253-80 (p. 262).

⁴⁵² Gilles Deleuze, *Différence et répétition* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968), p. 82.

⁴⁵³ James Williams, *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 79.

phenomenology, she writes, 'insisted that we need to look at the world in its fluctuating appearances, and not in terms of fixed concepts of logic',⁴⁵⁴ and as Lawlor argues, Deleuze's work therefore parallels phenomenology's commitment to the thought 'that essence does not lie outside of appearance', but criticises it for relating this immanent plane of appearance 'back to a subject that constitutes the given'.⁴⁵⁵

Moreover, in spite of Nancy's methodological criticisms, Deleuze is a remarkably skilled scholar of the history of philosophy, and many of his most important texts are commentaries on and interpretations of single philosophers. So while in *Différence et répétition* [*Difference and Repetition*] Deleuze's reading does, on the surface, seem to assimilate Heidegger's philosophy's singularity in just the way Nancy bemoans, by stating firstly that '[t]here has only ever been one ontological proposition: Being is univocal', and that furthermore, 'there has only ever been one ontology, that of Duns Scotus, which gave being a single voice',⁴⁵⁶ before finally asserting that 'from Parmenides to Heidegger it is the same voice which is taken up',⁴⁵⁷ nevertheless, Deleuze is in fact a highly sensitive to Heidegger's thought of ontological difference. The 'Heideggerian *Not*', Deleuze writes, 'refers not to the negative in Being but to Being as difference',⁴⁵⁸ that is, just as Brogan and Webb have shown, the conflict that constitutes ontological unity is not ontic, because the distribution of the positive and negative as it is presented in the ontical is not equivalent to, but presupposes, the difference between beings and their Being. Deleuze contrasts this formulation with the ontological and hermeneutic starting

⁴⁵⁴ Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Leonard Lawlor, 'The end of phenomenology: Expressionism in Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty', in *Continental Philosophy Review*, 31 (1998), 15-34 (pp. 15-6).

⁴⁵⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), trans. by Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 35.

⁴⁵⁷ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 35.

⁴⁵⁸ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 64.

point of Sartre's *L'Être et le néant* [*Being and Nothingness*], which is, according to Deleuze, that ontical negativity and positivity are directly equivalent to being and not being. As we have seen, Nancy attributes a similar position to Levinas.⁴⁵⁹

Deleuze states that in this sense, Sartre's and Heidegger's concepts of ontological difference are diametrically opposed, the former, for Deleuze, as a thinking of what *is* and the empty spaces in between (much like Harman, in fact⁴⁶⁰), and the latter described by Deleuze as espousing an ontology of difference.⁴⁶¹ But here Deleuze's position diverges, for rather than interpreting this ontology of difference in light of the Aristotelian interpretation we have noted, that is, as Brogan and Webb have shown, as the ontological movement or entelechy that Heidegger discovers in Aristotelian *φύσις*, and as the dynamic interrelation of the cultural disclosure of beings and the general principles of their disclosure, Deleuze instead makes the rather unfounded claim that Heidegger 'follows Duns Scotus and gives renewed splendour to the Univocity of Being',⁴⁶² that is, Deleuze claims that Heidegger understands "being" as always said in the same way, thus reducing ontological difference to a series of concentrations and relaxations of one homogenous plane of the same. What this means will only become clear after a note on the content of Duns Scotus' philosophy itself.

⁴⁵⁹ See section (2.1).

⁴⁶⁰ See section (1.3).

⁴⁶¹ Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 64.

⁴⁶² Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p. 66.

2.7 The concept of univocity

In 1925, Harris could write of a ‘profound misconception’ that the philosophy of Duns Scotus, in its departure from Aquinas’ total consolidation of theology and philosophy, ‘marks a decline in the development of scholastic thought’.⁴⁶³ The opposite is now the case; as Tonner notes, not only is Scotus’ introduction of the concept of *haecceity* seen as a game-changer in the medieval recovery and interpretation of neo-Platonic and Aristotelian themes, but Scotus’ novel approach to the univocity of being has also been a highly influential force in our own contemporary revival, namely, the ontological turn that has organised our thinking since the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁶⁴ Aside from Deleuze, Jean-François Courtine,⁴⁶⁵ for instance, has acknowledged the influence of Scotus in a differing way.⁴⁶⁶ To understand Scotus’ notion of univocity we need to look at the way in which it departs from Aquinas’ influential position within Scholasticism.

As already stated repeatedly, for Aristotle “being” is said in many ways but always with reference to one principle. This came to be understood by Scholastic philosophy as one of three contending ways in which to conceive of the saying of being: univocally, equivocally, and analogically.⁴⁶⁷ Thomas Aquinas, who died

⁴⁶³ Charles Reginald Schiller Harris, ‘Duns Scotus and His Relation to Thomas Aquinas’, in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 25 (1924-1925), 219-246 (p. 219).

⁴⁶⁴ Phillip Tonner, ‘Duns Scotus’ Concept of the Univocity of Being: Another Look’, in *Pli*, 18 (2007), 129-146 (p. 129).

⁴⁶⁵ Courtine has followed Scotus in describing a “tinology”, replacing the *ὄντος* that always invokes being with non-being, with the *τι*, of mere thingness or *haecceitas*. See: Jean-François Courtine, *Suarez et le système de la métaphysique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), pp. 376–93.

⁴⁶⁶ Pickstock provides an exhaustive list of recent interpreters in: Catherine Pickstock, ‘Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance’, in *Modern Theology*, 21.4 (October 2005), 543-574 (569-70 n. 2).

⁴⁶⁷ Daniel W. Smith, ‘The Doctrine of Univocity: Deleuze’s Ontology of Immanence’, in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 27-42 (p. 28).

when Scotus was only eleven, was a proponent of analogy, which he sets about proving by eliminating the other two options one by one. First of all, univocity, in which “being” is understood to be said in the same sense of all things is disregarded for the reason that ‘it is impossible for anything to be predicated univocally of God and a creature’.⁴⁶⁸ Aquinas’ argument here rests on ‘previous truths already known about God’,⁴⁶⁹ Rocca asserts, namely, that God is infinite and creatures are finite. Furthermore, Aquinas asserts that both matter and form are mutually privative:

three things are required for any generation: *existence in potentiality*, which is matter; *nonexistence in actuality*, which is privation; and that *by which a thing is made to be in actuality*, which is form.⁴⁷⁰

Privation, for Aquinas, is the relationship between matter and form. ‘[P]rime matter’,⁴⁷¹ that is, *ὑποκείμενον πρῶτον*, is essentially ‘shapelessness and formlessness’,⁴⁷² that which cannot exist ‘without form and privation’,⁴⁷³ and by privation, ‘form gives existence to matter’.⁴⁷⁴ ‘[I]n regard to God’, however, ‘infinite is not to be understood as a privation, as in quantitative numbers and dimensions, for such a quantity is naturally finite, and calling it infinite would mean a subtraction of what it has by nature’.⁴⁷⁵ That is to say, matter and form are finite in virtue of

⁴⁶⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, ed. by Mary. T. Clarke (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), p. 92.

⁴⁶⁹ Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God: Thomas Aquinas on the interplay of positive and negative theology* (USA: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), p. 174.

⁴⁷⁰ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 45.

⁴⁷¹ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 47.

⁴⁷² Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 47.

⁴⁷³ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 47.

⁴⁷⁴ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 47.

⁴⁷⁵ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 134.

their mutual privation, but God is not the privation of this privation,⁴⁷⁶ the privative in-finite or a-finite, for Aquinas, ‘the being of God [...] is not limited to any particular mode of a perfection of being, but contains all being within itself’.⁴⁷⁷ Finite creatures and infinite God are not in symmetrical opposition, but are rather related by a causal hierarchy that reflects Aquinas’ adherence to the Augustinian doctrine of divine illumination, a matter we will come to shortly. As Somers-Hall notes,⁴⁷⁸ this causal picture has just as much import for Aquinas’ refutation of univocity. Aquinas evidences this:

Every effect of a univocal agent is equal to the agent’s power, and no creature’s power, being finite, can be equal to the first agent’s power, which is infinite. Wherefore it is impossible for a creature to receive a likeness to God univocally [...] the form in the agent and the form in the effect have a common *ratio*⁴⁷⁹

Aquinas goes on to express the asymmetry of God and creature in a number of other similarly structured refutations of univocity, adding that on the finite plane:

being is not predicated univocally of substance and accident, because substance is a being as subsisting in itself, while accident is that whose being is in something else. Wherefore it is evident that a different relation to being precludes a univocal predication of being.⁴⁸⁰

In regard to the doctrine of equivocality, wherein “being” is said in many ways without any shared point of reference, Aquinas’s rebuttal revolves less around a

⁴⁷⁶ As we see in section (3.7), Nancy uses a very similar formulation to deny the opposition between conditioned and unconditioned.

⁴⁷⁷ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 77.

⁴⁷⁸ Henry Somers-Hall, *Deleuze’s Difference and Repetition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 31.

⁴⁷⁹ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 92.

⁴⁸⁰ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 92.

contention of principle, than an expression of shock at the disturbing nature of equivocity's logical conclusions. For if the terms predicated of God and creature are connected only nominally, this amounts to an admittance that we in fact know nothing of God, and worse, that the accepted philosophical proofs of God's existence are nothing but 'sophisms'.⁴⁸¹ Back on the finite horizon, without naming Aristotle, Aquinas recalls his example of the multiple ways in which 'healthy' is predicated by reference to a common principle, albeit in Aquinas' causal system, health produces 'medicine and animal'.⁴⁸² Aquinas' remaining candidate, the analogical predication of being, is affirmed and described as operating in two ways. The first kind is 'when one thing is predicated of two with respect to a third'.⁴⁸³ In this sense, accidents are related by virtue of the substance to which they are accidental. The second is 'when a thing is predicated of two by reason of a relationship between these two'.⁴⁸⁴ It is in this second sense that being is understood by Aquinas as the analogical relationship between the infinite God and the finite creature of which it is the cause.

Marrone explains that since an article of 1927,⁴⁸⁵ it has become fairly uncontroversially accepted that Scotus' rejection of analogy and appeal to univocity in his engagement with Henry of Ghent is necessitated to resolve certain problems in Aquinas' divine causality that are carried over from the Augustinian doctrine of divine illumination Aquinas inherited.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 93.

⁴⁸² Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 93.

⁴⁸³ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 93.

⁴⁸⁴ Aquinas, *An Aquinas Reader*, p. 93.

⁴⁸⁵ Etienne Gilson, 'Avicenne et le point de depart de Duns Scot', in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du moyen age* 2 (1927), 89-149.

⁴⁸⁶ Steven P. Marrone, 'Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus on the Knowledge of Being', in *Speculum*, 63.1, (January 1988) 22-57.

For I did not know that the soul needs to be enlightened by light from outside itself, so that it can participate in truth, because it is not itself the nature of truth. You will light my lamp, O Lord. My God you will lighten my darkneses (Ps. 17: 29), and of your fullness we have all received (John 1: 16). You are the true light who illuminates every man coming into this world (John 1: 9), because in you there is no change nor shadow caused by turning (Jas. 1: 17).⁴⁸⁷

Ghent, Marrone explains, had divided the functions of this received doctrine into three separate parts. First of all, its 'normative' function brought fallible human thought within the confines of God's ultimate truth, allowing the dialectic methodologies learned from the Greeks to lead the human mind from the beings given to thought in the world, toward reliable knowledge. Secondly, it justified the possibility of *a priori* knowledge. Thirdly, it justified the very fact we can and do conceive of God at all, through certain divine ideas given innately in the illumination.⁴⁸⁸ But these three functions proved on closer inspection by Ghent to be incongruous with one another, for to suggest that God provides the human with the means to think, is by no means the same as suggesting God is given as the object of that thought. If these two are thought in tandem the problem arises that God is both the first and last thing thought; that which is ascended to, and that which is given in the first instance. To maintain the classic formula, Marrone writes, Ghent was forced to suggest that being, the first brute object of experience, from which the human ascended towards a knowledge of God and God's truth, was in fact the most general attribute of God, a conclusion Scotus discounts as no different from the problem it was meant to solve, and essentially circular. On the

⁴⁸⁷ Augustine, *Confessions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), IV.25.

⁴⁸⁸ Marrone, 'Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus on the Knowledge of Being', pp, 23-4.

basis of this insight, Scotus rejects the whole schema of divine illumination.⁴⁸⁹ The need for univocity therefore arises out of a need to find a new way to explain 'how knowledge of God could be available to human beings in the world of sin'.⁴⁹⁰ Scotus' conception of a univocal predication of being replaces the first and third premises of divine causal illumination, the former being the question of how meaningful thought is possible, and latter being the question of what is given to be thought. I will present each in the following section, along with the way in which Deleuze shadows each move.

⁴⁸⁹ Marrone, 'Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus on the Knowledge of Being', pp. 24-5.

⁴⁹⁰ Marrone, 'Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus on the Knowledge of Being', pp. 22-3.

2.8 Deleuze's "reversal" of Platonism

Faced with the requirement of replacing the third function of divine illumination, needing to be able to seek God without God being circularly given to thought in the first instance, Scotus makes the Aristotelian move of reining in metaphysics as a science of being *qua* being,⁴⁹¹ ὄντος ἢ ὄν.⁴⁹² For to determine the word "being" as not just synonymous or analogous, but genuinely used in the same way in all possible contexts, allows the science of being to seek truth in the finite without recourse to the illumination of the infinite. Just as the eye's propensity to see 'per se objects', such as an area of white, lies in the fact that sight's 'primary object' is colour, so too metaphysics for Scotus ceases to be overridden by privileged objects, such as God or substance; metaphysics' ability to conjugate *per se* objects, beings, lies in the fact that its primary object is univocal being. As King notes, Scotus' metaphysics does not in this way stop dealing with special categories, such as the most irreducible, like the substrate, the least attributable, like the primary substance, or the most perfect, God, but crucially, in Scotian metaphysics these special objects 'are no more the primary object of metaphysics than triangles are of geometry.'⁴⁹³

This move is mirrored in Deleuze's project of 'reversing' Platonism in the following way. 'In very general terms', Deleuze writes, 'the motive of [Plato's] theory of Ideas must be sought in a will to select and to choose', which is to say, it is designed for 'distinguishing the "thing" itself from its images, the original from the copy, the model from the simulacrum'.⁴⁹⁴ Smith explains Deleuze's terminology here, as the

⁴⁹¹ Peter King, 'Duns Scotus on Metaphysics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 15-68 (p. 16).

⁴⁹² Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 1026a.

⁴⁹³ King, 'Duns Scotus on Metaphysics', p. 18.

⁴⁹⁴ Deleuze, 'The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy', p. 253.

three separations listed between commas in the passage are not as interchangeable as they look. What Deleuze describes is a three-tiered hierarchy of resemblances in Plato's philosophy. The "thing itself" is the singular idea, Smith writes, the "copy" is a thing which has a claim to resemblance in accord with the criteria of the idea it copies, and the "simulacrum" is something else, a counterfeit, a false claimant.⁴⁹⁵ As such, Deleuze's schematisation clearly reflects the tripartite chain of production in Book X of Plato's *Republic*. According to Deleuze's rankings, the θεός produces the thing itself, the τεχνίτης the copy, and the μιμητής the simulacrum.

For Deleuze, Smith explains, this hierarchy describes the fact that 'Platonism allows differences to be *thought* only by subordinating them to the principle of the Same and the condition of Resemblance'.⁴⁹⁶ That is, what is given to thought is only given by virtue of its "illumination", or rather, in the Platonic language Deleuze employs, *participation* (μέθεξις).⁴⁹⁷

To participate is, at best, to rank second. The celebrated Neoplatonic triad of the "Unparticipated," the participated, and the participant follows from this [...] Undoubtedly, one must distinguish all sorts of degrees, an entire hierarchy, in this elective participation. Is there not a possessor of the third or the fourth rank and so on to an infinity of degradation

⁴⁹⁵ Daniel W. Smith, 'The concept of the simulacrum: Deleuze and the overturning of Platonism', in *Continental Philosophy Review*, 38 (2006), 89-123 (p. 98).

⁴⁹⁶ Smith, 'The concept of the simulacrum: Deleuze and the overturning of Platonism', p. 97.

⁴⁹⁷ Deleuze's thought is not spurious in refuting μέθεξις by paralleling the Scotian critique of divine illumination; Aquinas makes it quite clear that what is in question is two perspectives on the same phenomenon, writing 'the air has light, which it is participating from the sun, which is thus the cause of its illumination': Aquinas, *The Aquinas Reader*, p. 79.

culminating in one who possesses no more than a simulacrum, a mirage⁴⁹⁸

Deleuze follows Scotus in refuting such a system whereby the only thing given to thought is already the highest thing to which thought might aspire, by likewise affirming metaphysics as a science of being *qua* being. '[The] inversion of Platonism' Smith writes, 'in other words, implies an *affirmation* of simulacra as such. The simulacrum must then be given its own concept and be defined in affirmative terms'.⁴⁹⁹ Reversing Platonism, in the restricted context of this chapter's concerns, can therefore be understood to entail a transformation of the "top-down" schema of illumination and participation, away from an ontology in which *μίμησις* is always analogued to *μέθεξις*, away from a world in which appearance or resemblance is never a value in itself without authorisation on the vertical dimension, and away from a world where, as Deleuze writes, 'resemblance should not be understood as an external relation [for] it goes less from one thing to another than from one thing to an Idea'.⁵⁰⁰ Resemblance, *μίμησις*, is instead affirmed and reconceptualised by Deleuze, the univocal predication of being turning out to be, as Ansell Pearson writes, 'the pure positivity of being as a power of self-differentiation'.⁵⁰¹ Deleuze writes:

Simulation is the phantasm⁵⁰² itself, that is, the effect of the functioning of the simulacrum as machinery – a Dionysian machine. It involves the false as power, *Pseudos*, in the sense in which Nietzsche speaks of the

⁴⁹⁸ Deleuze, 'The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy', p. 255.

⁴⁹⁹ Smith, 'The concept of the simulacrum: Deleuze and the overturning of Platonism', p. 100.

⁵⁰⁰ Deleuze, 'The Simulacrum and Ancient Philosophy', p. 257.

⁵⁰¹ Keith Ansell Pearson, *Philosophy and the Adventure of the Virtual* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 99.

⁵⁰² The phantasm is the image of imagination, *φαντασία*, for Aristotle. See: Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. by Hugh Lawson-Tancred (Oxford: Penguin, 1986), iii.3.428.

highest power of the false. By rising to the surface, the simulacrum makes the Same and the Similar, the model and the copy, fall under the power of the false (phantasm). It renders the order of participation, the fixity of distribution, the determination of the hierarchy impossible. It establishes the world of nomadic distributions and crowned anarchies.

Returning to Scotus' philosophy itself, its second charge is to replace the first function of divine illumination, to demonstrate how thought can be coherent without being in some way brought in line with God's truth from without. Scotus' answer follows from the nature we saw ascribed to metaphysics in the prior section. For the reason that the primary object of metaphysics is being, is the original Parmenidean identity (although Scotus cites Ibn Sīnā rather than Parmenides),⁵⁰³ 'it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be',⁵⁰⁴ that is, being is the primary object of metaphysics because it is the primary object of thought in general.⁵⁰⁵ To think is to do metaphysics. So where Aquinas argues that knowledge is only gleaned from brute sensation once its form has been abstracted in the imagination as an image or phantasm, Scotus rejects this notion; while upholding the importance of universal abstract knowledge, he also assigns genuine meaning to pre-reflective intuition.⁵⁰⁶ In dividing the intellect into immanent and universal faculties, Scotus' thought of univocity opens up a non-representational space for philosophy, for as Ingham and Dreye comment, '[t]he act of intuitive cognition turns the attention of the philosopher from knowing as a

⁵⁰³ Gilson, 'Avicenne et le point de depart de Duns Scot'.

⁵⁰⁴ Parmenides, *The Poem*, 4-5.

⁵⁰⁵ King, 'Duns Scotus on Metaphysics', pp. 15-17.

⁵⁰⁶ Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, II: *Medieval Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2003), pp. 487-99.

representational act to knowing as an act both immediate and certain [...] direct access to reality, if only in the act of existence'.⁵⁰⁷

In his book on Deleuze, Badiou makes a great deal of Deleuze's inheritance of this pre-representational identity of thought, and indeed philosophy, with being, remarking that 'Deleuze's philosophy is in no way a critical philosophy. Not only is it possible to think Being, but there is thought only insofar as Being simultaneously formulates and pronounces itself therein'.⁵⁰⁸ That is to say, when Deleuze speaks of a 'transcendental field', or a 'transcendental empiricism',⁵⁰⁹ he has, as Somers-Hall explains, broken completely with the way these concepts operate in Kant's critical philosophy.⁵¹⁰ Agamben explains that insofar as Deleuze maintains the Kantian conception of the transcendental as that which castigates all thought of transcendence,⁵¹¹ what remains in Deleuze after sweeping away the speculative is not a critical delimitation of the correlation between ego and empirical horizon, but a transcendental field 'immanent only to itself', which means, thought-as-transcendental field and transcendental field-as-thought, with no recourse to subjective or objective correlates.⁵¹² In Deleuze's 1968 work *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* [*Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*], Deleuze suggests that '[f]rom the viewpoint of immanence', an 'effect is "immanate" in the

⁵⁰⁷ Mary Beth Ingham & Mechthild Dreyer, *The Philosophical Vision of John Duns Scotus: An Introduction* (USA: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), p. 205.

⁵⁰⁸ Badiou, *Deleuze*, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁰⁹ Gilles Deleuze, 'Immanence: A Life' (1995), trans. by Anne Boyman. in *Pure Immanence, Essays on Life* (New York: Urzone, 2001), pp. 25-33 (p. 25).

⁵¹⁰ Henry Somers-Hall, *Hegel, Deleuze, and the Critique of Representation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), p. 23.

⁵¹¹ As Adorno puts it, both the transcendental and the transcendent are opposed to experience, but where the transcendent for Kant runs away from experience into metaphysical dogma, the transcendental 'precedes experience [and] makes experience possible'. Theodor W. Adorno, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (1959), trans. by Rolf Tiedemann (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 21.

⁵¹² Agamben, 'Absolute Immanence', p. 224.

cause, rather than emanating from it'.⁵¹³ As Agamben notes, the word immanate, in combining the *manare* or flow of emanation with the *manere* or dwelling of immanence,⁵¹⁴ for Deleuze describes an immanent kineticism, a process or flow without any 'transcendent finality'.⁵¹⁵

In contrast to Deleuze's conception of a pure plane of immanence, populated by simulacra lacking reference to things-in-themselves or even the middle term, images, a plane in which the transcendental consciousness resides pre-subjectively, for Nancy, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, the immanent demands to be thought as something other than a privation of the transcendent. In a paper presented in Paris in 1992,⁵¹⁶ Nancy marks out a critique of what he takes to be the Deleuzian position, pointing out that discarding the duality of the image in order to render the simulacra pure and devoid of any dative reference risks defining the immanent in accordance with this subtraction. To do so, Nancy raises Aquinas to counter Scotus.

Recalling for a moment the causal framework whereby Aquinas explains the analogical connection of the infinite god and finite creature as a relation without recourse to a third shared term, Nancy notes that outside of the relation between god and human, which is, to a certain extent, a two-way street, Aquinas' particular version of causality functions differently, in the case of brute beings it works in a "vestigial" mode. '[T]he vestige is an effect that "represents only the causality of the cause, but not its form"', Nancy writes, quoting Aquinas; "[a] vestige shows

⁵¹³ Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza* (1968), trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Books, 1990), p. 172.

⁵¹⁴ Agamben. 'Absolute Immanence', p. 226.

⁵¹⁵ Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, p. 172.

⁵¹⁶ Nancy, 'The Vestige of Art'.

that someone has passed by but not who it is”⁵¹⁷. As much as we assert that there is no smoke without fire, Nancy goes on, the smoke does not bear the form of the fire, only its causality, that is, ‘smoke has value first of all as absence of fire’.⁵¹⁸ The point of the metaphor is that here an absent cause does not come to mark the effect as lacking, as the outcome of a privation, for ‘the absence is not considered as such; it is not to the unrepresentability of the fire that one refers but to the presence of the vestige’.⁵¹⁹ Moreover, I would add, the metaphor demonstrates the inaccessibility of the contents of an immanent world, the common sense fact of the non-immediacy of the immanent. In the case of art, which is the topic of the essay and a subject to which this thesis returns in chapter four, Nancy states, ‘art is smoke without fire, vestige without God’.⁵²⁰ Likewise for the image in general, the withdrawal of the ideal thing in itself does not erase the image, leaving pure simulacra; the vestigial operates along the immanent horizon without reference to the ideal, but, nevertheless, without plunging into the immediacy of pure immanence, it brings the outside inside, the delay or spacing that constitutes the world immanently.

The outright rejection of the idol’s transcendence only inverts Platonism insofar as it also maintains it, as Nancy points out in 2001, it repeats the essential gesture of the ‘threefold Abrahamic traditions’,⁵²¹ rehashing the foundational flight of the gods from presence, which originally determines idolatry as the sin of devaluing the infinite in presence. For ‘[h]ere’, Nancy writes, in idol-worship, ‘one turns away

⁵¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, cited in: Nancy, ‘The Vestige of Art’, p. 95.

⁵¹⁸ Nancy, ‘The Vestige of Art’, p. 95.

⁵¹⁹ Nancy, ‘The Vestige of Art’, p. 95.

⁵²⁰ Nancy, ‘The Vestige of Art’, p. 96.

⁵²¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘A Deconstruction of Monotheism’ (2001), trans. by Gabriel Malenfant, in *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, pp. 29-41 (p. 32).

from the infinite, one becomes complacent in immobility',⁵²² so that rejecting the quasi-position of a presencing of the infinite, whether it be in the name of the infinite or the name of the finite, repeats the original Platonic-Christian gesture of disavowing the sophist and the idolater. Both are entirely bound up in their reference to or *φιλία* of the unattainable, the simple opposition of immanence and transcendence. But the moments of the idols' twilight are precisely transitory, a borderland, not the midday of the shortest shadow⁵²³ but a time when 'the god is in decline and finds himself tangled up, as he declines, in the affairs of the world',⁵²⁴ when the mutuality of transcendence and immanence privates the privation that existed between them, bringing to an end the thought of one without the other. For Nancy, the image is not abolished with the original, leaving only pure simulacra; rather, like the death-mask, the 'Roman *imago* is the appearance of the deceased, his or her compearance among us: not the copy of the deceased's traits, but his or her presence *qua* deceased'.⁵²⁵ We will return to question the way these thoughts transform aesthetics in chapter four.

⁵²² Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Complements, Supplements, Fragments' (2010), trans. by John McKeane, in *Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 65-97 (p. 66).

⁵²³ Nietzsche, 'Twilight of the Idols', p. 51.

⁵²⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy. 'Of Divine Places' (1987), trans. by Michael Holland in *The Inoperative Community*, pp. 110-40 (p. 138).

⁵²⁵ Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis & Methexis', p. 12.

2.9 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a context into and against which to locate Nancy's treatment of the figures of immanence and transcendence, and the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* which are tied historically to them. Indeed the historical is an essential part of this context, for Nancy's philosophical responses, I suggested, are not addressed in one instance to the ancient or traditional and in another instance to the contemporary, but formulated on the basis of the already available staging of the retrieval of the ancient within the contemporary. Regarding the contemporary context of Nancy's responses, this chapter focused specifically on two thinkers who, I argued, interpret the ancient question of the relationship between the immanent and the transcendent as a demand for an exclusive choice. Heidegger and Deleuze, I argued, choose immanence at the expense of negating transcendence, repeating what Nancy describes as the founding gesture of metaphysics, by marking the immanent as a privation of the transcendent. Both Heidegger and Deleuze, in differing ways, describe the transcendent relation requiring deletion as *μέθεξις*, and the concept of immanent connection to be affirmed in its place as *μίμησις*. Against this contextual background I will in the next chapter introduce an alternative trajectory in the thought of immanence and transcendence, and *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, which affirms the transcendent as an aspect of the immanent, and which Nancy, I suggest, radicalises in his philosophy.

The chapter began by noting the *de facto* immanence of the social conditions concurrent with the birth of philosophy, and that for Nancy, metaphysical philosophy is defined as an attempt to conceive this empirical immanence while lacking any apparatus other than transcendent signifiers with which to do so. Meaning, it was noted, is definitively understood by philosophy as the ostensive

gesturing of the immanent beyond itself, marking not only an ontological but also a hermeneutic difficulty, which is clearly the topic of many Socratic dialogues. In more recent times, Nancy was noted as indicating, metaphysics has become self-aware, but in doing so risks oversignifying or recuperating itself. Nancy's response, I suggested, is not to reject transcendence outright, but to reorient its verticality onto the lateral axis of the distinction of beings in their finite exposures, making immanence a function of its own web of contiguous transcendences, and to conceive of meaning as the gesturing not to the absolutely other, but to the non-immediate.

In the next section, I introduced the contemporary reactivation of Ancient Greek philosophy by referring to two books by Walter Brogan and David Webb, in order to demonstrate that Nancy's work on the nature of immanence and transcendence responds to an already retrieved problematic. Specifically, it was not noted, Heidegger opens up a reading of Aristotle in which the dictum of "being" said in many ways can be understood as an affirmation of the complex negotiation of forces at work in the verbal presencing of beings. And by borrowing the Aristotelian division between the natural (internal) and technical (external) production of these forces of being, I suggested it was possible to discern that in translating ontology into a horizontal, contiguous format, Nancy can suggest that the transimmanent sharing of beings is *both* natural and technical. In light of Heidegger's discovery that Aristotle passes to us a way of conceiving of philosophy as a dialogical conversation between the regional disclosure and general principles of being (even if Aristotle failed to properly take up this opportunity), and also in light of the further point that as such, the principle according to which being is said in many ways is never fully detachable from those

sayings, I suggested that Nancy radicalises this thought by conceiving of being as nothing other than its many sayings, the plural being the principle.

In the following section I attempted to show that Heidegger's critique of *μέθεξις* is based upon his understanding of Aristotle, but that it constitutes a privation of the transcendent in the sense I argued Nancy ascribes to metaphysics. I suggested that for Heidegger, *μέθεξις* emerges from a conflation of the split between reflection and thought, with an ontological split between thought as ideal and being as real. Rethinking *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις* in two different interpretations of Plato's *Republic*, we saw that Heidegger interprets *ποίησις* not as an act that copies by *μέθεξις*, but rather a production of beings that pays attention to the political designation of useful objects. Finally, *μίμησις*, which for Heidegger copies the outward appearance of a thing without bringing it into an instance of the thing, was affirmed as a privileged mode in which the Being of a thing may be phenomenologically approached, a thought that will be pursued in chapter four.

In the final section of the chapter, after noting Nancy's disagreement with Deleuze's methods, we followed Deleuze's Scholastic influences, from Scotus' affirmation of univocity into Deleuze's project of reversing Platonism. Again, here, my aim was to show that Deleuze conceives immanence as a privation of transcendence and interprets *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* accordingly. Following Scotus' requirement of replacing certain functions of the Augustinian doctrine of divine illumination, the section was concerned with the questions of what is given to thought and how thought is possible. In both instances, Scotus' thought of univocity, which determines both the intellect's and metaphysics' primary object as univocal being, is brought into Deleuze's work, firstly, in affirming the *μίμησις* between simulacra over a *μέθεξις* which would illuminate from above, and

secondly, in rethinking the Kantian transcendental as the immanence of the thought of being (as its primary object) as a non-subjective and non-objective transcendental field.

Insofar as the examples just treated subjugate *μέθεξις* to thoughts of immediacy, community, and oneness, in the following chapter I would like to draw attention to an alternative, pluralist trajectory in the history of receptions of the concept of *μέθεξις*, presented in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and rethought by Nancy. I would like to show that Nancy's interpretation of Heidegger's *Dasein* as *Mitsein*, that is, his assertion 'that the "mit" does not modify the "sein" [... and] that the "mit" does not even qualify the "Dasein," but that it constitutes it essentially',⁵²⁶ is the key to Nancy's thought of the end of the unconditioned and the internal transcendence of the immanent. I will show that a preliminary development in Gadamer's affirmation of *μέθεξις* to describe the ontological structure of *Dasein* is radicalised by Nancy to conceive an ontology released from the simple opposition of immanence and transcendence, and fundamentally connected to the nature of the human.

⁵²⁶ Nancy, 'Of Being-in-Common', p. 2.

CHAPTER THREE

A hermeneutics of finitude

The schema, which is not devised in accordance with an idea, that is, in terms of the ultimate aim of reason, but empirically in accordance with purposes that are contingently occasioned (the number of which cannot be foreseen) yields technical unity; whereas the schema which originates from an idea (in which reason propounds the ends a priori, and does not wait for them to be empirically given) serves as the basis of architectonic unity.⁵²⁷

- KANT, *Critique of Pure Reason*

Philosophy for me has always been a matter of meaning.⁵²⁸

NANCY, "Our World"

⁵²⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 653-4.

⁵²⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, "Our World" an interview', trans. by Emma Campbell, in *Angelaki*, 8:2, (August 2003), 43-54 (p. 45).

3.1 Introduction: the interpretation of interpretation

In the interview quoted in our epigraph, Nancy states unequivocally that before his discovery of the questions of writing and literature with Derrida, Blanchot and Lacoue-Labarthe, and before being confronted by Bataille's affirmation of plurality, what has always been at stake for him in philosophical research is, firstly, the sacred, secondly, 'the question of meaning [*sens*], of another meaning of "meaning"', and thirdly, "the meaning of being" in the sense that it shows us 'our provenance has its source in nothing other than a withdrawal of meaning'.⁵²⁹

The interview was conducted in 2003, with Peter Hallward playing the role of questioner. Considering the rather critical nature of the essay Hallward would go on to publish in 2005,⁵³⁰ which, as noted in section (1.5.1), judges Nancy's political philosophy a failure for its antagonism toward construction, Hallward's agenda in the interview is remarkably restrained. Hallward is himself strongly committed to the possibility of a neo-communist movement, taking his cues from Badiou⁵³¹ in interpreting, for example, the recent uprisings in North Africa as signs of a potentially self-organising force unifying swathes of underrepresented workers.⁵³²

⁵²⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, "Our World", pp. 45-6.

⁵³⁰ Hallward, 'Jean-Luc Nancy and the Implosion of Thought'.

⁵³¹ See 1998's *Abrégé de métapolitique* [*Metapolitics*] for example, where Badiou parallels Nancy in rejecting 'political philosophy', but only insofar as he reverses it, to affirm a mode of politics that, somewhat dialectically, proceeds spontaneously by its own inner logic and forces, as a practice that produces its own theory. Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics* (1998), trans. by Jason Barker (London: Verso, 2005).

⁵³² Peter Hallward, 'Arab uprisings mark a turning point for the taking', in *The Guardian*, 22 February 2011

<<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/feb/22/arab-uprisings-world-order-middle-east>> [accessed 2 March 2012].

It scarcely needs reiterating that for Nancy, while the emancipation of any proletariat is to be affirmed (as, in fact, he does publicly in *Libération* in 2011,⁵³³ much to Badiou's antipathy⁵³⁴), no political construction or organisation can be truly representative of the ontological organisation of being-with, wherein nothing is shared other than the fact of existing, and, moreover, it is not shared as a value but as a condition. What is more, it should be added that the notion of a political construction of the contemporary is of no interest to a thinker sensitive to a notion of the contemporary as precisely the unworking of stable constructions in the arrival of unexpected trans-temporal arrangements of meaning.

As with the rest of the thesis, I maintain that an external expectation placed upon Nancy's philosophy that does not approach Nancy's philosophy on its own terms, has no place here. Rather, therefore, than discussing the relationship between Nancy's version of being-with and the political, this chapter focuses on its implications for a theory of how meaning operates in a transimmanent world, suggesting that Nancy's hermeneutics, tied as they are to both ontology and aesthetics, can be read as a radicalising response to Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutical and ontological affirmations of the transcendent nature of *μέθεξις*.

Indeed, questioned in the interview as to whether the triad "theology-meaning-Heidegger" marks an affinity between Nancy's thought and the theological and phenomenological hermeneutics of Ricoeur and Gadamer, Nancy points the

⁵³³ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Ce que les peuples arabes nous signifient' (2011), in *Libération*, 28 March 2011 <http://www.liberation.fr/monde/2011/03/28/ce-que-les-peuples-arabes-nous-signifient_724744> [accessed 21 June 2013].

⁵³⁴ Badiou accuses Nancy of political naïveté for comparing revolutionary events in Libya, to those in Tunisia and Egypt, suggesting that the latter are authentic revolutions and the former a product of Western intervention. Alain Badiou, 'An Open Letter from Alain Badiou to Jean-Luc Nancy' (2011) <<http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/463>> [accessed 21 June 2013].

reader to his essay on hermeneutics, 'Sharing Voices', explaining that while his work is not a traditional hermeneutics, nevertheless nor is it an "anti-hermeneutic", 'it is something else, because it begins with a different interpretation of the word *hermeneia*' [interpretation].⁵³⁵ The implication is that this beginning happens in 'Sharing Voices', and indeed, in the text's introduction Nancy states:

This essay explores what one can risk calling the modern misinterpretation of interpretation and, therefore, it has only one end: to serve as a preamble, to incite a reevaluation of our relations, insofar as we are interpreters of that dialogue which distributes our "human" scene to us, and thus which provides us with our being or our "destination." It explores what would be, inseparably, nothing other than another *poetical* and another *political* sharing of our voices.⁵³⁶

Published in 1982, 'Sharing Voices' comes into existence after two decades of apprenticeship with Ricoeur,⁵³⁷ and falls directly between the creation of the research centre in 1980 and its dissolution in 1984, after the explosion of Bataille's thoughts of plurality into Nancy's thought in 1983's *The Inoperative Community*.⁵³⁸ 'Sharing Voices', I would suggest, presents a microcosm of these four years, for it interrogates contemporary hermeneutics and then exposes it to a scene of multiplicitous re-creative interpretation,⁵³⁹ before in the final footnote determining itself as overture to the question of community that would follow. There, at the

⁵³⁵ Nancy, "Our World", p. 46.

⁵³⁶ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 212.

⁵³⁷ Nancy went on to be supervised by Gérard Granel for his doctorat d'État studies.

⁵³⁸ Nancy was clearly already reading Bataille, but his work is only mentioned in passing before 1983, for example, in Nancy, *The Speculative Remark*, p. 188; and: Nancy, *The Discourse of the Syncope*, pp. 7-8 & 134.

⁵³⁹ Indeed the conjugation of the title "Le partage" (singular) "-des voix" (plural), is the reverse of the grammatical trajectory of Derrida's "Les fins" (plural) "-de l'homme" (singular). What is at stake for Nancy is a rejection of a principle of unity instancing in multiple places, that is, humans; rather Nancy is thinking about our multiplicity without recourse to any common principle.

closure, Nancy writes that 'closer to what is in question here would be the thought of "communication" in the texts of Bataille'.⁵⁴⁰ I would like therefore, in this chapter, to accept Nancy's implication that the essay denotes a beginning point and to treat it as such. This chapter will explore 'Sharing Voices' in order to interrogate Nancy's confrontation with Gadamer's interpretation of *μέθεξις* within his hermeneutic programme, before then presenting Nancy's continued utilisation of the concept in first questioning community, and then broader notions of plurality. I give a brief overview of 'Sharing Voices' here in the introduction, in order to introduce the close readings, tributaries and confluences that will make up the body of this chapter.

⁵⁴⁰ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', 259 n. 58.

3.2 Chapter structure and outline of 'Sharing Voices'

The first section of 'Sharing Voices' draws a trajectory between two contemporary ways of understanding the act of interpretation. The first of these takes interpretation as an end in itself, and for Nancy is exemplified in certain shallow readings of Nietzsche and Freud⁵⁴¹ that affirm nothing but the interpretation of interpretation and which are as such nihilistic at heart.⁵⁴² The second version orients an interpretation towards the site at which meaning is thought to lie in wait. This interpretation is associated, Nancy explains, with the names Ricoeur and Gadamer. In orienting meaning,⁵⁴³ Nancy warns, this interpretation risks predetermining its content, since as 'a movement towards the comprehension of a meaning, its fundamental rule is, thus, that meaning must be given in advance to the interpreter in the manner of an anticipation, an "in view of which" (a *Woraufhin*) or a "participation."⁵⁴⁴ It is the hermeneutic figure of participation, placed in scare quotes here by Nancy and universally ascribed to 'Ricoeur, Gadamer, Barthel, Greisch'...,⁵⁴⁵ that I will firstly show is tied to an interpretation of *μέθεξις* in Gadamer's work,⁵⁴⁶ before then arguing that Gadamer's interpretation of it breaks

⁵⁴¹ Nancy accuses Christian Descamps of reading Nietzsche and Freud in this way in 'Sharing Voices', and puts forward a similar criticism of Guy Debord's notion of the spectacle in 'Of Being Singular Plural'. See: Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', 248 n.1, and: Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', pp. 47-55.

⁵⁴² Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', 248 n. 1.

⁵⁴³ Nancy plays on the etymology of the word "orient", disrupting the geographically delineated "first world" of the Occident which supposedly defines itself against the Orient, each regional ontology defined in its radical alterity from the other. Pointing out that this picture did not even make sense two hundred years ago, let alone now in the age of globalization, Nancy indicates that our contemporary world is definitively disoriented, since it is worldwide with nothing outside of itself against which it may position itself. See: Nancy, 'Urbi et Orbi', p. 34; and: Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, pp. 4-9.

⁵⁴⁴ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 215.

⁵⁴⁵ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', 251 n. 14.

⁵⁴⁶ For further reading on this matter, see the chapter: 'Platonic *Methexis*: Heidegger's Aristotelian *Destruktion* and Gadamer's Heideggerian *Wiederholung*' in: Rod Coltman, *The Language of Hermeneutics: Gadamer and Heidegger in Dialogue* (Albany: State University of New York Press), pp. 25-66.

with the immanentist bias investigated in chapter two. I then argue that Nancy reinterprets and radicalizes this other notion of *μέθεξις*, first in a direct engagement with Gadamer, and then in the reading of Plato's dialogue *Ion* that makes up the second half of Nancy's essay.

Nancy does not afford the nihilistic version of interpretation the respect of a sustained engagement, and dedicates most of the first section of the essay to a discussion of Ricoeur's and Gadamer's hermeneutics, highlighting what Nancy deems to be their commitment to orientation, anticipation and participation, and criticising Gadamer's purported misuse of certain concepts from the texts of Heidegger.⁵⁴⁷ In interrogating this appropriation Nancy draws attention to a fundamentally different notion of orientation, anticipation and participation, articulated in Heidegger's concept of *Auslegung*. *Auslegung* is, on Nancy's reading, an orientation to meaning that does not anticipate any determinate or linguistic content, and furthermore, is a thought of human finitude that does not even presuppose a subject to whom the relation of anticipation relates, or to whom it can be reversed and claimed as participation.

I aim to show that Nancy does not do away with orientation, still less that he installs an arbitrary aestheticism akin to a doctrine of an "interpretation of interpretation".⁵⁴⁸ For as Nancy notes in *The Sense of the World*, meaning *does*

⁵⁴⁷ Although Ricoeur does not go unchallenged, the more cutting critique in 'Sharing Voices' is reserved for Gadamer. Considering the fact that Ricoeur, just like Gadamer, determines *Auslegung* to be the concept that ties hermeneutics to phenomenology and vice-versa, the softening of Nancy's criticism can only be interpreted as a mark of respect for a friend and teacher. See: Paul Ricoeur, 'Phenomenology and Hermeneutics' (1974), trans. by John B. Thompson, in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 101-28.

⁵⁴⁸ Hodge notes that on Nancy's account aesthetic experience can never be a matter of passive impression, for the sensory body presses back against the world

have something to do with orientation, and he uses the word *sens* precisely because in French it invokes, alongside meaning and sensory registers, also orientation and directedness.⁵⁴⁹ In arguing that the relation to meaning of *Auslegung* is constitutive of finitude, Nancy blurs the boundaries between the semantic and the ontological (thus the earlier cited declaration of a “dialogue which distributes our “human” scene to us, and thus which provides us with our being”), opening a space within which to think Greek *μέθεξις* and hermeneutic participation not as properly transcendent relationships to ontotheological or communal meaning, but as the finite *μέθεξις* that happens at the finite limits sharing-out finite things, that which discloses beings without recourse to a common principle and makes sense in the redistribution of their shared limits.

The middle section of ‘Sharing Voices’, which analyses Heidegger’s *A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer*, plays out the resulting philosophical predicament: how does one authorise this new definition of meaning and interpretation without reorienting it, either to *Being and Time*, or to the Greeks’ use of the concept of *ἐρμηνεία*? I claimed in section (1.5.3) that Nancy responds with a strong definition of how a philosophical “reading” operates, one which transforms the nature of Nancy’s own “commentaries” on authoritative texts. Then in the final section of ‘Sharing Voices’, Nancy’s now long standing commitment to plurality bursts onto the scene in a reading of Plato’s *Ion*, a year before its presentation in the confrontation with Bataille.

that impresses. To speak “only” of meaning or of sense, is therefore to speak just as much of a primordial politics of bodies clamouring for position: Joanna Hodge, ‘Excription at the Edge of Sense: Reading Jean-Luc Nancy’, in *Aesthetic Pathways*, 2.1 (2011), 2-30 (p. 28).

⁵⁴⁹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 12, and, for more see: Nancy, ‘The Forgetting of Philosophy’, p. 34.

In order to locate the emergence of Nancy's interpretation of *μέθεξις* at the "turn" whereby Nancy marks out both his loyalty to the question of meaning and the radically different terms under which he will be pursuing it, it is necessary to trace back the way an interpretation of *μέθεξις* is already a central issue for Gadamer's project, and how it becomes, in Gadamer's work, a plural principle, rather than something reducible to a principle of plurality. As such, the majority of the first half of this chapter is given over to delineating the trajectory to which Nancy and Gadamer are responding, from neo-Kantianism into phenomenological hermeneutics. The second half of the chapter is then concerned with Nancy's critique itself.

Beginning with a discussion of Nicolai Hartmann's and Martin Heidegger's influences on the young Gadamer, I then argue that the early interpretation of *μέθεξις* in Gadamer's habilitation thesis is a direct refutation of Hartmann's project, staged in idiosyncratically Heideggerian terms, and that it outlines a pluralist ontology. In this much, I argue, Gadamer's interpretation of *μέθεξις* as a transcendence that forms part of the immanent, breaks definitively with the reductive readings outlined in the prior chapter. I then show how Gadamer applies what began as an interpretation of Platonic dialogue to his own hermeneutic project, by interpreting *μέθεξις* as the ontological and temporal structure of *Dasein's* understanding, an appropriation which Nancy undermines in the first part of 'Sharing Voices'.

The conceptual thrust of Nancy's critique will be reproduced before I go on to argue that Nancy's critique of Gadamer's hermeneutics goes much deeper than a matter of interpretive practice, and claim that it presents a strong concept of human finitude that opens up Nancy's interpretation of *μέθεξις* as both a semantic

and ontological concept, opening the way to the final sections' focus on *μέθεξις* as a plural principle of world disclosure and sense making. The aim across this chapter is to bring to light the reorientation of *μέθεξις* in Nancy's work, which, mirroring Morin's affirmation of the horizontality of Nancy's *sens*, I claim begins with Gadamer's texts as a thinking of the transcendent within the immanent, and completes in Nancy's thought of *μέθεξις* as the mutual articulation and distinction of beings in their transimmanent contact at shared limits, his assertion that immanence and transcendence are but two facets of the limit that distributes our horizon without verticality. After moving from Nancy's explicit reading of Gadamer's texts, to Nancy's interpretation of Plato's *Ion*, in which, I claim, Nancy indicates the availability of a demonstration of the mutuality of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, end with a suggestion of the way in which Nancy conceives of the ecotechnical makeup of the world on the basis of these discoveries.

3.3 Gadamer's affirmation of μέθεξις as a refutation of Hartmann's critical ontology

Hans-Georg Gadamer is one of the twentieth century's most influential theorists of the art of interpretation. His work is distinctive both in the originality of its interpretations of Greek philosophy and the centrality it ascribes to encounters with it. This dedication to the Greeks has its earliest roots in an intellectual development in the twenties informed by three different ways of interpreting Plato's philosophy: as a transcendental epistemology with Paul Natorp, as a critical ontology with Nicolai Hartmann, and as a dialogue, with Heidegger.⁵⁵⁰ In this section and the one that follows, I would like to show how Gadamer's earliest interpretation of μέθεξις comes about when Gadamer sets to work refuting his teacher Hartmann's critical ontology⁵⁵¹ with the tools provided by his new Heideggerian commitment to philosophizing with the Greeks within the logos.

Natorp's neo-Kantian interpretation of Plato, 1903's *Platos Ideenlehre, eine einföhrung in den Idealismus [Plato's Theory of Ideas, an Introduction to Idealism]*,⁵⁵² was the most influential in Germany at the time.⁵⁵³ The text presents the doctrine of ideas as transcendental principles rather than real substances, and

⁵⁵⁰ Heidegger's relationship with Hartmann is somewhat ambiguous. In *Being and Time* Heidegger writes that Hartmann follows Max Scheler's thesis that 'knowing is a "relationship of Being"', but leaves this relationship as the blindspot of an ontology built upon it. For Heidegger this relationship is *Dasein*, and in failing to ontologically clarify *Dasein*, Hartmann 'is forced into a "critical realism" which is at bottom quite foreign to the level of the problematic he has expounded'. Yet Dermot Moran suggests that it was meeting Hartmann that allowed Heidegger to first understand Aristotle on an ontological basis. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 493 n. xvi, and: Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 204.

⁵⁵¹ Not long before, Natorp had been Hartmann's teacher, supervising his habilitation in the first years of the century.

⁵⁵² Available in English translation as: Paul Natorp, *Plato's Theory of Ideas. An Introduction to Idealism* (1903), trans. by Vasilis Politis & John Connolly (Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2004).

⁵⁵³ Robert M. Wallace, 'Translator's Introduction', in *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus*, trans. by Robert M. Wallace (New York: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. ix-xxiv (p. x).

marks the doctrine's purpose as critical in the Kantian sense, being to delineate the epistemological conditions of thought.⁵⁵⁴ Natorp will not be discussed at length here, but he is the interlocutor against which Hartmann most often positions his own work. Hartmann's reading in *Platos Logik des Seins*⁵⁵⁵ of 1909, for instance, is similarly categorical, for example interpreting *οὐσία* [being or beingness] as 'that mutual relationship between the elements of thought in which the concept of "Being" consists'.⁵⁵⁶ Importantly however, as Luchetti notes, unlike Natorp's pure epistemology, Hartmann's logic of being does not entirely reduce being to logic.⁵⁵⁷

Hartmann's ontological commitments markedly distinguish his philosophy from that of his contemporaries, to the degree that both Harich and Peterson have recently questioned why we attribute the twentieth century fixation with ontology to a Heideggerian genesis at all.⁵⁵⁸ Hartmann, Peterson explains, is indeed a Kantian, but one who does not accept that the role of the critical in Kant's project is to delimit all of its findings to a purely transcendental horizon, as a blueprint of the relationship between sensibility and understanding that makes no claims regarding the nature of the world beyond our representation of it.⁵⁵⁹ Such an abstract algebra, 'completed in neo-Kantianism [...] undoubtedly gives wings to apriorism

⁵⁵⁴ Vasilis Politis, 'Anti-Realist Interpretations of Plato: Paul Natorp', in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 9.1 (2001), 47-62.

⁵⁵⁵ No English translation available. Nicolai Hartmann, *Platos Logik des Seins* (1909) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1965).

⁵⁵⁶ Claudia Luchetti, 'Nicolai Hartmann's Plato. A Tribute to the "Power of Dialectics" (Parmenides, 135c 2)', in *The Philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann*, ed. by Frederic Tremblay, Carlo Scognamiglio and Roberto Poli (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 2011), pp. 221-36 (p. 222).

⁵⁵⁷ Luchetti, 'Nicolai Hartmann's Plato', p. 226.

⁵⁵⁸ Keith R. Peterson, 'An Introduction to Nicolai Hartmann's Critical Ontology', in *Axiomathes*, 22 (2012), 291-314 (p. 292).

⁵⁵⁹ Peterson, 'An Introduction to Nicolai Hartmann's Critical Ontology', p. 294.

as such, but it ceases to be epistemological apriorism', Hartmann writes, giving rise instead to 'speculative flights of conceptual fancy'.⁵⁶⁰

But nor, Cicovacki notes, can Hartmann accept 'the Parmenidian postulation of the ultimate unity of being and thinking', which for Hartmann assigns too much unity to a patently discordant world, and depending on which way the unity is inflected, either slips into speculation or reduces what is to a series of bracketed Augustinian pictures.⁵⁶¹ For Hartmann, both apriorism and immanentism are entirely arbitrary so long as the realms they each describe remain disconnected. In fact, Hartmann considers the seemingly opposed poles of apriorism and immanentism to be symptoms of but one erroneous presumption, namely, that the logical can and should only be pursued in the realm of logic.⁵⁶² In the former, the logical ends up being taken as a world unto itself, and in the latter, the world is reduced to 'everything that is the case'⁵⁶³ as it is with logical atomism. Kant's critical philosophy, on Hartmann's interpretation, is centrally concerned with defining the connection between the *a priori* and the immanent.

Hartmann's disagreement with neo-Kantianism can as such be seen to come down to a disagreement over whether an *a priori* justification of knowledge restricts the content of that knowledge to the *a priori* realm. When, in the *Critique's* 'Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding' Kant seeks to justify, in the strongly legal inflection of the word, the leap from demonstrating the *de facto*

⁵⁶⁰ Nicolai Hartmann, 'How is Critical Ontology Possible? Toward the Foundation of the General Theory of the Categories, Part One (1923)', trans. by Keith R. Peterson, in *Axiomathes*, 22 (2012), 315-54 (p. 317).

⁵⁶¹ Predrag Cicovacki, 'New Ways of Ontology – The Ways of Interaction', in *Axiomathes*, 12.3-4 (2001), 159-170 (p. 160).

⁵⁶² Hartmann, 'How is Critical Ontology Possible?', pp. 317-25.

⁵⁶³ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1913) (London: Routledge, 1961), I.

possibility of applying the *a priori* categories to objects, to asserting the necessity of their application *de jure*,⁵⁶⁴ rather than understanding this proof as taking place entirely *within* the transcendental horizon, Hartmann takes the ‘objective validity’⁵⁶⁵ for which Kant strives to be ontological in nature, stating that ‘there is no doubt that the deduction pertains directly to the ontological problem disguised in the apriorism of the cognitive categories.’⁵⁶⁶ ‘It has been repeated *ad nauseam* since Kant’, Hartmann goes on, ‘that a priori knowledge is possible only where the object of knowledge is a mere appearance; one could at least not know anything a priori about something existing in itself.’⁵⁶⁷ But for Hartmann, Peterson explains, ‘in asking about our epistemological limitations Kant was also asking a question to which philosophers had always assumed they knew the answer, namely, “How does thought relate to things?”’.⁵⁶⁸ Claiming that Kant ‘makes it astoundingly easy for himself, but he misses the point from the start’,⁵⁶⁹ Hartmann professes the extent of his commitment to interpreting Kant’s texts ontologically:

Representation is, as such, never knowledge; it can be, but then it is not knowledge by virtue of its own essence, but by virtue of the essence of a heterogeneous and transcendent relation to something else, by the relation to an object intended by it beyond the representation. Whether it be thought, imaginary objects, or ostensible knowledge of being, representation emptily running on without such a counterweight is a priori in the widest sense. It is not a priori knowledge, however. It is a mistake to believe that the problem of the a priori is a purely epistemological one. Wishes, intentions, suppositions, and prejudices also have an a priori character. An a priori object [*Gebilde*] first acquires its epistemic value through a particular dignity, not belonging to it

⁵⁶⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 120-1.

⁵⁶⁵ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 130.

⁵⁶⁶ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 317.

⁵⁶⁷ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 316.

⁵⁶⁸ Peterson, ‘An Introduction to Nicolai Hartmann’s Critical Ontology’ p. 294.

⁵⁶⁹ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 317.

merely due to its apriority, which Kant called ‘objective reality’ or ‘objective validity.’ *The Critique of Pure Reason* teaches in the most emphatic way just how much the proof of objective validity is in itself a problem by giving a central place to the ‘transcendental deduction’ in the problem of knowledge.⁵⁷⁰

So where Heidegger deems the adequation between thought and thing secondary and derivative to the presentation of the phenomenon,⁵⁷¹ Hartmann provides the countermove, accepting the critical delimitation of the phenomenon as synthetic representation and placing all genuine ontological weight on the adequation between that representation and its object in knowledge. Thus when Kant sets out the stakes of the critical program as being to turn the faculty of reason on itself, in order to determine the ‘knowledge after which [the faculty of reason] may strive *independently of all experience*’ so as to delimit and do away with those questions which although prescribed by reason, also transcend its abilities,⁵⁷² the critical delimitation must have repercussions beyond epistemology since for Hartmann ‘there is no knowledge whose whole meaning would not consist in knowledge of “what is”’.⁵⁷³

If it is the case that, as Hartmann claims, knowledge justified without recourse to the world can nevertheless make claims about that world, then Kant’s critical delimitation of what knowledge may be attained *a priori* is on Hartmann’s interpretation a critical delimitation of what connections between thought and thing may be deemed sound. To restate, Hartmann’s *kritische ontologie* or critical ontology, makes no claims of a general symmetry or unity between cognitive

⁵⁷⁰ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 317.

⁵⁷¹ See section (2.4).

⁵⁷² Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 9.

⁵⁷³ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 316.

representations and their objects, but in critically delimiting what can be known *a priori*, and with the stipulation that knowledge is knowledge of what is, we can determine the nature of our transcendent connection to the world in a critically circumscribed way. The symmetry here, rather than being between representations and objects, is between the *a priori* categories and certain logically governed restricted portion of the real world.

Hartmann's presentation of Plato follows a very similar process, in the way that it progresses out towards the ontological from the ground of the critical-transcendental. Luchetti explains that Hartmann's starting point is Natorp's interpretation of Plato's ideas as transcendental principles, but even here the two differ over what exactly defines a principle. For while it is the case that the two contemporaries agree that the Platonic idea is not a substance,⁵⁷⁴ their disagreement over how to interpret the idea as a law or Platonic category follows the same points as their differences regarding Kant. Replace Kantian "category" with Platonic "principle" and the contention remains: where Natorp understands Plato's ideas as laws governing the *a priori* cognition of *a priori* representations, Hartmann sees knowledge of something in the world. The work to be done for Hartmann, as with his interpretation of Kant, is to steer the Platonic text between

⁵⁷⁴ This is Hartmann at his most positivist. Borrowing from the natural sciences the tenet that 'laws can show an essentially qualitatively different face than the phenomena which rest on them and exist through them', for example, the postulates of trigonometry are not triangular or indeed of a spatial order at all, Hartmann highlights what he calls the 'Error of Homogeneity', or 'the "Platonic Error"'. Hartmann points out that Plato's Ideas and the beings which share their names should not be considered qualitatively homogenous and only differing by degree of perfection, for instance the Idea of red being redder than any instance of red but still qualitatively red, for this picture is at best ambiguous (what explanatory power can a dualism hold if it simply describes the same world in duplicate?), and at worst paradoxical (if the Ideas of tallness and shortness are also qualitatively so, then they not only provide the principle for differentiating between sizes of entities, but also have qualitative differences with each other, and would therefore require recourse to a meta-principle, and so on *ad infinitum*): Hartmann, "How is Critical Ontology Possible?", pp. 326-27.

empty tautological apriorism (which is nothing but a closed ‘unified deductive scheme’),⁵⁷⁵ and the naiveté of ascribing absolute unqualified identity to being and thought (in which ‘there cannot be anything alogical in reality’,⁵⁷⁶ for ‘an unintelligible element in the realm of the real would be rendered impossible’).⁵⁷⁷

Hartmann therefore writes of Plato:

The ‘Idea’ was to him the metaphysical expression of the structural identity between the principle of thinking and the principle of being. Of course, by this means the problem was not resolved for him. In order to seize the Idea, a particular method was still required, that of the ‘hypothesis,’ in which a critical reference back to the phenomena was clearly included.⁵⁷⁸

Now Natorp, Luchetti notes, understands Socrates’ affirmation of the hypothetical method,⁵⁷⁹ in his assertion that he ‘must have recourse to *λόγους* and examine in them the *ἀλήθειαν* of *ὄντων*,⁵⁸⁰ to be a proposition regarding transcendental objects, wherein *ὄντων* are objects of representation, ideas are the laws that form and organise them and *λόγους* the fabric of dialectical reasoning that is both

⁵⁷⁵ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 319.

⁵⁷⁶ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 319.

⁵⁷⁷ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 320.

⁵⁷⁸ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 319.

⁵⁷⁹ The “hypothetical method” is announced in the *Phaedo* when Socrates turns his gaze from the blinding sun of the ideal, and, like one studying an eclipse, looks to the images reflected in the water of the *logos* (99d-e). Socrates quickly qualifies this as a metaphor however, indicating that *λόγοις* are connected to the ideal in a much more fundamental way than *εἰκόσι* (100a). Refuting the regress of causal explanation, Socrates defines his method as to take the ‘principle [*λόγον*] which I consider the strongest [*ἐρρωμενέστατον*], and whatever seems to me to agree with this [*συμφωνεῖν*], whether relating to cause [*αἰτίας*] or to anything else, I regard as true [*ἀληθῆ*], and whatever disagrees with it, as untrue’ (100a). If asked for an ‘explanation of the principle [*λόγον*], you would give it in the same way by assuming some other principle which seemed to you the best of the higher ones’ (101d): Plato, ‘Phaedo’.

⁵⁸⁰ Plato, ‘Phaedo’, 99e.

grounded in these principles and capable of exposing them, in just the same way that for Kant the critical project operates both on and from the power of reason.⁵⁸¹

As such, in determining the ontological-critical moment in Plato as the “hypothetical method”, Hartmann is indicating another departure from his old teacher. Although Hartmann agrees that ‘the *Logos* belongs to the nature of the Idea itself’,⁵⁸² he refuses to consign the idea exclusively to the *a priori* epistemological horizon, and indicates that Socratic method is deductive in the Kantian sense, claiming that the hypothetical movement from each *λόγον* to a higher, simpler concept, is far more than a Natorpian auto-exposition of epistemological categories, but is a deduction of the basic logical symmetry between the most fundamental ideas from which the *logos* arises, and a critically delimited portion of the real world. Indeed, Hartman writes that he sees ‘the great dialectical investigations of Plato’s *Parmenides* as a kind of “transcendental deduction” of the Ideas’,⁵⁸³ that is, a critical delimitation of what can be known of what is.

At its base, the dialectical deduction is for Hartmann rooted in a moment of pure identity. Musing over the multiplicity of sensory organs and registers, Socrates remarks in the *Theaetetus* that it would be ‘strange’ if there were not ‘one power [*μίαν τινὰ ἰδέαν*], whether we should call it soul [*ψυχὴν*] or something else, by which we perceive through these as instruments the objects of perception’.⁵⁸⁴

From this, Hartmann concludes that ‘the vision of the Idea is mainly the “unity of a

⁵⁸¹ Luchetti, ‘Nicolai Hartmann’s Plato’, p. 222.

⁵⁸² Luchetti, ‘Nicolai Hartmann’s Plato’, p. 223.

⁵⁸³ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, 328 n. 3.

⁵⁸⁴ Plato, ‘Theaetetus’, in *Plato With an English Translation*, trans. by Harold North Fowler, II: *Theaetetus, Sophist* (London: Heinemann, 1914) pp. 1-248 (including parallel Greek text), 184d.

vision”⁵⁸⁵ since the *ψυχήν* [psyche, soul] is itself an idea, and as such it is a mistake to confuse the relation between idea and thing for a relation between subject and object; the *ψυχήν* is one part of the unity it seeks to discover dialectically,⁵⁸⁶ and the “error of subjectivity”, which Hartmann ascribes to Kant also, is to internalise this unity and in doing so transform the real connection of thing and idea into a *χωρισμός*,⁵⁸⁷ the classic Aristotelian renunciation of *μέθεξις*, which designates the ‘ontological transcendence of the ideas’, existing in isolation “in a heavenly place”,⁵⁸⁸ whether this heavenly place is a transcendental subject with Kantianism or a suprasensuous realm with Platonism. It is clear why Gadamer would find Hartmann to be ‘trapped in a naïve realism’⁵⁸⁹ or ‘objectivism’.⁵⁹⁰

It is important to note that Hartmann determines the problem of *χωρισμός* to be an issue in Platonism rather than the Platonic oeuvre itself,⁵⁹¹ since his approach to *μέθεξις* emerges from a biographical or historicist interpretation of the intra-relatedness of the dialogues. Gadamer writes in 1974, that on Hartmann’s

⁵⁸⁵ Nicolai Hartmann, *Platos Logik des Seins*, cited by Claudia Luchetti, in ‘Nicolai Hartmann’s Plato. A Tribute to the “Power of Dialectics” (Parmenides, 135c 2)’, in *The Philosophy of Nicolai Hartmann*, ed. by Frederic Tremblay, Carlo Scognamiglio and Roberto Poli (Berlin/Boston: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 2011), pp. 221-36 (p. 226).

⁵⁸⁶ Hartmann and Heidegger come remarkably close here. In his lectures of the winter of 1931-32, Heidegger explains that in this passage of the *Theaetetus*, the soul is ‘a relationship to what is perceivable in general’, but not in the sense that it is employed to unite the sense organs after the case, for ‘we do not perceive colour and sound because we see and hear, but the reverse is the case: only because our self is relational in its essence, i.e. maintains a region of perceivability as such and *comports* itself to this, can the same self have different kinds of perceptions (e.g. seeing or hearing) within one and the same region’. Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, p. 128.

⁵⁸⁷ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, pp. 332-334.

⁵⁸⁸ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 328.

⁵⁸⁹ Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, p. 255.

⁵⁹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Autobiographical Reflections’ (1975), in *The Gadamer Reader: A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. by Richard E. Palmer (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), pp. 5-38 (p. 10).

⁵⁹¹ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 328.

account, and by the accounts of those who would follow ‘the trend-setting works of Julius Stenzel’,⁵⁹² the rather more intense dialectical interrogation of the doctrine of ideas that takes place in later dialogues⁵⁹³ should be interpreted biographically, as if it were the case, Gadamer mocks, that ‘Plato himself recognised that the dogmatic assertion of the doctrine of ideas was untenable and that he then sought by means of dialectic to overcome the gap between two worlds’.⁵⁹⁴ Hartmann confirms this position in the 1923 text, stating that:

In [the later dialogues] the concept of “*symploke*” turned *methexis* itself from the one-dimensional vertical axis into the horizontal axis where the participation of the Ideas among themselves takes the place of the notion of the participation of things in the Ideas.⁵⁹⁵

By making Plato an emergent proto-Kantian who came to understand vertical *μέθεξις* as a deductive error to which the *συμπλοκή* of intra-ideal *μέθεξις* provided the answer, Hartmann is claiming that the two concepts essentially do the same job. For if Plato truly did at one stage conceive of vertical *μέθεξις* as a concept binding two discrete realms, which, in Kantian maturity Plato realised were not actually separate, why did he not just get rid of the connectivity of *μέθεξις* altogether? Here Hartmann has subtly blurred the distinction between the methodology of his strong interpretation of Plato, and a trajectory within the Platonic text.

⁵⁹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Idea and Reality in Plato’s *Timaeus*’ (1974), in *Dialogue and Dialectic*, trans. by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 156-93 (157 n. 2).

⁵⁹³ As noted in chapter one, Plato submits his ontology of perfection and concept of *μέθεξις* to stringent critique in both the *Sophist* and the *Parmenides*.

⁵⁹⁴ Gadamer, ‘Idea and Reality in Plato’s *Timaeus*’, p. 157.

⁵⁹⁵ Hartmann, ‘How is Critical Ontology Possible?’, p. 327.

As we have seen, on Hartmann's account, the point of Socratic dialectic is to proceed by hypothesis from the identification of soul and idea in intuition, to higher, simpler, more general principles. Now at the pinnacle of these, Hartmann explains, is not the Parmenidean "One." but rather a 'community' (*koinonia*), in which the interconnections of principles are reducible no further, for if they were, the dialectic would prove the absolute identity of being and thought beyond the critically delimited categories.⁵⁹⁶ In contending that "the *chorismos* of the Ideas that is conclusively bridged by means of these investigations [due to the fact that] the *symploke* leads to 'the counterpart of the Idea,' the *concretum*,"⁵⁹⁷ Hartman reverses the hypothetical deductive dialectic into a *διαίρεσις*, a division, that explains the physical circumscription of beings on the basis of the division of their principles from more general principles.

Hartmann would of course object that this is not problematic, for we are speaking only of a critically delimited set of entities whose connection with ideas have been transcendently deduced by dialectic, yet the ideal nature of intuition would suggest that this is a rather broad set. Gadamer writes in 1968 that the casting of *μέθεξις* as a '*principium individuationis*', the principle by which entities can be individuated in space and time, 'has its origins in Hegel's and Fichte's systematic conception'⁵⁹⁸ of philosophy',⁵⁹⁹ and then, in 1978 points out that this historicist version of Plato's later "discovery" of *συμπλοκή* is not even philologically accurate:

⁵⁹⁶ Hartmann, 'How is Critical Ontology Possible?', p. 347.

⁵⁹⁷ Hartmann, 'How is Critical Ontology Possible?', 328 n. 4.

⁵⁹⁸ Since this particular interpretation is singularly epistemological it falls outside of this thesis' focus on ontological interpretations of the concept of *μέθεξις*, for precisely the same reason that I do not claim Hartmann's rejection of Parmenidean Oneness is of relevance. Categorical plurality makes no claim of ontological plurality, only of a set number of critical correlations, either within the transcendental horizon or between cognition and world. Ontology is as such either entirely bracketed, or critically delimited.

It is striking that throughout the dialogues the terminology used for the relationship between idea and appearance is extremely free: *parousia* (presence), *symplokē* (interweaving), *koinōnia* (coupling), *methexis* (participation), *mimēsis* (imitation), and *mixis* (mixture) are all found alongside each other. Both the *Parmenides* and Aristotle's critique finally single out *methexis* [*not συμπλοκή*] from these expressions.⁶⁰⁰

I will show in the following section that Gadamer seeks to refute Hartmann's conception of *μέθεξις* on both fronts in his early Plato interpretation, arguing that *neither* variety of *μέθεξις*, vertical or intra-ideal, is a principle of individuation, and that they are certainly not reducible to one another. First, however, I would like to conclude this section by introducing the Heideggerian elements of Gadamer's refutation of Hartmann.

Having waned in the time the two had spent together in Marburg from 1923, Heidegger's academic respect for his assistant Gadamer was reinvigorated when he examined Gadamer for the certificate in classical philology on 20 July 1927.⁶⁰¹ As a result, Heidegger took on the supervision of Gadamer's *Habilitationsschrift* on Plato alongside Paul Friedländer. It was submitted under the title 'Interpretation des Platonischen Philebos' the following summer and published in 1931 as *Platos*

⁵⁹⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Plato's Unwritten Dialectic' (1968), in *Dialogue and Dialectic*, pp. 124-55 (p. 138).

⁶⁰⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* (1978), trans. by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 10.

⁶⁰¹ Lawrence Schmidt, 'Hans-Georg Gadamer: A Biographical Sketch', in *Gadamer's Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*, ed. by Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnsward and Jens Kertscher (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), pp. 1-14 (p. 4).

dialektische Ethik [Plato's Dialectical Ethics].⁶⁰² Gadamer recalls this period of their relationship from the reverse perspective, asserting that Heidegger opened up the possibility of the Plato interpretation all the way back in the summer of 1923, immediately prior to Heidegger's relocation from Freiburg to Marburg. The seminars of that term,⁶⁰³ Gadamer writes, 'permitted me to have the necessary distance from the work of my two other Marburg teachers',⁶⁰⁴ Natorp and Hartmann.

With the revolutionary potential of Husserl's phenomenology also too closely allied with transcendental idealism in the eyes of the young Gadamer,⁶⁰⁵ it was the Heidegger of 1923 who persuaded Gadamer of a genuine possibility for 'real thinking',⁶⁰⁶ which could be, against positivism, a thinking of substances and forces irreducible to permutations of equations within atemporal conceptual architecture. Heidegger showed Gadamer 'that we could only "fetch back" [*wiederholen*, repeat] the philosophizing of the Greeks after we had forfeited that *fundamentum incommensum* of philosophy [...] namely, *self-consciousness*'.⁶⁰⁷ With the rejection of the transcendental reduction to epistemological substructure, the historicity of thought was released to Gadamer from a story of the same barren questions iterated in different contexts, and 'the old questions of the

⁶⁰² Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics: Phenomenological Interpretations Relating to the Philebus* (1931), trans. by Robert M. Wallace (New York: Yale University Press, 1991).

⁶⁰³ These lectures are available in English translation as: Martin Heidegger, *Ontology – The Hermeneutics of Facticity* (1923), trans. by John van Buren (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁶⁰⁴ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 10.

⁶⁰⁵ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', pp. 6-9.

⁶⁰⁶ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 10.

⁶⁰⁷ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 10.

tradition' were not in this way rendered outmoded relics, but 'so alive that they became our own questions'.⁶⁰⁸

Firstly, Gadamer explains, in Heidegger's analysis of Aristotle's *φρόνησις* in the seminars, an analysis already outlined in section (2.3), Gadamer heard a 'magical word'.⁶⁰⁹ In Heidegger's seminars, Gadamer recalls, Heidegger marked out the importance of the fact that 'in practical reason there is no forgetting',⁶¹⁰ a lesson Gadamer reiterates in the section on Aristotle in 1960's *Wahrheit und Methode* [*Truth and Method*].⁶¹¹ As Gadamer recalls some years later, this lack of 'teachability' of a wisdom that does not simply 'pass from one to the other' reveals its 'possibility in *praxis* itself, and that means the inner linkage of ethics'.⁶¹² This insight, that the understanding can only be understood by taking account of its roots in intersubjectivity, was to be the seed of a realisation that the critical 'conditions of understanding' are not to be sought in the unchanging architecture of the mind, for they 'articulate themselves in a consciousness that formulates itself in language and does not begin with nothing or end in infinity'.⁶¹³ *Φρόνησις* opened for Gadamer a space between historical relativism and atemporal universalism, for it indicates a *Vorgreiflichkeit* or 'anticipation within concepts'⁶¹⁴ that determines the understanding as always already conditioned by a pre-reflective world of shared meaning which is neither arbitrary nor fixed, but is conditioned by the ethico-political flux of the logos.

⁶⁰⁸ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 11.

⁶⁰⁹ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 12.

⁶¹⁰ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 12.

⁶¹¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (1960), trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 315-18.

⁶¹² Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Philosophical Apprenticeships' (1977), in *The Many Faces of Philosophy*, ed. by Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (New York: OUP USA, 2004), pp. 467-72 (pp. 470-71).

⁶¹³ Gadamer, 'Philosophical Apprenticeships' p. 470.

⁶¹⁴ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 12.

Secondly, in the assertion Heidegger made to Gadamer in a private meeting, that 'Aristotle ultimately stood on the same ground of the logos for which Plato prepared him',⁶¹⁵ Gadamer sees that Aristotle's interrogations of Plato's philosophy do not reverse the Socratic linguistic turn, but introduce a discourse on the empirical into a dialectical relationship with Plato's texts, and that all of this happens entirely *within* the 'Socratic-Platonic ground which Plato entered with the flight into the logoi'.⁶¹⁶ The methodological framework of this dialogical reading of Aristotle impressed upon Gadamer the insight that to be loyal to the Greeks was 'to discover truths in their "being-other",⁶¹⁷ that is, entirely flipping the assimilating approach of transcendental philosophy, 'that one should make the dialogical partner stronger'.⁶¹⁸

It is in this sense that Gadamer's greatest loyalty to Heidegger is his *divergence* from Heidegger's interpretation of Aristotle during the course of his philological studies.⁶¹⁹ And it is a lesson applied in Gadamer's habilitation, attested to by the negative reviews its publication received from certain readers who, Gadamer writes, 'only regard one's research as "positive" if something new is produced',⁶²⁰ since they regard it as 'trivial to understand what is simply there'.⁶²¹ The stakes had for Gadamer been reversed; positivity really meant appropriation into established systems, whereas showing what is simply there meant the genuine creativity of entering into a dialectical relationship that renews rather than synthesises.

⁶¹⁵ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 13.

⁶¹⁶ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 311.

⁶¹⁷ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 13.

⁶¹⁸ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 13.

⁶¹⁹ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 13.

⁶²⁰ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 13.

⁶²¹ Gadamer, 'Autobiographical Reflections', p. 13.

When, years later, Gadamer describes his early interpretation of Platonic *μέθεξις*, as a refutation of Hartmann's 'theory of descending⁶²² *methexis*',⁶²³ he recalls that his charge was that Hartmann ignored 'the binding of the *eidos* to the *logos*' to his own detriment, such that in his work 'language is consequently replaced with mathematical calculus'.⁶²⁴ It is clear from our brief discussion of Hartmann's and Heidegger's influences that Gadamer's charge is an application of his lesson from Heidegger, that Greek philosophizing takes place always on the common ground of the *logos*. And indeed, although Hartmann is never called by name, Gadamer's thesis does attack both the terms under which Hartmann formulates the question of *μέθεξις*, and those by which he answers it. In the following section I aim to demonstrate the mechanics of Gadamer's early reading, and to highlight the way it prefigures his mature work, in which *μέθεξις* becomes an important element of his hermeneutics.

⁶²² This is a translation of '*absteigende μέθεξις*', the title of a section in Hartmann's *Platos Logik des Seins*, pp. 360-65

⁶²³ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 312.

⁶²⁴ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 312.

3.4 Gadamer's interpretation of μέθεξις as an ontological presupposition of dialogue

As already stated, Hartmann is never mentioned by name in *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, but one can be under no illusion whom is in Gadamer's targets when he explicitly declares in that text that μέθεξις has nothing to do with the problem of individuation:

If Plato makes the particular thing's methexis with the Idea into a problem, he is not thereby formulating an unsolved problem of his ontology: he is not posing the problem of individuation; instead, the aporia of this "problem" is itself meant, indirectly, to make the assumptions of the ontology visible.⁶²⁵

The analysis of μέθεξις offered in the text is powerfully informed by the work's guiding insight, that the dialogical form of Plato's text is no rhetorical device, but rather reflects the form of shared understanding and the way meaning arrives in dialogue. 'The process of reaching a shared understanding of the matter in question through conversation is aimed at knowledge',⁶²⁶ Gadamer notes, and as such, he reads the texts as performative, so that if the problem of μέθεξις is indeed 'insoluble' as he echoes Aristotle in asserting,⁶²⁷ this aporia is nevertheless *real*, because it expresses not an impasse arising from a systematic treatise, but is a dialogical invocation of the ontological presuppositions of dialogue itself. Gadamer therefore reverses the order of exposition; where Hartmann sees the dialectic as an experiment yielding results, Gadamer sees the staging of a game that takes place, as Heidegger has taught him, already on the ground of the *logos*, apagogically gesturing back toward its conditions.

⁶²⁵ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, 96 n. 20.

⁶²⁶ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 17.

⁶²⁷ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 96.

Gadamer comes to refer to this presupposition in *Truth and Method* as ‘*die metaphysische Crux des Platonismus*’⁶²⁸ - ‘the metaphysical crux of Platonism’.⁶²⁹ Both of the meanings of the word *crux* are at play here. The metaphysical *crux* is for Gadamer both an unsolved problem and a central tenet of Platonism, not in the sense of the critical point from which to unravel it, but as the nexus that cannot be refuted from within the system. For Gadamer, the transcendent dimension of *μέθεξις* is not a problem Plato’s dialogues run into, but is their very presupposition, for ‘in the *logos* the individual entity is encountered only as an ahyletic *eidos*’.⁶³⁰ The very linguistic articulation of the problem of transcendent *μέθεξις* in the Platonic text, by Gadamer’s account, therefore already relies for its presentation upon the division it queries. What was understood by Hartmann as a problem Plato only became cogent of in maturity, for Gadamer pertains to the fact that the ontological division that grounds the *logos* cannot be completely accounted for within the *logos*, due to its being of another order. As such, to take any resulting *aporia* as a refutation would be for Gadamer a category mistake. *Μέθεξις* is only *aporetic* insofar as it is not appropriable by the dialogue it permits and Plato’s demonstration of this *aporia* within the dialogues is, on Gadamer’s account, not a crisis but a further refinement.

‘That this participation exists is, in the end,’ Gadamer writes in the 1988 essay ‘Plato als Porträtist’ [Plato as Portraitist], ‘the condition for the very possibility of thinking and speaking, of the binding together of the ideas and understanding’.⁶³¹ In *Truth and Method*, as in that essay, Gadamer turns to Plato’s phenomenological

⁶²⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) (Tübingen: Mohr, 1975), p. 456.

⁶²⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 476.

⁶³⁰ Gadamer, *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, 96, n. 20.

⁶³¹ Gadamer, ‘Plato as Portraitist’, p. 314.

treatment of the beautiful in the *Phaedrus* to demonstrate that what is aporetic in expression is not so in experience, evidenced in the otherworldliness of beauty which emerges and subsides in the immediacy of the phenomenon:

“Being present” belongs in a convincing way to the being of the beautiful itself. However much beauty might be experienced as the reflection of something supraterritorial, it is still there in the visible world. That it really is something different, a being of another order, is seen in its mode of appearance. It appears suddenly; and just as suddenly, without any transition, it disappears again. If we must speak with Plato of a hiatus (*chorismos*) between the world of the senses and the world of ideas, this is where it is and where it is also overcome.⁶³²

Μέθεξις pushed to the intensity of the singular case of beauty reveals itself to Gadamer as the appearance of otherness *in the appearance*, and its correlate disappearance, whereby the flickering radiance of beauty divulges the dialectical element of brute phenomenal experience. The two registers of being in this picture, the apparent and the supraterritorial, are not for Gadamer two expressions of the same unity, and nor does *μέθεξις* resolve their difference, for it is only in the tension of this duality that novelty arrives.

In affirming that the logos already presupposes the irreducible connectedness of the real and ideal for the presentation of its interrogation of this divide, Gadamer’s text flips on its head the univocal assertion that *μέθεξις* merely says the one “being” in two ways, for, according to Gadamer, every time “being” is said in the singular, it already presupposes the duality of *μέθεξις* that binds the ideal and real in the logos, and is quite evident in brute experience. I aim to show in the following section that the irreducibility of *μέθεξις* from a dynamic of radical transcendent

⁶³² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 476.

alterity is retained in Gadamer's use of the concept in theorising the irreducibility of the temporal extension of the faculty of understanding.

Now, the question of Hartmann's intra-ideal *μέθεξις* is approached by Gadamer in a consideration of Plato's *Parmenides*. When in that text Plato has the young Socrates employ a set of similarly phenomenological proofs to the example of beauty just outlined, the Eleatic master points out to Socrates that although his comparison of *μέθεξις* to daylight achieves a demonstration that the light of being need not become separate from its source in shining on beings,⁶³³ it does not, however, explain how the 'whole idea, being one, is in each of the many participants,'⁶³⁴ without as a result becoming divided and 'separate from itself,'⁶³⁵ or, like a sail spread 'over many persons',⁶³⁶ reveal its nature as in fact constituted of parts, segments through which each particular participates in but a small section of the singular idea.⁶³⁷

Parmenides' point to the young Socrates is that in his examples, which are meant to demonstrate that there is no problematic *χωρίς* between the idea and appearance, Socrates still maintains the singularity of each form in which the particular participates, the oneness of the ideal. 'In the hypothesis of the beautiful and the good, Socrates does not doubt that "it itself" would be different and separate from everything that participates in it',⁶³⁸ Gadamer writes. Here Plato has, through the mouth of Parmenides, internalised his text's confrontation with the Parmenidean oneness of being. For how can it be that the text enacts a

⁶³³ Plato, *Parmenides*, 131b.

⁶³⁴ Plato, *Parmenides*, 131a.

⁶³⁵ Plato, *Parmenides*, 131b.

⁶³⁶ Plato, *Parmenides*, 131b.

⁶³⁷ Plato, *Parmenides*, 131c.

⁶³⁸ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 313.

shared dialogue on a *single* idea - in this particular instance the idea of the doctrine ideas - if by sharing in it, the characters of Socrates and Parmenides in fact share it out, dissect it, or rupture it? This is of course the same dialectical interrogation which Hartmann refers to as a transcendental deduction, and reverses as an explanation of individuation in space and time.

Insofar as this iteration of the *μέθεξις* problem is supplementary to the first, likewise Gadamer's response to it in *Plato's Dialectical Ethics* builds on his response to the first. Again recalling the binding of the ideas and the logos, Gadamer reminds the reader that the '*Parmenides* proof takes place entirely within the *eidē*',⁶³⁹ an observation which is enough to refute Hartmann's notion that here Plato's dialogue is providing a *principium individuationis* by which entities can be individuated in space and time, through a dialectical division or *diaeresis* of higher genera of ideas into more specific concrete species. 'Plato did not intend this as a proof that the Idea as a unity is and can be the plurality of what comes to be',⁶⁴⁰ Gadamer writes, indeed dialectical *diaeresis* is not employed to 'provide positive defining characterizations of things'⁶⁴¹ at all, for again, on Gadamer's account such a determination cannot be achieved from *within* the logos where only the ideal is encountered. Rather, as with the first version of the *μέθεξις* problem, the demonstration exposes the ontological preconditions of doing *diaeresis* at all.

To dialectically investigate the way a multiplicity of entities may participate in the same idea is, according to Gadamer's strict adherence here to philosophizing with the Greeks within the logos, not to make any claim regarding the participants in themselves, but only of the ahyletic *eidos* that is encountered in the logos.

⁶³⁹ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 97.

⁶⁴⁰ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 96.

⁶⁴¹ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 97.

Therefore to show that a multiplicity of individuals or things participate in the same idea is really to show that a multiplicity of *ideas* can participate in the same idea. The dialectic takes place on but one horizon and therefore makes no claims regarding a hierarchical individuation of general ideal principles into concrete particulars, partly due of course to the fact that for Gadamer the dynamic *μέθεξις* that holds the real and the ideal in discordant harmony is already irrefutably intimated in the very act of dialogue. But on top of this, through the character of Parmenides, Plato 'shows that the idea of unity does not exclude, but posits together with itself, the idea of multiplicity'.⁶⁴²

In bringing the process of *diaeresis* to bear on the *μέθεξις* problem, Plato, on Gadamer's interpretation, does not mark out the fracturing of the conceptual in the real, but exposes another ontological presupposition of the dialectical quality of dialogue, a nature upon which the logos relies but which it cannot master, 'that the unity of an Idea can include a multiplicity of ideas under it', not an 'undefined manifold of things that are coming to be', but a 'multiplicity of unities'.⁶⁴³ As with the first version of the *μέθεξις* problem, the demonstration exposes the ontological preconditions of doing *diaeresis* at all, since it is only by virtue of, first of all, the fact of the binding of the ideas and logos, and secondarily, the fact that a multiplicity of unitary ideas can participate in another ideal unity, that any dialogue can achieve the 'substantive defining characterisation of entities by dialectical *diaeresis*'.⁶⁴⁴

In *Plato's Dialectical Ethics* this conclusion remains partial, for although Gadamer has steered the interpretation of the *Parmenides* away from a reduction of the idea

⁶⁴² Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 97.

⁶⁴³ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, pp. 97-8.

⁶⁴⁴ Gadamer, *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*, p. 97.

to a genus or common trait under which a plurality of beings may be encompassed, it is only in 'Plato as Portraitist' that Gadamer makes the full assertion regarding the dialogue in question, that 'if there is to be *logos* at all', 'there must be participation of one idea in the other.'⁶⁴⁵ The crux or tension that holds the space of experience open and grounds the *logos*, *μέθεξις*, is not for Gadamer restricted purely to a unilateral transcendent doubling whereby the apparent sensible realm participates in the suprasensuous, the resonance of the one in the other allowing meaning to happen – this is only one condition of the dialectic; there is also a contiguous crux, a participation of idea in idea, which multiplies the participations involved in dialogue potentially without end.

Gadamer's ontological claims in *Plato's Dialectical Ethics* are thus powerfully pluralistic, and on both counts. Firstly, as already noted, Gadamer denies that *μέθεξις* merely says the one "being" in two ways, turning the argument back on itself, pointing out that in the binding of the real and the ideal in the *logos*, any saying, even the saying of this one Parmenidean "being", already presupposes the duality of *μέθεξις* for its presentation. Secondly, here, reversing Hartmann's suggestion that the multiplicity of things are only particular expressions of higher and yet higher unities organised by hierarchical intra-ideal *μέθεξις* all the way up to the *συμπλοκή*, discoverable by the hypothetical method, Gadamer asserts the opposite, that this hypothetical method or dialectic, is only possible due to the fact that the ahyletic ideas it conjugates must already participate in one another for the method to proceed. Again, then, in every saying, dialectical or otherwise, the possibility of meaningful discourse already relies on the multiplicity of unities at play in every *λόγον*.

⁶⁴⁵ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 314.

Now inasmuch as the analyses of transcendent and horizontal *μέθεξις* are presented in *Plato's Dialectical Ethics* as an interpretation of Platonic dialogue, in what follows I would like to show the way in which Gadamer incorporates these two dimensions of participation as elements of his theory of hermeneutic experience, where the transcendent dimension is interpreted as the temporal interval of *Dasein's* understanding, and the horizontal as the participation of individuals in the creation of shared tradition. In doing this, I am attempting to present the position from which Nancy combines these concepts, transforming *μέθεξις* into a horizontal or horizontal concept, through his demonstration that *Dasein's* interval or openness, is an openness to others, a participation with other individuals, a *μέθεξις* of singularities.

3.5 Gadamer's ontological interpretation of μέθεξις as the temporal and communal structure of *Dasein*

Gadamer's transference of aspects of his Plato interpretation into his hermeneutic theory, although implicitly clear throughout *Truth and Method*, is first acknowledged explicitly in the text when, in Gadamer's aforementioned turn to Plato's examination of beauty, Gadamer puts the word 'μέθεξις' in brackets next to his own concept of participation, 'Teilhabe'.⁶⁴⁶ In the much later essay on Plato, Gadamer explains that the Greek μέθεξις and German *Teilhabe* have an intimacy entirely unavailable in the Latin *participatio* and its modern derivatives, 'for here the idea of the whole and the parts intrudes[...] Can one really speak of taking a part when one takes part?'⁶⁴⁷ Gadamer backs this up with reference to Socrates' response to Parmenides, writing that 'Socrates finds the use of the concepts of whole and part inadequate, especially in the reified form in which Parmenides employs them for his refutation'.⁶⁴⁸

As we will see, Gadamer's rejection of the figures of whole and part is tied up with *Truth and Method's* transformation of the historicist methodology of traditional hermeneutics. With this rejection, Gadamer refutes Aristotle's claim that with the concept of μέθεξις Plato merely refers to the same external-representational relation as Pythagorean μίμησις,⁶⁴⁹ and the concomitant suggestion that there is a unified whole of which the parts are merely analogues. On Gadamer's account, μίμησις 'always points in the direction of that which one approaches, or towards which one is oriented,' whereas μέθεξις, 'as the Greek *meta* already signifies,

⁶⁴⁶ Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 456.

⁶⁴⁷ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 311.

⁶⁴⁸ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 313.

⁶⁴⁹ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, 987b.

implies that one thing is there together with something else.⁶⁵⁰ I will argue however that on Nancy's reading the degree of belonging Gadamer assigns to *μέθεξις* in *Truth and Method* risks contradicting the ontological heterogeneity his analyses announced in the early treatment of Plato.

Gadamer's *Truth and Method* solicits a definitive break from classical hermeneutic method, which it diagnoses as historicist, consisting in an exegetical technique based on 'the universal principle of textual interpretation', namely 'that all the details of a text were to be understood from the *contextus* and from the *scopus*'.⁶⁵¹ Referring to Schleiermacher, Gadamer explains that for the old hermeneutics, in the same way 'the single word belongs in the total context of the sentence, so the single text belongs in the total context of a writer's work' and furthermore, to the 'whole genre' and the 'whole of its author's inner life.'⁶⁵²

The old hermeneutics therefore predicates its method on the assumption of the absolute availability of the meaning of a text within a specific historical worldview or *contextus*, and marks its aim or *scopus* as being to 'transpose ourselves into the perspective within which [the author] has formed his views',⁶⁵³ in order to resolve the historical division of the reader's *contextus* from the author's, with the further presupposition of the possibility of 'one person's immediate participation with another.'⁶⁵⁴ Methodologically speaking, the reader's attention oscillates between a partial comprehension informed by his or her own historical situatedness and an anticipation of the full meaning of the text which is presumed to have been available to the author. The two are modified against one another

⁶⁵⁰ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 311.

⁶⁵¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 177.

⁶⁵² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 291.

⁶⁵³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 292.

⁶⁵⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 385.

until equilibrium is reached and they resolve into a complete understanding of the text. What is presupposed by this method is participation understood as immediacy, both on the transcendent dimension spanning the historical hiatus and on the horizontal dimension of an immersion in one's immanent *contextus*.

Gadamer rejects the historicist interpretation of hermeneutics and along with it the very notion that hermeneutics is a method or technique at all. Referring to sections §31-2 of *Being and Time*, Gadamer explains that 'when Heidegger gave understanding an ontological orientation by interpreting it as an "existential" and when he interpreted Dasein's mode of being in terms of time',⁶⁵⁵ hermeneutics could no longer be understood to be structured according to a historical gap between *contextūs*, but reveals itself instead as the temporal structure of *Dasein's* being-in-the-world, 'the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted.'⁶⁵⁶ The interplay between immersive comprehension and anticipative conjecture is therefore not a methodological, or even a subjective process, it is in Gadamer's text a description of 'the ontological structure of understanding',⁶⁵⁷ which as an *existentiale*, is entirely pre-subjective. As with the analysis of the transcendent *μέθεξις* of beauty and dialogue then, the interval between comprehension and anticipation does not for Gadamer constitute the objective of a resolution in the faculty of understanding, but rather the irreducible spacing of its ontological foundation.

In being transformed from a historically antagonistic hiatus between worldviews into the dynamic ontological reciprocity of familiarity and arrival, there is no longer with Gadamer any motivation to close the gap between what had traditionally been

⁶⁵⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 296.

⁶⁵⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 296-7.

⁶⁵⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 294.

called “whole” and “part” in hermeneutics. Indeed, in being determined as the ontological structure of understanding, these concepts cease to have a substantive identity for Gadamer at all. Instead what is described is ‘the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter’,⁶⁵⁸ such that what is anticipated never finishes arriving, ‘the understanding of the text remains permanently determined by the anticipatory movement of fore-understanding’,⁶⁵⁹ and the ‘discovery of the true meaning of a text or a work of art is never finished; it is in fact an infinite process’.⁶⁶⁰ For Gadamer, then, the understanding is not an instrument of synthesis or appropriation, because the tension between immediacy and partial disclosure ‘is not dissolved in perfect understanding but, on the contrary, is most fully realized’.⁶⁶¹ “Perfect understanding” happens in the affirmation of *Dasein*’s differing from itself, the distinctiveness of novelty, the unfinishedness of the interpretive position and the ontological hiatus first articulated in Gadamer’s reading of Plato.

Introducing the horizontal dimension of *μέθεξις* into his analysis, Gadamer notes that where historicist hermeneutics is unidirectional in its program of recovery, the hermeneutic dynamic is mutually implicative, it articulates *Dasein*’s *contextus* as a work in progress rather than as a stable historical coordinate, for ‘we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves’.⁶⁶² He goes on, ‘[u]nderstanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as a participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated’.⁶⁶³

⁶⁵⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 293.

⁶⁵⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 293.

⁶⁶⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 298.

⁶⁶¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 293.

⁶⁶² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 293.

⁶⁶³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 291.

Away from the fixity and immediacy of the historicist *contextus*, that is, the figure of the whole, Gadamer's theory of interpretation is not only forged on an irreducible ontological heterogeneity that temporally spaces *Dasein's* understanding, but the immediacy into which the novel arrives is itself in constant flux, opening onto the future *and* onto the others with whom meaning is shared. Gadamer calls this context-creation *Horizontverschmelzung*,⁶⁶⁴ the ethico-political negotiation and fusion of singular phenomenal horizons in the flux of the shared logos.⁶⁶⁵

There is a problem here, however, that Gadamer affords this contiguous *μέθεξις* none of the radicality he ascribes to the temporal interval of *Dasein's* understanding. For in the case of the transcendent *μέθεξις* of beauty and dialogue, as with *Dasein's* understanding, every articulation and comprehension presupposes the irreducible hiatus of being. But here, in the contiguous *μέθεξις* of the event of tradition, Gadamer risks repeating the immanentist assertion of a unitary source, since though it is the case that the event of tradition that creates shared context is a plural dynamic, it is nevertheless a linguistic event grounded in a deep political identity. 'Participation,' Gadamer writes in the later essay on Plato, 'completes itself [*erfüllt sich*] only in genuine being-together and belonging-together',⁶⁶⁶ before going on to make the powerful claim that 'the signifying power of the syllable *meta* lends *μέθεξις* the sense of "being-with" [*Mitsein*⁶⁶⁷].'⁶⁶⁸ Invoking Heidegger's existential analytic, where '*Being-with* and *Dasein-with* [*Mitsein* and *Mitdasein*]' are 'structures of *Dasein* which are equiprimordial with

⁶⁶⁴ Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 290.

⁶⁶⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 306.

⁶⁶⁶ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 262.

⁶⁶⁷ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Plato als Porträtist' (1988), in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. VII: *Griechische Philosophie III: Plato im Dialog* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991) pp. 228-257 (p. 246).

⁶⁶⁸ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 314.

Being-in-the-World,⁶⁶⁹ and disentangling *hexis* [ἕξις: disposition]⁶⁷⁰ from μέθεξις, a homology is derived. For Gadamer, *met-hexis* and *mit-dasein* say the same thing: an openness to meaning, an existential disposition, coordinated in advance by an essential togetherness with others. ‘Being present’, Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*, ‘does not simply mean being there along with something else that is there at the same time.’⁶⁷¹ To be present means to participate,⁶⁷² and this means one ‘participates in the communion of being present’.⁶⁷³ The plural project of tradition forming is thus grounded in a prior ontological commonality. In contrast to the radical otherness that permeates all phenomena, the interaction of contiguous μέθεξις is for Gadamer rooted in similarity, not alterity, spirit rather than logos, communion rather than community.

These two trajectories, *Dasein*’s temporal interval as a transcendent μέθεξις, and its *Mit-* as the horizontal μέθεξις of shared tradition, are brought together by Gadamer in the Plato essay in a phenomenological demonstration akin to the one repeatedly referenced from the *Phaedrus*. Unlike Plato’s example of beauty which only illustrates the dynamic of a transcendent μέθεξις, Gadamer locates in the portrait a site at which both forms of μέθεξις evidence. Presenting his paper at the Munich Glyptothek, at the exhibition of a sculpture of Plato, Gadamer asserts that the portrait is exemplary amongst the plastic and visual disciplines for its

⁶⁶⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 149.

⁶⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1106b.

⁶⁷¹ In this much, I would like to claim, there is an unacknowledged homology to the projects of Gadamer and Nancy. While I claim in section (3.6) that there are deep differences in their interpretations of Heidegger and the way they each conceive whole and part, it is worth remarking that in the intention of reading Heidegger’s *Dasein* and *Mitsein* as genuinely irreducible from one another, their thoughts are wholly compatible.

⁶⁷² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 121.

⁶⁷³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 128.

escalation of recognition, and therefore understanding to its forefront.⁶⁷⁴ In clear reference to Heidegger's phenomenological definition of the artwork as a thing that announces its existence as its essence, radiating the fact that it *is* when it might not have *been*,⁶⁷⁵ Gadamer here determines 'the most distinctive element of a portrait [as] its intention to be recognised as such,'⁶⁷⁶ that is, unlike the symbol that only wishes to disappear in its mediation, the portrait seemingly discloses its own *μίμησις* as its primary quality. And yet, as we have seen, this consideration of the portrait happens in a paper in which *μίμησις* is completely rejected.⁶⁷⁷

'It is the likeness [*Abbildung*], the image [*Bild*] of an individual or a person that would enable us to recognise it, if we know it',⁶⁷⁸ Gadamer writes, and one must recognise the force of the last four words. The portrait is by no means a *μίμησις* of an origin. In the case in point, neither Gadamer nor the exhibitors can say how far removed this particular portrait is from an original, it being a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture of Plato, or maybe even a copy of a copy. The portrait rather discloses the way Plato becomes his image, that is, the way our Plato is constituted through the literary self-portrait he has bequeathed to us, and our shared understanding of it. That is to say, the portrait is for Gadamer a special case of the theatrical mimetic ambivalence noted in section (1.2), whether

⁶⁷⁴ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 294.

⁶⁷⁵ Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (1935-37, 1950 & 1960), in *Poetry Language Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 15-89.

⁶⁷⁶ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 295.

⁶⁷⁷ In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes '[t]he doctrine of recognition on which mimetic representation is based only hints at what it would mean to grasp the claim to being of artistic representation'. Earlier, Gadamer writes of tragic theatre, '[t]he spectator does not hold himself aloof at the distance characteristic of an aesthetic consciousness enjoying the art with which something is represented, but rather participates in the communion of being present.' We will return to the question of *μίμησις* and the artwork in chapter four. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, pp. 128 & 581.

⁶⁷⁸ Gadamer, 'Plato as Portraitist', p. 294.

Gadamer acknowledges this or not. We only recognise the portrait, for Gadamer, if we already participate in something of its meaning. Thus the portrait brings together in a special way the two terms of the investigation, novelty and participation, a transcendent burst of meaning in the *μέθεξις* of temporal arrival, enabled by the shared *μέθεξις* that furnishes the immanent that may enter this transcendent dynamic.

To the extent that Gadamer's strategy to overthrow the whole/part logic of classical hermeneutics dictates the rejection of the part and its *μίμησις* in favour of the belonging-together of *μέθεξις*, it seems clear that when Gadamer translates *μέθεξις* as *Mitsein* and determines being present to be co-originary with participation, that the whole/part logic he has in mind corresponds to the artificial separation of being-with and being-there. Yet, as already noted, in Gadamer's refusal to make the *μέθεξις* of being-with a function of radical alterity in the same way that temporal *μέθεξις* is a properly transcendent opening onto otherness, he shrinks away from Plato's Parmenides' prompt in the direction of unstructured multiplicity and risks thinking the *μέθεξις* of tradition as not a *Horizontverschmelzung*, Gadamer's word for a political negotiation and fusion of singular phenomenal horizons, but rather as Heidegger's *Erbschaft*,⁶⁷⁹ which is the historical and fraternal essence which binds horizons together in advance.⁶⁸⁰ In the remaining sections I aim to show how Nancy's reading of Gadamer, and his strong interpretation of the nature of *Dasein* and *Mitsein*, transposes the strong partition of transcendent *μέθεξις* onto the contiguous horizon of being-with. Beginning with Nancy's criticism of Gadamer's theory of interpretation, I will then draw out its ontological implications.

⁶⁷⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 383.

⁶⁸⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 435.

3.6 Nancy reading Gadamer reading Heidegger

Explicit mentions of Gadamer are scarce in Nancy's work and the one with which the beginning of this section is concerned, from 1982's 'Sharing Voices', is critical of his appropriation of Heidegger's hermeneutics. Nancy reprimands Gadamer for running together 'the hermeneutic circle and Heideggerian preunderstanding',⁶⁸¹ which is to say, for conflating *Auslegung*, which is *Dasein's* prelinguistic articulation of beings as beings, and *Interpretation*, which Heidegger describes as the linguistic process that only comes after, and on account of, *Auslegung*.⁶⁸² *Auslegung*, Heidegger explains in this section, differs from *Interpretation* which is synonymous with the retroactivity of "explanation" by way of its Latin root, because it is not something that comes "after" the understanding, which is to say, in *Auslegung* 'understanding does not become something different'.⁶⁸³

Macquarrie and Robinson explain in their translation of *Being and Time* that Heidegger uses both words, *Auslegung* and *Interpretation* (which shares the spelling and etymology of its English counterpart), according to a consistent terminological program. They explain that while *Interpretation* is reserved for speaking of systematic exegeses and calculated strategies of theoretical development, *Auslegung*, which they translate as "interpretation" with a lower case "i" by way of distinction, 'seems to be used in a broad sense to cover any activity in which we interpret something "as" something'.⁶⁸⁴ The notion of the "as" [*als*] highlighted by the translators in scare quotes, is a loaded term in itself. The fact that we experience entities as entities, rather than as manifold intuition of chaotic

⁶⁸¹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 215.

⁶⁸² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 194.

⁶⁸³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 188.

⁶⁸⁴ John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson, 'Translators' Notes', in *Being and Time*, 19 n. 3.

sensory data, is amongst the first philosophical curiosities for the Greeks, and the “as” in Heidegger’s lexicon pertains precisely to this pre-predicative meaningfulness of experience, as Heidegger explains:

In dealing with what is environmentally ready-to-hand by interpreting it circumspectively, we “see” it as a table, a door, a carriage, or a bridge; but what we have thus interpreted [*Ausgelegte*] need not necessarily be also taken apart [*auseinander zu legen*] by making an assertion [*Aussage*] which definitely characterizes it.⁶⁸⁵

The difference clearly concerns language. *Auslegung* Nancy writes, ‘announces what it comprehends’ and ‘to announce (*Kundgeben*) is neither to interpret nor to anticipate.’⁶⁸⁶ It furnishes the propensity to experience things as things rather than as a chaotic manifold. *Auslegung*, Nancy reasserts, ‘does not depend, in particular, on linguistic enunciation. Rather, it is the *als* which renders linguistic enunciation possible’.⁶⁸⁷ In the comprehensive *Interpretation* that follows, the thing already announced is split in the adding of a characterization. In §7 of Heidegger’s text, Heidegger states that the quality of logos is to ‘make manifest what one is “talking about,”’ that it lets ‘something be seen by pointing it out.’⁶⁸⁸ As such, logos relies on the prior disclosure of what is to be talked about, and if its speech is to be phenomenologically accurate it must only ‘let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way that it shows itself from itself.’⁶⁸⁹ For Nancy, this is a ‘discreet but decisive inflection’⁶⁹⁰ in Heideggerian methodology, because it shows that Heidegger is no longer interested in:

⁶⁸⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 189.

⁶⁸⁶ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 220.

⁶⁸⁷ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 220.

⁶⁸⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56.

⁶⁸⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 58.

⁶⁹⁰ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 219

Showing the constitution of a world for a subject, but of letting be seen what the manifestation *is*, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of letting it be seen that a comprehension is *already* comprehension of being.⁶⁹¹

What is at stake in the thought of *Auslegung*, as Heidegger puts it in the 1924-25 lectures on Plato's *Sophist*, is the thought that 'in every understanding of the world, existence is understood with it,'⁶⁹² and that while *Being and Time* will have to make use of the *Darstellung* of logos, the logos is to be set to use in approaching the things-themselves, phenomena, in their self-showing, not, as Heidegger writes in the lecture course on Plato's *Sophist* two years prior to the publication of *Being and Time*, to 'repeat propositions and understand them without having an original relation to the beings of which I am speaking',⁶⁹³ that is, not to let the λέγειν (speaking) become the λεγόμενον (what is spoken of).⁶⁹⁴ If phenomenology is truly to be a science then it must not fix its results in advance, but rather discover them, for speaking of what is spoken of constitutes a vicious circle.

In §2 of *Being and Time* Heidegger justifies his own project on this basis. There he writes that interrogating the question of the meaning of Being is 'formally' but not 'factically' circular'.⁶⁹⁵ The circularity of which Heidegger speaks concerns the fact that *Dasein* has a 'vague average understanding of Being',⁶⁹⁶ since it experiences

⁶⁹¹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 220.

⁶⁹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 194.

⁶⁹³ Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 18.

⁶⁹⁴ Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, p. 17.

⁶⁹⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 27.

⁶⁹⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 25.

that a being 'is', while lacking the ability to define what the 'is' signifies'.⁶⁹⁷ But unlike an 'axiom from which a sequence of propositions is deductively derived',⁶⁹⁸ the vague average understanding of Being does not presuppose 'something which only the answer can bring',⁶⁹⁹ for it does not constitute determinate knowledge of an 'explicit concept of the meaning of Being',⁷⁰⁰ but only the fact that *Dasein* experiences beings as beings, prelinguistically - a fact 'which in the end belongs to the essential constitution of *Dasein itself*'.⁷⁰¹

This assertion is less a presupposition than a tautology, for as Nancy writes, 'the being of being-there does not consist of anything other than this: it is in its Being that this being relates itself to its Being.'⁷⁰² Being is not 'presupposed as another thing' and nor is a subject posited to whom a relation to Being must then be appended. *Dasein* is nothing but the relation, such that in "presupposing" *Dasein's* vague average understanding of Being, Being 'is infinitely less anticipated than according to [the] classical interpretive model, and nevertheless infinitely more presupposed: it is presupposed as *the relation itself*'.⁷⁰³ Nancy goes on, 'Being is presupposed as the relation to Being which makes the Being of being-there. It is presupposed as being-there itself, as the facticity of being-there'.⁷⁰⁴

The 'vague average understanding' of Being that imposes the question of the meaning of Being is clearly *Dasein's Auslegung*, a fact that Heidegger confirms in

⁶⁹⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 25.

⁶⁹⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 28.

⁶⁹⁹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 27.

⁷⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 27.

⁷⁰¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 28.

⁷⁰² Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 217.

⁷⁰³ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 217.

⁷⁰⁴ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 217.

§32. It is here however that Nancy locates Gadamer's misreading of the Heideggerian text, and I reproduce the section both cite in full from the book:

It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even a circle which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation [*Auslegung*], we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow our fore-having [*Vorhabe*], fore-sight [*Vorsicht*], and fore-conception [*Vorgriff*] to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves.⁷⁰⁵

Gadamer's reception of this passage in *Truth and Method* goes like this:

What Heidegger is working out here is not primarily a prescription for the practice of understanding, but a description of the way interpretive understanding is achieved. The point of Heidegger's hermeneutical reflection is not so much to prove that there is a circle as to show that this circle possesses an ontologically positive significance. The description as such will be obvious to every interpreter who knows what he is about. All correct interpretation must be on guard against arbitrary fancies and the limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought, and it must direct its gaze "on the things themselves" (which, in the case of the literary critic, are meaningful texts, which themselves are again concerned with objects). For the interpreter to let himself be guided by the things themselves is obviously not a matter of a single, "conscientious" decision, but is "the first, last, and constant task." For it is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning

⁷⁰⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 195.

emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there.⁷⁰⁶

Auslegung, as the openness to being that *Dasein* quite literally is, is not a circular structure, but nor is it linguistic. So when Gadamer, on the same page as the reference to *Being and Time*, ascribes the structure of *Auslegung* to ‘a person who is trying to understand a text’, and determines ‘meaningful texts’ as one example of the phenomenological ‘things themselves’ which populate the prelinguistic fore-structures of the understanding,⁷⁰⁷ he has, for Nancy, justified the apparent circularity of an anticipation of linguistic meaning by recourse to an ontological structure that is presupposed by, but does not apply to, language.

In light of our prior discussion of Gadamer’s reading of Plato, I would like to suggest the following slant on Nancy’s critique. If *Auslegung* is in Heidegger’s philosophy the ontological presupposition of linguistic *Interpretation*, in the same way as, in the analyses of *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, the transcendent version of *μέθεξις* is for Gadamer the ontological presupposition of linguistic dialogue, then in transforming the historical structure of hermeneutics into ‘the ontological structure of understanding’,⁷⁰⁸ Gadamer is, against his own warning, attempting to appropriate an ontological presupposition of the logos into the logos. There, as here, the result of doing so is aporia, for as Nancy writes, Gadamer’s ‘hermeneutic circle is suspended in the supposition or the presupposition of an origin: both the

⁷⁰⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 269.

⁷⁰⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 269.

⁷⁰⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 294.

origin of meaning and the possibility of participating in it'.⁷⁰⁹ What this means is that the phenomenological 'things themselves' are on Nancy's reading precisely what Gadamer's hermeneutics does not pay attention to,⁷¹⁰ because the circle predetermines the object of its investigation as the *Aussage* that has already dismantled the phenomenon. Worse, by predetermining that which it seeks, Gadamer's hermeneutic process fixes the object of its lack in advance, both predetermining and negating, before recuperating this negativity into the positive moment of tradition which is nothing but the *relève* of the circle's origin.⁷¹¹ Nancy writes of Gadamer's project:

In this way, the hermeneutic circle is suspended in the supposition or the presupposition of an origin: both the origin of meaning and the possibility of participating in it, the infinite origin of the circle in which the interpreter is caught always already. The circle can be nothing other than the movement of an origin, lost and recovered by the mediation of its substitute. Insofar as it renders possible the right direction for interpretive research, this substitute implies a mode for the conservation and preservation of the origin up to and through its loss. Hermeneutics requires very profoundly, very obscurely perhaps that the "participation in meaning" is unaware of the absolute interruption. On account of this profound continuity, hermeneutics represents the process of a historicity which is valued both as suspension and as revival of the continuity. It designates in the most accentuated fashion the history of a *permanence* and a *remanence*, that is to say, the possibility of returning from (or to) an origin.⁷¹²

It is this presupposition of an origin which Nancy recognises in Ricoeur's statement that 'it is necessary to understand in order to believe, but it is necessary

⁷⁰⁹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 214.

⁷¹⁰ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 219.

⁷¹¹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', pp. 213-4.

⁷¹² Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 214.

to believe in order to understand,⁷¹³ and even more so in Gadamer's concept of tradition which he marks as the target of the above passage in a footnote.⁷¹⁴ This is because in the notion of tradition, Nancy thinks Gadamer has unwittingly made explicit the fact that the history of hermeneutics is a history of historicism, that the circle projects an origin (as negativity), an anticipated future, and synthesises a continuity as return to origin. In this sense all novelty in hermeneutics is illusory; the true event is abhorrent to it. Nancy returns to the terms of this analysis in *L'oubli de la philosophie* [*The Forgetting of Philosophy*] where he designates all philosophies of crisis as being strangers to real rupture, and rather attestations of a deeper continuity to which a "crisis" motivates our return.⁷¹⁵ Nancy will finally say this best in *Being Singular Plural*, where he distils the problem to the sheer fact that 'denying the presence of meaning affirms that one knows what meaning would be, were it there, and keeps the mastery and truth of meaning in place.'⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ Paul Ricoeur, *Philosophie de la volonté. Tome II: Finitude et culpabilité* (1960), cited in: Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 214.

⁷¹⁴ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', 250 n. 9.

⁷¹⁵ Nancy, 'The Forgetting of Philosophy', pp. 13-5.

⁷¹⁶ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 1.

3.7 Nancy's interpretation of *Dasein* as absolutely conditioned finitude

'Sharing Voices' for the most part proceeds textually, offering detailed readings of Heidegger's existential analytic (from which emerges the critique of Gadamer's interpretation of it), and of Plato's dialogue *Ion*. But the terms of Nancy's presentation should not convince the reader that the import of Nancy's disagreement with Gadamer is restricted to academic contestation over who reads Heidegger more accurately, nor is its purpose merely to debunk phenomenological hermeneutics. I would like to suggest in this final section that the key component in the mechanics of Nancy's critique of Gadamer indicates an important ontological undercurrent. What is specifically in question here is the weight Nancy assigns to the determination of *Dasein* as a relation, that is, not a thing in relation, nor even always already in relation, but itself a relation that presupposes nothing but its own being as a factual relation to being. Beyond this figure's contribution to, or disruption of, a theory of interpretation, I wish to point out that it has deep repercussions for the way Gadamer conceives of *Dasein*'s participation in tradition as grounded in communion, because Nancy's subtly powerful observation serves to reorient the radically transcendent *μέθεξις* of *Dasein*'s ontological interval onto a contiguous horizon, that is, the horizon of *Mitsein*.

In the course of discussing the inapplicability of *Dasein*'s *Auslegung* as an element of the hermeneutic project, Nancy differentiates between 'anticipation as "prejudgment" of meaning' and the 'ontological anticipation' which is 'anterior' to it.⁷¹⁷ The former refers to the mistaken appropriation of *Auslegung* into *Interpretation*, and the latter, to *Auslegung* understood as *Dasein*'s absolute presupposition of itself as relation to what is. I would like to highlight that the word

⁷¹⁷ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 223.

anterior [*antérieur*]⁷¹⁸ here is no grammatical or logical connector, but a spatial designation that draws attention to the topological significance of defining *Dasein's* relation to being as 'infinitely less anticipated than according to [the] classical interpretive model, and nevertheless infinitely more presupposed: it is presupposed as *the relation itself*'.⁷¹⁹ Now, in the linguistic-hermeneutical register, the word presupposition refers to an implicit logical precondition, but Nancy plays on the topological roots of the word, *pre-sub-ponere*, literally place-under-before⁷²⁰ and writes in 'Sharing Voices':

This "presupposition" is not one: when one speaks of a presupposition, one supposes it anterior to that subject of which there is a presupposition. In reality, it is implied in this way as posterior to a position, whatever it is (ideal, imaginary, etc.), to that subject which one can "presuppose." But here, nothing precedes the presupposition, there is no "that" and above all not so much as a "being," which is nothing without [*en dehors*: outside] the presupposition. "That," it is the "presupposition" which is posterior and anterior only to itself that is to say, to being-there. On this account, one would be able to call it, as well, the "absolute" presupposition, but this "absolute" will be the only pure and simple beginning given in being-there and by being-there. In other words, the "absolute" presupposition is tied essentially to "absolute" finitude.⁷²¹

The presupposition of *Dasein's* relation to being is not, strictly speaking, a presupposition at all, since this relation is not positioned before, after, or outside of the subject of which it is presupposed. Neither subject nor being are anything

⁷¹⁸ Nancy, *Le Partage des voix*, p. 35.

⁷¹⁹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 217.

⁷²⁰ A year later Nancy places 'sup-pose' and 'sub-stance' side by side when asserting that 'community is presuppositionless'. Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Preface' (1983), trans. by Peter Connor, in *The Inoperative Community*, ed. by Connor, pp. xxxvi-xli (p. xxxix).

⁷²¹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 218.

“outside” of the presupposition of their relation, the relation is rather *supplementary* to the position in the Derridean sense,⁷²² an appendage that is equiprimordial with the appended,⁷²³ for there is no ‘object or term *to which* this *relation* would have to be made’.⁷²⁴ The presupposition of relation is therefore “absolute” in the sense that there is no position from which it can be posited that is not already supplemented by the relation presupposed; and in this way the concept of the “absolute” undergoes a significant transformation. The “absolute” finitude to which the “absolute” presupposition is tied, does not conform itself to the thought that the absolute would be unconditioned,⁷²⁵ in fact it is the opposite; “absolute” finitude’s being absolutely-in-relation recasts the absolute as the *absolutely conditioned*. This represents an early formulation of a core ontological commitment running

⁷²² Derrida cites Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s assertion that ‘[l]anguages are made to be spoken, writing serves only as a supplement to speech’ (p. 144). Pointing out that the ‘logic of the supplement’ in this case leads to a ‘chain of supplements’ (p.165), since, for Rousseau, language is in turn supplementary to the mute child, Derrida indicates that what is at stake is a deferral of immediacy that is constitutive of immediacy. There is no origin within the chain of supplements to which they are appended extraneously, thus each time a supplement is added as an enrichment it is at the same time a replacement, gesturing to that which withdraws in its wake. (p.145). The exterior of pure presence, the sign or the image, is thus precisely *not* external. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967), trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

⁷²³ In ‘L’intrus’ [‘The Intruder’] Nancy confirms that he considers the human body, its technical engagement and prosthesis, its sickness and auto-immunity, all to be engaged in a network of supplementarity in Derrida’s sense. Derrida repeatedly picks up on this fact, suggesting that Nancy’s ‘thinking of a *technē* of bodies as thinking of the prosthetic supplement’ marks the originality of his work. Noting that this supplementary technicity both connects and spaces out bodies, Derrida commends the departure from a Husserlian reliance on the presence of a same and other that is dissolved in the thought of a supplementary limit “between” but, in place of, the two figures. Yet as Morin notes, Derrida also worries that this departure is a reduction or domestication of the other to its immediate contact at these shared limits: Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘The Intruder’ (1999), trans. by Richard A. Rand, in *Corpus*, pp. 161-70 (172-3 n. 2); Derrida, *On Touching*, pp. 97 & 223, and: Morin, *Jean-Luc Nancy*, p. 20.

⁷²⁴ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 217.

⁷²⁵ Kant, for example, determines the first class of transcendental ideas to contain the ‘absolute (unconditioned) *unity* of the *thinking subject*’. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 323.

throughout Nancy's work, the subtly powerful observation that 'finitude is not privation'.⁷²⁶

A year later, in *The Inoperative Community*, Nancy refers this to Heidegger's formulation, that '[t]he ending implied in death does not signify a *Dasein's* Being-at-an-end, but a *Being-toward-the-end* of this entity',⁷²⁷ remarking that in these words Heidegger 'leads us farthest' towards understanding conditioned finitude. By Nancy's account, Heidegger's assertion that "[t]he dying of Others is not something that we experience in an authentic sense; at most we are always just "there-alongside." ... By its very essence, death is in every case mine",⁷²⁸ pertains to an inversion of the originary recognition by which one comes to know oneself in the other. In recognising that there is nothing comprehensible in witnessing the death of another, one comes to "know" that one's own finitude is no less comprehensible. *Dasein's* singularity is thus revealed as not something enclosed by the absolute cessation of death ("Being-at-an-end"), but as the rending out towards that which *Dasein* will never come into contact with ("*Being-toward-the-end*"), that is, as an "unfinishedness" rather than some determinate object possessing its start and finish.

But as far as this takes us, Nancy does not consider it far enough. Heidegger has shown that the singularity of *Dasein* is not absolute, but by relying on the specular recognition of the death of the other to account for the cognisance of the incomprehensibility of one's own mortality, Heidegger is stuck in a circle. For finitude is precisely the delimitation of *Dasein* from the other that is presupposed by any specular recognition of it, such that one cannot appeal to a cognisant

⁷²⁶ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 29.

⁷²⁷ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 33.

⁷²⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 33.

relationship with the other to explain the ontological differentiation that necessarily precedes it. Heidegger has succeeded in thinking death without privation, but has still presumed privacy, that is, that *Dasein* is distinct from other *Dasein* in whom it recognises that it is a Being-toward-death. Nancy's formulation is much simpler. If *Dasein's* singularity, its spatio-temporal finitude that distinguishes it from others, is the absolute presupposition of supplementary relation, then its limit cannot be private, *Dasein* cannot be private. The anterior and posterior that are equiprimordial with its singularity determine *Dasein's* limit as precisely shared with other beings, which in their finitude share their limits with *Dasein*.

As already intimated, this is not merely a logical conjugation; it concerns the spatio-temporal topology of *Dasein*, that is, its finitude, its discontinuousness in time and space, its singularity. For to say that *Dasein's* finitude is absolutely conditioned is to say that the material and temporal limits of *Dasein* are conditioned, which means that its circumscription is not its own, but is a relation to something other. *Dasein* is nothing outside of its relation to being, and as such *Dasein* is equally for Nancy a being-in-relation; it is nothing if not in relation to other beings. *Dasein* for Nancy cannot be said in the pure singular, its singularity is only so by virtue of its being one-with-another.

Indeed, as Nancy points out in 1996's *Being Singular Plural*, the Latin *singuli* only denotes individuality insofar as the one is individuated from others; it means "one by one"⁷²⁹ in the sense of the singular distinguished from the plural it is a part of. Likewise here, *Dasein's* privation is not private, it is a function of its being-in-relation, its finitude and its relation are the same limit that constitutes *Dasein's* singularity as one amongst others, connecting and distinguishing in the same

⁷²⁹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 32.

contact. The contiguous *μέθεξις* that for Gadamer constitutes a shared ontological identity therefore becomes strongly qualified in accordance with Nancy's understanding of *Dasein*. For if, as Gadamer has it, *Dasein's* contact and communication with other *Dasein* were truly to be bereft of any external mimetic relationship, which is to say, lacking any exposure, relating only as a pure "belonging-together" of *μέθεξις*, then on Nancy's reading there would be no enclosure, no *Dasein*. For Nancy, *Dasein's* separation *and* contact mutually implicate, such that there is never an exclusive choice between them. An absolutely immanent conception of contiguous *μέθεξις*, by Nancy's account, violates the terms of *Dasein's* very existence. Nancy's concept of the relatedness of plural *Dasein* would therefore be by Gadamer's definitions *both* a *μέθεξις* and a *μίμησις*.

Furthermore, inverting the perspective of his analysis of *Dasein's* finitude by looking to that which conditions it, Nancy goes on to note that 'the finitude of the other is, without a doubt, in its singularity and its delimitation', but 'it does not consist in a limitation (sensible, empirical, individual, as one would like) which will set itself up dependent upon infinity and in an imminent relation of sublimation or of recovery in this infinity'.⁷³⁰ Which is to say, *Dasein* do not simply chance upon one another as disconnected islands of being wandering an infinite unconditioned substratum, for the other that conditions any particular *Dasein* relies no less on exposure for its own being.

That there can be no "outside" of the relation of being, means that there is no "between" *Dasein* that would not disrupt the endless chain of supplements by which every *Dasein* each time defers its finitude to the other, and on to every other

⁷³⁰ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 246.

Dasein. As Nancy puts it in 1996, there is no *milieu* from which beings would arise,⁷³¹ but instead, ‘in lieu of and in the place of Being’,⁷³² there is simply *lieu*, place – places, each time singular and exposed to plurality. Moreover, in that text, what is declared in Nancy’s ‘ambition of re-doing the whole of “first philosophy” by giving the “singular plural” of Being as its foundation’,⁷³³ is that not only *Dasein*, but everything ‘which occurs only once’,⁷³⁴ a rock, a voice, or a line of text, all conform to Nancy’s fundamental topological law, that the singular cannot be singular without apportioning itself from the plural, which is a plurality of singulars in contact, bound in the separation that distinguishes them. All singularity, every being, is maintained in exposure and sharing. There is no pre-existing horizon in which singulars exist, for the horizon is nothing other than the sum total of the exposures that differentiate and individuate all singulars. ‘Lest we confuse it with, say, Hegelian “finiteness”’, Nancy writes, finitude is ‘a limit that does not soar above nothingness’.⁷³⁵ Finitude is rather ‘the infinite of the finite itself’,⁷³⁶ ‘the instability of every finite determination’.⁷³⁷

For Nancy, there can therefore be no transcendent *μέθεξις*, at least not in the sense Gadamer understands it, because on Nancy’s account there can be no exposure that would not be an exposure to another finite thing. *Dasein*’s conditioned finitude, the exposure that encloses, is, as we saw, both a *μίμησις* and a *μέθεξις*, for the belonging of its *Mitsein* and the externality of its *Dasein* are two functions of the same limit. But here, in extrapolating this logic of conditioned

⁷³¹ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 5.

⁷³² Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 80.

⁷³³ Nancy, ‘Preface’, in *Being Singular Plural*, p. xv.

⁷³⁴ Nancy, ‘Banks Edges Limits’, p. 41.

⁷³⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative* (1997), trans. by Jason Smith & Steven Miller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 37.

⁷³⁶ Nancy, ‘On the Soul’, p. 122.

⁷³⁷ Nancy, *Hegel*, p. 12.

finitude into a general ontology, Nancy shows that the transcendent and the contiguous are also irrevocably implicated in one another. The arrival of the new is no less radically transcendent, but it is nevertheless devoid of verticality, for it comes in the touch of other incommensurable plural *Dasein*, mediated by endless chains of supplements, singularities, 'machines, vehicles, photocopies, eyes, still other hands are all interposed',⁷³⁸ never coming into contact with an in-between or an outside, but renewing meaning in the transcendent and contiguous *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* of being-with. To put it another way, there is with Nancy no ontological difference, only the endless plurality of finite differences that each time present what is, which is to say, for Nancy, "being" is nothing other than its indefinitely plural announcement. In the following section I will present Nancy's demonstration, in his reading of Plato's *Ion*, of how meaning arrives and is shared in accordance with these figures, that is, how meaning happens when it is stripped of metaphysical transcendence or immanence and consigned to finite plurality.

⁷³⁸ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 51.

3.8 Nancy's interpretation of μίμησις and μέθεξις in Plato's *Ion*

My aim here is to relay Nancy's presentation of Plato's dialogue as a description of how the communication of meaning can function when stripped of the devices Gadamer employs to formulate its transmission, namely, predetermination and communal unanimity. As we will see, Nancy finds the *Ion* to illustrate a passage of meaning between agents in which neither utility is available, for in it no party has either access to an origin or comprehension of an accord; all that is shared is the ontological limit at which each is exposed to the other. As such, meaning and being in the *Ion* are not participated in vertically as an illumination, but nor are they reduced to functions of pure unitary immanence and univocity, rather, Nancy shows, they are functions of the transcendent nature of the immanent, the externality of that which is nevertheless *right at [à même]*.

Ion, Nancy tells us, is the *ῥαψωδῶν* [reciter] and *ἐρμηνεύς* [interpreter] of but one poet, Homer. *Ion's ἐρμηνεία* [interpretation] 'makes heard the *logos* in the delivery of the verse',⁷³⁹ it allows the audience to grasp what the verse *means*. Yet *Ion* has no ability in the *ἐρμηνεία* of any other poet's work and harbours no poetic skill himself, nor any knowhow in the subject matters Homer touches upon. He therefore neither identifies with the poesy nor the content of Homer's verse. Nor does *Ion* simply recite the verse by rote. He does not reproduce the verse through sheer mastery of Homeric syntax, for such an exact reproduction would merely repeat that which the audience already lack the ability to grasp without the help of the *ῥαψωδῶν*, and a perfect *μίμησις*, critical theory will tell us, is absolutely not what an interpreter strives for.⁷⁴⁰ Under Socratic interrogation, Nancy writes, *Ion's*

⁷³⁹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 231.

⁷⁴⁰ See for example: Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' (1923), trans. by Hannah Arendt, in *Illuminations* (New York: Fontana/Collins, 1970), pp. 69-82;

skill is determined in the dialogue to be neither a *τέχνη* nor an *ἐπιστήμη*, for he neither deciphers Homer's message nor comprehends its origin.⁷⁴¹ Ion does not so much know what the poetry means as what *Homer* means. There is therefore, by Socrates' determination, no *σοφία* in Ion's relationship to Homeric verse and his ability is deficient in the eyes of the philosopher,⁷⁴² because it is, Plato writes in the *Ion*, accidental, unintentional, unconscious and rapturous; a possession of sorts.⁷⁴³ Spreading like magnetism through iron rings, this possession is infectious, infecting with the ability to infect.⁷⁴⁴ What this means is that "*ἐρμηνεία*" is a magical word for Nancy in the same way that we saw *φρόνησις* is for Gadamer in (3.4), for it confers another way in which the Greeks approach meaning and communication at an entirely pre-reflective level.

A chain of 'en-thusiasm'⁷⁴⁵ connects the characters of the *Ion*, Nancy writes, hyphenating the word '*en-thousiasme*'⁷⁴⁶ to highlight its etymological connotations of divine inspiration. From the muses to Homer, from Homer to Ion and from Ion to Socrates or the audience, each is in turn taken possession of by the divine voice. Yet no member of the chain has any more comprehension of its divine source than any other. Socrates has already established that Ion does not comprehend it, but even Homer himself, when infected by the divine voice, just like Ion or the audience is not given 'the comprehension of a *logos* of the gods', but only

Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (San Diego, New York & London: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1970), and: Stanley Cavell, 'Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy', in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 73-96.

⁷⁴¹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 232.

⁷⁴² Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 233.

⁷⁴³ Plato, 'Ion', 536b.

⁷⁴⁴ Plato, 'Ion', 533d-e.

⁷⁴⁵ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 237.

⁷⁴⁶ Nancy, *Le Partage des voix*, p. 68.

‘entrance’ into one singularly distinctive tone from the cacophony of muses,⁷⁴⁷ one ‘sweet’ from the ‘honey-dropping founts’ of the ‘gardens and glades of the Muses’.⁷⁴⁸ Enthusiasm takes them all, from the outside, sweeps them up, ‘place[s] the self outside itself in the other, *en-theos* in delirium’.⁷⁴⁹ What Homer’s skill as a poet comes down to is therefore ‘a saintly passivity which gives way to the magnetic force. The lightness of the poet is made of this passivity, responsive to the inspiration and the fragrance of the Muse’s garden’.⁷⁵⁰ Ion’s skill, in turn, is the ability to emulate this passive transitivity, magnetism and openness to enthusiasm.

As Hynes observes in 2011, enthusiasm, as it appears in Spinoza, Kant, Dickens, Lyotard and Deleuze, is an ‘affective force that is “elusive and unobjectifiable”, which spreads like fire in the in-between of subjects and objects; barely perceptible, yet with potentially world transforming effects’.⁷⁵¹ Her argument is that the force of enthusiasm in these thinkers can be seen as describing an alternative trajectory for anti-foundational theories of subjectivity and politics, which for her money have been dominated by various notions of ec-stasis, naming Bataille, Heidegger and, interestingly, Nancy⁷⁵² as exponents in this regard. Ecstasy, for Hynes, ‘is still (too) tied to the form of man and thus of God’,⁷⁵³ since on her reading the figure of ecstasy revolves around the ‘the experience of finitude’⁷⁵⁴ in the sense of a quite literal confrontation with sublime revelation or existential dread, and is thus caught up in the human perspective of a total divide between

⁷⁴⁷ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 237.

⁷⁴⁸ Plato, ‘Ion’, 534b.

⁷⁴⁹ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 235.

⁷⁵⁰ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 235.

⁷⁵¹ Maria Hynes, ‘Surpassing Ecstasy, Infinite Enthusiasm’, in *Parallax* 17:2 (2011), 59-70 (p. 67).

⁷⁵² Hynes limits her commentary on Nancy to the *Inoperative Community* and limits this to the way it reads Bataille.

⁷⁵³ Hynes, ‘Surpassing Ecstasy, Infinite Enthusiasm’, p. 67.

⁷⁵⁴ Hynes, ‘Surpassing Ecstasy, Infinite Enthusiasm’, p. 68.

finite and infinite. Enthusiasm, on the other hand, ‘the in-common of enthusiasm – vitalised by the unbounding of the imagination and the encounter with the forces of the outside’, refers to the ‘site of a brush with the infinite, not in order to raise man (failingly) toward the perfection of God, but as an experiment with a life freed from God and Man and from the abyss of their absence’.⁷⁵⁵

What I find so useful about Hynes’ analysis is that it perfectly lays out the binaries Nancy finds Plato’s text to be intersecting. For when Nancy asks if ‘finitude has been the stake since Plato’ and if ‘lon [is] the first name of finite being-there’,⁷⁵⁶ we know from section (3.7) that the finitude of finite being-there, *Dasein*, is by no means to be understood as ‘*finité*’,⁷⁵⁷ the mode of finitude that only appears in relief from the infinite,⁷⁵⁸ but rather as *Dasein*’s absolutely conditioned or irreducibly exposed nature. As soon as *Dasein* is comprehended as pure exposure to other *Dasein* and other singularities, rather than as an absolutely finite entity amidst an infinite sea traversed by other disconnected self-enclosed things, then two obstructions come to interrupt the opposition Hynes opens between the human-centric experience of ecstasy and the from-elsewhere of a wave of enthusiasm. Firstly, there is no “in-between of subjects and objects” in which enthusiasm can spread like fire, no *milieu* or elsewhere (again see section (3.6)), only singularities sharing their finitude. Secondly, for the same reason, ec-stasis is not the experience of an infinite outside, but rather the experience of the finite other, with which *Dasein* shares its enclosing and exposing limit. On Nancy’s

⁷⁵⁵ Hynes, ‘Surpassing Ecstasy, Infinite Enthusiasm’, p. 67.

⁷⁵⁶ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 234.

⁷⁵⁷ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 87.

⁷⁵⁸ Nancy borrows this distinction from Henri Birault, and although he does not give a reference, Morin kindly points the reader towards his essay ‘Heidegger et la pensée de la finitude’ in the collection *De l’être, du divin et des dieux* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005), in her essay, ‘Thinking Things: Heidegger, Sartre, Nancy’ in *Sartre Studies International*, 15.2 (Winter 2009), 35–53 (52 n. 9).

model, neither enthusiasm nor ecstasy pertain to a brush with the infinite, but rather to an experience of the exposure from which all finite beings are entirely irreducible. The enthusiasm is communicated at the limit that separates and shares out singularities, and the delirium or ecstasy, the being-outside-of-oneself it induces, is the experience of this limit, the limit that is simultaneously familiar and strange, proper and other.

Nancy highlights two levels at which communication occurs in the *Ion*'s illustrations. Firstly, there is the comprehensive linguistic communication ascribed to philosophy by Socrates, that is to say, the *μίμησις*, the external transmission or transfer of a determinate content, the words of the Homeric verse. Secondly, there is the non-linguistic communication which Socrates ascribes to lyric poets, which, in the same sense that we speak of a contagion being communicated, communicates no content other than its communicability. But it would be erroneous, Nancy points out, to suggest that in the *Ion* the word *ἐρμηνεία* names only the latter and does not imply the former. Here Nancy refers to Rémi Brague's differentiation between two modes in which Plato deploys the concept of *μίμησις*,⁷⁵⁹ the one that 'produces, outside of itself, a copy of a model',⁷⁶⁰ which as we saw in section (2.4) is the mode of the painter and tragic poet as defined in Book X of the *Republic*; and the one that 'conforms itself to a model'⁷⁶¹, as is the case by contrast in Book III of the *Republic*, where *μίμησις* put to the use of *παιδεία* [education]⁷⁶² operates not as external reproduction but as praxical emulation. Nancy points out that here, in the case of *Ion* the *ῥαψωδῶν*, there is really never one without the other. For when *Ion* reproduces Homer's verse in a

⁷⁵⁹ Rémi Brague, *Du temps chez Plato et Aristote* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), p. 60.

⁷⁶⁰ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 239.

⁷⁶¹ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 239.

⁷⁶² Plato, *The Republic*, 416c.

mimetic and determinate linguistic communication, a reproduction, this transmission only takes place on account of a certain emulation on Ion's part; he does not simply impart a learned content to the audience, but 'the rhapsode embodies, overall, the very transitivity, even the transit of the enthusiasm, the passage of communication, in that it is necessary to listen to the meaning of the magnetic communication and to the meaning of the communication of the divine logos'.⁷⁶³ The mimetic transfer of the rhapsodic performance is deeply connected to an emulation of the poetic gesture, for, as pointed out earlier on, a pure *μίμησις* that lacked this would give nothing to the audience. The accompaniment of these two modes of *μίμησις*, the reproductive and the praxical, the content and the enthusiasm, for Nancy shows that in the *Ion*:

Hermeneia is *mimesis*, but an active, creative, or re-creative *mimesis*. Or, again, it is a *mimetic* creation, effected through a *mimesis* which proceeds from *methexis*, from the participation itself due to the communication of enthusiasm-unless *mimesis* is the condition of this participation.⁷⁶⁴

The mimetic communication of poetry across the chain illustrated in the *Ion*, from the muses to Homer, from Homer to Ion, from Ion to the audience, proceeds from a participation, a *μέθεξις*, a pre-linguistic communication at the ontological level of enthusiasm and rapture wherein each link in the chain lets themselves be taken outside of their domesticity to experience the limit at which they are exposed, not to the infinite, but to each other. Of course this *μέθεξις* does not and cannot produce an immanence or immediacy either between or encompassing the members of the chain, for this would violate the laws of their finitude, and nor does

⁷⁶³ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', pp. 239-40.

⁷⁶⁴ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 238.

this *μέθεξις* have any vertical element, as pertaining to a communication or participation that might connect each person to one overarching meaning, or to the origin of the chain, but, rather, only operates each-time, in each singular communication between finite beings, it restricts the production of the “chain” as a work at all. Devoid of verticality, that is, devoid of external criterion or standard, this finite *μέθεξις* renders the mimetic element of the communication, as Nancy states, creative, or recreative, a Chinese whisper; for while the mimetic element does indeed have an external yardstick, the determinate syntactic arrangement of the poetic words, it is always accompanied by a non-regulated communication between beings, an emulative *μίμησις* that renders *μίμησις* a form of *μέθεξις*, without which it “means” nothing, and which, moreover, Nancy suggests describes something rather more universal than just this scene of the *Ion*:

It is not certain, moreover, if it is not to err to ask oneself, with or without Plato, if the combination of these two is not inevitable in every case of *mimesis*: can one conform without producing this structure as a work? Can one, in copying for the sake of the work, not conform oneself to something of a model?⁷⁶⁵

A number of years later Nancy will answer this question rather more definitively, asserting that there is never any *μίμησις* without *μέθεξις*, or *μέθεξις* without *μίμησις*,⁷⁶⁶ in an essay we will return to in the next chapter’s focus on the central role of the aesthetic in Nancy’s philosophy. Here, it is enough to note that the text is for Nancy an illustration of a shared participation in meaning in which there is neither communion nor vertical transcendence. The members of this chain of interpretation neither participate in the chain’s origin, nor comprehend the chain as

⁷⁶⁵ Nancy, ‘Sharing Voices’, p. 239.

⁷⁶⁶ Nancy, ‘The Image: Mimesis & Methexis’, pp. 10-11.

a chain. What is important is each singular transference, only the repeated iteration of an announcement of meaning, which neither produces compromise, correspondence or accord, nor reveals anything of an originary determinate meaning. There is no transcendence here other than the contiguous, the transimmanence that is each time singular and finite, between finite beings. The chain, unlike Gadamer's tradition, is not the product of a sublation; the work of *ἔρμηνεία* does not produce the chain as a work, its members do not participate in the creation of it as a shared whole, nor reproduce it in their part. Meaning is not averaged or entered by contract, it is announced and renewed in every communication of *ἔρμηνεία* which is at each time a singular communication between singular voices. There is no signal degradation because there is no identical signal, the singularity or incommensurability of each voice recreates and refreshes the signal each time, their difference making sense.⁷⁶⁷ Meaning thus emerges from the harmony of singular voices, albeit under a different definition of the harmonious, and Nancy writes in *The Sense of the World* that 'insofar as the *cosmos* is a *harmony*, it is already distributed among the various functions of the Muses',⁷⁶⁸ which is to say, harmony is not the organizational principle, essence, or average of the plurality of singular voices, it is what is affirmed and renewed infinitely in their distinctiveness. Or as Nancy puts it in the book he names after the Muses, what is at stake in the harmony of singular voices is 'the plural itself as principle' which is nothing like a 'principle of plurality'.⁷⁶⁹

Where, as we saw earlier, Gadamer affirms *μέθεξις* as the multiplicitous ontological foundation of meaning, importantly introducing into the thought of *μέθεξις* a horizontal distribution, between *Dasein*, yet, by denying this horizontal

⁷⁶⁷ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 238.

⁷⁶⁸ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 85.

⁷⁶⁹ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 2.

element the heterogeneity he affords *μέθεξις* in its vertical element, his work possibly presupposes a substratum of fixed relations joining the agents as an immanent 'we', a communion; for Nancy, on the other hand, by erasing verticality altogether, we find that 'we are the meaning, in the sharing, in the distribution, in the multiplication of our voices',⁷⁷⁰ on the strict qualification, as Nancy goes on state in the opening section of *Being Singular Plural*, that '[t]his does not mean that we are the content of meaning, nor are we its fulfilment or its result, as if to say that humans were the meaning (end, substance, or value) of Being, nature, or history',⁷⁷¹ it means only that this "we" contains its own transcendence, from each to each, as the *à même* of exposure, of absolutely conditioned finitude, and this "we" is the medium across which meaning circulates. Likewise, being, which is the being of the singularity, is the privation of matter not from the ideal but from other matter, a privation that does not circumscribe but exposes, and as such, circulates also, for there is no singularity that does not co-articulate itself with other singularities, which do the same in turn, the distribution of the infinitely folded limit that shares all beings, indefinitely rippling with fluctuations.

⁷⁷⁰ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', p. 244.

⁷⁷¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 1.

3.9 From μίμησις and μέθεξις to ecotechnics

Whilst for Nancy no “one” can ever have access to the excess of meaning circulating across and as a transimmanent “we”, either in communal immanence, or by vertical ascension to a common principle or origin, nevertheless, it remains to be seen how absolute transcendence does not become re-established in Nancy’s picture, not at the border of the phenomenological event, but at the border of the “we”, in the spaces between regional circulations, for example, in the gulf that separates the “we” that names Ion, Socrates and the audience (itself already a conglomeration, for Ion is an Ephesian⁷⁷² and Socrates an Athenian – Eastern and Western Greeks respectively), and the “we” of the Persians or the Gauls, or even the Chavín. Would not the hermeneutic community unworked by the delay, spacing, and praxical creativity of communication become reworked, enclosed by its cultural boundaries into something self-present and isolated? Or to ask the question another way, how can Nancy move from a thinking of a regional dynamic, to a thinking of the world, a world which is a sum total of its parts?

By Nancy’s account the dawn of globalisation answers this question, understood as the world-wide telecommunication of capitalism, the appropriation of all inter- and intra- cultural exchange mechanisms into a system of general equivalence whose unending circulation is incited by the amassing of a greater and greater surplus of socially necessary labour time. And what is crucial to Nancy’s account is that this interconnectedness of the globe is to be conceived at an ontological level, which is to say, not only as web of technical instrumental connections overlaid upon discrete pre-existing entities, but also as a multiplication of the exposures that make up the very being of beings, their mutual distinction, a network of

⁷⁷² Plato, ‘Ion’, 530a.

technical connections that forms identities and singularities by putting them into a contact that they do not exactly pre-exist, sharing-out by sharing-in.

As such, for Nancy, however alienating or extortive a global economy of relative value is, nevertheless its unending conglomeration, the overlay of more and more networks, connects us all together in never before known ways, it extends and intensifies the equally inter- and intra- cultural *ontological* exposure of human bodies and being-with into something worldwide and ever accelerating:

Even if it is without reason, end, or figure, it is clearly the case that the "global (dis)order" has behind it all the effectiveness of what we call "planetary technology" and "world economy": the double sign of a single network of the reciprocity of causes and effects, of the circularity of ends and means. In fact, this network or order is what is without-end, but without-end in terms of millions of dollars and yen, in terms of millions of therms, kilowatts, optical fibers, megabytes. If the world is a world today, then it is primarily a world according to this double sign. Let us call this ecotechnics.⁷⁷³

Ecotechnics clearly pertains to an indefinite deferral of all teleology. Just as the discovery of the spherical nature of the globe opened up the possibility of sailing to the same point in different directions without fear of reaching an end, so too the world economy is without end, geographically and figurally spherical, deferring cause, effect, and meaning or rather *sens* in unending circulation. 'Circulation goes in all directions', Nancy writes in 'Of Being Singular Plural', 'this is the Nietzschean thought of the "eternal return," the affirmation of meaning as the

⁷⁷³ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'War, Right, Sovereignty – Techne' (1991), trans. by Robert D. Richardson & Anne E. O'Byrne, in *Being Singular Plural*, pp. 101-44 (p. 133).

repetition of the instant, nothing but this repetition.’⁷⁷⁴ And in this deferral of a world without end, without inside or outside, the world is reconfigured and constantly recreated as the sum of its parts exposed and singularised, spaced out in ever new ways. ‘This would be a world’, Nancy writes in 1991, ‘where spacing could not be confused with spreading out or gaping open, but only with “intersection”’,⁷⁷⁵ where spacing is the multiplication of shared ontological limits, giving ‘priority to a multiple and delocalized spatiality over a unitary and concentrated spatiality’.⁷⁷⁶ Furthermore, as Nancy asserts in 2002, such a circulation of deferrals produces a resistance to ethico-political hierarchy:

The world that I have called “ecotechnics” – that is, a natural environment entirely made up of the human replacement of a “nature” henceforth withdrawn – which is also the world of democracy, the universal rights of a human being presumed to be universal, the world of secularism and religious tolerance both aesthetic and moral, not only keeps us from founding in a sacred regime differences of authority and legitimacy, it makes those disparities or inequalities that overtly violate its principles of equality and justice seem intolerable.⁷⁷⁷

Nancy’s particular understanding of globalisation is rooted in his understanding of the human body. For in the same way that Nancy can claim *Dasein* is nothing reducible from its relations, conditions or exposures, likewise, the body that every *Dasein* is, is, for Nancy, irreducible from its exteriority, touches or contacts, such that in *Corpus*, he states that ‘[t]he body is the return of the “outside” that is to this “inside” that it isn’t.’⁷⁷⁸ The body for Nancy is the limit at which a negotiation takes place between an interiority and exteriority that do not pre-exist their touch upon

⁷⁷⁴ Nancy, ‘Of Being Singular Plural’, p. 4.

⁷⁷⁵ Nancy, ‘War, Right, Sovereignty – Techne’, p. 140.

⁷⁷⁶ Nancy, ‘War, Right, Sovereignty – Techne’, p. 136.

⁷⁷⁷ Nancy, ‘A Deconstruction of Monotheism’, p. 40.

⁷⁷⁸ Nancy, ‘Corpus’ (b), p. 67.

the body. However, and without exempting the body from the laws of singularity and limit, in the thought of “ecotechnics”, the relation between interiority and exteriority along the surface of the body is qualified as technical, which means as consisting in appendages, supplements and apparatuses, a surface that is extended or deferred along all of the technical objects it appropriates to mediate the relationship between inner and outer.

That the body is innately technical, and that it is so in a more fundamental way than just being a manipulator of tools, is according to Derrida what Nancy means by ecotechnics.⁷⁷⁹ According to Derrida, ecotechnics is Nancy’s name for the ‘*technē* of bodies,’ which instances in ‘the prosthesis, the metonymic substitute, the autoimmune process, and *technical* survival.’⁷⁸⁰ We already know from Plato’s *Protagoras* that the fire Prometheus gifted to humanity was the same fire that was used to create the human, and as Plato writes in the dialogue, this gave each one of us a ‘share [μετέσχε] of the divine dispensation’,⁷⁸¹ imbued with a ‘τέχνη’ enabling us not only to invent ‘houses [οικήσεις], clothes, shoes, and blankets’ but crucially also to articulate ‘speech and words’.⁷⁸² But what Nancy takes seriously in the concept of the ecotechnical is that this same fire produces us, as he writes in *Corpus*, ‘[t]he ecotechnical functions with technical apparatuses, to which our every part is connected. But what it *makes* are our bodies, which it brings into the world and links to the system’.⁷⁸³ Eco-technics, οικήσεις-τέχνη, thus means the mutual technical relation between the body and the world (which is a world of bodies in turn); a matter of pure contingency, precisely the opposite of the way Kant conceives of the body’s organisation:

⁷⁷⁹ Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 19.

⁷⁸⁰ Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 19.

⁷⁸¹ Plato, ‘Protagoras’, 322a.

⁷⁸² Plato, ‘Protagoras’, 322a.

⁷⁸³ Nancy, ‘Corpus’ (b), p. 89.

The whole is thus an organised unity (*articulatio*), and not an aggregate (*coacervatio*). It may grow from within (*per intussusceptionem*), but not by external addition (*per appositionem*). It is thus like an animal body, the growth of which is not by the addition of a new member, but by the rendering of each member, without change of proportion, stronger and more effective for its purposes. The idea requires for its realisation a schema, that is, a constituent manifold and an order of its parts, both of which must be determined a priori from the principle defined by its end. The schema, which is not devised in accordance with an idea, that is, in terms of the ultimate aim of reason, but empirically in accordance with purposes that are contingently occasioned (the number of which cannot be foreseen) yields technical unity; whereas the schema which originates from an idea (in which reason propounds the ends a priori, and does not wait for them to be empirically given) serves as the basis of architectonic unity.⁷⁸⁴

Now, as has already been made clear, Nancy's strong notion of singularity is entirely at odds with the picture of absolute internal consistency Kant paints above; a singularity, for Nancy, is singularised from the plural and is only singular insofar as it remains exposed. But in the case of a living human body, there is more to consider, for the nature of its exposure is not that of simple brute contact, but is technical. The 'technical supplementarity of the body',⁷⁸⁵ as Derrida calls it in *Le toucher*, refers to the way in which the body does not for Nancy pre-exist the supposedly subsidiary organs (and tools) of sense (ears, eyes, skin, walking canes, telephones...) which expose it to the world; the body is not something reducible from its prostheses, whether these be organs, or tools: the body is absolutely conditioned, a pure relation, a *Dasein* within a system of technical relations operating praxically.

⁷⁸⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 653-4.

⁷⁸⁵ Derrida, *On Touching*, p. 223.

All that is left for Nancy is a surface, 'a skin, variously folded, refolded, unfolded, multiplied, invaginated, exogastrulated, orificed, evasive, invaded, stretched, relaxed, excited, distressed, tied, untied'.⁷⁸⁶ But describing the folding of this skin in accordance with the thought of the ecotechnical, is not as simple as tracing the visible outlines, or the material boundaries of things, for when all singularities are organised around the ecotechnical nature of the body, they are revealed as themselves forms of skin, of limit, folded in their own way, connecting, supplementing, deferring bodies, 'machines, vehicles, photocopies, eyes, still other hands are all interposed',⁷⁸⁷ interlacing the exposure of *Dasein* in their *Mitsein*. The possibility that this opens up for Nancy is of interpreting globalization, the technological achievement of total capitalism, the ultimate extortion and devaluation, as simultaneously the becoming of a world, toward the contiguous exposure of *all Dasein* without remainder.

According to Nancy, the entire world is connected via, or simply *is* the connectedness of, a network of electronic communication and informational exchange which appropriates value into a world economy of general fiscal equivalence, a single network under a "double sign" which does not go from one place to another, but circulates indefinitely, repeating the empty instant. Now to an extent Nancy is following Heidegger here in marking the "suspension"⁷⁸⁸ of *technê* that happens in global technological society, in that once there is no space "outside" of the relation of *technê*, no other space in the world, *technê* becomes its own means and ends, with the accumulation of capital corresponding to

⁷⁸⁶ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 15.

⁷⁸⁷ Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), p. 51.

⁷⁸⁸ Nancy, 'War, Right, Sovereignty – Techne', p. 129.

Heidegger's *Bestand* or standing reserve.⁷⁸⁹ And yet for Nancy, there is no "technology" beyond each of its instances, each use or operation in a specific context (Nancy gives the examples of transport and fertilisation), and, without naming Heidegger, he refutes '[t]he vague idea of a general technology [...] represent[ed] in comics or in the cinema', arguing to the contrary that:

Technology "as such" is nothing other than the "technique" of compensating for the nonimmanence of existence in the given. Its operation is the existing of that which *is* not pure immanence. It begins with the first tool, for it would not be as easy as one imagines to demarcate it clearly and distinctly from all animal, if not indeed vegetable, "technologies." The "nexus" of technologies is existing itself. Insofar as its being *is* not, but is the opening of its finitude, existing is technological through and through. Existence is not itself the technology of anything else, nor is technology "as such" the technology of existence: it is the "essential" technicity of existence insofar as *technology* has no essence and stands in for being.⁷⁹⁰

The technicity of existence is the 'spacing of the world',⁷⁹¹ because as Derrida noted of Nancy's ontology above, the human body is nothing if not equiprimordial with the technologies of exposure which put it into contact with other bodies, such that the world of bodies is a world of ecotechnics. The upshot of Nancy's thought of the equiprimordiality of the *οἰκήσεις* of world and the *τέχνη* of bodies forms in this way a rejoinder to the Heideggerian commitment of which Brogan made us aware in section (2.3), that is, Heidegger's reading of Aristotle's *φύσις* and the ontological difference of which it is suggestive. As was noted there, as well as in section (1.3), by Nancy's account there is only difference between beings that do

⁷⁸⁹ Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 17.

⁷⁹⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'A Finite Thinking' (1990), trans. by Edward Bullard, Jonathan Derbyshire & Simon Sparks, in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. by Sparks, pp. 3-30 (p. 24).

⁷⁹¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'War, Right, Sovereignty – Techne', p. 136.

not pre-exist their exposure to one another, and in a footnote to the principal essay of *A Finite Thinking*, Nancy reads this, via his thought of ecotechnics, back into Heidegger's philosophy of technology:

it follows that the Greek *phusis*, with its complex relation to *technē*, a relation that renders the two indistinguishable, isn't "nature" in this sense. This is one of Heidegger's central theses, although he was unable to draw out its full consequences and instead allowed *phusis* to assume once again the guise of a kind of original immanence. The reactive part of his thinking about "technology" is entirely of a piece with this (although it's perhaps worth adding that Heidegger wasn't confronted by the kinds of technology we know today)⁷⁹²

This is not to say, however, that Nancy simply affirms "the kind of technology we know today". Nancy is acutely aware of the problematic tension named by ecotechnics, which is that while Marx's analysis of capitalism 'indicates an excess with respect to production as well as with respect to possession',⁷⁹³ that is, a connection between extortion and exposure, nevertheless, there is no possibility of affirming the one without the other, for exposition and extortion fall with one another. Techno-capitalism prioritises the bodies of the "first world", the "west" and the "one percent" in the extortion and redistribution of equivalent value, but simultaneously connects every single human being, not instrumentally, but ontologically, redistributing the supplementary-technical limits at which the entire plurality of human bodies now touches. Yet one cannot have one without the other:

the most important [thing] is not to say, "Here is the decisive alternative!" (which we already know). What matters is to be able to

⁷⁹² Nancy, 'A Finite Thinking', 324 n. 29.

⁷⁹³ Nancy, 'Urbi et Orbi', p. 45.

think how the proximity of the two "ex-," or this twofold excess is produced, how the same world is divided in this way [...]

jouissance would be shared appropriation-or appropriating sharing-of what cannot be accumulated or what is not equivalent, that is, of value itself (or of meaning) in the singularity of its creation.⁷⁹⁴

Jouissance is what Nancy calls the creation of meaning in the touch of incommensurable bodies, a touch that is paradoxically structured by technologies of commensurability. But it cannot be a simple choice between the two and in this way Nancy releases Marx's double figure of alienation and emancipation from its eschatological narrative; Marx's emancipation-from-alienation cannot be realised, because they are the double facet of one world, the creation and *jouissance* of value at the limits of bodies that neither outlasts nor pre-exists techno-capitalist extortion. For Marx, the excess of the unalienable in all alienation is indicative of an originary community to which "we" may return or accede,⁷⁹⁵ but for Nancy, while the emancipatory gesture is not *entirely* restricted, it certainly cannot come from a choice between the extorted "we" and the exposed "we", for neither comes first or second, they are the same network: the world.

To close this chapter I would like to return this notion of a world to an alternative interpretation of Plato's concept of *συμπλοκή*, which, as we saw in section (3.3), is claimed by Hartmann to signify a turn in the dialogues from '*methexis* [as] the one-dimensional vertical axis into the horizontal axis where the participation of the Ideas among themselves takes the place of the notion of the participation of things in the Ideas',⁷⁹⁶ to which Gadamer argued that not only, philologically speaking, is

⁷⁹⁴ Nancy, 'Urbi et Orbi', p. 46.

⁷⁹⁵ Nancy offers an extended analysis of the nostalgic gesture in Marx, as well as Rousseau and Hegel, in: Nancy, 'The Inoperative Community'.

⁷⁹⁶ Hartmann, 'How is Critical Ontology Possible?', p. 327.

there no such turn in the Platonic corpus, but also that transcendent *μέθεξις* cannot be reduced to a horizontal principle of individuation without committing a category mistake. As useful as Gadamer's argument was in charting a path that refused to conceive of transcendent *μέθεξις* as something reducible to a more fundamental unity (recalling that in Hartmann's system, *μέθεξις* is only the *diaeresis* that individuates the highest genera of ideas, the *συμπλοκή* understood as *κοινωνία*, into the concrete), it does not, on Nancy's reading, manage to avoid thinking horizontal *μέθεξις* as *κοινωνία*, communion. We have seen in the prior two sections how Nancy conceives of intersubjective communication as horizontal transimmanence, and then how this operates within the regional ontology of a cultural space, and here, in this section, how Nancy conceives of a whole world which, unlike the singularity, has no outside by which to enclose itself. I would like to suggest that here *μέθεξις* can indeed be understood as *συμπλοκή*, but an alternative interpretation of it as something other than *κοινωνία*.

In the *Sophist*, Plato's stranger leads Theaetetus to question precisely what degree of horizontal *μέθεξις* is possible. First, the possibility that nothing associates with anything else is discounted, for this would mean that nothing had any 'share in being' [*μεθέξετον ούσίας*],⁷⁹⁷ and nothing would be. Next, the possibility that everything is interrelated with everything else is discounted out of hand, because this would require that opposites participate each other.⁷⁹⁸ By deduction, therefore, the stranger asserts that the only option left is that 'some things will commingle and others will not',⁷⁹⁹ that much like *γραμματικῆς*, the art of grammar, in which some letters are compatible and some are not, but by virtue of

⁷⁹⁷ Plato, 'Sophist', 251e.

⁷⁹⁸ Plato, 'Sophist', 252d.

⁷⁹⁹ Plato, 'Sophist', 252e.

the art are all joined together, although many of them only indirectly.⁸⁰⁰ What this means is that *συμπλοκή*, mingling, is presented in the *Sophist* neither as a communion nor as a reduction to more fundamental principle, but rather as an organisational concept that stresses contiguity in its purest form, something which Gustavo Bueno argues is central to understanding philosophy in general. Camprubí writes:

Bueno takes his concept of *symplokē* from Plato and understands it as a principle of his system. It stresses both the moment of connection and the moment of disconnection, or partial mutual independence, of things themselves forming a situation, system or totality. In effect, according to Plato's principle, if everything were connected to every other thing, we would be able to know nothing, but if nothing were connected to no other thing, we could remain equally ignorant about every aspect of the world.⁸⁰¹

That is to say, within a totality, it is not necessary for every part to be connected to every other part, nor, indeed, even be capable of being; *συμπλοκή* is the conception of a totality of contingency, a family of parts who need not all be in direct contact for they each mediate that contact according to their immediate relatedness which reflects nothing of an all-encompassing unity.

⁸⁰⁰ Plato, 'Sophist', 252a.

⁸⁰¹ Lino Camprubí, 'Reviser's Note', in *Sciences as Categorical Closures*, trans. by Brendan Burke (Oviedo: Pentalfa Ediciones, 2013), 143 n. 74.

3.10 Conclusion

It was my intention, in this chapter, to highlight a family of interpretations of *μέθεξις* entirely distinct from the reductions and rejections outlined in chapter two. In chapter two, *μέθεξις* was shown to be interpreted in certain cases as a principle of a problematic transcendence, and a candidate for replacement by an immanent concept of *μίμησις*. In these cases, I argued, the rejection of absolute transcendence lead to a reliance on an absolute notion of immanence defined nevertheless by its privative relation to the transcendent. This chapter was to highlight in contrast, an interpretation of *μέθεξις* as a form of transcendence *within* the immanent, an interpretation I am suggesting Nancy takes to its full conclusion in his commitment to the mutuality of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, and of immanence and transcendence.

We saw that Hartmann's critical philosophy, in which *μέθεξις* is understood as a principle of individuation, is refuted by Gadamer on the Heideggerian grounds that it is a positivist misinterpretation of the dialectical nature of Plato's dialogues. By strict attendance to the binding of the ideas and the logos in the dialogues, Gadamer is able to flip Hartmann's interpretation on its head, pointing out that, first of all, transcendent *μέθεξις* does not say one being in two ways, but is the dualistic presupposition of every singular saying, and secondly, that contiguous *μέθεξις* does not organize multiple concrete beings beneath a hierarchy of more and more general principles, but is the participation of ideas in each other that is presupposed in every dialectical operation.

We saw that in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer interprets the temporal structure of *Dasein's* understanding as a transcendent *μέθεξις*, an irreducible interval between

immanence and arrival, but that when he interprets *Mitsein* as the contiguous *μέθεξις* that produces the immanence of shared tradition, he assigns it none of the radicality of the temporal interval. Although intent on affirming the inseparability of *Dasein* and *Mitsein*, and on rejecting the schema of whole and part that was at the centre of traditional theological hermeneutics, Gadamer ends up privileging the whole by conceiving of contiguous *μέθεξις* as a communion. In critiquing Gadamer's misuse of *Auslegung*, the pre-linguistic comprehension of being, to model the anticipation of textual meaning in the hermeneutic operation, Nancy, we saw, uncovers a deeper more disruptive problem that goes much further than problematizing Gadamer's theory of interpretation.

In arguing that *Dasein's Auslegung* is not something presupposed outside of the facticity of *Dasein*, Nancy emphasises the supplementarity of *Dasein's* finitude-in-relation, the fact that it is finite only on the basis that it is conditioned. The traditional limit that circumscribes the mortal being, death, is therefore reinterpreted by Nancy as not being an absolute limit, separating the singular from the infinitely indeterminate, but as the finite limit that is never *Dasein's* own, for it is shared with other *Dasein* and other beings. According to this picture, neither the figures of whole and part, nor the differentiation of *Dasein* and *Mitsein*, any longer make any sense. *Dasein's* ownness, is the same limit that it shares with other *Dasein*, and the part is only so by virtue of its being distinct from other parts with which it shares boundaries. Gadamer's contiguous *μέθεξις*, the dynamic that binds us together in shared understanding, therefore only binds insofar as it guarantees distinction, which is to say, on Nancy's reading, it is both a *μέθεξις* of internal belonging, and a *μίμησις* of external relatedness. Moreover, within the narrative of Plato's *Ion*, and furthermore, within a system of ecotechnical interconnection, the sharing of this limit can be understood as internal, or transimmanent, a limit that

does not circumscribe one world from another, but as the complex network of fissures around which a world is determined as the totality of beings in exposure to one another, an ontological sharing of meaning and finitude without appeal to origin, elsewhere, or communion.

CHAPTER FOUR

An art of plural origins

Artworks are not the absolute, nor is the absolute immediately present in them. For their methexis in the absolute they are punished with a blindness that in the same instant obscures their language, which is a language of truth⁸⁰²

- ADORNO, *Aesthetic Theory*

It is a matter, then, of the relations between art and sense⁸⁰³

- NANCY, *The Sense of the World*

⁸⁰² Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1961-69), trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (London & New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 133.

⁸⁰³ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 128.

4.1 Introduction: aesthetics as first-philosophy

Nancy writes of the principal essay of 1996's *Being Singular Plural*, '[t]his text does not disguise its ambition of redoing the whole of "first philosophy" by giving the "singular plural" of Being as its foundation'.⁸⁰⁴ The double meaning of this initiative runs parallel to the structural deuce of this thesis, harking back to the beginning of chapter two, where de Beistegui was petitioned regarding the *de facto* immanence of the Ancient Greek *polis* and *kosmos*, and the 'philosophy [that] always falls short of total immanence'.⁸⁰⁵

For what is up for grabs for a reconstructed first philosophy, for Nancy, is not only a reorganisation of the popular trope which orders philosophical approaches according to the procedural questions, "what is there?", "how can we know it?", and finally, "what are we then to do?", but also 'the fact that philosophy is contemporaneous with the Greek city',⁸⁰⁶ which is to say, the question of *first* philosophy is also the question of *the* first philosophy. Redoing first philosophy by giving the singular-plural of Being as its foundation will therefore entail interrogating the empirical immanence that is supposed to lie at its genesis:

According to different versions, but in a predominantly uniform manner, the tradition put forward a representation according to which philosophy and the city would be (would have been, must have been) related to one another as subjects. Accordingly, philosophy, as the articulation of *logos*, is the subject of the city, where the city is the space of this articulation. Likewise, the city, as the gathering of the *logikoi*, is the subject of philosophy, where philosophy is the production of their common *logos*. *Logos* itself, then, contains the essence or meaning of

⁸⁰⁴ Nancy, 'Preface', in *Being Singular Plural*, p. xv.

⁸⁰⁵ De Beistegui, *Immanence*, p. 20.

⁸⁰⁶ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 21.

this reciprocity: it is the common foundation of community, where community, in turn, is the foundation of Being.⁸⁰⁷

According to Nancy, what these traditional accounts miss, including de Beistegui's, is that '[t]he city is not primarily "community," any more than it is primarily "public space"; it is these things, but it is simultaneously 'being-in-common as the *dis-position* (dispersal and disparity) of the community represented as founded in interiority or transcendence.'⁸⁰⁸ The city is the place of happenstance and the economic space constituted in the negotiation of individual concerns. To think that the *logos* produced in the city takes on a purely immanent character once the gods, priests, and crowns have left is to ignore the dynamic heterogeneity of position and exchange that creates the city not as a thing but as a happening, and the way *logos* is produced in the incommensurability of speakers bound by economic relations of pure commensurability.

In light of his understanding of the nature of *Dasein's* ecotechnical being-with, Nancy reverses the problematic of empirical-theoretical tension outlined in chapter two; the question of first philosophy, for Nancy, is not of how philosophy's transcendent apparatuses of signification can be reconciled with a *de facto* immanent foundation, but of how philosophy's mania for consistency, immanence, essence and principle, its constant 'appeal to the origin', can be reconciled with the fact that this appeal can only happen 'on the condition of the dis-position of *logos*', which, as 'the spacing at the very place of the origin',⁸⁰⁹ opens the possibility of philosophy as the impossibility of completing its appeal. To redo first philosophy for Nancy means aligning philosophy's form and its foundation, but this

⁸⁰⁷ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 22.

⁸⁰⁸ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 23.

⁸⁰⁹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 23.

does not mean prioritising the immanent over the transcendent (or *vice versa*), only thinking its singular-plural logic with its singular-plural origin, the transimmanence of *Dasein/Mitsein*.

Indeed, as he states in the same text, Nancy considers Heidegger's fundamental ontology of *Dasein* to be 'the last "first-philosophy"',⁸¹⁰ because it 'has put us on the way to where we are, together',⁸¹¹ that is, as Nancy writes elsewhere, Heidegger's 'thinking sought to analyse what it is that constitutes man as the being through whom *being* has as its original *sense* (or *ethos*), the choice and conduct of existence'.⁸¹² Which is to say, Heidegger's was the last first philosophy because by pursuing the question of being at its privileged site, human *Dasein*, in one fell swoop both ethics and ontology are displaced from their positions in the procedural order of enquiry.

'Soon after *Being and Time* appeared a young friend asked me', Heidegger quips in the 'Letter on "Humanism"', "[w]hen are you going to write an ethics?".⁸¹³ For what Heidegger's project claims to have uncovered in the originary phenomenology of the Greeks is that the notion of a distinct human realm independent but nevertheless conditioned by an ontological foundation is but a disciplinary fracturing of the Parmenidean unity of being and thought, a division that did not, by Heidegger's account, exist prior to Plato.⁸¹⁴ We noted as much in chapter two, specifically in terms of the way Heidegger undercuts the *μέθεξις* problem by attributing it to a projection of a psychologistic metacognition. Here in

⁸¹⁰ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 26.

⁸¹¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 26.

⁸¹² Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Heidegger's "Originary Ethics"' (1995), trans. by Duncan Large, in *Studies in Practical Philosophy*, 1.1 (1999) 12-35 (pp. 12-13).

⁸¹³ Martin Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"' (1946), trans. by Frank A. Capuzzi, in *Pathmarks*, ed. by McNeill, pp. 239-76 (p. 268).

⁸¹⁴ Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"', p. 269.

the 'Letter' Heidegger legitimises his unifying return with a translation of Heraclitus' *Fragment* 199, 'ἦθος ἀνθρώπῳ δαίμων',⁸¹⁵ classically rendered as a straightforwardly ethical proposition, as in the case of Burnet's standard translation, which imposes a neo-Aristotelian interpretation⁸¹⁶ in construing the line as 'Man's character is his fate'.⁸¹⁷ Heidegger, translating ἦθος instead as "abode", renders the fragment "The (familiar) abode for humans is the open region for the presencing of god (the unfamiliar one)".⁸¹⁸ For Heidegger, what we now call ethics, the study of ἦθος, was once a first philosophy of the abode or opening in which *Dasein* and being are disclosed in one breath.⁸¹⁹

Now although Nancy's strong reading of *Being and Time* in 'Sharing Voices'⁸²⁰ goes a long way toward rejecting the notion of a Greek source available for recovery, nevertheless, in interpreting *Dasein* as pure relatedness, absolutely conditioned exposure, that is, the mutual exposition of *Dasein* and the beings to which its relation is neither posterior nor anterior, it is clear that Nancy is sympathetic to the idea that the sub-disciplinary hierarchy of philosophy is somewhat contrived. Moreover, as we have seen, there is for Nancy no ontology that is not ontology of the body, and no possibility of human *Dasein* being abstracted from its necessary exposure to beings. However, as we saw Nancy point out in 'Sharing Voices', as part of the analysis of *Auslegung* within his critique of Gadamer's hermeneutics, whatever expectation of imperatives we might place on an ethical first philosophy will have to be abandoned to the disclosure of

⁸¹⁵ Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"', p. 271.

⁸¹⁶ Burnet admits as much, noting that he understands these words identically with their use in Aristotle's *Ethics*. Heraclitus, *The Fragments*, trans. by John Burnet, in *Early Greek Philosophy*, pp. 97-105 (123 n. 49).

⁸¹⁷ Heraclitus, *The Fragments*, 121.

⁸¹⁸ Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"', p. 271.

⁸¹⁹ Heidegger, 'Letter on "Humanism"', p. 269.

⁸²⁰ See sections (3.6-8).

being that precedes any such ethico-political determinations. As Nancy puts it in 1995:

This thinking “has no result.” It gives neither norms nor values. It does not guide conduct but conducts itself toward the thinking of conduct in general – not as something to be normalized or finalized, but as what constitutes dignity itself, namely, having, in one’s own being, to make sense of being. Besides, if thinking as originary ethics were to provide “maxims that could be reckoned up unequivocally,” it “would deny to existence nothing less than the very *possibility of acting*”⁸²¹⁸²²

After the so called “turn” in Heidegger’s work, *die Kehre*, when, as Nancy puts it, Heidegger begins to question “no longer from man to Being, but from Being to man”,⁸²³ there is a corollary modification to Heidegger’s project of disciplinary reorganisation. Continuing the trajectory departed by Kant, who, Nancy writes in 1988, ‘is the first to do justice to the aesthetic at the heart of what one can call a “first-philosophy”’,⁸²⁴ Heidegger ceases to focus exclusively on the phenomenological unity of the science of the subject and the science of being *qua* being, and begins to pursue a different notion of the origin, that of the work of art, which is an origin for many. Like ‘the act that founds a political state’ or ‘the

⁸²¹ Nancy, ‘Heidegger’s Originary Ethics’, p. 14.

⁸²² Nancy’s doctorat d’État thesis, translated as *The Experience of Freedom*, pursues this thought exhaustively. Compounding the question marks we have seen some commentators place on Nancy’s refusal to contribute to a “politics” of which he refutes the very possibility, here Nancy places strong restrictions also on the question of the ethical. Of course, since for Nancy the question of the individual and the many is the question of the same transcendental exposure of *Dasein/Mitsein*, the ethical and the political can only be thought together, as Hutchens has shown in: Hutchens, ‘Archi-Ethics, Justice, and the Suspension of History’.

⁸²³ Nancy, ‘The being-with of being-there’, p. 5.

⁸²⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘The Sublime Offering’ (1988), trans. by Jeffrey S. Librett, in *Of the Sublime: Presence in Question* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 25-54 (p. 27).

essential sacrifice',⁸²⁵ it is, Heidegger writes, an origin that plays a part in determining the regime under which all beings are disclosed within a world, or a people. Like Kant, whom for Nancy enacts a 'double suspense' in his third *Critique*, suspending and overcoming the regional science of sensory *αἴσθησις* by marking its invocation of the sublime,⁸²⁶ but simultaneously enslaving all future consideration of the beautiful to philosophical service,⁸²⁷ Heidegger brackets the notion of aesthetics as a regional discourse or derivative sub-discipline in the same way he had done with ethics, accusing the classic Hegelian formula that analogues the perfection of an artistic movement with its ability to adequately present the ideal in the sensuous, of repeating the psychologistic mistake.⁸²⁸

The aesthetic, in Heidegger, is definitively severed from the aisthetic; '[f]or Heidegger', Geulen writes, 'beauty remains objectively what it is, independently of how the question "who notices it?" might be answered'.⁸²⁹ Heidegger's artwork not only gestures beyond itself as in Kant, but is once and for all uncoupled from the functioning of sensibility altogether. For Heidegger, as we have already seen in chapter two, *αἴσθησις* discloses the *ἴδια* of *Dasein*'s intentional horizon. But the artwork, freed from this individual relationality, is no longer uncovered or partially determined by *Dasein*, but, Heidegger claims, in reverse, the artwork stands at the origin of the whole shared horizon of a people, determining the regime under which beings are disclosed or uncovered, which is to say, the artwork, for Heidegger, shows a community of *Dasein* what counts as a being. This was touched on briefly at the end of chapter two in regards to the way in which

⁸²⁵ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 62,

⁸²⁶ Nancy, 'The Sublime Offering', p. 27.

⁸²⁷ Nancy, 'The Vestige of Art', p. 86.

⁸²⁸ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 26-7.

⁸²⁹ Eva Geulen, *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumour After Hegel* (2002), trans. by James McFarland (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 115.

Heidegger affirms *μίμησις* as a special way in which meaning arrives when disengaged from the in-order-to structure of the city state. There the matter was left underdeveloped with the promise to return to it, which we will do in the first sections of this chapter.

What I would like to claim in this chapter is that, firstly, in formulating the nature of the exposure of *Dasein* as ecotechnical, the interplay of senses and the interplay of technological intermediaries forming the limits around which singularities are referred to one another, Nancy's version of first philosophy is fundamentally aesthetic, that is, it returns the notion of an aesthetic origin to the senses, and in doing so, pluralises that origin. Secondly, I would like to suggest that as a result, Nancy's philosophy of art takes on a particular priority within his corpus, since the artwork is determined by Nancy to present nothing to the observer other than that they are exposed, at the limit of their senses, to the sense of the world, which is its transimmanence.

As such, a phenomenology of the artwork is for Nancy a phenomenology that does not reduce the exposure of singularities to an immanent unity in the phenomenon, but rather discloses the transimmanence, the simultaneous contact and differing of the observer and the world, and discloses the way in which each is nothing beyond its exposure to the other. Rather than merely concluding the direction of this thesis' prior chapters, by demonstrating their "results" or "application", the aim of this chapter is to feed back into and enrich the extrapolation of the core problematic from the reverse angle. For here, rather than approaching from ontological and hermeneutic angles, asking what becomes of *μέθεξις* if it is irrevocably implicated in mimetic, ontical, sensible relations, the question is instead: what then can be said of *μίμησις* and its place in traditional theories of

representation when it is likewise implicated in the fundamental ontological structure of a transimmanent world?

4.2 Chapter structure

The chapter begins by noting Nancy's well known criticism of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, namely, that it implicitly prioritises *Dasein* over *Mitsein*, and therefore requires a tertiary principle to explain how a community of *Dasein* can share a world – a principle that for Nancy opens up a totalitarian politics in Heidegger's project. I then suggest that Heidegger's analyses of *μίμησις* in both the *Origin of the Work of Art*, and the Nietzsche lectures already discussed in chapter two, tend in a similar direction, that although they restrict the possibility of any one individual or political movement setting the rules of world disclosure by determining the operation of the mimetic around which the *μέθεξις* of the community is conformed, to be neither operable nor presentable, they nevertheless bind the plurality of a people to the sovereignty of an origin.

Next, I show the way in which Gadamer repeats this move, again dislocating artistic *μίμησις* from both the intention of the individual and the *αἴσθησις* of the observer, but again, subjugating it to the self-presentation or mirroring of a communal *μέθεξις*. Following this, I present Nancy's critique of theatrical and sacrificial *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* as a response to the Heideggerian and Gadamerian tropes just noted. Nancy, I argue, rejects the notion that artistic or ritualistic *μίμησις* is or has ever been a *μίμησις* or mirroring of a communal *μέθεξις*, by pointing out that the nostalgic impulse of this schema invents a lost originary community to which *μίμησις* gestures, rather than affirming the absence of model of which all analyses of *μίμησις* are suggestive.

By reference to Nancy's concept of ecotechnics outlined at the end of the prior chapter, I then introduce Nancy's determination, following Blanchot and Kant

amongst others, of art as a moment of *τέχνη* in which the particular technical operation is opened out from its given purpose into a moment of sheer purposivity. As such, art is for Nancy something that discloses the technicity at the limits shared between all things, and is not severable from the aesthetic limit along which *Dasein/Mitsein* are exposed. Nancy, we see, affirms Adorno's negative aesthetics, in which *μίμησις* is still without model, maker, or observer, but is now announced and affirmed as such, as an expression of the irresolvable technical plurality of the world and its continued redistribution, I show that for Adorno *μέθεξις* is always a principle not of the communal, but of conflict and disruption.

In the final sections, I argue that for Nancy the artwork and the image are presentations of presentation, that is, of transimmanence; they are aesthetic events in which the exposed world is gestured toward as sheer existence and possibility, neither completely transcendent nor immediately immanent, and the observer is disclosed to herself as something other than herself, as the exposure-to-world from which he or she cannot be abstracted.

4.3 Heidegger's mimetic origin

In one of the most commented upon moments of his work,⁸³⁰ Nancy states in *Being Singular Plural* that the existential analytic of Heidegger's *Being and Time* is incomplete because it implicitly prioritises *Dasein* over *Mit-Dasein*, while all the while claiming that the two ways of existing are in fact equiprimordial, that is, two facets of the same being.⁸³¹ As we saw in chapter three, for Nancy, this equiprimordiality is absolutely fundamental: there can neither be *Da* without *Mit* nor *Mit* without *Da*, being-with and being are not reducible from one another. The singular is so only insofar as it is one of many and the many is only the totality of singulars, and *Mit-Dasein* names nothing but the fact that plural *Dasein* co-constitute their finite boundaries by exposure to one another.

Nancy therefore advocates a completion of Heidegger's project that would involve writing a "co-existential" analytic [*analytique co-existential*]⁸³², which would revive *Dasein's* "*Mit*" as a resistance to the totalitarian politics that Nancy interprets Division II's *Erbschaft* [heritage] and *Geschick* [destiny] to imply.⁸³³ As he puts it in 2003's 'The Being-with of being-there', an essay that serves as a highly condensed statement of the themes of *Being Singular Plural*, this wrong turn that Nancy contends occurs in the second division of Heidegger's text comes about because the implicit priority Heidegger affords singular being-there in the first division leads him to have to question how it is that many being-there can all be there together. For if every *Dasein* is entirely its own "there", there must for

⁸³⁰ See for example the varied receptions in: Critchley, 'With Being-With?'; Adriana Cavarero, 'Politicizing Theory', in *Political Theory*, 30.4 (Aug., 2002) 506-532, and: Anne O'Byrne, *Nativity and Finitude* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁸³¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', pp. 93-9.

⁸³² Jean-Luc Nancy, *Être singulier pluriel* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), p. 117

⁸³³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 384.

Heidegger be a further intersubjective principle than the ‘simple external “with” of things which are only put together, only contiguous to one another’:⁸³⁴

What kind of *there* for many? A common *there* or the *there* of each? But then, brought together in what way?

How is *Mitdasein* possible? First of all, how should one picture it? As the Being-with of several *Dasein*, where each opens its own *da* for itself? Or as the Being-with-the-there, or maybe more precisely as a Being-the-there-with, which would require that the openings intersect each other in some way, that they cross, mix or let their properties interfere with one another, but without merging into a unique *Dasein* (or else the *mit* would be lost)? Or else—in a third way—as a common relation to a *there* that would be beyond the singulars? But what would such a *there-beyond* be?⁸³⁵

By Nancy’s account, Heidegger discards being-with as merely factual, that is, the surface effect of a deeper ontological structure, and submits it to an overriding temporality, *Geschick*, which determines that ‘our fates have already been guided in advance, in our Being with one another in the same world and in our resoluteness for definite possibilities.’⁸³⁶ The existential fore-having of *Auslegung* is, in this way, supplemented by a predetermined political-historical spirit into which every singular *Dasein* is born and to which it is fated, such that ‘the individual has no weight at all, except insofar as it can be transcended toward (devoted or sacrificed to?) the Gest and the Legend of a common foundation and inauguration, that is, in so far as the individual measures up to a destiny and a civilization’.⁸³⁷

⁸³⁴ Nancy, ‘The being-with of being-there’, p. 3.

⁸³⁵ Nancy, ‘The being-with of being-there’, p. 4.

⁸³⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 438.

⁸³⁷ Nancy, ‘The being-with of being-there’, p. 5.

Nancy's emphasis on the identity of *Dasein* and *Mitsein* removes any requirement for such a destinal *milieu*, and, in fact, excludes its ontological possibility entirely, leaving it as a tertiary structure of political ideology. Denying *Dasein/Mitsein* any communal solidarity, it can no longer conceive of itself as existing within the element of the common (as one speaks of a town common). Fraternity and patriotism reveal themselves as auxiliary, and *Dasein* finds that the "common" of community is nothing but the totality of plural *Dasein* with but one thing in common – that they exist as exposed. It is precisely at this point that the disagreements in the secondary literature emerge, over whether common exposure could ground, or whether it ultimately rules out, a future political construction.⁸³⁸

It should be stressed, however, that whatever one makes of the outcome of Nancy's reading, its resources are drawn from the Heideggerian text itself. Critchley, for example, while expressing reservations over what he deems to be a reduction of ethical alterity entailed by the terms of Nancy's proposed co-existential analytic, nevertheless agrees:

that the genuine philosophical radicality of *Being and Time* lies in the existential analytic of inauthenticity. What has to be recovered from the wreckage of Heidegger's political commitment is his phenomenology of everyday life, the sheer banality of our contact⁸³⁹

As such, Nancy's position here can be roughly situated within a field of projects seeking to retrieve Heidegger's work on its terms, against, on the one hand, crude interpretations that over-identify Heidegger's philosophy with his personal political

⁸³⁸ See introduction section (1.5.1).

⁸³⁹ Critchley, 'With Being-With?', p. 54.

errors,⁸⁴⁰ and on the other, much more attentive readings that nevertheless conclude that *Being and Time* opens up an irreconcilable division between the solipsistic singularity of existence, and the intermingling of facticity.⁸⁴¹ In one such project, for example, Brogan argues to the contrary that the division is in fact what is important, that the ‘movement between facticity and existence’, is exactly that which ‘opens up the space of being in the world’.⁸⁴² The point being, that when taken together, Being-towards-death as the ‘ownmost, non-relational, and not to be outstripped [...] potentiality-for-Being’,⁸⁴³ provides the singularising resistance to the totalizing thrust of heritage and destiny,⁸⁴⁴ while, in turn, Brogan explains, facticity anchors the ownmost in the everyday, for ‘existence always arises out of a recovery from one’s absorption in the they-self’,⁸⁴⁵ in the recognition of the unrecognizability of the other’s finitude.⁸⁴⁶

These alternative potentials in the Heideggerian text notwithstanding, in what follows, I would like to show that Heidegger’s later account of an artistic identification of what counts as a being within a certain cultural horizon, which as we saw at the end of chapter two, replaces authorisation by *μέθεξις* with mimetic reference, is still susceptible to Nancy’s critique, and that, furthermore, Nancy responds by returning the aesthetic to the aesthetic. While Heidegger’s *μίμησις* is intended to take the place of a psychologistic *μέθεξις*, I would like to suggest that it

⁸⁴⁰ See for example: Víctor Farías, *Heidegger and Nazism* (1987) (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

⁸⁴¹ See for example: Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*.

⁸⁴² Walter A. Brogan, ‘The Community of Those Who are Going to Die’, in *Heidegger and Practical Philosophy*, eds. François Raffoul & David Pettigrew (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 237-48 (p. 238).

⁸⁴³ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 295.

⁸⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 384.

⁸⁴⁵ Brogan, ‘The Community of Those Who are Going to Die’, p. 240.

⁸⁴⁶ We have already seen Nancy refute this point in section (3.7).

only does so by projecting a communal *μέθεξις* upon a community, in much the same direction as we saw Gadamer does in *Truth and Method*.

Chapter two closed by noting the phenomenological privilege Heidegger ascribes to *μίμησις* in the specific case of a painting of a hare by Dürer. Refuting that Book X of Plato's *Republic* determines the difference between the *τεχνίτης* and the *μιμητής* to lie in differing standards of authenticity, as *Il Divino* and the rascal counterfeiter respectively, instead Heidegger asserts that the *τεχνίτης* is better understood as a demiurge, one with an eye for the in-order-to structure of the *demos*, allowing them to create artefacts fully appropriate to that particular epochal regime of what counts as being, while the *μιμητής* is skilled at revealing things in a different way, having just as much an eye for the being of beings, but unlike the *τεχνίτης*, wrenches beings out of their in-order-to structure, showing in isolation and clarity what it means to be that being, as, for example, in the case of Dürer's hare, held frozen in a glazed, brutish stare.⁸⁴⁷ I would like now to reprise this element and explore it further.

In Heidegger's 1935-37 artwork essay, it is Van Gogh who is called upon to demonstrate the special power of *μίμησις* to reveal the being of beings. Noting that the 'mere thing' of nature that has 'taken shape by itself'⁸⁴⁸ as the product of *φύσις*, is 'self-contained',⁸⁴⁹ whereas 'use-objects' or 'equipment',⁸⁵⁰ which are 'the product of a process of making',⁸⁵¹ a *ποίησις*, do not merely presence as self-enclosed beings in the way the stone does, because their usefulness, that is, their

⁸⁴⁷ See Albrecht Dürer, *Feldhase* (1502), held at Albertina, Vienna. Presumably this image corroborates Heidegger's assertion that 'the animal is poor in world', as discussed in section (1.3).

⁸⁴⁸ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 29.

⁸⁴⁹ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 28.

⁸⁵⁰ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 29.

⁸⁵¹ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 28.

embedding in a political in-order-to structure, is their basic aspect and is ingrained in their very form, not something 'assigned or added on afterward',⁸⁵² Heidegger asserts that the nature of the artwork falls into a third category. Describing a pair of "peasant shoes"⁸⁵³ as we encounter them in everyday life, the way they appear to us as useful objects, 'gear [that] serves to clothe the feet',⁸⁵⁴ that we experience them in the first instance as the simultaneity of what they are and what they are for, only truly at home in the place they are put to use (the field), so much so that, recalling the tool analysis of *Being and Time*,⁸⁵⁵ Heidegger asserts that the shoes disappear in their proper work, that in the field 'they are what they are [...] all the more genuinely so, the less the peasant woman thinks about the shoes while she is at work, or looks at them at all, or is even aware of them'.⁸⁵⁶

But Van Gogh's painting of such shoes⁸⁵⁷ abstracts the shoes, takes them out of their element, leaving 'nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong – only an undefined space',⁸⁵⁸ on the face of things, violating the 'natural comportment toward things', in which, Heidegger asserts in a lecture course of 1927, 'we never think a *single* thing, and whenever we seize

⁸⁵² Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 28.

⁸⁵³ It should be noted that the meditation upon Van Gogh's painting of the shoes was only added in later versions of the much-redrafted lectures and essay. See for comparison: Martin Heidegger, 'On The Origin of the Work of Art: First Version' (1935-37), trans. by Jerome Veith, in *The Heidegger Reader*, ed. by Günter Figal (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), pp. 130-50.

⁸⁵⁴ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 33.

⁸⁵⁵ See: Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp. 95-122.

⁸⁵⁶ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 33.

⁸⁵⁷ According to the catalogue at the Amsterdam Van Gogh Museum, the shoes in question actually required wearing-in as they appeared too 'smart' fresh from the flea market. See: Vincent van Gogh Stichting, *Een paar schoenen* (1886), held at Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam.

⁸⁵⁸ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 33.

upon it expressly for itself we are taking it *out* of a contexture to which it belongs in its real content',⁸⁵⁹ but in Van Gogh's painting, something else happens entirely:

From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death.⁸⁶⁰

As was the case with Dürer's hare, by presenting the shoes outside of their place in the in-order-to structure of daily life, the equipment that is never considered in itself but only constitutes one piece in a practical chain eventually leading by way of sowing, tending, harvesting, grinding, baking and eating to continued life, the shoes no longer disappear into this long deferral of intention, but become entirely conspicuous, and, not only that, make conspicuous the whole world into which they are usually absorbed. The artwork for Heidegger, while a product of *ποίησις*, is not drawn into the teleological circulation of the intentional world, but rather, like the product of *φύσις* is 'self-sufficient'.⁸⁶¹ However, unlike both, the artwork has a special ability to disclose these structures, to reveal the world as what it is, resisting both the deferral of ends in which equipment disappears and the scientific attitude that denatures beings by isolating them from their place in the world.

⁸⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (1927), trans. by Albert Hofstadter (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 162.

⁸⁶⁰ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 33-4.

⁸⁶¹ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 29.

Heidegger only completes his severance of the aesthetic from the aesthetic when he abruptly inverts the example he has just described, asserting that Van Gogh's painting in fact depicts neither the likeness nor the essence of any existent thing.⁸⁶² For '[w]ith what nature of what thing should a Greek temple agree? Who would maintain the impossible view that the Idea of Temple is represented in the building?'⁸⁶³ The temple copies nothing, to the contrary, for Heidegger, it is an origin, it 'gathers around itself the unity of those paths and relations in which birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline acquire the shape of destiny for human being'.⁸⁶⁴ Recalling what we have already noted of Heidegger's analysis of *μίμησις* in the 1936-39 Nietzsche lectures in chapter two, it is clear that what Heidegger is asserting here in the 1935-37 essay, is that the *μιμητής* in no way copies or reproduces that which is supposedly made more authentically by the *τεχνίτης*. Rather, the *μιμητής* possesses *two* abilities; they indeed have an eye for the in-order-to structure of the *demos*, allowing them to present beings as they are, but furthermore, in a way that the *τεχνίτης* is not, the *μιμητής* is also moved by this access to create works that are originary, that, for instance in the case of a tragic drama, while 'originating in the speech of the people', also 'transforms the people's saying'.⁸⁶⁵ The *μιμητής* is the vessel through whom the community transforms itself, which is to say, *μίμησις* for Heidegger is not mimetic; Heidegger's *μίμησις* does not refer to what is, it founds its very possibility.

⁸⁶² Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 37.

⁸⁶³ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 37.

⁸⁶⁴ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 42.

⁸⁶⁵ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', pp. 43.

In the second of Heidegger's 1936-37 Nietzsche lectures⁸⁶⁶ thematised around the assertion that '[a]rt is *mimēsis*',⁸⁶⁷ Heidegger interestingly turns from the discussion of *μίμησις* in the *Republic*, to the discussion of beauty in the *Phaedrus*, the same discussion to which we saw Gadamer repeatedly return in the discussions of chapter three. For Gadamer, beauty is one of the paradigmatic phenomenological demonstrations of the vertical dimension of an irreducible *μέθεξις* that only becomes aporetic when one attempts to master it linguistically, for it is in fact presupposed in every act of speech. The experience of beauty, the conflagration of the suprasensuous *in* the sensuous, is for Gadamer one of the ways in which this dualism is experienced in a completely unproblematic way as a transcendence within the immanent. Heidegger denies this conclusion. Speaking of art, which is for Heidegger, as already noted, *μίμησις*, he parallels Gadamer in stating that it 'bring[s] forth the beautiful' yet at the same time 'resides in the sensuous',⁸⁶⁸ however in congruence with his characterisation of Plato as one who turned away from the shining of beings towards an invented ideal that shines on them,⁸⁶⁹ offers a different interpretation of what beauty really constitutes.

Heidegger refers here to the so called "doctrine of recollection" wherein Plato asserts that memory, *ἀνάμνησις*,⁸⁷⁰ is defined by its alpha-privative prefix in the same way Heidegger determines *ἀλήθεια*.⁸⁷¹ In the *Phaedo*, Plato asserts that what we call learning, *μάθησις*, is actually the practice by which we

⁸⁶⁶ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Phaedrus*: Beauty and Truth in Felicitous Discordance' (1936-37) in *Nietzsche*, pp. 188-99.

⁸⁶⁷ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Republic*', p. 171.

⁸⁶⁸ Heidegger, 'Plato's *Phaedrus*: Beauty and Truth in Felicitous Discordance', p. 198.

⁸⁶⁹ See section (2.4).

⁸⁷⁰ Plato, 'Phaedrus', in *Plato With an English Translation*, trans. by Harold North Fowler, 1: *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, pp. 405-579 (including parallel Greek text), 257a.

⁸⁷¹ See section (2.4).

ἀναμνησκόμεθα, recollect, our acquaintance with the ideal that preceded our physical births into the sensuous.⁸⁷² This is usually considered as an argument for the immortality of the soul, a suggestion that before birth we existed in the ideal realm. Heidegger regards it rather as a statement of the always-already relatedness, the *Auslegung*, of a being ‘that comports itself to beings as such’,⁸⁷³ *Dasein*, the being that “has beings as such in view ahead of time”.⁸⁷⁴ Correspondingly, μάθησις is for Heidegger the task of opening oneself to this comportment, becoming open to the way beings reveal themselves (the project of phenomenology⁸⁷⁵) rather than losing oneself in the in-order-to structure that defers beings to goals. Now, beauty, Heidegger asserts, has a special place in that it makes us aware of this comportment, in its radiance it snaps even the most ‘cockeyed’⁸⁷⁶ out of their everyday concerns and gives them a glimpse of the truth, not an ideal truth that illuminates, but the truth of the being’s shining, the truth of ἀλήθεια.

It is necessary, then, to add qualification to Geulen’s pronouncement of the absolute objectivity of beauty, since as much as Heidegger affirms its universality,⁸⁷⁷ he does not detach it from phenomenality in the way he does μίμησις. Beauty, for Heidegger, is neither ‘a property that is added to a being as an

⁸⁷² Plato, ‘Phaedo’, 72e.

⁸⁷³ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s *Phaedrus*’, p. 192.

⁸⁷⁴ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s *Phaedrus*’, p. 198.

⁸⁷⁵ See section (2.3).

⁸⁷⁶ Heidegger, ‘Plato’s *Phaedrus*’, p. 193.

⁸⁷⁷ See for example: Martin Heidegger, *Parmenides* (1942-43), trans. by André Schuwer & Richard Rojcewicz (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 10.

attribute',⁸⁷⁸ and nor does beautiful mean 'stimulating, pleasant, for pleasure and enjoyment',⁸⁷⁹ but it is, nevertheless, something given to be witnessed:

Truth is the unconcealedness of that which is as something that is. Truth is the truth of Being. Beauty does not occur alongside and apart from this truth. When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance - as this being of truth in the work and as work - is beauty. Thus the beautiful belongs to the advent of truth, truth's taking of its place. It does not exist merely relative to pleasure and purely as its object. The beautiful does lie in form, but only because the forma once took its light from Being as the isness of what is.⁸⁸⁰

In this way, Heidegger describes a division of operations in the realm of art: where *μίμησις* contributes to the reproduction of what is and the production of novel possibilities for ways of being within a particular epochal regime, beauty discloses these ways of being to the observer. According to a mode of the of mimetic ambivalence which we noted in sections (1.1-2) stretches from Aristotle to Nancy, the community is grounded in a copying-operation in which nothing is copied, and then returned and shown to the community as their self-reflection in the beautiful self-evidence of beings formed by the operation. Before moving onto Nancy's critique of the dialectic of communal self-identification, I would like to note the way it appears also in Gadamer's reflections on the aesthetic, albeit in a modified fashion, which stays much closer to an Aristotelian account of mimesis than Heidegger's focus on Plato.

⁸⁷⁸ Martin Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason* (1955–56), trans. by Reginald Lilly (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 57.

⁸⁷⁹ Heidegger, *The Essence of Truth*, 235 n. 17.

⁸⁸⁰ Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 81.

4.4 Gadamer and the end of μίμησις

Gadamer, in parallel fashion to his replacement of μίμησις with μέθεξις in conceiving the social and temporal structure of *Dasein*, refutes Heidegger's aesthetic reading of μίμησις entirely, and, as we will see, again relegates it beneath an affirmation of μέθεξις. This is not to say he entirely departs the Heideggerian thought of ἀλήθεια, nor his analysis of beauty, although he does add qualification to the Heideggerian reading. But what Gadamer categorically cannot accept is the suggestion that any Platonic text legitimises the connection Heidegger makes between μίμησις, beauty, and ἀλήθεια.

In regards to the *Phaedrus*, to which we have seen both Gadamer and Heidegger refer, in *Truth and Method* Gadamer agrees with his old master that the privilege of beauty is to 'attract the desire of the human soul to it', because '[b]eauty is not simply symmetry [or harmony] but appearance itself', that is, 'disclosure (aletheia)'.⁸⁸¹ But, crucially, in reference to the *Philebus*, Gadamer states that ἀλήθεια is only 'part of the nature of the beautiful',⁸⁸² part because although '[b]eauty has the mode of being *light*', unlike Heidegger's determination of it as the singular shining of the beautiful being, Gadamer refuses to collapse the duality of its phenomenological experience, referring in a footnote to Chrysippus and asserting that the light of beauty has a 'reflective character', in that 'by making something else visible, it is visible itself, and it is not visible in any other way than by making something else visible'.⁸⁸³

⁸⁸¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 477.

⁸⁸² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 477.

⁸⁸³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 477.

As we have already noted, it is during this same discussion in *Truth and Method* that Gadamer affirms *μέθεξις* as the dynamic of this duality, the essentially bonded but irreducibly distinct appearance of the idea in the appearance. In 1992 Gadamer appends this analysis quite definitively:

When Plato speaks of *aletheia* [truth] and sees truth connected with beauty, he is not thinking of art and he is also not thinking of the poets, who have much to say that is true but as the saying goes, “The poets lie a lot.” What Plato has in mind with this connection between truth and beauty is a joy in pure forms and colors, but not in flowers or animals “or copies of them” (*Philebus* 51c). This passage in the *Philebus* teaches quite clearly how little weight Plato actually accords to copying as such.⁸⁸⁴

Gadamer in fact sides with neither Plato nor Heidegger in this debate. He concurs with Plato against Heidegger that *μίμησις* has no connection to beauty or *ἀλήθεια*, but disagrees with Plato that art should be identified with *μίμησις* at all; at least not in our current ‘world order’ in which we no longer experience the beautiful ‘that presents itself in its true fulfilment in the starry heavens’.⁸⁸⁵ Rather, what we mean nowadays in referring to the *ἀλήθεια* of the artwork, for Gadamer, is the fact that ‘art presents itself in such a way that it both conceals itself and at the very same time authenticates itself’,⁸⁸⁶ which is to say, the artwork actually amplifies the dynamic of the apparent and the transcendent which Plato identifies with beauty. ‘It remains always the same work’, Gadamer writes, ‘even if in each new encounter it emerges in its own way’,⁸⁸⁷ a point Nancy in fact echoes in a seminar

⁸⁸⁴ Han-Georg Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image: “So True, So Full of Being!”’ (1992), trans. by Richard. E. Palmer, in *The Gadamer Reader*, pp. 195-224, (p. 204).

⁸⁸⁵ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’, p. 214.

⁸⁸⁶ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’, p. 214.

⁸⁸⁷ Gadamer, ‘The Artwork in Word and Image’, p. 214.

of 2010, when he suggests the power of da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* is its refusal to be pinned down, that it offers something more every time it is seen,⁸⁸⁸ as opposed to the deficient type of artwork he critiques in a lecture four years earlier, which, through a political over-emphasis, pins itself down to a static reference point.⁸⁸⁹

Gadamer asserts that while for Plato and Aristotle *μίμησις* truly was art, now things are not so simple. He writes in 1977's 'Die Aktualität Des Schönen' ['The Relevance of the Beautiful'], that 'the tradition is justified in saying that "art is always mimesis"', just so long as it is understood that '[w]hen we say this', we do not mean it represents in the way the orbit of the stars represent mathematical perfection for the Greeks; no, 'this representation cannot be grasped or even come to be "there" for us in any other way',⁸⁹⁰ the representation does not re-present at all, it offers something completely original. 'Clearly, we are dealing here with something quite different from the relationship of original and copy', he writes in the 1992 text, '[w]orks of art possess an elevated rank in being, and this is seen in the fact that in encountering a work of art we have the experience of something emerging—and this one can call truth!'.⁸⁹¹ Our truth, our *ἀλήθεια*, is not simple unconcealment, not the clarity of a mathematical beauty that presents itself as it is, rather, in our experience of artworks 'what comes forth was hidden there',⁸⁹² it presents itself as the emergence, the reopening, each time, "representing" only insofar it presents.

⁸⁸⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Mystery of Art' (2010) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=he2k_ukMgRM> [accessed 9 September 2013].

⁸⁸⁹ Nancy, 'Art Today', pp. 91-99.

⁸⁹⁰ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'The Relevance of the Beautiful' (1977), trans. by Robert Bernasconi, in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1-56 (p. 36).

⁸⁹¹ Gadamer, 'The Artwork in Word and Image', p. 207.

⁸⁹² Gadamer, 'The Artwork in Word and Image', p. 214.

In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer refers to Aristotle's discussion of *μίμησις* in the *Poetics*⁸⁹³ as a paradigmatic example of the "ancient" version of *ἀλήθεια*:

when children enjoy dressing up, as Aristotle remarks, they are not trying to hide themselves, pretending to be something else in order to be discovered and recognized behind it; but, on the contrary, they intend a representation of such a kind that only what is represented exists. The child wants at any cost to avoid being discovered behind his disguise. He intends that what he represents should exist, and if something is to be guessed, then this is it. We are supposed to recognize what it "is."⁸⁹⁴

Indeed, considering our prior chapter's reference to Plato's *Republic* and *Ion*, and the emulative kind of *μίμησις* found there, Aristotle's account is by no means a marginal one, even if, in the much later essay of 1992, Gadamer would have us believe that for Plato *μίμησις* only means the hierarchical copying of an idea (as in *Republic X*) whereas for Aristotle it means the heterarchically shared similarity of two things in our cognition of them, which thus leads to 'recognition'⁸⁹⁵ (even if, as Gadamer has it in *Truth and Method*, this would lead straight back to Plato's *ἀνάμνησις* and thus to hierarchy⁸⁹⁶). Interestingly though, Gadamer finds something legitimate in Aristotle's formulation, stating that 'even today the mimesis theory still retains something of its old validity',⁸⁹⁷ because what is described there is a scene in which the player 'allows what he knows to exist and to exist in the way that he knows it',⁸⁹⁸ that is, it 'is the presentation of a common truth',⁸⁹⁹ a participation in the shared horizon of those for whom the imitation makes sense:

⁸⁹³ See sections (1.1-2).

⁸⁹⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 113.

⁸⁹⁵ Gadamer, 'The Artwork in Word and Image', p. 204.

⁸⁹⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 113.

⁸⁹⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 129.

⁸⁹⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 113.

Their being is not exhausted by the fact that they present themselves, for at the same time they point beyond themselves to the audience which participates by watching. Play here is no longer the mere self-presentation of an ordered movement, nor mere representation in which the child playing is totally absorbed, but it is "representing for someone." The directedness proper to all representation comes to the fore here and is constitutive of the being of art.⁹⁰⁰

Indeed, as keen as Gadamer is to highlight the epochal difference between the Greek and the modern conception of art with or without *μίμησις*, he cannot deny that the Greek worldview is not 'wholly alien to us, separated from us by fathomless stretches of time',⁹⁰¹ as he says in a lecture of 1964. For, as he states in that lecture, the definitively Greek art form of tragic theatre speaks to us of something we share far more fundamentally with the Greeks than any specific worldview, the experience of our very finitude, and, moreover, a transgression of finitude that operates on two levels. 'The tragic hero resembles, indeed represents, a sacrificial victim', the victim in whom 'the finitude of fate is transcended',⁹⁰² Gadamer writes, it is the image of a confrontation with the gods that destine the people who commune in the transgression. Yet already at a remove from the "real" sacrifice of the Minoans, this sacrifice is only represented in the tragic hero, played out, but it is in this representation that we come closest to the Greeks, as Gadamer writes in *Truth and Method*, this play stops being simple imitation or *μίμησις* as soon as it takes on the form of being 'a play', that is, theatre:

⁸⁹⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 129.

⁹⁰⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 108.

⁹⁰¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, 'Image and Gesture' (1964), in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, pp. 75-82 (p. 78).

⁹⁰² Gadamer, 'Image and Gesture', p. 78.

For the players this means that they do not simply fulfil their roles as in any game - rather, they play their roles, they represent them for the audience. The way they participate in the game is no longer determined by the fact that they are completely absorbed in it, but by the fact that they play their role in relation and regard to the whole of the play, in which not they but the audience is to become absorbed. A complete change takes place when play as such becomes a play. It puts the spectator in the place of the player. He - and not the player - is the person for and in whom the play is played.⁹⁰³

The *μίμησις* of sacrifice, the representation of a transgressive participation, brings about a second-order participation, in which the 'removal of boundaries between the *I*, the *thou*, and the *we* in a unique collective union'⁹⁰⁴ is dislocated via a *μίμησις* and emerges from the act of playing as the participation of the actors and audience in the idea of communion. It is in this *Gebilde* [structure], as Gadamer calls it,⁹⁰⁵ that we recognise the genesis of the non-mimetic art that defines our world. 'Thus transformation into structure means that what existed previously exists no longer. But also that what now exists, what represents itself in the play of art, is the lasting and true'.⁹⁰⁶ The play, as *Gebilde*, ceases to rely on any of its formative relations, the mimetic gesture of the actors or the writers, or indeed the audience, and becomes autonomous, 'exist[ing] for someone, even if there is no one there who merely listens or watches',⁹⁰⁷ 'it is, so to speak, its own measure

⁹⁰³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 109.

⁹⁰⁴ Gadamer, 'Image and Gesture', p. 78.

⁹⁰⁵ In the winter of 1921/22 lectures on Aristotle Heidegger has already used this word in a similar way, connecting the construction of a structure, *Gebilde*, to the actualisation of an image or likeness, *Bild*. See: Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation Into Phenomenological Research* (1921-22), trans. by Richard Rojcewicz (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), p. 98.

⁹⁰⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 111.

⁹⁰⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 110.

and measures itself by nothing outside it.⁹⁰⁸ And so Gadamer, like Heidegger, severs the aesthetic from the aisthetic, but beyond Heidegger, also subtracting its mimetic function, replacing it with *μέθεξις*. Indeed, in the case of *our* art, and its roots in tragic theatre:

The spectator does not hold himself aloof at the distance characteristic of an aesthetic consciousness enjoying the art with which something is represented, but rather participates in the communion of being present. The real emphasis of the tragic phenomenon lies ultimately on what is presented and recognized, and to participate in it is not a matter of choice.⁹⁰⁹

Somewhat invertedly, it is in fact in the “occasional” artwork, the piece that maintains its mimetic element through the orientation it maintains to the occasion to which it is addressed,⁹¹⁰ that Gadamer finds the most intense demonstration of our art. It is at this point that we are returned to Gadamer’s discussion of Plato’s portrait from chapter three. As we saw there, ‘the most distinctive element of a portrait [is] its intention to be recognised as such,’⁹¹¹ yet this is not a presentation that comes about as the result of a *μίμησις*, but rather a presentation *of* *μίμησις*, a relation carried by the work independently of our ability to recognise its likeness to a Plato to whom none of us are acquainted, ‘though indeterminable this relation remains present and effective in the work itself’.⁹¹² In being presented, the model or represented is neither required nor called upon, it ‘becomes its image’,⁹¹³ and in this way ‘the universal becom[es] visible in the individual’,⁹¹⁴ that is to say, what is

⁹⁰⁸ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 111.

⁹⁰⁹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 128.

⁹¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 138.

⁹¹¹ Gadamer, ‘Plato as Portraitist’, p. 295.

⁹¹² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 142.

⁹¹³ Gadamer, ‘Plato as Portraitist’, p. 295.

⁹¹⁴ Gadamer, ‘Plato as Portraitist’, p. 295.

recognised is not the original, but our own participation in the formation of its image. Making the occasional the most intense demonstration of the nature of our art, Gadamer shows that what he means by the artwork's dual dynamic of revealing and concealing, the way it opens anew on every occasion, unlike the self-same *μίμησις* of the Pythagorean orbs reflecting the singular static worldview of an undefined Greek age, is that '[t]he specific mode of the work of art's presence is the coming-to-presentation of being',⁹¹⁵ which, as we have already noted, is for Gadamer a function of communal participation, *μέθεξις*.⁹¹⁶ In what follows I will trace out Nancy's extended critique of modes of thought that legitimise communal *μέθεξις* according to a mimetic operation.

⁹¹⁵ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 152.

⁹¹⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 121.

4.5 Nancy on the myth of participation

When Nancy states in 'Sharing Voices' that Ion's *μίμησις* proceeds from a *μέθεξις* of which it also the necessary condition, he remarks in a footnote, '[o]ne knows how Lévy-Bruhl returns to this couple of Platonic terms in his last conception of the "primitive mentality"'.⁹¹⁷ The "last conception" Nancy is referring to here is the idea of a 'participation-imitation'⁹¹⁸ which in Lévy-Bruhl's posthumously published notebooks describes a conjunction in the "primitive" worldview of certain cultures that is not suggested in his earlier texts.⁹¹⁹ Earlier, Lévy-Bruhl had written extensively of '*participation mystique*', to describe this mentality, a concept Jung describes as the 'lack of distinctiveness between individuals' and the 'oneness of the subject and the object',⁹²⁰ a deep connection of community and environment that Lévy-Bruhl proposed defined the so-called "primitive mentality" of the uncivilised.⁹²¹

But in the later notebooks Lévy-Bruhl complicates this communion, and writing of the Indian and Burmese Naga people, Lévy-Bruhl notes that in the case of the rain dance, 'imitation of the desired event determines a participation [...] It is certain, by virtue of participation-imitation, that the rain will fall, a little sooner or a littler

⁹¹⁷ Nancy, 'Sharing Voices', 256 n. 51.

⁹¹⁸ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, trans. by Peter Rivière (New York: Harper & Row, 1975). pp. 111-12.

⁹¹⁹ In *La mentalité primitive*, there is at least a prefiguration, in commentary on the use of both animals and imitations of animals as good luck amulets: Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *Primitive Mentality* (1922), trans. by Lilian A. Clare (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1923), pp. 339-40.

⁹²⁰ Carl Gustav Jung, 'The Tavistock Lectures' (1935), in *Symbolic Life*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (Oxford: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 42.

⁹²¹ As Sedgwick notes, for Jung on the other hand, participation mystique is a 'basic mental state of civilised man. As Jung says, it is "an *a priori* identity of subject and object", in other words, a given'. David Sedgwick, *Jung and Searles: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 32.

later'.⁹²² In her pioneering studies of Greek mythology, which cite Lévy-Bruhl along the way,⁹²³ Harrison argues that a community operating in such a way, participating by imitating, for instance in the ritual blood-letting or eating of a totem animal, evidences that 'the beginning of a distinction is just drawing',⁹²⁴ a new epistemological division between the members of the community, and also between the community and its environment, a loss of *participation mystique* that is now being appended by a mimetic function, imitating that which was once simply immediate, undifferentiated. She writes:

The magical ceremonies, the shedding of the human blood, the counterfeiting of the animal, have for their object to bridge the gulf that is just opening, to restore by communion that complete unity which is just becoming conscious of possible division. The ceremonies are however still intensely sympathetic and cooperative; they are, as the Greeks would say, rather *methektic* than *mimetic*, the expression, the utterance, of a common nature participated in, rather than the imitation of alien characteristics.⁹²⁵

Making the atomic family synonymous with civilisation, in just the way as does the early Lévy-Bruhl, Harrison notes that right there in the dawn of a civilisation *μίμησις* is already the weaker term, the servant of *μέθεξις*, that is, of a communal *μέθεξις* conceived in the way Gadamer has it, as *Teilhabe*, but a lost, irrecoverable *Teilhabe* subsidised by emulation. In doing so, Harrison demonstrates the exact form of nostalgia that Nancy suggests pervades our notion of community to this day, the yearning of the West to recover an immediacy of community, a spiritual communion that is thought to have been lost to rationality, and which the West

⁹²² Lévy-Bruhl, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, pp. 111-12.

⁹²³ Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis, a study of the social origins of Greek religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), p. 122

⁹²⁴ Harrison, *Themis*, p. 125.

⁹²⁵ Harrison, *Themis*, p. 125.

now plays at, imitating it, deficiently. It is worth highlighting here that this is precisely the charge levelled at Plato's use of the concept of *μέθεξις* by Aristotle, Heidegger, and Deleuze, namely, that his concept is extraneous, that it merely covers over the division of a prior unity which is to be the object of recovery, by analogy or univocity. Nancy's point here, as it was in his discussion of Plato, is that communion, the prior unity that is established as negated, as the object of recovery, is a construct symptomatic of a thinking of the immanent as a lack of transcendence, without which it now struggles to circumscribe itself, that is, the philosophical tension we have been following throughout this thesis. As we will see here, Nancy's aim is rather to think community according to the mutual *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις* that shares out its finite, internal, *transimmanent* limits.

Before the publication of 'Sharing Voices', Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe had touched upon Lévy-Bruhl's work in a paper delivered at the 1980 conference *Les Mécanismes du fascisme*, a more developed version of which was translated into English and published in *Critical Enquiry* in 1990 as 'The Nazi Myth'. In that paper the two thinkers use Lévy-Bruhl's conjunction of imitation and participation to point out the curious relationship between the Romantic German, or simply modern⁹²⁶ conception of how a people identify with their founding myths, and a "Greek" conception of myth invented by the modern to provide an origin against which to define itself. First of all the authors turn to the Platonic text to glean how grand teleological and unifying narratives might have functioned within a *polis*, finding that Plato's approach to myth:

⁹²⁶ In their book on the *Literary Absolute*, Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe assert unequivocally that Romanticism is not over, that it stretches from the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* to the contemporary. Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 17.

implies the recognition that their specific function is, in fact, that of *exemplarity*. Myth is a fiction, in the strong, active sense of "fashioning," or, as Plato says, of "plastic art": it is, therefore, a *fictioning*, whose role is to propose, if not to impose, models or types (this is still Plato's vocabulary, and you will soon see where and how it reemerges), types in imitation of which an individual, or a city, or an entire people, can grasp themselves and identify themselves. In other words, the question posed by myth is that of *mimetism*, insofar as only *mimetism* is able to assure an identity.⁹²⁷

This idea of exemplarity is what is at stake in the doubled approach to *μίμησις* we have already observed in Plato's writing, in the contrast between Plato's denunciation of artistic, reproductive *μίμησις* in *Republic* Book X, but his acceptance of the emulative, educational *μίμησις* of Book III. 'Why?', Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe ask, before answering, '[f]or the essential reason that myths, through the role they play in traditional education, through their character of general reference in the habitual practice of the Greeks, induce bad attitudes or bad ethical (and political) behaviors'.⁹²⁸ In line with the project of the *Republic* as a whole, *μίμησις* for Plato must therefore be controlled, turning the power of *mimetism* to sway entire peoples in the right direction. As was the case with the productive hierarchy of Book X, where it was a question of the right model by which to create a physical product, here, when the pedagogical mode of *μίμησις* is in question, it is a question of the correct narrative around which the *polis* should organise itself, of determining the correct myth, that Plato no doubt considered the *Republic* to fulfil the need for.

⁹²⁷ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', p. 297.

⁹²⁸ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', p. 297.

Nancy suggests in *Being Singular Plural* that this qualitative classification of *μίμησις* in Plato's texts ultimately mirrors the much more general delineation Plato makes of philosophy as a whole when he circumscribes it from its opposite, sophism.⁹²⁹ According to Nancy there is for Plato 'a "good" *mimesis* (the sort Plato wanted), a *mimesis* of *logos*, and a "bad" *mimesis* (that of the "sophist,"⁹³⁰ the prototype of the spectacular merchant who sells the simulacra of *logos*.)⁹³¹ As is well known, the determination of what philosophy is according to what it is not produces the conjunction of its name, where *σοφία* is placed under the negative restriction of *φιλία*, whereas the *σοφιστής*,⁹³² Plato would have us believe, claims ownership over *σοφία* and worse still instrumentalises it, so that it ceases to be an end in itself. The philosopher loves *σοφία*, and in desiring it, contrary to the pretence of the sophist, does not and cannot have it. The sophist, therefore, must not be allowed to instrumentalise the mimetism of myth. Plato confirms this in the *Laws*:

We ourselves, to the best of our ability, are the authors of a tragedy at once superlatively fair and good; at least, all our polity is framed as a *μίμησις* of the fairest and best life, which is in reality, as we assert, the truest tragedy. Thus we are composers of the same things as yourselves, rivals of yours as artists and actors of the fairest drama, which, as our hope is, true law, and it alone, is by nature competent to complete.⁹³³

Now, what is so interesting about the modern account of the place of myth within a community, according to Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, is not only that it adds a

⁹²⁹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', pp. 71-2.

⁹³⁰ Nancy is referring here to: Plato, 'Sophist', 235a.

⁹³¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 72.

⁹³² Plato, 'Sophist', 218c.

⁹³³ Plato, *Laws in Two Volumes*, 817b.

participation mystique or μέθεξις to the Greek emphasis on μίμησις, but that it represents the Greek worldview as the mythical origin which it can now only relate to by μίμησις, which is to say, we moderns ascribe the μέθεξις we have invented to an outmoded era, the perfection of which we can scarcely hope to recover, and in doing so it quite literally:

adds something to the classical, Greek theory of mythic imitation, of *mimesis* - or develops, very insistently, something that, in Plato for example, was really only nascent, that is, a theory of fusion or mystical participation [i.e. *participation mystique*] (of *methexis*, as Lucien Levy-Bruhl will say), of which the best example is the Dionysian experience, as described by Nietzsche.⁹³⁴

And we need only look as far *Die Geburt der Tragödie* [*The Birth of Tragedy*] to find a powerful instance of this mythical nostalgia:

We had actually always believed that the true spectator, whoever he might be, must always remain aware that he is watching a work of art and not an empirical reality, while the tragic chorus of the Greeks is required to grant the figures on the stage a physical existence [...] The audience of spectators as we know it was unknown to the Greeks: in their theatres anyone in the terraces, rising in concentric arcs, was able to *overlook* the whole of the surrounding cultural world, and, in satisfied contemplation, to imagine themselves members of the chorus.⁹³⁵

Here Nietzsche demonstrates what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy refer to in their paper as the 'double' Greece,⁹³⁶ distinguishing between one Greece just outlined as the world of Plato, the world of mimetic distance, and another Greece that

⁹³⁴ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', p. 302.

⁹³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), trans. by Shaun Whiteside (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 37-42.

⁹³⁶ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, 'The Nazi Myth', p. 301.

forms part of the modern representation, a Greece employed as the image of the *ἀρχή* of the modern combination of imitation and participation, *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, determined circularly as the prototype of this combination with Nietzsche's feigned surprise, as if a discovery, "[w]e had actually always believed...". As Nancy will put it later in *Being Singular Plural*:

There is certainly nothing accidental in the fact that our modern way of grounding the so-called Western tradition involves a triple reference: to philosophy as the shared exercise of *logos*, to politics as the opening of the city, and to the theater as the place of the symbolic-imaginary appropriation of collective existence. The Athenian theater, both the institution itself and its content, appears to us as the political (civil) presentation of the philosophical (the self-knowledge of the logical animal) and, reciprocally, as the philosophical presentation of the political. That is, it appears to us as the "one" presentation of being-together, yet as a presentation where the condition for its possibility is the irreducible and institutive distance [*l'écart*] of representation.⁹³⁷

The "danger" is that we 'efface the moment of *mimesis* in favor of the moment of *logos*',⁹³⁸ as if, as in the role Nietzsche plays, we really did imagine ourselves impassionate observers of an entirely self-enclosed, perfect *fragment*, in the Schlegelian sense, of political life. Subjugating *μίμησις* to *logos* on the one hand makes of the theatre a unilateral spectacle, a simple and neutral representation of political life recounted to a passive viewer, and on the other hand it misrepresents the *logos* as something that *can be* represented, but '*logos* does not present itself of its own accord—and maybe because it does not present itself at all, because its logic is not the logic of presence.'⁹³⁹ In its folding together of *logos*, *polis* and

⁹³⁷ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 71.

⁹³⁸ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 71.

⁹³⁹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 72.

shared existence, the theatre is not a representation of *logos* via a secondary *μίμησις*, it is a presentation of the *μίμησις* of *logos*, and of the necessity of *μίμησις* for *logos*; or again, the theatre enacts the *logos* in total conspicuity through its staged intensification of the *μίμησις* which is at its heart. 'This amounts to recognizing that "social *logos*," the logic of "association," and "association" itself as the *logos* all require mimesis',⁹⁴⁰ Nancy writes. He goes on:

By effacing the intrinsic moment or dimension of *mimesis*, we efface this sharing [*partage*]. We give ourselves the representation of a presence that is immanent and enclosed, self-constitutive and self-sufficient, the integrally self-referential order of what we call a "logic" in the most general and basic sense.⁹⁴¹

The members of the chain in the *Ion*, or the *polis*, or the modern community, are connected by an imitation-participation, a *μέθεξις* that can neither access an origin nor encompass every member in communion, but functions as a *μίμησις* of such a communion, a *μίμησις* that in doing so presents itself *as* *μίμησις*, a participation in the emulation of the myth of communion. Now, as we have already noted, such a *μίμησις*, while it may represent or recreate an origin, in fact consists in a communication between *Dasein*, exposed singularities devoid of milieu or pure outside, and at the end of Nancy's essay 'L'insacrifiable' ['The Unsacrificeable'] from 1990's *Une pensée finie* [*A Finite Thinking*], Nancy once again recalls Lévy-Bruhl's 'guess that mimesis is *methexis*, participation',⁹⁴² and asks in a footnote:

why shouldn't we grasp mimesis on the basis of a *methexis*, a communication or contagion that, outside the West, has perhaps never

⁹⁴⁰ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 71.

⁹⁴¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', p. 71.

⁹⁴² Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', p. 62.

had the meaning of a communion, which we have tended to give it? What escapes us, and what “Western sacrifice” at once misses and sublates, is an essential *discontinuity* of *methexis*, an in-communication of every community.⁹⁴³

Here Nancy picks back up on themes from Bataille previously explored in *The Inoperative Community*, namely, that communication is predicated upon alterity,⁹⁴⁴ and that, therefore, the work of death, the ultimate transgression of the finite, leads not to communion but to ‘the infinity of immanence’,⁹⁴⁵ that in the thought of ‘decomposition leading back to nature’ in which ‘everything returns to the ground and becomes part of the cycle [...]there is no longer any community or communication: there is only the continuous identity of atoms’.⁹⁴⁶ Western sacrifice, Nancy points out, by representing itself as only figurative,⁹⁴⁷ which means, only *μίμησις*, a spiritual simulacrum of Christ-like or Socrates-like self-sacrifice that only mimes the “real” ancient sacrifice, of the truth of which it knows nothing, just like the nostalgia of modern myth, reflects back its own ideal of communion, ‘the uniqueness of the life’⁹⁴⁸ and of the substance in which-or to which-every singularity is sacrificed’,⁹⁴⁹ as a *μίμησις* of something truer.

But ‘what we represent as the bonds or communication of sacrifice’ Nancy writes, ‘stems from what we have already invested in this idea’,⁹⁵⁰ and ‘[a]s is the case at other decisive points in our Western discourse, the representation of a loss of truth - here, the truth of sacrificial rites - leads directly to the representation of a truth of

⁹⁴³ Nancy, ‘The Unsacrificeable’, 327 n. 30.

⁹⁴⁴ Nancy, ‘The Inoperative Community’, p. 24.

⁹⁴⁵ Nancy, ‘The Inoperative Community’, p. 17.

⁹⁴⁶ Nancy, ‘The Inoperative Community’, p. 12.

⁹⁴⁷ Nancy, ‘The Unsacrificeable’, p. 59.

⁹⁴⁸ i.e. ‘Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification’. *Romans* 4.25.

⁹⁴⁹ Nancy, ‘The Unsacrificeable’, p. 57.

⁹⁵⁰ Nancy, ‘The Unsacrificeable’, p. 62.

loss',⁹⁵¹ our immanent world placed under the sign of a negation of the absolute transcendence and transgression that once had the power to circumscribe it. For philosophy, '[e]verything happens as if the West began where sacrifice ends',⁹⁵² precisely because philosophy emerges in and as a tension of the immanent and the transcendent in which being is abandoned, so that so too, sacrifice is 'abandoned to the finite world',⁹⁵³ determined as a negation, a faulty imitation of the absolute transgression of horizon by which a perfect community circumscribed itself from the absolutely transcendent. I want to quote Nancy's response from the end of 'The Unsacrificeable' in full, noting that it leads directly into the next section's concerns with understanding the nature of a whole world structured by singularity and exposure:

[T]here is no horizon; that is, there is no limit to transgress. In another way, though, horizon is all there is. On the horizon something is constantly rising and setting. And yet this is neither the rise nor the fall, the orient nor the occident of sacrifice. It is, so to speak, "horizontality" itself. Or, rather, finitude. Or, better still, it is the fact that sense needs to be made of the infinite absence of appropriable sense. Again, "technology" might well constitute just such a horizon (so long as "technology" is understood as the regime of finitude and its "unworking"). That is, and there's no getting away from it, the closure of an immanence. This immanence, however, would neither lose nor lack transcendence. In other words, it would not be sacrifice in any sense of the word. What we used to call "transcendence" would signify instead that appropriation *is immanent*. Such "immanence," however, is not a vague coagulation; it is nothing more than its own horizon. The horizon holds existence at a distance from itself, in the separation or the "between" that constitutes it: *between* life and death ... We don't enter into this between, which is also the stage of *mimesis* and *methexis*. Not

⁹⁵¹ Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', pp. 60-61.

⁹⁵² Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', p. 52.

⁹⁵³ Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', p. 59.

because it would be an abyss, an altar, or an impenetrable heart, but because it is nothing other than the limit of finitude.⁹⁵⁴

In the next section I would like to present the way in which Nancy precisely does articulate *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις* on this basis, starting with Nancy's ratification of the dislocated, fractured interactions of *μέθεξις* and *μίμησις* as they are described in the aesthetics of Theodor Adorno.

⁹⁵⁴ Nancy, 'The Unsacrificeable', p. 76.

4.6 Adorno: negative μίμησις and catastrophic μέθεξις

Referring via Blanchot to Bataille's book on Lascaux, Nancy concurs with both in 2006 that the "birth of art" consists in a disruption of the simplicity of *τέχνη*, at the moment when, as Blanchot writes, 'finally, the one who breaks the bone or the stone with which to arm himself, also breaks it apart for his own delight'.⁹⁵⁵ Moreover, as Nancy states in 1994, with the first artistic gesture comes also the first human; the first monstration (from the Latin *monstrare*, to show⁹⁵⁶), engenders the first monstrousness (from the same root), that is, the first unnatural being. It is a gesture that is without end, in the teleological sense, unlike the technical 'gesture of picking up my glass', which 'stops when I've picked up the glass',⁹⁵⁷ it is the gesture that Kant calls '*purposiveness without purpose*', a formulation⁹⁵⁸ to which Nancy demands we remain true.⁹⁵⁹ In fact:

from Kant down to our day, including Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Adorno, Heidegger and our contemporaries, Derrida for instance, all the reflections about art agree in one way or another, in terms that are similar or different, that in art there is a question of something like what I am calling a gesture.⁹⁶⁰

From that list it is Adorno whom Nancy names, in the principal essay of 1994's *Muses*, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', as 'one of the ones who

⁹⁵⁵ Maurice Blanchot, *Friendship* (1971), trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 8.

⁹⁵⁶ Nancy evokes this etymological connection much more clearly with the original French *montrer*. See: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Les Muses* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1994), p. 122.

⁹⁵⁷ Nancy, 'Art Today', p. 97.

⁹⁵⁸ See Kant's 'Analytic of the Beautiful' and its development in the 'Analytic of Teleological Judgement', in: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (1790), trans. by James Creed Meredith & Nicholas Walker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹⁵⁹ Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, p. 90.

⁹⁶⁰ Nancy, 'Art Today', p. 97.

comes closest⁹⁶¹ to conceiving of the technical at the heart of the artistic, for while in one sense Adorno does repeat the disconnective moment we saw in Heidegger's and Gadamer's severance of the aesthetic from the aisthetic, in renouncing the 'consumptive, bourgeois satisfaction'⁹⁶² of aesthetic amusement, and indeed, even radicalising it by pointing out that "[m]ost works of art fall short of coinciding with a generic concept of art", in another sense Adorno flips the stakes entirely, by asserting to Nancy's approval that "the arts do not vanish completely in art".⁹⁶³ Moreover, as Jarvis notes, for Adorno:

Art imitates nature: but nothing like 'nature' exists as yet: art imitates what does not yet exist. For Adorno it can be said that all authentic art is a mimesis of utopia - yet this mimesis can be carried out only negatively. Art cannot provide an explicit image of utopia. The possible 'nature' which does not yet exist can only be imitated by the determinate negation of the falsely naturalized culture which does exist.⁹⁶⁴

The upshot of this "negative" dialectic, although Nancy does not say it, is that Adorno also comes closest to breaking with the nostalgic formula in which *μίμησις* is overcome, or overcomes itself, in subjugation to a communal *μέθεξις* that it makes present in its representation. Although Adorno's art is nostalgic insofar as its *μίμησις* points backwards, 'because for art, Utopia - the yet-to-exist - is draped in black, it remains in all its mediations recollection',⁹⁶⁵ nevertheless what is recalled is brought back as negative, not as an object of return or resolution, it is engaged rather as a moment of resistance to the positivity of the actual that can

⁹⁶¹ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 3.

⁹⁶² Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, p. 17.

⁹⁶³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (1961-69), cited in Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', 104 n. 2.

⁹⁶⁴ Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 100.

⁹⁶⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 135.

only begin to move into the yet-to-exist through this conflict.⁹⁶⁶ Elsewhere in the 1982 essay 'Noli Me Frangere' Nancy affirms this movement of tension between actual and mimetic as enacted in the very way Adorno writes, comparing his text to the fragments discussed in section (1.5.2), which tremble at their frayed edges, so too Adorno's dialectic, for Nancy, makes no attempt either to recuperate what is recalled nor even to '*maintain* the contradiction but to *bear* its rupture',⁹⁶⁷ such that much later in *Listening*, Nancy asserts that Adorno is one of but a few thinkers to write in a way that 'mak[es] sense resound beyond signification'.⁹⁶⁸ Like Gadamer, what this means for Adorno is that our modern art is tensed between two poles, the actuality that provides the material of their existence, and the negative *μίμησις* that ruptures it, although, unlike Gadamer, no new structure emerges from this conflict:

The truth content of artworks, as the negation of their existence, is mediated by them though they do not in any way communicate it. That by which truth content is more than what is posited by artworks is their methexis in history and the determinate critique that they exercise through their form. History in artworks is not something made, and history alone frees the work from being merely something posited or

⁹⁶⁶ Nancy and Adorno offer divergent attitudes to the utopian. For while Adorno conceives of art's participation in the construction of a future as blind to the nature of what is to come, only beckoning it in by destroying the actual to make space for it, and as such appears to parallel Nancy's rejection of political or hermeneutic constructions that fix their object in advance, nevertheless, Adorno still states that '[e]ach artwork is Utopia insofar as through its form it anticipates what would finally be itself, and this converges with the demand for the abrogation of the spell of self-identity cast by the subject'. Which is to say, Adorno trusts that whatever is brought about in an artistic disruption will be itself, how it is meant to be. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 135. For more discussion, see: Richard Wolin, 'Utopia, Mimesis, and Reconciliation: A Redemptive Critique of Adorno's Aesthetic Theory', in *Representations* 32 (Autumn 1990) 33-49.

⁹⁶⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy & Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Noli Me Frangere' (1982), trans. by Brian Holmes, in *The Birth to Presence*, pp. 266-78 (p. 272).

⁹⁶⁸ Nancy, *Listening*, p. 34.

manufactured: Truth content is not external to history but rather its crystallization in the works.⁹⁶⁹

Like *ἀλήθεια*, Adorno's artwork mediates the distribution of light and shade, but in contrast to it, Adorno's artwork at no point presents what has been brought to light. For just as much as Adorno's negative *μίμησις* consists in a recollection of obsolescence, the actuality upon which it works (which is also the material of its own actuality) is no less a product of history and its sedimentation, and is as such entirely incidental, transcending the intention of the artist or the experience of the viewer by its very universality. Insofar as the artwork *does* enact a material participation in truth, it does not communicate it, rather '[a]rt's methexis in the tenebrous, its negativity', is 'its tense relation to permanent catastrophe'.⁹⁷⁰ Art's *μέθεξις* with history, its mimetic participation in the material reconfiguration of the historical truth given to it incidentally in the actual, is not a content to be communicated by the artwork, but a process it is engaged in, and the maker or artist who sets the artwork to work has no access to this content, they can only presuppose it in the forms historically available for their *μίμησις*. In this way their *μίμησις* is political,⁹⁷¹ not artistic, and the artwork's *μέθεξις*, that which constitutes its special artistic relation to truth, can never be disclosed. Adorno's *μέθεξις* never presents anything positive; for Adorno art arises from, but cannot communicate, the truth of its historical conditioning nor what comes after the conflictive act of *μίμησις* that is its *μέθεξις* in the reconfiguration of those conditions. The upshot of this, Adorno states in a lecture of 1966, which Nancy cites at length in his first footnote to *The Muses*, is:

⁹⁶⁹ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 133.

⁹⁷⁰ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 135.

⁹⁷¹ For more on the intimacy between art and politics' negative engagement with the actual in Adorno, see: Michael Rothberg, 'Adorno: Culture in the Wake of Catastrophe', in *New German Critique* 72 (Autumn 1997), 45-81.

In relation to the arts, art is something that forms itself, contained potentially in each of them insofar as each must seek to liberate itself from the contingency of its quasi-natural moments by traversing them. But such an idea of art within the arts is not positive; it is nothing that one can grasp as simply present in them, but only as negation... Art has its dialectical essence in that it accomplishes its movement toward unity only by passing through plurality. Otherwise the movement would be abstract and powerless. Its relation to the empirical order is essential to art itself. If it overlooks that relation, then what it takes to be its spirit remains exterior to it like any material whatsoever; it is only in the empirical order that the spirit becomes content. The constellation of art and the arts has its place within the concept of art.⁹⁷²

What Nancy finds important here is that although the truth of art, its *μέθεξις* in the reconfiguration of history, does entirely transcend any possible moment of aesthetic contact, determining art as an unconsciousness or even inhuman agent in the formation of the actual shared material horizon, for the very same reason, no particular artwork can ever claim to present the truth of this *μέθεξις*, each artwork falls short of the total force of art, which gains its energy not from a unitary or unifying field that would nullify its insurgence, but from its internal differing, “the free movement of discrete moments (which is what art is all about)”,⁹⁷³ the multiplicity of its transgressions. If art were to resolve into a singular essence it would cease to be art by becoming nothing but actuality.

There are, I would therefore suggest, three interconnected reasons why Nancy affirms Adorno’s above all of the other names. First of all, unlike Heidegger’s

⁹⁷² Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Die Kunst und die Künste’ (1966), cited in: Nancy, ‘Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?’, 103n.1.

⁹⁷³ *Aesthetic Theory* (1961-69), cited in Nancy, ‘Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?’, 103 n. 1.

dialectic of beauty and *μίμησις*, or Gadamer's presentation of *μίμησις*, Adorno's notion of art invokes no absolute distinction between total immanence and total transcendence. It is something that only transcends the individual insofar as one finite individual can never be cogent of the total conditions (material and temporal) of his or her existence. Second, Adorno does not claim that art ever represents that totality of conditions back to the individual. For Adorno, *μίμησις* is never put to the work of, or made to represent a communal *μέθεξις*. Irreducible from its technical instances, the material temporality of its happening, and emptied of determinate content, neither presenting nor representing, it is clear that Adorno's aesthetics really describes nothing but gesture, nothing but purpose without purposiveness. Third and finally, there is, in Adorno's thought of art, no origin proper; there is rather an indefinite distribution of finite artistic moments that, while they are indeed world forming, do not do so according to a common intent or a shared principle.

4.7 Nancy on the presentation of presentation

I would like to suggest that Nancy's contribution to an understanding of the nature of artistic *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* turns on an alignment of the Romantic and the technical definitions just presented. As Nancy puts it in 2007's *Le plaisir au dessin* [*The Pleasure in Drawing*], by his account, '[m]imesis proceeds from the desire for *methexis* - of participation', that is, in accordance with the Romantic schema of ambivalence and absence, *μίμησις* is the desire to 'imitate the inimitable', yet, in accordance with art's irreducible technicity, and, moreover, the world's irreducible ecotechnicity, the inimitable is to be understood neither as pure negation nor pure transcendence, but rather as the excess that escapes every presentation that touches it, such that what is at stake in *μίμησις* is not the desire for presence, immediacy, or communal *μέθεξις*, it is the desire to be involved in the presencing of the world, its sense, to draw a line or form a thing in order 'to imitate the inimitable "creation," or more simply, the inimitable and unimaginable uprising [*surgissement*] of being in general.'⁹⁷⁴ Or, as Nancy puts it in an essay of the same year:

(If the imago was first formed on the basis of a death mask,⁹⁷⁵ it was because, from the moment of the mask's molding, *mimesis* modulated the *methexis* through which the living shared the death of the deceased. It is this sharing of death – of its harrowing and hallucinatory force - it is the *methexis* of disappearance that properly serves as a model for *mimesis*.) The image is the effect of a desire (of the desire to rejoin the other) or, better yet, it opens up the space and hollows out the chasm of this desire. Every image is the Idea of a desire. It is conformity itself as "self" of a desire, not of a posited-being.⁹⁷⁶

⁹⁷⁴ Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, p. 64.

⁹⁷⁵ Image comes from *imago*, the Roman word for death mask.

⁹⁷⁶ Nancy, 'The Image: Mimesis & Methexis', p. 12.

The image, for Nancy, makes the in-order-to structure conspicuous precisely by exiting it, that is, in just the same way that Heidegger described Van Gogh's shoe-image. As Nancy writes in 'The Image – The Distinct', '[t]he thing as image is thus distinct from its being-there in the sense of the *Vorhanden*, its simple presence in the homogeneity of the world and in the linking together of natural or technological operations',⁹⁷⁷ and in being distinguished, raising the image from a ground, the ground is itself framed in relief, indicated at the borders upon which it touches the image. But unlike Heidegger's account, this indication or gesturing toward the ground absolutely does not present it as a determinate regime of disclosure in view of which the image would become a representation, drawing its meaning in resemblance to the world from which it has arisen. No, the image 'resembles *itself* and thus it gathers *itself* together',⁹⁷⁸ and 'the distance in which its self-coincidence is separated in order to coincide with itself, leaves behind its status as a thing and becomes an intimacy'.⁹⁷⁹ In its relief, the image gestures towards the world in an announcement merely that there *is* world, not what specific distribution of meaning is currently at play, but rather that there is meaning and existence at all, and in doing so, serves as a moment of resistance to semantic structures involved in the opposite operation, of illustrating a fixed organisation:

[The image] is outside the world, since in itself it is the intensity of a concentration of world. It is also outside language, since in itself it is the assembling of a sense without signification. The image suspends the course of the world and of meaning—of meaning as a course or current of sense (meaning in discourse, meaning that is current and valid): but

⁹⁷⁷ Nancy, 'The Image – The Distinct', p. 9.

⁹⁷⁸ Nancy, 'The Image – The Distinct', p. 9.

⁹⁷⁹ Nancy, 'The Image – The Distinct', p. 10.

it affirms all the more a *sense* (therefore an “insensible”) that is *selfsame* with what it gives to be sensed (that is, itself).⁹⁸⁰

The image is therefore opposed to a counter-regime, not only signification but also its support, the ‘decoration or illustration’.⁹⁸¹ This, in fact, forms the basis of a critique of ‘Art Today’, an aesthetic movement that spreads across ‘painting, drawing, sculpture, engraving, ceramics’, ‘experimental cinema’, “‘body art” or “land art”’, ‘installation’, and ‘*performance*’,⁹⁸² without being defined under any specific ism, other than according to its *de facto* contemporaneity. Echoing Adorno, Nancy asserts that this is the most empty definition of an artistic movement possible, since ‘art is always contemporary because it always belongs to a creation of forms in the space of the contemporary, in the space of an actuality’.⁹⁸³ But what art precisely does not do is bring the meaning of this actuality to rest, rather, ‘the meaning that art shapes’, is ‘the meaning that allows for a circulation of recognitions, identifications, feelings, but without fixing them in a final signification’.⁹⁸⁴ ‘Never’, Nancy goes on, does art say to us “the meaning of the world, the meaning of life, is this”’.⁹⁸⁵

And this is what leads to a questioning of “art today” regarding those artists who ‘want to characterize themselves as witnesses, even sometimes instead of artists’.⁹⁸⁶ For this pathos leads art down two parallel paths. Firstly, the artworks themselves become things that ‘shoot a big block of significations at me’, as if to

⁹⁸⁰ Nancy, ‘The Image – The Distinct’, pp. 10-1.

⁹⁸¹ Nancy, ‘The Image – The Distinct’, p. 12.

⁹⁸² Nancy, ‘Art Today’, pp. 91-2.

⁹⁸³ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 92.

⁹⁸⁴ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 92.

⁹⁸⁵ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 92.

⁹⁸⁶ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 95.

say, for instance, “here you are, this is war”, famine, rape...⁹⁸⁷ Secondly, the artist who bears witness also makes a more a much general statement about the state of the contemporary, that not only is the world something signifiable, something that has come to rest in a general way as a certain distribution of determinate meanings, but that, moreover, art has nothing to contribute to this arrangement, that ‘there is no possibility of giving form, or creating meaning’.⁹⁸⁸ ‘So’, Nancy laments, ‘I find myself embarrassed and sometimes even simply greatly disapproving of certain artistic gestures which are almost exclusively gestures of signification’.⁹⁸⁹

Nevertheless, even in the most politically motivated work, the excess of signification with which it is loaded cannot negate the excess of sense from which the image arises in relief. ‘Sylvie Blocher hangs this parachutist’s uniform on the wall, she nails it up in a certain way, she nails a head of hair over it: of course, there is the excess of signification I spoke of, but there is also the gesture, her artist’s gesture’.⁹⁹⁰ Beyond and beneath the political signification, there is what Kant calls, and Nancy reaffirms,⁹⁹¹ the work’s ‘*purposiveness without purpose*’.⁹⁹² For a ‘technical work is there for itself, it has its own function, its own usefulness, it bears its finality along with it, this bottle bears its finality as a container of liquid, of allowing one to pour liquids’.⁹⁹³ But with the artwork there is something else, ‘its character as work always consists of pointing outside the work’, that is, to the world, not a fixed signified world, but to the fact that there is world, and that what is fixed and signified is always exceeded by that world, an excess of sense that

⁹⁸⁷ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 95.

⁹⁸⁸ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 95.

⁹⁸⁹ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 95.

⁹⁹⁰ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 97.

⁹⁹¹ Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, p. 90.

⁹⁹² Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, pp. 174-8.

⁹⁹³ Nancy, ‘Art Today’, p. 98.

always offers possibility and future, what Heidegger, Nancy writes approvingly, refers to as a totality of 'significabilities'.⁹⁹⁴

Moreover the artwork also always presents the viewer to herself, just like the traced hands on the walls of Cosquer Cave, Nancy writes, 'these hands present nothing other than presentation itself, its open gesture, its displaying',⁹⁹⁵ a presentation not only of the fact that there is world, that there is an indefinitely multiplying network of surfaces spreading out from the outlines of the hands, but also that there is an "I", and a "we", from which the world is distinct, and, in fact from which the experience is distinct, in its ek-sistence. Nancy writes in 1994:

The pleasure men take in *mimēsis* is made up of the troubling feeling that comes over them in the face of recognizable strangeness, or in the excitement that comes from a recognition that one would have to say is *estranged*.

I recognize there that I am unrecognizable to myself, and without that there would be no recognition. I recognise that this makes for a being as well as a non-being, and that I am one in the other. I am the being-one-in-the-other.⁹⁹⁶

Or, as Nancy puts it in 1999:

We touch on the same and on this power that affirms this: I am indeed what I am, and I am this well beyond or well on this side of what I am for you, for your aims and your manipulations. We touch on the intensity of this withdrawal or this excess. Thus mimesis encompasses methexis, a participation or a contagion through which the image seizes us.⁹⁹⁷

⁹⁹⁴ Nancy, 'Art Today', p. 92.

⁹⁹⁵ Nancy, 'Painting in the Grotto', pp. 71-2.

⁹⁹⁶ Nancy, 'Painting in the Grotto', pp. 69-70.

⁹⁹⁷ Nancy, 'The Image – The Distinct', p. 9.

And then again in 2007:

The line, or the mark, or better yet, the tracing of the line - this gesture is nothing other than the infinite in actuality that drawing shows us, that it extends toward us so that we produce it again within us, so that we ourselves become mimesis of this mimesis of the birth to form. This includes methexis as well - I embrace the line that I am gazing at or the musical movement that I hear. Their desire is reborn in me and for me - or rather, in a withdrawn body [*corps retiré*] that is not “me” but the other “self” in me that harmonizes with this motion and emotion.⁹⁹⁸

Given in art is not only the exposition of the possibility and excess of world, but the possibility and excess of self, and, moreover, the “harmony” that connects the two. To draw out what this means, I would like to indicate the relevance of these analyses of artistic *μίμησις* by returning it back to the “start”. In closing, I will suggest that Nancy’s “mature” standing on art can be read as a highly complementary supplement to his early collaborative work on literature with Lacoue-Labarthe. This is meant only to be a preliminary indication for the direction of future enquiries, which I will touch on again in the conclusion of the thesis.

It was noted in section (1.5.2) that in 1978, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy offer an analysis of the Jena Romantics’ literary ideal of the fragment. The fragment, for the Romantics, in its self-sufficiency, self-presence and fullness of meaning, reflects the absolute nature of literature, its self-containment as a world-unto-itself. This, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy write, represents none other than the ‘*theoretical* institutionalization of the *literary genre*’.⁹⁹⁹ But it is an instantiation of

⁹⁹⁸ Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing*, pp. 93-4.

⁹⁹⁹ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 3.

semantic autonomy precisely motivated by its subtraction elsewhere, for, as the two authors state, the Romantic movement essentially forms a response to Kant's critical project, attempting to assign an availability of meaning to an artistic act in compensation for Kant's reduction of the Ego to a structure representable only by the transcendental imagination.¹⁰⁰⁰ As Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy have it, the Romantics offset the loss of a self-present Ego or subject (assuming that Descartes' *cogito* can be considered self-present¹⁰⁰¹) by affirming the creative act through which any subject can assert its freedom and autonomy, and, moreover, present its subjectivity back to itself in and as the act.¹⁰⁰²

The requirement, then, is for an entirely autonomous artistic act, an act that rejects Kantian representation by reorienting art's object back upon itself, that is, away from the model and toward the avant-garde, transforming it into a praxis of subjective process in which nothing but the act and the actor are intended. It is to this demand that the theoretically charged form of the Romantic fragment responds, as a work 'entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself',¹⁰⁰³ Schlegel's words, cited by Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy. As noted in the introductory chapter of this thesis, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy respond to the Romantic theory of the fragment, via Benjamin, by asserting that the fragment is indeed a reflection of the nature of literature, but absolutely not in the way the Romantics had thought. In a prefiguration of the topology of singularity, exposure, enclosure, and limit, which I have argued throughout this thesis is a fundament of

¹⁰⁰⁰ Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰¹ Nancy refutes this in a number of places and suggests that the hiatus designated between the "I" and its enunciation "am" in Descartes represents a major step in the deconstruction of subjectivity. See for example: Nancy, *Ego Sum*, and: Nancy, 'Corpus' (b), pp. 25-9.

¹⁰⁰² Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰³ Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenaeumsfragment 206', in Lacoue-Labarthe & Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, p. 40.

the Nancean text, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy state that the fragment is precisely nothing in itself, but rather, like one element of a mosaic, montage, or maybe even bricolage, the literary fragment creates meaning not in its self-containment, but rather across the extremity of its heterogeneity. Furthermore, as I noted, by Lacoue-Labarthe's and Nancy's account, no totalizing picture emerges from the montage, rather, literature in general is equally as fragmentary as the fragment itself, it makes sense at its divisions, both internally, and at its external disciplinary exposures.

In light of this, I would argue that it is clear that Nancy's more recent treatments of *μίμησις*, and the *μέθεξις* from which it cannot be subtracted, wherein the artistic gesture of both the one who draws and the one who embraces the drawing shows not only that the world is in excess of their appropriations but that they too are foreign to themselves, outside of themselves, provides the exact counterpoint of the auto-subjective creative ideal of the Jena Romantics. For what is reflected or recognised in *μίμησις*, by Nancy's later accounts, is nothing determinate, no specific totality of significations and no stable subject to whom a presentation of these meanings could be offered. What is presented, Nancy writes in 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', is 'presentation',¹⁰⁰⁴ which is to say, neither a subject nor an object, but instead the negotiation between the two, the way their mutual exposure internally and externally conditions them, making them what they are:

One could also put it this way: art is the transcendence of immanence as such, the transcendence of an immanence that does not go outside itself in transcending, which is not ex-static but ek-sistant. A

¹⁰⁰⁴ Nancy, 'Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?', p. 34.

“transimmanence.” Art exposes this. Once again, it does not “represent” this. Art is its ex-position. The transimmanence, or patency, of the world takes place as art, as works of art. And that is why these works themselves work a definitive torsion on the couple transcendence/immanence.¹⁰⁰⁵

Now sensibility, Nancy states in *The Sense of the World*, as it has been understood since Aristotle,¹⁰⁰⁶ is simultaneously ‘the act of sensing and the act of the sensed’,¹⁰⁰⁷ which means that for Nancy ‘[e]xistence is the act internally differing from its own sense’, sensible ec-stasis, or as Nancy puts it in 2002’s *Listening*, ‘a feeling-oneself-feel [*se-sentir-sentir*]: or, if you prefer, sensing is a subject, or it does not sense’.¹⁰⁰⁸ What art presents, by this account, is a subject. But entirely at odds with the Romantic conception of the artistic presentation of a self-present subject back to itself by way of its flexing of its creativity and liberty, the “subject” that art presents on Nancy’s account consists in a mutual exposure, the parties of which do not stake an existence claim beyond their *referring* to one another, that, is, harking back to section (1.5.3) of our introduction where the concept was introduced only as a stylistic-methodological device, as a *renvoi*. The sensing-itself of sensation is, for Nancy:

A reference [*renvoi*¹⁰⁰⁹], or in Baudelaire’s terms, a response from one touch to another. This response is neither a relation of external homology nor an internal osmosis, but what might be described, with the etymology of re-spondere, as a pledge, a promise given in response to a demand, to an appeal: the different touchings promise each other the communication of their interruptions; each brings about a touch on

¹⁰⁰⁵ Nancy, ‘Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?’, pp. 34-5.

¹⁰⁰⁶ See for example: Aristotle, *De Anima*, 418a & 415b.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Nancy, *Listening*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Nancy, *Les Muses*, p. 45.

the difference of the other (of an other or several others, and virtually of all others, but of a totality without totalization). This “co-responsence” disengages itself from signification.¹⁰¹⁰

Indeed, in our earlier remarks on the nature of the body in chapter one, the term *renvoi* was translated as “return” in Nancy’s statement that ‘the body is the return [*renvoi*¹⁰¹¹] of the “outside” that is to this “inside” that it isn’t’.¹⁰¹² And its conceptual import in regards to a sensuous ontology of the subject is entirely homologous with the mode of deployment in which we observed that *renvoi* named the “referring” between two texts, their *Auseinandersetzung*, a notion of semantic arrival at the contact point that determines the contemporaneous as its textual exposure to an “origin” that does not pre-exist this exposure. Here, *renvoi* means just the same thing, albeit regarding the exposure of sensibility, as Nancy puts it in 1999:

What we usually call a "response" is a solution; here, though, it is a matter of the referral or the return [*renvoi*] of the promise or the engagement. Sense is the engagement between several beings, and truth always, inevitably, lies in this between or in this with.¹⁰¹³

What this is all to say, is where philosophy, for Nancy, has the ability to make sense in the exposure of textual singularities, the artwork has the ability to present sense in the making, as the *renvoi* or referring that is the sensing of a subject, referred back to itself, a referring to a referring that discloses world and observer as not only indeterminate, but also irreducible from their exposure to one another, from the one’s ecstasis and the other’s transimmanence.

¹⁰¹⁰ Nancy, ‘Why Are There Several Arts and Not Just One?’, p. 23.

¹⁰¹¹ Nancy, ‘Corpus’ (b), p. 66 (parallel French text).

¹⁰¹² Nancy, ‘Corpus’ (b), p. 67.

¹⁰¹³ Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘Responding to Existence’ (1999), trans. by Sara Guyer, in *A Finite Thinking*, ed. by Sparks, pp.289-99, (p. 296).

4.8 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to build upon the analysis of Nancy's ontological response to the concepts of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις* in chapters two and three by approaching from the reverse direction, documenting the transformation of aesthetic notions of *μίμησις* that occurs in Nancy's binding together of *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, immanence and transcendence, and, in fact, ontology and the aesthetic, or rather, aisthetic. For in Nancy's thought of the ecotechnical, we saw, the ontological is intimately connected to the sensibility, and it was therefore the aim of this chapter to indicate in what way Nancy's philosophy of art is informed by this emphasis on the sensory limit at which *Dasein* and world are mutually exposed. Moreover, it was my contention in this chapter that when Nancy advocates a rejuvenation of first philosophy by taking singular plurality as its empirical and theoretical starting point, what he has in mind is a first-philosophy modelled on his understanding of the artwork and image as phenomena in which the phenomenon transgresses itself, presenting the presentation of singularities in their exposure to each other, and indicating the excess on each side of the exposure, the transimmanent excesses of *Dasein* and world.

It was noted that a dual trajectory prevailed within a certain strand of philosophical aesthetics, wherein not only is the representative function of *μίμησις* divorced from the sensuous moment of either the maker or the observer, but furthermore, that the mimetic operation is placed at the service of a communal *μέθεξις*, serving to reflect a shared identity back upon a people. Nancy, we observed, critiques this trajectory on the basis of its adherence to a certain Romantic nostalgic conception of ceremonial and theatrical *μίμησις* as gesturing towards a lost immanence or *μέθεξις* once attained by sacrifice or lived in myth, which can now only be

represented as a loss. Nancy, to the contrary, affirms the absence at the heart of *μίμησις* and, as we saw, praises Adorno's aesthetics for treating *μίμησις* accordingly, as a tensed dialectic between creation and destruction without regiment or regime, and, thereby, Adorno's understanding of art's *μέθεξις* as the process of world forming as irreducible from the indefinite plurality of its technical instants.

Finally, it was noted that Nancy determines the artwork to be nothing beyond its technical and aesthetic happenings, and, moreover, that art functions as a cancellation of technical teleology, opening the purposive into a gesture with no purpose other than its own gesturing. In this much, both the image and the artwork are understood by Nancy to present nothing but this presenting or gesturing, which is to say, the artwork gestures towards the excess and possibility of world at its boundaries, and the excess of self of an ec-static observer witnessing his or her own exposure or referring to the world, which is to say, the artwork presents transimmanence.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

5.1 Summary

If it is indeed the case, as this thesis suggests, that the distinction of Nancy's written style emerges from the ontological determination he ascribes to syntactic singularities, such that they are subject to the same rules of exposure as any other existent thing, then it might be easy to suppose that for a commentator, someone who seeks to cherry-pick elements of a primary text and rearrange them with a discussion in a way that might accommodate a reader's understanding, Nancy's work would offer a plethora of expository possibility. But to simply take a reading and walk away content in the receipt of a novel arrangement of meanings is something reserved for the primary enjoyment of reading Nancy's books themselves. To attempt to do justice to the work in a commentary is a different matter entirely. The requirement in this case is not to relay either a particular transitory experience of the text or pin it down to a fixed signification, but rather to try and demonstrate certain potentialities that may serve as preliminary positions for future engagements with the Nancean text.

It was the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to make two interrelated contributions to the body of scholarly knowledge on the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy, that might aid such engagements. Firstly, it was to be maintained that Nancy's ontological commitments require locating within the context of an already available connectedness of contemporary and Ancient Greek philosophies. Secondly, it was to be argued that identifying and articulating this connection to the Greeks via the contemporary, is in return the key to understanding where Nancy's work fits in the contemporary scene, specifically in relation to the debate over the philosophical priority of immanence or transcendence, and regarding the relation between art and philosophy. It was suggested that as a merging of the textual notions of

Auseinandersetzung and *renvoi*, Nancy's philosophical approach to these diverse epochs and regimes of thought seeks not to determine them in isolation, but to allow the meaning of their corresponding to arrive in the exposure that constitutes the contemporary.

The key terms chosen for the investigation of these correspondences were *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, for two reasons. Firstly, the concepts have a long and intertwined history that connects the inaugural texts of ancient Greek philosophy, through Neo-Platonism, Scholasticism, and neo-Kantianism, into twentieth century thought and the philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy, where the terms are evoked together as mutually determining. Secondly, the lengthily documented relationship between the concepts delineates a meeting point between two regional discourses, the ontological interrogation of the immanence or transcendence of what is, in which *μέθεξις* regularly names a principle of transcendence and *μίμησις* a principle of immanence, and the aesthetic interrogation of the relationship between art and truth, in which *μίμησις* regularly names a resemblance or process of copying, and *μέθεξις* the participation of a community or world in that resemblance or process of copying. Nancy's response, I maintained throughout the thesis, is that first of all, there is no *μίμησις* without *μέθεξις* (and vice versa), and that, secondly and concomitantly, there is no immanence without transcendence (and vice versa). I would like here to summarise the trajectories drawn within this thesis, before finishing by noting some pathways along which to extend this research.

Μέθεξις and its derivatives, non-terminological words for sharing, participating and partaking, arrive charged with philosophical weight in the works of Plato, first under an ethical inflection, before taking on the more general character of a name for the transcendent participation of the sensible in the ideal. Moreover, the

Human for Plato is thus given determination as the creature existing in this between place, with one eye on the immanent and the other on the transcendent, interacting with the former with technical objects and the latter with images. Indeed the communication of an image is named in the concept of *μίμησις*, a word Plato sometimes uses to describe the sensible as a copy of the ideal. While this is not always the case, Aristotle nevertheless documents the ambiguity of the terms in Plato's texts, while at the same asserting that whichever name is used, what is described is an extraneous principle of communication necessitated by Plato's fracturing of the unity of being into ontologically distinct realms.

However, *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, both in Plato and in Aristotle's less polemical moments, are certainly not simply identical. For *μίμησις* names at least two other things in Plato's work, namely, the productive copying of the artist and poet, and the emulative copying of education. Now it is certainly the case that Plato holds this *μίμησις* to a methexic standard, qualifying it according to the degree to which the model of emulation or teaching participates in the ideal, but in Aristotle's development of the concept, where education and art are to some extent merged in the central position given to the theatre within the self-determination of the polis, *μίμησις* is definitively severed from the specificity of a model, and thus from Platonic *μέθεξις*, instead referring the shared understanding of an audience back to itself, reflecting the group determination of the meaning of the spectacle back upon the people as an image of their own immanent communion in a shared meaning, a communion which we saw in later chapters also came to be referred to as *μέθεξις* by certain thinkers.

Rather than devoting too much space to interrogating the Platonic and Aristotelian texts themselves, the thesis focused on documenting the contemporary reception

of, and response to, these concepts and their philosophical implications. Firstly, this agenda allowed a much more in depth discussion of the contemporary scene to which Nancy responds and against and into which his work can be positioned, a scene in which these receptions and responses are to a certain sense given in ready-made interpretations. But secondly, maybe more importantly, if it is indeed the case as I suggest it is for a Nancean methodology, that meaning arrives in an exposure of syntactic singularities that do not properly pre-exist their exposure to one another, then it makes little sense to speak of the Ancient Greek texts “in themselves” outside of the contemporary confluence within which Nancy goes to work. The focus of the thesis was therefore determined not only by its purpose, but also by the necessity of maintaining the internal coherence of the material it attempts to open up. Nevertheless, some major tenets of Plato’s and Aristotle’s positions have remained visible in the background of the chapters I am about to recap.

5.2 Ancient Greek themes

Chapter two, which explored the tension between philosophy's "immanent" social conditions (although as chapter four argued, these conditions are not immanent at all on Nancy's reading), and the transcendent structure of its significations, focused on Heidegger's and Deleuze's responses to the traditional problematic. Both of these responses clearly shadowed Aristotle's critique of *μέθεξις* as something to condemn for its invocation of separation and hierarchy, leading them to affirm an immanent inflection of *μίμησις* in its place, either as an expression of political communion for Heidegger, or a heterarchical principle of the distribution of intensities on a homogenous plane for Deleuze. For Heidegger, immanence and transcendence are derivative to the reduction of the real to the empirical and transcendental, with *μέθεξις* the name for the relation between these two once they become misunderstood by psychologistic projection as genuine realms of being. For subtracting this transcendence, I argued, Heidegger compensates with immanence, describing the articulation of beings as emerging not from a participation in the ideal, but from a community's participation in a shared essence. In turn, *μίμησις* for Heidegger was a way in which this essence can be expressed.

However where Heidegger affirms the Aristotelian dictum of "being" said in many ways, interpreting it as the philosophical challenge of hermeneutic circularity and ontological difference to interpret beings in their being and the being of beings in ongoing modification, and moreover, to account for being and non-being *together* in their ontological movement and folding, Deleuze reduces the dictum to mere univocity. Following Scotus, Deleuze asserts that every sense of being is the same, that thought and being are identical, and that all that is, is a plane of homogeneity, a transcendental field of pure immanence. In his project of

“reversing” Platonism, Deleuze rejects *μέθεξις* for the hierarchy and heterogeneity it implies, and affirms *μίμησις* as it is presented in Book X of the *Republic*, as the deprioritised relating of this plane to itself.

Chapter three, which was concerned with the interrelatedness of hermeneutics and ontology both in Nancy’s work and his correspondents, focused on Gadamer’s response to the questions surrounding *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*. Here, we saw that Gadamer already adds a layer of dialogue to the conversation this thesis is presenting, for Gadamer, it was noted, is already responding to Greek thought via Heidegger, his old master. In fact, Gadamer uses his Heideggerian induction to refute another of his old teachers, Hartmann, who, it was noted, interprets *μέθεξις* as an individuating principle dividing higher unified ideal objects into sub-species and concrete entities, by diaeresis. Gadamer presents his response to Hartmann as an explicit affirmation of Platonic *μέθεξις* as something wholly available to the senses and only aporetic when appropriated by language. In fact, Gadamer asserts that *μέθεξις* is the ontological precondition of language and dialectic, such that the impossibility of linguistic appropriation points rather to its necessity. This accommodation of the transcendent within the immanent provided a stark contrast to the immanentist accounts outlined in the prior chapter.

We then saw that in his later work, Gadamer interprets *μέθεξις* as the temporal hiatus that structures *Dasein*’s openness to novelty. Furthermore, and, although he avoids describing it in these terms and claims to reject *μίμησις*, nevertheless, Gadamer also echoes Aristotle when he describes the communal self-determination of a people through their projection of meaning upon an artwork that itself has no model. In this way, I suggested, Gadamer brings the two schemas, Platonic and Aristotelian, together.

However, by providing a normative communal base point of shared meaning into which the novelty and transcendence of *μέθεξις* can arrive, a political immanence or *Teilhabe* that Gadamer also calls *μέθεξις*, Gadamer too ends up advocating a reductive, immediate type of immanence. Identifying this communal type of *μέθεξις* with *Mitsein*, Gadamer determines it as deep connection and togetherness, most unlike the cleavage of its transcendent or temporal counterpart.

The final chapter, four, which sought to explore the centrality of aesthetic sensibility and aesthetic experience in Nancy's work, again focused on Gadamer's and Heidegger's responses to *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, but this time the thesis approached from the angle of their philosophies of art. While the two thinkers disagree both conceptually and textually, I suggested that their homology lies in their repetition of the Aristotelian trope of a political immanence structured by an origination and communion around a self-reflexive artwork, a trope that we noted is also taken up by Romantic German thought, certain anthropologists, and Jungian psychoanalysis. Moreover, both thinkers definitively sever art and the aesthetic from its relation to the aisthetic, its meaning-for-the-senses, and in this way render it sovereign, almost totalitarian.

Heidegger disconnects *μίμησις* from beauty in the same way as Aristotle. For while the *μίμησις* of an artwork is for Heidegger its ability to influence the regime of what counts as being, the distribution of light and shade, by allowing a community to orient their shared world around it, beauty, on the other hand, is, as Keats has it, truth, which is to say, *ἀλήθεια*, a reminder of the sheer sensory manifestation of a being, already laden with meaning, prior to any reflection, use, or taxonomy. Where *μίμησις* originates a world for Heidegger, beauty discloses it. Gadamer, it was noted, disagrees that art is mimetic at all. For Gadamer, *μίμησις* is the name

for an archaic mode of representation in which both the model and media of emulation were meant to disappear in the reality of the representation itself. Nowadays, we saw Gadamer assert, art, and in particular tragic theatre, is a focal point at which the universal consensus is reflected as a cultural image, the truth of the audience to whom the representation makes sense, as in the case of a portrait of Plato. In both cases, clearly, the communal version of *μέθεξις* produces a political immanence to compensate for the absence of the transcendent.

Offering an alternative in this chapter, however, was Adorno, who not only conceives of *μίμησις* as pure negativity, a nostalgic force that retrieves nothing, only disrupting the actuality of the present, but also rethinks *μέθεξις* as this rupture itself, an artistic participation in the redistribution of the actual that neither models nor presents it. Adorno as such refuses the sovereignty of art, marking it as nothing but the sum total of every finite instance of resistance and disruption.

5.3 Nancy's position

Nancy's responses to this contemporary scene were outlined as follows, and all, I argue, revolve around Nancy's fundamental ontological and topological insight: there is for Nancy no exclusive choice to be made between the figures of immanence and transcendence because both are disimplications or abstractions of one primordial, transcendental (in the Scholastic sense) law of objectuality. Unity, or singularity as Nancy calls it, means to be enclosed and distinguished, and a distinction requires something from which to be distinct. As such, for Nancy all beings are beings insofar as they are distinct from each other, which means divided from each other at a limit or boundary at which they nevertheless touch. For Nancy, enclosure equals exposure and to be is to be conditioned by other beings, mutually.

As such, there cannot be absolute immanence according to Nancy's topological commitments, for if the boundary between two beings were to dissolve, they would cease to be distinct, which means, cease to be. Furthermore, neither can there be absolute transcendence, because the absolutely distinct would be by Nancy's account a contradiction in terms, distinct from nothing and therefore indistinct. Beings in exposure to one another, co-articulating their shared limits, are both immanent and transcendent to one another, "right at" each other. There is, of course, always an excess, a horizon of beings that are not in direct contact, not immanent to one another. But this excess does not transcend in the traditional sense, because it is still connected by the vast network of mediations, exposures, that constitute the world as the sum total of beings. In Nancy's versions of immanence and transcendence there is still intimate contact and sublime excess, but there is no longer immediacy or absolution.

So in regards to chapter two's questioning of the immanent conditions, but transcendent apparatus of philosophy, while Nancy does agree that we have indeed lost certain hierarchical structures (mythical, ideological, theological, political, or otherwise), he refuses to conceive of our world as the remainder of this loss, as an immanent horizon defined by the subtraction of some transcendence. For Nancy, as just stated, the world's immanence and transcendence is comprised internally, as the innumerable finite hiatuses that enclose and expose every being. This is not the same as nihilistically affirming the absence of the absolutely signified, but for Nancy demands that the oriented interval that constitutes meaning be understood not as a signification, but as *sens*, across the pre-linguistic distribution and relatedness of beings in the continued circulation and renegotiation of shared limits.

"Being", for Nancy, is not one principle said in many analogical ways, nor is it the hermeneutic circularity modulating regional disclosures against the kosmotheoretical whole, and nor is it be reduced to univocity. Rather, it is nothing other than the plurality of beings and announcements; repeating a phrase taken from Nancy's *Muses* that I have used time again throughout the thesis, here Nancy replaces a principle of the plural with the plural as principle. The sum total of the distribution of this heterogeneous transimmanence is the world, the materially, sensorially, and electronically connected circuit of singularities mutually enclosing and exposing. Meaning, in turn, is the being toward the world of itself, at every finite hiatus.

Furthermore, because, by Nancy's account, beings are produced or distinguished both by their internal resistance and external exposure, mutually, the Platonic and

Aristotelian schemas of production cited throughout this chapter are transformed. The negotiation of forces by which beings come to presence in a Nancean ontology is both natural and technical on Aristotle's account, that is, both internal and external, necessary and contingent. In this regard, Nancy's concept of ecotechnics, as highlighted in later chapters, requires positioning in relation to this Aristotelian trope and its Heideggerian reactivation. Moreover, the determination of the Platonic triad of divinity, craftsman, and imitator according to a methexic standard ceases to make sense. Because for Nancy, if the objectuality of a being is always a mutual condition, every production is also participation: every *μίμησις* is also *μέθεξις*.

In chapter three's encounter with Nancy's interrogation of hermeneutics, ontology, and finitude, we noted that *Dasein* too is for Nancy absolutely conditioned. Indeed, Nancy's critique of Gadamer, which was outlined in the chapter, stems precisely from this insight. For when Nancy suggests that *Auslegung*, Heidegger's word for the prelinguistic and prereflective comprehension of a being as a being, is not to be conflated with determinate linguistic *Interpretation* in the way he thinks Gadamer does, Nancy is not attempting to demonstrate his superior understanding of a concept or text. Rather, Nancy is emphasising just how important and far reaching it is to understand that *Dasein* does not "have" a relation to the being of beings, but that *Dasein* is a relation to the being of beings, a relation that no subject or self pre-exists. *Dasein*, Nancy asserts, is absolutely conditioned finitude. That is, Nancy radicalises the Heideggerian interpretation of death by determining it to be the unfinishedness of a mutual conditioning and sharing of limits, which is a sharing of finitude.

Because on Nancy's reading *Dasein* is absolutely conditioned finitude, it is also *Mitsein*, not in terms of an appendage or relationship, but in the sense that the same limit that encloses *Dasein*'s ownness is the same limit that exposes it to others, its *Mitsein*. What this insight does, I argued, is transform the concept of *μέθεξις*. There is no longer the need, as there was for Gadamer, to posit one transcendent form of *μέθεξις* that structures *Dasein*'s hiatus and openness, and another immanent communal *μέθεξις* that connects it to other *Dasein*. By Nancy's account, *Dasein* is irreducibly *Mitsein*, which is to say, *Dasein*'s transcendent openness is the same as its immanent being-with, its enclosure is its exposure. The heterogeneity of *Dasein*'s vertical, temporal *μέθεξις* is therefore, for Nancy, reoriented onto the horizontal or horizontal dimension as its transimmanent contact with others.

In the reading of Plato's *Ion* that constitutes the second half of the essay 'Sharing Voices' that follows the critique of Gadamer and interpretation of *Dasein* just outlined, we saw that Nancy uses the *Ion* as a demonstration of how hermeneutics might function when stripped of transcendent or communal *μέθεξις*. On Nancy's reading, in the chain of interpretations that connect the characters of the dialogue, meaning is shown to circulate through a community without any singular agent accessing the origin of the meaning, or communing in some shared insight. Rather, each linguistic transfer, that is, each *μίμησις* of a determinate piece of information, is accompanied by a finite *μέθεξις*, a non-linguistic negotiation of the shared limit. Again, then, *μίμησις* and *μέθεξις*, in mutuality. And since meaning for Nancy is always the meaning of being, because it is the truth of the distribution of the limit at which all beings codetermine in their exposure to one another, communication for Nancy is the sharing of being, that is, the way that "being" is the many ways in which it is said.

Finally, in chapter four, Nancy's affirmation of the equiprimordiality of *Dasein* and *Mitsein* was brought to bear on the initial question of chapter two, of the tension between the immanent social conditions and transcendent apparatus of the first philosophy in Ancient Greece. Whilst, as already noted, Nancy agrees that the birth of philosophy coincided with the end of certain hierarchies and authorities, we saw in this chapter that Nancy absolutely disagrees that immanence lies at its foundation. Rather, it was noted, for Nancy philosophy has too often nostalgically projected an immanence as an object of retrieval, to which it determines itself as a lack or negation, rather than, as Nancy suggests it should, embracing the transimmanent heterology of *Mitsein* that opens the world and the circulation of meaning within it. This chapter went about presenting the Nancean response to this nostalgia, as it is borne in interpretations of artistic *μίμησις* as precisely such an orientation towards a lost, immanent, mythical origin, that is, a communal *μέθεξις* that such a *μίμησις* always fails to retrieve. Nancy advocates instead a discontinuous *μέθεξις* describing the totality of being-with, and an artistic *μίμησις* oriented toward the inimitable.

Following on from chapter three's presentation of the implication of ontology and hermeneutics in one another, in the exposure that *Dasein* does not pre-exist, the *Auslegung* or openness to the meaning of being that singularises *Dasein* with other singularities and *Dasein*, this chapter noted that as such, for Nancy, aesthetic sensibility is also implicated at this limit of exposure as pertaining to the very organs of exposure that mark the body as a referring to itself of a material self that does not precede the referring, a *renvoi* of outside and inside. As such, the regional discourses of ontology, hermeneutics, and aesthetics take up a common object for Nancy: *sens*. And for Nancy, all of these studies must take into account

the law of singularity that ties them together, outside of an absolute binary of immanence and transcendence.

We saw that for Nancy, artistic *μίμησις* is therefore neither a representation nor copy, and nor even a presentation of anything determinate, it is rather a presentation of presentation, because the *μέθεξις*, the participation or deep involvement it desires is not a restricted origin, but rather the mutuality of the meaning of being in its constant circulation and renegotiation as the limit that exposes all beings. To copy an image or trace a line is to present the exposure of singularities, their very singularity, not any specific singularity or distribution of singularities. And in the raising of an image, for Nancy, the transimmanent excess of world upon which it touches is exposed in relief, not presented in its particular arrangement as Heidegger has it, but simply the fact of its existence and excess. Art, for Nancy, in this way carries a disruptive power, it counteracts any regime in which the world is presented as a specific world, by presenting sheer presentation, the excessive sublimity of the aesthetic and the aesthetic. This excessiveness is the inimitable toward which Nancy's *μίμησις* is oriented.

Moreover, the maker or observer is likewise presented to themselves as exposed at the limit. No common identity, no self-present identity, only the experience of a referral and exposure between two singularities in transimmanent excess and a gesturing towards the mediated swell of possibilities converging as an infinite bifurcation of the line drawn between them. As such, I suggested that these more recent considerations of art within the Nancean text form a strong rejoinder to his early work on literature with Lacoue-Labarthe. There, as here, the upshot is a theory of the artistic that does not resist the Kantian restriction of the presentation of subjectivity (as the Jena Romantics intended), but rather supports it. It is an art

that presents the impossibility of a stable presentation, by presenting the referring between singularities outside of which no existence claim can be made. So where Nancy's philosophy makes sense between textual singularities, art, as he has it, discloses sense in the making, the referring between irreducibly exposed singularities in the world.

Along the way, I made a number of minor claims regarding the relationship between Nancy's texts and those of his contemporaries and predecessors. Fundamentally, however, the purpose of this thesis was not to detail these relationships so much as to mark out the importance of their existence, to argue that if the swell of enthusiasm for reading Nancy systematically and ontologically is to be maintained, it will require the support of a project resolutely engaged in positioning these findings as responses, or rather referrals, exposures by which Nancy invites meaning to be borne into the contemporary.

5.4 Paths for Future Exposition

Further to the theoretically determined challenges Nancy's philosophy places upon any attempt at a commentary, is the *de facto* matter of the corpus' continued movement. Jean-Luc Nancy is a living human being. While it is always the case that an interpretation accepts right from the start the possibility of an as-yet unpublished, untranslated, or undiscovered manuscript, when commenting upon Nancy's work this is less a possibility than a guarantee. This thesis already contains a number of references to works that have emerged since its research got underway in 2010, but there are also notable omissions.

Nancy has rarely been one for writing monograph length works and in recent times he has published a number of pamphlet sized books. 2013's *Vous désirez?*¹⁰¹⁴ marks the Hegelian synonymy of the grammatically separated articles of the phrase "you want?", and 2012's *L'Equivalence des catastrophes*¹⁰¹⁵ continues to explore the interpretation of Marx noted in chapter three, wherein the fiscal equivalence of capitalism is described as engendering new communications and interactions between regional ontologies. *Ivresse*¹⁰¹⁶ [intoxication] continues another thematic trajectory in Nancy's work, one which, I would suggest, begins with the interrogation of enthusiasm in *Sharing Voices*, and parallels the general investigation of the pre-linguistic circulation of meaning as *sens* by examining the subjective experience of excessive or multiplicitous meaning, in, for example,

¹⁰¹⁴ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Vous désirez?* (Montrouge : Bayard, 2013).

¹⁰¹⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'Equivalence des catastrophes* (Paris: Galilée, 2012).

¹⁰¹⁶ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Ivresse* (Paris: Rivages, 2013).

witnessing an artwork,¹⁰¹⁷ being raptured by divine inspiration,¹⁰¹⁸ falling asleep,¹⁰¹⁹ *jouissance*,¹⁰²⁰ or, in this case, inebriation.

Three important translations will also provide the resources of future investigations, and, furthermore, indicate another emergent theme in the secondary literature, a focus on Nancy's thoughts on the body and subjectivity. Anne O'Byrne's translation, *Corpus II: Writings on Sexuality*,¹⁰²¹ appeared in the summer of 2013, gathering together essays originally suggested for inclusion in *Corpus*, which, according to the team at Fordham University Press, were omitted to accommodate an editorial focus on Nancy's response to Descartes. François Raffoul's translation of *Identité: Fragments, franchises, Identity: Fragments, Frankness* is due for release early in 2014, and Marie-Eve Morin is currently working on a translation of *Ego Sum*, completing the Nancean triad: body- immune identity-enunciated subjectivity.

In regard to that which was certainly available and yet is conspicuously absent in this thesis, it should be noted that absence of this sort is a direct consequence of the thesis' focus. Firstly, for the sheer size of its scope, but also for its somewhat incomplete nature,¹⁰²² I have omitted to engage with the thematic project of

¹⁰¹⁷ See chapter four.

¹⁰¹⁸ See section chapter three.

¹⁰¹⁹ See: Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Fall of Sleep* (2007), trans. by Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009).

¹⁰²⁰ See section (3.9).

¹⁰²¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus II: Writings on Sexuality*, trans. by Anne O'Byrne (New York@ Fordham University Press, 2013).

¹⁰²² In 2012 Nancy distances himself from a certain specification of this project, remarking 'I think that I would propose in the future not to use the phrase "deconstruction of Christianity," and indicate by other means – I don't know which yet – that "Christianity" does not persist beyond the completion, if there is any, of this movement'. The auto-deconstructive force that emerges from the Greco-Jewish-Roman melting pot that is called Christianity should not, for a more recent Nancy, be conflated with the theology that spawned it. See: Jean-Luc Nancy, 'On the Commerce of Plural Thinking', in *Jean-Luc Nancy and Plural Thinking*, pp. 229-39, (p. 229).

Nancy's two volumes of *The Deconstruction of Christianity*, even while referring to texts contained therein.¹⁰²³ Such a vast discussion, which will have to remain a task for a later enquiry, would have added a somewhat antagonistic element to the mostly agreeable relationship this thesis presented between Nancy and Heidegger. For the broadening out of Derrida's Greek/Jew and Jew/Greek¹⁰²⁴ in Nancy's charged definition of Christianity as the philosophically generative 'dis-union'¹⁰²⁵ of the Hellenic and the Hebraic that emerged along the trade routes of the Roman Empire, I would suggest, is a direct reproach of Heidegger's distaste for the Latinate. It cannot escape the notice of any reader of both Nancy and Heidegger that only the former can be, and indeed regularly is, content with a Latin etymology. But the etymological relation, moreover, leads onto altogether less explicit bearings, and one wonders what remnants of Christian thinking Nancy's project might expose in our repeated theme of the "theatrical" and its implication in a communal *μέθεξις*,¹⁰²⁶ Adorno's thought of "tenebrous" *μέθεξις*,¹⁰²⁷ and Gadamer's thought of *μέθεξις* as a "crux".¹⁰²⁸ The linguistic association of *μέθεξις* with the view from the crucifixion, its extinguishing light, and the cross itself respectively, are glaring.

Secondly, the thematic focus of this thesis has been on a historical form of philosophising, but it would be, I believe, a highly rewarding exercise to explore what pathways are opened up by Nancy's reading of a less historical thinker, namely, Husserl. Moments of the thesis have opened onto this reading and have

¹⁰²³ See for example sections (1.3), (1.5.2), (1.5.3), and (2.8).

¹⁰²⁴ See: Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics' (1964), trans. by Alan Bass, in *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 97-192.

¹⁰²⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Judeo-Christian (on Faith)' (2000), trans. by Bettina Bergo, in *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, pp. 42-60, (p. 43).

¹⁰²⁶ See sections (1.2) and (4.4).

¹⁰²⁷ See section (4.6).

¹⁰²⁸ See section (3.4).

been immediately shut down to maintain the clarity of its explicit considerations. This was the case in the closing phases of both chapter three and chapter four, the former of which cut short the discussion of the essays of *The Creation of the World or Globalization* at the point at which a challenge to a Husserlian notion of horizontality could be discerned, and the latter of which stopped short of noting Nancy's affirmation of the auto-transgressive moments of Husserlian phenomenology in *Listening*. There are three possible lines of future enquiry here.

Firstly, as Lee Hardy notes in his translator's introduction to Husserl's 1907 *The Idea of Phenomenology*, Husserl engages his own transformation of the concepts of immanence and transcendence, moving from the assumption that "real" transcendence would provide a natural limit to what can be adequately accessed and known through phenomenological reduction, through a reversal of qualification, redefining the transcendent as that which is not accessible to phenomenology, that is, placing the concepts of immanence and transcendence onto critical, transcendental grounds, meaning, Hardy writes:

In the case of essences, or more generally, universals, we now have entities that are transcendent in the real sense (external to consciousness) but not in the phenomenological sense (since they can be wholly given); conversely, they are not immanent in the real sense (since they are not real part of consciousness), but they are in the phenomenological sense (again, because they can be wholly given).¹⁰²⁹

Indeed, in *The Sense of the World*, Nancy writes of Husserlian phenomenology:

¹⁰²⁹ Lee Hardy, 'Translator's Introduction', in *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. by Lee Hardy (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1999), p. 7.

in the incessant will to turn back on itself in order to appropriate its own process, in the reduction to the "immanence" of an origin (subject, consciousness) that contains all "transcendence," that phenomenology (and with it, in this sense, philosophy as such, which it indeed completes with ultimate rigor) ensures that it will miss something of the "transcendence" (if one must still speak in such terms) it wants to bring out. It misses the excess or the initial spacing of this "transcendence," which it nonetheless has in view.¹⁰³⁰

The points that open onto Husserl in this thesis, therefore, do not represent tangents or departure points for separate investigations, but would, given time, re-engage with the core themes of the dissertation.

Secondly, and continuing directly from point number one, it was noted in the introduction to this thesis that when, in *Being Singular Plural*, Nancy notes that there are times when 'phenomenology itself reaches its limit and exceeds it',¹⁰³¹ he is explicitly referring to Husserl. In fact, in *Listening*, it is to Husserl's analyses of the phenomenology of internal time consciousness¹⁰³² to which Nancy turns for a resource for thinking about the sonorous and its inadherence to the optic division between the right-here and the over-there.¹⁰³³ Husserlian phenomenology could therefore provide certain atemporal elements of process and method to a Nancean post-phenomenology.

Finally, if these prior two tangents were in fact to be diverted back around to form tributaries to this thesis, the upshot could possibly have further value beyond its own explicit content. For, in light of an alternative heritage, entirely different

¹⁰³⁰ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, p. 18.

¹⁰³¹ Nancy, 'Of Being Singular Plural', 200 n. 53.

¹⁰³² Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (1893-1917), trans. by John Barnet (London: Kluwer Academic, 1991).

¹⁰³³ Nancy, *Listening*, pp. 18-9.

interpretations of Ricoeur and Gadamer might arise via their differential relations to Husserl, which, in turn, in providing the context for situating Nancy's departures, could only offer a yet richer exposition of where Nancy's work is to be located.

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