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# A Critical Phenomenology Of Violence: At the Intersection of the Ontic and the Ontological in the Gaze and the Reimage of Violence

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A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF VIOLENCE: AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE

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What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind,
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be,
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering,
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.


Excerpt from William Wordsworth, *Ode*: *Intimations of Immortality*
("There was a time") Page 302.

Dedication


For all those whose lights were instantaneously stolen away from tragic acts of violence.

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ABSTRACT

Gale Newman Richardson

A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF VIOLENCE: AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE

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This study engages with Merleau-Ponty's supposition, from *Phenomenology of Perception*, that exposing time underneath the subject and relinking it to all the *contradictions* of time, body, world, thing, and human other allows awareness to come into its fullness. I argue that rationales of thought associated with cultural violence and its images of the social world—both mental and tangible—link back to the ontological of time *underneath each human being*, where the conditions of language alter both consciousnesses and meanings behind the phenomenal dimensions of violence, appearance, being, and image. These alterations accompany violence into its reimaging, where an inaudible consciousness awaits each spectator.

My focus here is phenomenological, but not in the strict Husserlian sense. Rather, I take other discourses and their methodologies to the borders of this centering. Through an intertextual latitude of subsets, I define the meaning of *a critical phenomenology of violence* through its paradoxical sense, interrogating past and current thinkers across a wide spectrum within a Merleau-Pontian and Arendtian arc. I contend that dangers in the *paradox of thinking* partner with moral and perceptual thinking and that the phenomenon of imagination in the aesthetic of violence pairs with human will and the Kristevian abject; that Lévinas's ontology merges with perception, when language creates loss of being; that Lacan's reduction of the Freudian drive and its gazes couples with Merleau-Pontian desire and his radical, ontological look at psychoanalysis.

Finally, the Nancian ontic text-image signals Arendtian insight on deceptive metaphors that expose facets in the blow of violence.

By the end, this study demonstrates that phenomena stay within their operations, but the power of the human will alternately recognizes or negates the authenticity behind the phenomenon of violence, while events remain actively, quietly at work in cyclical patterns of desires and perversions, placing the human being in the flux of endangerment and risk from an array of social images.

Keywords: Phenomenology, Violence, Ontology, Gaze, Reimage, Desire

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INTRODUCTION

If, by chance, one could appear before the Sphinx to be presented with the riddle of violence, which must be solved in order to live, what would such a riddle propose? Would the riddle present dark, enigmatic sayings or a conundrum of mismatched puzzle pieces, or perhaps, would it be presented with only pantomimes of a charade? But what if the Sphinx presented the *answer* to the riddle of violence itself? Such a recipient would then need to find all the mismatched puzzle pieces, trace the pantomimes of deception, and even go to the dark enigmas of violence in order to address them. And what might be the answer to this riddle of violence? The answer, of course, would appear to provide no direct clues of solving the riddle of violence until the riddle of thinking itself was approached. Then, an answer for the riddle of violence would look like this: "From which it seems to follow that the business of thinking is like the veil of Penelope: it undoes every morning what it had finished the night before" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* 166). Hannah Arendt sets the correct bar for a critical study on violence: Thinking is for everyone, not only for a select few, but thinking can go against itself and reject its own sound adages; and since thinking involves "invisibles" and "appearances," it is imperative that individuals do not lose sight of the "visible" (166, 167). Thus, it is the movement and the act of thinking itself that needs "experience rather than doctrines" in order to mark the clear differences that separate "thinking" from understanding and "truth" from signification (167–68). This critical phenomenology of violence is defined according to paradoxes: the paradox of thinking; the paradox of the human will; the paradox of violence; the paradox of time, language, world, body, and human other; and the paradox of image. However, if individuals do not first understand the paradox of thinking, then no critical phenomenology—the study of the consciousness of violence—can occur.

The overall arc of this critical study of violence and consciousness is not strictly Husserlian but takes other methodological thought to the borders of phenomenology. Most scholars will not question Arendt's inclusion in the arc of a phenomenological look at violence, since so much of her work covers both violence itself and the lived experience of dealing with the phenomenon of violence. However, many may question how and why Maurice Merleau-Ponty is a major arc alongside Arendt, since he does not explicitly speak of violence in general, with only rare exception. In this project, I have chosen Merleau-Ponty for more than just his keen insight into paradoxes themselves, but also for his insights on phenomena; on language and its power to trap meaning inside its "web"; on where thinking goes awry through the rationale of actions and beliefs; and even for his later and final thoughts on the "ontological difference" for the psychoanalytical lens (*The Visible and the Invisible* 118, 270). In this instance, I have chosen him for his deep commitment to the human other, for his stance like that of Arendt's. For Arendt, violence requires a lens to be connected to morality because of the harm done to the community of human others; when such a lens fails, all individuals must question not only where and why such failure occurs but also what lens can be trusted to act on behalf of the community of individuals. For Merleau-Ponty, the "primacy of perception" calls such individuals to awareness of the world they live in and to "love" the human being even though this task may bring on misgivings, and even futilities, because the world itself, he states, does not always encourage such an upright confidence (*Primacy of Perception* 26–27). Instead, he writes: "We weigh the hardihood of the love which promises beyond what it knows. . . . But it is *true*, at the moment of this promise, that our love extends beyond *qualities*, beyond the body, beyond time, even though we could not love without qualities, bodies, and time" (26–27). This critical study of the consciousness of violence—its search for ontological being and the ontic presence of the vast

number of ways individuals reimage violence—stands on the shoulders of these thinkers, who

keep an unadulterated moral lens in looking at the human other and at the contradiction of

violence: one side of violence enacts harm on the human other; and the other side of violence

reveals the actualities of this very harm.

Two key text passages from Merleau-Ponty drive my overall argument of this project. He

writes:

> We must rediscover the origin of the object at the very core of our experience, we must
>
> describe the appearance of being, and we must come to understand how, paradoxically,
>
> there is a *for-us* an *in-itself*. Not wanting to prejudge anything, we will take objective
>
> thought literally and not ask it any questions it does not ask itself. If we are led to
>
> rediscover experience behind it, this passage will only be motivated by its own
>
> difficulties. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 74)

> But if we uncover time beneath the subject, and if we reconnect the paradox of time to
>
> the paradoxes of the body, the world, the thing, and others, then we will understand that
>
> there is nothing more to understand (383).

I argue that rationales of thought associated with cultural violence and its images of the social

world—both mental and tangible—link back to the ontological of time underneath each human

being, where the conditions of language alter both consciousnesses and meanings behind the

phenomenal dimensions of violence, appearance, being, and image. These alterations accompany

violence into its reimaging, where an inaudible consciousness awaits each spectator. I define a

reimage of violence within its full denotative meaning: a mental portrait of an opinion or belief

of an abstract principle; an appearance or its likeness; a symbol or an allegorical visual image; an

embodiment; a mental picture of individuals from words and rhetorical devices; a painting, sculpture, photograph, cinema film, computer or video-image; a mirror image; and an image that typifies something or someone.

Each chapter contains portions of reporting from the theories of past and current thinkers that may appear, at times, as merely adding more theory. However, the reporting of this material is necessary not only because the thinkers substantiate my argument, but also because these individuals have already worked out puzzle-piece answers that are being ignored, or are simply unknown. Their ideas and concepts make up the foundation of this critical study on the consciousness of violence and its vast social and cultural reimages. Otherwise, thinking easily goes through a labyrinth of wrong paths. Thus, I have methodically chosen and purposefully placed this reporting for its maximum impact on what I call a triptych of the overall perspective of the problematic ground of violence. The first panel sets the reporting in place to establish an ethos of credible ideas through relevant and substantial evidence from each thinker in order to provide the multiple lenses necessary for proofs required for such topics as violence and its reimaging. In the second panel, I use artwork and diagrams as teaching tools to apply these past and present critical theories to the phenomenon of violence and to its reimaging, which is already rife with social and cultural influences that can alter consciousness of both being and of appearance. Thus, the fullness of violence in all its problematic ground and its mental reimaging from social and cultural influential factors presents a myriad of difficulties for those individuals working within tangible reimages of violence itself and the spectator who views them. The third panel presents lines of questionings that serve a dual purpose: first, as rhetorical, for recapturing essential ideas in a different light of inquiry; and second, to inspire individuals toward particular questions that intrigue or challenge them in order to embrace the continual quest to find meaning

from the enigmas, puzzle pieces, and silent deceptive movements of violence itself and its cyclical reimages.

Explicit detailed introductions covering purpose, argument, vision, and operational procedures accompany each chapter, so it is only necessary here to mark the crucial steps that each chapter will perform and the thinkers within these chapters. In chapter one, I use Arendt and Merleau-Ponty to set the foundations for this project through a critique on thinking itself in relation to Arendt's concern over harm to the community and her puzzlement over a thoughtlessness toward violence itself and toward the paradox of thinking. Arendt connects to an implicit moral tie to the Merleau-Pontian levels of consciousness and to perception in its essential elements: the progress of events from "moral necessities" or "verbal instruction" must outline the fullness of human being through the phenomenon of being (*Phenomenology of Perception* 115). Arendt lays out the problems within the operations of thinking that derive from the divided self, which in turn, create a divide between morals, laws, and "moral law," on the one side, and misperceptions about law itself on the other (*Responsibility and Judgment* 68). Then, I focus on the different types of syntheses of consciousness in order to understand what happens with thought in the perceptual encounter while in a world where even consciousness can be at risk. Next, I present Merleau-Ponty's "world of ideas" that limit perception; the "givens" as infinite arrangements; and "gestures" of meaning. I conclude with the different types of syntheses of consciousness in order to understand what happens with thought in the perceptual encounter, while in a world where even consciousness can be at risk (*Primacy of Perception* 13, 5, 7). I acknowledge that we cannot merely pay attention to violence but must look at the motive of and not the cause for the violent event in order to experience awareness of this event.

Chapter two presents a genealogy of violence, focusing on the aesthetic experience, with the aura of Foucauldian genealogical approaches and an array of past and current thinkers. For the aesthetic discussion, I incorporate Slobodan Marković's research findings through a lived-experience perspective of authentic reactions from individuals participating in the aesthetic encounter. The underlying current is Merleau-Ponty's ever-present theme of the "living body" intertwined with the mind to become "perceiving mind" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 56; *Primacy of Perception* 3). Mikhail Bakhtin defines the disconnection of meanings toward violence in medieval and Renaissance folk culture of the grotesque body and the Romantic grotesque. Arendt presents Augustine's account of the human will's ability to operate in connection with other powers of the mind and the body. I then draw from Merleau-Ponty's accounts of both imagination and perception in the aesthetic scene and apply them to how the human will affects thinking, either in an authentic way to perceive violence itself, or in a inauthentic manner, when a human will refutes the realities of violence itself, even those realities that accompany reimaged violence. Next, I explore the paradox of a divided human will partnered with Julia Kristeva's "abjection" in the midst of the aesthetic experience of violence itself (*Powers of Horror* 4). The phenomenon of imagination stays within its operative function, but it is the human will in its many divisions that can alter perception of violence itself and its endless effects on human existence through its embodiment of the human body.

In chapter three, I recognize the space of violence, power, and myth through the different avenues of essence and essence of consciousness in order to understand how the compositional traits of each separate phenomenon conceal themselves through their presences and absences. Next, I reveal the multiple dimensions of both visible and invisible violence from an Arendtian phenomenological lens. Then I use Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence" as a bridge of

insights in order to recognize the different facets of violence and power that splinter into further perceptual dimensions, elaborating on the confusion surrounding a lack of clarity and distinctness in Benjamin's analysis. Last, using a film as an example, I present the multiple dimensions of violence and power that presence themselves through arbitrary fictions and through myth and show how spectators can lose sight of the phenomenal movement in the space of violence and power.

Then, in an ontological and ontic shift, chapter four enters the place of past and present consciousness in the dimensions of time that are present in Merleau-Ponty's "phenomenal field" (57). I focus on the perceptual events within the dimensions of time and its paradox for awareness of how consciousness interacts with the components of time, language, fact, perception, and being. Emmanuel Lévinas is partnered with Merleau-Ponty in an "overflowing play of lights" and many gazes that take place between ontology and phenomenology in order to get to the fullness of being (Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity* 27). Only then do individuals recognize that the phenomenal field is where spectators deal with violence itself, its physiognomies, and its reimages. Equally important, this is the field for realizing how to reconnect the paradox of time to the contradictions of human beings and to their world and to the contradictory factors of violence in connection with the human other. Finally, chapter five is an extension of chapter four and deals with disturbing factors of events behind the gazes that operate outside and inside a video-image of livestreaming acts of violence. Jacques Lacan identifies these gazes through his reduction of the Freudian drive that partners with the Merleau-Pontian view of desire and a radical, ontological look at psychoanalysis. This chapter provides clear insight on a tangible image, its ontological construction, and, through a Nancian ontic text-image lens, the paradox of image: Image can divide against itself. Lacan connects to Merleau-

Ponty, and I show that Nancy's text-image links to Arendt through Arendt's insights on deceptive metaphors that help expose the exhibitionists and by defining the facets present on the ground of the blow of violence. By the end of this study, we understand that phenomena stay within their operations, but the power of the human will alternately recognizes or negates the authenticity behind the phenomena of violence, while the events remain actively, quietly at work in cyclical patterns of desires and perversions, placing the human being in the flux of endangerment and risk from an array of social images.

CHAPTER ONE


A CRITIQUE OF THINKING ON MORALITY, VIOLENCE, AND PERCEPTION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to begin the exploration of the two-sided topic of violence and of perception by evaluating the thinking process concerning violence in relation to its ever-changing face of morality and by recognizing the mental facets that alter the act of thinking on violence in general and on the roles of consciousness and perception.[1] The double arc of this critique on thinking is seen through the primary phenomenological lenses of Hannah Arendt and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Such an examination within the overall project of a critical phenomenology of violence and its reimages is necessary for three broad reasons: First, awareness of the paradox of thinking defines the dangers in thinking in isolation, with a Socratic divided self, and the contradictory ground of the need for, yet peril of, the "arousal" and "paralysis of thought" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* 176). Second, the assumptions of morality can lead to "moral absurdity" and moral neutrality, so awareness is essential for recognizing how these transformations affect the thinking process in relation to violence and communal responsibility (62). Third, it is important to evaluate and target the restrictive traits that effect the perceptual experience of violence itself, and thus, its reimaging.

This chapter's primary focus is not on the discussion of reimages but on setting the foundation for the many facets of thinking, as thinking relates to the perception of morality, which is the ever-present counterpart needed in thinking on violence itself. The following chapters cover not only the aesthetic experience but the multiple dimensions of violence in

general, of perception, of art, and of the image itself in relation to violence. Thus, we begin from a place of inadequacy for any account of reimaged violence if the groundwork on the different functions of consciousness and on a type of thinking that hinders perception and alters the course of thought on morality, and thus on violence, is not first established. How do our views of morality and perception lead us away from the vital work of staying connected to the thinking process of the thing itself—the presence of violence? How do we recognize the ways that thinking is paradoxical in its nature? In what ways does consciousness isolate itself from the many consciousnesses and miss altogether the perceptual event of violence itself?

In defining traits of thinking, Arendt argues: "For thinking itself, as distinct from other human activities, not only is an activity that is invisible—that does not manifest itself outwardly—but also and in this respect perhaps uniquely, has no urge to appear or even a very restricted impulse to communicate to others" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 8). In her greatest concerns of the problematic ground of thinking, she grapples with the difficulties of "evil," as a historical event of horrific violence in the twentieth century, wherein common individuals fall prey to what she calls "the banality of evil" (54, 159). Arendt is critical of both words, because they prove to be problematic for many individuals. From this point of confliction, she argues that "To raise such questions as 'What is thinking?' 'What is evil?' has its difficulties" (161). For Arendt, banality is equated not with an average condition, but with "a curious, quite authentic inability to think" (159). She maintains that her phrase, the banality of evil, describes "the phenomenon of evil deeds," which has the ability to hide any patterns of "wickedness, pathology, or ideological conviction" from the actor of deeds, an actor of "extraordinary shallowness" (159). Though she states that the word "evil" is perceived in multiple ways by different philosophers and by individuals in various places, Arendt settles on Jesus of Nazareth's

example of the "stumbling stone" to define and then comprehend the magnitude of evil, taking

from his very words: "the real wrongdoer appears as the man who should never have been

born—'it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the

sea' " (*Responsibility and Judgment* 79, 125). What impresses her most is that this emphasis of

evil does not explain the particular individuals themselves or what guilt they may or may not

carry with them, or even the "Platonic subject" of "sufferings," used as a correction or

admonishment (125). Instead, she argues that the evil that is a stumbling stone is "the evil to

which I wholeheartedly assent, which I commit willingly" (125, 126). She ranks this action as

the "greatest evil," which can achieve unimaginable behaviors, resulting in situations that engulf

the entire world, because this type of mental and physical injury to the community has no

identifiable pattern of parts and no boundaries for any persons or features of society (95, 159).

Therefore, for the basis of this chapter, and this project, I define Arendt's phrase, the banality of

evil, as she rightly does, as the "harm done to the community, the danger arising to all" (Arendt,

126). Arendt's bafflement over harm to the community and her puzzlement over a

thoughtlessness toward violence is also a concern of this project, because of its implicit tie to

perception and its essential elements, and thus to Merleau-Ponty in his acknowledgement of

those "moral necessities" that must outline human resourcefulness through the fullness of being

(*Phenomenology of Perception* 115).

Just as an extraordinary shallowness of fleeting morals and the absence of moral actions

in high-stake matters of violence perturb Arendt, "doctrines" and dogmas surrounding perception

as a "simple" matter likewise plague Merleau-Ponty (*Primacy of Perception* 3). He upholds the

argument that the classical, scientific model of a detached subject limits our consciousness from

an endless system of meanings in perception. Instead, he argues: "The miracle of consciousness

is to make phenomena appear through attention that reestablish the object's unity in a new dimension at the very moment they destroy that unity" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 33). But Merleau-Ponty upholds that perception will always be complicated because it is "paradoxical," in that perception is present only if we can see it (*Primacy of Perception* 16). He argues that human consciousness on no occasion holds itself in "complete detachment and does not recover itself at the level of culture except by recapitulating the expressive, discrete, and contingent operations by means of which philosophical questioning itself has become possible" (*Primacy of Perception* 40). Thus, it is imperative for this chapter to reveal the delicate study not only of phenomenological concepts of perception but of the type of perceptual thinking that takes place in consciousness through the phenomenon of perceiving versus understanding.

In the first arc, I present Arendt's critical engagement with the ideas of Socrates, Plato, and Immanuel Kant. Through them, she intends for her readers (and, by extension, her era in history) to lay out the intricate problems in the operations of thinking that derive within the divided self and which, in turn, create a chasm between "morality," "legality," and "moral law," on the one side, and misperceptions about law itself on the other (*Responsibility and Judgment* 68). Moving from within Arendt's thinking, I turn to perception, through Merleau-Ponty's understanding, as a kind of basis for and practice of the thinking that should transpire at all times in relation to the intricacies of perception and of morality for assessing the opinions of the United States Supreme Court justices on reimaged violence. The second arc deepens the intertextual dialogue on the function and alteration of thinking and on consciousness by looking at three important factors taken from Merleau-Ponty: a "world of ideas" that limit perception; the "givens" as infinite arrangements; and "gestures" of meaning. I conclude with the different types of syntheses of consciousness in order to understand what happens with thought in the

"perceptual experience," while in a world where even consciousness can be at risk (*Primacy of Perception* 13, 5, 7, 40).[2]

By the end of this chapter, we will understand that what is at stake for the whole of society in dealing with difficulties of thinking on morality is the failure to recognize the paradox of thinking itself, which encompasses both positive and negative qualities that can, in turn, lead to the failure to reassess morality and the process of being moral in the presence of violence itself. As a result, individuals tend to be indifferent toward acts of violence on the community. We will understand that perception is also paradoxical, and "intellectualism" and "idealism" work against the operations of how the many consciousnesses function in perception to reach the level of phenomena (*Primacy of Perception* 22). The importance of reporting on Merleau-Ponty and Arendt is necessary in order to understand how thinking operates in perception, culture, morality, and community, and their connectivity to the many levels of consciousness, which can alter the authentic perception of violence itself, and thus its reimage.

Dangers of Thinking in Isolation

Arendt's evaluation is that thinking through the nonparticipation of the divided self and the necessities and dangers of thinking alone leads to the ease of conformity. In generating her concept of the banality of evil, she synthesizes the evidence needed to demonstrate that, even though an alertness and a loss of the ability toward thought are both necessary for the progression of thinking, they can invert thinking to arrive at the very opposite conclusion of its intention (*Responsibility and Judgment* 176). Arendt emphasizes the Socratic paradox inherent in thinking itself: Thinking can be both good and bad for self and community. She expounds on two

points of reference in the Socratic thinking process that evolve into the dangers of solitary thought: the dual self, and the concepts that awaken and paralyze thought (176). What are the necessary roles and functions of thinking in isolation? What are the apparent dangers for the community in such thinking? These questions drive the discussion on the paradoxical factors in thinking that then raise concerning questions about isolated thought on critical matters dealing with self-views on violence, community, and the reimaging of violence itself.

In the first point of reference, to the dual self, Socrates states: "I think it's better to have my lyre or a chorus that I might lead out of tune and dissonant, and have the vast majority of men disagree with me and contradict me, than to be out of harmony with myself, to contradict myself, though I'm only one person" (*Gorgias* 482 b-c). In clarifying Socrates's statement, Arendt evaluates how thinking functions in the intimacy of self in the Socratic argument of the "two-in-one" self (*Responsibility and Judgment* 90). She argues that because Socrates is conscious of himself and in communication with himself, then the self is not an "illusion," for the self can differ in opinion with other individuals but not with itself (90). The important point here from Arendt is that the self tries to agree with itself before any thought of the human other (90). Her concern is that "If you are at odds with your self," you are obliged to "have daily intercourse with your own enemy" (91). Of even greater concern to Arendt is a thinking process that allows human judgment to become slowly clouded to the point that individuals do not recognize their own helplessness in thinking. In delineating Socrates's example, she indicates that he may understand the wrong and yet allow himself to succumb to the wrong but not to "suffer wrong," so as not to appear bad or different from those around him (90). As a result, the thinking process adjusts itself in permitting the opportunity not to question the process of being moral, but to choose to forget that he is no longer in agreement with himself. Instead, he is

intimate with a "wrongdoer," who is not mute (90). The dangerous result is that a type of thinking in and of itself now settles into the mind. For Arendt, this disturbing state of mind is what Socrates defines as *dianoeisthai*, and she quotes Socrates, who says: "I call it [*dianoeisthai*] a discourse that the mind carries on with itself about any subject it is considering. . . . The mind asks itself questions and answers them, saying yes or no to itself" (91). In her view, he indicates that individuals must, at this point, arrive at a judgment or belief, which Socrates determines as discourse; and yet, judgment or belief is the audible utterance, not told to another person, but in tacit agreement with the self (Socrates qtd. in *Responsibility and Judgment* 92). Consequently, Arendt comes to a palpable conclusion: a transgressor is not an acceptable companion for an implicit conversation (92). How does thinking function now through the lens of *dianoeisthai*?

For Arendt, the fact that no "crime" exists in merely possessing a dual-self existence causes her to question the irony in why the idea of a non-criminal, dual-self existence does not even faze Socrates's adversaries when they contemplate such duality either way (90). She maintains that individuals in the *Republic* who possess moral natures in the necessary functions of roles easily accept the idea of a dual, criminal self (90). At this point, she shifts her argument to her own historical time period, in that the roles of the dual-self signal a major focus on why morality may not turn into right actions. Arendt realizes how the Nazi-led banality of evil, the harm done to the community, begins to take its form: a seemingly overnight fall in morality had actually begun long before (54). For Arendt, the real criminality of being sentenced to live with a wrongdoer conceals itself from those unwilling to see it. Such concealment begins to signal the subtle visual theme that lies behind an incapacity to think about violence. For Arendt, the authentic crime manifests itself as an unwillingness to search for the insights of *how* to live with an internal wrongdoer. To what extent is community affected by a dual self?

In keeping with Arendt's line of argument, moral inspiration and the sense of responsibility to the community are lost when individuals accept that they are friends with their wrongdoers. However, they tell themselves that they will never live with an actual person who is "a thief, murderer, or liar" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 91). She argues that in such reasoning, they may say that others in the community partake in violent acts, and leaders may come into power "by murder and fraud," but these individuals themselves say that they are not murderers (91). All of this takes place without questioning themselves or their sense of "collective responsibility," or even questioning the degree to which violence impacts communities (149). Thus, the awareness of such a mind-set helps in understanding both how individuals overlook the high stakes of violence itself and the effects of an altered thinking in relation to the consumption of visual violence in this chapter's example of the opinions, not the verdict, of Supreme Court justices in relation to minors and reimaged violence.

The ways in which Arendt's two examples relate to the confirmation of a flawed thinking process prompts the question of what kind of thinking takes place in perception. For Merleau-Ponty, the issue is not so much akin to Arendt's reference to a shallowness of thinking, as an active thinking in the wrong direction. Though there are differences between Merleau-Ponty and Arendt, their views are not necessarily opposed. He is not disagreeing with the arguments Arendt makes. Rather, he stresses another important side to thinking. I provide a closer look at Merleau-Ponty in a later section on thinking and imagination, but it serves well here to reference a particular point. He argues that "communication with others, and thought, take up and go beyond the realm of perception which initiated us to the truth" and emphasizes that individuals continually live in the arena of perception; but they extend past it through "critical thought" that can surpass actual perception and forget the components of perception that caused their own

notion of truth (*Primacy of Perception* 3). For Merleau-Ponty, "Critical thought has broken with

the naïve evidence of *things*, and when it affirms, it is because it no longer finds any means of

denial" (3). Thus, an absence of denial instigates careful thought in perception. He does,

however, acknowledge that trying to recognize an understanding of the human other brings about

indistinctness, but what is far more indistinct is the "human condition" itself (41). According to

Merleau-Ponty, denial of the human condition allows for no perception (*Phenomenology of

Perception* 144). Why? Because the body cannot unite with mind or align to "imagination" or

even to the environment; and thus, no audible expressions or moral requirements can then mark

the human development necessary for perception of the greatest extent of being (115). How does

thinking function inside the human condition?

In Arendt's last point on the dangers of thinking in isolation, she expounds on the

paradoxical concepts of both an alertness and a loss of ability toward thought. She argues:

> *First*, Socrates is a gadfly: he knows how to arouse the citizens who, without him, will
>
> "sleep on undisturbed for the rest of their lives," unless somebody else comes along to
>
> wake them up again. . . . Socrates . . . remains steadfast with his own perplexities and,
>
> like the electric ray, paralyzes with them whomever he comes in contact with. The
>
> electric ray, at first glance, seems to be the opposite of the gadfly; it paralyzes where the
>
> gadfly arouses. (*Responsibility and Judgment* 174, 175)

Addressing her apprehension of only moments of morality, Arendt emphasizes the functioning

of thought as a duality. She argues: "Hence, the paralysis of thought is twofold: it is inherent in

the *stop* and think, the interruption of all other activities, and it may have a paralyzing effect

when you come out of it, no longer sure of what had seemed to you beyond doubt while you

were unthinkingly engaged in whatever you were doing" (176). To evaluate the function of thinking using the example of the electric ray, she maintains that in the first strand of an inability to thought, individuals may become paralyzed because regulations cannot tolerate "the wind of thought," due to invisibilities of thought that restrict the different ways it can appear and interact among circumstances (176).[3] If individuals must apply "general rules" to certain situations that may change daily so that their conduct aligns with morality, they become paralyzed in "frozen thought" of inadequate results for their own conflicts (176). Then, neither can they analyze morality nor can they question the state of being moral.

Ultimately, Arendt arrives at the greatest of threats, the functioning of a type of creative thought that leads to a perilous and ineffective outcome from those who may not appear as the most injurious of persons—the group of individuals surrounding Socrates himself (176). Here it is not the electric ray but the gadfly that awakens some of them to "license and cynicism" (176–77). She argues that they were not satisfied to learn the process of thinking without having a "doctrine," so they altered the "nonresults of the Socratic thinking examination into negative results" (177). What this means to Arendt is horrifying. She realizes that the very individuals surrounding Socrates, who understand that he promotes the highest level of morality for the betterment of the community, now awaken to a pessimism and mockery that perverts thinking into an entitlement, which poses a serious exposure to harm for the community. She argues that ones such as these become the ultimate peril for the community because they invert the Socratic thinking to its opposite. In other words, they cannot define virtue, so they take on immorality (176). Knowing how to evaluate the thinking process for paradoxical traits of banality— immobile thought and the awakening to irresponsibility and contempt for morality by exploiting principles or beliefs of the other —arouses an understanding of the potential dangers inherent in

thinking itself (176–77). This evaluation of the functions of thinking reverts back to the question of how thinking can be both good and bad.

Thus far, not only do we recognize how thinking itself is paradoxical and can lead to the throes of an inability to think, but Arendt goes one step further in understanding Socrates's call for a discourse of thinking beings, those who would rather "give up all other ambitions and even suffer injury and insult than to forfeit this faculty [thinking]" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 92). She acknowledges that an individual who does not befriend his or her own wrongdoer, stays friends with "the sufferer" (185). On the one hand, she argues that repentance returns a person to the particular wrong and causes that person to think. On the other hand, she states that the wrongdoer tries to forget and then never wishes to return to the deed in order to terminate thinking (124). Therefore, we can infer why thinking can be both good and bad: thinking with the wrongdoer in each of us is not the realization of a thinking being; instead, the thinking being strives toward the sufferer who remembers and ponders upon the bad deed that must be no more (124). Arendt's warning is that individuals have the capacity to "refuse to think and remember" and yet appear to be within the mean or standard of thought as many individuals expect (94). How does a person adapt to becoming a thinking being in order to create a different environment within a community of individuals who merely appear to display the proper characteristics of thinking beings? Arendt continually disturbs thought by evaluating how thinking functions in relation to violence and its harm on the community. But when she argues that "the greatest evil is not radical," she means that it is not radical in the Kantian sense of the failure to follow reason, but rather, in the "unthinkable extremes" it can accomplish through the guise of thinking beings with "no roots" and "no boundaries," which exude distorted reasoning associated with morality

and violence (95). Is there a breaking point in the thinking process around morality that deals with moral recommendations and their accepted standards in relation to violence?

## Moral Absurdity and Duty

Arendt holds Kantian thinking and reason in high regard, but she will allow tensions to rise in addressing the onerous and chaotic issues that she finds still at odds in the twentieth century: those of silence toward violence and nonactivity of moral thinking. These tensions are essential in her reexamination of the Kantian "categorical imperative," and she outlines the multiple routes that lead her to the many assumptions about morality in questioning why "the very terms . . . —'morality,' with its Latin origin, and 'ethics,' with its Greek origin—should never have meant more than usages and habits" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 61, 50). She then explores at what point Kantian *obligation* impairs the thinking process in missing altogether that which is good and the action of *duty* necessary to and essential for the community when dealing with violence. She ultimately concludes that an indecisiveness leading to moral neutrality is the greatest culprit in how thinking functions in relation to violence, morality, and community.

From Kant, she extracts two anchor-text passages on the ontological and cosmological traits of morals in order to recognize why Kantian thought on morals failed during a time of horrific violence, and, in turn, affected communities worldwide during the twentieth century. Kant states:

> *Morality* is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, that is, to the possible universal legislation through its maxims. An action that can be consistent with the autonomy of the will is *permissible*; one that does not agree with it is *impermissible*. A

will whose maxims necessarily harmonize with the laws of autonomy is a holy, absolutely good will. The dependence on the principle of autonomy of a will that is not absolutely good (moral necessitation) is *obligation*. This cannot therefore refer to a holy being. The objective necessity of an action from obligation is called *duty*. (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 51)

Thus, then, we have progressed in the moral cognition of common human reason to reach its principle, which admittedly it does not think of as separated in this way in a universal form, but yet always actually has before its eyes and uses as the standard of its judging. Here it would be easy to show how, with this compass in hand, it is very well informed in all cases that occur, to distinguish what is good, what is evil, what conforms with duty or is contrary to it, if—without in the least teaching it anything new—one only, as Socrates did, makes it aware of its own principle; and that there is thus no need of science and philosophy to know what one has to do in order to be honest and good, indeed even to be wise and virtuous. (19)

Regarding violence and morality in the community, Arendt's greatest concern is that even the Kantian compass cannot determine the good, the evil, or what aligns with or differs with duty. What is the moral meaning of the good?

Arendt finds that its various interpretations create countless connotations of morality itself. With establishing the good in relation to her banality of evil, she finds a connection in Kant's reference to Socrates's mindfulness of reason's "own principle," and she then reviews the Socratic notion of virtue as good. She contends that Socrates appears to be the first person who questions whether the "gods love piety because it is pious, or is it pious because they love it?"

(qtd. in *Responsibility and Judgment* 66). At this time in antiquity, theology and philosophy have equal footing in scholastics. Arendt fully understands that a shift eventually occurs in the twentieth century, where theology separates from philosophy, yet she chooses to bring in theologians and their philosophical views so as to see the progression of thought on numerous opinions of the good and morality. Thus, she states that Thomas Aquinas comments on one occasion as if in reply to the Socratic question. She writes of Aquinas in his belief that "God commands the good because it is good—as opposed to Duns Scotus, who held that the good is good because God commands it. But even in this most rationalized form, *obligatory* character of the good for man lies in God's command" (66).

Why are theologians important to Arendt in evaluating the thinking process of Kant's obligation? She is quick to note that, though theologians may disagree about "the good," overall, they agree with Aristotle, in that the essential and binding qualities of the good come from God alone. In relation to the Kantian good and bad in morality only, and not in religion, Arendt argues that Kant does not view actions as obligatory because the command is from God. Rather, Kant states that the commands from the self are good because of "reason," which to Kant is the innermost obligation of good binding all humans. She stresses that, for Kant, listening and adhering to our own "inclinations" and not tapping into the resources of reason cause a state of "*absurdum morale*" or "moral absurdity" (62). For good and bad in theology, not following God's commands of the good rates as the highest level of disobedience against God. She concludes that "repentance" holds a high place in the process of being moral because the "question of remembrance brings us at least one small step nearer to the bothersome question of the nature of evil"—of harm to the community (94). Even still, what most concerns Arendt is that the level of moral concern regarding self in Kant and Socrates seems to be equally addressed

in religion through the highest standards of the commands "Love thy neighbor as thyself" and, equally, "Don't do unto others what you don't want done to yourself" (68). Therefore, she questions that when the root of the problem is the self, how can moral goodness be guaranteed to go into action in matters dealing with violence and the community?

Arendt assesses how thinking functions in Socratic, Kantian, and religious moral belief in order to recognize how and where thinking alters itself in failing to act against violence that harms the community. For Socratic thought, the assumption of a moral truth enters into the statement of suffering rather than doing, and then irresponsibility comes from the "inability to think" past the suffering to the doing-something-about the suffering caused by violence. Kant's own line of thought is that "*Morality* is thus the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will" (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* 51). However, Arendt concludes that the "obligation," which should have led individuals toward a "good will," actually led them to a false sense of reasoning. For Arendt, the "obligation" within "moral proposals" can force individuals to acquiesce to the command of what is now false thinking. She deduces that Kant's obligation has the potential to guide individuals into the very trap of self-disgust that Kant himself wishes to avoid. Thus, she concludes that "Kant's categorical imperative" was no "imperative" at all and has the same result as Socrates's idea of suffering rather than doing (*Responsibility and Judgment* 77). As for religious moral thought, she argues that in a Christian nation, such as that which allowed the throes of Nazi-led violence, the majority of individuals professing religion had no fear of "an avenging God" or even of potential "punishments in a hereafter" (63). What she does recognize about how thinking functions is that a select but limited number of individuals, whether religious or not, relied not on "religious beliefs or fears" but on responsibility to the community, in that they could not live with themselves if they succumbed to

such acts of violence (64). Therefore, what is ever troubling to Arendt in relation to the causes of a type of thinking that harms a community lies within morality itself and in the process of being moral.

From Arendt, submersion into a sea of moral absurdity, wherein moral truths and propositions assume they are correct with correct precepts, allows individuals to think that they have the convincing proofs necessary, with no need of rebuttal. But greater still are Arendt's apprehensions with the Kantian self, in that the self chooses what reason should be good. Such concern leads her to the acknowledgement of an even more critical problem in the functions of the thinking process on morality and self: "If thinking dissolves normal, positive concepts into their original meaning, then the same process dissolves these negative 'concepts' into their original meaninglessness into nothing" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 179). If the thinking process can allow only adverse and purposeless abstractions to dissipate into nonexistence, then, Arendt deduces, there may be an even greater and more "dangerous fallacy" than the Platonic notion that " 'Nobody does evil voluntarily' "—that of a willful rejection of thought, which leads to indifference (180, 146). In what modes does nonthinking conceal itself?

Arendt argues that an absence of thinking may appear as good for "political and moral affairs," but its threat comes in failing to question morality itself and any current notions designated for individuals on moral guidance (178). As a result, she surmises that the "most evil" stems from nonthinking (180). The most harm to the community comes from those "who never made up their minds to be good or bad" (180). She emphasizes a further danger from Nietzsche's aphorism, number 39, in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

But there is no doubt that when it comes to discovering certain *aspects* of the truth,

people who are evil and unhappy are more fortunate and have a greater probability of

success (not to mention those who are both evil and happy—a species that the moralists

don't discuss). (37)

Though Arendt is not promoting Nietzsche's overall philosophical thought, she does

acknowledge that he, at least, recognizes the deterioration of morals in his era by detecting that

even the moralists choose to bypass thought on individuals who have full satisfaction in evil. She

indicates that his challenge of the "traditional views" of questioning good and bad is noteworthy

(*Responsibility and Judgment* 127). In considering the functions of thinking in relation to

violence, she stresses that morality failed, not instantaneously during the Nazi era, but going

much further back, at least a century before, to a time when morality was already in decay and

never fully questioned by the moralists. Arendt takes the questioning of morality even further

than Nietzsche in contemplating his notion of "the wicked who are happy." She delineates how

thought functions in processing the traits of violence itself. She recognizes that "ugliness" and

harm done to the community do not fall under the umbrella of thought, except at times as

imperfection, incompleteness, inequity, and as a "lack of good" (179). She concludes that the

function of thought in relation to ugliness and harm upon the community has no essential part or

"essence," nothing to anchor itself within the community itself. Such harm conceals itself as an

"absence" that does not even exist, especially when those who produce the harm are in a constant

state of contentment (179). Thus, it is no wonder that even moralists are deceived when looking

at ugliness and harm to the community, when considering them only as something that falls short

of the good and of justice. But Arendt advances further her ideas of the highest degree of danger

for the community existing through those who show no concern by arguing that our

determinations of "right and wrong" will be contingent upon the companions we keep, who think

for us, even if these companions happen to be "persons dead or alive, real or fictitious, and in

examples of incidents past or present" (145, 146). Such a denial to think for ourselves produces a

self-powerlessness, where, Arendt argues, "the real *skandala*, the real stumbling blocks" cannot

be eradicated because they are "not caused by human and humanly understandable motives";

they are, instead, the real "horror"—the banality of evil—the meaninglessness of thought as the

actual harm to the community (146). How do we recognize non-understandable motives of the

stumbling blocks that most harm the community?

We rightly retain from Arendt's discussion the realization that what can take place during

real-time violence, in the blurring of moral propositions and moral truths, can establish

meaninglessness of thought, or even someone else's thought as one's own, and can transfer in

three ways to individuals who view and even create the content of violence in visual form: (1)

Harm is done to the community by misunderstanding the problematic self, both in religion and in

morality, which affects the connotations of moral goodness in viewing visual violence itself and

thus its reimage: (2) Harm is done to the community when the human will, with a false reasoning

of morality, can assume a rightness toward violence that needs no evidence, or even any

argument at all; and (3) Harm is done to the community when the attitude toward real-time

violence for those who stay at the level of indifference translates into indecisiveness about being

good or bad in relation to the moral self in viewing visual violence. How do all these factors,

culminating in indifference, affect how thinking functions in perception? At this point, a shift

back to Merleau-Ponty is necessary in order to add Arendtian thought as an important bridge to

the perception of violence in its reimages.

When considering visual imagery, it is easy to forget that morality is a motivating concern for Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception. Thus, there is much to learn from him that is critical for this project. In looking at the thinking process that restricts perception in relation to apathy and morality, he argues that perception has everything to do with our connections in the way we behave toward others; he says that we must not exclude morality from the human world, especially when our lives create and recreate the living world around us (*Primacy of Perception* 25). He holds that "morality cannot consist in the private adherence to a system of values," and that "principles are mystifications unless they are put into practice" (25– 26). Instead of placing the emphasis on an incapacity to think in terms of banality, he sets our relationship to human others as the ground of perception and morality as a connecting point for all that we cause, design, and recondition in our environs (26). He enters onto the ground of action when he questions "whether intention suffices as moral justification" (26) For Merleau-Ponty, indifference toward the human other acts as a domino effect in voiding our thinking, the human other, and, thus, the phenomenon of perception itself—the "appearance" of being. Thinking is thus part of human productiveness, which presences the phenomenon of being "without losing itself" in its own change into the union with consciousness (*Phenomenology of Perception* 115, 31, 32). But if individuals allow indifference to set in and try to present it as what Merleau-Ponty calls moral justification, he argues then that they do not think, because they look for compliance from others of mutual agreement (*Primacy of Perception* 26). Looking ahead to further discussion of Merleau-Ponty's ideas in the latter portion of this chapter: When individuals bring their "acts" toward the other into perspective, and their perspectives are irreconcilable to others, then "their existing connections to human others employ "immorality" (26). How then does thinking operate toward actions in perception?

In relation to how thought functions in perception, he argues that in the careful examination of an unbiased perception, the perceived world is not merely a "sum of objects"; we are not thinkers toward an "object of thought"; neither can consciousness equate with the "unity of a proposition," which is known by many thinkers; and a "perceived existence" does not equate with "ideal existence" (*Primacy of Perception* 12). He continues to argue that if we adhere to the "classical" order of "form and matter" in viewing the perceived world, then we cannot experience perception (12). The thinking process in perception operates through multiples "consciousnesses," but we cannot think of the one who perceives as simply a consciousness that operates as a mere mechanism, which decodes situations involving the senses and perceptible to the mind, and then orders itself in alliance with its very own "ideal law" (12). Merleau-Ponty adds perception to the epistemological situation in the limits of human knowledge, and we need to keep in mind that perception in the epistemological realm is a moral issue. His approach differs from Arendt's emphasis on violence and what went wrong with morality's role in failing to act for the sake of the community. Why is it essential to address how thinking operates in perception toward action, morality, and community in comparison to Arendt's notions?

Merleau-Ponty's position regarding morality and perception rightly outlines how thinking functions differently in perception. First, he indicates that thinking functions through action in the "perceptual experience" rather than in human understanding or in making assumptions about perception and its limits and interests according to an individual's perspective (12). Second, in relation to morality aligned to the community, thinking takes place with the reconciliation of the perceiving subject to the human other. If indifference toward the human other persists, if we cling to an assemblage of values for ourselves only, then, Merleau-Ponty maintains, we deceive ourselves as being thinkers (25–26). Merleau-Ponty's ideas of thinking and perception link to

Arendt's argument about the thinking process, where nonthinking is the highest level of harm when individuals refuse to choose "to be good or bad" (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* 180). Such a state causes the failure to question morality or any written course of actions on moral behavior for individuals to follow (178).

Finally, for Merleau-Ponty, thinking in perception takes on somewhat of a different role: consciousnesses play a major part in perception, and recognizing how consciousness operates in the visual field is first and foremost. He sets the perceptual stage in establishing that the perceived world will never consist of all objects (*Primacy of Perception* 12). Neither will the perceiving subject have a kinship to the perceived world as "a thinker" would a fixed form of thought (12). On thinking and consciousness, Arendt argues that: "Consciousness is not the same as thinking; but without it, thinking would be impossible. What thinking actualizes in its process is the difference given in consciousness" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 185). This "difference given in consciousness" is the place of thinking in perception. Two different angles on thinking, from Merleau-Ponty and Arendt, are necessary in combination in order to learn the foundations needed not only to critique image and violence but to know how to handle all the different facets taking place in violence itself and the perception of its reimaging. I agree with both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt in their conclusions of how thinking operates in relation to morality already present in perception and of how thinking alters itself in the changing of how morality operates in relation to violence. Thus, we carry forward these questions in assessing the problematic ground of visual violence, morality, and ideal law: How do the misconceptions of moral propositions and moral truths regarding violence itself have an impact on the reimaging of violence and then further impede the responsibility to the community? How does thinking function when ideal law enters into the thinking process of perception in relation to violence and

its reimaging? What results occur in the functions of thinking when our choices of right and wrong determine legal justifications by the companions we keep, whether they authentically exist or exist in mind only and in instances of past or present situations? At this juncture, we can benefit from examining real-time examples in how legality and the law can lead to moral neutrality and alter the thinking process of perception in relation to violence.

<p style="text-align:center">Legality and Moral Neutrality</p>

In what ways does the thinking process inherent in legality and moral neutrality effect violence and the community? Does the misconstrual of law and moral law lead to misunderstandings of the phenomenon of perception in reimaged violence? Ultimately, such questions drive the necessary discussion in analyzing why reimaged violence tends to be seen within the corporate, economic, and consumer communities as nothing more than Arendt's Socratic reference of "child's play," rather than " 'the greatest' matters" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 84). Arendt's urgency in finding why morality collapsed among the educated, the religious, and the moralists within Nazi Germany sets in place the study in the operations of thinking. This same urgency is necessary for all human beings as they question morality and the process of being moral when recreating the imagery of violence, and the subsequent ingesting of such imagery by consumers. Ultimately, Arendt demands to see where morality went wrong between the Greeks and Kant, eventually leading to an acceptance of horrific violence committed during her historical era and a lack of responsibility or guilt for the harm done to the community. Through a phenomenological lens, her concerns of Kantian moral absurdity and duty, of the legality in moral law and their effects on "collective responsibility" demonstrate how these

elements interlock with human connections in the reimaging and viewing of violence (62, 68, 149).

In search of answers to the questions posed above, Arendt presents essential relevance on altered thinking in a focal shift from Socrates to Plato's last work, *Laws*, which includes "Plato's doctrine of Ideas" but excludes Socratic moral reasoning (*Responsibility and Judgment* 87). Why present such a separation as important? Two main issues highlight Arendt's prior analyses of investigation into the features of thinking in relation to violence and harm to the community: our thinking alters when real or fictional individuals and prior or present instances think for us; and the misperception of laws alters our judgment of right or wrong with a confusion of "standards and measurements" from Plato (87). Next, Merleau-Ponty argues that the classical subject-object mode appears to be relevant but makes demands on "a consciousness" in alliance with its own ideal law. Both views, from Arendt and from Merleau-Ponty, are critical for the example of reimaged violence and laws in this section on how thinking operates. What are the features of thinking in relation to transitory laws altering morality and ideal law altering perception itself?

Arendt establishes an intriguing line of historical and cultural thought regarding human laws and the inability of individuals to think during Nazi-governed Germany. She writes, "They acted under conditions in which every moral act was illegal and every legal act was a crime" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 41). In her distinction between the political and religious orders and Kantian moral law, Arendt reiterates that when individuals freely set into place a moral law unto themselves, they obey their own reason to act morally and legislate a valid law for everyone in the form of "moral 'laws of freedom,' " which are binding, as opposed to " 'laws of nature' " that are necessary (Kant qtd. in *Responsibility and Judgment* 70). She then highlights Kant's stance on the difference between "legality and morality" in arguing: "Legality is morally neutral;

it has its place in institutionalized religion and in politics, but not in morality. The political order does not require moral integrity but only law-abiding citizens, and the Church is always a church of sinners" (68). This passage will be a key point in following the Supreme Court justices in a case involving minors' access to video images of acts of murder and sexual assault and in marking the place where thinking begins to alter its course as to how it functions in law, morality, and community in relation to violence. She tries to understand why the thinking behind the Kantian moral laws of freedom did not work and argues that the main motive of "this self-misunderstanding in Kant is the highly equivocal meaning of the word 'law' in the Western tradition of thought" (69). In keeping to her thematic concept of the banality of evil, as harm done to the community and misconception, Arendt argues that the misunderstanding of the word "law" comes back, full circle, to Plato. In establishing the conditions of such inversion, she highlights an apparent agreement with the Athenian's view of moral standards in Plato's *Laws* (84). The Athenian states the following:

> In particular, goodness according to nature and goodness according to the law are two
> different things, and there is no natural standard of justice at all. On the contrary, men are
> always wrangling about their moral standards and altering them, and every change
> introduced becomes binding from the moment it's made, regardless of the fact that it is
> entirely artificial and based on convention, not nature in the slightest degree. (*Laws X*
> 889e-890a)

Arendt determines that Plato's greatest fears derive from humans who constantly clamor and quarrel about their moral principles, while changing them to become the authority at any given instant in time. This restrictive legislation, established from human customs, rather than from nature devoid of human interventions, leads her to evaluate the features of thinking and how they

operate in morality through transitory laws. On the one hand, what appears to be disturbing to

Arendt is Plato's assertion that when laws are recorded, then only the "wise" will understand that

they are artificially created by humans (*Responsibility and Judgment* 85). On the other hand, she

is troubled by the notion that the masses will think laws are a "natural standard of justice" mainly

because they appear to be secured, in alliance with nature and not with the constant reshaping of

moral standards. Such concern is evident when she argues that Plato abandons the dialogues and

the "myth" in *Laws*, because coercing the masses is no longer possible since all inducements to

believe have failed (85). For Arendt, Plato appears to believe that coaxed efforts are no longer

possible due to a misunderstanding of both individual-made legislature and natural laws, and

thus he creates his doctrine of Ideas (*Responsibility and Judgment* 86). She argues: "Plato's

doctrine of Ideas introduced such standards and measurements into philosophy, and the whole

problem of how to tell right from wrong now boiled down to whether or not I am in possession

of the standard or the 'idea' which I must apply in each particular case" (87). But how exactly do

standards and measurements cause difficulty in discerning right from wrong?

Plato's Forms are a reminder that if we cannot determine whether we measure the

standard of justice or of violence that affects human attitudes—the ideas (beliefs) of justice or

ideas (impressionable attitudes) of violence that must be applied to every law—then the blurring

of right and wrong can stagnate thinking on the part of moralists, of the religious, and of the

individuals in the community. Arendt argues that one possible reason for such confusion is that

Plato believes such things as "Justice" and "Goodness" have a presence as real things with

beings (86). She maintains that treating justice and goodness as a separate being through the

"Forms" of laws, rather than audible or written communication, actually takes individuals away

from the Socratic "spoken word" of moral inspiration that is ultimately necessary for laws (86).

Thus, she deduces: "Within the realm of words, and all thinking as a process is a process of speaking, we shall never find an iron rule by which to determine what is right and what is wrong . . . where the standard or measurement is always the same" (86). We can now conclude that law, goodness and justice easily conceal themselves on more than one level in the course of thinking: through treating them as individual beings and through a constant reflux of reasoning with morality and the particular standard or measurement. It is not that Arendt devalues Plato's writings of logical laws, for laws are necessary. She simply emphasizes Plato's shift in tone of attitude and belief away from Socratic notions on morality to Plato's own "Doctrine of Ideas." She emphasizes that Plato leaves aside the Socratic realization that diminishing morality to facts or laws in dealing with rights and wrongs leads only to a thinking of rationales and not to thinking beings, who think through all aspects of high-stake concerns (92). Concerning this particular place in Plato's Forms, Arendt insists that they introduce the blurring of the perception between right and wrong through an indeterminate gauge of standards and measurements, which ultimately strengthens threads in the web of an incapacity or negation to think. At this place, it is necessary to emphasize that both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt have their concerns with doctrines and their effects on the thinking process: Merleau-Ponty on the restrictive traits from the doctrines of the classical subject-object restrictions; and Arendt in both her recognition of those who required a doctrine for thinking and changed the nonresults of the Socratic thinking inquiry into negative situational end results; and her recognition of Plato's doctrine of Ideas, or Forms, that blur right and wrong.

In reference to Plato's Forms, a larger image begins to come into view through a subtle thread found within the Greek term *eidos*, meaning figure or appearance (image). This figure or image connects to the understandings of imagination and perception later implied by Merleau-

Ponty. He will ignite a challenge to distinguish between "primary consciousness" and "consciousness of an object" in order to comprehend a complete hollowness that is recognizable only through an "inner perception of recollection or imagination" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 448, 39, 448). He argues that, through imagination, which allows us to draw a change of positions, deriving from moral necessities, we invert "the natural relation between body and the surroundings, and a human productivity must appear through the thickness of being" (115). Thus, we anchor our thought at such a place that produces an image in the depth and breadth of being when applying two separate philosophical theories to the problematic ground of the thinking process and of perception. How do we process such theories on law, morality, and perception in relation to violence?

A modern-day example illustrates what transpires in viewing reimaged violence (artist choice of placement) in two key arguments from Arendt on the misperception of laws altered by individual judgment of right and wrong, and what transpires when factual or imaginary instances determine legal justifications. Given Merleau-Ponty's two arguments, we keep in the forefront the driving questions on how our own ideal law affects the thinking process of perception and how looking through a classical subject-object lens places demands on such a consciousness. The following case-specific example emphasizes more of what takes place *after* the ruling through the *opinions* of the court in their justifications, rather than in the actual ruling itself.

In 2011, the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association* ruled against a California law and in favor of the 60 billion-dollar video industry by allowing the sale of violent video games to children on First Amendment grounds. The occasion for such a law was the exposure of video game violence to the underaged. The California law delineated the following:

The Act covers games "in which the range of options available to a player includes killing, maiming, dismembering, or sexually assaulting an image of a human being, if those acts are depicted" in a manner that "[a] reasonable person, considering the game as a whole, would find appeals to a deviant or morbid interest of minors," that is "patently offensive to prevailing standards in the community as to what is suitable for minors," and that "causes the games, as a whole, to lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors." (Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Assoc. § 1 at 1)

The Supreme Court decision indicates that the California law violates the First Amendment and cannot prove the evidence it provides in arguing that children should not be exposed to interactive video violence. Justice Antonin Scalia attempts to justify the opinions of the Court in the reasoning behind their ruling, writing on behalf of the five concurring justices:

California's argument would fare better if there were a longstanding tradition in this country of specially restricting children's access to depictions of violence, but there is none. Certainly the *books* we give children to read—or read to them when they are younger—contain no shortage of gore. Grimm's Fairy Tales, for example, are grim indeed. As her just deserts [*sic*] for trying to poison Snow White, the wicked queen is made to dance in red hot slippers "till she fell dead on the floor, a sad example of envy and jealousy." . . . Cinderella's evil stepsisters have their eyes pecked out by doves. . . . And Hansel and Gretel (children!) kill their captor by baking her in an oven. . . .

High-school reading lists are full of similar fare. Homer's Odysseus blinds Polyphemus the Cyclops by grinding out his eye with a heated stake. . . . In the Inferno, Dante and Virgil watch corrupt politicians struggle to stay submerged beneath a lake of

boiling pitch, lest they be skewered by devils above the surface. . . . And Golding's Lord

of the Flies recounts how a schoolboy called Piggy is savagely murdered *by other*

*children* while marooned on an island. . . . (§ 2 at 8–9)

Keeping in mind Kant's observation, that legality has its place as morally neutral, how do we

trace where thinking alters its course in relation to morality and laws through the opinions of the

Court by applying Arendt's full argument as presented here thus far?

Arendt's assessment on ugliness and evil and her claim that indifference, the most

significant danger, comes about through our determinations of right and wrong aligned to the

companions we choose, who think for us, even if such a companion happens to be "persons dead

or alive, real or fictitious, and examples of incidents past or present" (*Responsibility and*

*Judgment* 145, 146). Clearly, Justice Scalia provides numerous previous examples of violent

fiction in his references to children's and high school literature in support of the justices'

opinions that First Amendment rights do not change when violent content is presented through a

new medium such as video games. In the mind-set of remaining "morally neutral" per the law,

Scalia actually proves true Arendt's claim of indifference when he uses personal opinion to

justify that violence has been part of the world of minors in centuries past. Moreover, he argues

that the California law did not prove that the threat of violent video game interaction with minors

was harmful. Regardless of this assertion's outcome, however, we begin to see how the thinking

process alters when examples of violent fiction from both the past and present do the moral

thinking for us. When different connotations of morality enter into the opinions about violence—

whether we invite them or not—we cannot question the full range of facets of violence, morality,

and the state of being moral in relation to ugliness and any harm to the community. As a result,

we place Arendt's ugliness and communal harm into categories of insufficiencies that conceal

themselves as nothing at all (179). Thinking changes into nonthinking in choosing meanings about right and wrong when justices use the fact that there is not enough evidence to support parents in restricting their children from exposure to these games that are being presented as harmful. When morally revolting acts on the community are devoid of thinking beings in the thinking process, then, with no cause or identifiable traits of a problematic situation, we merely think in rationales that lend themselves to treating issues of high importance as simple and clear, when in fact they are precisely the opposite.

In addition, we see the Platonic notion of transitory laws altering opinions of morality when Justice Scalia gives a rational and historical account of minors viewing violence and opposition from the public to nineteenth-century "dime novels . . . blamed in some quarters for juvenile delinquency" (Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Assoc. § 2 at 9). He reviews the history on law and action related to the Supreme Court. In 1915 there was "censorship of movies because of their capacity to be 'used for evil' . . . but we eventually reversed course . . . (invalidating a drive-in movies restriction designed to protect children)" (§ 2 at 9–10). Next comes "Radio dramas" and then "comic books" in the 1940s–50s: "Many . . . blamed comic books for fostering a 'preoccupation with violence and horror.' . . . But efforts to convince Congress to restrict comic books failed" (§ 2 at 10). Why even reference transitory laws in relation to visual violence? It is not through the rulings of the Supreme Court or the failure to persuade the legislative branch but through their justification of transitory laws and opinions that we understand Arendt's concern about the inability of the Kantian moral compass to decipher what is good, bad, or harmful to the community. We rightly align to her conclusions that when nonthinking appears as good for political and moral issues of concern, the community misses the very threats posed by an altered thinking process because it does not question the current ideas

dictated for individuals on moral actions (*Responsibility and Judgment* 178). What takes place next in the thinking process allows for Arendt's claim that "negative," "meaningless" general ideas cause abstract principles or notions to erase all (179). With their opinions on right and wrong about reimaged violence, the justices permit the violent, video game conceptualizations to disintegrate into nothingness through an alteration in thinking operations. How is such deception possible?

Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. and Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. both voted with the majority but did not agree entirely with the majority opinion. In his opinion, Justice Alito indicates that the California law is elusive and that a law, if cautiously worded, could have withstood constitutional examination. Interestingly, Alito argues that the majority was too hasty in discharging differences between other media and video games. Later in this chapter, we see how Alito's doubts fit with Merleau-Ponty's concerns on perception. Alito describes the "concepts" behind some violent games: "The objective of one game is to rape a mother and her daughters. . . . [P]layers attempt to fire a rifle shot into the head of President Kennedy as his motorcade passes by the Texas School Book Depository" (Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Assoc., Alito, J., concurring § 1 at 15). Soon, he reports, children may be playing three-dimensional high-definition games wearing equipment that "will allow [them] to ' "actually feel the splatting blood from the blown-off head" ' of a victim" (H. Schechter, qtd. in Alito, J., concurring § 1 at 13).

In rebuttal, Justice Scalia acknowledges Justice Alito's documentation of disturbing images; yet Scalia argues that "disgust is not a valid basis for restricting expression" (§ 1 at 11). At this point of the discussion, where thinking comes in rationales and not as thinking beings, Justice Scalia's opinions on what constitutes "disgust" negate Justice Alito's concerns about

potential harm to the community. An altered thinking process takes these violent

conceptualizations and equates them to pointless nothingness in relation to freedom of

expression. Not only do the justices give their divided opinions regarding the right to view

violence, but the spokesman for the merchants gives his opinion on rights from the final ruling.

He professes that now all is fair for everyone—game makers, consumers, and store owners.[4]

What is most disturbing, however, arises from Arendt's analyses of laws and standards and

measurements, according to Plato's fears. In relation to laws, humans constantly dispute rights

and change them to become the authority at that given moment in time, according to legislation

and not to nature. After this particular court case, the masses tend to presume and believe that the

opinions about rights in relation to viewing reimaged violence are natural laws that need no

verbal oppositional points of view expressed except for the clarification of the ruling and its

results through the justifying of personal opinions. As Arendt indicates, the blurring of right and

wrong is always a factor because of the uncertainty in knowing which particular varying moral

standard and its quantity or degree we happen to be using, at a specific moment in time, which

then must be applied to every law. Therefore, violence, morality, and the process of being moral

can never be excluded from thorough questioning by the community.

How does consciousness operate in the thinking process of perception that makes

demands on consciousness and ideal law through the lens of the classical mode of subject and

object? Here, it is important to note that Merleau-Ponty's contribution in relation to

consciousness in perception will be covered in depth later in the chapter. However, it is essential

to apply his foundational observations on perception, as presented thus far in the demands on

thinking toward morality and ideal law, to this Supreme Court example of reimaged violence.

Even though Merleau-Ponty does not speak of violence, his insights on perception are critical to

the human condition and moral indispensability. Thus, through a perceptual lens, we explore how thinking functions when applied to the subject-object mode of vision.

Justice Scalia begins his justifying opinions in the classical mode of subject-object when he places the restriction on consciousness in the opening sentence: "California's argument would fare better if . . ." (Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Assoc. § 1 at 8). The word *if* points to a restrictive clause that makes demands on the reader's consciousnesses and advances the *if-*directive toward the ending subject "none" in the remaining portion of the sentence: ". . . but there is none." The word *none* completely settles the restriction of the reader's consciousnesses. The word *there* signals the original subject—the "argument" of California. Now, readers recognize that three objects, "access," "depictions," and "violence," modify a second subject, that of "tradition": ". . . if there were a longstanding tradition in this country of specially restricting children's access to depictions of violence . . ." (§ 1 at 8). These three objects are what Merleau-Ponty calls a sum of objects that cannot be associated with a perceived world because, in perception, thinking in association with "an object of thought" restricts the many consciousnesses needed for the "perceived thing" (*Primacy of Perception* 12). The perceived thing, of course, is violence itself in its many reimagings both mental and tangible. The opinions, not the proposed law, of the highest court in the land alter the thinking process of the masses when thinking about violence and the perceptual layers of its reimaging, as in the California law: "killing, maiming, dismembering, or sexually assaulting an image of a human being" (§ 1 at 1). An absence of thinking, as indicated in Arendt's argument, now functions in relation to perception the moment we allow the opinions of the both the court and the Entertainment Merchant's Association to think for us. Merleau-Ponty argues that "in looking for it [approval]

of our own judges," we cease "thinking for ourselves" (*Primacy of Perception* 25, 26). What

happens in the perceptual experience when nonthinking of perception pairs with ideal law?

In his opinions of thinking on violence only through a classical mode of subject-object,

Justice Scalia's misjudgment unfolds in two ways, according to Merleau-Ponty's rightful

assessments on perception: through eliminating perceptual occurrences and through altering our

lived relation connection with violence. First, in his effort to attach a "realism" approach to

reimaged violence, Scalia does exactly what Merleau-Ponty argues will happen: "If we attempt

to follow realism in turning the perception into a coinciding with the thing [violence], then we

could no longer even understand the nature of the perceptual event . . . for in realism, the subject

necessarily possesses nothing of the object" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 340). Merleau-Ponty

argues that a perceiving subject will "organize and unite all of the appearances of the thing

[violence]" (340). Scalia eliminates perceptual appearances of violence by holding a realist

approach toward reimaged violence, and thus, he cannot evaluate the assorted perceptual views

of violence because he is not within the perceptual event. Second, Justice Scalia also operates

inside what Merleau-Ponty calls an "idealism of synthesis," which misrepresents one's lived

connections with events, affairs, and circumstances (340). The ideal law of freedom of

expression, which appears as perfect, is part of the idealism of synthesis, for a synthesis alters

views of violence itself and thus it reimages. Without numerous consciousnesses needed for the

perceptual experience of thinking, then a consciousness merely mandates how to think in alliance

with ideal law. The ideal law in this case study is freedom of speech, or of expression. We freely

choose, and appreciate the privilege of, such a freedom because, through historical evidence, we

recognize the dangers of its opposite. But what happens in the thinking operations with ideal law

is the confrontation with one of the many paradoxes of thinking: the price of freedom. Outside of

the perceptual lens, which now disconnects us from a community of human others, only one

consciousness out of many instructs us not to enter the ground outside of ideal law, not even to

explore why freedoms come with a price. Merleau-Ponty's and Arendt's notions on how thinking

functions in relation to community pave a correct path for our assessments of an authentic

perception of violence.

At this point, nonthinking appears in the guise of thinking in relation to law, community,

and matters dealing with violence—even in all forms of its reimaging. Merleau-Ponty rightly

states that a lack of concern develops toward the community with only a "personal adherence to

a system of values" (*Primacy of Perception* 25, 26). We begin to think perceptually when we

question, as does Merleau-Ponty, whether or not plans and ideas serve as moral justification (26).

The court, who must remain morally neutral, merely decodes facts and opinions without taking

in the perceptual thinking process of the presence of violence and its reimaging. It is, however,

Justice Alito, in his personal research on video game violence, who recognizes an intent of harm

toward the community in his opinion statements. He argues that in these games, "the violence is

astounding" and directs a purposeful violence toward the "ethnic cleansing [of] . . . African-

Americans, Latinos, or Jews" (Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Assoc., Alito, J., concurring §

1 at 14, 15). Alito's concerns of violence on the community lead toward Merleau-Ponty's unity

of perceived existence in relation to the perception of violence, which only comes about with the

use of multiple consciousnesses. But Alito's comments cannot withstand the rhetoric

surrounding an ideal law, which deceptively appears to produce an ideal existence and conceals

the full thinking process required for visual violence and its reimaging. As Arendt rightly argues,

we cease questioning how thinking functions in the human condition and its relationship with

violence that ultimately results in harm to the community. As a result, her line of argument

proves certain when the legitimate concern—whether minors, involved with the "negative concepts" in violent video games, can murder and sexually assault an "image" of a human — transforms into no identifiable portions of human qualities and then result in no significance toward the acts of violence itself. Thus, we do not question why it is permissible to sexually assault, murder, or mutilate an image of a human being. Furthermore, we do not question what type of effects settle into the human psyche, or perhaps, why we cannot recognize such effects? She rightly states that no recognizable causes and no given evidence from ugliness and evil— harm to the community—erase any anchoring of thought (*Responsibility and Judgment* 179).

By recognizing what is taking place within the human condition—as did Socrates, Plato, and Kant—Merleau-Ponty extends perception further than the philosophers before him. He extends the Husserlian lived perception to the level that morality enters into the image, not only with the presence of the human other, but in the lived perception of the "human world," or the community—"the homeland of our thoughts" (*Primacy of Perception* 26). If consciousness plays a key role in perceptual thinking on the human other, morality, and community, then further examination from Merleau-Ponty of such knowledge in perceptual consciousness is not only beneficial but necessary for the continuation of this chapter.

What type of questioning should take place in relation to violence, community, and perception when the function of thinking alters morality through a misperception of laws? We benefit in questioning whether we think in isolation with a transgressor or in relation to the regional community, where multiple consciousnesses interact in the presence of all human others. It is necessary to question whether we allow our own opinions of morality and rights to fit particular circumstances that remove us from the field of thinking beings. We think, as Arendt reminds us, that some features of authentic stumbling blocks can never be removed because they

do not come to fruition through "humanly understandable motives" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 146). The denial to think and a meaninglessness toward thought are the features that most threaten to alter the way thinking functions. Such impediments disorder what the community will continually confront in relation to facets of violence itself and communal harm.

We must question, in Arendtian terms, whether we utilize the "faculty of remembering" to trace injustices that we ourselves, if committed, could not endure, so as to avert future erroneous acts toward the human other (*Responsibility and Judgment* 124). Are we then thinking within the parameters of thinking beings, who never cease to question individual accountability toward community? Arendt reiterates that only a limited number of individuals did not succumb to the Nazi-led dehumanization of community and were not changed or dimensioned but "free of all guilt," though neither in terms of the Kantian "ought not" nor through the religious deliberations of the "lesser evil," which conceals from individuals that they still select evil (78). Instead, they thought within the operation of the "I can't," which equates with the axiomatic moral proposition: I cannot kill harmless and guiltless individuals (78). Do we question our consciousnesses as to why we consent to the willful harm done to the community as an inferior matter? Arendt reveals that "the lesser evil" is an instrument that contributes to "the machinery of terror and criminality" (36). She holds that such an agency alters the thinking of not only the governing body of individuals, but also the entire populace (36). Therefore, do we question whether we view goodness and justice only through their ideal forms, or whether we think about them through verbal communication that leads back to the inspiration of the law itself?

It is essential to question if one consciousness does the thinking for us in relation to ideal law, to community, and the moral relationship with the human other, which then alters the perception of violence itself and even its reimaging. In our questioning about violence and its

reimaging, do we use a perceptual lens, connecting us to human beings, or a single lens of community as objects, or even the lens of realism, where the subject may not have knowledge of the object at all? Do we question the layers behind the human desire to murder and sexually assault an image of a person? Thus, we benefit from a continual questioning of how thinking functions through consciousness to see if we hold any indifference toward violence itself and in morality by remaining morally neutral about good and bad in our relationship to the human other of the community. In what ways do our own ideas keep us from the perception of violence itself and its reimage?

## The Phenomenon of Perceiving versus Understanding

In the factors that affect perceptual thinking through ideas of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty argues that individuals cannot "superimpose on the perceived world a world of ideas," because proofs are not always logically certain (*Primacy of Perception* 13). Neither can thought be ageless, though he recognizes that thought certainly authenticates itself for more than just a transitory moment. He clarifies his assertion, in that ideas reappear and affect us "only for a period of our lives or for a period in the history of our culture" (13). To reiterate: Merleau-Ponty maintains that ideas, as "the foundation of the certainty of perception," actually introduce uncertainty, due to their transitory traits. He joins in dialogue with Arendt's concern that Plato's Ideas or Forms introduce into philosophy a blurring of perception between right and wrong through the uncertainty of knowing whether we measure the moral principle or only the idea of it. Thus, a transitory state of morality exists because of this blurring of right and wrong. Also, not exactly parallel but similar to Merleau-Ponty's understanding of transitory ideas is Kant's

concept of "radical evil," the incapacity to follow reason because the sense world overtakes our disposition of human will that leads to reason. Specific points, for Merleau-Ponty, speak to how the thinking process alters perception in a closer look at perception versus understanding: "a world of ideas" and "a certainty of ideas"; syntheses of consciousnesses; and "a theory of imaginary existence and of ideal existence" (*Primacy of Perception* 13, 40).

To begin his discussion, Merleau-Ponty clarifies a certainty of ideas in relation to the experience of perception. He writes: "The certainty of ideas is not the foundation of the certainty of perception, but is, rather, based on it—in that it is perceptual experience which gives us the passage from one moment to the next and thus realizes the unity of time" (13). This unity of time in the perceptual experience is critical to the discussion in all the chapters here, in understanding how consciousness operates perceptually underneath time. When Merleau-Ponty states that "all consciousness is perceptual," he means to indicate that consciousness is always and foremost perceptual, rather than that everything is merely a matter of perception; he believes that there is still room to build justifiable ideas on the basis of perception. He does, however, desire a consciousness of selves, which is ultimately what his project offers. However, ideas are problematic for him when they are accredited with authority and their perceptual underpinnings forgotten. He continually challenges the assumed authority of the scientific paradigm and the overly rational paradigm in philosophy—the ways of thinking about ideas, which carry an epistemological subject-object divide. His concerns are in line with Arendt's worries about our default trust in moral and rational ideas, which turn out, in the end, to be detached and unexercised, as with the Platonic Socrates, who argues that individuals continually change their mind about what is right and wrong. Arendt recognizes that "'iron bonds'" for the determinacy of right and wrong are not even in place, because "the reasoning process is without end"

(*Responsibility and Judgment* 86). Thus, she turns to imagination to exercise thinking in its highest form in order to see the other side of individuals' senses, or what Kant calls inclinations, which lead them away from thinking and reason. In what ways do thinking and reason function in perceptual events?

Merleau-Ponty focuses on the meaning of self-awareness in the realm of experience that is always happening prior to our conscious reflections on things. He argues:

> The perceiving mind is an incarnated mind. I have tried, first of all, to re-establish the roots of the mind in its body and in its world, going against doctrines which treat perception as a simple result of the action of external things on our body as well as against those which insist on the autonomy of consciousness. (*Primacy of Perception* 3–4)

In this statement Merleau-Ponty makes his main claim that perception has been assumed and perception as a phenomenon has been vastly overlooked by empiricism and intellectualism. He argues that the perceptual experience, and not a certainty of ideas, opens each moment to the following one to grasp the "unity of time" (*Primacy of Perception* 13). Akin to Merleau-Ponty's concern of perception and rational "isms," Arendt admits to a similar sentiment about philosophy and thinking when she states that the entire "history of philosophy" delineates vast theories on "the objects of thought and so little about the process of thinking itself" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 166). She argues that the "history of philosophy . . . is shot through with intramural warfare between man's common sense, this highest, sixth sense that fits our five senses and enables us to orient ourselves in it, and man's faculty of thinking by virtue of which he willfully

removes himself from it" (166). She acknowledges that individuals alter the thinking process with their own human will power and take themselves away from their abilities to think (166).

In considering both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt, it is clear that a world of ideas on violence—violence present at particular moments during the different historical eras of our culture—was placed upon a current concern of a technological nature: the type of violence young children would experience via the video-game world. Proof of such an overlay of ideas on violence comes when Scalia provides a lengthy list of past genres of reimaged violence from the arts, in his attempt to justify the court's opinion on the verdict regarding video-game violence. This act of what seemed a certainty of ideas on violence itself and its reimage, through intellectual reasoning, actually produced the uncertainty of knowing what was being measured in the opinions on reimaged violence: Was it current motives both personal and economic, the unknown of a technological image, levels of disgust over the cultural violence present in the games, or freedom in general?

Merleau-Ponty determines that, through a lens of merely understanding versus perception, a set of beliefs that forms within the communities of our environments tends to evaluate perception as nothing more than easily understandable matters, in much the same way that Arendt argues that thinking and moral action around matters of high stakes are taken for granted and treated as transparent enough for even a child to comprehend them (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* 84). Wording this in his own way, Merleau-Ponty maintains that the interaction between the roots of the body and the mind work against fixed dogmas. He insists that philosophies typically overlook the fact that the mind—rooted in the physicality of the flesh—results in an ambiguous relationship between body and mind, and then, ultimately, in perception. He locates the "problem of knowing" by placing it in the realm of "how my

experience is related to the experience which others have of the same objects" (*Primacy of Perception* 17). It is with this evaluation that a recognition of the risks of perceiving versus understanding delineates their differences. Thus, neither thinking in relation to morality as the accountability partner to violence itself nor genuine perception is elementary. Now we come to the point of acknowledging what takes place in the many syntheses of perception. When ideas function as *the* foundation, instead of as a foundational element for an assurance of perception, can the perceptual experience correct itself?

Merleau-Ponty maintains that the perceptual arrives in Husserl's " 'synthesis of transition,' " where the invisible is presented as " 'visible from another standpoint' " (*Primacy of Perception* 15). In the operations of thought and consciousness in perception, Merleau-Ponty maintains that "a 'transitional synthesis' " takes place in the "unity of the perceived objects," which then give signification to perceptual information (15). He insists that this synthesis is neither from "realism" nor from "idealism," and he argues that if we abide by "realism in turning the perception into a coinciding with the thing [violence], then we could no longer even understand the nature of the perceptual event" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 340). In turn, he argues that not only do we misconceive the perceptual event, but we also do not accept "the idealism of synthesis," which muddles our lived connection to all things. He states: "If the perceiving subject accomplishes the synthesis of the perceived, he must dominate and think a material of perception, he must himself organize and unite all of the appearances of the thing" (340).

For Merleau-Ponty, if we are to realize the basic traits and properties of the perceptual event and manage thought in all the things needed for perception, then we enter Husserl's *Logos* of the aesthetic world. We begin the perceptual event of violence itself with Merleau-Ponty's

applications of "the act of attention" and its journey with thought and consciousness in order to convert the full array of its positions through a synthesis of awareness and a unifying consciousness that can arrange and combine all the appearances of violence in general, and thus its reimaging process. Merleau-Ponty upholds that with the transition of synthesis, which happens through the experience of perception, an aim or reaction can only be ascertained if it acts as the " 'motive' [*motif*] of and not the cause of this event" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 33). Such an event is a " 'knowing event,' " with motive as a key player (340). How do we define motive, phenomenologically? Here, Merleau-Ponty draws from Edith Stein and her statement in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*, "paying attention to the object about which I already had some information, and going on to further data" (47). Stein argues that before the "attention-paying, serves as a motive for paying attention . . . It exerts a pull upon the ego, which the ego can obey, but which the ego can also fail to register" (47–48). How then is motive, in line with the act of attention, important in relation to violence itself and then to its reimaging? First, in applying both Merleau-Ponty's and Stein's ideas, we cannot merely pay attention to the causes of violence for the event of knowing it. Instead, we have to look at the motives of violence in order to foresee the knowing of violence through its perspectival lenses so as to understand its incentives. Second, in the Supreme Court opinions, the justices had prior information on reimaged violence. But in progressing to more advanced data, the racial and genocidal motives of the violence in the video games in the opinion from Justice Alito failed because the egos from the justifying opinions of the overall court did not pay attention to motive, and thus they could not measure the very motives of violence or the scale of disgust itself. How do we recognize perceiving versus intellectual understanding?

Merleau-Ponty argues that perception is not an "intellectual act," because such an act merely comprehends "the object either as possible or as necessary"; however, in perception, the object is " 'real' " (*Primacy of Perception* 15). "Real" for Merleau-Ponty is "infinite" and "inexhaustible" examination (*Phenomenology of Perception* 338). However, only by looking through a perceptual lens with endless views do we recognize what he calls the subject's "body as the field of perception and action," which can perceive only if the body's movements can extend to the place of touching all positions, in the body's sphere, the entire system of objects, and in the body's sphere as known to the perceiver (*Primacy of Perception* 16). He argues that the Cartesian soul, intertwined with the body, perceives the object, but not as the "ideal unity in the possession of the intellect"; rather, the perceived thing is "a totality open to a horizon of an indefinite number of perspectival views" (16). It is at this place of "body as the field of perception and action" that we get to the "miracle of consciousness," which presents the phenomenon of violence from multiple perspectives, for the purposes of this project, and then its transfer to its reimaging. Without the body as the perceptual field, Merleau-Ponty argues, the act of perceiving is missing, and so then carefully formed opinions are simply one level of measurement in perception with the responsibility for supplying what the body would have revealed on multiple levels (*Phenomenon of Perception* 35). Instead of a perceiving mind, which is out of the picture altogether, we lose our sense of such responsibility because we are "outside of reflection," and we create perception instead of uncovering its appropriate operations (35). In other words, we can only involve our thinking in a method of logic through a series of events in order to arrive at a final outcome about the thing itself (35). In looking through a perceiving consciousness, imagination, through body, gets underneath all of the sensory objects through a limitless examination. Merleau-Ponty's assessments on the imaginary refer back to Arendt's

subtle theme of imagination, wherein she argues that "the faculty of imagination would be involved in such thought to a high degree, that is, the ability to represent, to make present to myself what is still absent—any contemplated deed" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 157). How do we grasp a deeper understanding of how perceptual thinking functions in imagination?

Merleau-Ponty stresses another important side to the perceptual structure "of imaginary existence and of ideal existence" while in the "world of ideality," or of ideas as opposed to reality (*Primacy of Perception* 40). What he means by an imaginary existence is "placing perception at the center of consciousness" wherein "we transform our lives in the creation of a culture—and reflexion is an acquisition of this culture . . ." (40). So, in an imaginary existence, he insists that we are not thinking in the function of intellectualism, because intellectualism cannot discern phenomenon, not even an "imitation of it given by illusion" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 37). With this assertion, Merleau-Ponty forges the path for this project in going beyond understanding toward the perceptual experience of the phenomenon of violence itself and recognizing how to discern the events behind reimaged violence. He argues that intellectualism lowers phenomenon to mere mistaken judgment (37). In his understanding of the perceptual experience, we are in both an imaginary existence and an ideal existence, where we recognize the "co-presence, or coexistence of profiles": an imaginary existence connects to the "natural world," which is the range of perception that guarantees our "experiences have a given"; the "counterpart of the natural world is the given" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 345).

At this point, an ideal existence marks the vital clarification of the body in its importance as the scope of operations in perception (345). In the imaginary and ideal existence, Merleau-Ponty argues, we occupy both "time and space" (*Primacy of Perception* 40). As a result, we position ourselves to install the "object's unity" into a "new dimension" at the very moment it

extinguishes that unity so that the thing appears as a phenomenon (*Phenomenology of Perception* 33). This new dimension of perception is the place where we can view the thing (violence) in countless views. Here, there is what Merleau-Ponty calls a "practical synthesis" of perceptual consciousness that leads to the distinguishable and non-distinguishable of the thing (*Primacy of Perception* 14). But what happens to consciousness when its unity is destroyed? Merleau-Ponty clarifies the critical difference between his observation of perception and that of the "philosophy of understanding" by stating that "human consciousness never possesses itself in complete detachment and does not recover itself at the level of culture except by recapitulating the expressive, discrete, and contingent operations by means of which philosophical questioning itself has become possible" (40). This place of imaginary and ideal existence is the place to perform such philosophical questioning that allows for all the processes of perception to function through different levels of consciousnesses. Therefore, through all of the analyses on perception as phenomena, there is a steady unfolding of a subtle inferencing that the default trust in understanding as subject-object modes prohibits how knowledge and self are understood. Once we understand Merleau-Ponty's evaluation of perceiving versus understanding, we add another layer of perspicacious assessment in what takes place in the opinions involved in the Supreme Court case study. We realize that Scalia operates within an "intellectual act" that only sees the commodity of violence as suitable and expedient. Such realization surfaces in all his examples of reimaged violence in various types of literature. However, in perception, we see the object through endless and untiring examinations of the incentives of violence and its different facets (*Phenomenology of Perception* 338, 33). The perceptual lens of violence for Scalia does not exist. What hope do we have of overcoming the risks of perception?

Merleau-Ponty chooses the methodology of phenomenology for the philosophical questioning in his project, as does Arendt; it best serves their aims, since phenomenology is, in Merleau-Ponty's words, the "maintenance of contact with 'the thing itself' " (*Phenomenology of Perception* 41). It may seem that the philosophies of Merleau-Ponty and Arendt do not, or cannot, overlap, but we need to see that they can. The goal is to recognize the need for perceiving consciousness versus merely understanding through intellectual conscious; otherwise, we will never get to the level of recognizing the many motives of violence and its countless ways of disguising itself.

Arendt may never strictly voice that she is working within a phenomenological realm, but she certainly utilizes all the correct verbiage from phenomenology when she says the presence of thinking absences all other things that intersect with "the thinking process" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 165). As she argues: "thinking always deals with objects that are absent, removed from direct sense perception. An object of thought is always a re-presentation, that is, something or somebody that is actually absent and present only to the mind which, by virtue of imagination, can make it present in the form of an image." (165) Thus, she comes closer to Merleau-Ponty's perceptual assertions on ideas as she affirms that, when she thinks, she travels "outside the world of appearances," even when her thoughts encounter "ordinary sense-given objects and not with such invisibles as concepts or ideas" (165). The thing itself in Merleau-Ponty's project is the phenomena of perception, in which his conclusions can arrive at knowledge and action if comprehended properly. However, the negative aspect in the thing itself also allows for an interference in the confines of perception. According to Merleau-Ponty, the negative aspect of the thing itself is that although "the thing is presented as a thing in itself even to the person who

perceives it," it then presents the conflicting situation of a "genuine in-itself-for-us" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 336).

Now it is clear why both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt call upon imagination, in its manifold operations, in order to presence what is absent—the thing that conceals its multifold presences. Not only do we miss such presences of violence, but we also have to contend with the problem of what it is about violence—its indubitable qualities—that draws us toward it only in a "familiar sense," where, in actuality, we merely experience Merleau-Ponty's "silent Other [*Autre*], a Self that escapes us as much as the intimacy of an external consciousness" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 336). The realization that the thinking process in perception is bigger than even the constricting subject-object classical approach to vision comes to light with a seed within perception itself. Merleau-Ponty maintains that the "thing is presented as a thing in itself even to the person who perceives it, and thereby poses the problem of a genuine in-itself-for-us" (336). He holds that individuals cannot capture sight of this conflict of this in-itself-for-us due to the problematic ground of perception itself, in that, within day-to-day situations, individuals act on minimum perceptual efforts to understand only a "familiar presence" with such matters, and not to "rediscover what of the non-human" is concealed inside these situations (336). For Merleau-Ponty, we view the thing as antagonistic and external to our own dealings with it, and the thing itself can no longer function as our "interlocutor" of clarification (*Phenomenology of Perception* 336). His concerns about the problematic features in perceiving the thing links to Arendt's concern over the issue of thinking in isolation and the problematic ground of thinking alone with a wrongdoer inside the duality of the self.

Moreover, when applied to violence, a recognizable expression makes even one who perceives stop at what is only commonly understood in violence itself. Such familiarity is the

same problematic ground in which Arendt searches for answers concerning the customary traits

of a morality that humans continually adjust to fit the particular situation at a particular time in

their dealings with violence. As in Arendt's recognition of the paradoxes of thinking, Merleau-

Ponty demonstrates the paradox of perception itself (*Primacy of Perception* 16). This

acknowledgment interacts with Arendt's great concern in the thinking process: the paradoxes of

thinking that can cause moral action within the community to become indifferent to violence

itself. Recalling Arendt's earlier statement, thinking can arouse us to action that is not always

good and instead leads to a bitterness and a sense of entitlement to do whatever we choose,

regardless of harm to the community (*Responsibility and Judgment* 176–77). For Merleau-Ponty,

the "perceived thing itself is paradoxical" and "exists only in so far as someone can perceive it"

(*Primacy of Perception* 16). We can also land in the Socratic frozen thoughts, where we feel

unsuitable and give up, instead of engaging in a process that allows thinking to stop and reassess.

From Kant, Arendt makes the evaluation that our judgment of a specific occurrence does not

hinge on our obvious recognitions; instead, she states it is contingent upon "my representing to

myself something which I do not perceive" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 140). What Arendt

means by this statement is that common sense, in connection with its "imaginative capacity," has

the potential to presence "all those who are absent" (140). She is adamant that judgment cannot

be personal emotions or views, in that we come to conclusions only by considering ourselves in

the matter (141). Merleau-Ponty's and Arendt's contributions rightly acknowledge that ideas

cannot guarantee actual perception.

To recapitulate the many consciousnesses in perception accurately outlines what must be

set in place for violence itself and its reimage. From Merleau-Ponty's contribution to the

perceptual experience, there exists a transitional synthesis in an act of attention that destroys the

unity of the thing, while, at that very moment, re-forms the unity of the thing on a new dimension that can presence phenomena (*Phenomenology of Perception* 33); and there exists a practical synthesis that reveals violence as a phenomenon and all its visible and nonvisible perspectives, as in Justice Alito's opinions on the concerning motives and factors of reimaged violence. Outside of a perceptual experience, and when applied to this project, an intellectual synthesis strays from givens that play an important part in the process of reaching the levels of phenomena; and an idealism of synthesis merely misrepresents our lived experience with violence, together with the lived experience of others and their relationship with violence. Now we advance to what is behind givens—to gestures of meaning and their purpose, because even a perceiving consciousness can be misguided by the deceiving familiar sense of the thing itself. At what specific positions in perception will the many consciousnesses go wrong?

<center>Movements of Perception versus Consciousness of Error</center>

Intertextually, both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt set the needed groundwork for this project in tracing "verbal expression" and the events within its arena of presence (Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception* 8; Arendt, *The Human Condition* 181, 199). In looking at perception and errors of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty reveals that through perception, our embodied minds relate to an "openness to *something*" and not to an "already-made reason" regarding a particular thing (*Primacy of Perception* 21). As seen through his discussions on the differences in perceptual thinking, the world is not an "object of thought" but is more "like a universal style shared in by all perceptual beings" (6). But what is most concerning to him regarding perception and thought is "our power of making even what is false, true" (21). This notion is of equal

concern to Arendt, not only in the Socratic dialogue of self-to-self, but also in considering Kant's reference that "self-contempt" avoids its proper function because "man can lie to himself" (*Responsibility and Judgment* 122; 63). In reference to expression, Merleau-Ponty argues:

> Skepticism begins if we conclude from this that our ideas are always false. But this can only happen with reference to some idol of absolute knowledge. We must say, on the contrary, that our ideas, however limited they may be at a given moment—since they always express our contact with being and with culture—are capable of being true provided we keep them open to the field of nature and culture which they must express. (*Primacy of Perception* 21)

How do we avoid skepticism of error and stay within actual perception? Merleau-Ponty maintains that "gestures" can track meaning, whereby meaning then leads to the openness of expression in both nature and culture (7).

Gestures play a critical role for Merleau-Ponty in his assessment of intellectual consciousness versus perceptual consciousness, so one could argue that what is ever-present has strangely altered within the normal or default scientific view. Once again, he emphasizes that the classical scientific view of subject-object and the assumed primacy of the detached observer solidify "bounded entities whose laws of construction we possess *a priori*" (*Primacy of Perception* 5). In the perceptual event, Merleau-Ponty states that we constantly progress within an ongoing world of ongoing ventures, where every fleshly subject is "like a new language" in which human freedom develops the body as language toward verbal or silent "expressive gestures" with only one meaning pertaining to the circumstance to which those gestures place emphasis (6, 7). The meaning of gestures derives from something shared and emphasizes the

importance of a community of active "intersubjectivity," or reciprocal respect between the subject and human other (7). He states that the language of gestures uses a symbolic system that can reshape countless numbers of circumstances, but only when considering the gesture's "cultural space" and its "corporeal situation" (7). Only then does the mind employ the necessary tools given to it to measure countless meanings involved in that particular cultural space and situation (7). This Merleau-Pontian perceptual revelation is, first and foremost, in countering arguments that take violence itself and its reimage—which is already steeped in the cultural space of violence—and then proclaim universally that the reimage of violence has nothing to do with real-world violence. On the contrary, this project proves that the reimage of violence has everything to do with real-world violence, even when it makes its entry into a concrete image. Such revelation begs the question: How does the intellectual thinking on expressive movements cause these gestures to invert their very own perceptual purpose?

In alignment with Merleau-Ponty's discussion of consciousness, Arendt states her concerns about verbal expression both in action and in the " 'web' of human relations" (*The Human Condition* 183): She writes: "The manifestation of who the speaker and doer unexchangeably is, though it is plainly visible, retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression" (181). For Arendt, the vortex of visual underpinnings comes through verbal expression that alters thought and places it in the "what" by merely describing a person according to intermingled visual images (reimages) of shared traits with other individuals (181). Likening the "what" of that person to others, and not the "who," appears to remove that person's individuality (181). But Arendt disturbs thinking even further by revealing that the visual underpinnings of the "who" are identical to the "notorious unreliable manifestations of ancient oracles," which, as Heraclitean insight indicates, do not disclose or

conceal through words, but render "manifest signs" (182).[5] These manifest signs are the gestures

that eradicate, what Merleau-Ponty calls, the indisputable opinion in "sensation" that only

presences "visual givens" (reimages) as a solitary inner experience (*Phenomenology of*

*Perception* 58). The risks come when we do not realize that the level of consciousness

(intellectual or perceptual) in which we operate affects the way we process not only gestures but

also the givens that find endless meaning in those gestures.

The greatest risks come in dealing with the perception of violence in general when

missing the rightful acknowledgment that even in its reimage, violence is never a simple matter.

In relation to perception, Merleau-Ponty argues that through "an intellectual synthesis," we go

*not* toward "what is given" but toward "what is not actually given" (*Primacy of Perception* 14).

In other words, we go toward mere influences that allow for an intellectual consciousness to

think it knows, rather than keeping its concentration on the perceptual experience of what

Merleau-Ponty calls the knowing event. He maintains that the mind is set on the perceived object

alone and thus places it in a "homogenous area," where every aspect of the thing views the same

way, and where no givens have the capability to reach the organizational part that connect to

authentic perception (*Phenomenology of Perception* 4). As a result, he argues: "A visual field is

not made up of isolated visions. But the viewed object is made up of material fragments, and

spatial points are external to each other" (4). When the mind focuses only on such solitary

visions of one perspective of the thing itself, Merleau-Ponty argues, the assumed proofs of the

sense faculties are not situated in the evidences of "consciousness" but become the foundation of

indisputable opinions in the physical world, as if to claim: All individuals have absolute

knowledge of every sense faculty (5). On multiple levels in the case study of the opinions of the

Supreme Court, Scalia and those of like opinions from the Court see only through the isolated

vision of a lone perspective of violence in its reimage, while bypassing the perceptual experience

of the givens in violence as a phenomenon in order to realize all its motives and its perspectives.

If gestures link to givens and givens connect to the conversion toward phenomenon, then how do

we direct our thought toward such manifest signs that partake in a conversation with

phenomena?

Signification in phenomenology directs consciousness to empty itself and fill itself back

up with the perceptual images. Merleau-Ponty indicates that "situated thought" addresses other

thoughts equally placed, while each person responds according to his or her capabilities of the

mind (*Primacy of Perception* 8). Merleau-Ponty is not, however, extolling these functions as

absolute and appropriate in some kind of relativistic way. He simply states that there are some

vulnerabilities, while there is still important work to be done in terms of our reflective

understanding. His reference to the "common intention" of gestures as going beyond the "verbal

chain," a chain that can only stay within words as opposed to realities, implicitly applies to

Arendt's larger theme on action, which is essential to her philosophy of making morality directly

involved in the community (*Primacy of Perception* 8). Staying aligned to the vortex of visual

underpinnings, Arendt holds that the "space of appearance" presences through words and deeds

at the gathering together of individuals (*The Human Condition* 199). Her claim corresponds with

Merleau-Ponty's explanation of the mental situation and situated thought that responds and

directs meaning according to individual capacity. She then states that "speech and action" within

the mental space of the gathering together creates problems when the mental space cannot

manage the real existence in the changing positions of appearances themselves (constant

reimages of words and deeds) within the original appearance that actually preserved this very

mental space (199). We can infer, then, that this very gathering together and its situational events

give an illusion of space that can easily disappear when both word and deed from individuals cease, due to the absence of answers from ambiguous signs. If ambiguity comes into play in perception, thinking alters its course on words and acts of violence and their effects on the community. As a result, an absence of answers causes the mental situation of violence in general and its space to distort itself into nothingness, as does the reimage of the events of violence. How is it possible that speech and act cause high-stake matters to disappear into the field of nonthinking?

Merleau-Ponty stresses that an odd function enters into the conflict within vague forms of language. When attempting to change elusive thought into "exact thought," or a demand on thought, there is a qualitative measure that takes place in applying itself to a particular "mental situation" (*Primacy of Perception* 8). Rather than abiding in the perceptual experience of perspectival views, thought, he argues, "extracts a meaning only by applying itself to the configuration of the problem" within a determined mental situation (8). In the case study of opinions on violence in a legal context, elusive thought converts opinion to exact thought. Scalia states, on behalf of the Supreme Court decision, that the California act, because of its equivocal language, did not prove that violence in its reimage is harmful for minors. However, in his opinion for the court, he argues through an idealism of synthesis that distorts the lived experience of violence and through an intellectual synthesis in relation to the conformity of violence itself. He states that violence cannot equate to "disgust" in its various forms of past reimaging, and thus equates to the "fact" that it must not be harmful in a technological reimaging. Legal *opinions* have the capability to be equated with law. Merleau-Ponty warns that the act of extraction is not easily acquired, for thought is always "formal" or in accordance with conventional rules relating

to a particular situation (8). How then do we operate in a paradoxical thinking process of perception, of morality, and of harm to the community?

Merleau-Ponty's genuine concern for morality in relation to perception (as Arendt's is to the "banality of evil") leads him to the knowledge of how "to awaken perception and to thwart the ruse by which perception allowed itself to be forgotten as a fact and as perception to the benefit of the object that it delivers to us and to the rational tradition that it establishes" (*Primacy of Perception* 57). He argues: "The classical analysis of perception reduces all our experience to the single level of what, for good reasons, is judged to be true" (14). Thus, the subject-object analysis is a ruse to avoid in dealing with a reimage of violence in general, because it narrows the events behind violence itself to a single view and assumes that single view to be correct. Perceptual consciousness lends itself to more of a subject-imagination that opens the perspectival views of violence as a phenomenon, and frees it from restrictive syntheses: from intellectual synthesis that strays away from the givens and then loses the path that leads to the dimension of phenomena; and from idealism of synthesis that presences a false sense of our lived experience with violence and with the human other.

He indicates that the perceptual underpinnings of thinking in the moral experience and truth for the self is always and already an intersubjective entity, not a detached "*cogito*," arguing that he is aware of himself as a "particular thought, as a thought engaged with certain objects, as a thought in act; and it is in this sense that I am certain of myself" (*Primacy of Perception* 22). He continues to build on body as thought, where body is the distant line that marks perception and awareness (22). Rather than providing truth, the body as thought appropriately recovers itself to give rise to "truth" through the overlapping of meaning, where fact interacts with reason in a freedom that allows for moral knowledge and actions that lead to the highest level of

awareness (22). Merleau-Ponty argues that such a knowledge in the thinking process of perception is body-thought that "*feels* itself rather than *sees* itself"; and "searches after clarity rather than possesses it" (22).[6] In perceptual consciousness, the body is thought that feels, sees, searches for clarity, and creates perceptual actualities through language and through the knowledge that arises in gestures of meanings more than through intellectual consciousness of judgments and understandings. As Merleau-Ponty rightly assesses, we do not deny the validity of judgments or understandings, but we recover a better sense of their basis in perception, along with their presence in relation to situations, to the perceiving subject, and to the human other.

The space of appearance is the space where reimages are fashioned and linked to individuals and to the opinions of violence in general. Arendt identifies time underneath the vortex of visual underpinnings of verbal expressions that alter thought, when she states that such underpinnings go back as far as the unreliable manifestations of ancient oracles. Merleau-Ponty points out that fixed and indisputable opinions only presence visual givens as a solitary inner experience. These visual givens are reimagings that appear as unquestionable. Within the many facets of consciousness, individuals process both gestures (movement) and givens (traits) that find endless meaning in those gestures. Such movement in the space of appearance is why the very space itself seems to disappear from a lack of control in the myriad movements. This space of appearance is also the ground for the gaze, which will be discussed in later chapters. However, an intellectual synthesis permits an intellectual consciousness to think it knows, rather than to concentrate on the perceptual experience of the knowing event. In the end, every element linking to the violent event of action and to violence itself presents itself in the same way, because no givens of material fragments or external spatial points in the visual field can connect to perception. The knowing event then becomes mere isolated vision.

Conclusion

Recognizing the different types of consciousness is essential for this project in order to know where and how we will not experience the full spectrum of perception in dealings with social and cultural violence and their reimage. Multiple parts of the act of attention take place in a perceptual space, or a mental space, where thought and consciousness interact and where consciousness does not lose itself in its own transformation. Motives of violence determine the events behind violence itself, but the ego, or self-consciousness, can fail to register the motives altogether. The miracle of consciousness unifies itself by overthrowing the givens so that a transitional synthesis can drive toward the dimensions of violence as a phenomenon. Irrelevant ideas on violence itself that do not pertain to a specific circumstance of the actions of violence at hand cannot be overlaid onto situational violence, because such ideas guarantee that perception will not take place.

Consideration of Arendt's notions on thinking continues in the next chapter, through an in-depth study on the human will and how it can alter the thinking process, which I alluded to through Arendt's references to Kant. She states that human will "divided against itself" cannot easily call forth action (*Responsibility and Judgment* 122). Understanding how thinking functions, as covered in this chapter, leads the way to a realization that human will can change thinking in relation to violence and harm to self and the community. From Merleau-Ponty, we see a deeper study of the different kinds of consciousness and the problematic ground of how thinking changes the role perception plays in the aesthetic experience of reimaged violence. Coverage of his focus on perceptual thinking through imagination continues in the next chapter on cultural violence present in reimaged violence. Both lines of thinking, from Merleau-Ponty

and Arendt, can be combined for the phenomenological critique on reimaged violence, as they provide an insightful and persuasive assessment of what happens behind all factors.

Finally, in the next chapter, on a phenomenological critique of reimaged violence, these questions set the foundation: To what extent does the human will affect the functions of thinking and consciousness toward violence? How does imagination pair with perceptual thinking in relation to forms of cultural violence toward human beings? How does the perceptual experience function with the aesthetic experience in presencing violence as a specter?

CHAPTER 2

A GENEALOGY OF VIOLENCE IN THE SCENE OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how thinking and consciousness operate on two planes of the aesthetic encounter with reimaged violence, together with embodiment as an underlying feature: (1) in relation to the "lived experience" in the ever-changing cultural role of violence itself and the means of its reimage; and (2) how the human will affects thinking and the perceptual consciousness of imagination in relation to reimaged violence (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 340). What takes place in the interplay of the thinking process and in consciousness within the aesthetic field? Why should we think about the operations of violence itself and its embodiment of the human body? How does the human will manifest itself perceptually through imagination in the aesthetic experience of reimaged violence? What commonplace, overgeneralization of thought must we relinquish in relation to violence and its reimaging?

To understand thinking and consciousness in the aesthetic field, I examine the aesthetic "events" in reimaged violence, using as a guide Slobodan Marković's definition of the "aesthetic experience" as having three components: first, "aesthetic fascination," or "the *motivational*, *orientational* or *attentive*," which involves an experience of "intense attention engagement and high vigilance"; second, "aesthetic appraisal," or "the *cognitive*," the "semantic, symbolic, and imaginative," where the spectator "appraises the aesthetic objects and events as parts of a symbolic or 'virtual' reality" that goes beyond "their everyday uses and meanings"; and third, "aesthetic emotion," or the "*affective*," where "a person has a strong and clear feeling of unity with the object of aesthetic fascination and aesthetic appraisal" (3). From his research, Marković

makes it clear that works of art are not axiomatic in always reaching the level of the aesthetic

experience (13). Instead, unaware of the underlying layers beneath the art symbols and objects,

spectators see the works as merely objects of their own milieus of cultural meaning (13).

Marković is important, in that he provides a lived-experience lens for the aesthetic encounter,

and he confirms Merleau-Ponty's argument, discussed in chapter one, that ideas are only relevant

in "a period of our lives or for a period in the history of our culture" (*Primacy of Perception* 13).

In effect, spectators cannot place their own ideas of violence, relevant to their culture only, onto

reimages of cultural violence and treat it as the consciousness of violence itself.

Thus, in the ever-changing roles of cultural violence in artwork, I create a type of

genealogy from art history, in that I adapt *auras* from a Foucauldian genealogical approach to

serve more discrete purposes than as a deep inventory of social and epistemic apparatuses; but

the type of genealogy I create is distinguished as intertextual with more or less contemporary

theories. These theories are not necessarily theories of art, but rather, are theories of the

interplaying factors of the phenomena of human will, of imagination, and of perception with

reimaged violence. I conduct a portion of the social contextual approach mostly through

philosophers, along with some art historians, who act as cultural guides on the violence

associated with the paintings, but this too is an inflection of sorts. I argue that this process can

and should be unpacked in terms of some kind of relationship between violence itself and the

human will, the imagination, and perception along more general terms of a lived experience.

Such an experience includes the various ways violence embodies itself in human form, which I

develop in very specific ways via each thinker.

I serve the larger plot of will, of imagination, and of perception, in both the aesthetic

scene and in my overall project, with Arendt's account of the human will's ability to operate in

"its interconnectedness" with "other mental faculties" (*Life of the Mind* 97). I take her accounts

on the will's interaction with perception and imagination and apply them to how the human will

affects thinking, either in an authentic way to perceive violence itself, or in a inauthentic manner,

when a human will refutes the realities of violence itself, even those realities that accompany

reimaged violence. Next, I explore the paradox of a divided human will partnered with Julia

Kristeva's "abjection" in the midst of the aesthetic experience of violence itself (*Powers of

Horror* 4). I then draw from Merleau-Ponty's accounts of both imagination and perception.

Though the discussion in each section covers different aspects of perceptional content, the

underlying current is his ever-present theme of the "living body" intertwined with the mind to

become "perceiving mind" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 56; *Primacy of Perception* 3). By the

end of this chapter, we shall see that the phenomenon of imagination stays within its operative

role of revealing the actual in both the aesthetic and perceptual involvements with reimaged

violence. But it is the human will in its many divisions that can alter perception of violence itself

and its endless effects on human existence through its embodiment of the human body.
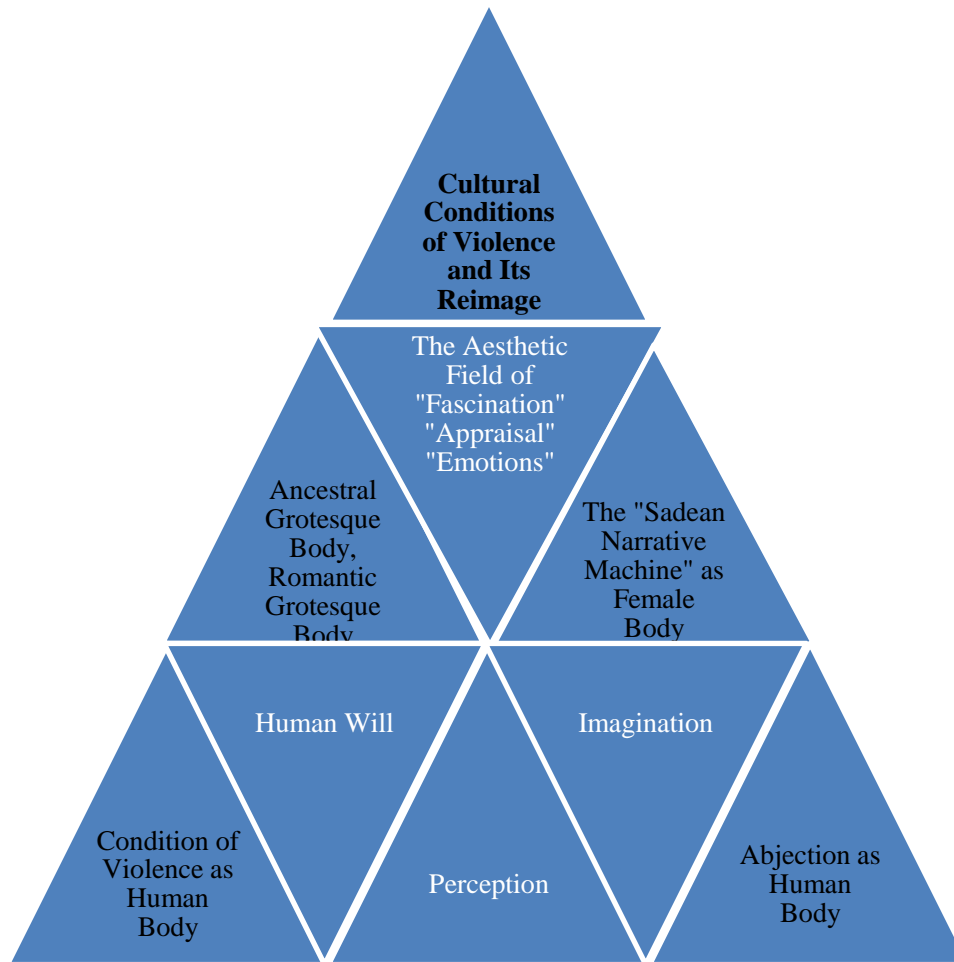
Figure 1. The Interplaying Cultural Components of the Aesthetic and Perceptual Encounters with Reimaged Violence.

Symbols of Violence from Ancestral Body to Romantic Grotesque Body

In a genealogy of transitory cultural symbols of violence, the works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder and William Bouguereau are exemplars of how violence evolves in its cultural and artistic meanings through the aesthetic scene of symbolization. Mikhail Bakhtin defines the

disconnection of meanings toward violence in medieval and Renaissance folk culture of the grotesque body and the Romantic grotesque. He maintains that within the freedom of change in the Romantic era, a repression settles into the inverted ideas of the original canon of the carnivalesque grotesque to the new connotative meanings of the Romantic grotesque (*Rabelais and His World* 37). He argues that the "images of folk culture are absolutely fearless and communicate this fearlessness to all," while the Romantic grotesque images typically promote "fear of the world and seek to inspire their reader with this fear" (39). Why is recognizing the transitory meanings of violence in the aesthetic scene important to the overall perception of violence itself? How do artists and spectators benefit in such acknowledgement of events behind the aesthetic perceptual encounter with violence?

In experiencing the three main categorical elements of the aesthetic field—fascination, appraisal, emotion—both spectator and artist come to understand that, in order to experience an aesthetic encounter of the many faces of violence, authentic appraisal of aesthetic art objects of a particular era and culture can only arise from a cultural knowledge of the symbols of violence. Otherwise, they fall into the trap of what Merleau-Ponty calls a "world of ideas," as referenced in chapter one, by doing exactly what he warns against: We cannot "superimpose on the perceived world a world of ideas" that are relevant only for a portion of our lives or for a particular part of our cultural history (*Primacy of Perception* 13). Otherwise, spectator and artist rely on ideas as the authority for perception, when ideas can only be one layer of the aesthetic experience, which helps produce aesthetic meaning (13). This section will reveal the problems that come from taking cultural ideas on violence and inverting their meanings to the individual spectator's rendition of meaning, which includes Arendt's directive on how the human will operates inside visual illusions in connection to its other mental counterparts (*Life of the Mind* 100–01).

Merleau-Ponty reveals the different paths both inside and outside of perception as a "visual illusions that consists of "wild fluctuations of a visual power" that is not accompanied by a "sensory counterpart," whereas hallucinations possess a "coexistence that always has a sense for the patient . . . [and] the debris of a shattered world" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 357).

It is first through Bakhtin's clarifications that spectators can come to the authentic meanings of the symbols in the aesthetic encounter of Bruegel's reimaged violence. Though Bruegel's work has multiple symbols from cultural and biblical proverbs, this section focuses on the theme of "cosmic terror" and "cosmic fear," featuring the "cosmic, ancestral element of the body" (*Rabelais and His World* 336, 323). Though Bakhtin never specifically discusses Bruegel's work, application of his folk-cultural knowledge of embodiment allows for the fullest understanding of the aesthetic experience and the cultural conditions of violence in Bruegel's era. Bakhtin states:

In the development of this theme [cosmic fear] the grotesque body plays a most important part. It is the people's growing and ever-victorious body that is "at home" in the cosmos. . . . The body is the last and best word of the cosmos, its leading force. Therefore it has nothing to fear. Death holds no terror for it. The death of the individual is only one moment in the triumphant life of the people and of mankind, a moment indispensable for their renewal and improvement. (336, 341)

With Bakhtin's guiding insights, we can identify how the aesthetic experience of violence unfolds from the view of informed spectators, who are aware of the folk-cultural symbols that artists such as Bruegel utilized in sending messages of hope to the people of their historical eras. An awareness of Bruegel's use of positive semantics in the title of his painting *The Triumph of*

*Death* comes best with Bakhtin's illustrations on the embodiment of symbolic folk-culture, which signifies death as a successful victory in the recovery and betterment of humankind. Bruegel's reimaging of violence through the carnivalesque grotesque body, the ancestral body of skeletal forms, is, as Bakhtin indicates, a victorious message, with the body as the force of the people leading humanity toward the hope of regeneration after the catastrophic calamities in political and religious affairs gone wrong, which then led to violence that takes place on multiple levels.

Bruegel and the people of his culture live within the reality of religious war. His reality, as an artist, is understanding that an aesthetic, audible voice speaking against the call for violence cannot favor either side of this Christian religious war.[7] Instead, through a history-less realm of the carnivalesque, he chooses to give humanity hope in the cessation of such violence altogether.[8] He takes a risk with his own life by sending a message through the folk-cultural language of carnival, and he accomplishes his task when he alludes to those symbols of cosmic fear and terror that actually liberate fear and terror. In relation to the ancestral body, Bakhtin states: "Cosmic fear is deeper and more essential. It is hidden in the ancestral body of mankind; this is why it has penetrated to the very basis of language, imagery, and thought" (336). What appeared as monstrous chaos to the uninformed art viewer now becomes awareness to the informed spectator: Bruegel utilizes the ancestral body to carry his penetrating nonvocal message through scenes of imagery that provoke thought to surpass the ordinary and mundane image of violence to reach the different levels of violent equations that enact themselves upon the community.

Figure 2. Bruegel, Pieter the Elder. *The Triumph of Death*, 1562-1563. Oil on Panel. 117cm x 162 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid. https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-triumph-of-death/d3d82b0b-9bf2-4082-ab04-66ed53196ccc

In the aesthetic experience of Bruegel's work *The Triumph of Death* (Fig. 2), spectators enter into the attentive stage of fascination with the prodigious number of art objects and then advance to the cognitive level of aesthetic appraisal ("Components" 3). In the far distance in the painting, Bruegel utilizes cosmic terror within the smelted skies and from the range of mountains that appear as mass, lined with imitations of trees that no longer bear fruit. Now, the trees display

human bodies with no sign of life, bodies hiding within the trunks. Bruegel ensures that he

covers all areas of cosmic terror, with the sea bearing the look of disturbance and with

executions of all types taking place on the barren soil extending to the turbulent sea. Through

Bakhtinian instruction, the use of cosmic fear, the "fear of the immeasurable, the infinitely

powerful" does not carry a supernatural sense of the meaning but only produces distress from a

magnitude of materialism, which nothing can stop (335). Bakhtin holds that "official culture"

nurtures fear so as to demean and dominate humankind (336). Spectators can view the

immeasurable in Bruegel's juxtaposition of king and clergy near the state-sanctioned barrels of

gold and silver (Fig. 2). How do spectators, aware of Bruegel's folk-cultural symbols in relation

to violence, connect to the message Bruegel intends for the people of his era who experienced

violence?

Marković states that emotions from spectators must connect to a unified facet of the

aesthetic experience: that of a durable and distinct emotional interconnection to both aesthetic

captivation and aesthetic evaluation (3). Bruegel's work curates perception in a unique way, one

that is indicative of how the phenomenon of violence operates through the multiple cultural

meanings understood by the people of Bruegel's era. In Bruegel's day, the Bible, history, and

everyday life-conflicts were inseparably blended, with the Bible accepted as "truthful history"

and applicable to present-day situations (Foote 94). Spectators see white-clothed ancestral

skeletons gathering together on the ledge and watch a man with a millstone around his neck

being cast into the sea. This act references the biblical scripture that warns: "But he that shall

scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone

should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt.

18:6, Douay-Rheims version). With this visual biblical proverb of the millstone, Bruegel

connects a punishment to the invisible reality of violence that lies underneath the levels of the aesthetic experience. Spectators can unite with Bruegel's message of the ancestral body, as the collective heartbeat, to his call for the cessation of violence and abuse coming from both the political and the religious factions. Signification via Bakhtin allows for perception to uncover the awareness that what appears to be chaos and terror is the hope of a new generation of people who will right the wrongs of the oppressive political and religious violence enacted on the community. But what happens to the aesthetic encounter of reimaged violence when the spectator does not have the background knowledge of Bakhtinian insights on the folk culture of the original canon of the carnivalesque?

Such spectators partake of a different type of meaning. They draw from their own cultural violence in relation to their ideas and assumptions of what they think Bruegel's reimaged violence signifies; in other words, Merleau-Ponty's intellectual synthesis, as seen in chapter one, takes spectators away from the givens in meaning of hope for the people of Bruegel's time and toward the opposite meanings of fear for all that Bruegel never intended for spectators. Spectators fall prey to a terrifying and unconceivable scene of violence because they do not understand that expressions and proverbs play a major role in depicting the state of foolish humans (Foote, *The World of Bruegel* 145). They not only have to struggle with the meanings associated with the original canon of the carnivalesque and its symbols and meanings of violence, but they also have to deal with the fact that words and meanings, associated with violence, change throughout the historical periods of art. Their own cultural ideas of violence cannot be placed upon the folk-cultural ideas of the original canon of the carnivalesque of Bruegel's era. Why does fear and terror take on different roles of embodiment from era to era?

Bakhtin emphasizes that the change in meanings with the Romantic grotesque were intended to combat a "cold rationalism, against official, formalistic, and logical authoritarianism . . . a rejection of that which is finished and completed, of the didactic and utilitarian spirit of the Enlighteners" (37). However, he also maintains that within the freedom of change, a repression settles into the now inverted ideas of the original canon. He argues that the Romantic grotesque does not associate with folk culture in order to unite the whole of the community. Instead, he argues:

> . . . the Romantic genre acquired a private "chamber" character. It became, as it were, an individual carnival, marked by a vivid sense of isolation. The carnival spirit was transposed into a subjective, idealistic philosophy. It ceased to be the concrete (one might say bodily) experience of the one, inexhaustible being, as it was in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. (37)

Such inversions of artistic symbolic meanings of seclusion and the "idealism of synthesis," as seen in chapter one, misrepresent spectator lived-experience with violence itself (*Phenomenology of Perception* 340). These distortions emotionally affect both artist and spectator in fostering fear and isolation that disassociates them from the human other. In *Dante and Virgil* (Fig. 3), Bouguereau accentuates these changes from the original canon to the new existential canon but is so disturbed by them that he never again returns to them during his painting career.[9] How do spectators deal with such damaging emotions from reimaged violence?

Aesthetically, some spectators enter the affective level of the aesthetic encounter through an experience of "*responding* emotions" of desire and stimulation, prompted by Bouguereau's "perfect artistic form" demonstrating the fight between two men and the "structure of the artwork itself" (Marković 10).[10]

Figure 3. Bouguereau, William. *Dante and Virgil*, 1850. Oil on Canvas H. 281; W. 225cm. ©

Musée d'Orsay, dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Patrice Schmidt.


The actual fight displays a bizarre and daring fear in three ways overall: first, with the

forcefulness and position of the teeth of an imposter ready to tear into the main artery of his

heretic opponent; and second, with Bouguereau's rendition of the alteration and overemphasis of the muscles of the rivals. But it is with the third display, the look of fierce vengeance in the eyes of the rival and the look of fear that turns to horror in the eyes of Dante, that spectators experience a shift to "complementing emotions" of numerous perspectives and plots, which resemble emotions in actual living experiences (10). In the background, the ghost of Virgil, the Roman epic poet, displays a melancholic expression as he regards the fight between the two combatants, condemned as forgers and imposters.[11] Dante bears a subtle look of horror and stands next to his guide, Virgil, who is to take him through Hell and safely to Heaven. But a winged-demon reveals the characteristic abusive laughter indicative of the Romantic grotesque.

For Bakhtin, the presence of laughter is perhaps the most significant aspect in the reversal of the Romantic grotesque image, for it sets in place direct links to the aspects of terror (38). He indicates that laughter remains within the new canon but is reduced to "cold humor, irony, sarcasm" at the least effective level and loses the influential "regenerating power" of the original canon (38). Such an alteration presences laughter as an invisible abusive trait of violence. Bakhtin argues that the devil of the original canon is a happy, yet indecisive character who bears no traits of horror or exclusion, but rather, merely articulates the "unofficial point of view" in the layer of the materialist body (41). In contrast, he argues that "the Romanticists present the devil as terrifying, melancholy, and tragic, and infernal laughter as somber and sarcastic" (41). Spectators view this new type of demonic laughter when Bouguereau illustrates the nocturnal atmosphere in the eighth circle of Hell from the *Inferno* and utilizes the shadows to create tension in the horrific figures of the demons and the condemned.[12] These condemned also attack each other in the terrifying movements of murderous destruction, while the winged demon bares its teeth in a menacing smile, relishing the terror before it.

Aesthetically, we identify two problems: First, such terror leads some spectators into a misguided subject-object lens. Their responding emotions fixate primarily on Bouguereau's ability to present the flawless physicality of human bodies as the focal point, in what Marković references as G. C. Cupchik's "reactive model" of processing emotions for mere "pleasure and arousal," evoked by the subject matter (10).[13] Second, the multiple aesthetic facets of meanings that instill terror and fear in this reimaged violence go deceptively unnoticed, yet are internally consumed. As a result, the spectator does not advance to aesthetic reflection that generates multiple meanings with multivocal connections.[14]

Bakhtin provides the cultural role, where "a radically transformed meaning" of "the carnival spirit" deeply concerns him, because he sees folk culture, which had tamed fear and terror, now turn into a long-lasting perceptual conflict, and, as he states, "our own world becomes an alien world" (*Rabelais* 39). This same perceptual conflict is ever-present in Merleau-Ponty's concerns for authentic perception: the alteration of a person's lived existence to the extent that it removes the relationship of such a subject from the human other. As for the perceptual experience of violence, Merleau-Ponty stresses that reflection alone is not enough for the spectator. This is where Merleau-Ponty differs from the researchers covered in Marković's perceptual study, in that Merleau-Ponty takes perceptual awareness to the utmost extent, reflecting on the unseen, the "unreflected," which holds the specific answers to the problems individual spectators experience outside of perception (*Phenomenology of Perception* 414). For my own work, the unreflected from Merleau-Ponty centers on illusion and hallucination (357). With the change from the original symbolic meanings to new symbolic meanings of repressive traits from violence, how does the human will affect perception in a fantasy world of violence?

Arendt enters the discussion on illusion with image through the way the human will functions

with its mental counterparts, while Merleau-Ponty extends that discussion to fantasy and

hallucinations by explaining the different types and the intensity in which the body experiences

both. The main point we want to capture from both thinkers is to understand why processing

violence is very different from spectator to spectator and how the factors involved within the

phenomena of the human will, of imagination, and of perception interact within illusion and the

different levels of hallucinations. Why is such awareness important? Merleau-Ponty argues:

"Hallucination, and consciousness in general, must no longer be constructed according to a

certain essence or idea of it that requires it to be defined through an absolute adequation and that

renders its developmental interpretations inconceivable" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 352). It

is necessary to distinguish the ways in which spectator human will interplays with perception in

the aesthetic scene of violence, given any previous experience of violence or any witnessed

events of violence, because of the human will's command over memory and intellect in relation

to image.

Through Augustine, Arendt exposes how the human will functions in relation to illusion

and imagination. She states:

Moreover, by fixing our mind on what we see or hear, we tell our memory what to

remember and our intellect what to understand, what objects to go after in search of

knowledge. Memory and intellect have withdrawn from outside appearances and deal not

with these themselves (the real tree) but with images (the seen tree), and these images

clearly are inside us. . . . For the inner images are by no means mere illusions.

"Concentrating exclusively on the inner phantasies and turning the mind's eye

completely away from the bodies which surround our senses," we come "upon so striking

a likeness of the bodily species expressed from memory" that it is hard to tell whether we are seeing or merely imagining. (*Life of the Mind*, "Augustine, the First Philosopher of the Will" 100–01)

To apply Augustine's theories to the spectator in the Bouguereau work: Through a penetrating alertness, spectators fixate the human will on what they want to view and hear from the Bouguereau artwork and then instruct their memory to retain those violent actions and facial expressions. Next, they instruct their intellect on how to process understanding from their own perspectives of those actions committed on the human other, together with the emotions of the violent event, which will all remain internally embedded into memory. At this point, the perceptual experience turns problematic, according to the state of mind of each spectator: memory and intellect withdraw from the actual images of violence before them. The individually witnessed scene of violence in the fight itself and the scenes of violence in the background now become validated as real according to mere spectator views of violence. Such individually processed violent actions and emotions are now internal images, but not as illusionary images. When spectator human will commands the intellect and memory to concentrate entirely on these internal fantasies of violence, it also wills itself to reject the bodies inundated by the senses. Our human will instructs the memory so well in strict likeness of a human being or creature and their involvements with violence that it is difficult to distinguish whether we see the human and creature in their participation with Bouguereau's violent event, or merely imagine them.

This particular view of spectator vision is the beginnings of what Merleau-Ponty refers to as unmanageable phenomenal truths (*Phenomenology of Perception* 356). He joins in the same argument with Augustine, in that spectators have the capability to refute any mental dealings with the senses. But Merleau-Ponty takes the point farther than Augustine when he argues that,

without "the 'sensible elements' " in place, which keep the visual stimuli invariable, then spectators are in between impression and "judgment" and the only conclusion requires a substitute (36). Thus, he maintains that " 'the mind's conception modifies the perception itself' and 'the appearance takes on form and sense upon command' " (36).[15] Through Merleau-Ponty, we can determine that the appearance can adapt to the shape and sense merely from the commands of our own human will to modify both the aesthetic encounter and perceptual judgment. He means to disturb our thinking:

> But if we see what we judge, how can we distinguish true perception from false perception? And after such a conclusion, how will we continue to say that the person suffering from hallucinations or the madman "believes they see what they do not see"? Where will the difference be between "seeing" and "believing that one sees"? (36)

These explorations beg two questions: How do we define the real in perception? What is the difference between illusion and hallucination? First, Merleau-Ponty argues that the hallucinations others experience are not the same visions we experience in any way within our "visual or auditory world," because our vision of phenomena is not strictly from a "private spectacle" but can happen to us and to those around us (*Phenomenology of Perception* 354). In other words, the real is a perspective probable for all of us. Second, he argues that, "truth of perception and the falsity of illusion" must each be manifested through some fundamental imprint of distinction, but if the imprint is missing, then individuals cannot determine awareness of either perception or illusion, because the senses, or any future encounters, and even human others, would be indeterminate (308). He deduces: "The visual illusion is thus much less the presentation of an illusory object than the unfolding and, so to speak, wild fluctuations of a visual power henceforth lacking a sensory counterpart" (356). Here, he intends spectators to

understand that they misjudge something they cannot see because the sensory counterpart is missing. Hence, if the imagination in its vast visual power lacks its needed counterpart of the senses, then the unraveling of a visual illusion consists of mere uncontrolled and irregular changes. In the Bruegel work, the uninformed spectators deal with aesthetic objects that are mere wild fluctuations of a visual power, which are not connected to the symbolic folk-cultural meanings—the sensory counterpart of the symbol. Such spectators have no way to control the flux of multifaceted objects, their associations, or their meanings in the perceptual experience.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the real image possesses perceptions that are not exactly defined, but they unite together to reaffirm spectator perception in every way that will synthesize distinctive vision of the perceived world, which includes the human other's consciousness as well (*Phenomenology of Perception* 354, 355). The spectator, who cannot control the great flux of visual movements, is outside of the perceived world of consciousnesses from Bruegel's era— those who experienced the real violence and knew how to read Bruegel's folk-cultural symbols. However, hallucinations are different sorts of images that involve an "external fantasy" (355). As a result, new sets of problems accrue for the spectator with perception in reimaged violence. Merleau-Ponty states that hallucinations are not within the same scene of the perceptual events but are "superimposed," upon perception itself (355). If fantasy, as Merleau-Ponty states, is from within a person and nonexistent to anything outside, then what is the difference between hallucination and an external fantasy?

He describes hallucination, not as retaining a moment in time, but as that which smoothly traverses along "time," as it does the "world" (355). Most important to note, he argues: "The hallucination is not in the world, but rather 'in front of' it because the body of the person suffering from hallucinations has lost its insertion in the system of appearances" (355).[16] Such a

loss in appearance causes an external fantasy for the schizophrenic experience because the body believes it is seen "naked and from behind" (355). As a result, those suffering from such loss of appearance have the sense of "hearing" with their "mouth," and the human other "speaking" on their own "lips" (355).[17] In the Bouguereau work, this type of vision from spectators, who have lost their appearances in the world, now possesses a continual association between a surrounding they have been thrown into and their detachment from their genuine surroundings thus, their body can create a "pseudo-presence" with its own milieu and its particular groupings (356). Thus, Merleau-Ponty argues that the hallucinatory object is neither observable nor is it ever discernible, because hallucinations do not consist of multi-layers angles but are "ephemeral phenomena, injections, shocks, explosions, drafts, hot or cold flashes, sparks, points of light, glimmers, or silhouettes" (356). The greatest of the problems that occur with spectators, who experience such hallucinations and view such reimaged violence as Bouguereau's, is not with the fear and terror generated for all spectators by the murderous acts on the human body—a reality that eventually expose itself as Bouguereau's plot in Hades (356). Rather, for the one suffering hallucinations, realities do not eventually unfold as plots but affect such spectators according to their sensitivity, so that any preexisting violence or witnessed violence from these spectators now unfolds in the way Merleau-Ponty describes as the features of "real things" now processed inside the hallucination (356). He states:

> These articulate phenomena do not allow for precise causal connections among themselves. Their only relation is a relation of coexistence—a coexistence that always has a sense for the patient, because the consciousness of chance presupposes a precise and distinct causal sequence, and because we are here within the debris of a shattered world" (356–57).

From Merleau-Ponty, we understand that hallucinations are not part of the perceptual experience but do have an equivalence to reality itself, and their intensity depends upon each patient and the debris of his or her shattered world (358). Just as there are levels of hallucinations, there are also levels of traumas. Those who suffer trauma from the actions of violent events relive their own reality on multiple layers of emotions when the trigger mechanism sets itself in play.[18]

Viewing reimaged violence has its own set of aesthetic problems when significations and roles change from hope and regeneration to instigating fear and terror. Such oppressive traits have the potential to misguide spectators to the subject-object lens that can focus merely on likings and desires from Bouguereau's perfect bodily forms in their violent acts—which brings on another set of problems. Rather, a subject-imagination lens finds a distinguishing mark of an informed spectator that can identify authentic perception from unmanageable visual variations, which are missing their sensory companion. The art image has its own complexities, and placing violence in its reimage adds more layers to spectators who process visual images according to their particular perspectives and lived-experience of violence itself. We may never know the extent of Bouguereau's own fears and traumas, but there was something that caused him never again to paint the content of violence itself. What we now understand is that the human will can make it difficult to know whether we see or imagine that we see.

## The "Sadean Narrative Machine" of Female Body

In the aesthetic scene of reimaged violence, spectators experience conflict not only in the different meanings of violence itself, but also in the layers of artist choice in placement of the violent event and its actions. Working within the sublime and the beautiful in both violence and visual image can present indistinctions. What are the problematic elements of the sublime and

the beautiful in relation to scenes of reimaged violence? How do they operate in the aesthetic experience of violence? Edmund Burke poses an intriguing question to begin this inquiry: "If the qualities of the sublime and beautiful are sometimes found united, does this prove, that they are the same, does it prove, that they are any way allied, does it prove even that they are not opposite and contradictory?" (*A Philosophical Enquiry* 114). He determines that the colors black and white, when amalgamated, are still different but their distinctions are not as clear as when they are self-contained. Burke argues that the two—sublime, deriving from "pain," and the beautiful, from "pleasure"— possess natures of an unlimited number of composites that can bond in a single object, and especially in artworks (113). From the perspectives of a contemporary thinker, Marković puts forward two significant points on the aesthetic experience and beauty. First, the aesthetic experience constitutes an "exceptional state of mind" (2).[19] Second, beauty can play a key factor in the aesthetic experience, but with restrictions: "a *beautiful object* must become an *object of beauty*" but cannot be used as an instrument for gratification of another's fleshly desires; and beauty must rise from its practicality to its "aesthetic value," which can even include the "monstrous, grotesque, morbid, horrible" (2).[20]

Last, we determine how the human will interacts with the body through Arendt's Augustinian lens in recognizing to what extent the artist's mindset of violence on the human body affects the spectator's mind and body. Arendt states: "The body obeys the mind because it is possessed of no organ that would make disobedience possible" (*Life of the Mind* 95). Related to this issue, Merleau-Ponty is critical about understanding how the perceptual experience goes awry when the empirical view of the subject-object lens of the human other's body becomes an "automaton, a transcendent cause and not someone actually inhabiting its movements" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 56).

Figure 4. Delacroix, Eugène. *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1826). Oil on canvas. 12'111/2" x

16'3". Louvre, Paris, France. Lois Fichner-Rathus, *Understanding Art,* 10th ed. Wadsworth,

2012. 446. Print

Eugène Delacroix paints a disturbing scene of violence, in which his use of the beautiful

does not follow the aesthetic qualifications for beauty in the aesthetic experience, and thus, the

sublime takes on altered meanings as well, outside of the aesthetic experience. He illustrates the

perfect example of what happens when the blending of the sublime with the beautiful are both

indistinct in the aesthetic field. Art historian Lois Fichner-Rathus states: "*The Death of*

*Sardanapalus*, inspired by a tragedy by Byron, depicts the murder-suicide of an Assyrian king who, rather than surrender to his attackers, set fire to himself and his entourage" (446). But Lord Bryan's play does not include the murderous violence enacted upon women.[21] Instead, Delacroix chooses an account of Sardanapalus, with his self-indulgent and decadent lifestyle, for the premeditated, sadistic acts of murder against the women, in what can be argued as a domestic crime scene of murder-suicide. [22] Delacroix ultimately takes inspiration from the Marquis de Sade.[23] Foucault, perhaps, best describes the influence of Sade on the artistic world. He states:

> One could plot a line going straight from the seventeenth-century pastoral to what became its projection in literature, "scandalous" literature at that. "Tell everything," the directors would say time and again: "not only consummated acts, but sensual touchings, all impure gazes, all obscene remarks . . . all consenting thoughts. . . .Your narrations must be decorated with the most numerous and searching details; the precise way and extent to which we may judge how the passion you describe relates to human manners and man's character is determined by your willingness to disguise no circumstance; and what is more, the least circumstance is apt to have an immense influence upon the procuring of that kind of sensory irritation we expect from your stories." (Sade qtd. in Foucault 21)

Sade fosters a culture of violence in sexual crimes against women in terms of how men believe they have the extreme freedom to perform any violent acts on the female body, most pleasing to men. Kristeva refers to such an extreme as the "Sadean narrative machine . . . beneath the power of terror, the playful reckoning of sexual drive coiled up in death" (134). Influenced by Sade, Delacroix paints with Sade's own words of sensory irritation in a willingness to lay bare everything by illustrating the murderous acts against women in the Sardanapalus tale. However, Fichner-Rathus correctly points to how Delacroix's "unleashed energy and assaulting palette

were strongly criticized by his contemporaries, who felt that there was no excuse for such a blatant depiction of violence" (446). The reason for such concern has everything to do with Delacroix's everyday use of the beautiful and its blending with a distortion of the sublime and terror.

According to Marković's accounts of the aesthetic experience, spectators are in an extraordinary frame of mind when beauty "transcends its biological, psychological, and social functions and gets new 'aesthetic' meanings in the symbolic reality" (2). Delacroix leads spectators away from this aesthetic experience and toward what Marković calls "liking and the judgment of beauty," which are part of the "everyday experience with everyday objects . . . human faces, bodies. . ." (2). Best clarifying Burke's position on the beautiful and the sublime, Jean-François Lyotard holds that Burke's intent was to ensure that the sublime comes to fruition only from the notion that no further "terror" takes place (99). Lyotard argues:

> Beauty gives a positive pleasure. But there is another kind of pleasure that is bound to a passion stronger than satisfaction, and that is pain and impending death. In pain the body affects the soul. But the soul can also affect the body as though it were experiencing some externally induced pain, by the sole means of representations that are unconsciously associated with painful situations. This entirely spiritual passion, in Burke's lexicon, is called terror. Terrors are linked to privation: privation of light, terror of darkness; privation of others, terror of solitude; privation of language, terror of silence; privation of objects, terror of emptiness; privation of life, terror of death. What is terrifying is that the *It happens that* does not happen, that it stops happening. (99)

Lyotard states that the only way Burke would allow terror to intertwine with the pleasure that is associated with pain and impending death and that leads the emotions toward the sublime is that

it must not complete the act of the "terror-causing threat" (99). Relief has to be part of the process, even though it is, as Lyotard states, "still a privation"; however, "the soul is deprived of the threat of being deprived of light, language, life" (99).

In applying Lyotard's clarifications to Delacroix's paining, we can pinpoint the precise ways in which Delacroix takes spectators from the aesthetic experience. First, he interweaves pleasure and passion with that of pain and that of portending death, which produces terror. How can spectators be sure they are not in an aesthetic experience of the sublime and the beautiful but in a terror linked to the privation of others? Delacroix brazenly illustrates the beginning of the murderous acts in the far background. What happens next in spectator vision is the idea that pain can disturb the soul. Perhaps even more troubling is that the soul can move the body to feel real, external pain from representations that waken the unconscious, so that particular spectators, who are victims of violent abuse or who have suffered from murderous acts committed on a loved one, reexperience the deepest of pain and terror. This Burkean lexicon is where Delacroix places the sublime in the midst of terror and deprivation. As one who operates within emotions of the highest order involving violence, Delacroix fails to follow the defining traits of both the beautiful and the sublime and causes spectators to lose sight of such distinguishing traits. Beauty does not go beyond its ordinary emotional, physical, and societal usage to attain origins of meaning in an extraordinary frame of mind (Marković 2). As a result, Delacroix propels spectators into the realm of what Marković calls a mere commonplace experience with commonplace artifacts (2). If spectators are not part of the aesthetic experience, then how do they process Delacroix's reimaged violence against the female body?

In his painting, Delacroix proves true two factors that Burke warns against. First, Burke argues: "Pleasure of every kind quickly satisfies; and when it is over, we relapse into

indifference, or rather we fall into a soft tranquility . . . in a sort of tranquility shadowed with horror" (32). Delacroix paints Sardanapalus with an indifferent quiescence toward the explosion of violence around the supposed Assyrian king. The look of horror appears only in the eyes of the servants and the Arabian stallions. Because spectators are outside the aesthetic experience, the greatest amount of horror comes from Delacroix's mixture of the sublime with the chaos of murder as a judgment of beauty, a mere liking of the murderous event and torture, and even Delacroix's own preferences for violence on the female body (Marković 2). As a result, each spectator reacts differently and experiences the commonplace meanings of this work, according to each one's own appetite that feeds its desires, stemming from a pornography addiction, even to the point of sexual violent tendencies. [24] Second, Burke argues that the "characteristical effect of the beautiful" are the traits of "sinking," "melting," and "languor" (112). Delacroix paints all the visible faces of the women as having Burke's characteristic effects of the beautiful. Some may argue that we are indeed in an extraordinary frame of mind aesthetically, not only because of Delacroix's talent with colorization, but because we do see the plummeting face of a female victim, laying forward on the bed in a type of stupor. Below her lies another victim in a state of stillness, or even a kind of sleepiness. Beside her in the forefront is the murderous act in progress, with the face of the woman painted in a state of torpor, in a type of frozen physical power, or a dormancy of any power. But what sets apart the notion that we are not in the required use of the aesthetic experience of beauty is the line that Delacroix—the artist—crosses into the murderous throes of a daily experience with the violent assaults on women and on men through the circumstances of murder-suicide. Burke argues:

> These powers and passions shall be considered in their place. But whatever these powers
> are, or upon what principle soever they affect the mind, it is absolutely necessary that

they should not be exerted in those things which a daily and vulgar use have brought into

a stale unaffecting familiarity. (29)

When working in the violent event and its actions, artists' choices do matter, so that in presenting

the aesthetic traits of distinguishing the characteristics of the sublime and the beautiful, artists

themselves do not succumb to the passive and unmoving tones of violence in general. Otherwise,

spectators experience a "vulgar use" of the body as an instrument of personal satisfaction,

according to mere proclivities, rather than an extraordinary way of thinking about the unrelenting

effects of violence and the degree to which they affect human beings. Even Delacroix's fellow

artists recognize that nothing can justify his deliberate display of assault in his rendition of

reimaged violence. How then does the human will interact with perception and imagination in

this type of involvement with reimaged violence?

Arendt's study is critical in understanding the power of the human will over the body and

its interplay with imagination and perception in relation to a violent assault on humans and the

resulting effects of a disconnectedness from the community of human others. She highlights

Augustine's investigation of the conflicts within the human will through a unique entrance: "not

in isolation from other mental faculties but in its interconnectedness with them" (*Life of the Mind*

97). She states that the human will commands not only the intellect, memory, knowledge, and

senses, but now, even the "body" obeys the human will through the "power of the mind over its

body" and through utter "imagination," citing the Augustinian claim that the body has no

structure that would allow for anything other than obedience (100, 101, 95). Such power comes

from a human will that binds together the introspection of the mind to the external world, where

the mind has the capability to form mental images inwardly but also to imagine external things

(101). But what is concerning, especially within the content of violence itself and its reimaged

unprincipled factors concerning the female body, is the ability of the human will to pair with the totality of imagination, to the extreme degree of bodily stimulation, exerting a disconnect from inward human to outward human existence. Thus, questioning the different obstacles surrounding imagination in its interplay with perception is essential.

Erazim Kohák clarifies the Husserlian position of "pure imagination" as "*given as imagined* rather than *as perceived*, as hoped for, or any other mode of givenness" (164). But he states that conflicts arise when those, who fail to recognize the "physical entities," begin the investigation but choose to follow only statistics of "awareness" in the clues of visual experience and overlook the phenomenological perspective that "ideas, like facts, are *seen*," and merely take them as existing in the mind (164). Kohák states: "In that case, the distinction among the modes of givenness (given-as-perceived, given-as-imagined, or given-as-hoped for) disappears as all data become equally and arbitrarily present" (164). Husserl maintains, as does Merleau-Ponty after him, that data awareness is important but not enough to override physical beings that deliver the awareness data. When working within the confines of mere awareness of reimaged violence against the human body of beingness, then the givens of human being dissipate, because all aspects of violence then become equal with humanness. Perhaps of even greater concern to Husserl is his recognition of why principles become indistinct: "Awareness of principles is a primordially presentative act and, as such, is analogous to sense perception, not to imagination" (165).[25] Not only are the traits of the sublime and the beautiful unmanageable in the Delacroix painting, but their different arrangements now appear as equal in their entangled presence. Such an inward confusion of traits allows for principles and values such as justice, dignity of human life, and integrity to be unseen, because people tend to look toward the exhaustive resources of imagination instead of toward the realization of their connection to their sense perceptions. How

do we process the functions of will and imagination with such confusion as is created in Delacroix's reimaged violence on women?

In applying Augustine's stated theories, the images of women's bodies that spectators already have in their minds affect the perceptual experience of reimaged violence. If sensible images of women (which I define as principles and values aligned to their sense perceptions) are absent, then these internal, illogical images, embedded in spectator memories, disconnect from authentic, external images of women. With such entanglement, these kinds of internal images foster only a false sense of women with a human will that continues in its insatiable functions. Drawing from Augustine, Arendt states that the human will chooses to use the "memory and intellect" to direct them another way, but the will does not understand traits such as "joy" and "hope" but computes only the present (*Life of the Mind* 103). For these reasons, the human will can never be appeased, only an " 'endurance' " pleases the will for the continual existence of the present enjoyable effect (103). In the Delacroix work, the actual presence in the momentary focal point is the murderous act unleashed on women under the perpetrator's gaze of indifference. The degree to which each person acts on such a false sense of external images lies within the mindset of each individual and in how each human will chooses to utilize memory and intellect with such a focal point of murderous violence. But how does the will-body relation operate alongside the perception-body relation in the Delacroix piece?

Merleau-Ponty rightly agrees that the human will functions in a disconnect toward the human other. But he goes one step further to indicate that the conflicts of sense perception and quality lose sight not only of the human other but also of self-realization—both physically and mentally—as a "living body," as "perceiving mind," in the perceptual field (*Phenomenology of Perception* 56; *Primacy of Perception* 3). He argues:

Sensing, thus detached from affectivity and motricity, became the mere reception of a quality, and physiology believed itself capable of following. . . .The living body thus transformed ceased to be my body, that is the visible expression of a concrete Ego, in order to become one object among all others. Correlatively, another's body . . . was nothing more than a machine, and the perception of another person could not truly be of *another person*, since it resulted from an inference and thus only placed a consciousness in general behind the automaton, a transcendent cause and not someone actually inhabiting its movements. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 56)

Merleau-Ponty's insights mark how the will-body relation operates. A human will disunites the act of sensing from human emotions and the body's control of movements to make sensing appear as only quality. He argues that two problems engulf quality from a person's actions: (a) ". . . turn it into an element of consciousness when it is in fact an object for consciousness, to treat it as a mute impression when it in fact always has a sense"; and (b) ". . . to believe that this sense and this object, at the level of quality, are full and determinate" (5). To apply his ideas on quality to violence: both spectator and artist take a quality of violence (what they assume they know about violence), as consciousness, when it is actually an object for consciousness. In other words, an element of violence is to question and contemplate. They also take those qualities of violence as a silent voice from the inner sense of conscience, and yet they are confident that their assessment is fully complete in awareness of both violence itself and its object image. What emerges next is the alteration from living body, as perceiving mind, to object. As a result, the human other's body inverts to automaton with only a general consciousness behind it, rather than an actual human being inhabiting movement. Such a spectator in the Delacroix work now becomes the object viewing a mechanical robot with merely a collective consciousness from

simply the ideas of women the spectator instigates. Last, the human will of this spectator

resolves any conflicts by searching only for the "familiar presence" needed, as seen in references

to Merleau-Ponty in chapter one, to find the perfect "*in-itself*" for easement, while "a genuine

*for-itself*" of human beingness conceals itself deep inside the spectator (336, 56).

Because of Delacroix's decision to place women as the focal point of sadistic acts of

murder, spectators who are inside the perceptual-body relation can begin to realize that it is not

the gaze of Sardanapalus that is the concerning factor. Rather, it is the gaze of indifference from

Delacroix, through Sardanapalus, who affects these sadistic passions. In other words, Delacroix

does the opposite of what Burke says must take place with those who "affect the

passions" (*Philosophical Enquiry* 114). Delacroix does not maintain an "eternal distinction"

between the "direct nature" in the causes of "pain" in the sublime and the direct nature of the

causes of "pleasure" in philosophical beauty itself (113). Spectators are in the gaze of the one

who advances a purpose unto himself, an "*in-itself*" for himself, with his placement of violent

assault on female as useful automaton and Sardanapalus's so-called entitlements of violence on

"machine." Such spectators recognize that the "genuine *for-itself*" of human beingness is

concealed from the artist himself.

For all spectators, the images we take inward on violence and the human body (sensible

or nonsensible) do matter. They either connect us to the outward human beingness, or they

disconnect us from the community of human beings. But we cannot stop short of asking difficult

yet necessary questions: We question not simply why prominent men in high or common places

assault women and children, but we ask the question, what kind of images of women and

children are such men taking inward? What kind of reimaging of violence do they internalize

that would cause their human wills to disconnect from the community of human beings? Yet, the

questioning does not stop here until we ask: What is behind the complex situational-factors that contribute to why individuals participate in such pornographic images that place all human beingness at risk?[26] Finally, we ask, how can spectators know they experience authentic perception in recognition of the condition of violence itself and its forms of embodiment?

## The Condition of Violence on the Human Body

This section scrutinizes the entanglements behind reimaged war violence from the historical eras of Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes and Magdalena Abakanowicz and war violence's challenging considerations of processing the type of cruel capability present in human beings that enables a mentality of vulgarity and perversion in the physical destruction to be perpetrated on the body of human beingness. What factors of violence itself need to be in place before looking at the aesthetic encounter of reimaged war violence? Both Arendt and Walter Benjamin address the essential factors relevant to this section: from Arendt, "a condition of human existence"; and from Benjamin, traits of "the destructive character" (*Human Condition* 9; *Reflections* 301). Arendt argues: "Whatever touches or enters into a sustained relationship with human life immediately assumes the character of a condition of human existence" (*Human Condition* 9). Benjamin argues: "But what contributes most of all to this Apollonian image of the destroyer is the realization of how immensely the world is simplified when tested for its worthiness of destruction" (301). Combining Arendt's and Benjamin's views, the destructive character traits diagnose how violence initiates itself as a condition of human existence and expands itself in future generations.

Goya's etchings in *Disasters of War* disturb the senses with the very recognition of violence and

its capable cruelty within human beings to embrace it and transform it into an accepted trait of

human existence. Abakanowicz's work exhibits the emotions necessary in the aesthetic

encounter of human body remains to recognize the very traits of the destroyers, who continue to

exhibit violence as an assumed trait of the human condition. Equally disturbing, Arendt reveals a

human will, in its interaction with imagination, that chooses to erase the existence of reality

itself, while Merleau-Ponty differentiates between the functions of imagination in relation to

body and mind in a verbal call for morals (*Life of the Mind*, "Epictetus and the Omnipotence of

the Will" 78; *Phenomenology of Perception* 115). How do spectators begin to process an

aesthetic encounter of reimaged violence of such horrendous proportions?

Emotions fall under their own umbrella of complications, and understanding their dual

function is necessary not only for viewing the reimage of violence in artist choice of placement,

but for handling the intensity of emotion from horrific cultural war violence in the aesthetic field.

Marković's compilations apply to the artworks of both Goya and Abakanowicz primarily

through "aesthetic emotions," and specifically through the "collections of emotions," that result

from an arousal caused by the intrigue of unfamiliar stimuli from aesthetic fascination with the

object and appraisal of that object (10–11, 5). He first indicates what constitutes aesthetic

emotion, according to one view—"Kubovy's *pleasures of the mind*" —by stating: ". . . pleasures

of the mind are not simple emotional reactions, but rather collections of emotions distributed

over time: . . . during the reading of a novel or the watching of a film or a theatre show . . . and

other emotions are transforming one in the other in respect to the changing of the narrative" (11).

Second, Marković's research emphasizes the difference between the stimulation of aesthetic

emotions and emotions that are generated on a daily basis (11). He states that aesthetic emotions

do not exist at the level of a regular daily use, but have precise and extraordinary emotive purposes (11).[27] Most helpful in considering the specific works of Goya and Abakanowicz is his emphasis that particular narratives involve a full array of emotions and necessitate an overt and empathic evaluation of the condition of emotions from individual characters and their mutual interconnections with others so to avoid misunderstanding even those artworks consisting of a one-dimensional layer (11).[28] Thus, Goya requires this kind of emotional rubric for his multidimentional levels of emotions from war violence itself and his choice of reimaging such violence in *Disasters of War*.



Figure 5A. (Left) Plate 37. Goya, Francisco. *Esto es peor* ("This is worse");

Figure 5B. (Right) Plate 39. *Grande hazaǹa! Con Muertos!* ("Great feat! With dead men!") (1810-1820).

Figure 5A. *Esto es peor* (*This Is Worse*). Figure 5B. *Grande hazaǹa! Con Muertos!* (*Great Feat! With Dead Men!*) (1810–1820). (Robert Hughes, *Goya*, 294).

In Goya's etchings, viewers automatically enter into the level of aesthetic fascination through arousal from the utterly blatant and appalling acts of violence on human bodies. Spectators cannot be certain how to process such fused scenes of morbid cruelty expressed in the maiming of human bodies. This difficulty, plus the vagueness of who these men are in this

particular circumstance, leads spectators to spend additional time with both figure 5A and 5B in order to examine any other stimuli that would incite their thoughts and emotions to the present but unseen layers of violence and human being. Some art scholars refer to Goya's etchings in *Disasters of War* as more like photographs, as a photograph (a reimage) of authentic documentation of war violence. But others, such as Robert Hughes, have some reservations, in that Goya had only secondary observation of war violence. He indicates that Goya does visit Zaragoza, but no evidence proves the number of etchings influenced by his visit there (287). As Hughes points out: "The only one that certainly was shows a scene that he could not have witnessed while he was there . . ." (287–88). Thus, Goya's disturbing war etchings could be positioned in an in-between place of reimaged photographs in real time, documenting violent actions of the event, but still within the reimage of artist's choice of placement vis-à-vis the actions of the event through etchings. Why is such acknowledgment of the category of imagery from violence important? Goya's etchings ultimately demonstrate the condition of violence itself against the human body and against nature, an in-between place that has the potential to leave spectators with emotions that conclude no resolution can combat such violence. It is at this precise in-between place of violence itself that we can recognize where the aesthetic experience of the violent event can stop short of the full recognition of the consciousnesses needed to identify motives, traits, and conditions of violence itself. What propels viewers to the next level of aesthetic appraisal that requires perceptual thinking?

Spectators experience the unrelenting captivation of unpleasant scenes of war violence from Goya. Those spectators who choose to advance from the level of arousal enter into what Marković calls the " 'mental space' " of aesthetic appraisal (12). Such space houses "aesthetic information" within "cognitive structures" that have an ability to comprehend hidden semantics,

the perceptual language behind visual and spoken languages of what needs to be perceived in

uncovering the levels behind such challenging visuals (12). This step forward to aesthetic

appraisal is critical when viewing the word titles that Goya chooses for the mindboggling

contexts of violent acts, and their effects, in this frozen state of violence. Goya works within the

aesthetic field of exceptional discernment so as to demonstrate the atrocities of the condition of

violence itself. From the level of arousal, spectators need aesthetic information about the cultural

violence of Goya's era in order to process meaning from the collection of emotions necessary for

Marković's "affective information" (13, 12). Hughes states that Goya places war violence

"impartially and unblinkingly" before spectators (295).

In Figure 5, Goya's etchings of the morbid trophies of war mean to disturb not only the

senses but the psyche in order to reach the level of the condition of violence. At this place in the

aesthetic encounter, spectators can begin to amass information to untangle the cumulative

emotions they amassed during the arousal state of fascination. Hughes states: "it may be that the

writer who does not know fear, despair, and pain cannot fully know Goya" (x). Goya clearly

illustrates such emotions in his etchings in the *Disasters of War*. He portrays all sides of the war

to exemplify the barren and desolate acts of human destruction. As Hughes explains, "the French

killed and mutilated Spanish partisans and left their wretched remains exposed as a warning to

villagers and passersby" (293). However, he states that there were plenty of circumstances when

Spanish partisans committed the same acts on French soldiers, and on those assumed to be

Spanish traitors, even without due process (294). From the cultural violence portrayed in *This Is*

*Worse*, spectators begin amassing an assortment of emotions, originating with the focal point: the

body of a male, with severed arm and "impaled from anus to neck" upon the piercing point of a

lifeless tree (294). They surmise that the repulsive remains of a human war-trophy come at the

hands of French soldiers, since French soldiers are readying themselves for another carcass of "disgusting mutilation" (294). Marković states that "objects" in works of art do not instinctively transfer to the aesthetic experience and that "non-experts" can miss profound aesthetic meanings in an artwork if seen through the mere lens of "the ornamental parts of the everyday environment than as exceptional objects with deeper aesthetic symbolism" (13).[29] Thus, we detect, at such a place, that spectators, who are unaware of the cultural violence in Goya's era, place their amassed emotions within the scope of their own known cultural violence. Once again, misrepresentations from such a synthesis can invert, pervert, and revert spectator relationships with emotions from the actions in violent events.

But, within levels of an extraordinary state of the aesthetic experience, Marković indicates that spectators advance from a preservation of attentiveness, which takes place for a range of cognitive situations that moves the perceptual vision in evaluation of emotional positions, and, specifically, the "reflective" assessment of complementing emotions that interrelate multiple perspectives through multivocal plots (5, 11, 10).[30] In Goya's scenes of multivocal violence, spectators begin the process of appraising the visual and spoken semantics of ambiguity in determining why this particular act of violence on the human body is a horror of a higher degree. In *Great Feat! With Dead Men!*, Goya illustrates shock and disgust through what Hughes describes as "a sickeningly effective play on the Neoclassical cult of the antique fragment," by depicting a morbid assortment of human body parts suspended on a tree in order to instill fear into all who see them (295).

Hughes continues: "But how is one to read an image like plate 39?" His answer: "The ruin of the human body is paralleled, in the *Desastres*, by what Goya sees inflicted on nature itself" (295). Hughes argues that the trees "are perverted, by implication, because they no longer

have the wholeness of nature," and carry the same sense of morose disfigurement as the remains

of the human corpse (295). As a result, spectators can now determine that Goya means that both

human being and nature are inverted to perversion by human beings themselves. At this place of

nature and human being, we diagnose what it means, both aesthetically and perceptually, to be in

the midst of an in-between-state of a continual relationship to violence—not only with human

life but with nature—through the assumptive traits of violence as a condition of human

existence, as Arendt indicates (*Human Condition* 9). Hughes points out that Goya does not give

any clues as to whether these bodies are on one side or the other, "collaborators" or "allies"

(295). This leads toward violence, and its ambiguity can be most disturbing for some spectators,

who contemplate an arrangement of emotions they accrued in the depths of the barbarism of war

violence, but they are unsure what to do with such emotions. Other spectators, however, can

aesthetically evaluate the perceptual matter of empathetically seeing these men as the whole of

humanity, maimed by the condition of violence itself. Such contemplations from spectators are

part of what Marković refers to as "reflective orientation," which is essential to the aesthetic

experience in linking an assortment of complex layers to their individual emotional meanings to

create a "coherent aesthetic (artistic) whole" (11).[31] Still, others evaluate the assorted emotions

from Goya's war violence in the scenes of the aesthetic encounter and surmise that Goya's

message emphasizes something far worse even than the violence itself: a pragmatism that stems

from the false assumption that there is nothing anyone can do about violence because it is part of

human existence. The latter assessment is what Merleau-Ponty calls the "unreflected," which can

only be reached through its bond to the reflected (*Phenomenology of Perception* 414). Perhaps

Goya leaves spectators at the in-between place with no hope of resolving violence on human

being and the human destruction of nature. But only through the unreflected of violence and its

assumptive traits of human existence do we understand how to decode the aesthetic emotional experience of barbaric war violence. How should spectators reach the unreflected of reimaged violence through an interplay of emotions between imagination and perception?

Abakanowicz demonstrates the cultivation of emotions that illustrate the dignity of human beingness even through the devasting results of violent acts of those destructors who foster a relationship with violence. When evaluating her work *Backs*, spectators enter, both perceptually and aesthetically, through the imaginative of the cognitive level. They look for the necessary aesthetic information of emotional traits that will allow for the assumptive traits of violence to take on physiognomies as a human existence. Such emotional traits come from Benjamin. For the cultural violence of Abakanowicz's era, Benjamin's notion of the destructive character lays out the human traits that incorporate a terroristic violation of human life and dignity. First, he makes the case for a revitalized destruction that erases the destroyer's disorder. He states: "The destructive character is young and cheerful. For destroying rejuvenates in clearing away the traces of our own age; it cheers because everything cleared away means to the destroyer a complete reduction, indeed eradication, of his own condition" (301). Second, he speaks of the need to inflame misconceptions. He continues: "The destructive character has no interest in being understood. Attempts in this direction he regards as superficial. Being misunderstood cannot harm him. On the contrary, he provokes it, just as oracles, those destructive institutions of the state, provoked it" (302). Third, Benjamin warns of pretensions in the desire for eradication: "The destructive character stands in the front line of the traditionalists. Some pass things down to posterity, by making them untouchable and thus conserving them, others pass on situations by making them practicable and thus liquidating them. The latter are called the destructive (302). Such cultural traits of violence provide the necessary direction for

the aesthetic experience of emotions from reimaged violence to get to the unreflected of why the same war violence from Goya continued into the twentieth century. If Goya leaves spectators at an in-between place of violence, how do spectators utilize the aesthetic information from Benjamin to get them past mere knowledge that violence assumes traits of a condition of human existence and into the fullest understanding of how those traits continue from age to age?

In applying Benjamin's traits of the destroyer to a modern reimage of horrific violence on the human body, spectators evaluate a telling narrative of manifold emotions through the intrapersonal connection to human being and to the traits that lead to the fashioning of human destroyers. Figure 6 displays Abakanowicz's work on a series of body works titled *Alterations*, where she creates fibrous sculptures displaying human backs. On first impression (Figure 6A below), the backs appear to be bent over, with the head and the remaining parts of the bodies intact.

Figure 6A. Abakanowicz, Magdalena. *Backs in Landscape*, 1978–1981. Eighty sculptures of burlap and resin molded from plaster casts, over-lifesize. Marlborough Gallery, New York. Photo ©1982 Dirk Bakker, Detroit, MI.

On a closer examination (Fig. 6B below), spectators view the painful process of internal decay that has taken place in the bodily remains of these human beings. As in Goya's etchings of maimed carcasses, Abakanowicz's human sculptures also include headless bodies, with partial limbs. But Abakanowicz differs from Goya in that she takes spectators to an assemblage of emotions in a wider spectrum needed to evaluate them, both aesthetically and perceptually, in order to get to the unreflected of violence.

Figure 6B. Abakanowicz, Magdalena. Backs, Installation View, (1976-82). Burlap and glue

Eighty pieces, three sizes: 61 x 50 x 55cm- 69 x 56 x 66cm -72 x 59 x 69 cm

http://art.nmu.edu/109arson/isit/oldstuff/aba.html

Spectators begin such a process in the depth of emotions when they recognize, as Lois Fichner-

Rathus states, that "the fronts of the torsos have been hollowed out, leaving an actual and

symbolic human shell" (83). From Goya's clustering emotions of shock and disgust that could

lead the spectator to the assumptive trait of violence as a human condition of existence,

Abakanowicz's work takes spectators one step further: to violence and its condition of

regenerating itself. She helps them ask not why, but *how* humans continue to nurture the traits

that lead to the abomination of war, inflicted on human life, centuries after Goya's historical era.

Her sculptured, fibrous bodies, laced with personal affectivity, demonstrate the "dehumanization

she witnessed" of her own mother, "mutilated by the Nazis in World War II" (83). Each torso reminds spectators of the humans who not only lost life but "lost their individuality" (83). Henry Sayre states: "These forms, all bent over in prayer, or perhaps pain, speak to our conditions as humans, our spiritual emptiness—these are hollow forms—and our mass anxiety" (310). Probing into our own human condition, as Sayre indicates, is the needed reflection. But the culture of violence that Abakanowicz portrays as responsible for the liquidation of lives causes spectators to move to the depth of the unreflected and question how to recognize any circulatory traits within ourselves that bear any resemblance to an individual who evokes facets of destruction (Arendt, *Life of the Mind* 9). What is the process of such a movement?

Applying Benjamin's emotional traits of the destructive to those who cause the extermination of human lives in Abakanowicz's *Backs*, each spectator benefits by asking the following questions: Is there a need in me that desires to wipe away any hints of a person's existence and historical era? Do I have a delightful eagerness to reduce and purge my own condition so as to annihilate the very condition of violence itself? Do I incite misunderstanding from the examples of those who excite misperceptions of others? Do I pass on the qualities of the prevention of deprivation or degeneration? Or do I position myself among such ones in order to take on their views as pretense, and then endow my own situation of practicality in order to exterminate those I fear will take my place or become more prosperous? Perhaps, the most difficult questions of all: Do I negate the realities of human destruction on body and beingness? Is such negation the unreflective of my collection of disquietude? Or is it the scapegoat of the very condition of violence in me? What do I continually feed my human will that causes its familiarity?

Arendt describes the interplay of the human will with imagination and perception that

leads to the ability to negate reality (*Life of the Mind*, "Epictetus and the Omnipotence of the

Will" 78). Such problematic ground transfers to the dimensions of violence itself, to the reality

of the annihilation of human body and of humanness, and, thus, to an erasure of the aesthetic and

perceptual experience of reimaged violence. Arendt demonstrates how humans can will

themselves to "indifference" in the possession of an Epictetian Stoic will (81). The problematic

nature of indifference is that it wears various guises that deceive the very ones who believe

indifference is a stoic virtue. Some spectators have a sense of empowerment, of self-pride, in that

they are unaffected or indifferent to the reimaged violence they view. But how is it possible that

spectators can operate inside a Stoic will of indifference toward such images of violence and

know nothing about Stoicism? Arendt argues that, with Nietzsche's extension of Epictetus into

the twentieth-century, the will of indifference evolves into " 'Eternal Recurrence,' " the "final

redeeming thought as it proclaims the '*Innocence of all Becoming*'. . . and with that its inherent

aimlessness and purposelessness, its freedom from guilt and responsibility" (*Life of the Mind*

170). In first laying the groundwork with Epictetus, she reveals why perception is affected by a

will of indifference. She states:

> And since "it is impossible that what happens should be other than it is," since man, in
>
> other words, is entirely powerless in the real world, he has been given the miraculous
>
> faculties of reason and will that permit him to reproduce the outside—complete but
>
> deprived of its reality—inside his mind, where he is undisputed lord and master. There he
>
> rules over himself and over the objects of his concern, for the will can be hindered only
>
> by itself. Everything that seems to be real, the world of appearances, actually needs my
>
> consent in order to be real *for me*. And this consent cannot be forced on me: if I withhold

> it, the reality of the world disappears as though it were a mere apparition. (*Life of the*
>
> *Mind*, "Epictetus" 78–79)

When dealing with the content of reimaged violence, the reality of violence, and all its appearances, does not go away. The presence of violence is its reality, as the possibility of an assumed condition of human existence in Goya's etchings. Benjamin's destructive traits are real in pointing to the condition of violence and its continual historical recurrences, savored by the destructive, with their visible acts of annihilation on the human bodies and beingness, rendered by Abakanowicz. To be unaffected by the aesthetic emotions that Abakanowicz establishes will allow no opportunities for the kind of aesthetic reflecting that points toward the perceptual unreflected of multiple perspectives of violence itself and the reality of its presences, its appearances in its reimage. Arendt rightfully emphasizes not only the power of the human will over reason, but also how the imagination can take us to the utmost level of thought.

For Arendt, thinking perceptually is not reason. She recognizes that Epictetus is fully aware of the power of imagination and of his attempt to control such power. Such acknowledgment is good for her because she recognizes the underlying problem of indifference: "Epictetus is interested in what happens to him" (80).

She references Epictetus:

> The constant question is whether your will is strong enough not merely to distract your
>
> attention from external, threatening things but to fasten your imagination on different
>
> "impressions" in the actual presence of pain and misfortune. To withhold consent, or
>
> bracket out reality, is by no means an exercise in sheer thinking; it has to prove itself in
>
> actual fact. What bothers men is not what actually happens to them but their own

"judgment" (dogma in the sense of belief or opinion): "You will be harmed only when you think you are harmed. No one can harm you without your consent." (79)

Epictetus teaches how to train a mind to indifference, resulting in withholding one's approval or agreement of reality to negate reality in one's mind. As problematic as the Epictetian "doctrine of invulnerability and apathy" is, through an ability to try to tame imagination by focusing on impressions of pain and misfortune, perhaps more perplexing to Arendt is the inconceivability that "some of the best minds of Western mankind" embraced Epictetian ways of perfecting the ability to be unmoved by the emotions caused by reality (80). She warns not only of the destruction within Epictetus's power of the will, but of Nietzsche's advances and extensions of Epictetus. She argues that Nietzsche's "Innocence of Becoming" and "Eternal Recurrence" do not derive "from a mental faculty" but are embedded in the fact that we have not chosen who we are, or given our permission even to be part of this world. This type of thinking alters the "essence of Being" and of morality (170). Arendt equitably maintains that, with Nietzsche's omission of " '*causa prima*,' " no person is " 'held responsible,' " and no cause " 'traced back' " (170). She recapitulates three key factors taken from Nietzsche:

 "1. Becoming does not aim at a *final state*, does not flow into 'being.' 2. Becoming is not a merely *apparent state*; perhaps the world of beings is mere appearance. 3. Becoming is of [equal value at] every moment . . . in other words, it has no value at all, for anything against which to measure it . . . is lacking. *The total value of the world cannot be evaluated.*" (170-172)

In the minds of those spectators who operate in accordance with Arendt's interpretation of Epictetus and the Nietzschean will (acknowledging those scholars who may see her views as a

misreading of the Nietzsche will), the reimaged violence of Abakanowicz's portrayal of the

Holocaust's horrors committed on the human body and their beingness of existence are now all

negated, because absence of being means moral facts are absent. Negation of being means

nothing at all even happened. Thus, no one is responsible and guilt belongs to none. Equally as

problematic, even the aesthetic and perceptual factors are removed in the minds of such

spectators, because, to them, the reality of violence and being are mere reimages of indifference.

Arendt substantially and realistically demonstrates what takes place with the human will,

imagination, and their effects on perception. Benjamin shows how to recognize the presence of

the traits of violence and the many ways they regenerate themselves. It is clear that spectators, or

even artists, can tap into the power of imagination to train their wills simply to match what they

consent to accept of the realities of violence toward human being and then deny the rest. What

hope is there that all facets of the presence of violence can be identified and recognized for the

recurring ways they harm the community of human beings? Can imagination overcome a human

will of indifference (toward the reality of the violent event), or a human will that negates all

moral facts (and thus beingness) in order to redirect spectators toward perception?

The way to think toward an impartiality of mind within imagination is through the view

Merleau-Ponty holds, which is the polar opposite of that of Epictetus or Nietzsche. It is through

Merleau-Ponty that spectators and artists understand the makeup of imagination and how it

operates for a genuine perception. Rather than the Epictetian act of tapping into the power of

imagination in order to erase reality or being, Merleau-Ponty focuses the mind on fleshly body

for the embodiment of the two as one perceiving mind through the spoken word or the need for

morals—the "natural relation" between body, environment, and the depth and breadth of being

(*Primacy of Perception* 3; *Phenomenology of Perception* 115). He states that such an

embodiment embraces imagination to capture an accurate perception of the world and of the human other by first marking the other's existence of actions, designated solely through "a verbal instruction or by moral necessities" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 115). In this manner, the abilities of imagination are the keystones for trustworthy perception. He states:

> In imagination, I have hardly formed the intention to see before I already believe that I have seen. Imagination is without depth; it does not respond to our attempts to vary our points of view; it does not lend itself to our observation. We are never geared into the imagination. In each perception, however, it is the matter itself that takes on sense and form. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 338)

How do Merleau-Ponty's perceptual insights on body and imagination apply to the aesthetic scene of reimaged violence in Abakanowicz's *Backs*? Because of imagination's abilities, the spectators see the shadow of the backs before they know exactly what they see. Fibers take form, and then spectators make sense of the shapes as being that of human backs. But at this point, each spectator will have his or her own perceptual experience for the meanings of the human backs. The reality is that the external consciousness of Abakanowicz's work takes spectators to the time period of horrific and unspeakable violence against humankind. This section's focal point is of the spectator whose human will is of indifference toward the effects of violence or of a negation of every moral proof, and thus, a valueless sense of human existence. As indicated, imagination does not advise spectators in their observations of reimaged violence; neither does it respond to the different points of view they may have on the horrors of violence committed by the Nazi regime. It does, however, pair with perception to draw the spoken word for the need of morals in relation to another human being. How each person works through what Merleau-Ponty calls "the paradox of consciousness seen from the outside, the paradox of thought that resides in

the exterior" in relation to the human other depends on the complications posed by each of their

cultural environments (*Phenomenology of Perception* 364). Since external thought is already

"without a subject and is anonymous," a spectator must then invert the natural association

between his or her body and environment, so that body, as perceiving mind, and imagination

work together to find the vocal edifications of the moral message (364). The difficult factor that

enters into body and imagination is that, in recognizing the habitus of the human other,

individuals tend to take that particular consciousness of a single other or a particular group as the

whole of society (364). Merleau-Ponty argues, rather, that the whole of society constitutes a

"coexistence with an indefinite number of consciousnesses" but comes with cultural

complications in external consciousnesses that must be unraveled and clarified (364).

Abakanowicz already prepares a connection of coexistence with the infinite consciousnesses of

each fibrous body in her work to activate exterior thought from spectators on the uniqueness of

each human being. She states:

> It is from fiber that all living organisms are built—the tissues of plants, and ourselves.
>
> Our nerves, our genetic code, the canals of our veins, our muscles. We are fibrous
>
> structures. Our heart is surrounded by the coronary plexus, the plexus of most vital
>
> threads. Handling fiber, we handle mystery. . . . When the biology of our body breaks
>
> down, the skin has to be cut so as to give access to the inside. Later it has to be sewn, like
>
> fabric. Fabric is our covering and our attire. Made with our hands, it is a record of our
>
> souls (qtd. in Sayre 310, 311).

Abakanowicz understands that spectators from different cultures will have very different

views—both condoning and condemning—or will have no reaction to those responsible for the

dehumanization of these human beings she illustrates from all different walks of life and

ethnicities. She provides the one artistic connection to all human beings to help strip away

cultural difficulties. Sayre states that Abakanowicz uses fiber as a "tool of serious artistic

expression, freed of any associations with utilitarian crafts (310). Abakanowicz distinctly allows

for each torso to presence beingness. But if each spectator gives his or her own perceptual

renditions of what each experiences in this work, every account proves significantly different.

Because of the inconsistency of external and internal consciousnesses, spectators must work

through the problems that each culture fashions in its own views of racial violence and genocide.

Imagination is an essential component that reveals things as they are through what Merleau-

Ponty calls an "act of representation" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 448). But he also

emphasizes that there is a difference between perception and "representation": The act of

representation is "presented" and "perceived," while a "represented experience" is mere

representation (448). He states that, in certain cases, it is an "inner perception of recollection or

imagination" that presents the perception (448). The inner thought of imagination does its work

inside perception, but the outer thought, affected by cultures can, in the end, effect perceptual

outcome of reimaged violence. Being tuned in to the perception of violence and its effects on the

existence of others in this world is more than mere representation and is, as Merleau-Ponty

affirms, a definitive consciousness of the present in an open-minded connection with self and

world (448). Abakanowicz rightly provides all the aesthetic tools necessary for perception so that

spectators can deal with the contradiction of an external thought that is subjectless and nameless.

It is clear that violence is not a mere image in the aesthetic field between object and

subject. If we follow statistics, we end up following a red herring. Instead, we follow the traits of

destruction and the ways in which they keep regenerating themselves through everyday nurture,

so that we can follow the ways they enter into and are nurtured within reimaged violence. If

imagination can maintain its constant and unbiased purpose, then one must learn how to follow

the paths of the aesthetic and perceptual fields in a subject-imagination experience in the

interplay with the human will and perception of violence. Far deeper than a historical treatment

of how violence relates to images, we can establish that the aesthetic-art event always holds its

meaning in a living relation to the makeup and vulnerabilities of the human consciousnesses in

their structures and in their cultural situations of violence. Yet, how do we combat the human

will of the Epictetian mindset, where all "that seems real, the world of appearances," can only be

real if we allow it (Arendt, *Life of the Mind* 78)? And if not, then, Arendt reminds us, "the reality

of the world disappears as though it were a mere apparition" (79). Equally disturbing to Arendt,

Nietzsche takes the position that "perhaps the world of beings is mere appearance," and thus,

"the total value of the world cannot be evaluated" (qtd in *Life of the Mind* 171–72). At this

uncomfortable place of denial and negation, we cannot ignore the phenomenon of human will

and how it operates in both the aesthetic and perceptual encounters of reimaged violence. We

have seen the power of the mind over body, over internal mental images of illusions, of fantasies,

or even of hallucinations in relation to both spectators and artists viewing and working with

reimaged violence. We understand the power of the mind to instruct memory and intellect, but

even still, there remains a crucial concern that we have not covered: the ability of the human will

to divide itself multiple ways. We benefit in recognizing how such a human will operates with

imagination in its many divisions among itself. What happens when a divided human will

interplays with the aesthetic and perceptual factors in an encounter with the human body as

"abjection"?

The Human Body and Abjection

Kristeva is helpful in decoding meaning behind the twofold purpose of this section. The

first is to examine the consequences of what happens when abjection enters into reimaged

violence, as a "failure to recognize its kin," where not one thing is visible or understood, much

less the "shadow of a memory" (Kristeva 5). Through Kristeva, we question how and what

factors divide selfhood. She argues: "The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that

experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the

inaugural *loss* that laid the foundations of its own being" (5). She provides the lenses for the

reimaged violence needed to recognize the many faces of human abjection. In dealing with the

content of violence and image, the loss of the human other and of self takes both spectators and

artists to a different place, where piercing, but necessary questioning cannot be avoided. The

second purpose is to note the extent to which the human will affects perception differently than

the prior sections of discussion. Though Kristeva does not speak directly toward the human will,

as does Arendt, she indirectly contributes to its discussion by addressing the abject in relation to

reimaged violence in literature that alters perception of, and even nurtures, violence itself. Some

may question how Kristeva provides the necessary information on when and why the human will

divides itself if abjection is, ultimately, desire. Kristeva clearly states that there is another

something, one of the "dark revolts of being," brewing inside abjection (1). It is not "desire,"

because she argues that this rebellion mesmerizes desire; and desire can even turn, repulsively,

from such an uprising inside abjection and refuse it (1). But she maintains that this revolt does

not allow itself to be "seduced" (1). Perhaps the best clue Kristeva offers is her "vortex of

summons," which continually distresses the one who is overwrought by such a summons and its

repugnance (1). I argue that such a controlling current is the human will in its divisionary state

between, what Arendt references as, a "bad will" and a "good will" (Arendt, *Life of the Mind* 95, 94). Why are these particular discussion points important, and what is their payoff in dealing with reimaged violence?

With her discussions on abjection, Kristeva agrees with Arendt's banality phenomenon, as the incapacity to think in relation to harm toward the community (Arendt, *Responsibility and Judgment* 159). Such an agreement takes place in Kristeva's emphasis of where abjection conceals itself as a threat to the community, in that abjection is the additional aspect of "religious, moral, and ideological codes," which abjection uses to free itself and to control the inactivity of human action within the social world (209). She warns that these codes cannot be ignored because their continual recurrence constructs our own annihilation (209). The only way to avoid such construction of an abject human self is to openly commit to a discussion which reveals the horrors of abjection in relation to reimaged violence (209). Yet, she argues: "We prefer to foresee or seduce . . . or to make art not too far removed from the level of the media" (209). How do we recognize the ways that abjection enters into an image that is close to the level of the media, so that spectators can acknowledge what they experience in order to combat Kristeva's codes of repression from abjection itself?

Kristeva provides how we can identify three factors of reimaged violence that accompany ambiguous meaning of art that is close to the layer of the media. First, the "jettisoned object" is omitted through extreme measures to the point where no signification can be found; second, all the self's objects are the basis of the inaugural *loss* of its own being; and third, failure to recognize its kin (2, 5).

Figure 7. Schutz, Dana. *Open Casket* (2016). Whitney Biennial, 2017. Photo by Benjamin Sutton for *Hyperallergic*.

In *Open Casket* (Fig. 7), the artist Dana Shutz works within what Kristeva calls "the fragile border . . . where identities . . . do not exist or only barely so—double, fuzzy, heterogeneous, animal, metamorphosed, altered, abject" (207). To complicate matters further, Kristeva argues: "The corpse seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection" (4). The artist's choice for a focal point is a corpse, painted in facial abstraction. She bases her work on a media image from the open coffin following the 1955 lynching of Emmett Till.[32] Spectators can only surmise from the artist's clues that a corpse with an abstract face lies in an open coffin. They have no indications of God, and thus they can infer that they are external to science as well, and

thus in the highest state of abjection. What appears is not a human being behind the corpse but merely what Kristeva calls a "*symptom*: a language that gives up, a structure within the body, a non-assimilable alien, a monster, a tumor, a cancer that the listening devices of the unconscious do not hear . . ." (11). Where are we aesthetically in this process of abjection in reimaged violence, and why is grasping such aesthetic ideas important in dealing with a symptom versus a human being?

According to Marković's aesthetic assessments, spectators are in the second stage of critical aesthetic information, one of "perceptual associations," which involves trying to decode the meanings of the "object's physical features" and unmasking consistent clues from "compositional regularities" (1). However, Marković's compilations of his own and others' studies indicate contrary results.[33] He states:

> . . . aesthetic experience is not correlated with the experience of regularity and the compositional harmony of paintings . . . and the so-called collative variables (complexity, uncertainty, novelty, ambiguity, etc): complex, irregular, and unusual stimuli have greater arousing potential; they draw more attention and are experienced as more interesting and attractive. . . . (4, 5)[34]

But what is missing from the Marković findings is why the irregular is more appealing. Kristeva rightly identifies the very reason for this irregularity when she determines that "so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims—if not its submissive and willing ones" (9). Those who desire to stay within the parameters of abjection are themselves, as Kristeva argues, abject.

With the abstract-art traits of *Open Casket*, spectators are in what Marković refers to as "non-narrative arts," in which "the aesthetic effects of abstract compositions are based on the

holistic nature of perception and the capability for abstract perceptual thinking" (9).[35]

Aesthetically, spectators begin the process of piecing together the narrative-like connotations.

Yet, spectators cannot piece together aesthetic meaning because they are in the presence of what

Kristeva calls the jettisoned object—the rejected object in its thorough omission of human

beingness (2). Even the semantics of the artist's title falls in line with the symptomatic through

what Kristeva describes as language that acquiesces its own meaning and leads spectators closer

to no meaning at all (2). As a result, spectators fully interact with the abject. The abject saturates

spectators with its presence, and they themselves are abject (11). They try to decipher such

abstract physical features and their unspoken meanings from a subject without existence, but the

only way spectators can manage this type of abjection, according to Kristeva, is through

"sublimation," or a coming into being (11). Spectators have no management of the abject

because they are only in the throes of the symptom devoid of sublimation. She holds that

sublimation is "prenominal" being, who comes before the name, and the "pre-objectal" is the

existence before being objectified (11). For Kristeva, this type of naming is still merely a "trans-

nominal," a state of altered naming and altered existence (11).

Yet, with *Open Casket*, spectators cannot name the prenominal, that of being itself, not

even through an alternative naming of his being in the trans-nominal. There is no sublimation

provided by the artist, who actually leads spectators to what Kristeva calls a "forfeited existence"

(9). Kristeva argues: "The Other no longer has a grip on the three apices of the triangle where

subjective homogeneity resides; and so, it jettisons the object into an abominable real,

inaccessible except through jouissance. It follows that jouissance alone causes the abject to exist

as such" (9). Drawing from Kristeva, spectators can neither name beingness in the open coffin,

who comes before his name, Emmett Till, as victim of violence, nor recognize his existence, as

their kin, their fellow human being. At this place of distorted meaning, no familiarity is present even to bring the hint of a memory. Such an existence can be, for some spectators, what Kristeva argues is a "jouissance in which the subject is swallowed up but in which the Other, in return, keeps the subject from foundering by making it repugnant" (9). Regardless of the artist's purpose or unintentionality, when choosing to work in the indistinct bounds of violence and its reimage, the risks of falling into a *jouissance* of abjection through the symptom of "primal repression" are high and so offer a very likely possibility that spectators will experience a willing, relentless interaction with abjection (12). What is primal repression?

Through Kristeva's insight of the abject as object, I identify primal repression within the human will itself, among the many wells of consciousnesses that have the capacity within the "speaking being, to divide, reject, and repeat, itself against itself" (12). Kristeva states that such division comes from the memories of one that causes anxiety for consciousness (12). She is clear that memory converts the sublime object into perception, and thus, authentically identifies that which is dejected. I argue that the human will, when divided and before it reunites itself, is primal repression.

- Speaking Being, Disturbed by Other

- Divides

- Rejects

- Repeats

Abject = Object of Primal Repression

Pseudo-Object = Abject of Secondary Repression

- Presences in Gaps in Objects

- Presences in Gaps in Representations
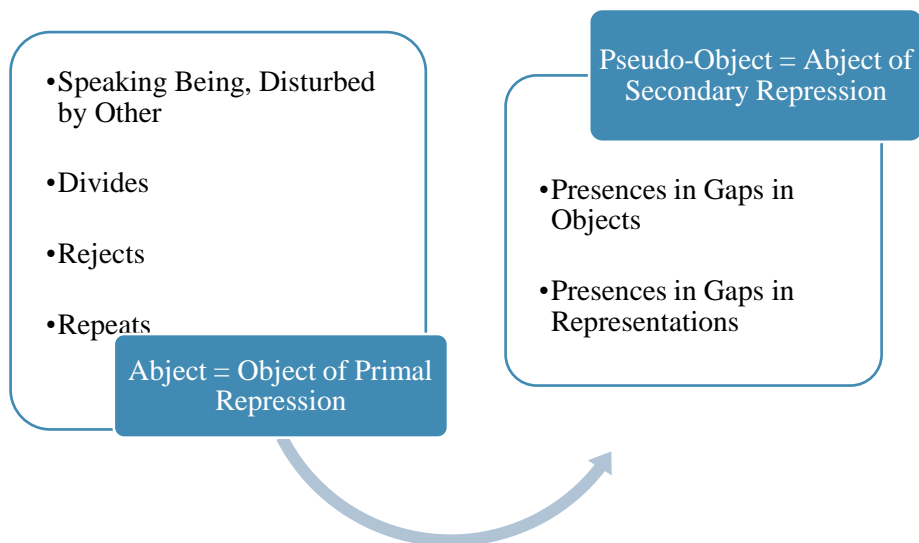
Figure 9. The Divided Human Will as Primal Repression in Human Being and Abject Interplay in as Object.

In the first layer of the diagram (Fig. 9, left to right), I illustrate Kristeva's assessment of the abject as object of *primal repression* in a speaking being with the capability to divide, reject, and repeat, in what I identify as the human will that divides itself against itself. The next layer defines her evaluation of the abject as the "pseudo-object," which comes together and presences only in slits or partial openings of "secondary repression" (12). Kristeva states that the abject can be many things, in that it may presence as the parts of a language that exist without any history, or even parts of a language that change through time and its own history (12). The abject is "object" created before it even surfaces in the slits of "secondary repression" (12). I hold that this pseudo-object is the mental reimage. What is the significance of the human will as primal and secondary repression? Kristeva states that the abject itself is the pseudo-object of primal repression and is a "precondition of narcissism" and a "narcissistic crisis" (13, 14). Therefore, I argue that the human will is the vortex of summons that brews inside abjection; but in its

divisionary state, it is primal repression and in the midst of all that houses the prerequisites for narcissism. When the speaking being of the human will goes into the state of anxiety, haunted by the will itself, then the will divides into many wills and rejects and vies for the superior will. This process keeps repeating itself within the wells of a narcissistic crisis. The abject as the pseudo-object of the human will slitters within the gap of desire through the secondary repression of the human will, which is the place where mental reimages of the human other, of self, and of violence itself are fashioned. The human will cannot even manage the space of these vast mental images.

Thus, the process of how and where mental reimages of desire are shaped within the human will is the problematic ground for the deep-rooted components in the phenomenon of violence, along with the choices of how to reimage victims of the violent event and its actions thrust upon the body of human beingness. Artists working with the victims of violence have a thin veil between sensitivity and the abject. When choosing to work with a corpse as the focal point, artists deal with what Kristeva calls an "imaginary uncanniness and real threat" that "beckons to us and ends up engulfing us" (4).

In another example of art near the level of media (Figure 8), the artist works within the frail boundary of the abject but does allow for some control of the abject through sublimation (209).

Figure 8. Taylor, Henry. *The Times Thay Aint a Changing, Fast enough!* (2017). Whitney Biennial, 2017. Photo by Benjamin Sutton for *Hyperallergic*.

Henry Taylor works with both reimaged violence of actual video footage of the event of violence in real time, and he operates not only in the shroud of violence and victim, but in the abject—that of the corpse. Aesthetically, spectators evaluate the artist's signs about and symbols of police violence in this shooting of an innocent human being. The artist seems to choose a universal and faceless police officer in uniform. In so doing, spectators can begin to realize where abjection lies within this particular painting. In looking through a Kristevian lens, the abjection of self lies not only within the police officer but also in the foundational loss of the borders that define the institution of the police, its being—its very existence. The objects of the police gun and uniform

indicate the being that constitutes the unique and familiar existence of officers under the umbrella of their foundational purpose of protecting and defending the community. Regardless of the facts surrounding this police violence, we experience an elongated abjection that does not alleviate itself, because we no longer recognize the familiar or the traits akin to the being of law and order, in what Kristeva calls dark revolts of being (1).

However, the semantics of the artist's title (*The Times Thay Aint a Changing, Fast Enough!*), draws spectators toward signification through the sign and language that emphasizes the violent action, taking on the very existence of human being. The language of the artist is enough to guide spectators out of continual abjection, void of meaning, and into sublimation with the recognition of the remembrance of being, of human being, who comes before his name, through an altered naming, by the linguistic dialect of the artist. At this point, spectators can at least control the abject, which, according to Kristeva, "is edged with the sublime," yet "not the same moment on the journey, but the same subject and speech bring them into being" (11). In dealing with violence itself and the abject, spectators and artists alike benefit in understanding what happens with the abject and the sublime. Kristeva argues that the " 'sublime' object dissolves in the raptures of a bottomless memory," because of "remembrance" and "love" (12). Then the memory imprints the object as a radiant form of remarkable impressions, where Kristeva states we can now discern and identify the object (12). She maintains that the sublime activates an outburst of "perceptions and words" that allows memory an endless ability to unfold more memories and take us to a place where we are both "delight and loss," "both *here*, as dejects, and *there,* as others and sparkling" (12). According to her assertions about the abject, there is a fine line between the abject that has no object, but is "opposed to *I*," and the sublime

that dissolves the object into memory, which then perceives, names, and understands what is present in the dejected and what is absent in the sparkling (1, 12).

In both the Schutz and Taylor works, spectators experience the symptom of primal and secondary repression. Something other than just desire fueling the abject operates alongside abjection itself, which affects perception and memory that would lead to meaning. This something is the human will divided in both artist and spectator when viewing abjection. Not only do spectators deal with their own conflicting wills and mental reimages, but they must decode the same process for the artist, concerning violence itself and human other, to recognize why the meaning of human beingness collapses. However, imagination stays within its function of providing endless perspectives and does not alter itself when interplaying with a divided human will on the ground of abjection. Imagination does not fluctuate between the human will's multiple points of view in divisions of itself. Neither does imagination participate in trying to unify a divided will because imagination does not make adjustments for spectators and artists in order to produce an outcome. From Merleau-Ponty, we identify that it is perception, which alters itself according to both spectator and artist human will. But how do spectators cope with the many divisions of a human will that affect perception of violence itself, and thus their experience of reimaged violence, steeped in abjection?

Merleau-Ponty operates with perception from the standpoint of the human other in the field of spectator vision. He appropriately agrees with Augustine when he states: "I find myself in relation with another 'myself,' . . . From the depths of my subjectivity I see another subjectivity invested with equal rights appear, because the behavior of the other takes place within my perceptual field" (*Primacy of Perception* 17–18). According to Merleau-Ponty, perception can recapture itself through the phenomenon of body and "the body of the other—as

the bearer of symbolic behaviors and of the behavior of true reality" (18). He demarcates the

pathway of communication by acknowledging that if a lack of communication exists between

persons, it is because they do not acknowledge the "undivided being between us" (17).

Otherwise, our own human wills divide into multiple perspectives on violence itself, its effects

on the human body of beingness, and every reimage. This process, altogether, becomes a

division in the erasure of reality and a negation of being through all its associations with

"sensationalists," who maintain that "primordial communication" is mere unexplainable illusion

(17). Merleau-Ponty indicates that "intellectual consciousness" professes human involvement to

be commonplace, which prevents individuals from realizing the irrefutable, in that each of us has

multiple levels of consciousnesses (17). Without the distinguishing factor of human beingness,

without love extended toward the human other, then the divided human will is entangled within a

complex network that keeps it alienated instead of allowing its needed return to an appropriate

unity of itself for the human other.

## Conclusion

This chapter's focus on the events of human will, imagination, and perception in the

aesthetic scene of violence prepares the way for the next chapter, on the facets of the

phenomenon of violence and its multiple dimensions. We have seen how the aesthetic meanings

associated with violence and with the grotesque body in the original carnivalesque canon broke

the barrier of fear and terror, only to realize that word-meaning transmutation in a Romantic

grotesque body caused fear and terror for spectators, and thus alienated them from the human

other. We have seen violence as a condition of human existence and how the traits of violence

nurture and regenerate themselves, and then make their way into specific reimaging processes. We have seen that artist choices do matter when operating within the realm of violence itself. We have seen the various ways in which spectators can view reimaged violence, according to their own personal mental situations involving the violent event and its actions. We have seen how the abject operates with the divided human will in the aesthetic experience of violence.

Now that we can distinguish what takes place from a lived-experience perspective in the aesthetic encounter with reimaged violence, we can advance our questioning to what takes place within the dimensions of violence itself. Why is it essential that we understand the many dimensions of violence in general? How do these dimensions interact with one another in the experience of reimaged violence? How do artists operate in such dimensions of violence to attain authentic perspectives of reimaged violence and human other? How does power interplay with violence?

CHAPTER 3

AVENUE OF ESSENCE INTO THE TOPOLOGICAL SPACE OF VIOLENCE, POWER,

AND MYTH

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to recognize the space of violence, power, and myth

through the different avenues of essence in order to understand how the compositional traits of

each separate phenomenon conceal themselves through their presences and absences. As

introduced in chapter one, Arendt's "space of appearance" has the ability to cease to be known

because it cannot keep up with the changing of positions in what brings on its existence: "speech

and action" (*The Human Condition* 199). Thus, an absence of answers caused the mental event

and its space to appear as nothingness. This chapter widens the scope of the space of appearance

to that of the perspectival views of violence and of power in their social and cultural milieus that

carry over into their reimaging. Considering "essence" and "consciousness," Merleau-Ponty

delineates their authentic presence in "mythical space," while Husserl describes "arbitrary

fictions" of no mental feelings or knowledge, which require "sensory perception" (Merleau-

Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 303, 305; Husserl 42). How does this chapter build upon

what we have already learned about the cultural violence in the aesthetic experience and its

interplaying factors of human will and imagination? The layers of the aesthetic experience are

necessary in understanding that the phenomenon of imagination remains in its operative role,

even though the human will in its multiple divisions has the power to alter our perceptions of

violence and its effects on the human other. Now we come to a place where we are in sensory

perception rather than imagination, when operating within the arbitrary ground of both violence

and power, in accordance with myth and fictions, which appear not to be grounded on any network of operations. This chapter is necessary to better understand the phenomena of violence and power through the Husserlian perceptual awareness of the "different possibilities of graded clearness," or indiscernibility, where "differences belong to different dimensions" (Husserl 85).

Why is it necessary to track such dimensions through the avenue of essence? What answers must we have in place about violence in general to recognize and follow its multiple dimensions? How does the arbitrariness of violence and of fiction conceal the dimensions of violence and power in the field of perception? I first demonstrate why we follow essence by way of Husserl's elucidation of both essence and the "consciousness of an essence" in order to understand Merleau-Ponty's "emotional essence," which involves the perceptual processing of a " 'verbal image,' " rather than a simple awareness of an object without understanding the full engagement behind its activities (Husserl 42; Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception* 193, 186). However, Arendt argues that violence is without essence, due to its constant need to uphold and control its usage *(On Violence* 51). Yet, her own indirect workings of essence, which appropriately track the space of appearance of violence, operate through emotions to reach the "roots" of violence and through the consciousness of the essence of movement to find the many guises of the "instrumental" nature of violence (56, 51). I argue that her path to violence, through its roots and nature, is on middle ground between Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's ideas of essence. Next, I reveal the multiple dimensions of both visible and invisible violence from an Arendtian phenomenological lens. Then I use Benjamin's essay "Critique of Violence" as a bridge of insights in order to recognize the different facets of violence and power that splinter into further perceptual dimensions, elaborating on the confusion surrounding a lack of clarity and distinctness in Benjamin's analysis. Last, using a film as an example, I present the multiple

dimensions of violence and power that presence themselves through arbitrary fictions and through myth and show how spectators can lose sight of the phenomenal movement in the space of violence and power. Though Husserl and Merleau-Ponty do not discuss violence as a phenomenon, their insights on perception of the thing itself are critical to this chapter's purpose of recognizing the different dimensions of violence and power and their ability to hide themselves.

By the end of this chapter, we come to understand that dimensions of violence and power in their individual phenomenal traits exist and cannot be dismissed as nothingness. With each nebulous explanation of their components, new dimensions add to the confusion of both phenomena. When living human beings cannot recognize mind in its fullness of sensory perceptual understanding, the layers do not go away. They merely retreat to the multiple networks of the conscious and unconscious mind. We see that, as Merleau-Ponty describes, there are no repositories of " 'cerebral traces,' " which can pre-organize interpretations and meanings of actions or reactions (*Primacy of Perception* 4). Each behavior operates in a different fashion depending on circumstance and on the level of understanding of the different appearances of the "perceptual structure" (4). When visual ambiguity accompanies violence itself, a lack of answers about violence in general causes thinking to alter its course concerning the speech and actions from violence. Thus, individuals who struggle to maintain the movement of harmful effects on the community of human beings from the social and cultural components of violence and of power, and by recognizing those very components, find themselves already present in the reimaging process. Those who merely state that there are no proven scientific or psychological facts to support the dimensions of violence, and then proclaim that the discussion on violence and its reimage should end altogether, actually follow the very movement toward the space of

violence and power that changes its appearance into nothingness. In what ways is essence essential in acknowledging such dimensions?

## From Consciousness of Essence to Emotional Essence of Violence

The ultimate aim of the essence discussion is to recognize that essence can take on multiple appearances. The main thinkers relevant to this section—Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Arendt—take different paths toward essence, yet their views align together to reach the threshold of sensory perception. The space toward sensory perception is necessary, but it is not an easy path, as Husserl emphasizes, due to the multiple forms of essence. How then do we track essence and keep from being misguided by its various forms?

Recognizing the Husserlian consciousness of essence is essential in directing the first step toward the rightful perceptual process of essence (Husserl 42). Husserl maintains that a similar behavior or basic rule that involves our acts bring about the "pure givenness" of the essence itself (43, 44). His radical shift, in which he deviates from traditional philosophy, basically indicates that essence is always finite and happens in real time, in the sense that it is beneath the surface of our natural involvement with things. He anticipates problems in the ideas surrounding essence and consciousness by the way of arbitrary fictions (42). It is important to identify these problems now because, when describing the conflicts in the art examples on arbitrary fictions to come, we will understand the specific layers of invisible violence, present in the reimaged violence of this present era. In dealing with arbitrary fiction, there is also a danger of misconception. Husserl distinguishes why we cannot follow essence through the "lived experience of imagination," a mere mental image of an object that is not present to the senses (42).

He argues that, in imagination, we can freely presence our own idea or abstract creation of a "flute-playing centaur," according to our own desires in the mental appearance of the centaur. But he argues that such an appearance is not a connection to a "mental experiencing" of the centaur, for the centaur does not exist in the fullness of mind and senses, through an internal awareness, or in the "soul" (42). His warning is pivotal: Imagining the idea of a centaur, rather than something one knows and experiences, is merely a sudden action that results in the general idea, the consciousness of essence, rather than the essence itself (42). In distinguishing between essence and consciousness, he argues that we experience events within a "*primordial dator consciousness of an essence*," or what Wolfgang Walter Fuchs describes as the "metaphysics of presence," through an original and present non-presupposed and discernable positioning of the presence of "being" (Husserl 42; Fuchs 26). Fuchs argues: "At this point we must follow out Husserl's thought that non-presence can and must be reduced to some more primordial presence which is given in an epistemologically absolute sense, and that it is upon this that the knowledge of the absent can be founded" (26). In dealing with arbitrary fictions, we recognize the importance of the senses in determining what is absent and of a consciousness of essence to direct the correct placing for the presence of being. What types of problems arise in the misrecognition of essence?

Husserl argues that in viewing the thing itself through an "empirical consciousness" alone, one may be aware of the object present but not fully engaged, through mind and senses, with the object's active component parts (42). Thus, with a subject-object lens, spectators bypass insightful essence of numerous forms by thinking that the consciousness of the essence is essence, and thus reduce the essence itself to mere "psychological terms" (42). He argues: "In particular *essential insight is a primordial dator act*, and as such *analogous to sensory*

*perception*, and *not to imagination*" (43). It may appear that we are backtracking to imagination

again, but we are not. Instead, we go deeper into understanding the conflicts surrounding

essence, arbitrary fictions, and myth in the problematic dimensions of violence and power as

individual phenomena. Husserl emphasizes that essences and objects have connotations attached

to them, which can be correct but also incorrect, at times, as in "false geometrical thinking" (43).

Ultimately, we understand that if, in relation to the perspectival dimensions of violence and

power, we view essence through the lens of imagination rather than through a sensory perceptual

lens, we miss altogether the arbitrariness of multiple forms that may lead to false paths not only

in the religious, social, and cultural settings of violence and power, but also in their reimaging.

Husserl's account on essence and sensory perception lays the foundations for later discussions

with Merleau-Ponty and Arendt. How then do we recognize essence if it appears to take on

numerous forms?

A rightful step toward essence recognition comes from Merleau-Ponty, a pupil of

Husserl, who ultimately finds a more consistent, more compatible perceptual direction through

first observing the emotional essence of a thing instead of proceeding immediately to the essence

of any one thing (*Primacy of Perception* 21). His argument on essence in relation to perception

differs somewhat from Husserl's. However, Merleau-Ponty does not hold that essence is

secondary in importance. On the contrary, he seems to agree with Husserl in that essences do

have various forms, and he finds his own path through emotional essence. Merleau-Ponty argues:

"What is given is a route, an experience which gradually clarifies itself, which gradually rectifies

itself and proceeds by dialogue with itself and with others" (21). He works from the Husserlian

primordial dator consciousness, or the original essence in being through presence. He does so by

maintaining that we benefit in tracking the emotional essence of things in order to follow the

dialogue—not a dialogue as seen in chapter one with Socrates, but rather, a dialogue that leads to consciousness of an "absolute flow" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 477). He argues: "The absolute flow appears perspectivally to its own gaze as 'a consciousness' (or as a man or an embodied subject) because it is a field of presence—presence to itself, to others, and to the world—and because this presence throws it into the natural and cultural world from which it can be understood" (477–78). He argues that such a flow of presence takes viewers to the emotional essence of things in a " 'verbal image' " (193, 186). Why does a verbal image mark such importance?

Merleau-Ponty argues that words, and even sounds within words, are a route to describing the very being of a specific thing, as a verbal image of words only comes to mind through an emotional essence in terms of an exactness and of nonrestrictive traits separated from practical experience (*Phenomenology of Perception* 186). By focusing only on the sense experience of a thing, we avoid altogether the deduction of the essence of emotions such as wrath or sorrow, which are vital to identify in the interaction with the thing itself. Yet emotions of wrath can display a particular gesture in one culture and a different gesture in another culture. In reference to bygone civilizations, Merleau-Ponty argues that he uses his own words and actions from his culture to recognize the potential meanings of the purpose and aim in the realization of the gesture (364). Is it possible to apply both Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's take on essence to violence itself?

Oddly, Husserl's acknowledgement that the consciousness of an essence is not essence, together with Merleau-Ponty's acknowledgement of emotional essence, leads to Arendt. She learns indirectly from Husserl, in deducing her own radicalization of essence, by seeing no inner essence to violence itself, as though it were a Husserlian given object. She breaks away from

looking at violence through essences as a patterned inner core, which is always factual, even if not always known empirically. However, her study of the cultural extents in the problems of violence collaborate with, and not against, Husserl and Merleau-Ponty in her quest of finding the events within violence as a phenomenon that allow for morality to change in a seemingly instantaneous appearance. We can determine that she actually follows the emotional essence of the roots of violence and their relationship aimed specifically toward replacements. But why does she see no essence for violence itself?

Arendt's take on violence and its lack of essence comes from her focal concept—the banality of evil, or harm to the community—through an "unconscious distortion" (*Eichmann in Jerusalem* 136). She argues that such distortion allows humans to agree with whatever they demand of their views on violence and to silence any concepts of right or wrong they may have with regard to the effects of violence on the community (137). Her assessments on violence then lead her to the opinion that violence lacks essence because of its means and ends. She argues: "Violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, it always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues. And what needs justification by something else cannot be the essence of anything" (*On Violence* 51). In the end, we see that Arendt's path to revealing the phenomenon of violence diverts from Husserl's idea that we can practice fully an "eidetic reduction" into the essence of the thing's pure givenness (Husserl 137).[36] Arendt argues that violence always relies solely on agents that succeed with the tools of violence, rather than quantity of, particular consideration on, or specific attitudes and beliefs of violence (53). With no pure givenness in violence for Arendt, do Husserl's and Merleau-Ponty's theories on essence have a place in the acts of violence?

Arendt is correct in saying that imagination presences what is absent, as seen in its operative role of revealing what is present in the aesthetic experience. But now we understand that if we follow the function of imagination in viewing violence as a phenomenon, its space of its appearance in all of its perspectival depth disappears, or rather, conceals itself. But she has the foresight to trace the consciousness of essence—though knowing it is not essence itself—in the movable instrumental nature of violence to the trajectory of its many guises and through an emotional essence to its roots. We understand this path of emotional essence through her assessment that the idea that violence arises from rage is a common one for many people (*On Violence* 63). Interestingly, she follows a different route from this widely shared line of argument by maintaining that rage can be "irrational and pathological," as all human emotions have the potential to be (63). She substantiates her claim by acknowledging that certain "conditions," such as "concentration camps, torture, [and] famine" cause the erasure of human qualities and human dignity (63). However, she maintains that people themselves do not "become animal-like" (63). Instead, she argues that, under such dehumanizing conditions, the obvious nonexistence of rage in the face of violence without justice is equated with the most distinctive sign of the bestiality of the human individual (63). According to Arendt, the fact that humans are not brought to rage in opposing such macabre conditions of the human other clearly demarcates an absence of justifiable rage, which thus allows these conditions to continue. Though not without considerable criticism from academia, she acknowledges that situations occur, in both public and private life, where only a prompt violent action, perhaps, can reasonably correct and restore the very violence at hand (63).[37]

Yet, for Arendt, it is not the rationality of emotions but their irrationality, the lack of provocation toward emotions, that marks the "perversion of feeling" (64). She argues that "rage

and violence turn irrational only when they are directed against substitutes" (64). Her argument

on aggression compared with substitutes leads back to sensory perception. She argues in

opposition to suggestions from psychiatry and polemology that aggression release improves

when using alternatives in alignment with rage and violence (64).[38] She maintains that

irrationality presences itself when replacements come into the picture with violence, and results

in peculiar dispositions and "unreflecting attitudes" on violence itself within a greater portion of

the community (64). From Arendtian analyses, we can appropriately recognize that she ends up

applying the same traits of Merleau-Ponty's emotional essence to track the emotions of language,

gesture, and behavior, which lead to the roots underneath violence itself. Her pairing of the

emotion of rage with violence, in its rationality and irrationality, requires careful direction in the

line of questioning in reimaged violence. But how do Arendt's views on emotion and violence

relate to the effect on the consciousness of emotions in the perceptual experience of an arbitrary

fiction in video games?

<center>Sensory Perception of the Emotional Essence in Reimaged Violence</center>

Neither Arendt nor Merleau-Ponty discuss the specific genre of violent videogaming. But

Arendt's conclusions on violence and Merleau-Ponty's on perception are beneficial in assessing

the ongoing and controversial discussions about violent videogaming. Arendt's argument (rage

pitted against substitutes is irrational) warrants the sensory perceptual lens from Merleau-

Ponty—his profound awareness of perceptual behavior and the perceiving living being. He

demonstrates how perception, grounded in a known experience, maintains the connection of

meaningful awareness between a living being and its social and cultural activities—but not as an

"automatic machine" requiring external assistance to activate its many parts (*Primacy of*

*Perception* 4). In connection to Arendt's line of argument, he continues to argue: "And it is

equally clear that one does not account for the facts by superimposing a pure, contemplative consciousness on a thinglike body" (4). He outlines the most powerful factors from sensory perceptual events that take place behind perceptual behavior and the perceiving organism, using both body and mind (4). Here, we must keep in the forefront that, for Merleau-Ponty, body is sensory perception, and in that body, as mind and sense, is "thought" that questions all potential objects of personal encounter (22). He agrees with the idea that body is "thought, which *feels* itself rather than *sees* itself," pursues the capacity to think but not own thought, and to express, once again, the qualities of itself through the concurrence of known existence and sensible judgments, which are free from external controls (22).[39] It is essential to note four key Merleau-Pontian characterizations of both body, as perceiving organism, and perceptual behavior, in order to apply them, with skillful judgment, to the sensory perception necessary for the reimaged video-game violence to follow.

In his first point, Merleau-Ponty argues: "In the conditions of life—if not in the laboratory—the organism is less sensitive to certain isolated physical and chemical agents than to the constellation which they form and to the whole situation which they define" (4). His argument that humans are less sensitive to particular representations of body and mind is the connecting link to Arendt's notions of the irrationality in the inability to be moved, with regard to rage and violence and their engagement with replacements. His second point marks a foundational factor on behavior, where a genuine realization of self, or of the consciousness of a situation with multiple activities, goes missing (4). He argues: "Behaviors reveal a sort of prospective activity in the organism, as if it were oriented toward the meaning of certain elementary situations, as if it entertained familiar relations with them, as if there were an '*a priori* of the organism,' privileged conducts and laws of internal equilibrium which predisposed

the organism to certain relations with its milieu" (4). In the social and cultural activities of the

human being, Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on the "as if," carries the most profound perceptual

insights toward meaning, familiarity, innateness versus experience, and their inclined attitudes,

actions, or conditions of behavior. His third argument states: "High-order behaviors give a new

meaning to the life of the organism, but the mind here disposes of only a limited freedom; it

needs simpler activities in order to stabilize itself in durable institutions and to realize itself truly

as mind" (4). High-order behaviors, when not presented with all the necessary elementary

situational factors, result in an unstabilized and unrecognizable self. Last, he argues: "Perceptual

behavior emerges from these relations to a situation and to an environment which are not the

workings of a pure, knowing subject" (4). With these essential arguments in place, application of

Merleau-Ponty's insights to an example of reimaged violence collaborate with the possible

reasons why Arendt disagrees with the notion that aggression release improves when violence

and rage are aligned against substitutes.

In relation to violent video games, some studies claim that continued interaction with

action role-playing violence actually causes acts of violence toward society. Simultaneously,

other studies of that same origin indicate a positive aggression release through the act of murder

on what Merleau-Ponty calls a thing-like body.[40] We may ask: How do two opposing

conclusions derive from the same interaction with the simulation of reimaged violence of artist

choice? Intellectually, we tend to agree with one side or the other. Then, in our everyday

distractions, we perhaps give no more thought to its importance, or merely allow, as Arendt

indicates, the slumber of common sense where matters of violence, specifically aligned to

substitutes, are concerned. What should take place in this instance is a change in our line of

questioning. It is not enough to question only rage or aggression from violence—such as the

overgeneralization that, if videogaming violence is harmful, then all who participate in that expression of violence will murder other people. Such a statement is merely a logical fallacy. Instead, we should question how these substitutes can cause a dysfunction of emotions that are not always externally evident. Merleau-Ponty correctly focuses on less sensitivity toward isolated representations. From him, we can deduce that the player of the violent video games— including, but not limited to games on military combat violence—has less sensitivity toward both the physical representations of the body and the chemical reaction of the brain during the act of killing a thinglike body-substitute. The patterns of related violence and the overall defined situation of the game itself then become secondary to the player and even to the general public. Thus, increased insensitivity toward killing even a substitute can cause an inability to be moved and can lead to the absence of the expected emotion toward such an act of violence, regardless of the designated game situations. How can simulated violence against substitutes cause violent acts toward the real world of human beings?

In applying Merleau-Ponty's argument that behaviors expose potential activities in the human organism, the "as if" becomes noteworthy when applied to reimaged video violence. The "as if" exposes some players to a future with violence, making this probable or likely to occur when applied to recognizable situations in their environment. How can we be sure? A theoretical deduction of a violent situation, as opposed to actual experience with violence, can guide the behavior of perceiving organisms, "as if" familiar, "as if" innate in their attitudes, and "as if" acquainted with their actions and certain conditions. The "as if" is the ground of arbitrary fictions. There is no mental experiencing of combat battle except for those for whom the games were intended—for the military alone, for teaching purposes, and not for public viewing, which military experts deemed inappropriate at the time such games were introduced for public

viewing.[41] What exactly takes place in the sensory experience of violence in such an arbitrary world of fictions?

From Merleau-Ponty's insights, we can rightly infer that in the APM—actions per minute of the situational video violence—the human players see different meanings to violence inside the video world because the mind cannot stabilize thought or appropriate emotional behavior in a situation of violence that has no mental experiencing, except to those with authentic military combat experience. Players with no mental experiencing of such violence operate in arbitrary fictions, and thus in the arbitrary layers of violence, because the mind has restricted freedoms in recognizing itself. In searching for clarity, their minds, the chemical agents of their brains, seek and reach toward a simpler appearance in the activities of character involvement. Thus, they *see*, but they may not *perceive*, because they do not feel themselves in the entirety of the situational violence, with its real-world realities. In the midst of the irrationality of emotion in killing one thinglike body after another per minute, the mind of a video-game player, with no real experience of military combat, has a much less likely chance of realizing what the mind is experiencing in its unstable condition. Such players do not have verifiable knowledge, and the logical emotions from such a situation do not converge with the mind and senses of players, and they cannot recapture themselves. What are the defining characteristics of a stabilized mind?

The mind can reasonably consider what takes place under conditions of perceptual behaviors. If one kills another thinglike body or substitute, it is still in the arbitrary act of killing. If there is a purging of emotion during violent acts of arbitrary fictions, then the mind cannot function in the fullness of mind and senses. To such a mind as this, eliminating a substitute in a video game may appear "as if" it is the same action in real life, with no obvious results or consequences. Thus, there is no full realization that taking a real gun, in a real-life situation, to

shoot another human being for the momentary goal of achieving an object, can forever terminate that life and that this comes with grave, lifelong consequences of a domino effect upon all those involved.[42] The risks are too costly for human beings if we fail to question the full spectrum of emotional essence in the phenomenon of both violence and power in its reimage and the needed grounding of sensory perception. The risks are too great if we fail to question the irrationality of emotions coming from the cultural and social world of violence, and thus from their presence in the experience of the arbitrary fictions of violence.

By contrast, finding such answers to the visual world of violence lies in a continual return to the phenomenal views of violence and power in their social and cultural contexts in order to understand that participants of gaming violence have their own unique set of problems. Merleau-Ponty indicates that the "visible space" consists of their own methods of seeing others around them, in feeling through their own behaviors toward the world around them, and that, with some, "morbid variations" are exposed (*Phenomenology of Perception* 300). Understanding the different ways that violence can function helps those who view reimaged violence not only see the numerous roles of operation in both visible and invisible violence, but recognize Husserl's applicable line of argument in that the lack of clarity or distinction of violence itself creates different perceptual dimensions of violence, which then complicate both perception and violence. Violence itself is paradoxical because it is both visible and invisible. We can recognize violent blows because of the obvious action before us. However, we find difficulty in readily recognizing what lies beneath these concrete visible acts or in understanding the many components that nurture invisible violence. Invisible violence transforms a common act into an invisible act of emotional violence and, in turn, strips individuals of their human dignity. For example, laughter and certain body gestures can transform themselves into invisible acts of

verbal abuse, along with coerced isolation, which all constitute an emotional violence. Such acts are difficult to recognize because of the deception taking place before us. These layers are still present internally even when directed against substitutes.

But on her journey of following the emotional essence of the roots of violence and the consciousness of essence on the means—the instruments of implementation—of violence, Arendt discovers why it is so difficult to reach the layers of violence. When particular opinions from experts assess that reimaged violence is cathartic in relation to aggression, we must question what tools of violence in our society feed the different traits of violence on social and cultural levels to experience such catharsis. We must question what has placed us on the irrational ground of violence itself. Merleau-Ponty maintains that we cannot obtain all the facts from a thinglike body alone. Since he does not directly confront the phenomenon of violence, then following his suggestion of a continual return to the thing-itself can take us to the necessary perceptual components of knowledge and actions, if comprehended through the proper lenses. Are we continually going back to violence as a phenomenon with perspectival layers and questioning its problematic ground, which ultimately must be addressed in the sensory experience of violence?

<center>Dimensions of Violence and of Power</center>

Covering the issue of violence as a phenomenon and questioning the types of violence, together with their functions, is also a matter of questioning the types of violence that spectators view perceptually in an image. Arendt addresses the capriciousness of violence, which makes people believe that it has no basis of design or structure but only possesses unlimited power by

law, or even by God, in situational control (*On Violence* 8). Such deceptive power, which allows

violence to seem clear and evident to all, demands a cumulative approach toward its dimensional

layers. By examining violence as a perceptual phenomenon, in lieu of a different approach, one

might be tempted to look at images containing the content of violence as an assumed objective

issue. Instead, we benefit by first working through the dimensions of violence and its multiple

perceptions in order to understand the ways in which violence conceals its dimensions. By

broadening the essence terrain in following violence, we frame the reimage focus of violence

through more of a perspectival lens in order to solve the riddle behind violence itself that allows

our common sense to sleep with regard to real-time violence and its indistinctive dimensions,

which expand even further with every unclear or obscure reimage. While covering the more

hidden factors behind the phenomenon of violence, it may seem as though we are branching off

too far from our focus of the reimaged violence-perception relation. However, we need to realize

that when either violence or power is present, the other is absent in an unseen sense, yet present

in its full dimensions. How can we be assured of such an absent presence? Merleau-Ponty

describes a simplistic but profound absent presence in the reflection of the cypress trees on the

water in order to clarify such a phenomenological event.[43] If we do not get to these invisible

dimensions of violence and of power, then this study would fail to uncover the traits from both

phenomena, present in reimaged violence, which then allows for a spectator or an artist to have a

limited scope of perception toward the space of violence and of power. Such dimension extends

even as far when violence is presented as fiction, with seemingly no foundational ideas or

structures. In other words, one can acknowledge that violence itself may have dimensions but

argue that such dimensions mean nothing perceptually in their visual presentation of violence.

Setting in place these dimensions provide necessary and crucial evidence for the examples of reimaged violence in this chapter.

In outlining this section, we question what the "additional element of arbitrariness" is that "violence harbors within itself," according to Arendt (*On Violence* 4). Indirectly and perhaps inadvertently, Arendt outlines the invisible space behind violence that takes place beneath the abstract components of power in connection to the appearance of the many guises of violence (*On Violence* 52). She addresses the factors that contribute to the arbitrariness of violence. Through the example of a modern-day superhero film, we see such layers of violence that Arendt describes and question in what ways fiction has its own arbitrariness, according to Husserl's recognition of arbitrary fictions (43). Such indistinctions point back to the lack of mental experience of humans with superhuman strength, as in Greek mythology. Perceptually, we understand when, where, and how fiction becomes arbitrary when dealing with vast dimensions of violence and of power. In what ways do violence and power hide themselves in their multiple dimensions?

One path of concealment amasses itself through a philosophical misperception of opposites and of what appears to be good. Arendt argues that people who know nothing of G. W. F. Hegel and Karl Marx believe in the same philosophical concept of the control of negation: The two thinkers, she explains, believe that opposites do not omit each other but easily blend into one another, because, they uphold, inconsistencies advance progress rather than stifle it (*On Violence* 56). Through the light of phenomena, Arendt reliably argues that recognizing the oppositional states of violence and power—whereby one completely controls the situation, while the other disappears in concealing its presence—proves that they do not blend effortlessly into one another as an immovable, concealed "good" (56). Yet, many people still hold onto the notion

that violence and nonviolence are opposites and blend together as a covert good in order, according to Arendt, to "inspire hope and dispel fear—a treacherous hope used to dispel legitimate fears" (56). How then do we trace the movement of violence as a concealed good in the space of violence and of power in hidden dimensions?

Arendt covers the abstract traits of violence in their unpredictability. In following her abstractions, we can determine six separate dimensions. First, there exists a possibility of "justifiable" violence (53). Second, violence will at no time be "legitimate" (53). Third, extended violence that takes place from the present moment and then continues, loses credibility. Fourth, violence used in "self-defense" goes unquestioned, due to the immediate peril, and where "the end to justify the means is immediate" (53). Fifth, violence can eradicate power. And sixth, the weapon of violence ("barrel of a gun") demands immediate and complete compliance (53). However, she emphasizes that power cannot develop from the barrel of a gun. In other words, power operates on more obscure levels than that of a physical weapon.

In differentiating the dimensions of power, Arendt argues: "Power needs no justification, being inherent in the very existence of political communities; what it does need is legitimacy" (52). She then clarifies that power appears when individuals gather and perform the same activities (52). Yet she is clear, in that power's legitimacy stems from the first gathering, rather than from any group behaviors, functions, or results (52). Arendt argues that when power's legitimacy is disputed, then power always reverts to "past" actions so as to support itself, whereas she states that "justification relates to an end that lies in the future" (52). Last, she upholds that with loss of power violence comes to the forefront (53). But she argues that terror is different from violence, in that terror presences when violence does not renounce itself and then dominates the situation entirely (55). She argues that the intended results of terror rely almost

completely on the extent and depth of societal factions (55). In Figure 1, I demonstrate the dimensional traits from the Arendtian theory of violence and power, which accurately prove to be opposites but cannot evolve from the same source.
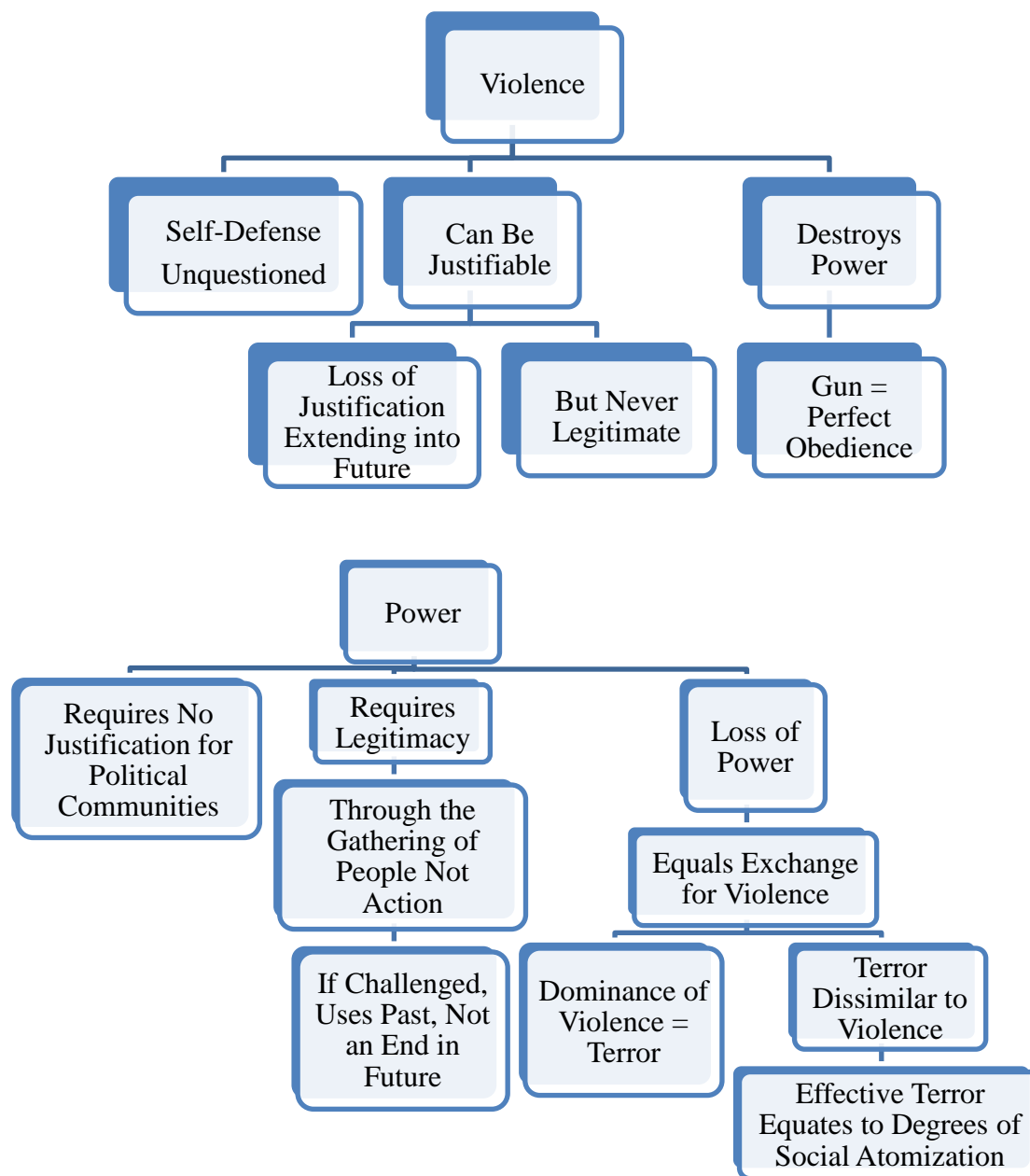
Figure 1. Dimensional Traits from Arendtian Theory of Violence and Power as Opposites.

What dimensions of violence and power are present in reimaged fiction that takes on social views in current-event issues, such as violence against nature and thus power over nature and humankind? What do spectators and artists experience within such perceptual dimensions when fiction blends real-world issues in a reversal of roles, wherein the villain prevails as hero, rather than superhero? Critics such as Dan Schindel rightly question the "dissonance" when villains appear to protect current world conditions as opposed to superheroes, whose primary role is to defend the status quo.[44]

Understanding what spectators experience in the reimaged violence of superheroes and villains in the film *Infinity War* means first understanding the dimensions of violence and power present in world-wide current events. If we apply Arendt's ideas, we note that spectators, unknowingly for the most part, experience multiple dimensions of violence. First, the superheroes' fight against the proposed villains—Thanos and his entourage—presences the dimension of an unquestionable self-defense on the part of the superheroes, which then allows for the presence of the dimension of violence as justifiable. Next, the battlefield scene with the superhero Vision takes place on the grounds of a religious cathedral, which in turn, presences the dimension from Arendt that, even though violence may be justifiable at times, it is never legitimate. The dimension of the loss of justification appears because violence extends well into the future. The legitimacy for the superheroes' power creates a dimension through the gathering of people and not their actions. But spectators are thrust into yet another dimension when Dr. Strange challenges the legitimacy of Thanos's power, as a "prophet who wants to murder millions."[45] Thanos refers to the past when trying to legitimize overpopulation as the culprit in destroying the universes, in that there were "too many mouths," and he boasts, "I predicted what came to pass."[46] Yet, the superheroes offer very little resistance to him through speech, by not

presenting the argument that overconsumption is the real culprit.[47] Lack of resistance from the superheroes allows for an exchange of violence on one dimension that leads spectators to another dimension of terror, with the dominance of violence from Thanos and his followers. The superheroes who possess the remaining infinity stones, Vision and Time, relinquish their power to the dominance of violence from Thanos. By the end of the film, spectators, unknowingly for the most part, operate in the dimensions of terror that turn to massacre. Finally, terror produces the result Thanos desires, and he is successful, according to the levels of societal factions in which the superheroes participate. The dimensions of power then eventually provide the more perplexing levels of concealment for spectators who now experience unclear and indistinct dimensions of both violence and power because of a reversal of roles in villain and superhero. In Figure 2, I illustrate visually the different dimensions in which both spectator and artist operate.
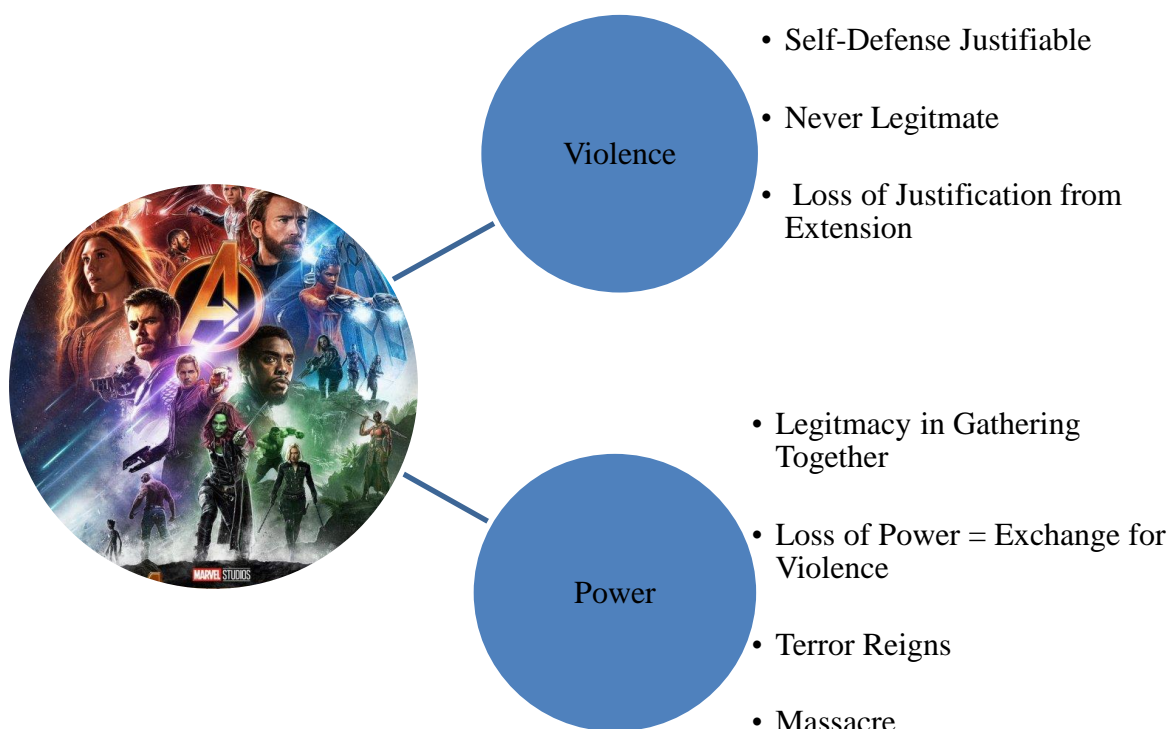


Figure 2. Dimensions of Violence and Power of Spectator Experience with Villain Prevailing over Superheroes.

What message do spectators grapple with, given the indistinct levels of violence, power, and terror, galvanized through arbitrary fictions? The political message behind the violence of Thanos sends a blurred message to spectators. Thanos falsely believes that his claim of overpopulation not only justifies his right to murder whomever he pleases in order to "save" the universes, but that it will legitimize his murderous deeds, when, in actuality, legitimacy can only come, to either side, through the gathering of people. Thus, a new dimension, of violence as legitimate, presences for spectators when Thanos himself attempts to legitimize his violence deeds, as the only path for the universes. This new dimension conceals the insights in Arendt's argument that violence can never be legitimate: Violence can be unjustifiable, illogical with spurious conclusions, and is against principles and standards.

Thanos's terror is effective on two dimensions: (1) violence does not renounce itself; and (2) Thanos preys on the weakness of others caught in the degrees of their own societal fragmentation, or in what Arendt calls "social atomization" (55). Spectators can understand such a level by the last acts of Thanos in the visible, disintegrating fragmentation of the people he is destroying—while professing to "save" them—since he himself fragmentizes and is then shown alive at the end of the movie. Did he destroy or did he save those who were fragmentized? Spectators cannot be certain, and so they continue in the intense splintering of dimensions of power, violence, and terror of fast-paced action. In Figure 3 below, I illustrate the active movement in the presencing dimensions of both violence and power from Thanos.

**Violence**
- No Renouncement and Terror Reigns
- Terror Effective by Societal Factions
- Justifies Self-Defence against Overpopulation

**Power**
- Legitmate Only in the Gathering of His Followers
- Inverts Legitimacy in Violence as Logical Solution
- Questioned but References Past as Legtimate
- Claimed Power Not Actualized from Empty Words and Brutal Deeds
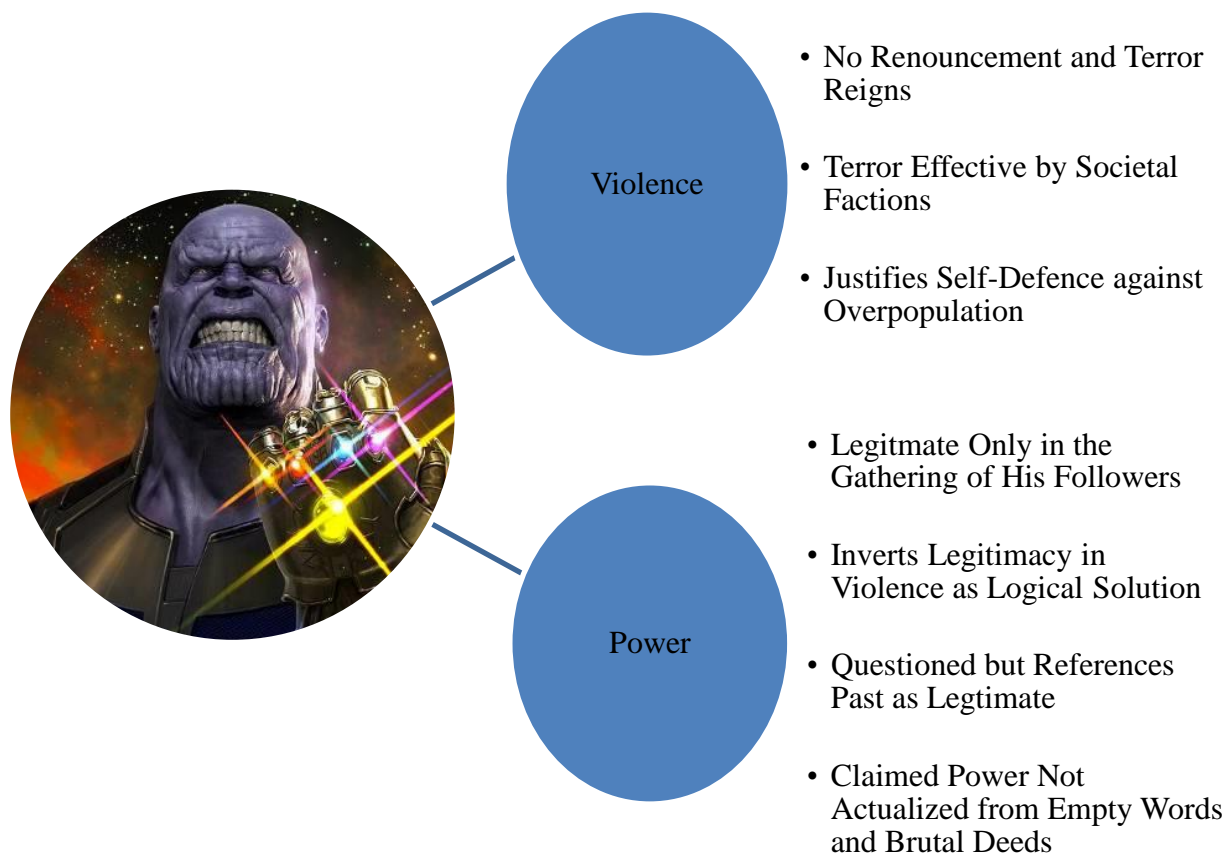
Figure 3. Dimensions of Violence and Power in the Role Reversal of Villain as Superhero.

In not following the movement in the space of violence and power, the dimensions disappear from conscious understanding but not from unconscious keeping. These dimensions do not go away. They merely conceal themselves within the vast webbings of the conscious and unconscious mind, where no place exists, as Merleau-Ponty indicates, that can pre-organize such perceptual actions or reactions. Instead, each behavior operates differently, depending on certain conditions and on the level of perceiving the diverse appearances of perceptual structures (*Primacy of Perception* 4). Up to this point, we have covered the dimensions of violence and power, but we have not demonstrated how they hide themselves, as an immovable good. How do we trace such covert layers?

Perhaps the crux of the problem of understanding the most deceptive ways violence and power hide themselves in everyday life, as well as in their reimaging, is found in their guises and their ability to mask themselves, as "strength," "force," and "authority," when both phenomena move into the same presence (Arendt, *On Violence* 44, 52). Arendt argues that power and violence are clearly separate phenomena, which typically presence side by side, but when considered together, power is the first and foremost contributing element (52). Her argument, stated earlier, that power cannot cultivate itself from the weapon of violence, clearly indicates that the complications of not only tracking the dimensions of power but of tracing their differing facets of misperceived presences are the most dangerous, as in the hidden portion of an iceberg. Given her argument that violence has no essence, Arendt understands the importance of following an emotional essence in tracking the roots of violence. We can now recognize that Arendt follows an essence of motion (pursuing the shifting places or positions) in order to recognize the concealed guises of the phenomena of violence and power. How do we follow an essence of motion in the constant movement between violence and power that allows both phenomena to appear as strength, force, or authority?

Arendt first traces such appearances through strength. She argues: "*Strength* unequivocally designates something in the singular, an individual entity; it is the property inherent in an object or person and belongs to its character, which may prove itself in relation to other things or persons, but is essentially independent of them" (44). She continues to argue that, in relation to its power, a group innately renounces individual autonomy or the conditions of one's own strength (44). The singularity of strength as an entity, with a relational but independent presence of characteristics to person or thing, marks not only the importance of understanding this place of strength but of recognizing the very instant that the originating group

of power moves. Then power itself disappears from our presence (44). In other words, such a movement does not erase power from the picture but merely conceals the movement of power to its manifold dimensions. Perceptually, people struggle to recognize the dimensional guises of power and of violence they contend with momentarily. Arendt argues that, "phenomenologically, [violence] is close to" the qualities of strength (46). Because of the instrumental nature of violence, and its ability to conceal itself in the intention of increasing "natural strength," she maintains that the "tools" of violence can then substitute violence into the role of natural strength (46). She indicates that force, together with strength, is another interchanging guise for violence, since force is misused in the likeness of expression with violence itself, particularly if violence acts "as a means of coercion," rather than the meaning of force in its intended usage, as the forces of situational matters or of contending with nature itself (45). Thus, recognition of the guises violence takes on in its movement as strength and force is critical in understanding how we deal with the equivalent basis of power in its concealed presence of appearance alongside violence. What are evident structural dimensions of concealed power from social and cultural traits?

According to Arendt, power's habitual abuse can be protected by the guise of a "personal authority," as when a mother or father embodies harmful or injurious authority or a ranked system of government engages in maltreatment through its offices, or a religious establishment, through a minister or "priest," commits an assault against another and demands "unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey" (45). She states that when authority is lost, due to abuse or mistreatment of the authoritative role, then respect no longer remains present for that particular individual being or agency (45). She argues: "The greatest enemy of authority, therefore, is contempt, and the surest way to undermine it is laughter" (45). In Figure 4, I

illustrate Arendtian thought on the ways in which violence and power can take on the guises of strength, force, and power.

**Power as Authority and Strength**

**Violence as Strength and Force**

Power Appears in the Guise of Authority

Authority Demands Unquestioning Recognition

Violence Appears as Prerequisite of Power

Power Foremost in Appearance with Violence

Individual Entity Relates Traits in Object, Person but Is Independent of Them

Implements Violence as Substitute for Strength

Force Wrongly Synonymous with Violence

Figure 4. Arendtian Invisible Traits and Dimensions of Violence as Power and as Strength.

Here we recognize why Arendt directs our thinking to power as the opposite of violence and not to allow violence to appear as a prerequisite of power. Even though they appear in concert, violence and power, or even authority, are dissimilar from one another (47). Yet, she argues that in an authentic world circumstance, violence, strength, power, authority, and force never fully fit into "watertight compartments" (46). This realization from Arendt is critical. In real-world circumstances, violence, force, and strength, together with power and authority, spill over from their own categories, causing more indistinctions, and confounding our ability to recognize the

categories, which, in turn, allow violence to appear as a hidden good. If such spillage takes place during the actual event, then the same indistinctions and misrecognitions emerge in the viewing of reimaged violence of arbitrary fiction that takes on the indistinctiveness of real-world problems. How do some spectators reach the point of assuming that Thanos and all his acts are necessary and a hidden good?

According to Husserl, things can be processed through perception and kept in the mind but can, at a later time, be acknowledged as " 'real' " (*Ideas* 43). Such an understanding of the mind is concerning, when considering violence and its opposite power, as an immovable and concealed good. Following an emotional essence toward the verbal image of both power and violence is critical in understanding their movement toward a seemingly concealed good. Arendt argues: "Power is actualized only where word and deed have not parted company, where words are not empty and deeds not brutal, where words are not used to veil intentions but to disclose realities, and deeds are not used to violate and destroy but to establish relations and create new realities" (*The Human Condition* 200). But such words and deeds, as Arendt describes, are absent in the religious and philosophical rhetoric from Ebony Maw, a conspicuous member of the aliens who work for Thanos. His words—"I Am"; "Choose a side or die. One side is resurrection"; "Hear me and rejoice"; and "To what end" —conceal the realities of brutal violence and hide motivational aims that lie adjacent to the murderous deeds of a villain. Yet Thanos has more power than the superheroes. [48] Is it because he obtained the power infinity stone? Spectators cannot be sure, because we are not in a clearly fictitious world, because of the real-world problem of climate change that this villain now enters.[49] Thanos tends to appear as good, at times, not only because of the parallelism of religious rhetorical analogies but also because of the believability of his compassion toward a stepdaughter. In the end, he knows that

to get what he desires (his version of saving the universes through terror), he must sacrifice her—and he does, stating that it was worth losing everything.

The dimension of violence as a concealed good should be a red flag for spectators, not only because the fiction-constructing consciousness now enters into altered actions that can appear real because they reference real-world opinions, but also because, as Arendt indicates, a treacherous hope has been dispelled to calm the legitimate fear of violence as immovable and good.

## Benjamin's Mythological and Divine Violence

One might argue that Arendt is incorrect in her views of violence and power as opposites and take the stance of a more typical view: that violence is on one side of the coin and nonviolence on the other. Why are different comparisons of violence important for the perceptual views of essence and the dimensions of violence and power that operate in the arbitrariness of myth? The purpose for referring to Walter Benjamin's arguments in his "Critique of Violence" is not merely to introduce more theory around his own objectives in critiquing violence. His criterion for violence actually assists spectators in a twofold way: Recognizing the contradictory ground of legitimizing revolutionary violence; and recognizing the problematic dimensions that stem from Benjamin's incomplete analysis in proving his argument clearly and distinctly through his critique on violence and power. He establishes his overall argument on the "question of the justification of certain means that constitute violence," according to "the positive theory of law," as due to positive law's ability to function in the types of violence separate from their usage and specific circumstances, or means and ends (279). He draws from mythology in order to

demonstrate the hidden wrongs within law and the tainting of law by human ideologies that make law favorable toward particular human perspectives. But in so doing, Benjamin follows a misdirection of consciousness to fall within the very arbitrariness of violence itself, which he desires to expose but cannot escape.

Husserl's applicability to this section is twofold: first, through "ideation," a fashioning of images, not as object but in the "presentation of the essence," as the "consciousness of the object" (Fuchs 25); and, second, through "*eidos*," the "new object," as the "originating act of consciousness," through sense perception and through "dimensions of knowledge" (23, 25). Typically, one would not pair critical theory from Benjamin with Husserl's phenomenology, but both reveal insights into the perceptual arbitrariness of fiction. Merleau-Ponty is critical in disclosing the placement of essence in myth, in "mythical space" and in "mythical consciousness" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 298, 305). Benjamin operates not only in the arbitrariness of violence in his radical evaluation of it, but also in the arbitrariness of consciousness in the space of myth. How do Benjamin's evaluations add a broader scope than Arendt's views of the nebulous layers of violence and power as phenomena?

Benjamin begins his critique on violence by placing the "nature of violence" in "positive law," exterior to "positive legal philosophy" and "natural law" (279). In looking at both violence and power, he establishes "sanctioned," or mythical, violence as law through the opinions of human beings, while he places "unsanctioned," or divine, violence in the hands of God, as the pathway out of the means of law from direct opinion (279, 297). Benjamin sets in place five dimensional components by arguing that mythical violence, on the one hand, is "lawmaking, "sets boundaries," instigates immediate "guilt and retribution," "threatens," and is "bloody power" (297). He then provides their seemingly binary oppositions, in divine violence, which is

"law-destroying," "destroys boundaries," advances atonement, attacks through action and not merely words, and "is lethal without spilling blood" (297). In relation to power, he argues: "Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it" (297). Benjamin ultimately determines that mythical violence is identifiable, unless there is no path of comparison through similarity or circumstance, while sovereign violence is "pernicious" overall, because of its insidious destruction (300). It is important to mark these foundational categories and their differing traits now, and, for the chapters to come, to recognize how Benjamin, in effect, misreads the phenomenon of violence, with a preconceived notion about the phenomenon of violence, in order to understand the extent of social and cultural milieus and their influence on the numerous misconceptions of violence itself, and thus, its reimage. In Figure 6 (below), I illustrate Benjamin's synthesis of deception that derives from two oppositional factions of violence (law versus God), in order to demonstrate the dimensions of violence and power that accrue from Benjamin's language.

Distinguishable if Comparable

Mythical Violence

Pernicious

Law-Making

Bloody Power over Life for Own Sake

Executive, Law-Preserving, Administrative Violence that Supports Mythical Violence

Sets Boundaries

Guilt and Retribution

Threaterns

Demands Sacrifice

Ultimately Pernicious

Divine Violence

Law-Destroying

Pure Power over Life for Sake of Living

Destroys Boundaries

Amends, Expiates

Attacks in Action Not Words

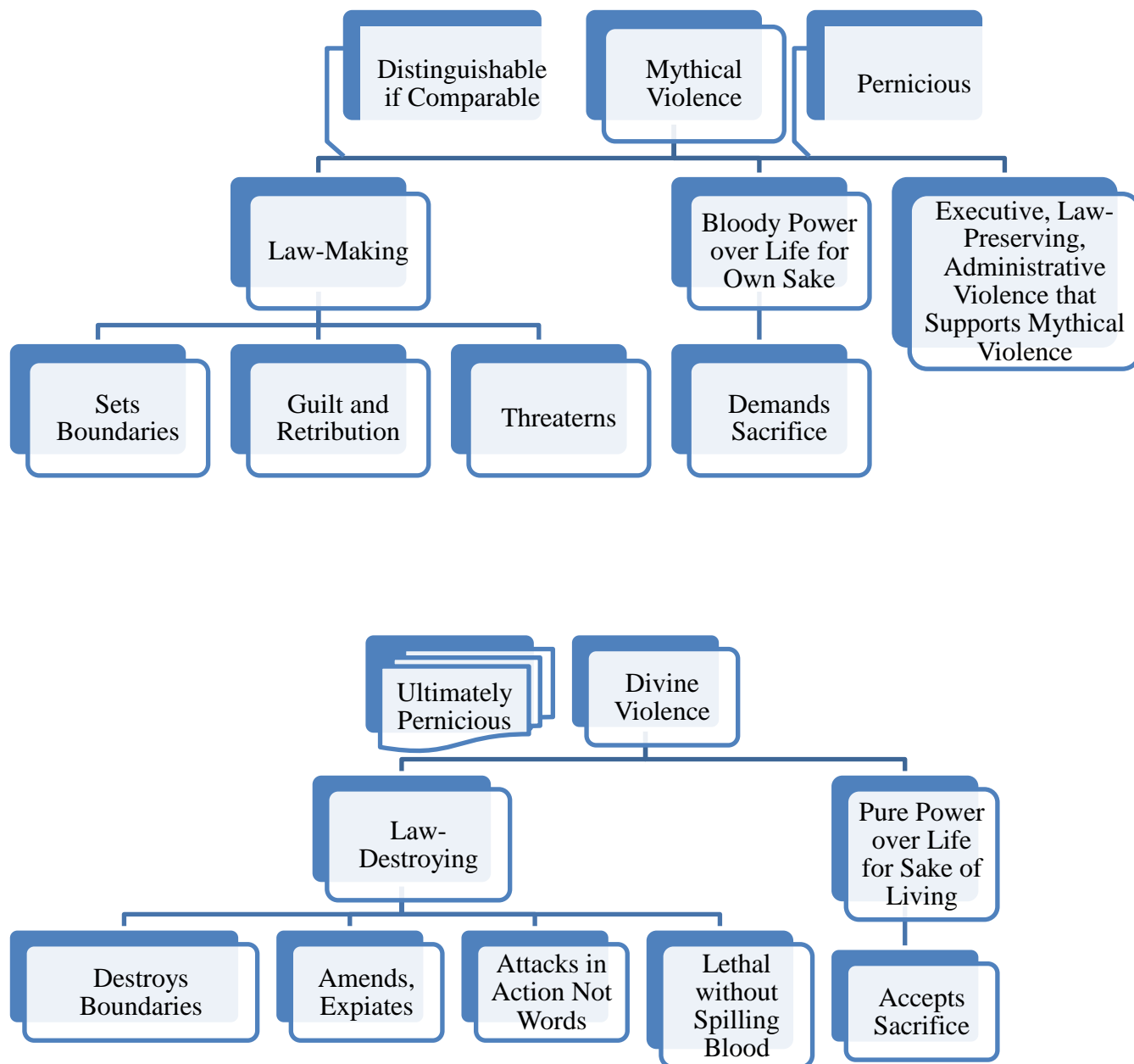Lethal without Spilling Blood

Accepts Sacrifice

Figure 6. Comparison of Dimensions in Benjamin's Mythical Violence and Power with Divine Violence and Power.

What are the steps in recognizing Benjamin's analysis on the legitimate and illegitimate factors in the function of violence itself? We must ask this question, because it is essential to distinguish such dimensions as foundational now, for the purpose of this chapter on understanding the arbitrary space of violence, power, myth, and fictions, but also for the purposes to come in further chapters on the importance of differentiating violence itself.

Another level of conflicting ground for Benjamin comes through his attempt, first, to legitimize revolutionary violence, as opposing law-making violence, or mythical violence, by constructing five different categories of violence and their individual functions and implementations. He draws from Georges Sorel's argument of two types of strikes in relation to class struggles—those of violence and those of nonviolence: The "political general strike," where the government of a country or region remains strong because power goes from one group of privileged to all being privileged in the role alteration of "master"; and the "proletarian general strike," which has the singular aim of terminating "state power" (Benjamin 291). Benjamin continues to argue that the privilege of the strike against the state in relation to labor workers is not that of an acceptable adherence to violence but a pathway outside of violence that takes the workers from the type of violence not obviously clear from their establishment (281). However, he acknowledges that the reasons for violence come through the method of "extortion," whether intentional or not, should the guilty party cease improper actions only for the appearance of amending the problems and in the end does nothing about them at all (281–82). As a result, he argues, the workers will always think they have the right to use force, and the state will always think it possesses the same right to abolish such rights (282). He eventually concludes: "But if the existence of violence outside the law, as pure immediate violence, is

assured, this furnishes the proof that revolutionary violence, the highest manifestation of unalloyed violence by man, is possible, and by what means" (300).

Second, regarding revolutionary violence, unalloyed violence is pure, immediate violence that places Benjamin on problematic ground in defending revolutionary violence as legitimate. He does not appear to argue against unalloyed violence but merely acknowledges its ambiguity. He argues: "Less possible and also less urgent for humankind, however, is to decide when unalloyed violence has been realized in particular cases" (300). Third, concerning police violence, he maintains that this category of violence has a range of elements with phantomlike features of violence, such as is present in the "death penalty": "violence for legal ends (in the right of disposition), but with the simultaneous authority to decide these ends itself within wide limits (in the right of decree)" (286). He continues to argue that police violence falls under the lawmaking functional traits—not in exposing law as an official proclamation but in its reciprocal attachment to the ends of legal preservation of decisions from the governing state (286–87). He states: "Its power is formless, like its nowhere tangible, all-pervasive, ghostly presence in the life of civilized states" (287). Fourth, in relation to militaristic violence, he argues: "If, therefore, conclusions can be drawn from military violence, as being primordial and paradigmatic of all violence used for natural ends, there is inherent in all such violence a lawmaking character" (283). According to Benjamin, such conclusions are due to the obligations of military violence to uphold the appearance of a violence, applicable in all cases to protect the legal intentions of the governing state, unlike the function of knowledge in reasonable, circumstantial ends (284).

Fifth, he argues: "In the great criminal this violence [with lawmaking character] confronts the law with the threat of declaring a new law, a threat that even today, despite its impotence, in important instances horrifies the public as it did in primeval times. The state,

however, fears this violence simply for its lawmaking character" (283). He upholds that the great

criminal "has aroused the secret admiration of the public," not because of the actual act of

violence on the criminal's part, but from the lawmaking actions of violence by the state, which

the public understands (281). He concludes that the violence of his lawmaking era desires to

eradicate individuality, but even if the state were to succeed in such a hostile action, the masses

would still side, in contradiction, with lawmaking and law-preserving violence (281). With each

different characteristic trait of Benjamin's critique, a schism of perceptual dimensions presence

themselves. In Figure 7 (below), I illustrate the five components of violence and their multiple

dimensional traits, based on Benjaminian descriptions.
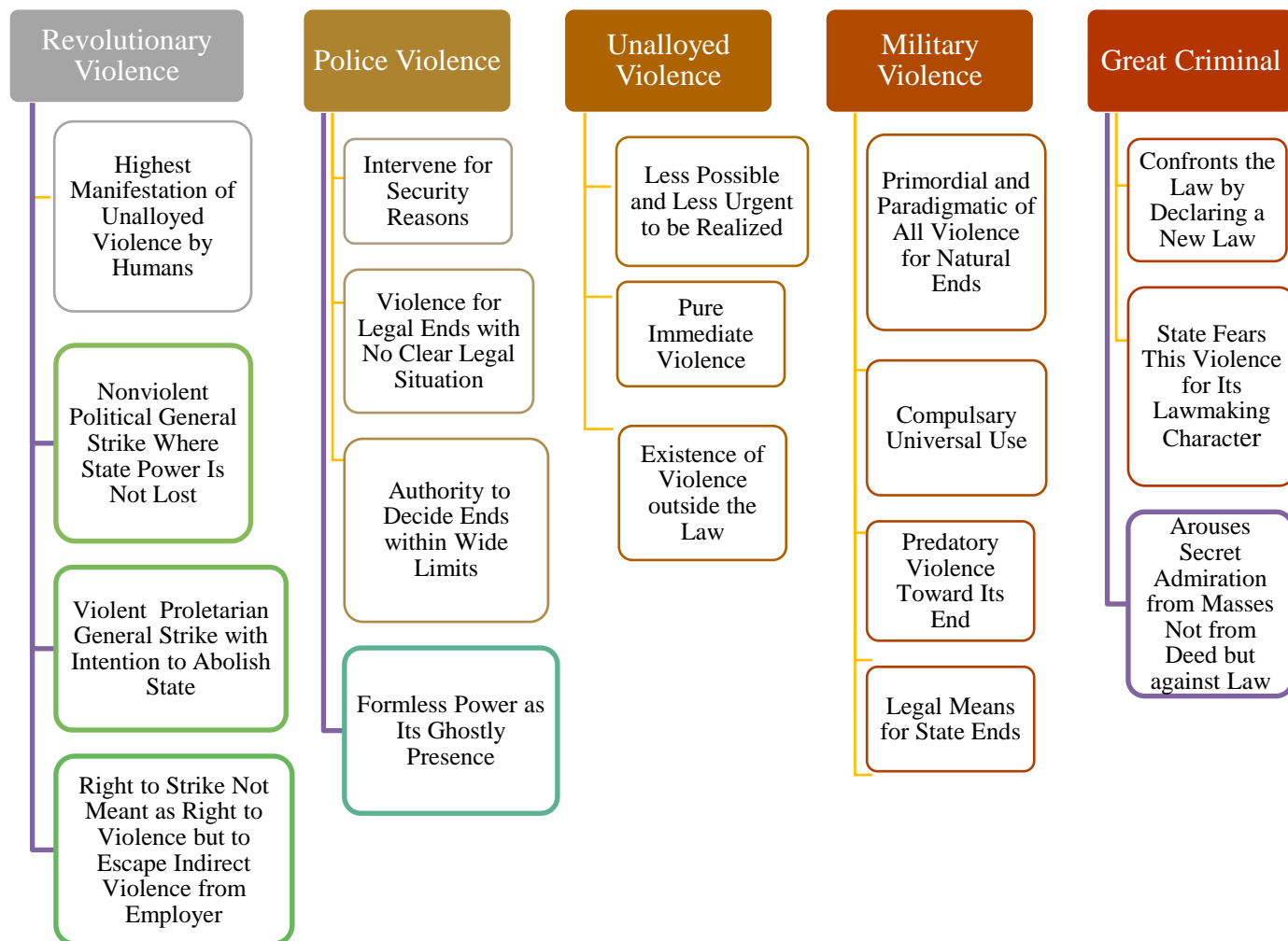
Figure 7. Illustrated Chart of the Benjaminian Dimensions of Violence and Functions.

However, according to his critics, Benjamin's "Critique of Violence" is not only troublesome but misleading in its unsubstantiated arguments on divine violence—what Benjamin himself calls pernicious.[50] In her article "The Distinction between Mythic and Divine Violence," Alison Ross indicates that such discrepancies allow for recent critics to reach conclusions from Benjamin that are in opposition to the very concepts of violence he attempts to indicate, and thus eliminate. She states: "Instead of analyzing the means-end schema, these critics reinterpret its components so that a 'means' without any definite 'end' is the goal of Benjamin's analysis" (101). Ross argues

that such a modification leads critics to explore divine violence and recognize it in uncommon

situations (101). One such opinion is that "pure violence 'is' nonviolence," and still another view

articulates that "there is no alternative 'outside' " of "pure means" (102, 108).[51] Ross upholds

that these opinions do not accurately reflect Benjamin's intentions, though she does agree that

Benjamin fails to indicate a clear and discrete difference between mythical violence and divine

violence; and, in the process of determining the distinction between such categories of violence,

he creates examples that are "more mysterious" (99). Phenomenologically, we can draw from the

Husserlian idea to determine what actually takes place perceptually in this circumstance. Not

only does each differing opinion from Benjamin have its own dimension in itself, but each new,

dissimilar opinion from critics, given the ambiguity of Benjamin's critique, adds a new layer of

dimensions splintering off from mythological and divine violence. How then do the dimensions

from Benjamin, and those created by his misconstructed analysis, demonstrate the confused

intermingling for the spectator or the designing artist of the reimaged violence of real-world

conflicts?

Spectators are within the components of revolutionary violence, since both superheroes

and villains are in the dimensions of what Benjamin calls the highest degree of the manifestation

of unalloyed violence. Thanos presences the dimension of the violent intention to abolish the

state, or, in his case, the residing authority of every universe. Though Benjamin argues that

revolutionary violence is outside of law or mythical violence, he does not intend for the violence,

which he says is understandable, to be a *right* to violence. Thanos, in his own mind of murdering

for mercy to preserve the universes, actually operates in the dimensions of what some recent

critics indicate—that violence is nonviolence—as Benjamin's intention for divine violence.

Spectators then experience the dimensions of unalloyed violence, which is, according to

Benjamin, less possible and less urgent to be realized. They are in the dimensions of total and

instant violence within the existence of violence outside the law—or, in this situation, the state of

affairs. But unalloyed violence is ambiguous even for Benjamin, as he attempts to argue that

revolutionary violence is closest to divine violence and untainted by human influence. Moreover,

spectators also have to deal with the dimensions of the great criminal in relation to Thanos.

Thanos confronts the existing state of affairs by declaring a new status quo of overpopulation,

which he uses to justify the slaughter of peoples, for the sake of the so-called redeeming of the

universes. The superheroes are also those who fear the violence of Thanos because of his ability,

with the infinity stone of power, to make new proclamations while destroying the existing one.

Finally, spectators have to contend with the dimension of the arousal of secret admiration for the

villain Thanos—who operates in the current-world event of climate change—given their

assumption that Thanos may even be correct, but they do so without full knowledge and insight

about a current-world situation. What are the perceptual consequences in such dimensions of

violence and power in real-world conflicts set against the backdrop of myth and arbitrary

fictions?

Perhaps even more concerning, dimensions presence for spectators through Benjamin's

own indistinctions of mythical and divine violence, as a perversion takes place that guides

spectators toward a mental mismanagement of false assessments, from mythical violence of

bloody power in demanding sacrifice to divine violence of pure power. On the one hand, the

superheroes, who are to protect and defend humanity—a more divine violence—actually fall into

the category of mythical violence. Such a place is not where spectators anticipate superheroes to

be, since Benjamin argues against mythical violence as being unfair, with laws made according

to opinions. Also, in the mythical violence dimensions, Thanos demands sacrifice from both

superheroes and all who are against him in his fight for the infinity stones. He sets boundaries, plus he instigates guilt and retribution through his view of world overpopulation. On the other hand, both sides of this conflict overflow into dimensions of divine violence, whether villain or superhero. Though Thanos creates boundaries, he causes confusion for spectators, when in the dimension of divine violence, by destroying boundaries and law during his murderous hunt. As villain, Thanos appears in the dimensions of divine violence with pure power when he accepts the sacrifice of killing the one person for whom he possessed love.

In the midst of spectator confusion, the dimensions of the indistinctive divine violence presence. Thanos redresses what is unjust in his particular crimes to what is just in them, indicating that his violence purges sins. He boasts that he is the "only one with a will to act . . . a small price to pay for salvation," or for the purging of sins against the universes. Dr. Strange also moves back and forth, from mythical to divine violence, by accepting sacrifice, in that he believes that relinquishing the time stone was the only way, but he leaves the spectators in a state of ambiguity, having to guess why relinquishing the stone was the only way, and the only way to what? What purpose can such an act uphold? Spectators and designing artists alike experience the potential for the same ambiguity in not being able to distinguish between the dimensions or components of mythical violence and divine violence that Benjamin experiences in his own critique. Even Benjamin cannot keep up with the movement in the space of violence and power. In Figure 8 (below), I indicate the overflow of traits from the Benjaminian dimensions of mythical and divine violence, wherein spectators are left confused and having to contend with a conundrum. Thus, they experience dual dimensions of blended tracks, in which they cannot distinguish origin.

Divine Violence and Mythical Violence

Ambiguous Blending of Traits

Demands Sacrifice

Pure Power over Life for Sake of Living

Destroys Boundaries

Accepts Sacrifice

Bloody Power over Life for Own Sake

Figure 8. Amalgamation of Traits from Mythical and Divine Violence
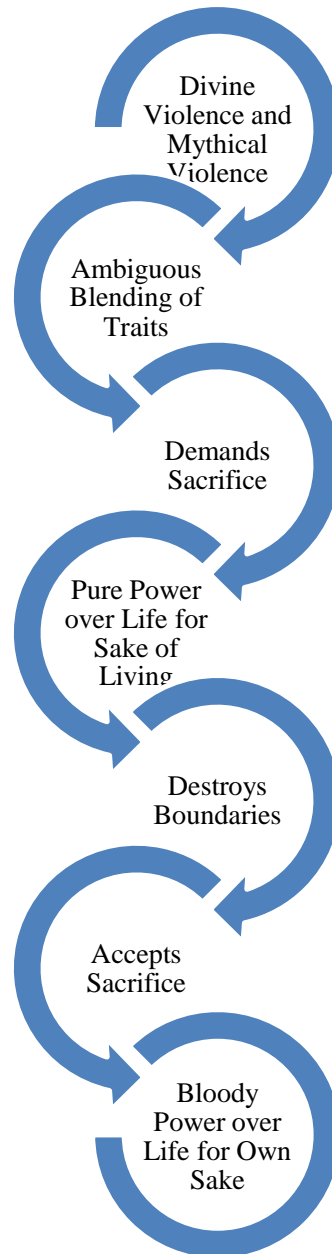
Where does Benjamin go wrong in creating such confusion in his placement of violence and power in the mythical arena? To explicate his views of violence and what he thinks makes revolutionary violence legitimate, Benjamin is not operating in the sensory perception of myth, but instead in the imagination of myth. We understand this from Merleau-Ponty, who builds on

the foundation of Husserl's fiction-constructing consciousness. Merleau-Ponty states that imaginations of myth authentically house specific information, or even image awareness—not in the realization of an idea or belief, but rather, toward human existence (298). As indicated earlier, the function of imagination is "re-presentation" and is a "modified act of consciousness" because consciousness relies solely on imagination for things that have no mental experience (Fuchs 23, Husserl 43). But modified acts of consciousness cannot presence original existence to any of their acquired objects (Fuchs 23). As a result of following imagination and not sensory perception, Benjamin loses the defining characteristic of violence in its phenomenal space because ideation is not in its operative function of presenting the essence of myth—the very source of which he intends to foster insightful awareness of the events behind what he chooses to call mythical violence of abusive laws from humans. But how does the essence of myth connect to ideation that leads the space of violence?

We find answers in Merleau-Ponty on the placement of essence in myth, in "mythical space," and in "mythical consciousness" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 298, 305). He builds upon and further clarifies Husserl's foundational argument that myth—fantasy—can help explain the phenomenon of essence. Merleau-Ponty argues: "The myth fits the essence *into* the appearance; the mythical phenomenon is not a representation, but a genuine presence. The demon of the rain is present in each drop that falls after the incantation, just as the soul is present in each part of the body" (303). He continues to argue that such a presence is not that we perceive the objects we desire, as in Comte's claim of "intuitions" or "consciousness as an object," but through the human lens that something is understood as the very moment of its fundamental meaning (303). He states: "In the dream, as in the myth, we learn *where* the phenomenon is located by sensing [*en éprouvant*] what our desire moves toward, what strikes

fear in our hearts, and upon what our life depends" (298). He maintains that through "natural geometry" or "natural judgment," myths travel to the place of meaning through the all-encompassing results suggested by the symbols of meaning only through the "perceptual experience" (268–69). Benjamin begins the movement toward the perceptual experience of the phenomenon of violence through his desire to reveal a type of violence that is visible, and yet invisible, and this does indeed raise fear in him with the realization that lives depend upon the understanding of what is happening behind the legal violence of his era. In applying Merleau-Pontian thought, Benjamin loses clarity about violence as a phenomenon in two ways: (1) He loses the consciousness of violence as a phenomenon, when he cannot fashion images of the presentation of essence, the ideation; and (2) The *eidos* of both violence and myth—their preexisting consciousnesses—is missing because Benjamin is in an imagination lens and is not fully engaged in sensory perception in the space of mythical consciousness on objective ground that cannot distinguish the e, which now hide the human condition. At what point does Benjamin lose sight of such a consciousness in relation to myth and thus to violence?

Merleau-Ponty argues: "Mythical or dreamlike consciousness, madness, and perception, despite all their differences, are not self-enclosed; they are not islands of experience without any communication and from which one cannot escape" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 305). Rather, he upholds that, within the consciousness of myth, there lies an area of potential purposes or silhouettes that help define forms (305). But he emphasizes that "mythical consciousness is not a consciousness of a thing," because consciousness of a thing falls into the arena of subject (305). Since consciousness of a thing is on subjective ground, Merleau-Ponty argues that, if on objective ground, mythical consciousness will not position objects before itself by defining behaviors or conditions that connect to one another (306). Instead, he maintains that mythical

consciousness constitutes a "flow," without concentration or awareness of itself, and without entering into any movements toward emotions, beliefs, or plan of action (305–6).

In placing his critique inside the parameter of mythical consciousness to explain the world of violence around him, Benjamin settles upon the ground of predeveloped reason, which Merleau-Ponty warns against. Merleau-Ponty insists that when we do not protect mythical consciousness from "premature rationalizations," then the myth is impossible for us to understand, due to the misconception that we can find in myth elucidation of "the world and an anticipation of science" (306). He argues that we can only view myth through the perceptual estimation of "existence and an expression of the human condition" (306). According to Merleau-Ponty, awareness of the mythical space is not saying that the myth is authentic, but it is placing ourselves in the "phenomenology of spirit" that reveals its operative workings by connecting to our self-consciousnesses, as does awareness for a "philosopher" (306). The moment that Benjamin opens a mythical space but follows pragmatic experience, or a psychological reduction only, of violence from others around him and his own intuitions of violence, he is outside of the sensory perceptual experience of the phenomenological spirit. Therefore, he cannot follow ideation through to the point of presencing essence in myth that would lead him to the new object, the eidos, the original act of consciousness in violence itself; and thus, the space of violence and essence become clouded. However, Ross argues that in his later thought, Benjamin writes about the functional qualities of myth, and, in a later writing on Goethe, clarifies what he could not define in his first critique on mythical violence juxtaposed with divine violence.[52] From Benjamin, we understand that the perceptual experience itself has complex layers and can follow misdirected paths in its search for authentic perception of violence itself. The arbitrariness of violence and of power, and of myth and fictions, all add

difficult layers of dimensional components to the experience of reimaged violence. The placement of essence and the consciousness of essence directs the appropriate placement of being and then works together through sensory perception to presence what is absent in the milieus that surround phenomena, which conceals phenomena's field of visible space.

## Conclusion

Once we acknowledge that the same phenomenal dimensions of violence and of power are pregnant with social and cultural influences in reimaged violence, are we then asking the correct questions about the space of vision when violence itself continues to appear as a concealed good? If the perceptual experience has the potential to guide people down misleading paths, are we posing the right questions about the phenomenal field itself, to understand what takes place in its dimensional space? Are we inquiring properly about the placement of being in relation to the perceptual experience of violence in the phenomenal field? These pertinent questions prepare us for taking what we have learned on the dimensional space of violence and of power in this chapter to gain a clearer view of what events take place in the dimensions of the phenomenal field itself.

CHAPTER 4

VULNERABILITIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS UNDER THE GAZES OF THE PHENOMENAL

FIELD

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to understand what takes place behind the many facets of

consciousness under perceptual and ontological gazes in the "phenomenal field" and their

interactions with appearance and being in the specific dimensions of the "founding," or

"*Fundierung*," which houses "time, the unreflective, fact, language, [and] perception"

(*Phenomenology of Perception* 61, 414). [53] In order to complete this specific phenomenal path

toward the structure of knowing, understanding ontological being in its fullness through

Emmanuel Lévinas's "asymmetrical intersubjectivity" is essential because it boldly and rightly

addresses the ontological routes of the human other through the "overflowing in this play of

lights" (*Entre nous* 105; *Totality and Infinity* 27). Although the phenomenal field of distinction

does not concern the phenomena of image and of violence in their proper sense, it matters

because this ground demonstrates more of the inner workings of meaning for perception and

ontology in relation to mental images. Such connective meaning is why I insist that the

phenomenon of the gaze cannot be bypassed or ignored, since this is the field where spectators

experience the overflowing play of lights, which drive thought toward its highest apex. I

demonstrate that such a play of lights is the intermingling of perceptual and ontological gazes in

order to highlight *how* the events behind time and language affect the consciousness of

appearance and being through a cycle of words that go before acts of violence. I define the

perceptual gaze, according to Merleau-Ponty, as prior "acts of seeing" from ourselves or from

agents who recognize the events behind time and language and pass messages on to the other in need of them; and the ontological gaze as the Lévinasian "traces" that point to the human other (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 72; Lévinas, "Trace of the Other" 355, *Entre Nous* 3). This chapter is necessary because it is in the arena of the phenomenal field that we experience violence and its paradox; its social and cultural events; its manifold mental images, fashioned by each individual; and the lights of phenomenology, which rely on both perception and ontology to clarify their operational functions in the field of human experience.

I argue that if individuals do not experience a continuous flow through all the paths in the founding of the phenomenal field, then they detach themselves from present consciousness and remove themselves from knowing how the facets of time and language operate behind the many consciousnesses connected to acts of violence. As a result, they cannot assess these acts through both past and present consciousnesses in their proper places because they misperceive fact and reason in relation to language and time. In this case, the cogito has the power to negate the unreflected vistas of appearance and ontological being. But through application of the Merleau-Pontian "new cogito," recognition of appearance and being in their phenomenal states can track the many layers of consciousness behind social discourses to identify linguistic realities and their underlying situational motives (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 310). Such a cogito recognizes when the phenomenal field changes into a "transcendental field" of lived experience (61). Merleau-Ponty argues: "If the past and the world exist, then they must have a theoretical immanence—they can only be what I see behind myself and around myself—and an actual transcendence—they exist in my life before appearing as objects of my explicit acts" (381). Phenomenology is always looking at the conditions of possibility for meaning and knowledge in real-time lived experience. This chapter is a transcendental project in that regard.

However, phenomenology is not first of all an ethics, in relation to Lévinas, who is foremost an ethics thinker. But I try to show how the transcendental project in its fullest scope of awareness and the ethics project need to be seen as converging if we are to work out violence and its eventual reimage. Otherwise, we treat the issue of violence—in both the everyday experience of the social world and the aesthetic experience—too narrowly.

How then do we process the facets of time in their workings toward immanence and transcendence? What unseen traits of consciousness need to be realized in order to understand the dimensions of time that include a language, which can lead to acts of violence? What kind of interplay between mental images and their gazes do spectators experience in the dimensions of the phenomenal field? Why is the overflow in the play of lights essential for a "humanity of consciousness," which is driven by an accountability that understands the asymmetry of being and of consciousness? (*Entre Nous* 112) First, I briefly cover Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the facets in the phenomenal field in order to understand a visual of its many components and their network of functions. Then I focus on the dimensions of time and its "paradox" in order to understand the dual-path connection of "thought and perception" in dealing with past acts of violence through a present consciousness that "takes up or lives time and merges with the cohesion of a life" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 383, 414, 446). Next, through an intertextual dialogue of "thought and language" between Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas, I address the "cogito" to indicate how a "silent consciousness" surrounds the word "sense" of language (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 414, 424, 425). Then I demonstrate how the language of violent ideologies can lead to acts of violence through a "null and void cogito" of a "necrological discourse," where something other resides behind an individual's consciousness (Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 25). Last, I present the relation between the "reflected and the unreflected" within the

phenomenological light of perceptual acts of seeing and the ontological traces that indicate the

varying levels of consciousness and their mental images of contradictions (Merleau-Ponty,

*Phenomenology of Perception* 414; Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 3). By the end, we will see, from both

Lévinas and Merleau-Ponty that each individual is interlinked with time—as a "dimension of our

being" and the social world as a "dimension of existence"—through a discourse, rooted in time

(Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 438, 379). The overflowing interplay of gazes

illuminate time underneath the subject to rejoin it with the paradoxes of time, world, body,

violence, and human other, not through absolute thought of absolute knowledge of self and the

human other, but in knowing the events behind the vulnerabilities of consciousness, appearance,

and being that interconnect to the paradox of violence.[54]


### The Network of the Phenomenal Field and Its Problematic Ground of Time

Merleau-Ponty argues that the phenomenal field tries to prevent its activities from their

full array of exposure, due to the multiple ways that appearance, being, and consciousness can

carry unclear meanings (*Phenomenology of Perception* 61, 65). Because the phenomenal field is

not a tidy compartmental ground, realizing its network is vital in recognizing how and where

perception can lead into the fullness of the phenomena of appearance and of being, and then

precisely where and how perception can fail. Part of this networking includes the workings of the

perceptual gaze with the ontological gaze as its counterpart. This section first identifies the

components of the phenomenal field to understand their overall functions but focuses primarily

on the facets of time, where the gazes of perception are instrumental in propelling a continuous

flow through the dimensions of the phenomenal field toward the awakening of thought to

perception and its ultimate aim of providing light for thought toward the phenomenal

appearances of the fullness of being. And yet the perceptual gaze is restricted by the limits of the

"human gaze," in that an individual can only see one portion of an "object," an event, but never

the full extent of the entire object (72). The journey through the phenomenal field can cease, due

to the gestation of ambiguities. Merleau-Ponty argues: "My gaze can only be compared with

previous acts of seeing or with the acts of seeing accomplished by others through the

intermediary of time and language" (72). Thus, it is imperative to understand how the

perceptual gaze operates within the dimensions of time through the lived experience of

social and cultural violence. How then is time defined?

According to Merleau-Ponty: "Time understood broadly, that is, the order of coexistences

as much as the order of successions, is a milieu to which one can only gain access and that one

can only understand by occupying a situation within it, and by grasping it as a whole through the

horizons of this situation" (347). Time, then, is a sequential order of situational coexistences to

be understood as a unit and entered through outlooks or interests with both strengths and

limitations. Thus, time is a critical factor in considering appearance, being, and the manifold

traits of consciousness in their connections to the images of social and cultural violence in the

field of experience. Why should individuals understand the facets and operative functions of the

phenomenal field itself?

Merleau-Ponty indicates the sequence of transcendence to emphasize that, even though

transcendence takes place in the midst of the confused and equivocal life, it allows for a larger

lens for understanding thought and recognizing the clearest meanings and interconnections

behind events when the phenomenal field converts to a transcendental field (*Phenomenology of

Perception* 65, 382). He argues: "The process of making explicit that had revealed the lived

world beneath the objective world is pursued with regard to the lived world itself and reveals the transcendental field beneath the phenomenal field" (61). Merleau-Ponty stresses that psychology is important in understanding the phenomenal field; but it is "phenomenological psychology" that acknowledges the awareness of where and why the phenomenal field chances into a transcendental field (59). Such a transcendental field abides and functions within lived-experience and through a consciousness that recognizes more than a single region of being (59). This type of consciousness can question the totality of life conditions and their realities (60).

> In setting the foundation of the facets in the phenomenal field, he argues:
>
> The fundamental philosophical act would thus be to return to the lived world beneath the objective world (since in this lived world we will be able to understand the law as much as the limits of the objective world); it would be to give back to the thing its concrete physiognomy, to the organisms their proper manner of dealing with the world, and to subjectivity its historical inherence. . . . (*Phenomenology of Perception* 57)

Such a philosophical act regains insights of phenomena—levels of lived experience in how people and situations first appear to us—and recovers awareness of every purpose for perception in its role of presenting vision (57). In Figure 1, I illustrate the Merleau-Pontian descriptive ground in the dimensions of the phenomenal field and where the perceptual and ontological gazes move throughout its facets. Though the diagram illustrates these compartments, the facets themselves incorporate subtle ways of clarifying interaction between all dimensions, because deception is rife in this field of experience. These components provide the tools of discussions for the entire chapter. But how do the events of this field connect to the phenomenon of violence? When individuals grasp the basic functions of each facet in the

phenomenal field, they understand more clearly how the perceptual and ontological gazes illuminate the features of thought that will delineate all the components in the founding—where the dimensions of time and language are critical in understanding violence itself. As a result, appearance and being, as separate phenomena, then propel spectators toward their fullest regions: appearance as vistas of experience; of being as existence and entities; and of the paradoxical countenances of violence itself.
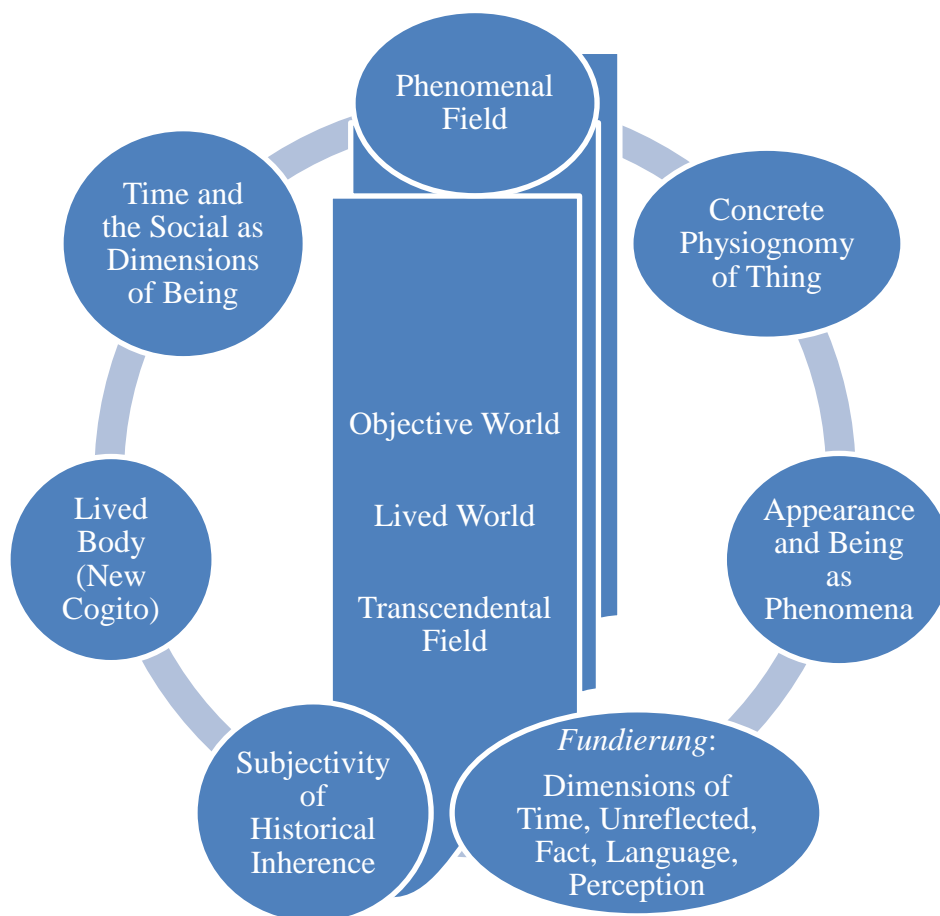


Figure 1. Merleau-Pontian Dimensions of the Phenomenal Field.

On the ground of the phenomenal field, the objective world includes "objective thought"—"thought applied to the universe and not to phenomena"—and "objective time,"

which moves and presences piece by piece (*Phenomenology of Perception* 427, 50, 348).

Beneath the objective world is the lived world, with the transcendental world below it. Merleau-Ponty maintains that the lived world understands the law and limits of the objective world and, to some degree, an falsely construed consciousness can also recognize this even though it lacks or simplifies experience (57). He warns that a serious problem intensifies when such a consciousness merges with the belief that the objective world is an unknown or a misunderstood field of obscurities (59). It is important to note here that the connection of the world and the social realm to each individual goes deeper than what is perceptually evident and is more penetrative than even the capacity for sensible and wise decision making or assessment of opinions (379). He argues: "Thus, we must rediscover the social world, after the natural world, not as an object or a sum of objects, but as the permanent field or dimension of existence: I can certainly turn away from the social world, but I cannot cease to be situated in relation to it" (379). Ontological traces, in all their facets and movements, exist in the social world: Individuals can ignore such movements but cannot remove themselves from the layers of existence within the social world of cultural violence and injustices. Drawing from Merleau-Ponty, the social preexists our knowledge of it, well before any examination or perceiving takes place, for the social is present as a mute and tacit allurement (379). As further evidence, he says: "It is just as false to place us within society like an object in the midst of other objects, as it is to put society in us as an object of thought, and the error on both sides consists in treating the social as an object" (379). It is in the error of dealing with the social as an object that provides specific answers for how thinking functions behind the events of perceptual and ontological gazes and where they go unnoticed in connection to acts of violence and the eventual reimage of such acts. Yet Merleau-Ponty claims that the lived world in its proper sphere exposes the transcendental

field and provides not only the thing itself with its actual physiognomy but facilitates the appropriate measures essential for subjectivity to realize its historical inherence or authenticity of a lived present (57, 348).

For Merleau-Ponty, the lived body is the path of experience, which regains awareness of phenomena—the initial level of knowledge and distinct qualities learned from life events. The lived body is devoid of boundaries in the inner workings of just and unbiased individuals with a "subjectivity" steeped in historical inherence (56, 57). He argues: "The thing and the world only exist as lived by me, or as lived by subjects like me, since they are the interlocking of our perspectives; but they also transcend all perspectives because this interlocking is temporal and incomplete" (349). Merleau-Ponty is clear that the interlacing of the relations of time to the inconclusive makes the world appear to have unnoticed or missing features that live outside of humans, yet these relations still exist and exceed the human ground of vision as the past they lived before their present (349). Therefore, it is crucial to connect to a subjectivity that recognizes historical inherence: a type of configuration of the mind in relation to one who views the past from a lived present perspective. He states: "Objective time, which flows by and exists part by part, would not even be suspected if it were not enveloped by an historical time that is projected from the living present toward a past and toward a future" (348). Historical inherence can then be defined as innately connecting the relationship of the "knowing-body" to the living body with a living present that directs the past to its horizon of hope—the future (431). As a result, a knowing, living body of historical inherence exposes objective time—linked to violence and its natural components of instrumentality and function—to propel a full-throttle interaction of thought between both the gazes of the perceptual and the ontological in the arena of *Fundierung*.

Merleau-Ponty outlines the exposure of knowledgeable awareness that will point to its connective motifs: "The relation between reason and fact, between eternity and time, just like the relations between reflection and the unreflected, between thought and language, or between thought and perception, is the two-way relation that phenomenology has called *Fundierung* [founding]" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 414). To be clear, Merleau-Ponty argues that thought can never be absolute, "taking itself as its object" or to "eliminate the opacity of thought but only to push it to a higher level" (416-17). In application to acts of violence, this dimension gathers motifs of transcendence between the relation of thought toward the gaze of the perceptual and the lived experience of the gaze of various traces in the ontological: (1) through the unreflected of thought toward time in relation to violence itself; (2) of the unreflected of thought toward a language that leads to acts of violence or that subdues both acts and violence itself; (3) and of the unreflected of thought toward fact and reason in order to expose the paradox of violence. The events in this dimension are vital for the highest awareness of appearance and of being as separate phenomena.

On appearance, Merleau-Ponty argues that people cannot consider appearance and reality as one (310). Neither can they say appearance and reality are separate, because then there would be no consciousness of either (310). This statement is key when applied to reimaging and reproducing acts of violence that are inseparable from social and cultural layers. How do we process this concept in relation to the phenomenon of violence? When individuals merge the appearance of violence and reality, or state that each is separate, then both the appearance and the reality of violence are canceled, because they can no longer recognize the phenomenal appearances of the violence itself and thus lose sight of the realities of cultural violence and their

motives in the social world. How is the paradox of time understood in its full dimensions in order to regain sight of these realities?

Merleau-Ponty argues: "Since time is the dimension according to which events drive each other from existence, it is also the dimension according to which each one receives an inalienable place. To say that an event *takes place* is to say that it will always be true that it has taken place" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 413). Herein lies the paradox of time: Every present act must place itself beside the past true or false act for its inalienable, or unchanged, position. He continues: "Each present that happens drives into time like a wedge and lays a claim to eternity. Eternity is not a separate order beyond time, it is the atmosphere of time" (414). Borrowing a term from Proust, Merleau-Ponty indicates that humans are on the top edge looking down on a "pyramid of the past"; and if they do not understand the past and its rightful place, they follow an abnormal and persistent thinking of the past, as deeply observed recollections of the entire event through the lens of objective thought—thought as the entirety of one's own universe—rather than thought through phenomenal events from the new cogito (413). The pyramid of the past includes the paradox of time. Merleau-Ponty concludes that if people remove themselves from these dimensions, then they do not have a lived present but merely exist in the original patterns of a developmental past (413). He argues that time, in its emergence and early development, is not in the form of an idea or belief about time, and neither is it a fixed purpose of information or understanding of time itself, since time is an extension of being (438). Thus, it is in the atmosphere of time that perceptual truth of evidences and the essence of each moment will establish the powerful components of their paradoxes. How then do we avoid the pitfalls of absolute truth?

Merleau-Ponty suggests that the indication of current errors is to say mistakes are always true, in that they took place and were incorrect thought (414). However, true thought stays in both present and past dimensions but does not differentiate "truths of fact and truths of reason" (414). Every truth in act, as in every error in act, operates as a needed progression toward a greater totality of perceptual truth (414). He says, "My truths have been constructed with these errors and draw them along in their eternity" (414). He continues to pique interest: "Thus, every truth of fact is a truth of reason, and every truth of reason is a truth of fact" (414). His intention with this rhetorical chiasmus is to show that we can make judgments on the inquiry into proofs by delineating their realities (415). In other words, a truth of fact from a particular situation reveals the error in reasoning, and is etched within eternity—the atmosphere of time—next to that particular circumstance. The evidentness of fact equates to the reasoning of these actualities within that specific event of that historical era. But because truths—proven evidence of actualities—come with the same paradoxical connection as perception does, Merleau-Ponty is convinced that human beings can never detect all reasoning behind every truth or existence (415). It is never absolute truth that is sought here, because he holds that "there is a forum of opinion that is not a provisional forum of knowledge, destined to be replaced by absolute knowledge" (416). In other words, both the qualitative and the quantitative are situated in experience and considered. Neither absolute knowledge nor absolute thought is the ultimate goal, because individuals would have to remove themselves from being "situated" in the events (416). Instead, thought continually drives itself to the fullest facets of situations and toward the " 'teleology' of consciousness" that must endlessly "forge more perfect ones" (416).[55] Thus, he maintains that incentives and goals are the only way to assess truth and perception, since people engage momentarily with time but can never obtain the rights to an ownership of time (415). It is

necessary that individuals should follow time to the place where it abandons itself and then compacts itself into obvious manifestations (415–16).

In assessing both the qualitative and quantitative, Merleau-Ponty determines that in the dimension of time and its paradox, the pyramid of the past does not define the past; rather, a pyramid can indicate the conditions for the change of position in attitudes or beliefs about both time and the world (*Phenomenology of Perception* 347). He explains: "The world, which is the nucleus of time, only subsists through this unique movement that simultaneously separates and brings together the appresented, the present, and consciousness, which is taken at the place of clarity, is in fact the very place of equivocation" (347). What type of movement takes place in the nucleus of time that can both reveal and deceive? According to Merleau-Ponty, the nucleus of time brings together, first, the appresented of what is dissimilar yet existing with the introduced object of present consciousness (347). This process of prior learning from the pyramid of the past unites the separations of the past to present perceptual perspectives of the "condition of association"—all situational factors, their stipulations, and direct effects on the social position—in the inalienable place within the dimensions of time (17). Merleau-Ponty claims: "If we hold ourselves to phenomena, then the unity of the thing in perception is not constructed through association, but rather, being the condition of association, this unity precedes the cross-checkings that verify and determine it, this unity precedes itself" (17). Within the movements of time and world are the cross-checkings that relate not only to the prereflective, in Merleau-Pontian terms, which goes before and confirms its causes and effects, as experienced by the spectator and individuals like the spectator; but also, these same cross-checkings relate to the Lévinasian concept, to come later, of an ethical space prior to knowledge—the "prereflexive consciousness"—the capability to understand all aspects of self (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*

*of Perception* 349; Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 129). Looking at conditions of associations for cross-checking situational factors connected to acts of violence is trifold: the prereflected, the reflected, and the unreflected. In order to give the clearest possible view of understanding, Merleau-Ponty indicates that the thing and the world rise above the intertwining of each individual's personal way of thinking, which cannot be long lasting, or even conclusive of all necessary understandings (349). Then what is the warning from such interweaving of personal views that cannot clarify or last when connected to acts of violence and their conditions of association? If individuals presuppose a milieu around violence itself, as opposed to describing the milieu as a perceptual phenomenon through a primary opening to the dimensions of violence, then they rely on a milieu that does not include unity or all the developments and cross-checkings of perceptual norms that will justify a truth—a world. In fact, they strip perception of all its essential functions that will initiate awareness of the phenomena of violence and of perception. If the nucleus of time consists of the movement that both divides and unites consciousness, what are the risks of such equivocation in the consciousnesses of the human being?

Two events take place when individuals do not understand the world as a nucleus of time and its many movements of conditions within time: (1) They cannot gain access to the realization of the situation of violence as a whole, and thus bypass perceptual truths—evidence of actualities; (2) At risk, they can enter into a perpetual state of what Merleau-Ponty calls a "permanent truth of solipsism," through a "lived solipsism" that cannot move beyond its boundaries because such solipsism is too extreme (374). He argues: "This self, who is the witness of every actual communication, and without which the communication would be unaware of itself and thus would not be communication at all, seems to prevent any resolution of

the problem of others" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 374). Individuals succumb to a lived

solipsism when they refuse to address communication that contains no awareness of itself and

that prevents any solution of human problems that exist in the social world through cultural

violence. In turn, they believe that this type of deceptive communication is factual when, in

actuality, it has absolutely nothing to impart on the problem of continual acts of violence

inflicted on the human other. If violence as the condition of association, linked to the present, is

not long lasting, or even inclusive of all the needed knowledge, how do we get to the greatest

degree of understanding consciousness from the top of the pyramid looking down? How do the

perceptual gazes connect to the consciousness of the human other through time as a facet of

being and the social as a extension of existence?

Through a portion of Diego Rivera's *The History of Mexico* (see Figure 2), spectators can

understand Merleau-Ponty's concept (articulated previously) of the phenomenal field in order to

recognize how the dimensions of time and of violence interact with components in the field of

phenomena. Through Rivera, spectators capture a visual of the essence of time in order to realize

the meaning of a subjectivity of historical inherence, not as time in its practical elements but, as

Merleau-Ponty indicates, "Time must be understood as a subject, and the subject must be

understood as time" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 445). He is not, however, saying that the

original source of the subject is "temporal," according to experience (446). Instead, he goes

straight to the "consciousness of time" to explain that consciousness is not constructed from

consecutive conditions of consciousness itself, as in circumstances of the mind, or of emotions,

because, if this were the case, then each condition would require a "new consciousness" in order

to recognize each sequence of conditions (446). He further clarifies: "We are forced to

acknowledge 'a consciousness that would no longer have behind it any consciousness in order to

be conscious of itself,' which, as a result, must not be spread out in time and in which 'being coincides with being for itself' " (446). Since consciousness cannot be extended through intervals of time so that being is for itself alone, Rivera himself must clarify the acts of reimaged violence from his historical pyramid so that past connections are inseparable from their own cultural and social tools involving that historical-era violence. Neither can such acts separate from their functional conditions of associations toward such era-specific violence. Such clarifications allow the spectator to enter into the perceptual gazes of a present-world consciousness in viewing the past conditions of acts of violence so that no other consciousness is behind the viewer's consciousness. Before any viewing takes place, the spectator benefits in proposing the necessary lines of questioning on subjectivity, time, and the gaze in order to be an informed viewer. How do we understand the ontological construct of time as a subject and the subject as time through a historical inherence of a lived world in a lived body in connection to social and cultural acts of violence? To what extent do perspectives from a specific human other control the perceptual and ontological gazes to the point of interference with the purposes of these gazes? How do these effects highlight deception, rather than shine light on how to think upon the conditions in the reimaged violence and the harmful effects of conditioning consciousness?

Figure 2. Rivera, Diego. *The History of Mexico*. 1929-1930. National Palace, Mexico City, Mexico.

https://www.mercatornet.com/features/view/the-history-of-mexico-an-ideological-

masterpiece/20827

Spectators enter the dimensions of time through Rivera's pyramid of Mexico's historical

past with the placement of people and their circumstances of particular acts of violence. These

givens align with the perspectives from the new order of Mexican leadership, who commissioned

the mural, and with Rivera's own interplay of historical perspectives in the reimaging of

violence.[56] But Merleau-Ponty states: "A present without a future, or an eternal present, is

precisely the definition of death, the living present is torn between a past that it takes up and a

future that it projects" (348). In reimaging or viewing acts of violence, both artist and spectator

benefit by recognizing the risks of the living present, wedged between a past they accept and a

future they anticipate. But an eternal present causes all purposes from both the past and the

future to cease.

Rivera works within the perceptual gaze of seeing through others in the agents of time

and language, or in one's own prior acts of seeing in the atmosphere of time, which clarifies

when outside agents control the gaze of perception that highlights ontological traces of existence

and entity. Since the pyramid of the past does not define the past, then following the changing of

positions of the condition of situational acts of violence—through the gaze from Rivera's

work—directs spectators to the traits of cultural givens and toward ontological gestural meanings

of existence and entity in the paradox of time. Spectators follow the givens (bottom center) in the

conditions of associations from the military violence of the conquistadores that directly affect the

mighty ancient Aztec civilization. Above them, Rivera directs the movement of the gaze of

cultural violence through religious givens that are evident from the Aztec war headdresses and

from the Aztec leader standing in front of the sun god, holding a human heart: a reminder of the

condition of the violence—a human sacrificial offering to the sun god in exchange for blessing

the land with abundant crops. Through images aligned to the Catholic clergy, Rivera makes clear

his own perspective: The Spanish defeat of the great Aztec heritage of Mexico (middle right) is

the condition of associations of violence, which over time causes the end of the Aztec

civilization and conversion to Catholicism; and the Catholic clergy has its own forms of religious

violence. By moving the perceptual gaze through the cultural acts of violence to the middle level

of the pyramid (far left), Rivera portrays the brutality of the Holy Inquisition—1571 to 1870—

through the interaction of faces from an ontological gaze (*Mexican History Diego Rivera's*

*Frescos* ix). How do the cultural conditions in the acts of violence from the Inquisition interact with the ontological gaze of the subject as time?

Rivera allows for questioning of the overall malicious acts of violence by clergy of the Catholic Church. Spectators observe the violent treatment of the accused, as presented through thematic meanings of the Inquisition, which spanned over decades and sent thousands to their deaths. The perceptual gaze continually provides movement in the cultural reimages of acts of violence in order to interlock with the ontological traces of time as the space of social being— existence and entity. In Figure 2, a woman is strangled (far left), while the man next to her is enveloped in flames, burning alive (ix). The level above (center stage) illustrates a different historical era, with social givens of evidence from the struggles of an invisible violence oppressing the farm workers, who provide for the aristocracy above them and receive little compensation for their families. In the top center arch, the perceptual gaze comes not in seeing time and language through Rivera's lens, for Rivera portrays revolutionary leaders such as Pancho Villa as only fighting for the safety and health of the less fortunate and most oppressed, leaving out all other conditions of proof of the various acts of violence committed by Villa. Thus, spectators must know to draw from their own prior acts of seeing in the atmosphere of time— that authenticates evidence of fact and reason—to recognize when the perceptual and ontological gazes are controlled, whether by Rivera or governmental commissioners. Finally, present-day leaders and commissioners of the work (top right arch) promise a new order in Rivera's era of present connection to the paradox of time—the historical facticity of violent events will change to a better future for all of Mexico. Rivera emphasizes that the only guarantee for such a promise is a new constitution, which becomes the condition of associations not only to promise relief from acts of violence against the people of Mexico, but also to reveal the future violence enacted

by this administration if it fails to instigate change from oppression to the betterment of the

Mexican people. For the spectator viewing the past through present consciousness, the

simultaneity of the work not only sets apart but also brings these perceptual and ontological

givens together toward the evidence, or facts, of an inalienable and unchangeable place, in that

events drive each other from existence only when each act is seen through a lens of the present

directing the past toward the future. What are the clues that demonstrate an authentic present

consciousness that follows the condition of associations from prior acts of violence in the

atmosphere of time?

Such clues delineate the operative functions of the paradox of time to define what it

means when the false, or inauthentic, thought of the medieval Inquisitions possesses an eternity

of false thought, just as true thought does. For, later, through the nucleus of time, perception, for

the Catholic Church, comes to a fuller awareness of the brutal, cultural violence on the social

world, when it separates and brings together that which is dissimilar. The Catholic Church's

position has been described as: "The heretic, in a word, was seen as an outlaw whose offense, in

the popular mind, deserved severe punishment. But this does not excuse the abuses of those who

failed to witness Christ's mercy and forgiveness when acting as a representative of Christ's

Church" (Armenio 346). Drawing from Merleau-Ponty in connecting the perceptual gaze in this

statement, present consciousness delineates a responsiveness in the movements of release from

obstacles of concealment (*Phenomenology of Perception* 348). Tracking the ontological

movement of time and the social world as dimensions of being, truth of reason in this cultural

setting reveals the human traces that caused the conditions for these cultural acts of violence.

Through the cross-checkings that conclude and prove evidence from the atmosphere of time, the

Catholic Church acknowledges: "Even if the Inquisition helped lessen an evil of the time, it still

allowed for a certain amount of injustice to remain" (Armenio 346-47). Here, the lens of the

living present further extends what Merleau-Ponty means by time as subject and subject as time.

The Inquisition as subject enacted violence on the human other—a dimension of time, and thus

subject as time: Acts of violence equate with the human other. The human other of unchangeable

injustice from this historical time marks time as subject: The human other equates with injustice.

From a present perspective, church leaders give instruction from the paradox of time through its

informed truths of fact—evidentness that these errors accompany later corrections in thought

within the atmosphere of time. False thought does not go away but is separated to indicate

erroneous thought that results in heinous acts of violence from misguidance and misperception.[57]

Simultaneously, the essence of time sets in place the chiasmus of the truth of fact as the truth of

reason, and true reason as true fact. In relation to the condition of associations of violence in the

Inquisition—as opposed to constructing associations—every moment of false thought in time is

unable to create any other effect than what action took place at this moment of time. Yet, what

takes place in the event of consciousness, when a subject does not recognize its own historical

inherence in alignment with present consciousness, and then constructs associations of violence

and conditions of consciousness that initiate, with a domino effect, new consciousnesses for each

created condition?

Consciousness, then, begins, as Merleau-Ponty indicates, to spread out in time, which

takes being from its social dimension and into the dimension of being for itself alone

(Phenomenology of Perception 46). According to a Catholic historian: "Historical accounts of

the Spanish Inquisition are often naively defensive or wildly exaggerated: Some ignore the

Inquisition's blatant disregard for human dignity; others use it as a vehicle for contemporary

anti-Catholic sentiments" (Armenio 349). Here, the interconnections of the perceptual with the

ontological equate the condition of violence with indifference for the loss of human dignity, but Merleau-Ponty's perpetual truth of solipsism unfolds through individuals' lived solipsism. This solipsism is the eternal present that will eradicate both past and future. Indifference to acts of violence of this historical era overtakes some individuals to make time-as-indifference the subject: equating time with subject. Furthermore, through another view of subject as time, disdain from these acts of violence transfers into the present, for other individuals to become the tool for anti-Catholic sentiments, making the present Catholic human other, as a construction of objective time, a segment of time. Neither camp of individuals has any authentic recognition of their permanent state of solipsism that bars any dialogue of present resolution to the condition of associations in these past acts of violence on the human other.

What takes place in this situation is twofold, and exactly what Merleau-Ponty warns against. First, these two examples illustrate the adverse effects in the condition—construction of associations, rather than assessment of the condition—and the formation of conditions of consciousness that splinter into new consciousnesses to match the new condition. Second, Merleau-Ponty clearly addresses time and the subject, as he argues earlier that the highest level of subjectivity is not temporal, according to the empiricist doctrine that all knowing stems from only sense experience; thus, only a present consciousness with no other consciousness on the backside of it can come to the realization of itself (*Phenomenology of Perception* 446). The resulting factors from these two examples replace present consciousness with being that dwells in the same space of being for itself alone, and then the greatest degree of consciousness—a present and ageless consciousness—no longer exists as an "ecstasy toward the future and toward the past that makes the dimensions of time appear, not as rivals, but as inseparable: to be in the present is to have always been and to be forever" (446). The unity of existence operates through

an uninterrupted series of consciousnesses, where subjectivity is not inside historical eras but embraces and "lives time" in a coherent union with human others (446). Merleau-Ponty argues: "This originary temporality is clearly not the juxtaposition of mutually external events, since it is the power that holds them together by separating them from each other" (445-46). This space of originary temporality is the paradox of time in the atmosphere of time that separates events with fact and reason, yet holds them together for the clearest light on both. What happens to consciousness when the subject avoids originary temporality?

Merleau-Ponty poses very difficult and uncomfortable questions about "eternal truth" in relation to the "One" and to "God" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 415). From his discussion, individuals have the potential to take even an eternal truth and adjust it to their particular mind frame in order to create their unification of self alone among others. In this case, he argues: "We do not have the experience of an eternal truth, nor of a participation of the One, but rather of concrete acts of taking up by which, in the accidents of time, we establish relations with ourselves and with others" (415). By accidents of time, he acknowledges that humans are merely an attribute of an eternal truth that may or may not even belong to them in relationship with themselves and others and to the levels of awareness needed.[58] Yet this attribute, which is only part of an eternal truth, does not alter the essence of truth or, as Merleau-Ponty references, the " 'soul of truth' that transcends it and that detaches from it" (415).[59] He holds that through intersubjectivity, humans share an experience with the world, and " 'being-in-the-truth' . . . is not distinct from being in the world" (415). He argues that to be in truth in the world, human beings need a network that opens the importance of the human other, of their own individual selves and of the "world as the pole" of their perspectival views on phenomena (61). How does such insight on truth affect us in dealing with the phenomenon of violence in our social and cultural worlds?

It is vital to take from Merleau-Ponty the necessary structures of knowledge on the problems of transcendence in the phenomenal field, so that spectators see that these very problems exist within time and the social as dimensions of being and are inseparable from the reimage of violence. His remedy for the difficulties of the social world, together with the conflicts associated with transcendence, is to understand the ways in which human beings can avoid any restrictions or closed passages of phenomena that go beyond them: to experience the transcendental field of the unreflective to the degree that they embrace phenomena as essential in every aspect of their lives (*Phenomenology of Perception* 381). He provides the image of gazes with perception advancing the ontological through the act of "depresentation"—reversal of presentation to the "presence" of self—which can identify the distinctive and essential qualities of self and recognize each specific mode of being: person or thing in its existing state according to each circumstance (381). This event is why time and the social world have the potential to reach the perspectival views of appearance and being in their phenomenal states and in relation to the many vistas of violence itself. But as long as the sole focus is to defend a human-designed constitution on the instrumentalities of violence, individuals will not transcend to the multiple vistas of the phenomenon of violence, and awareness of its avenues goes beyond them. They do not recognize that violence is much more than its pieces, which the social world lends them. They simply take one, maybe even two or three, of its traits to place blame on its wrongs, to avoid any culpability that may come back to their individual errors of contribution toward the problems of social violence. As a result, they stifle transcendence from its vast and unending perspectival views of their lived experience with cultural violence. They construct appearance as being only and miss the network of themselves in relation to the human other and to their world as the indicator of perception on the full range of problems surrounding the violence of lived

experiences. How do we instruct consciousness toward depresentation to experience immanence and transcendence?

Merleau-Ponty states that one's individual past cannot be presented as aspects that exist through his or her difficulties or dangers, or of "cerebral traces," because, as seen earlier, a present truth of evidentness exists in both the past and the present but does not categorize memories of things by truth of fact or truth of reason (381). Human beings cannot rely on a past consciousness that establishes itself instantaneously, as Merleau-Ponty argues, due to a misunderstanding in the "sense of the past" that would, in turn, cause the past to become the present (381). In relation to Rivera's reimage of cultural and social violence, theoretical immanence takes place when spectators or designing artists see the dimensions of violence behind or around their own connections to themselves, and then experience transcendence within the knowing-body of lived experience—of time as a dimension of being through personal gestures—recognizing that these acts of reimaged violence they view existed well before such actions appeared as clear and openly understood acts of violence, given by Rivera himself. This evidence is why individuals cannot separate themselves from the social even though they have the power to ignore the events that connect the social to the events behind sectors of being, which then causes a collision of consciousnesses.

But spectators are at the heart of the interplay with consciousness through the perceptual "act of representation" and the ontological "gesture of 'ex-sistence' "(*Phenomenology of Perception* 448). Merleau-Ponty's maximum level of present consciousness acts as a "privileged status because it is the zone in which being and consciousness coincide," rather than collide (447). The horizon of the past from the present provides a light for the unique heritages of personal recognition in how such heritages lead to an interconnected world, not an isolated

world. At this place, they are now in what he calls a unique right in the social position where being and consciousness share the same relative space in a cosmopolitan event of the present. When he argues that none of the dimensions of time can be derived from the others, he means that human beings cannot come to any conclusions from the known facts in any of their lineages or make any assumptions about such lineage because their beings—their existence and entity— are not reduced to the knowledge that they have laid out in the lines of their heritages (447). However, human consciousness can disagree with such a gesture and then carry with it no right to being or existence for the human other. According to Merleau-Ponty, if a person or experience is to appear to people as a perception, as an act of representation, then they must carry into being a previous experience by a primary consciousness of their inner perception of knowledge recalled from memory without any "interposed mental object" (448). He determines that they must "arrive at a consciousness that has no other one behind it" that would overtake their very own beings (446). We understand what takes place with acts of violence, consciousness, and being in the dimensions of time. But what happens when time and consciousness collide in the dimensions of language and in connection to acts of violence? What are the differences between a consciousness of time and a "consciousness of language" that concern us here (*Phenomenology of Perception* 425)?

<center>The Cogito: Time, Language, and the Trace</center>

Through an intertextual dialogue, Lévinas operates in sync with Merleau-Pontian ideas on language and states of consciousness, but Lévinas extends his thinking further than, and certainly differently from, Merleau-Ponty, and even more so, perhaps, from Arendt and Kristeva,

discussed in prior chapters. Lévinas provides an extraordinarily aesthetic focal image of human

experience that encompasses the gaze of the ontological traces in relation to the entirety of being

in connection to acts of violence. This section's dialogue between Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas

covers the dual path of thought to language, wherein time underneath the subject tethers to a

cogito and its assumptions of consciousness toward discourse. Examination of the "spoken

cogito," the "tacit cogito," and the null and void cogito is essential when looking at time beneath

the subject in order to address objective thought that can wreak destruction of thought in

knowing how to recognize something other behind an individual's consciousness (Merleau-

Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 426; Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 25). Merleau-Ponty unravels the

specificities of the tacit cogito and its functions in consciousness and words, together with the

paradox of violence through the mental images of perception (424). Lévinas aligns with

Merleau-Ponty in the discussions of the cogito but gives a more strident look at time and

language through the null and void cogito that constructs its own mental images through mere

prisms of human beings and of reality itself (*Entre nous* 25; *Phenomenology of Perception* 377).

For such a cogito, social discourse from all its platforms pinpoints the cultural world that helps

fashion mental images of the human other to foster acts of violence against targeted human

beings. Thus, the gaze of traces in the ontological image acts as a compass to point to violence

itself and the asymmetry of being. Why look at unconventional mental images in the paradox of

violence and the asymmetrical images of ontological being?

First, to understand violence itself is to understand its paradox. According to Merleau-

Ponty, actions of violence are different from the perceptual "violent act" (*Phenomenology of

Perception* 379). He argues that, in awareness of more than just surface images of individuals,

one attempts to achieve an unlimited event of facts that attribute to the positive and negative

characteristics of such individuals (379). In so doing, he warns, the violent act may "shatter the image" that a person has of others—not illusively—and rightly so, because the social cannot equate with a thing or even a place, but only as a part of being (379). Since relationships coexist in the phenomenon of being, individuals may feel profound disappointment when the violent act shatters the image (379). Thought to language as the "founded term," by sheer persistency and without losing sight of itself, clearly reveals the authenticity in both reason and fact about a specific person, so that the structure of awareness arrives at all the connecting ontological traces left by such an individual—traces that go beyond what is assumed to be an obvious surface image of the face (414).[60]

Second, to understand the ontological gaze is to understand not only how to follow the many traces within its gaze but at what point the traces cannot be followed. It is important to recognize how such a gaze connects to language in the dimensions of the founding. For Lévinas, this gaze houses "existence" and the "face" of the human other and tethers to discourse and to time as a "withdrawal of the other" ("Trace of the Other" 358, 359, 358). Lévinas sets the aesthetic stage for this trace by referring to the acts within comedy and tragedy. He argues that comedy starts the trace with the least complicated actions, as in moving a piece of furniture that leads to an embarrassing display of clumsiness (*Entre nous* 3). He states: "In doing what I willed to do, I did a thousand and one things I hadn't willed to do. The act was not pure; I left traces. Wiping away these traces, I left others" (3). And at this point, he emphasizes that comedy has the potential to make a move toward an extreme event. He argues: "When the awkwardness of the act is turned against the goal pursued, we are in the midst of tragedy" (3). He demonstrates where and how individuals can wipe away their own traces through necrological discourse. These reasons are why he believes ontology is not only marking the place of honor in everyday

activities in their connections to being, but ontology is every connection in the consideration of being as existence and to the careful thought behind being as entities (4). How does thought move to a higher level through the perceptual and ontological events behind both cogito and language that can lead to acts of violence?

Two primary points drive Merleau-Ponty's discussion on language and the cogito: conflicts that occur when words are presumably taken as consciousness; and the failure in recognizing how past consciousness can exist and dominate over present consciousness. He extends consciousness—even further than the emotional essence of a verbal image—when he acknowledges a tacit consciousness and word impressions (*Phenomenology of Perception* 425). He distinguishes the difference of the spoken cogito, which changes into audible expressions of indispensable authentic facts and reasoning (426). On the tacit cogito, he argues: "Everything hangs on gaining a clear understanding of the tacit Cogito, on only putting into it what is really there, and on not turning language into a product of consciousness on the pretext that consciousness is not a product of language" (424). The tacit cogito is, he says, "an experience [*épreuve*] of myself by myself," or the "presence of self to self, being existence itself"; and "the tacit *Cogito* is only a *Cogito* when it has expressed itself" (426). Oddly, Merleau-Ponty maintains that the tacit cogito recognizes itself to the greatest extent possible in the severe danger of circumstance, as in "fear of death," or through angst instigated by the human other's "gaze" upon such a person (426). He insists that sound judgment in a verbal image cannot assess language as consciousness (426).[61] Instead, human beings can only consider words in their most visible and evident appearances, since words and their impressions come only as associations for consciousness and not as a personified or corporeal form of consciousness (426). He indicates that vocalized subjects, who carelessly and without delay infect themselves with verbal words,

do not realize the extent to which they place themselves as representatives of these words

through a "motor presence," which is not the same as understanding the facts that accompany

these words (425).[62] He argues: "The word has never been inspected, analyzed, known, and

constituted, but rather caught and taken up by a speaking power [*puissance parlante*], and,

ultimately, by a motor power that is given to me along with the very first experience of my body

and of its perceptual and practical fields" (425). This place of the speaking power and the motor

power is the peripeteia of the cogito, where a motor presence takes on a motor power and where

language and consciousness change the ontological image into mere subjective and isolated

morpheme-images. How does consciousness allow for such deformed mental images of the

other?

Merleau-Ponty states that people have the ability to distort the image of the human other

into any image of their liking because their perspectives of the social and cultural world—their

consideration of it and its contents—become mechanized in the same way they witness a piece of

equipment used within the context of particular circumstances (425). He argues that possible

word meanings do not constitute particular amounts of bodily qualities connected to things or

persons; but these word meanings are, instead, the qualities that the things or persons appear to

represent in social and cultural settings, which comprise the images humans create (425).

Merleau-Ponty explains: "Thus, language clearly presupposes a consciousness of language and a

silence of consciousness that envelops the speaking world, a silence in which words first receive

their configuration and their sense" (425). He cautions that this silence is the first point of

intervention in recognizing the process of alteration in appearance as being rather than

appearance as phenomenon. The assumption from language, that consciousness awaits word

impressions in discourse, allows for keener awareness of what takes place behind a silent

consciousness that settles upon a "physical and social world," which incites a quick responsive action—whether helpful or harmful (*Phenomenology of Perception* 377). How do we determine the movements of consciousness and its traits that trigger a quick response that affects thought toward appearance and being?

Merleau-Ponty argues that when people are in the physical world and in the middle of a phenomenon itself, their subjectivity and their movement of significance toward the human other are positioned in the physical and social world and not hidden from them or foreign to them (377). Thus, he clarifies that such individuals cannot in any way encircle themselves within their own circumstances "like an object in a box," because their freedom of vision will not allow them to reduce themselves to their experiences (377). However, he states that in the social-world backdrop, human beings can ignore the significance of other human beings and rob them of all their human dignity, while treating them and their circumstances as mere fragmented rubble (377). Such manifestations as these are rife throughout the discourses of social media, which can disrupt thinking and alter the psyche, changing the ways in which individuals live their lives. If people react in a selfish and aggressive way at the first signs of crises, then a critical line of questioning should be put in place. When such questions come from members of the community—relaying their deepest concerns about a hostile environment on social media created by a discourse riddled with underlying dimensions of violence—then the members of the community benefit by engaging in an act of listening. To what degrees do selfishness and aggression result from growing and living in a social world that trivializes acts of violence? When individuals believe, even erroneously, that the world is generally hostile, are they more likely to assume that they are under an immediate threat, and therefore behave selfishly and aggressively? Why is teaching competitive behavior at a young age deemed paramount in a

society, while empathy does not seem to be regarded as a critical form of intelligence or a

fundamental skill? What kind of society meets crises in a spirit of fear and with actions of

violence to avoid the kinder direction taken by strong, caring communities?[63] These relevant

questions lead back to the findings of Lévinas and Merleau-Ponty that pinpoint the events of

language, of consciousness, and of the different identifications of the cogito that compose the

backdrop of a social media world unique to itself: its powers of language that can carry with it

layers of benevolence through truth of fact and truth of reason; and the pitfalls of the ability to

post, with one click, a response without the necessary cross-checking in place. Dimensions of

visible and invisible violence lace the discourse of misinformation that results in inauthentic

reasoning. Neither Lévinas nor Merleau-Ponty were familiar with social media sites as they exist

in the present. Recognition of what both thinkers emphasize on the paradox of violence and of

language in social and cultural backdrops is critical for understanding how to respond to a hostile

social media discourse that distorts the image of the human other.

From the social backdrop of violence seen through a Hobbesian lens, Lévinas argues that

justice requires "judges," and that involves a form of violence; but he emphasizes that violence

must be avoided through all possible avenues of dialogue and discussions (*Entre Nous* 106). He

references the challenging words of the biblical prophets, who were "not in hiding, . . . not

preparing an underground revelation" but fearlessly addressing "the king and the people" to

redirect them toward moral principles (106). However, equally as bold were "false prophets who

flatter kings" (106). For Lévinas, the just interlocutor is the authentic prophet who always directs

people to the ethical of the human other (107). Merleau-Ponty thus argues that even against the

natural-world backdrop, humans can easily dupe themselves and allow their thinking nature to

misconceive the phenomenon of perception (*Phenomenology of Perception* 377).[64] He states that

individuals are easily prone to cast doubt on everything in both the social and natural worlds, which places them into a state of solipsism and outside the fullness of being (377). He then adds that individuals can only question perception in search of a more genuine perception that would make perception itself clearer and more precise (377). He writes: "But I can only escape from being into more being; for example, I escape from society into nature, or from the real world into an imaginary that is made up of the debris of the real" (377). The imaginary made of the debris of the real is the crux of the problem in discussions of social media that possess an absence of a sense of community, as well as an absence of the embrace for the human other and one's responsibility that accompanies such embrace.

Where does our line of questioning go wrong? We fail to question an altered nature in a social media and techno world, or even what circumstances or processes induce the experience of solipsism to appear as a natural environment. In this sense, technology replaces nature itself with a neoteric poetastric nature.[65] We do not question how to recognize the vast array of mental images that take place in the objective world or even the lived world of the phenomenal field and from where they originate. We do not question the dimensions behind language and its power to propagate anything it chooses, whether accurate or inaccurate. We do not follow time to the place where it abandons itself so that we can clearly recognize the unmistakable errors connected to objective time of portions only. As a result, we bypass altogether the ontological traces that mark the actions of the human other in relation not only to time but to language that situates itself in time. But how do we follow such markings that can erase the ontological traces of the other?

Applying Merleau-Ponty's perceptual lens to language and consciousness, I first illustrate the Merleau-Pontian events behind the images of the motor and power presences of language in

connection to acts of violence from domestic terrorism, and to the alteration of ontological images of escape from time of the social world into nature, or into an imaginary world (Figure 3). Then, I apply in three ways Merleau-Ponty's ideas on the many facets behind language and its power: looking at why and how language can lead to acts of violence instigated specifically from violent ideologies; identifying the helpful or harmful effects of a quick-responsive action behind events that transpire through a social media discourse; and then delineating how the Lévinasian "tragic turn" unfolds through the erasure of traces before horrendous acts of violence unfold (*Entre Nous* 3).

**Social World = Words Construct Meaning and Images of Fragments, Prisms of Faces and Being**

Natural World = Uncertainties of Perception

Imaginary = Unwelcomed Ruins of Reality

**Motor Presence Splits Perceptual Image: First Speaking Power Becomes Motor Power**

Words of Violent Ideologies Await Attitudes, Beliefs

Silent Consciousenss Covers Social World

**First Motor Power Creates Second Motor Power**

**Second Motor Power**

Constructs Images of Human Other

Manifesto with Language of Hatred
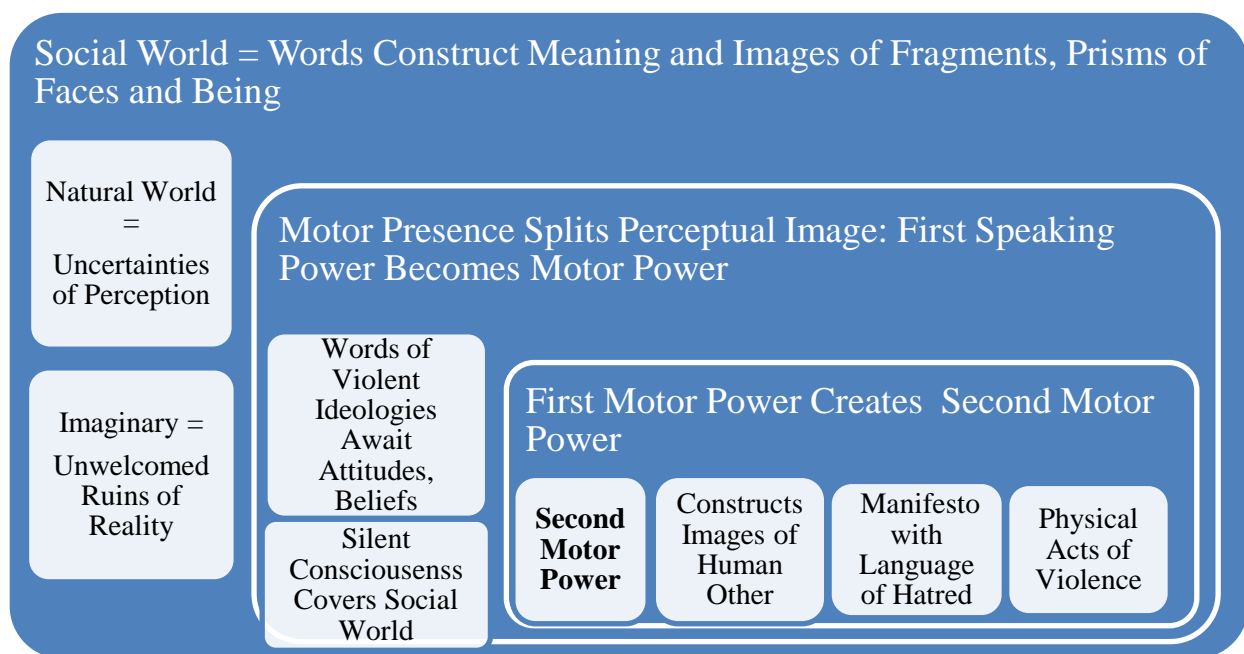
Physical Acts of Violence

Figure 3. Splintering of Perceptual and Ontological Images.

Figure 3 diagrams how the linguistic image splits in multiple ways in real time in the social world: If a speaking power in position of high authority in the social world audibly voices the words associated with violent domestic ideologies in affirmation of those ideals, whether

carelessly or purposefully, that initial speaking power then becomes a representative of those violent ideologies, not only as a speaking power, but as a motor power—bolstering movement toward such ideals of extreme distortions, achieved from past acts of violence. The phenomenon of language assumes that consciousness comes from attitudes and beliefs pertaining to the specific words of violent ideologies. Next, a silent consciousness covers all speakers of the social world, while the words of these ideologies ready themselves for the conditional arrangements of potential meanings and images. At what point does the social morph into the imaginary to alter the ontological image through the language of the first speaking power?

Operating from an imaginary place, a second motor power takes the sense of the key words from the first speaking power to generate images through a narrative of flawed realities with fragmented faces and shadows of beings from the real social world. As a result, in the social realm of coexistence, this second motor power puts physical acts of violence into play against specifically targeted human beings, who, ironically, are an extension of this motor power's own being. But the cycle of words and their impressions, which goes before these acts of violence, does not stop there. Before these acts begin, with the very person, or persons, in the motor-power role, that motor power takes on an additional role of a secondary speaking power through a manifesto of words, fueled by the sense of hate—produced and owned by the specific violent ideology—and which may include identical words belonging to the initial speaking power.[66] The language of this manifesto, posted on social media sites, readies itself for the silent consciousness that comes from the sense words of instructions, which are clear to the people who associate with the same violent ideological attitudes. These word-meaning messages feed an extreme fear of annihilation for those who embrace such violent ideologies and advance their deep-seated hatred of a particular human other.[67] The messages of such manifestos are clear to

those who are open to them: equate continual acts of violence with racial, religious, ethnic, or gender-based traits of human beings. When individuals who embrace the traits of violent ideologies read words that contain the silent consciousness inherent in those ideologies, the ontological image continually divides itself into pieces of ontological being, in accordance with each reader and not according to an authentic ontological image of being, which has no qualities that would be considered universal in an extreme form. Objective time and its existing sectors fit into language when the manifesto declares that its actions of violence both affirm and existed before the words of the first speaking power, as seen with perpetrators of mass shootings and their destruction of innocent human beings.[68] When such heinous and tragic acts are actually completed, situational assessments indicate no initial remorse from the perpetrator, but only confusion. From this observance, the tacit cogito may have engaged in the experience of what Merleau-Ponty calls seeing itself by itself alone through fear of death or through the angst in the human other's gaze. At this juncture, conjecture about the depth and breadth of Merleau-Ponty's chiastic emphasis on time understood as subject and subject understood as time can lead to the unconventional: a different persona of subject and of time (*Phenomenology of Perception* 445). If violent ideologies increase their power during particular times of history, then we fail to question the meanings behind the language of time and the numerous variations behind time—not the temporal—as subject and subject as time. We fail to follow the paths of the paradox of time all the way to their origins. We fail to ask the question: What happens to the atmosphere of time in this situation of violent ideologies?

Recalling that when individuals are in the physical world and in the midst of phenomena—lived-experience of realities—their freedom of vision will not allow the reduction of self. However, the events of consciousness from violent ideologies take being in the universal

sense, so that appearance is only one view of both existence and entity. Thus, the setting for these violent ideologies is an imaginary space housed in the objective world of objective thought and objective time. Merleau-Ponty argues that "subjectivity" is absent in objective thought, because objective thought constitutes only its own "world and itself" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 427). The imaginary space of this objective thought does not reach the paradox of time, where evidence proves such horrific acts of violence did take place from distorted thought of the human other. For Merleau-Ponty, eternity, the atmosphere of time, houses the paradox of time, which aligns with Lévinas, who states: "Eternity is the very irreversibility of time, the source and refuge of the past" ("Trace of the Other" 355-56). These similar concepts are the structural lattice for Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas: Merleau-Ponty urges the disclosure of time underneath the subject to rejoin the contradictions of time to its actualities and to reunite what seems a self-contradiction of body to the reality of a knowing-body of lived experience (*Phenomenology of Perception* 383); and Lévinas stresses the necessity of following the traces from the human other, since this is the place of greatest vulnerability for consciousness. But the two-path relationship between time and eternity of the founding does not exist for objective thought of an objective time. Instead, such conditions produce what Merleau-Ponty warns of, noted above: placing society in human beings as an object of thought (379). Why objectification?

The answer is twofold: (1) Each act committed from violent ideologies wedges itself farther into objective time and stakes out its claims to self-centered opinions within the space of the physical world—"objective thought, or the thetic consciousness of the world and of itself" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 427). This physical world is shared by all living beings, since time and the social are part of being. Its space is between the objective world and the lived world and where acts of violence occur within present time. (2) Individuals are wedged between the

paradox of violence and the paradox of time, where, as Merleau-Ponty indicates, society (the whole of human others) becomes an object positioned among other objects (379). But the lived, knowing-body of the lived world cannot become object, as can the Cartesian knowing-subject, in all its markings of objective thought for self and for others. The object of thought thrives in the conditions of the objective world. In the shared physical world of social media discourse—media to equate with all forms of communication—the first and second speaking powers and motor presences operate in the same way (as explained earlier) through language that can lead to acts of violence or through language with a violent act that reveals rather than conceals what is behind a mental image of someone or something—all the more reason to understand that we are back with the act of attention applied to violence, as discussed in chapter one.[69] When social discourse in any form is devoid of the traits in the act of attention, then objectified thought thrives. Thus, social media discourse requires attentiveness and all which that attentiveness encompasses. Individuals cannot focus on an affiliation of ideas or to thought that manipulates objects; otherwise, there is no conversation, but only logical fallacies of overgeneralization toward entire groups. Objectified thought leaves only when individuals engage in actions toward the fundamental principles of a "new object" that demonstrates the possibilities of what could not be recognized before through the vague scope of individual interest (*Phenomenology of Perception* 33). Individuals who generate a "mental field" can carefully examine conditions of time and language that are clearly understood and where consciousness does not have another behind it (31). This field discovers where all motives originate rather than what causes stem from. What kind of mental field can mark the consciousness of being when individual traces are untraceable? We follow Lévinasian thought all the way through the act that left, wiping away its traces only to leave other traces. Lévinas elaborates: "It is like an animal fleeing in a straight line

across the snow before the sound of hunters, thus leaving the very traces that will lead to its

death (*Entre Nous* 3). And this is not just physical death, but what Lévinas means when he

calls the tragic individual a "dead soul" of necrological discourse (25). How then do we read the

signs of discourse, filled with the object of thought, that erases the traces of the human other?

The tragic turn for Lévinas comes through time and language, when he argues that,

instead of a discourse that should include assessment from the "condition of the interlocutors,"

necrological discourse, in its fixed cohesion, reduces interlocutors to mere " 'moments' " of

discourse, and thus only to "concepts" (25). Lévinas comes to the same conclusions as Merleau-

Ponty in two specific areas: how time and language can alter consciousness through what

Lévinas calls necrological discourse of "impersonal reason," void of any sound judgment; and

that there is someone other behind consciousness (*Entre Nous* 25). Lévinas contends that

necrological discourse allows the "irreversible past"—which signifies the place of oneness

for all humanity—to reverse itself and to operate as the only dialogue of the present ("Trace

of the Other" 345; *Entre Nous* 25). In effect, the ontological image shatters at the place where

Lévinas argues that necrological discourse restricts itself merely to the unchanged traits of

impersonal reason, which then suppresses an interlocutor to the point of mere abstraction

(25). An interlocutor's role provides the questioning needed and the appropriate thought

process in reaching the level of personal reason, which links to the proper inclusion of

human others, rather than their exclusion (25). These traits of necrological discourse and

oppression of a just interlocutor are the direct traces that should be followed. According to

Lévinas, this act of suppression makes conspicuous the very people who, irrationally and

unreasonably, speak of their own form of proofs (25). However, ironically, they function

only as concepts that cannot participate even in the necrological discourse they embrace

(25). Lévinas argues: "Such is, in fact, man reduced to his accomplishments, reflected in his works, man past and dead who is totally reflected in that discourse" (25). In other words, man past and dead is behind the consciousness of those who embrace such discourse. In drawing from Lévinas, the direct line of traces across the ontological field present images of time and language through the traits of necrological discourse. Lévinas does not hesitate to acknowledge, rightfully, that those who partake in this discourse are not only invalid themselves, but any accomplishments during the span of their lives are also discredited (25). Why such a harsh assessment from Lévinas?

When an individual becomes a dead soul, Lévinas contends: "This is not reification; this is history" (25). History is a necrology. A necrology lists the dead of a particular time period, who, Lévinas claims, are not present but carry with them in their absence, wrongful and unalterable opinions at this point (25).[70] Instead of providing lessons from these abominable acts of violence against the human other present in the paradox of time, these actions now sport themselves as a social influence brought from past time into the present physical world, *as if* false truths can now become true truths of reification. What happens to such an altering of the ontological image at this point?

Here, the problem does not lie with objectivity, for no subject-object mode exists in the loss of being. Since time and the social are part of being itself, the loss of being does not negate the ontological image. Rather, the loss of being changes the contents of the image in the moment it shatters its own image. Drawing from Lévinas, at this place, individuals—totally "coherent"— encase themselves in their own abstracted image through the inner constructs of a necrological discourse that disfigures the ontological image (*Entre nous* 24, 25). Behind the loss of being, the ontological image morphs into a false appearance of being from fragments of facial images of

those past and dead, who appear to the encased *as if* those very fragments are a genuine portrait

of reinstated being through the necrological language and deeds from past violent ideologies.

The present living being erases traces of its movement. But appearance as phenomenal

perspectives presents the contents and effects of this dead discourse. Now, the dual path of

thought to language can make sense of why perpetrators, who physically and purposefully

commit acts of violence, experience confusion when the tacit cogito recognizes itself, as

Merleau-Ponty indicates, through another's gaze or its own encounter with death

(*Phenomenology of Perception* 426). Thus, the ontological image from Lévinas aligns with

Merleau-Ponty's warning of being outside the phenomenal perspective: Such persons are neither

in the physical world nor are they in the midst of the phenomena of perception, or even of

appearance through immanence and transcendence; rather, they are in their own coherent private

containment—a lived solipsism. Those who escape into an imaginary field cannot connect their

gaze to the perceptual gaze of seeing through prior acts or through acts of the human other

through time and language, because they exhibit an absolute abandonment of particular people

and their situations. Here, the ontological image and the perceptual image are on different

dimensions in the phenomenal field but are in active participation with the same components of

phenomena that affect consciousness. If we, as members of the world community, miss these

signs in the morphing of an ontological image, we take appearance as being and miss the

multiple vistas of existence and human being. What then happens to the cogito in a necrological

discourse that has no ability to change itself to have rightful thinking of the human other?

Lévinas argues: "What makes the return of the *cogito* null and void is that the clear and

distinct consciousness of what was formerly called a psychological fact is only the symbolism of

a reality totally inaccessible to itself, and that it expresses a social reality or an historical

influence totally distinct from its own intention" (24). The cogito, in this instance, operates now from the symbols—signs, emblems, word phrases—that associate meaning and reality to the influence of a specific historical, opinionated power that manipulates present consciousness from its original intention. Lévinas holds nothing back and bluntly argues that every "breathing" living being is merely unaware or uninformed when it comes to the outward appearance of the world (14). He deduces that there is a point, where individuals can choose a place of "absolute ignorance" since there is no thought present for the world around them, but only "sensations" of themselves (14). He contends that the human other has no individualized scent for those persons of self-sensations only, who as "statue[s]" can only smell themselves and nothing other than themselves (14).[71] At this tragic place, the absolute erasure of traces makes for difficulty in following the direct paths of individuals before their acts of violence. Can such a cogito that alters the contents of the ontological image regain conscious reality of the present?

Lévinas argues that the null and void cogito does not have the basis to support a reality and lacks the features needed to assess realities that are "independent of any point of view and incapable of being deformed by consciousness" (*Entre Nous* 24). This highest level of altered consciousness is the most dangerous to the community. He clearly outlines the hostile effects of suppressing a just interlocutor to the point of abstraction and rightly states that necrological discourse reverses dimensions of time and strips away any "power" a person once authorized in everyday encounters with others (25). Thus, these individuals do not have the power to experience immanence and transcendence in the dimensions of time and of language, because the violence and hatred, which belong to bygone days, are renewed, *as if* eternal, to allow the continuation of ethnic, political, and religious violent ideologies to thrive. The mental field for questioning social media discourse must include the levels of language behind its

discussions in order to track the traits at the beginning of an altered consciousness: Has the just interlocutor been reduced to concepts through the quick responsive action of a click? Does the discussion become a condition of the circumstantial condition? Are there indicators of traits from necrological discourse present in the language of social media? Where and how does time and language factor in the discourse of social media? What cogito and consciousnesses are present behind the linguistic traits of social media disagreements?

The fact that those who embrace violent ideologies recruit from all areas where young people dwell provides evidence that such ideologies are not innate in human beings but are fashioned from the social and cultural worlds. Lévinas offers hope for the whole of humanity when he argues: "A trace would seem to be the very indelibility of being, its omnipotence before all negativity, its immensity incapable of being self-enclosed, somehow too great for discretion, inwardness, or a self" ("Trace of the Other" 357). Thus, questioning for the ontological trace should redirect itself to the ground before negativity and before enclosure and to the prereflexive, for Lévinas, and the prereflected consciousness—the knowing-body for Merleau-Ponty—where the self stays within itself to realize itself (*Entre Nous* 129).

In considering the question, presented at the start of this section, concerning the differences between a consciousness of language and a consciousness of time, we find that necrological discourse is a consciousness of time, constructed according to segments and conditions of time, while a consciousness of language is part of the paradox of violence that can reveal and deceive. A consciousness of language takes for granted that consciousness will be present in different forms. Such consciousness from words—in their particular setting and their resulting sense presence—is in accordance with individuals and their own fashioning of images from their sense of the words. Consequently, a cycle of words goes before acts of violence

through power and motor presences. Factors from the backdrop of the social world, the natural world—that permits nature or a new techno-nature to think—and the imaginary world distort ontological images: Only snippets of reality then create an individual's own mental images of self and the human other. Necrological discourse reverses the necessary irreversible past and allows the null and void cogito to result in no thought at all but merely those past and dead of unchangeable thought to exist behind its consciousness. Therefore, the events behind language and their interaction with consciousness mark time and the cogito underneath the subject. Appearance and being in their phenomenal states reveal traces in the vistas of being, but when appearance is taken as being itself, the cogito of thetic consciousness sees only an "incarnation of universal being" (*Entre Nous* 9). An individual's perceptual gaze alone gives different perspectives, but the human gaze never captures the entirety of the event. Even though strength lies in the gaze of prior seeing and seeing through others through the lenses of time and language, a current view of time and language is limited through the lens of consciousness itself (*Phenomenology of Perception* 72). Thus, the interlacing between the perceptual human gaze and the ontological traces of the human other in the dimensions of being—time, the social, and discourse rooted in time—creates the necessary double-faceted image of the phenomenal field. How then does an overflowing play of lights process the levels of consciousness prior to the places of negativity and self-enclosure and prior to the state of appearance and being reshaped from their phenomenal states to exist as one entity?

The Interplay of Lights with the Face of Embodied Consciousness

This section extends the discussion of what takes place behind the events of appearance and being and is tethered to the phenomenological light and the overflowing play of lights between the gazes of the perceptual and the ontological. Such lights illuminate perceptual thinking through a prereflected "unconsciousness" that initiates the path of the reflected toward the unreflected thought of ontological being from a prereflexive consciousness in an ethical space before knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 61; Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 129). Pushing thought to this highest level exposes the Lévinasian notion that not merely existence but the entirety of the human being is ontology (*Totality and Infinity* 27).[72] A key focal point in this play of lights is Merleau-Ponty's argument that we, somehow, cannot recognize or understand that the subject of this world is both infinite and finite, both creating and created (*Phenomenology of Perception* 382-83). But why is an overflowing of the play of lights needed? In the last section, we saw, through Lévinas, a thousand and one traces he left from his one act alone and how easy it is to lose the traces of the human other (*Entre nous* 3).[73] We understand the limits of the perceptual from Merleau-Ponty, in that the "anonymous horizon," which fails to yield evidence of the distinct, allows the visible event to be lacking and exposed to the point that the real and the tangible steal away from observance (*Phenomenology of Perception* 72). He argues that if the visible event is to be unadulterated, "it must be an infinity of different perspectives condensed into a strict coexistence, and it must be given as if through a single act of vision comprising a thousand gazes" (72). Thus, the play of lights is the thousand gazes that light the overflowing thousand and one ontological traces into the unity of a single vision. He holds that being is not reduced to what seems clear and distinct to individuals, because they "live more things" than what is possible for them to represent to themselves (310).

Finding the route to the ontological gaze and its genuine traces of mental images of the human other is not an easy path. Lévinas maintains that phenomenology evokes a light of awareness but stops short of revealing the entirety of being, because phenomenology does not compose or form all situational elements behind being, and that is why the event of being goes quietly unnoticed (*Totality and Infinity* 28). He argues: "Ontology is accomplished not in the triumph of man over his condition, but in the very tension in which that condition is assumed" (*Entre Nous* 2). It is in this uncomfortable realm of tension that examination of an assumed condition takes place because, according to Lévinas, losing the very site of being is the greatest risk in tracking the movements of being ("Trace of the Other" 358). Therefore, the overflowing in the play of lights marks the disguises of appearance and being behind the events of "good," "confused," and "bad" consciences (*Entre Nous* 204, 128, 129). The movement of accountability in the humanity of consciousness follows the paradoxical maze of "passivity"—which observes and heeds the movement of individuals before action or reaction (*Entre Nous* 112, 129).[74] It is in the interplay of lights that a new cogito recognizes the phenomena behind appearance and being. How does the infinite and finite, the creating and created, operate through the perceptual and ontological interplay of lights?

Of the perceptual, Merleau-Ponty says, "the infinite thought that one would discover immanent to perception would not be the highest level of consciousness, but rather a form of unconsciousness" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 40). This very form of unconsciousness is why reflection, the finite of thought, cannot get to immanence alone. He argues that reflection, a restricted noncreative scope, will never have the world and all that it encompasses exteriorized before its own "gaze" (62). The awareness of perception and ontology in a knowing-body comes from the unreflected in its transcendence of lived experience through the prereflected, the form

of unconsciousness that goes before the reflected, to propel the reflected toward the infinitude of

thought (*Phenomenology of Perception* 40). Here, we see that the unreflected operates as the

infinite of thought, while the reflected functions as the finite of thought. Lévinas argues that,

ontologically, each one is responsible to the human other in recognizing the "insomnia of the

psyche before the finitude of being, wounded by the infinite, is moved to withdraw into a

hegemonic and atheistic *I*" (*Entre Nous* 222). He alludes to Descartes's cogito, together with the

Descartesian ideas of the infinite and finite, in order to define the sleeplessness of psychism as

"an ambiguity or enigma of the spiritual" (73). For Lévinas, the spiritual is God, or the

Socratic/Platonic "Good" (200, 204). He directly references Descartes's idea of the infinite

linked to the notion of God, and the finite to the human being (220). But the field of love

between the human and God cannot diminish to a fixed form that causes separation from one

another, as mere thought contained within itself (220, 221). Instead, the affection between the

infinite and the finite allows for a genuineness of thought that exceeds its own levels to extend

toward a realm that encompasses much more than mere thought (221). Lévinas maintains that the

infinite coupled with the cogito, where nothing blocks its view of present consciousness, is a

prime feature of love as companionship in the activities of being and with fear as both reverence

for and death of the human other (221, 131).[75] He states, appropriately, that this irreducible

affectivity consists of the superior qualities and characteristics adequate for "Spirit," which is the

totality of the Good: transcendence will always rise to its proper operative function with

immanence (221).

Framing the creating and the created, Lévinas most poignantly argues that the other is

presented in the context of the assemblage of conceptions, customs, and the arts, while the

appearance of the whole is lit by the "light of the world" ("Trace of the Other" 351). This light is

each person's own cultural resourcefulness, "the corporeal, linguistic, or artistic gesture" that articulates and reveals (351). He states: "It is in the view of the Good that 'every soul does all that it does' " (*Entre Nous* 204).[76] For Merleau-Ponty, individuals who understand precisely their "project of the world"—their comprehensive efforts of observing the human other's activities of experience—know that they themselves are a "field," an "experience" on which to cross-check their subjectivity in its full inherency (*Phenomenology of Perception* 427, 429). These individuals open their minds to "a new *possibility of situations*" from people and their actions, with levels of meanings that presence for the first time, rather than to a "new batch of sensations" or simply a "new perspective" (429).

Simultaneously, Lévinas exposes the combination of factors present behind the hegemonic *I*—as the self-containment of Descartes's "I think"—that affect not only persons who enter the hegemony of themselves, but also the human other, who bears the monstrosities from a confusion in the spiritual. Yet the atheistic *I*—thought for itself only—is the one (the infinite, the power to create) that reduces itself (the finite, the created) to an object, forever outside of the trace of the Good (*Entre Nous* 220; "Trace of the Other" 359). The hegemonic and the atheistic *I* are why the overflowing play of lights is so critical in marking the events behind being and appearance, since there is no panacea that leads to understanding the depth and breadth of the phenomena of violence, being, and appearance. What role, then, does consciousness have in the interplay of lights?

Lévinas clarifies that "consciousness is a spirituality of knowledge, a spiritualty of truth [authenticity]; it is not itself a spirituality of love" (*Entre Nous* 204). He rightly draws from the Socratic assessment of the Good when he argues that the Good beckons consciousness to come, because consciousness cannot create the Good, while "wisdom" takes its instructive orders from

the Good (204). If consciousness cannot create the Good—where traces of the other reside and every individual does all that is possible—then the Good must beckon consciousness to come to the overflow of lights of the finite and the infinite, the creating and the created. But where is it possible to miss such an essential interplay of lights?

Lévinas argues: "The relation between the same and the other is not always reducible to knowledge of the other by the same, nor even the revelation of the other to the same, which is already fundamentally different from disclosure" (*Entre Nous* 28). How do we process such a statement in connection to the infinite and finite, creating and created? It is as though Lévinas has in mind Auguste Rodin's sculpture *The Three Shades*, wherein Rodin casts his own shadow one time—as creating, or creator—but replicates the same shadow, or shade, in three different positions—the created (Figures 4A and 4B). The same shade tricks the eyes of beholders into thinking that they may have knowledge of Rodin himself—the finite, the created statues. But representations do not render even the revelation of being in Rodin—the act of revealing— because the act stops short of uncovering the unreflected in the authentic signifying events behind being—the creator, the infinite. The uniqueness of this sculpture is not in the relationship between each identical pose but in the different dimensions of the gaze.

Figure 4A. Rodin, Auguste. *Les trois Ombres*. Bronze Cast Outside the Musée Rodin, Paris,

1886. Plaster, Later Bronze. Photographer: Omar David Sandoval Sida, 19 June 2016.

Figure 4B. Enlarged View.

What message might we take from Rodin and Lévinas? Henry Sayer says, of Rodin: "Even when each element of a composition is identical, it is variety—in this case, the fact that our point of view changes with each of the Shades—that sustains our interest" (*A World of Art* 190). The importance of the reality that identical perspectival changes maintain spectator interest cannot be overemphasized, for it marks the beginning of the interplay of perceptual lights with the overflowing ontological gaze of traces. What happens behind the phenomenological quest of appearance toward being and consciousness? Lévinas argues that in the maximum space of light from the interplay of lights, consciousness does not equate being with representation, and the final outcome of meanings is not present through an open view, as in Heidegger's belief (*Totality and Infinity* 27-28). Instead, Lévinas believes that consciousness forms in the dimensions of the ontological gaze—the traces—that get to the unreflected of being. In Figure 5 below, I illustrate Lévinas's precise descriptive wordings of the trace in its connections to time ("Trace of the Other" 358).
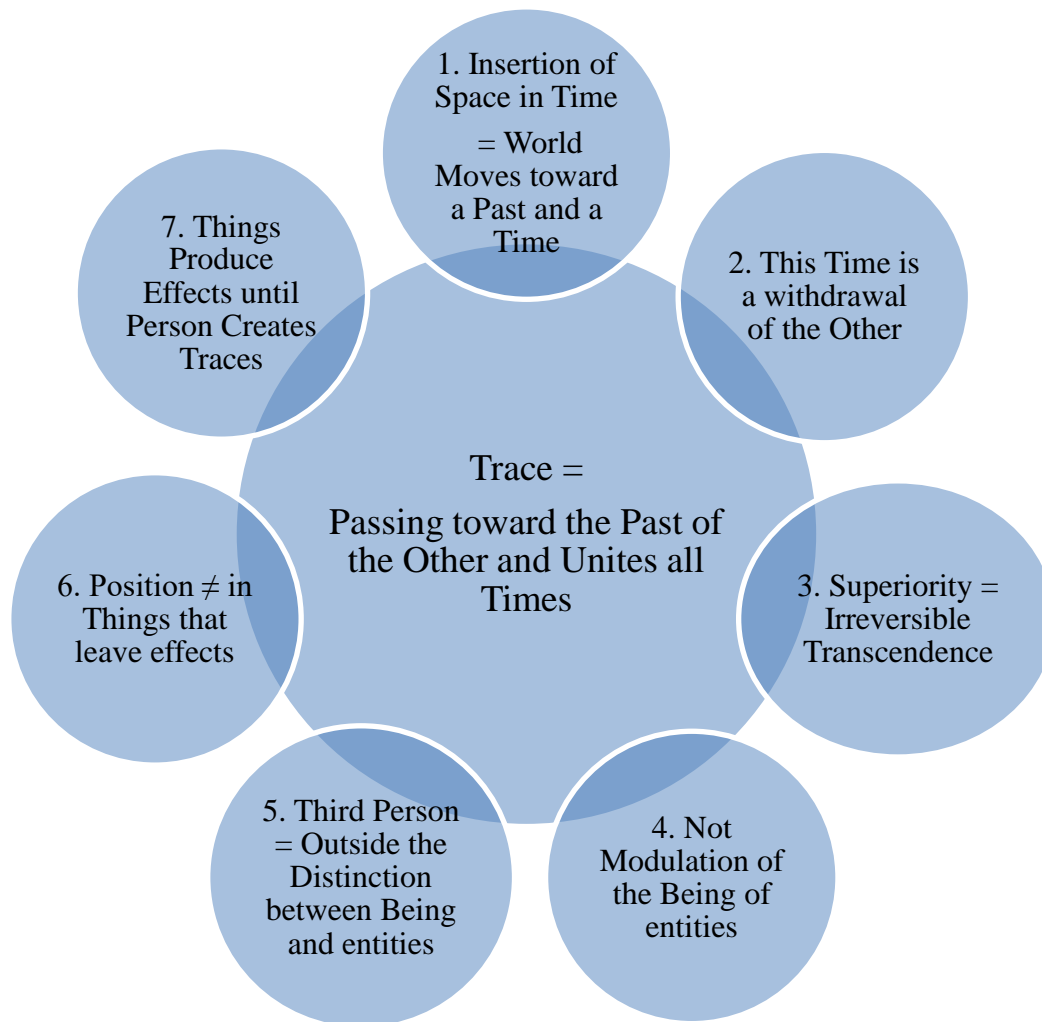
Figure 5. Original Wording of Lévinasian Dimensions of the Trace ("Trace of the Other" 358).

Following the events in Figure 5 and then applying them to Rodin's work *The Three Shades* allows for a keener awareness of how the dimensions of the trace function in the way we are to think perceptually and ontologically in the overflowing play of lights: Rodin is simultaneously creator and created and thus, in this sense, both infinite and finite. The perceptual light of the prereflected summons reflection to shine on each prereflexive ontological trace to reach the unreflected of what Lévinas calls "traces that mark them [things uncovered yet unfamiliar] are part of this plentitude of presence" ("Trace of the Other" 358). [77] In his creation, Rodin allows spectators to enter the realm of these unfamiliar presences: the ethical space of the

Lévinasian prereflexive consciousness that has the potential to understand aspects of self that equate with Merleau-Ponty's type of unconsciousness, a prereflection, which instigates movement of the knowing-body toward the unreflected in its change from the phenomenal field of experience to a transcendental field of experience (Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 129; Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 40, 61). Rodin places his work within the space of time by adding a fold—one hand touching the other—into a specific past and time.[78] The touching is the linking of the creating with the created. This specific time is withdrawn from Rodin himself, but not as passing from being to entity. Instead, the mystery in his work reveals its excellence through an unchanging transcendence when the spectator realizes that the third person of the trace—who is outside the distinction between existence and entity—is Rodin and not the spectator. Thus, not representation, but the overflowing of the play of lights on Rodin's traces, which he leaves as creator on the created, allows the spectator to understand the situational gatherings of being. The statue is a thing that can only leave effects without a cause, until Rodin picks up the sculpting tools himself and leaves his artistic traces. The perceptual lights of movement on Rodin's sculpture in the round comes not from the physical circular movement of the spectator, but from Rodin himself in his different positioning of his traces. Does the spectator then pick up these traces as part of their experiential process? How does the single vision begin to reverberate with spectators in the overflowing play of lights that gathers a thousand gazes and traces?

The statue on center stage is the image of the angle of Rodin's face, as if the spectator walks the circle of the round to look below and see the partial view of Rodin's face. The statue on stage left is yet another perspective of Rodin's face from a lower angle, as if the spectator looks upward at his face. Thus, the statue, stage right frontal view, does not disclose the face of Rodin and is eventually seen as the final view in completing the circle of the round. But

spectators realize that they have no knowledge of Rodin through this same pose from different angles. Neither do they have revelation of Rodin necessarily, until they reach awareness in the unreflected traces, which Rodin leaves behind from the moment his artistic hands guide the chisel. Oddly, yet exceptionally, at this point in the overflowing play of lights, the spectator is also creating and created and simultaneously infinite and finite. How can this be? From the spectator's present view, the overflowing interplay of lights on each of Rodin's traces propel movement toward the passing into the past of Rodin himself. Lévinas rightly states that this passing is the "very passing toward a past more remote than any past and any future which still are set in my time—the past of the Other, in which eternity takes form, an absolute past which unites all times" ("Trace of the Other" 358). In other words, spectators are in the atmosphere of time, where an unchanged transcendence of experience passes toward the past of Rodin that touches their very present lives to understand what it means in time as subject—Rodin's past, and subject as time: Rodin's lived experience in the atmosphere of time touches the spectator's present time. But it is not the identical face of representation that takes the spectator to transcendence. Rather, it is the phenomenological that lights the path for the spectator to gaze on the interplay of thought toward perception, which drives the reflective to expose the overflowing of unreflected thought in the ontological traces left behind by Rodin that go beyond mere reflective thought. Such transcendence enters into extraordinary thought, what Lévinas calls the passing to the past of the other that unites with the spectator's present time and to all time periods: a view of the past and the future from present consciousness—the highest level of consciousness—invoking a multiplicity of possible consciousnesses, even the unconscious of consciousness—that which moves itself to the place prior to knowledge.

When Rodin plays with appearance, he initiates a cause that creates the effect of questioning what is and what is *not* behind the images of Rodin himself. The interplay is twofold: the play of perceptual lights confirm that any representation is merely relational until the inner workings of such lights shine on the event of being through the dimensional traces of the third person—the human other. But Lévinas does not stop short in defining the parameters of ontology when he states: "The relation to the other is therefore not ontology" (*Entre Nous* 7). He argues that any relation toward the human other is not based on the nature of existence but only on "relationship"—a person's "invocation," which he names as "religion" (7). He chooses the word "religion" to indicate the kinship of existence as entity, but never to the extent of the embodiment of universal being (8-9). For him, the "social relation" equates with "experience" and is the space prior to any voicing of emotion or thought—the prereflexive— where being frees itself from mere connection or behavior to move into the totality of personal involvement with the human other (*Totality and Infinity* 109, 110). He offers a means of climbing out of solipsism by arguing that this social connection of "relationship" with the human other is not information but has the potential to elicit knowledge in justice for others, rather than for self alone (*Totality and Infinity* 109; *Entre Nous* 168). The Rodin piece helps define how the dimensions of the trace operate and how time can unite a past through his artistic touch that affects both present and future spectators. But without a relationship with the human other, individuals cannot deceive themselves into thinking that representations of the human other expose the being of that human. Instead, the overflow of lights directs perceptual thought of reflective relationship to flow past representation alone and toward the unreflected of relationship, where humans unite with their neighbor's face (*Entre Nous* 8-9). How do we

follow the facets of the trace to distinguish between a face that may not always be physically visible in the ontological trace and the different consciousness behind such an image?

The ontological aesthetic image presences through the varying colorations or patterns of the word "face," which renders meaning, even on a space contrary to the face itself, to realize the existence of being beyond the universal to that of a lived existence with being as entity, which cannot be severed.[79] Lévinas clarifies that varying patterns are not the face itself, yet every inadequacy can be seen in the patterns that point to the existence of a "naked and disarmed morality of the other" (*Entre Nous* 232). Why are we then deceived by the mental appearances of consciousness? Lévinas warns: even in good conscience, a deceived eye overlooks appearance in its phenomenal vistas (168). In covering the depths of the deception, he indicates that Heidegger's wish to impart knowledge of the highest importance in thinking toward being actually collides with the act of initiation from the principles of morality (168). This insertion by Heidegger into the space of time equals a world that moves toward a past and a time. Time is withdrawn out of the human other, who shares this space of time in the world, but Lévinas indicates that the good conscience may have voiced the words of thought toward being, yet not only fell short of understanding the human other, as an extension of self, but also failed to act in helping the human being in need of justice. What we see here are effects of things, and not traces left from people: signs of a failure to act and symbols of an absence of justice. Lévinas continues: "The offense done to others by the 'good conscience' of being is already an offense to the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, who, from the faces of others, look at/regard the *I*" (168). Now, modulations, which are outside the trace, are present and make adjustments and alterations affecting the being of entities. Lévinas indicates that the third person is outside the differences between being and entities, so it is essential for the interlocutor's gaze to recognize

the effects from things and modulations of being as warning signs of necessary intervention for the human other outside the trace. For inside the trace, these occurrences do not arise. Such individuals as these, Lévinas says, "remain in the world" ("Trace of the Other" 358). But he maintains that the innermost ego in its authentic identity combats the persistence of good conscience, which can both voice words and then ignore them (*Entre Nous* 170). The robust *I* in its present-view sense, instead, posits the necessary questioning of the "restful identity," and keeps itself on high alert for the inaudible yet unavoidable language emanating from a human face, even when that face itself may not be fully visible in its trace (170). How do we distinguish the signification of being when confused and bad consciences have the potential to conceal their traits and even transform their own images?

The restful identity leads to passivity. It is important to note here that Lévinas purposefully interrupts the thinking process through the paradoxes of confused and bad consciences and their relationship with passivity. Dwelling within the passive is the paradoxical. Lévinas utilizes the contradictory colorations of the word "passive" to paint an ontological image that disturbs conscious thinking on how individuals miss the contradictory signs of passivity within confused and bad consciences in their play with appearance. He argues:

> A confused consciousness, an implicit consciousness, preceding all intention—or returned from all intention—is not act, but pure passivity. Not only by virtue of its being-without-having-chosen-to-be, or its fall into a jumble of possibles already realized before all assumption, as in the Heideggerian *Geworfenheit* (*Entre Nous* 128-29).

Here, Lévinas references Heidegger's *Geworfenheit*, which takes on the persona of "*they-self*" (*Being and Time* 125). Lévinas agrees with Heidegger in this instance, in that conscience from

the persona of *they* is merely an erasure of self or a quiet concealing appearance, rather than the awareness of oneself (*Entre nous* 129).[80] For Heidegger, to be an authentic Dasein requires being present in the world with a sense of self-awareness. But for Lévinas, self-awareness is not enough, because it has the capacity to blind awareness of the human other.[81] He argues that the nonintentional, or the absent phenomenal appearance of consciousness, begins as passivity, while the "accusative [is] in a sense its first 'case' " (129). What does Lévinas mean by this complicated statement?

He holds that such passivity is not similar to delineating the bad conscience of the nonintentional, but that bad conscience actually denotes passivity that is directed not toward ourselves but toward the human other (129). He states that the nonintentional (the absent phenomenon) is beneath the gaze, or the trace, because bad conscience cannot reveal or disclose a "truth"—authentic evidence of harmful traits inflicted on the human other (*Totality and Infinity* 128; *Entre Nous* 129). He maintains that those individuals of bad conscience have no conscious meaning, no purpose, and lack the defensive coat necessary when deep and deliberate examination exposes all qualities in oneself before the "mirror of the world"—to affirm oneself more than merely by designation, social status, or office (129). He goes on to say that bad conscience is an appearance that strays from a featureless appearance (129). In what ways, and why? He holds that, before intentionality, before action of the human will, and before all wrongdoing, in the unconscious recognition of another human being as an extension of oneself, the authentic identity of a person of bad conscience timorously withdraws from the inevitable proof of any possibilities in its own restoration (129). To Lévinas, bad consciousness is not necessarily the same as Sartre's "bad faith," which loses its autonomy through social conflicts.[82] Instead, Lévinas is enigmatic in his emphasis on bad consciousness, in that he not only calls into

question what bad consciousness is in the phenomenal appearance of its passivity, but also the

very process of how we question and understand the perspectival images of passivity (111). Why

are such images important enough to single out? How do such images call for a responsibility

toward the human other with traits of bad conscience, prior to any wrongdoing? Lévinas admits:

"The human, qua bad conscience, is the Gordian knot of this ambiguity of the idea of the Infinite,

of the Infinite as idea" (*Entre Nous* 175). Within such ambiguity, perceptual images and

ontological images have the potential to morph into a tangled mesh of appearances, to the point

of being impossible to unravel. The overflowing play of lights highlights how to think about

these images of the asymmetrical face in the trace, but the images are viewed as universal being

by a "universal seer."[83] In Figure 6, I illustrate five Lévinasian trait-images that belong to bad

consciousness but are merely attached to the human other as representation—even before any
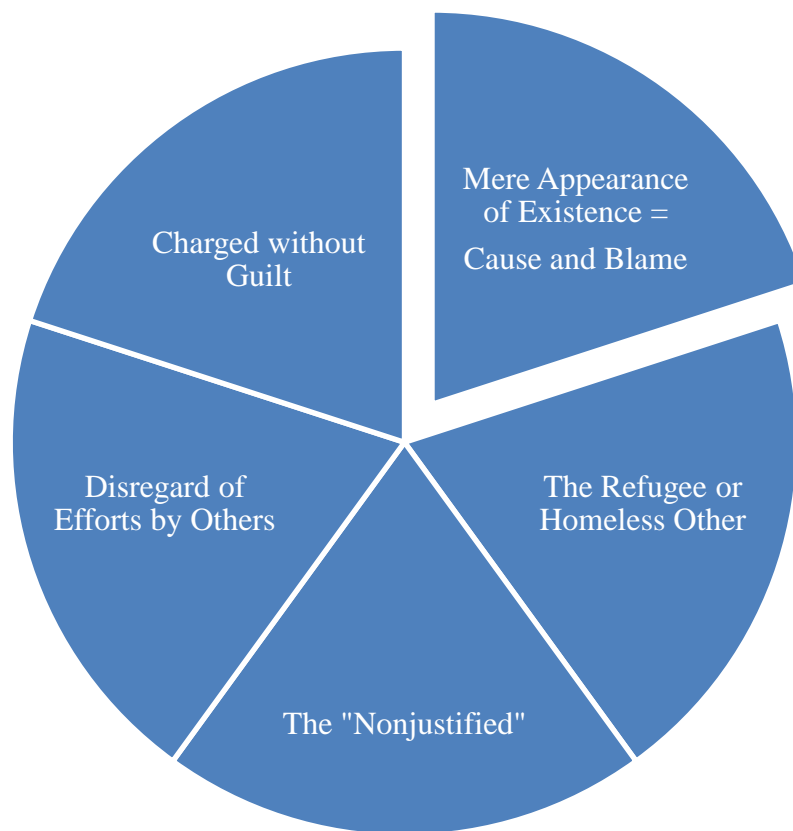
wrongdoing.

Figure 6. Lévinasian Traits of Bad Conscious as "Timidity"— Fear from Lack of Self-assurance (*Entre Nous* 129).

This diagram indicates the mental images of the third person in the trace, yet seen outside the distinction of being and entities from the inauthentic lens of appearance as being. Lévinas states that these descriptions are the inner borders of the "mental" called into question about its traits but not necessarily connected to the realm of existence (*Entre nous* 129). The images are meant to demonstrate how individuals, who see through the lens of universal being, have the capability to automatically fashion their own images of others when they do not always see their own reflection of their mirror image. The current human entity before them does not belong to the current moment of their own existence ("Trace of the Other" 358). They are constructing

associations, rather than assessing the condition of associations, as Merleau-Ponty indicates often

occurs. Lévinas maintains that the remembrance of the confirmation of oneself in both the field

of activity and in mortal existence is mysterious and confusing, to the point of recognizing

oneself, "in Pascal's terms, as being hateful in the very manifestation of its emphatic identity of

ipseity—in language, in saying 'I' " (*Entre Nous* 129). He argues that such pride, which can

vocalize "I hate," marks the exact paradoxical place of principles for perspicuity and meaning,

for power and autonomy in the human mind that marks "the advent of humility" (129). This

paradoxical ground of ambiguity—to say, I hate *and* I am humble—is the contradictory ground

in the process of the morphing of ontological appearance with perceptual images instead of the

necessary interplay of phenomenal images—as thought toward perception and thought toward

appearance in its multiple views of being as lived experience. The overflowing interplay of lights

highlights the way we think about the events behind consciousness when creating mental images

of the human other and indicates the point where appearance transmutes with being. The

morphing of images requires the sorting through of images by just interlocutors who, through the

ontological realization of the present *I*, name the absent and present issues and identities

belonging to the *theyness* of tyranny, which the objective world has fashioned.[84] Lévinas

concludes that, as long as thought is attached to object, consciousness cannot be described in

either its deepest or most basic plane and will continue in this state unless thought can align to

the phenomenal appearance of being in its far-reaching images of the many traces left by the

human other (*Totality and Infinity* 27; "Trace of the Other" 358 ). He maintains that even though

"cause and effect" can occur in detached time from one another, cause and effect remain in the

"same world," even if time divides them ("Trace of the Other" 358).

Lévinas connects to Merleau-Ponty's perceptual mainstay of why the human other must always be in the field of our vision, upon which Merleau-Ponty argues that we simply cannot perceive that individuals are both infinite and finite in their need for continual nurture of their natures: We are both the one who is responsible for the human other and the one who needs the human other to be responsible for us (*Phenomenology of Perception* 382-383). Lévinas goes even beyond responsibility to sanctity. For him, bad conscience is not merely the symbol for unsound judgment, for assuaging belligerent demands, for defending wrongdoing, or that it bears the two faces of good consciousness (*Entre Nous* 175). Rather, individuals have the opportunity to know and experience "holiness" in the "just" ones who do not possess good consciousness; yet, in their sincere search for justice, they accept the demands and difficulties of equitableness for all human beings through "holiness as the ultimate value, as an unassailable value" (175, 203). Is such responsibility too much to ask from the members of the community?

A colleague once questioned Lévinas: "The *I* as ethical subject is responsible to everyone for everything; his responsibility is infinite. Doesn't that mean that the situation is intolerable for the subject himself, and for the other whom I risk terrorizing by my ethical voluntarism?" (203). Lévinas replies that it is certainly out of one's comfort zone, and perhaps not pleasing; yet, "it is the good" (203). He admits that persuading others to accept such actions arouses disfavor and even causes failure of any consideration, to the point that such persuasion induces mockery even among those who appear as the highest thinking level of society (203). So why hold fast to the unfailing theory of responsibility, if the other chooses to leave?

Lévinas does not advocate for theory to enter the light of perceptual and ontological thought through "absolute thought"—as does Hegel—which Lévinas argues returns to the self, but devoid of the other; or through Husserl's reductionism in the "guise of the 'I think,' " that of

absolute transcendence that "returns to the immanence of a subjectivity which itself, and in itself, exteriorizes itself" (*Entre Nous* 137).[85] But he enters personally through his lived experience with acts of violence and through the "sovereign consciousness" present in the humanity of consciousness in his claim: First and foremost, we are responsible for the human beings of the social world through love as "judgment and justice" and through forgiveness (112, 19).

When Lévinas speaks of love as judgment, he draws upon deeply personal events behind the inhumanity of a deep-seated hatred, as a survivor of a Nazi prisoner-of-war stalag, and from awareness of the good in those who made the moral decision to risk their own lives in order to protect and shelter his wife and daughter in the Convent of the Sisters of Saint-Vincent de Paul outside Orléans, France (Malka 78-80). When he speaks of love as justice, he speaks of a paradoxical love, in that the "morality of respect" can only be authenticated through the "morality of love," but love of the couple conceals respect toward the third party to create an unwelcomed society (*Entre Nous* 21). When he speaks through the language of forgiveness, he addresses the unspeakable horrors of those who murdered his father, mother, brothers, mother-in-law, and father-in-law (Malka 78-80).[86] Lévinas affirms that if the one who suffers from such acts can eradicate the acts themselves, then violence diminishes and loses the effectiveness of its power, because a "divine" mercy frees blame and guilt (*Entre Nous* 19-20).

When Lévinas speaks of responsibility toward the neighbor, he means any person in need, but he does not shy away from addressing a Palestinian human being as first and foremost the neighbor of an Israeli human being. He rightly specifies that when one neighbor commits unwarranted acts of violence against the other neighbor, the qualities in otherness play a unique role in revealing an understanding of who is correct or incorrect, who is fair or unfair (Malka 296).[87] For Lévinas, the human other is the sole "being whose negation can be declared only as

total: a murder" (*Entre Nous* 9). When asked, after World War II, if the drawing of the prison

camp he endured was the " 'face of evil,' " Lévinas replies: " 'Evil has no face' " (Malka 75).[88]

How do we follow thought to perception, to language, and to the unreflected of ontological being

when destruction to the community has no face? If we follow Lévinasian thought, in that the face

in the trace is in the Good, then we can understand that the powers behind the sources of

invisible violence within political violence, within social injustice, and within a language that

leads to heinous acts of destruction on the community possess absolutely nothing good in them,

and thus are faceless—pure objects and pure violence. It is in the face of the human other in all

its manifestations that we must go, before the hour is too late—in fear for the other and in fear

for the death of the other.

For Lévinas, the ethical and future inspiration that keeps time, discourse, thought, and

perception in check abides within what he calls "true 'phenomenology' " (34, 35). For him, true

phenomenology includes the beyond of being: the holy "visitation" that stirs the "ethical

movement in consciousness" and the "*à-Dieu*"—the call and the "recalling" that leads to

neighbor ("Trace of the Other" 352, 353).[89] The neighbor is the single vision that comes from the

presentation of the phenomenological light that shines upon the unconventional thousand gazes

that track the asymmetrical thousand lights of highest thought in both the perceptual and the

ontological—of thought toward the beyond of being and consciousness in all its forms. The

Merleau-Pontian new cogito, which can distinguish appearance and being each as a

phenomenon, is the necessary cogito that filters the deluge of lights from the prereflected and

prereflexive of thought prior to any movement and to the reflected that drives such an

overabundance of lights to unreflected thought in the irreversible transcendence of the thousand

and one ontological traces in relationship with the human other.

<u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter set the groundwork in knowing the dimensional events of the phenomenal field and the operative functions behind those events: how consciousness can alter itself in relation to language, and thus alter time and being. I tried to showcase paradox as a way to get to the fullest sense of appearance and being to consciousness: the paradox of worlds, with the lived world and its foil, the objective world, in order to understand how thought functions in each world; the paradox of body, with a knowing-body striving toward highest thought and an objectified body of fragmented pieces in the object of thought; the paradox of violence, in its power to destroy, to reveal or eliminate; the paradox of the human other, with the asymmetrical face of many dimensions or the face with others as its contents; and the paradox of language that embraces a just interlocutor and one that diminishes the interlocutor to a concept in the condition of conditions. This groundwork contributes to understanding the staging of events behind real-time livestreaming videographic acts of violence that have the power to propagate ubiquitously.

Poignant questions lead to the next chapter: Are we questioning who determines the authenticity of fact and reason of the present in relation to what is behind the formation of technological imagery entangled with violent ideologies? Do we have knowledge of our present place in the right to live and to exist as *We-ness* with no *They-ness* in a social media world with an internet of multiple layers that includes picture images of heinous acts of violence? These questions are essential in extending the operations and functions of the phenomenal field to the third facet of a three-dimensional image of the phenomenal field: the perceptual, the ontological, and the pictorial. This chapter—with its focus on the first two of those facets, a deluge of interplaying

lights in the perceptual gaze of seeing prior and through others to the ontological gaze of traces

from a face—now hands the baton to the next chapter to uncover the gazes beneath visual events

of a time-based technological image of horrific acts of violence that go instantaneously

throughout the world through livestreaming videography.

CHAPTER 5

THE LAYERING OF INVISIBLE GAZES BEHIND VIDEOGRAPHIC ACTS OF VIOLENCE

<u>Introduction</u>

This chapter extends the perceptual and the ontological events of time, the social, and language in their interplay with a time-based image of actual videographic acts of violence. Its content is disturbing and demonstrates how the spectator, viewing such violence through a technological image, operates in the heart of the phenomenal field. Thus, the thinking of Merleau-Ponty, Lévinas, and even Arendtian thought on violence itself cannot be left behind, but included within the scope and sequence of Jacques Lacan's "phenomenological reduction," inspired from Merleau-Ponty's last work in progress and from specific essential elements of the Freudian drive (Bernet, "The Phenomenon of the Gaze in Merleau-Ponty and Lacan" 116). I draw from the connecting bridge that Rudolf Bernet has already established between Lacan and Merleau-Ponty, and thus, Lacan is important in three ways: the panoramic view of desire in active participation with the picture, which is "a trap for the gaze"; the phenomenological lens in the register of gazes and their operative functions in connection to specific drives; and the controlling gesture, whose presence is both inside and outside the concrete, still or moving picture image (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 89). I also acknowledge that I work within the perils of, what Bernet calls, "deep phenomena" and the many risks of "flattening" or even voiding the depths of such phenomena if the lens to see is a "pure given" (105).[90] However, to mark such phenomena within their own flaws and to keep them to the forefront through an awareness of their obscure boundaries and limitations can help differentiate the facets needed for the specific circumstantial violence, without diminishing the depths of its validity.[91]

The purpose of this chapter is to call forth the arena of events behind the gazes that operate outside and inside the livestreaming video-image: the operative functions of the "scopic drive," the "oral drive," and "sado-masochistic drive" inside the livestreaming video-image and the latency of the "threatening gesture," which designs and controls the types of gazes that accompany each drive (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts* 116, 185). This chapter is essential because it demonstrates why the Lacanian view is correct, in that the "central field" distinguishes the picture from "perception" and "representation," since such a field is present and cannot be substituted with a "reflection"; neither is it part of the intricate dimensions of "psychology," in the study of behavior and its circumstantial conflicts (108, 206 - 207). Rather the picture's "end and effect are elsewhere" (108). In other words, the image is a phenomenon and in the moving, or still, image, each of its genres has its own dimensions of multiple depths inside this phenomenon. I argue that the first physical thrust from the perpetrator calls violence into its full manifestation inside the livestreaming video-image of the active scene, together with the scopic, oral, and sado-masochistic drives, while the act summons all needed gazes for the conditional purposes: the exhibitionists upon whom the video-image relies and the controlling gesture that operates to manipulate anything inside the video-image and outside its central field of vision. Only in the dimension where the image, the social, and the cultural meet, but do not cross for a brief instant, can we mark the distinction of each and how they operate, in order to banish the malign eye from the levels of narcissism present in the perversion of norms within social institutions. The facets behind such a scene derive from the "perversion of norms" present in social institutions and mark the time underneath the subject for the ongoing resurrection of such perversion from all that is despotic in the "law of the signifier" (Simon Goldhill, *Greek Tragedy* 131; Bernet 117). Why is image a pivotal connection to how desire functions in relation to the

inaccessible gazes of the scopic drive? What are the functions of a gaze that continually images itself as consciousness? What are the specific registers of the gaze behind time, plot, and its tragic-language paradox of the human other as both friend or enemy that feed violent ideologies?

For the setting of violence inside the video-image, I rely on Merleau-Ponty's descriptions: "It [the thing] is an ob-ject, that is, it spreads itself out before us by its own efficacy and does so precisely because it is gathered up in itself" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 161). For the setting of the acts of violence, such markings of the social and cultural events identify specific gazes within their broad registers and point back to the "perversion of norms," which weave throughout historical linear time, language, and social institutions of family, religion, and government (*Greek Tragedy* 131). The perversion of norms pinpoints a "subject-with-holes" (*Four Fundamental Concepts*). Lacan argues that the subject-with-holes is only one side of an invariant form, interacting with a drive and its object of no density, no organized parts, or even a hint of silhouettes, rather is minus a subject (184). He holds that the opposite side of the subject-with-holes is the derivation of the "holes" themselves, which are present but undetermined (184). These undetermined holes can come from multiple places such as conditions affected at birth, situational environments, and biological changes in the brain.[92] This chapter, however, showcases a timeline of how perversions of social institutions fuel gazes for the continuous actions of violence.

For the setting of image, Lacan calls a picture-image a painting when he speaks of the gazes and desires in the drive of the scopic field. However, his findings on such elements are not restricted merely to paintings. Instead, the registers of the gazes and their underlying movements and influences in the drive carry over to all tangible and concrete images such as paintings; motion pictures as movies; plays presented through movies or even witnessed live; action

pictures as video games and videography; television pictures as scenes on a screen or technological pictures as scenes on a computer screen; and photographs. What changes in each separate image listed above is the "ontological structure" of each medium and the functions of cerebrum processing of each (Crowther 111; Eagleman 142).[93]

First, I describe the functions of the Lacanian phenomenological reduction in its drives, their registers of gazes, and when the drive surfaces before it returns to its initial source. Then the artwork of an artist philosopher visualizes these events behind the Lacanian phenomenological reduction. Next, I present a contemporary rubric for the time-based videographic image that requires multiple lenses of contemporary thinkers for the awareness of its ontological structure, where one side of the image presents the visible "blow" that presences the invisible fullness of violence inside the image itself; and the second side presences the gazes outside the video-image, which accompany the act itself of violence, in its specific purposes (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 119). Last, I layout the facets of the culminating point of the blow that presences the fullness of violence in all its indistinctness; and the act that summons the threatening gesture, where both act and gesture are different but operate through language for the purposes and motives of exhibitionists. Through the paradox of metaphor, Jean-Luc Nancy's text-image of the indefinite metaphor of sense words clarifies unadulterated vision, while Arendt highlights the misleading language of deceptive yet conceivable metaphors that alter vision. In the end, we see a paradox of awareness in why both Merleau-Ponty and Lacan are correct in their assessments of seeing and not seeing. For Merleau-Ponty, the gaze moves in the spectator and then moves out to remain in an extended space from this spectator: This movement allows the spectator to see because the gaze "straddles the gaps," rather than "suspending itself" (Bernet 117). Lacan holds that for the perpetrator, the exhibitionist, and those of like views, "nothing

holds together with anything else except by the arbitrary and conventional force of the law of the signifier" (Bernet 117).[94] Are we willing to see more than the mere specks visible in a video image that streams abhorrent acts of violence?

<u>Registers of the Scopic Drive and its Gazes of Desire and Fantasy</u>

This section determines the registers within the scopic drive, its gazes and operative functions, of the scopic field, and is tethered to events behind the Lacanian " 'short-circuit' " (Bernet 115). Bernet acts as the mediator to connect key defining elements in the Lacanian short-circuit. He states: "For Freud, as for Merleau-Ponty, it is the case that to see is to move and that this movement is the movement of a 'drive' (Freud) or of a 'desire' (Merleau-Ponty) which precedes and destabilizes the subject of intentional consciousness" (115). Bernet affirms that the scopic drive operates from this spherical route of the unseen, unexhausted, and unfound "*objet a*," the "gaze," which causes an individual discontentment, due to its clever evasion and its contingency upon someone other (115). The drive—in its various levels of desire—draws its beginnings from an "erogenous zone of one's own body" (115). Such a region takes its nourishment from sensations and causes, which have the ability to change and meet new directives. Lacan maintains that the movement of the scopic drive focuses in the creation of itself, and in its connection to all other drives (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 195). In the Freudian inspired drive, Lacan also distinguishes himself from Freud by proposing an additional drive that compels the perception of self: to hear, to listen, which is absent in Freudian analysis (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 195). Lacan states that seeing oneself comes back to the subject and is on a different drive than to listen ("oral drive") that goes outward towards the other (195). Through

a wider Lacanian lens of understanding why the self divides, this section also considers the oral

drive, with a discourse from the "dream" or "daydream" imagined or fully needed, and its

functions in relationship with the drive of the subject seeing itself divided in order to perceive the

events behind the gazes of oneself (185, 195, 106).

However, seeing oneself is not voyeurism in its typical Freudian sense. Bernet further

clarifies Lacan's view, in that the subject of this drive is not seen as a "voyeur" by someone

other but is seen by the picture's gaze through the illustration of "mimetism": such a subject is

placed inside the operations of gazes, while the functions of the different registers of gazes and

their desires work on their own to complete the purposes of each gaze in the drive (117). In the

Lacanian differentiation from Freud, Bernet confirms: "In insisting, firstly, upon the fact that

these forms of voyeurism and exhibitionism ought not to be confused with the sexual perversions

bearing the same name and, secondly, upon the fact that 'seeing', 'being seen' and 'letting

oneself be seen' are vicissitudes of one and the same drive" (115).[95] With such movement,

Bernet affirms that the individual then goes against its own self even when the drive presences in

the exterior boundary of one's body before it goes back to its origins (115). Thus, finding the

path of the "pre-existence of the gaze" for spectators is critical (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 72).

But why is it necessary to understand the dimensions of gazes through the intricacies of Lacanian

thought?

Lacan not only reveals the level of awareness needed for the harsh layers of what takes

place behind the relations between the victim and also for the perpetrator who commits these acts

of violence; but he enters the phenomenal field when he understands the phenomenological

reduction of events behind the gazes in the outer arena of the picture-image. Thus, he is essential

for setting the foundation of gazes outside the central field—the intermediary screen for the

subject seen as "picture"—for all still and moving picture images and specifically the livestreaming videographic acts of violence of this chapter. In addition, he reveals the gazes behind both the victim and the predator, and where such gazes derive (106). He writes: "The relation of the subject to the Other is entirely produced in a process of gap. Without this, anything could be there" (206). This capital "O" is the source feeding and nurturing the register of gazes upon the human other. Understanding the basis of Lacanian thought is first to understand what takes place in the process of gap.[96] The basis of the Lacanian ideas behind demand requires the need to be heard through language, where need is an urgent request. Desire in its voraciousness is the ravine between demand and need. The cause as fetish tracks desire, rather than to trail what gratifies desire.[97] How does demand and need function in the scopic field with mimetic gazes on the many registers of desire outside the picture-image in the shadows, which remains seemingly absent for the spectator?

Foremost, the mark or stigmata points to what comes in front of the gaze within the visible view of the spectator. Lacan writes: "If the function of the stain is recognized in its autonomy and identified with that of the gaze, we can seek its track, its thread, its trace, at every stage of the constitution of the world, in the scopic field" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 74). He is clear in stating that we do not search for the possible presence of a collective seer because both the stain and the multiple operations of the gaze work in secrecy to control what is seen and what is held back in the gaze (74). Yet, the gaze fashions its image as "consciousness" and will appear differently to each person under the particular forms of the gaze of vision and their functional effects (74).

Five operative subsets mark the gaze and its thread, its trace, and its stages fashioned by the social and cultural worlds. First, Lacan indicates that the "motive" behind the gaze's presence

can actually subdue the gaze to the point of no fear so that multiple gazes can surface (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 113). He maintains that the gaze functions in a downward slope of a craving and consuming vision for the "desire of the Other" (115). Second, Lacan argues: "The evil eye is the *fascinum*, it is that which has the effect of arresting movement and, literally, of killing life" (118).[98] The law of the signifier subdues the reality of manipulations behind its gaze and equates with harm done to the community, and thus, the name—evil eye. Third, he argues that the gaze, the *objet a*, may move into view as a representative for the "central lack," which is also manifest in the "phenomenon of castration," because a gaze is a "want-to-be" (77, 281). Such a gaze is a representative of the dominant deficiency present in the core of the phenomenon of castration with all its metaphorical division of gazes. Lacan argues that the gaze in its ability to morph into minute dimensions with vanishing operations creates a lack of awareness in the events taking place that surpass the place of vision (77).[99] Fourth, he borrows from Augustine in defining the depth of "*invidia*," as the place of surpassing envy and the willingness to "tear him [a brother] to pieces" (115-116). Fifth, "*méconnaissance*," is the inability to distinguish, or is a " 'misconstruction' " of self (281). In Figure 2 below, I illustrate the registers of gazes, applicable to all tangible images and in alliance with Lacanian ideas that indicate where the gaze, posing as consciousness, alters itself and reality. How do we recognize the conscious reality of functions and desires in the gazes that affect both victim and predator in the act of violence?
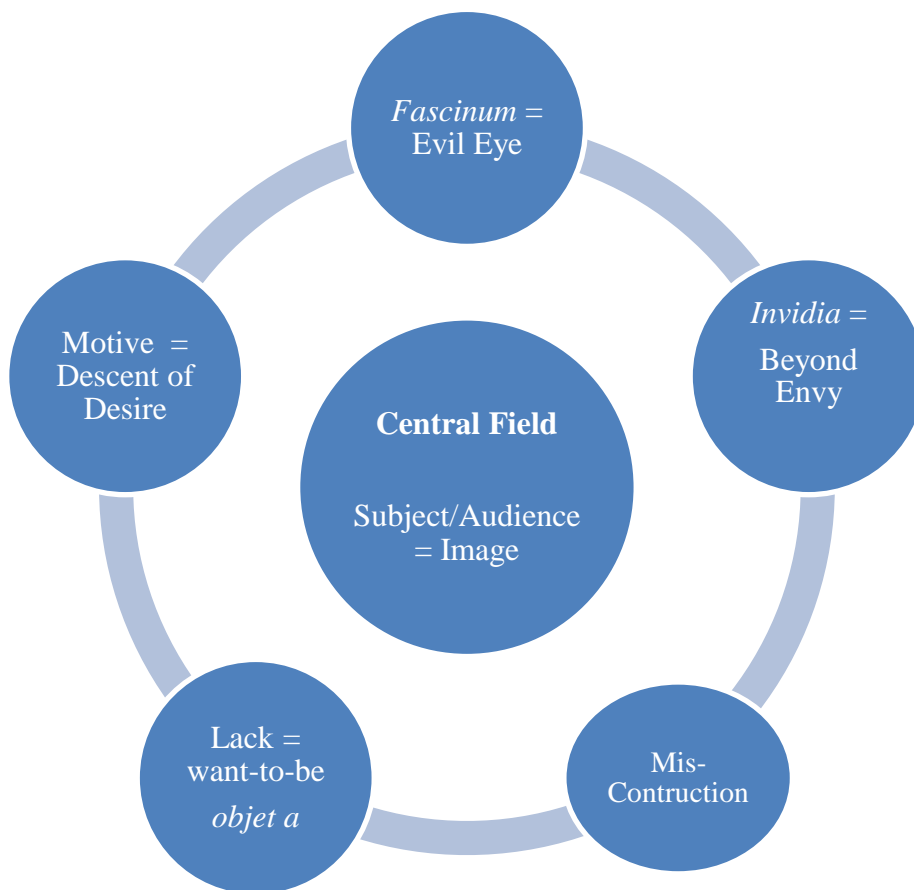
Figure 2. Dimensions of the Gaze Outside the Mediating Screen and Subject as Image.

In the middle of the diagram and critical to Lacan's stance is the central field. The diagram's cyclic shapes indicate both the circular route of the scopic drive and its registers of gazes. Lacan argues that the "register of the eyes as made desperate by the gaze" is the place where we look for the stain that will signal the functional power for the picture (116).[100] He defines the scopic field as the image and mediating screen and then argues that in the "scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture" (106). The social occasion for the gaze is the presence of "audiences" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 113). He states: "And what do the audiences see in these vast compositions. They see the gaze of those person who, when the audience are not there, deliberate in this hall. Behind the picture, it is their gaze that is

there" (113). However, such a statement raises more questions for individuals, rather than provide answers at this particular moment: Who are these persons left when the audience is gone? Is this reference to spectators in a larger sense? Who are the spectators in the play of victim and perpetrator? Are spectators active in both instances and spaces? Does the mirror function as an audience?

Bernet highlights the motive behind Lacan's "reduction-sublimation": In the outer portion of the picture, Lacan appears to be in one mind with Sartre, in that the gaze of the human other nullifies the subject (Bernet 116-117).[101] And yet, Bernet emphasizes not only the differences in French thinkers but also a subtle distinction: Merleau-Ponty sees correspondingly with the picture; but for Lacan, the subject must mark the features of itself in the "lure of the picture as being nothing," so that the subject can come close to the nearest authenticity of itself and its existence, which is different than Sartre's permission of nullification by another or even Lévinas's sacred devotion toward the human other (Bernet 117). But why the subject as a lure, a decoy in the picture-image?

Lacan cautions that the gaze glides in and out without notice and then allows itself to spread to the next course of action so that it escapes its own marks of trickery (73). He argues that when the "eye and the gaze" separate from each other, then the drive becomes visible on the ground of the scopic field (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 73). He states that the way spectators look for the authentic operative drive, the drive itself presences in its fullness, as if it has already completed its task and is back in its original space (183). He also maintains that in the scopic drive, the eye and the gaze reside only within the subject, as the subject literally sees itself. Lacan poignantly emphasizes the factors relating to the eyes: they either deeply affect a "predator" or the alleged ones who suffer as a result of predator actions; or, oddly, that the eyes

are intriguing merely for their color, shape, cells, pigments, and nerve fibers (73-74). In relation

to the oral drive, Lacan contends that the unconscious unlocks and locks itself, but the "essence"

of the oral drive identifies the sequential relations between the subject and the signs that mark the

birth of an unintegrated self (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 199). But to complicate matters, he

holds that a subject divided solidifies into a signifier—a signifier for an additional signifier—and

thus, these signifiers act as a proxy for the subject (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 199, 198).

Lacan holds that there are two victims in exhibitionism, which he has removed from all

Freudian sexual connotations: the victim seeing and this victim being seen; and one who acts and

the other who recognizes the act, while the authentic purpose of desire is the human other to the

point of limiting the force of behavior beyond just a singular incident (183). He maintains that

the subject may be misperceived but is always present in every extent, though possibly by

visions in dreams—the sleep state—or daydreams—types of visions in an awakened state (185).

*Méconnaissance* begins its misconstruction at such places of visions.[102] He argues that the

position of the subject is dictated by the fantasy itself and agrees, sustains, and feeds desire,

while subjects protect themselves by ensuring that they crave the entire assemblage of

interconnecting systems of the traits of desires (185). For Lacan, the "object of desire" typically

is a fantasy sustaining desire, but the object can be the lure and where the lure is founded within

Freudian love: one field is to love and to be loved and the other is the deepest and basic level of

systematic patterns of narcissism (186). He argues that the entire problem stems around the "love

object" and how it will eventually satisfy and perform the function similar to the object of desire

(186). As a result, such subjects, reduced to the love object, can acknowledge themselves in the

circumstances but are "split, divided, generally double" in their connection to the object that

typically will not illuminate its genuine image (185). Thus, it is the disguised gaze as subject that

tethers to the conversation between artist and viewer on how to follow the drives and their

registers of gazes outside the picture-image that give an authentic look at a self-divided. But can

a painting accomplish such a task especially when Lacan emphasizes the risk of painters

imposing their own gazes, as the sole gaze (113)?

Lacan does, however, ensure that an innovative painter has the ability to construct a

dialogue that can transform the fragmented self into an image, yet without reducing being or

allegory to a symbol (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 112). In Figure 3 below, Jacquelyn Morreau

presents perplexing and disturbing factors that allow for a clear visual of the stain, the stigmata

that marks the path of Lacanian registers of the gaze, in order to get a clearer vision of oneself.

To observe the patterns of motives that subdue the gaze of desire through a descending order,

viewers attempt to follow the "object that causes" this desire, and not the "object of satisfaction"

(278-279). In the process of seeing oneself lead back to itself, the artist renders a symbolic

reduction in the space of the division of self. What message from the artist is behind the

rendering of such a bizarre image?

Figure 3. Morreau, Jacquelyn. *Divided Self*
https://www.terriwindling.com/blog/2016/02/jaqueline-morreau.html.

It is as though Morreau knows the conscious and preconscious factors in the register of gazes and their relationship to the drive of linguistic symbols in the scopic field. She visualizes a subject divided at the very occasion of the conflict, and then points toward the origin of gazes outside the central field looking at the subject—the picture—while the subject sees herself through an authentic lens. Yet, making oneself seen in this visual, which points back to the woman, is a different drive than making oneself heard that goes out to the other. Spectators begin to recognize the traits behind each gaze from the six faces, in that they appear to take on the registers of desire from the scopic drive outside the image of the central field and mediating screen. Not only does the artist create a clear vision of this drive and its marked registers of the subject wanting to be seen, she also gives visual evidence of the oral drive of hearing and its relationship with the drive of seeing. How does the artist mark the sequential relations between the subject and signs of an unintegrated self on the mediating screen of spectators?

It appears that the artist has read Lacan. Both the one nursing and the offspring are signifiers of the signifier and represent the subject—the woman sitting at the table—while the male human other sees her from a distance. Lacan defines the oral drive as a "vampire," where the fantasy eagerly and ravenously consumes itself with the reverberation of destructive tendencies, and then reverts inward toward the self (195). As a result, he argues that a new lens needs to be applied to the "breast" other than a "food metaphor" since the form of life, the entity, needs the mother in order to be whole (195). Still furthering this new lens devoid of sexual connotation, Lacan indicates that the breast as metaphor is also the place of vision where the subject recognizes herself as "lovable" but also the point where the subject divides because of a "lack by *a*" (270). This lack, based on the many metaphorical phenomenological vistas of castration and their vigorous hostilities, stems from the *a* (other, or "otherness") and causes the

subject to want-to-be heard and seen.[103] According to Lacan, this human other occupies the gap that the subject initiates in its separation into distinct parts (270). Morreau visualizes this very moment of division in the scopic drive, while marking the illusion of an overlay of the oral drive in its distinctive traits: a mother nursing three offspring from three breasts placed in connection to the image of the woman. And yet, the overlay and image of the woman do not fit. What causes this misalignment?

The overlay cannot match because the features from both drives sequentially alter or interchange their courses or conditions in the very way that the gaze slitters in and out of registers. Morreau presents the manifestation of the scopic drive in its separation between eye and gaze through an inner image of the woman, as the woman possibly sees herself. Such emphasis on the eyes is important because the purpose behind the eye marks the stain—the pre-existence of the gaze. The eye now represents the deep affect of a predator, or that of the one who suffers from predator actions. But Morreau seems to spare the needed clues for spectators in what role the man plays. How then are spectators to understand the constraint of this human other beyond the involvement in the scene?

The answer lies in the seemingly empty pages of the book in front of the woman. The artist marks the woman as nothing in the lure within the blank pages of the book. Though spectators may misunderstand the subject, the subject is always present possibly through visions of dreams or daydreams, the place where *méconnaissance* begins its own vicissitudes. Such visions present a problem for spectators because of the similar ground of misconstruction and a fantasy that sustains and feeds desire. Following the object that causes desire, and not the object that satisfies, is now clear: the object of desire is not the fantasy, and thus the blank pages, placed before the woman. Rather the object of desire is to be found in the lure, the empty pages, and the

very direction that the artist leads the eyes of the woman: eyes that can affect predator or the one suffering from predator acts. Thus, spectators can now assess Morreau's bizarre renderings of the scene that actually depict the climax of the reversed and returning order of a drive that sustains itself by other drives it creates in order to bolster its own purposes. Two drives on two different dimensions intersect with one another. Five faces—signifiers representing the woman—point back to the five subsets of registers and their link to the operative gazes of desire: the *objet a* (the gaze), in its motives of the descending order, points to what appears to be *méconnaissance* as a misconstruction of self; when, in actuality, this is the place of vision through the oral drive's interaction in wanting to be heard with the scopic drive in wanting to be seen. The sixth face (the other in the background) is on another drive and its dimension of gazes. How do spectators process *invidia* (the beyond of envy) and the *fascinum* (the evil eye, the harm done to others and to themselves) in this frozen state before a reversed drive returns to its origin?

The woman is placed as decoy in the lure: on one level, loving and being loved points toward the second level, that of narcissism and its essence—*invidia*. The *fascinum*, however, has a seam—a thin "moment of seeing" before the malign eye takes over and closes all vision (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 118, 119). Our bafflement in questioning the purpose behind the human other, which Morreau designates in the background, actually helps identify the stain that marks the ground of the separated *a*. According to Lacan, this *a*, human otherness, is "presented in the field of the mirage of the narcissistic function of desire," but cannot be enveloped, rather stays in the hollow sphere of the "signifier" (270). The signifier is the woman. With clarity, the artist interrupts spectator thinking to portray a vivid and yet haunting image of events that mark the gap (the ground of involvement with the human other and the self) between the woman's demand (oral drive of language) to be heard and a need as an appeal. Even more revealing is

Morreau's visualization of the lure in the blank pages and the pen, which merely rests in the hand of the woman, as the Lacanian real—the "impossible"—that which is never spoken or written but directly confronts and addresses the obstacle.[104] But why choose to leave the work at the frozen atmosphere of all five registers of the gaze of the scopic drive interacting with the oral drive?

Morreau creates what a painted picture-image can allow, whereas a moving video-image cannot: Through the hollow sphere of the woman, keeping present the vision of the ashen human other (the *a*) that fills the narcissistic gap, where *invidia* originates, before the image, with all its elements in their entirety, obstructs its own moment of seeing; and where the subject has the potential to become the *petit a*—the object from the Other, who acts with a false sense of ownership of a property that merely fills the desire (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 116). Extreme self-love fuels an extreme consumption from the evil eye, or the harm upon community from the tyranny in the law of the signifier (115). Now, it is clear what Lacan means by the all-embracing actions of the evil, malign eye that possesses no pattern of protection or affection for others (115). Because of its narcissistic structure, such an eye can divide with a power greater than accurate vision can detect (115). Lacan's reminder of Augustine's distressing example indicates that part of this power comes from *invidia*: the small child inebriated with envy to the point of mutualization of his own kin (116). Following the cause of the object of desire is not an easy task because the *petit a* (object) never intersects with the gap; but Lacan states that it does escalate to the "*x*," or to that which is unidentifiable and then reflects back to the subject from the mirror of the central field, when all audiences are gone (282). This assessment is extraordinarily important, because it offers possible answers to the previous questions concerning who is left when the audience is gone. Applying Lacanian thought, the gaze fashions its image as consciousness and

appears differently to each individual under the particular forms of the gaze of vision and their operative functions.

But understanding the way in which the picture lays down its events is critical and, unfortunately, most often the least of concerns. Bernet's emphasis on Lacan's phenomenological reduction accomplishes two important factors: First, it permits "appearance" to presence itself in its authenticity in order to remove the scopic drive from its pleasures and even from its misguidance in order to direct the drive to a different purpose; and second, this purpose is a "sublimation" that appeases the longing to perceive by exposing the "veil" before the picture itself in order to reveal the covert agencies of desire (Bernet 116). The phenomenon of appearance presences when the artist's role presents a new purpose: to reveal what was behind the veil of the picture and of the drive and its registers of gazes, when both veil and registers in their satisfying and deceiving original intensions were absent from spectator view and could not be identified. Second, Bernet also acknowledges Lacan's notion that another redirected purpose can also be "aesthetic pleasure" in which Lacan calls " 'Apollinina' " (116). Aesthetic pleasure is not the enjoyment of watching acts of violence because vision as enjoyment is another dimensional set of problems, seen later.[105] What Lacan means by this term, the "Apollinaire," is the exact space witnessed in the accomplishment of the artist's mimetism. She places the subject—the woman—inside the operation of gazes, while the function of the drives and the purpose of each gaze directs the shift of emotions to the aesthetic space, where the woman saw herself as victim—caused by the human other in the gap. In what appears to be the placement of the man behind the woman, the artist cleverly positions the human other, seeing the woman, in an optical phenomenon to one side of its authentic position and at the exact place Lacan suggests: in the arena of authentic circumstances of narcissism and its dependency on insatiable

desires. Such a phenomenological reduction lifts the veil to the manipulating gazes that control

the subject.

However, Lacan argues that the condition of meaning in the words "project" and

"introject" do not have the same relation to each other; rather, they are boundaries, where

behaviors dominate and point to a "symbolic" sphere of activity, in other words, where behaviors

are present and observed (244). Yet, the arena of image is where the traits of the "imaginary"

exert their power (244). [106] Lacan holds firm that the image is not part of the real, because the

interconnections between "beings in the real"—involved with the impossible—stimulate motives

of circumstantial acts and reactions from human beings, which indicates that psychology has its

designated situations and conflicts (206-207). Rather the image is part of reality, and thus, the

key components of image (the imaginary) and behavior (the symbolic) dominate their own set of

different and complicated dimensions. However, Lacan indicates that there is a dimension where

neither the imaginary nor the symbolic meet (244). That dimension houses the missing

components that appear to lie dormant but insatiably operate through never-ending persistence.

This dimension is the silent and overlooked component connected to, but not part of the image in

its own distinct dimension, or behavior that lies on its unique dimension. Thus, the line of

questioning needs alteration because these two separate dimensions are essential and necessary:

Are we questioning the many dimensions behind behavior in the field of psychology? Do we

question what registers of gazes present behind each separate dimension of behavior? Are we

creating our own dimension of cluttered gazes by placing the dimensions of behavior, upon the

dimensions of image, and even upon violence as a phenomenon to conflict with or even cancel

the events on each of these three dimensions? How do we decipher the path that leads to the

existing dimension in which behavior and image never meet? Do we simply choose to negate the

divisionary space present behind the events of behavior, behind image, and behind violence itself, or do we choose to look behind the cloak belonging to each one?

At one point, the human other transfers to the Other: the source supplying fuel for the gazes that allow this human other to objectify particular persons in each specific situation. In the case of violent ideologies, it is to the mirage of the narcissistic function of desire in the unrestricted conventions in law of the signifier that we must go in order to find the origin of gazes from social institutions that cultivate harm on the community through: the many gazes that permit an excessive degree of the dead, so-called ideal father to survive through various registers of drives and gazes. How do we arrive at the hidden agents and their emphatic effects upon the central field of image—which is part of reality and not the Lacanian real of the impossible?

Ontological Rubric of Video-Image: At the Crossroads of Cultural Rituals of Greek Tragedy

Now that the groundwork is set for understanding the register of gazes that lie outside the central field of all picture-related images, this section recognizes the events behind, what Lacan calls, the "fascinating power of the function of a picture" (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* 116). The aim of this section is to reveal the function of the ontological interlacing parts of a video-image, using the lenses of contemporary thinkers, in order to mark the impacts of social and cultural rituals of tragedy as an essential part of the formative assessment for the rubric, all of which allows for fuller awareness in the summative assessment of how the captivating power the picture operates. Thus, the operational function of the picture is critical for understanding its presence in the scopic field and within the central field of vision not

just for the video-image but also all still and moving images, when the spectator deals with acts of violence.[107]

Critical to the central field of the video-image are the "terminal moment" and the blow, the physical thrust presences the manifestation of violence (118, 119). The terminal moment is the moment of seeing and its "suture" in, what Lacan calls, a "conjunction of the imaginary and the symbolic, and it is taken up again in a dialect, that sort of temporal progress that is called haste, thrust, forward movement, which is concluded in the *fascinum*" (117, 118). This seam in the *fascinum* is the slight and momentary view of the dimension in which the imaginary (the image) and the symbolic (housing behavior and ideological law) are used at once but do not cross into the presence of one another because of the conjunction itself (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 117, 118). The actual blow itself, because the blow can be deadly, instantaneously presences dimensions of violence, and for this reason the spectator can be deceived because, as Lacan indicates, following the blow alone is deceiving. This same deception engulfs the act: The act instigates purpose and through language to differentiate the paths that trace back to the subject-with-holes and the derivation of those holes; and the act can get bypassed through words themselves.[108]

Within Lacanian thought, Bernet states that the spectator's own gaze, unseen to itself, responds in an unperceived way to the picture's gaze, but the effects from the picture's gaze is definite: Such an unseen gaze, changed by the picture, can only reclaim itself inside the picture, and yet, the way back to itself is an expulsion for spectators because they continually carry within them the markings of the picture's gaze (Bernet 113).[109] Awareness of the ontological structure of the video-image alters the freedom of spectators to recognize their own gazes and even the gazes from the picture itself. Why even acknowledge, as essential, the ontological

structure of real-time moving pictures of acts of violence if experts cannot agree on the way the brain processes visual movement?[110]

Because of the ongoing debate on processing motion, understanding the case-specific ontological gazes both inside and outside the central-field of real-time videographic acts of violence do matter and benefit all individuals in recognizing that such ontological parts can alter consciousness of self for both subject and audience in the central field of the ontological alteration of the video-image and its screen of mediation. The question then becomes: Are experts in their fields willing to expand their lenses, freed from any underlying motives or fixed lens? Are they willing to rethink and redirect their questioning of the same past problems to a new line of questions, which consider the different dimensions of the phenomenal field and the many register of gazes behind acts of violence and their moving video-images? However, finding the undetermined holes of a subject—and their connections and signs that point to language, time, and act—are not on new ground. Moreover, spectators are not even on new ground in relation to videographic acts of violence documented and re-presented. Instead, we are on historical linear ground underneath the subject, as the Nazis performed the same horrific acts of violence on human beings during World War II and filmed such atrocities. Surviving film demonstrates the frame of mind from those who partook and witnessed such appalling acts of violence as enjoyment and entertainment.[111] The only new ground here is that such livestreaming can instantaneously and ubiquitously envelope worldwide communities, where shocking and horrifying imagery of real-time violence has the possibly to resurface in an individual.[112] How do we structure the rubric for the accurate measurement of the perceptual and ontological progression of events behind the social and cultural gazes outside the central field of the

ontological components of the video-image so that we do not invalidate any facets of phenomenal depth?

First and foremost, the proper setting must be articulated in acts of violence of this focal video-image: Spectators are not in a fictional narrative of acts of violence in a videogame, or cinematographic acts of murder and mayhem, but are in the brutality of graphic and actual events of real-time planned and perpetrated acts of violence from hatred, profound fear, or both, while viewing being as universal, in other words, no represented quality or extreme stereo-typical mode of appearance. Understanding the ontological alterations behind the video-image requires a contemporary net of thinkers and artistic genres in order to organize a more accurate rubric for the video-image. Though the ontological structure can continue to change depending on updated current findings, the following rubric provides enough information for the assessment needed in this chapter.

Laura Mulvey discusses violence on women from the gaze of the fictional narrative of cinema, yet she still contributes relevant insight toward the ontological components applicable to the video-image through the delineation of codes that extend the "look" (Mulvey, *Art in Theory*, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" 988). Mulvey states: "The conventions of narrative film deny the first two [looks: camera and audience] and subordinate them to the third [look: those persons involved in the active scene], the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience" (988). Thus, in an act of deception, the camera and audience take on the presence of persons in the active scene. Narrative film removes the distancing awareness of the audience in recognizing the many factors taking place behind the image, while the audience anticipates the continuation of the narrative plot. For Mulvey, to release the controlling factors behind *the look* for both camera and audience

extinguishes the fulfillment of gratification for the voyeur, upon whom the film relies (989).

Equally as important, Bertolt Brecht wanted spectators to look through the "A-effect" that could

release them of their social and political dispositions in order to achieve the authentic events

behind the social circumstances and then place the act into correcting the circumstantial event

(Willett 139, 137). Also, important for the rubric is the act through Brecht's lens. Willett states

that Brecht, through his "epic theater," continually observed not only what the actor did, but

"what he is not doing" (137).

Though Nicholas Bourriaud primarily discusses art, his insight into the ontology and

genre of the video-image contributes in five specific ways toward existence and entity. First, the

"camera," through its influential movement and ploys, personifies itself as "human presence" of

the concrete and the actual, allowing the presence of the camera to control the scene, because

"*the poll*" is the "videographic resident," as "humanoid," that now controls the risk of unfamiliar

activity and the process of selecting the crowd (74, 75). Second, in relation to entity, the video-

image acts as the operative function of the 1800s "sketch" for discovery and problem-solving

(75). Third, with time as a dimension of being, Bourriaud articulates the novel tactics in relation

to time: "Video, as we have noted just as much in the legal domain (with the Rodney King

assault, filmed by an 'amateur,' showing King being beaten up by the Los Angeles police) and

the debate stemming from the Khaled Kelkal affair, *works like evidence*" (76). He continues to

hold that when any person can video other people for any reason, then "surveillance" can

effectively position itself to record movements of individuals everywhere (77). Thus, video is the

realm, permitted by law, to provide evidence and justify surveillance. At this place, motives may

appear to be present for the legal domain of evidence and surveillance; but if individuals look

only here, then they miss motive altogether because this place is actually the tragic culminating

point of what Lacan indicates as the situational descent of desire from bad to worse to tragic.

Fourth, on existence, we can determine that the "beholder"—persons who look at the scene, audience—changes into the subject of the videographer's eye.[113] Last, in relation to entity, the "filmed visitor" passing by the active scene is now the "pedestrian subjected to a repressive ideology of urban movement" (77).[114] If the video-image has the ability to discover and problem-solve, then what specific discoveries arise for the beholder as subject of the videographer's eye are to be discovered in livestreaming acts of violence and the video-image?

Working within the outside gazes of the central field of the video-image, Brian Massumi holds that "all visual perception is virtual" and contributes to this contemporary rubric in the "virtual events of ritual" and the lens of an "invoked relational reality" (Massumi 124, 126).[115] He states that the virtual events of ritual enact systematic modulations of an extreme degree of exuberance that enhances their capabilities for "truth-producing powers" (126). According to Massumi, relational reality can first trace world patterns (part of the ritual process) that bring about positive ends, if the physical is in harmony with one another and the "cosmological realm"—domain, time, causality, and freedom—is influenced toward action without sensual pleasure to body or mind (126).[116] An invoked relational reality petitions a call for help for the concerted occupied space of personal encounters, where causality and freedom are questioned (Massumi 126). Invoked relational reality is the gateway to the seam in the *fascinum*—for the moment of seeing. But how are we to understand the different avenues of ritual?

Within the "ritual patterns" of tragedy, Simon Goldhill writes: "Tragedy does not simply function as a ritual but, as it does with myth, it represents, redeploys, and comments on ritual" (*Greek Tragedy* 336).[117] As the primary thinker on tragedy, he contributes the necessary knowledge for problem-solving the ontological factors behind the gazes through the ritual of

tragedy. However, he looks not at what measures the literary elements and their structural traits

of tragedy, but from the lenses of distinct origins, histories, and the mental growth progressions

of humans, which render supporting evidence that is absolutely essential for the whole of society

(*Greek Tragedy* 336). Goldhill delineates two types of ritual that prove vital for tracking the

thread of gazes: " 'apotropaic' ritual – ritual designed to turn away (apotrepein) disaster"; and

"*Oresteia*" of murder and perversion of norms (140; 333). He acknowledges that the "social

function of language" in cultural worlds is essential for tragedy and ritual to mark the "tragic

moment" that takes place when a hole opens in the crux of relationship in human lives and when

the welfare of human beings is endangered (140, 334). The hole houses " 'legal and political

thought,' " together with " 'mythical and heroic traditions,' " where distressful contradictory

values remain in place (334).[118] Such a hole is the same space of the Lacanian gap of desires.

The tragic moment causes this hole—the dimension where thought and tradition interweave the

political, the heroic, and the mythical—to envelope motives and their descent of desires. In

Figure 4 (below), I illustrate the rubric of ontological components inside the central field of a

video image, where the gazes of *Méconnaissance* move onto new ground of the video-image of

ontological misconstruction. The blow of physical thrust upon the human other presences the

fullness of violence and all its inner facets inside the central field of vision to saturate the field

with the gazes of violence itself, together the misconstruction of ontological components of the

video-image. The gazes outside the central field operate within their functional purposes.
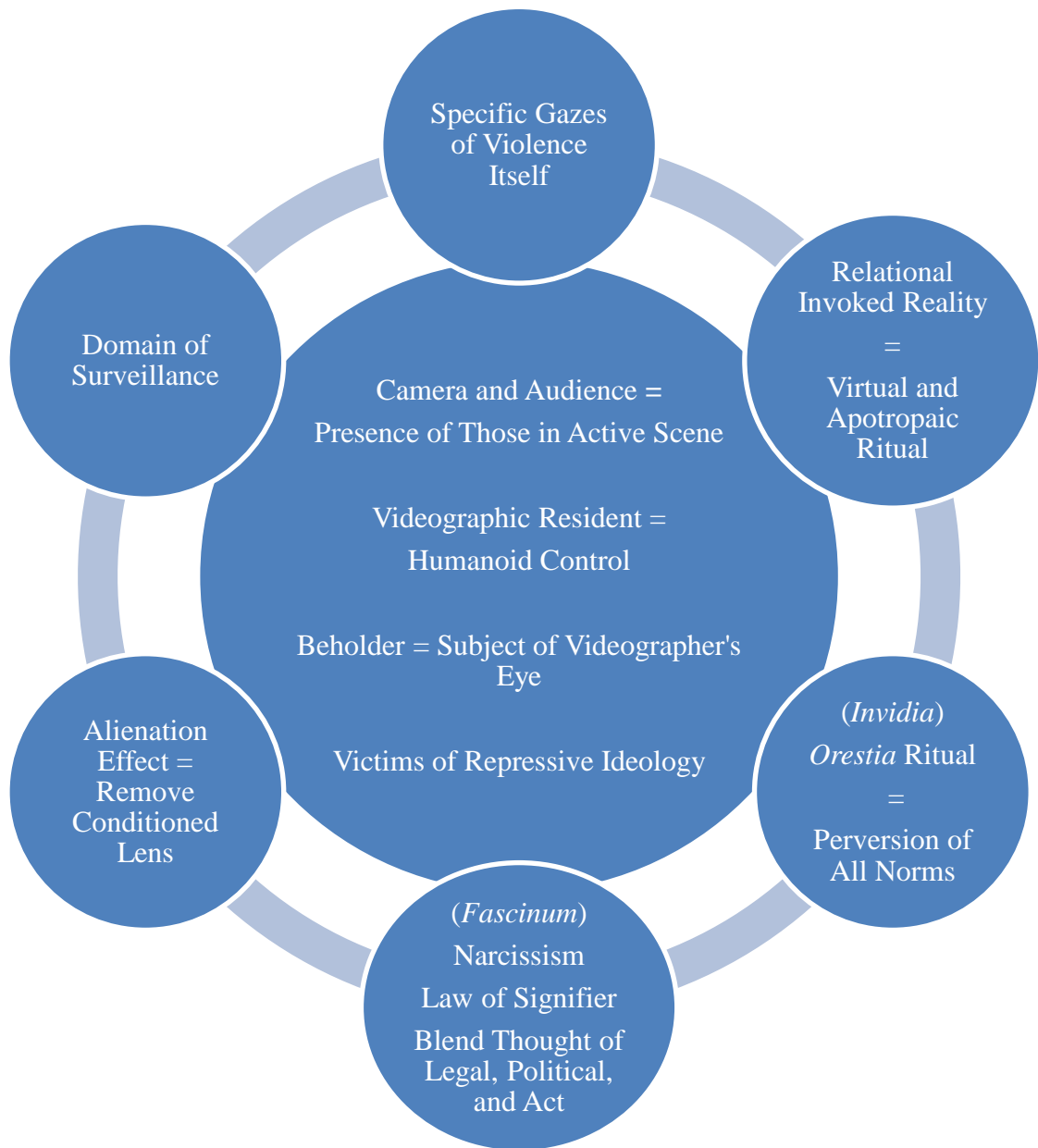
Figure 4. Perceptual and Ontological Components of Gazes in the Video-Image of Acts of Violence.

      Any time individuals deal with acts of violence committed upon the human other, they are on the world stage of tragedy. The features of ritual and their patterns embrace tragedy. The narrative plots do not change—names and faces change. Can the video-image and its operative

function of the sketch for discovery and problem-solving counter itself to make its misconstruction of ontological parts less effective?

As seen in the genealogy of artworks on acts of violence in chapter two, Henry Taylor's painting of reimaged violence—*The Times Thay Aint a Changing, Fast enough!*—illustrates the actual events behind the tragic death of Philando Castile. At his exhibition, Taylor also provides the livestreaming videographic account of this real-time disturbing and appalling event in the midst of its aftermath: the shooting of Castile by a police officer. The girlfriend of Castile, the messenger narrator and victim of trauma, begins the livestreaming videography in the chaotic aftermath of the shooting. She reports that Castile—who still speaks actively in the scene even in his dying moments—was wrongfully and unjustly shot during a routine stop of a traffic violation. No accurate examination could take place in chapter two in connection to these videographic images of the tragic scene, because the groundwork had not yet been established for precise descriptions needed of what takes place behind the components of violence itself, or the ontological structure of the livestreaming events of the tragic scene. But authentic perceptual understanding is now possible with a wider scope in place from an ontological rubric that draws the social and cultural portrait of the videographer and the scene of apotropaic ritual patterns. Why are such patterns of in tragedy and ritual important in assessing videographic real-time acts of violence?

According to Goldhill, apotropaic patterns mark the place of violence and the sudden and total end of all distinctions for the "city" so that this city can avert the calamitous occurrence and carry on without interruption (333).[119] He writes: "Tragedy, Girard argues, is a dramatisation—and thus ritualisation—of the force of threatening undifferentiated violence, a representation which displays the threat of disorder to expiate it" (332). Addressing the mark and movement of

violence—its specific dimensions—is to identify its undifferentiated gazes; for these dimensions are rife inside the central field of video-image because the blow of violence, not the act itself, presences the fullness of undifferentiated gazes of violence for those in the active scene and remain present for spectators once the videographic scene begins. Borrowing from Merleau-Ponty in reference to the thing as a "node of properties" and applying it to violence: When the blow presences the manifest of violence, all dimensions presence even if the blow invokes only one dimension or trait: dimensions that attach to an unfathomable ground level.[120] The node of properties from this particular circumstance distinguish the ambiguous dimensions of unalloyed violence of fewer capable, or even pressing, realizations of its gazes. Of pure violence and of immediate violence that presences the gaze of power in its guise of authority. The gazes of phantomlike features point to the extant institutional dimensions of police violence for legal ends with no clear legal situation; and from the institutional gazes of the delegated right to determine the result of actions within the broad range of boundaries.[121] The deadly physical thrust opens all dimensions of invisible guises of power, authority, and strength, alongside the act—initiated for purpose and will through language—that can distinguish the subject-with-holes. Police presence appears through the gaze of power from the guise of authority; the gaze of authority that demands unquestioning recognition; the gaze of violence that appears as a prerequisite of power; and third, implements of violence as a substitute for strength.[122] Such dimensions presence themselves when the designated person of police authority, in this particular incident, is aware of the presence of a gun in the legal possession of the victim. The gun is unseen and the police officer wants the gun to be seen. The scopic drive to see and the oral drive to hear are intermingling within all persons on all spectrums of this scene.

At this critical place, it is crucial to indicate Arendt's line of argument presented in chapter three: a gun cannot produce power but can only produce absolute obedience. However, in the first level of understanding, we tend to say that Arendt is incorrect in such a statement because power—in its multiple disguises—is rife throughout this tragic plot. Yet, on the deeper levels of awareness, we can see that absolute obedience surrenders to fear, not power; and thus, Arendt is on the mark in correctly identifying the levels behind the gun, an implement of violence itself, and not its opposite of power. Consequently, fear is the *peripeteia* (of which the messenger narrator later acknowledges from the moment of the tragic plot's beginning), the turning point of this tragic situation, that settles into the officer's mind, who looks through the lens of outward appearance as universal being and thinks he deals with a specific criminal other than the current victim before him, with no criminal history. Such fear on both sides leads him into the dimension of the loss of power, and thus to the actuality in the exchange of power for violence, which invokes the relational reality of tragedy. Thus, the tragic plot points toward the unwarranted use of deadly actions that occurred in a routine traffic violation of a broken tail light.

Inside the central field of the video-image, where the ontological components are mis-constructed, the camera and audience are now the human presence of the active scene. However, the poll—the videographic resident—the collection of opinions from those in the active scene and spectators summoned to the scene, are subject to humanoid control of the risk factors for this act of violence. This humanoid presence acts in distancing awareness of the actual event for spectators. The camera films the face of the videographer herself, and thus, the messenger is now the beholder (the looked upon) and is the subject of her (videographer's) own eye because she delivers the events that unfold the tragic plot, enabling the introduction of a critical perspective

into the scene—the alienation effect. As a result, the camera inverts both itself and the audience

to the concrete presence of the real and the actual. Such misconstruction of the ontological

influences the ability to make sound judgement in the videographer's call for the problem-

solving reasons needed for past and present experiences on ethnicity and on authoritative

brutality. However, it is not only inversion of presence that adds to layers of misperception, but

even the message of tragic events is at risk. In order for spectators to reach perceptual,

ontological, and linguistic awareness of presence and discourse, two major factors need to take

place: (1) narration must have brief intermittent moments in order to process the most basic and

important features of the telling of the course of actions; and (2) the "essence" of the descriptions

of the event guide awareness to its highest peak. [123] The messenger narrator does indeed pause,

either on her own or from the interruption of others in the active scene, enough for the spectator

to pause and process the sequence of actual events. But how do spectators find the essence of the

descriptions to reach the level of awareness for this tragic situation?

This essence is evident in the videographer's language. When the messenger, the victim

of trauma, instigates the joint participation in assessing the actuality of events in this real-time

act of violence: She invokes relational reality of the nonsensuous through the virtual event of

ritual in order to come to the authentic events taking place behind the events of violence and the

events presencing all gazes.[124] This nonsensuous realm is the essence of the messenger's

narration, and takes place after the fatal tragic act of violence, where spectators are now in two

realms: the virtual ritual event and the tragic events of apotropaic ritual. To reach the highest

peak of awareness in perception, ontology, and the scopic field of the video-image in this actual

event, the messenger must relay messages of the tragic moment, as in a variant of the Greek

chorus. However, the tragic moment is the core of the missing factors of the social experience

because it presences the hole, the gap of desires that intermingles with all legal thought and tradition of social institutions, and where distressful and contradictory values still remain in place. The hole opens the very instant that human welfare is threatened. Thus, the messenger narrator calls each spectator to this place to differentiate the violence itself in order to distance themselves from the open hole in the city so that the city of human beings moves forward in awareness of the many factors that take place behind this tragic scene. In the concerted space of personal encounters, individuals, free from any controlling senses, can trace world patterns that lead to the correct line of questions for the causality and freedom that is at stake.[125] But not all spectators are willing to participate in this nonsensuous call to the event that opens the hole to the fullness of the sensual, the *fascinum*—eyes of tumultuous desire to harm, and where narcissistic thought mingles with perversion in the legal, the heroic, the political, the mythical, and traditional of all social institutions. At such a place of the fullness of undifferentiated violence, rather than going away from the danger of the opened gap, some spectators are led into it, by motives intermingle with a descent of desires, which conceal themselves. How then are we to process language in a scopic space when dealing with acts of violence?

It is in the role of "messenger-speeches" that identifies the credence to the tragic language both for spectators and also to the adverse effects on the part of spectators, unintended by the messenger.[126] The actual face spectators see through the camera's presence is the messenger transformed from vision into, as Lévinas indicates, the audible for language.[127] The tragic discourse from this particular messenger narrator marks the very patterns of apotropaic ritual: reveal the threat of disorder and differentiation in order to expiate it. Those spectators who follow the overflowing play of lights from both the perceptual in ritual and the ontological of the apotropaic that marks the patterns of both existence and entity see as Merleau-Ponty,

correspondingly with the picture. For this case-specific tragedy, the picture is the face of hearing and language.[128] Here, the scopic drive to see instigates the oral drive to hear and be heard. This type of awareness is why everything holds together for such spectators. Bernet specifies that the gaze in Merleau-Ponty's assessment moves through the subject and comes out of the subject but catches itself in the far distance of the subject because it hovers over but does not go into the gap (Bernet 117). Yet, when each spectator's gaze recovers itself in the image, as Bernet emphasizes, such a gaze carries with it the influence of some agent from these events. In the video-image, the face of the audible of language is the filmed visitor, who is subjected to the cruel and unfair sensations associated with ideology from the city and all those spectators who side with such ideology. When the dramatic effects of discourse fail, ritual's perceptual images and tragedy's ontological images cease to have the overflowing play of lights because the messenger narrator has no control over the silent consciousness that awaits words.[129] What is still to come for this messenger, and all victims of trauma in relation to specific situational acts of violence, is an arduous road of suffering in search for the source of peace from the loss of being and time.[130] If apotropaic patterns of ritual can allow spectators to see in accordance with the video-image and in the distance of the gap, the hole that houses traits of the fascinum of narcissism and the invidia beyond envy, such a hole consumes the subject-with-holes in the central field of the video-image of livestreaming acts of violence.

Without the content of this chapter, chapter four could only mention that some perpetrators of mass shootings livestream through videography their monstrous acts of violence in order to place them on the worldwide web for exhibitionist purposes. Authorities remove such visual atrocities but not before many have already viewed them and others have secretly stored them. At this place of horror and trauma, the whole of society cannot process the multiple

layering behind such an act. It is easier not to process such atrocities because they seem too much for the mind to bear. However, when these mass shootings continue to occur on different religious and ethnic groups in world-wide communities, and when perpetrators call together others to view such monstrous videographic images before committing these very same acts, then it is essential that we ask difficult questions and go to undesirable depths to find answers— because one life can be stolen away instantly from an unbridled desire to destroy and such aggression and destruction causes a web of lifetime sufferings for many. Since the physical blow summons violence in its fullness, the act marks the purpose of the violence and the subject-with-holes. Only when understanding motive in its downward movement of desire can we trace the threads of desires in their origin of purpose for the act itself.

The motives come from the *Oresteian* ritual narrative and this ritual narrative is the underlying factor that dangerously and deliberately distorts the misconstruction of the norms from social institutions. We cannot say that the malevolent plot of violent ideologies is the *Oresteian* ritual narrative of perversion because that would be placing, as Merleau-Ponty indicates, a world of ideas from a specific time and culture onto a current culture. But when these traits appear as the same characteristics in current violent ideologies, then we need to question the range of events that take place behind such traits. In outlining traits of *Oresteian* ritual, Goldhill states: "When Clytemnestra in the *Oresteia* describes how she killed Agamemnon, she says: 'I struck him twice, and with two groans his limbs went slack. I add a third blow as he falls, an offering to chthonian Zeus, the Saviour of corpses' (*Ag*. 1384-6)" (131).[131] This act, its purpose, constitutes horror on many levels. Goldhill indicates that Clytemnestra casually presents her acts of violence, as a celebrative intoxicating situation and as though they represent the origins of the act of pouring wine for the gods that began all Athenian formal discussion

meetings or intoxicating social events (131). Goldhill acknowledges that all family and

politically-related ceremonies and festivities were offered to the "Olympian gods, the chthonian

gods, and, thirdly, to Zeus the Saviour" (131). He emphases that in Clytemnestra's forceful

arrogance, she assumes that she has the same rights as a god and offers up her murderous acts to

both Zesus and corpses to mark her own success and enjoyment in the bloodshed of the

collective family instead of the celebratory pouring out of "wine" in honor of family (131). In

following the linguistic metaphor, corpses then equate with man past and dead reflected in

necrological discourse that perverts an irreversible past in order to allow the cycle of violence to

continue through the descent of desires. In the murder of both husband and king, laced with

religious overtones, this act presences all the gazes of perverted norms that interweave

throughout three social institutions: family, religion, and government.

The gazes of perversion in religious ritual surface to debase the celebratory ceremonies

connected to systems of sacred beliefs (*Greek Tragedy* 131).[132] Goldhill confirms: "Indeed, the

language of the rite of sacrifice in particular occurs throughout the *Oresteia* (and other Greek

tragedy) to invest killing and other acts of violence with a sense of sacramental transgression"

(131). He holds that the infusion of systematic communication and visible entertainment of the

*Oresteian* ritual in its malicious reversal of norms are absolutely necessary to control the affect

of the emotions of people to instigate their own violation of law and moral social codes and

principle (131). Some tragedies, etched with mixed figures of twisted overlays, misrepresent the

paragon for the "worship of the god" and cause difficulty in recognizing the origin of the

perversion of norms in religious and family social institutions (131). These same multiple gazes

of the perversion of norms constitute the shadows outside the central field of video-image of

real-time acts of violence and give a false and perverted sense of justification of murder as

sacramental on their part toward the ones they deem as transgressors. At this place of language in the rite of sacrifice, perpetrators and those of like minds, who embrace such acts are mistakenly identified as extremists, when, in actuality, they are perversionists. How can such acts of perversion not only survive but continue to thrive in the present?

We follow Goldhill to end of his line of reasoning, as he writes: "So, the final scene of the *Oedipus at Colonus*, which stages the death of Oedipus and his transformation from blind exile to superhuman hero, a figure honoured with offerings by the Athenians at Colonus, mobilises the powerful religious feelings of hero cult" (*Greek Tragedy* 131). The gaze of murder from the hero cult laced with religious pathos splinter into an assemblage of gazes that mark each desire from the ground of *invidia* (beyond envy) and the *fascinum* (narcissism) with the gaze of religious institutions—their associated configurations of persons, doctrines, conditions, circumstances. Spectators that embrace such gazes are not universal seers; rather they see according to their constructional gazes from both hero-cult and religion to constitute their perversion of sacred ceremonial acts from their specified religion, or in what they associate to certain religions. Goldhill writes: "Tragic language, then, combines contemporary tropes and vocabulary of the public institutions of the city with elements of heroic grandeur which stem both from the epic poetry to the past and the sacral splendor of religious rite" (135). What happens here in the perversion process is that hero-cult worship then heralds itself as its own social institution, which takes its members from all regions of society through falsified means. How do we identify such tragic language interlocked within culture and social institutions?

Goldhill confirms that distinct collections of tragic language pinpoint the "sign and symptom" of the tragic performance of "fifth-century enlightenment" as a fast-acting movement in altering culture: progenitor traits and qualities perceived with adoring praise and worship that

pass successfully from one society to the next generational one (135). Here, two social and cultural worlds are at paradoxical odds: the sign indicates that something indeed exists and takes place in actions; and the symptom marks a bad situation, in that something is wrong with mind or body. The paradoxes of violence indicate the violent event happens with great force to separate a distortion of meaning or fact; yet, acts of violence through a perversion of norms are presented as religious ritual, as if pleasing to the gods or to the polis. At the place of polis, we cannot ignore the cultural implications that P. E. Easterling highlights in Euripides's *Hecuba*.[133] He acknowledges that Hecuba's character represents control and command, yet she exemplifies inadequacy and collapse from pressure or anxieties (*Greek Tragedy* 175). He cautions that her acts and language in the final scene cannot go unnoticed: she directs the females around her in a "farewell ritual for the Trojan dead," that of pounding on the earth beneath them while summoning offspring and spouses (177). Easterling writes: "The emphasis is all on loss and annihilation, but at least one statement can be understood differently by an audience brought up on epic poetry. When the Chorus sing that the 'name of the land will vanish' and 'Troy no longer exists' (1322-24) they are singing for an audience for whom Troy's name has survived" (177). This place of the proclaiming chant to spectators, who keep the cessation of the name alive, is the place of all that is arbitrary in the law of the signifier. What then are we to grasp from the applicable features in the perversion of norms and their chaos of gazes from multiple levels outside the central field of the livestreaming abominable act of violence against human beings?

In Figure 5A, I illustrate what the act itself of violence presences: the perversion of gazes from family norms in their purpose of violence for gods and corpses; from perverted religion norms in the purpose of violence as sacrificial transgression; and from perverted government-political norms in the purpose of violence from hero-cult worship. The front side of the central

field of vision of the video-image is subject-with-holes, where outside gazes look at all subjects
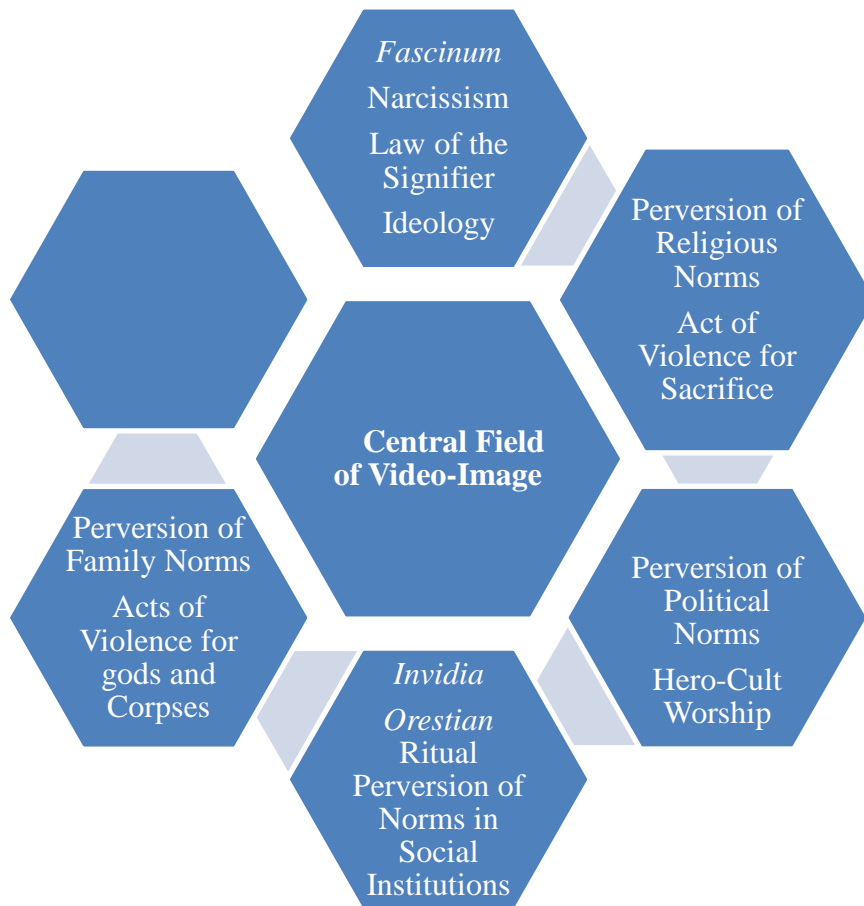
of the video-image as a picture.



Figure 5A. Gazes of *Oresteian* Ritual Outside the Central Field of Video-Image.

Figure 5B. (Arendtian) Circular Gazes of Invisible Violence Inside the Central Field of Video-Image Scene.

Keeping to the forefront that within the inverted ontological structure of the video-image, the camera and the audience are the human presence of those person in the active scene: Spectators are now the subject of the perpetrator's eye. The videographed visitors are the innocent victims of the oppressive ideology that infiltrates the scene. The humanoid presence of the camera in this tragic atmosphere controls the variables of the look for spectators, where spectators can only keep a distant awareness of the narrative structure of the perversion of norms from all social intuitions.

In Figure 5B (above), I illustrate the differentiation of some of the many facets from invisible violence that presence.[134] The act, the purpose, precedes the blow but the deadly blows summon the fullness of violence itself for all purposes, allowing the gazes of perversion to

operate fully. Its gazes of both visible (physical) and invisible violence circulate the active scene

of the central field in the video-image; and differentiating violence is crucial, even in knowing

the risk of losing site of its concealing factors, because spectators are in the hole, the gap of

desires where thought intermingles within all the perversion of social norms. Violence opens

itself up in all its collective parts over the entire surface of the central field. Recalling Arendt's

analysis from chapter three, in real-world circumstances, violence, force, and strength, together

with power and authority, spill over from their own regions, causing more indistinctions, and

confounding spectators' ability to recognize each dimension, which, in turn, allows violence to

appear as a hidden good, as it does within perverted norms. Such spillage takes place during the

actual event of violence, indistinctions and misrecognitions emerge in the central field of the

livestreaming video-violence. But, as Arendt indicates, when the act is brutal and the language is

empty of any truth-producing purpose, then power can only be recognized as indistinction. When

power presences with violence, power becomes the principal appearance. What takes place at

this point is absolute terror: The highest manifestation of unalloyed violence—where implements

of violence substitute as strength and where force is synonymous with violence—is the place

where the totality of violence gives way to complete terror.[135]

At the moment of the physical and deadly blows from the perpetrator, the depth of

purposes from the act go into the fullest and fastest action from the drives and the threatening

gesture—the "manifestation of the authentic non-being"—with all its accompanying gazes (*Four

Fundamental Concepts* ). Such a gesture imprisons its viewers and prevents all other outside

forces from interfering with the "spectacle" and its existing ideas, imbued with the complete

control of power and success for all gazes (117). Lacan states that the spectacle assents to an

entire event of gestures one following another in succession with unrestrained control (117). At

this tragic point, the threatening gesture has already layered each gaze with its message and purpose so the gesture begins its movements, as Lacan states, to turn the picture's expressions into sensations for spectators (114). The conjunction where image and the social and cultural meet, but do not intersect, is the needed dimension that distinguishes the elements of the threatening gesture—those that layer the brushstrokes for the deed, and those who take jouissance in this deed. Thus far, we understand the preexistence of the gaze in marking its deep regions within culture in both *Oresteian* and apotropaic rituals; but what is not clear is how such harsh gazes of the beyond of envy and the depth the varied levels of narcissism foster the perversion of norms that go quietly unnoticed until their culminating point in the tragic moment.

<p style="text-align:center">Domesticating Gazes of the Video-Image</p>

The space where image, the social, and the cultural meet is seen from the highest point of motive in its downward slope of desires. Three key factors demonstrate such a descent. First, the enactment of terror in its highest development abides in the apex of perversions and its conditional gazes that follow the circular movement of the interaction of the scopic and oral drives with the sado-masochistic drive, which houses the non-entity, the "object"—a "headless subjectification" and its peak of the return to its origin (*The Four Fundamental Concepts* 114, 184). It is not a simple task to track the accuracy of the drive that, as Bernet reiterates, refollows its own event of actions, yet cannot even find a glimpse of itself (Bernet 115). Thus, it is critical to understand what is and is not part of the sado-masochistic drive itself; for in the video-image, which relies on voyeurs, spectators become the eye of the videographer perpetrator. Second, such difficult tasks require difficult questioning that continually redirects itself to the will of the

exhibitionist, the one who abides in the *jouissance* of its own gaze through all victims active in the scene. Bernet rightly highlights Lacanian thought: "Thus the exhibitionist is not content with the fright of his victim, but he derives pleasure from the victim insofar as he or she is given over to his gaze, he enjoys his own gaze such as it manifests itself in the being-gazed-at of his victim (S XI, p. 182)" (115-116). Last, the blow of violence presences the act of violence in its all purposes that points to the exhibitionist through deceptive language and its perversion of norms of linear time all underneath each exhibitionist. Such a threatening gesture completes the "taming" and "civilization" of gazes in the social and cultural arenas well before the act of violence goes into play (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 116). Such a gesture controls the gazes by its own "brushstroke" both outside and inside the central field of image (114). Lacan states that the presence of the gesture never leaves and emphasizes that "there can be no doubt that the picture is first felt by us" (114, 115). Realizing the power from the gesture comes through Nancy's insight to metaphor and the paradox of the image itself, together with Arendt's awareness of seemingly credible but deceptive metaphors in connection to their origin of desires. What factors are essential for spectators in the dimension where the image, the social, and the cultural meet but do not intersect?

It is critical to separate the eye (to see) and the gaze (to dominate) in order to see the authenticity of the sado-masochistic drive, devoid of any misidentified parts, in order to recognize the point of its completed task before it goes back to its origin; for, this is the starting point where the descent of motives is visible. Lacan correctly states that perversion is not a drive; rather, the scopic drive of seeing and being seen becomes clearly visible and obvious in perversion (181). The scopic drive interacts with the portion of the oral drive that is the vampire of the fantasy, which upholds desire and ravenously consumes itself with destructive tendencies

to turn inward toward the self, and visibly seen on the part of the perpetrator. Without full

awareness of his actions that advance the will of the exhibitionist, the perpetrator willing

commits the blow of violence that invites the complete control of violence, which eventually

gives way to terror. The point of the return for the authentic active drive is most important

because in the return of the sado-masochistic drive, the perpetrator designates, what Lacan states

is, the "return, the insertion of one's own body, of the departure and the end of the drive" (183).

What Lacan means is that the subject is now the object—the headless subjectification—drive and

only has pleasure in the "transgression" of this tragic event (183). This is the highest moment of

the spectacle, where the event of gestures in their fastest motions trace and replace one another in

unrestrained control. But when *jouissance* is taken as the right of possession in disposing of

something or someone, then our vision becomes keener in where motives of desire and pleasure

are positioned in relation to the video-image. As the perpetrator's eye in the active scene,

exhibitionists insert the presence of their bodies into the return and end of the sado-masochistic

drive, where they achieve *jouissance* in their own narcissistic gazes of perversion on all levels

(183). This process is what Lacan means when he says that those functioning in the sado-

masochistic drive are not properly placed within the scopic drive. However, he argues that the

human other is distinctly placed in the scopic dimension of its circular motion. Thus, when the

threatening gesture itself momentarily stops its multiple change of positions, all movement of the

spectacle in the "terminal time of the gaze" ceases in order to expose—for spectators within the

sado-masochistic drive—the malevolent eye of the gaze—the *fascinum*, where all levels of

narcissism and ideology reside (117, 118).  This brief, terminal and terrifying moment (the

moment of seeing) is the dimension where the image, the social, and the cultural meet but do not

cross for a brief instant, and can mark the distinction of each and how they operate, in order to

banish the malign eye from the depths of desires in the perversion of norms in all social

institutions within the gap of the *fascinum*. This is the reason why vision holds together for the

spectator, who is at a distance from such a gaze, as Merleau-Ponty claims; and why, for Lacan,

all vision falls completely apart for the exhibitionists, who succumb to such an eye, where the

only facet that holds together in its fullness is the arbitrariness and tyranny enfolding the law of

the signifier.

Because the algebraic formula is so subjective to individual conditions, Lacan states that

the gaze may house the component *x* that indicates at what place, and what specifics, in the

scopic field the subject loses control of its own power and succumbs to the power of another; yet,

he warns that we will never distinguish the component itself because the subject, at this point,

diminishes to its lowest degree (77). He does indicate that such subjects understand that their

desires are simply an ineffectual circuitous path in realizing the *jouissance* of the human other,

but will, however, recognize that there is an enjoyment in the maximum pleasure that serves the

death instinct (183-84).[136] Thus, for these reasons, to trace motive in its descent of desire is

critical in order to thwart the loss of self before this tragic abhorrent chaos occurs. Descent of

desire goes back to time underneath the subject and follows the social and cultural language in

the dangerous and functional dimensions of narcissism and its many gazes of perversion, just as

in the Narcissus myth.[137] The myth itself, and all its cultural alterations, occurs over time within

the cultural and social arenas, and adjust to each circumstantial and genuine look at how culture

fashions its own version of the same underlying essential elements in the Narcissus plot itself:

rejection of love for the human other; extreme self-love that results in loss of self and even

suicide. Proof is evident when Lacan argues that perversion in the arrangement of patterns come

from the impressions of a deliberate reversal of fantasy: where the subject takes on its presence

as object through the misconstruction of self, which then operates and continually maintains the authentic events behind the sado-masochistic circumstance (185).  But even further and more dangerous, he holds that when a subject assumes the role of object from another person's deliberate choice of actions, then the sado-masochistic drive not only closes the deep space between an urgent request and obligation to fulfill the request, but also constitutes itself as "sadistic pervert" (185). It is key to remember here that the capability of the video-image enables the vicarious insertion of the presence of spectators' bodies into the sado-machoistic drive as object—sadistic pervert—at the same moment as the perpetrator videographer. This awareness reveals why the pervert (the subject-with-holes) only partially understands its actions to operate for the full advantage of, what Lacan calls, a "third party," the advantageous exhibitionists *jouissance* in all perversion, controlled and commanded by the sado-masochistic drive (185). The filmed victims—subjected to such suppressive ideology in the public space of community—are not part of this violent ideological perversion; they are the innocent ones and the very reason why we traverse the depths of such aberration.

These victims are in the hollowed, sacred space of being, what Merleau-Ponty calls, the flesh, the "fold" where the invisible of perception, vision, and ontological being reflect a steady and dependable idea of each other, which is unceasing and inseparable from the visible flesh of human being (*Visible and the Invisible* 146). These victims, transgressed upon by a human society of its own cyclical perversions within establishments and cultures, can never be treated as though their existence is easily expelled or negated. They must be—for all individuals, who share this physical world—a constant and undying light, what Lévinas calls, the "perseverance in being which is life": to recognize the invisible of the worst that plagues the mind and which can send into play the blow and the act of undifferentiated violence; not only to name the

problematic ground (for countless others before us have already done so) but also to identify the patterns behind the events of such violence, which then sends into action each individual's gifts to say where and how things must stop when the community of human beings is at constant risk by the imperiling of universal being of only one dimension.[138]

Such patterns track, trace, and identity the gazes of the component *x*. Drawing from Lacan, what clearly marks the extent of perversion is the modes that fashion the placing of the perpetrator and spectators, who look at this scene inside the many dimensions of perversion itself (182). The beholder, who looks at another, is simultaneously looked upon by the gazes from all levels of the *fascinum* outside the central field of image in this monstrous scene. Another pattern points to the awareness that the subject, as "pervert," is only placed as the final stage of the spherical movement of the drives in order to mark the headless subject, the object of the sado-masochistic drive and its gaze of the threatening gesture, the non-being without visible shape in its mighty depth (182). This is why subjects can only fantasize, what Lacan calls, "any magic of presence" from the gazes in the "shadows," wherein they may see the most pleasing attractions when, in reality, such attractions are the antithesis of their fantasy; for fantasy is only there to uphold desire (182, 185). In the case of perversion, the daydream is now reality, the actual, and not imagined. This subject-with-holes, as Lacan states, the hidden gaze, is there only to presence the "lost and suddenly refound" gazes outside the central field of image (182). The gazes from the *jouissance* of another are present outside the video-image but are not present in the arrangements of intensions to achieve desire itself (185-186). Thus, Lacan maintains that the gaze can be "pre-subjective," or perhaps the basis of the subject, or the basis of the recognition of something the subject rejects (186). Such insights on the gazes call for the separation of act from gesture.

The terminal moment allows one to determine the difference between the threatening gesture and the act (117, 118). The act of violence from the perpetrator is the greatest range of sight for superiority of narcissism on all its levels, not only from the perpetrator but exhibitionist. Lacan is correct in his assessment that if spectators follow the actual blow, then they miss altogether the close connection between gesture and act in the attempt to follow only the fullness of indistinctions in violence itself. The act's purposes come long before the blow. The act summons the presence of the threating gesture and all its abilities in using language to carefully place its brushstrokes in order to hide the harsh gazes that will eventually distinguish the desired messages for the purpose of the act and then complete their tasks. Lacan holds that the non-entity, the gesture, relates the designated traits in the gaze but is independent of the act that summons all gazes for the circumstantial violent deed against human kind. Since the presence of the gesture never leaves the central field of visual image, the gesture's brushstrokes "fall like rain from the painter's brush" from the "sovereign act" (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 114).[139] Lacan indicates that the first gesture is the light touch of a stroke that initiates the sovereign act (114). However, the act itself has multiple facets that have the potential to provide answers needed to reveal the non-entity and entity in the act that points back to the subject-with-holes. These answers come from language to clarify and distinguish human being from non-entity in the exploited deed.[140] Language is a connection to ontological being, because it is through the human being that language has its audible voicings: voicings that stem from the same registers of gazes circling the central field of image.[141] What are the signs and symptoms that show language and all its rhetorical devices at work with time and appearance of being inside the perversion of norms and reimage?

Through his ontological and ontic lens, Nancy marks how these signs of language and time function in image. It is his insight into the text-image and the video-image that best provides the paradox of image and then allows for an awareness that the blow of violence is "in itself" and is its "own ground" (25). On text, Nancy states that the "indefinite metaphor" is image, an "image of an image," and is essential for spectators because such a metaphor's purpose removes spectators from their typical space and carries them to a new ontic space of "sense" (*Ground of the Image* 76). Such a space is the distance needed for spectators to experience, without other dominating social or cultural influence, an indefinite metaphor of sense words that moves in and out of a "groundless" image, discovering the limitlessness of limitation (26). According to Nancy, an indefinite metaphor is akin to the "landscape of time," where time is beingness in free movement of significations, where nothing is fixed with previous actions of entity or nonentity (61). However, according to Nancy, the paradox of image is such that image can separate from a groundless image to an image of its polar opposite: to that of a contained ground (*Ground of the Image* 26). In connection to the video-image, Nancy holds that "video" not only has a hard coating of words that are tightly enveloped into the fabric of its image, but the image also contains the same crusty word-coatings, which can cause blindness to or ignorance of actual events (73, 74). Yet, this video-image does not have something hidden behind it; rather, it pierces or passes through itself to conceal its inlay of components, for the "voyeur" audience (73, 74). How do we process such inlaying of text and image as exhibition for the voyeur-exhibitionist, rather than as an indefinite metaphor's text-image for the spectator? Nancy argues: "The encounter involves recognition and exchange, a commerce of signs and of mutual trust or mistrust. That which counters presents an obstacle and suspends the forward step" (77). Thus, I conclude that the encounter is the act itself within violence that engages in

linguistic conversations, by way of opinions and attitudes with signs of shared interests, in order

to transfer doubt into good intention through what Arendt calls the false appearance of metaphors

that come in all shapes but seem valid and even accurate (*On Violence* 75). The blow itself of

violence is the counter, which presents the obstacle—violence in all its undifferentiation on an

enclosed ground, fixed and formulated beforehand by the act's purposes and language in order to

keep violence suspended in this state. How do we recognize language from the act and how do

we recognize the purpose this act would serve?

Arendt argues that "action without a 'who' attached to it, is meaningless" (*Human

Condition* 180–81). To get to this *who* is to identify the signs of mistrust in the metaphor, which

is not present to help spectators in the timelessness of being but which allows linear time to

recirculate its language and its gazes of prior acts of violence for exhibitionists, who await the

reappearance of these gazes. This is the purpose for the suspension of the obstacle. Arendt

addresses the false appearance present in Nietzsche's "Will and Wave": at first, it seems a

"perfect metaphor," an excellent likeness of connections in comparison of two complete

unlikenesses (*Life of the Mind, vol. 2, Willing* 164, 165). Arendt acknowledges that without

hesitation, what was once "irreversible" and indisputable in a "Homeric metaphor" is now

determined to be reversable (165). Here again, language, time, and being collide when the

irreversible reverses itself. According to a primitive Homeric metaphor, she states that seeing the

storms of the sea would always equate with interior, unforced feelings; yet, such feelings never

gave any information about the sea itself (165). She emphasizes that two unlikenesses are not

only likenesses now, but they agree precisely with one another (165). Arendt holds that the

Homeric metaphor—intended to connect the gaps that exist in between thought, or the individual

who merely wills without thought, and the domain of semblance—breaks down, not because of

the mass burdens of life itself but because appearance is now a "symbol for inward experiences" (165). Most concerning for Arendt in this breakdown of distinctions is that whatever interior feelings an individual has at the moment becomes the principle mechanism of thought and action for the sake of being considered first—without even fair assessment of facts and circumstances (165).

Still further, she argues that the false appearance of "organic metaphors," can seem reasonable, when in actuality, violence possesses an innate impulse to expand itself and carries with it a deception that organic metaphors are the same as natural organic realities (*On Violence* 75). She then maintains that "power and violence" equate with "biological terms" to refer to a " 'sick society,' " where violent uprisings are seen as indicators of a disease, and, when seen in this light, ultimately promote more violence (75). According to Arendt, those who promote violent means in order to restore acceptance and obedience of laws are juxtaposed with those who endorse "nonviolent reforms," and in biological, deceptive metaphors, all appear as doctors, who dispute the surgery needed instead of the curative necessary (75). For Arendt, deception is at its apex when the assumed "sicker" patient's doctor has the last say in the matter (*On Violence* 75). Violent ideologies then use *symptoms* as a veil to mask racism itself. Arendt argues that racism is not biases from all sides but is solely an "explicit ideological system" that takes the prejudices, not the interests, of a particular group and then converts them into a fully developed racist ideology, which bolsters itself in order to live (77). Deceptive metaphors in the act of violence mask the *who* behind the language of the ideology itself, while the threatening gesture is at work on its own, changing deceptive gazes to appear as credible when they eventually presence in the field of vision. Arendt clearly demonstrates where language goes awry. But how do we understand time underneath the subject when racist ideological systems are in place?

In connection to Arendt's argument on the language from the act and ideologies, Jeff Lewis establishes time underneath the subject when he indicates that "violent complexity" continues to advance itself through the expediency of rapid actions through vast degrees of transformations and altered consciousnesses connected to the "Neolithic Revolution" in its "desires" and natural inclinations for vicious and unrelenting struggles between rival groups (Lewis, *Media, Culture and Human Violence* 17). Using a Lacanian lens on political violence from states and/or governments, Lewis argues: "While nationalism and national sentiment are the most extant of these modes of consciousness, the imaginary of state power percolates through much of the individual's desires and fantasies of pleasure" (180). Lewis is on the mark when he argues that a "Master Ideology" feeds itself, not always from propagandistic indoctrination, but through the infiltration of "knowledge systems and imagining," where, he indicates, such systems are meant to be a safe space for individuals to address and try to understand the experience of life's difficulties (180).[142] Exhibitionists then constantly alter their appearance, depending on the motives from particular social institutions and the goals they desire to accomplish.

To signify this *who* that constantly changes appearance and alters thinking, Arendt argues that we look to those who laud and defend violence through clever inventiveness, such as enticing individuals toward the seemingly indisputable fact that only demolition and construction combine to form the two sides tantamount to nature (*On Violence* 75). Her argument points to bourgeois ingenuity to exploit the workers (70). She acknowledges that Georges Sorel, inspired by Henri Bergson, views both the intellectuals and the consumer society as "parasites": he contends that intellectuals are indolent, deceitful, and devoid of a "will to power" (70). At this place of deception for human beings, the gesture's brushstrokes paint *jouissance* as a right of

possession to dispose of human beings. According to Arendt, Sorel argues that the workers

should be persuaded to use violence so as to arouse the combative disposition of the middle class

in order to save Europe (Sorel qtd. in Arendt, *On Violence* 70). In accordance with Sorel, Arendt

emphasizes that, by constructing new ideas for ethical principles, the workers will recover

industrialization and terminate "Parliaments" that are filled with the "System," or the

"Establishment" (70, 71). Such ideas are the starting points for the gesture's brushstrokes that

soften the language of the act of violence to make it easily teachable and managed, according to

motive, so that the gaze can be cultivated with the same words (parasites, establishment, system)

that continue to designate linear time underneath particular individuals, who laud the use of

violence.

In the end, for Arendt, the *who* are the exhibitionists, those who exonerate violence and

justify it through creative ways for their own motives. For Nancy, "The torture's violence is the

exhibition," and in Georges Sorel's "positive violence . . . the entire image of the social project

that violence would serve immediately presents itself (*Ground of the Image* 21). From Nancy,

the payoff for exhibitionists is clear, in that upon the enclosed ground of violence in all its chaos

of dimensions, the mental images from the whole of the social project that fosters and serves the

purposes for violent means fill the entire image of violence: the one side of violence that can

only be contained in deception, and not the side of violence that reveals and authenticates. For

Lacan, the "showing" indicates the "appetite of the eye" from the one who looks, which then

creates a mesmerizing payoff when this particular eye continually consumes all that nurtures

itself from the all-encompassing maleficent eye of the *fascinum* (*Four Fundamental Concepts*

115). Such an eye is fully developed narcissism, where ideology, the perversions of norms in

social institutions, and the law of the signifier find their home. Lacan maintains that the law of

the signifier is not a reference to the origin of this particular father, or even a patriarchal image, but a symbolic father, according to what societies and cultures make it (281–82). This is why Lacan is on the mark when he indicates that this law, in its unlimited power and uncontrolled despotism, is the only thing that holds together for the exhibitionist and the subject-with-holes in the spectacle of all gazes of the central field of vision.

When the duration of all gazes outside and inside the central field of livestreaming videographic acts of violence concludes and the gazes go back to their origins with their existing drives, the lone subjects-with-holes have to confront their own gazes. Lacan's cautionary warning is essential, and it applies here: If we only apply the label of psychopathological, then we miss key factors in the events behind the passivity of the gestures, because the motives in descent of their desires for violence insinuate their gazes into the cultural and social fields of human others. Some may argue, understandably, as did Aristotle, that if they cannot see physical evidence before them, then they cannot say that what is unseen exists. They only know and understand what they can see. In sound rebuttal, Merleau-Ponty writes: "We cannot remain within this dilemma of understanding either nothing of the subject or nothing of the object" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 74). Instead, he holds that vision is present inside the invisible, because the visible is the "sensible" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 258). Vision comes from Lacan who gets to the register of gazes from the origin of desires on the part of exhibitionists. Arendt draws from the "core of human experience," when she identifies the deception behind believable but false reasoning in metaphors. And Nancy recognizes the paradox of image, in that an image, borrowing from Merleau-Ponty, can be "for-us," filled with sense words of the indefinite metaphor carrying spectators to the needed distance for groundless vision of immanence; or the image can be "in-itself" and for its own purposes on its enclosed ground

(*Phenomenology of Perception* 74). Invisible gazes do exist outside and inside the central field of the provocative video-image and surface from the visible threads from language that track the gazes through motives and their desires in descent to their origins.

The ground of the blow of violence houses the blow itself and the act of violence in its deceptive language and purposes all within the enclosed ground of the livestreaming video-image in full exhibition of the indistinctions of violence. The blow is a fetish for exhibitionists, who have no interest in the fright of their victims; the fetish is the habitation of causes for desire rather than the assumed appearance of satisfaction for desire. To follow the blow alone is to miss all causes of desires. Once the blow initiates all indistinctions of violence, then the act's language—its deluding, yet seemingly believable metaphors—begins the spectacle of gazes that presences the perversion of norms through faces and circumstances from linear time underneath each subject, but where exhibitionists see according to their own perverted fantasies. Exhibitionists within the spectacle cannot see the deception of the language in the act and its purposes that points back not only to the subjects-with-holes but to themselves as exhibitionists. The authenticities of reality become conspiracy theories for such ones, while deception becomes their truth, absolutely and unquestioned. When the video-image is involved, the deposits of words from violent ideologies saturate the image. Then the video-image penetrates itself with the spectacle to seal itself within all the perversions of norms from social institutions for those who await the lost and eagerly-to-be-found gazes, according to their own desires—whether dominated by another; the basis of the exhibitionist; or what the exhibitionist rejects.

Conclusion

      I tried to lift the veil to expose the events behind the moving picture image as a captivating event, where, as Lacan holds, the picture's traces of compositional lines can mysteriously disappear yet easily continue in the strength and power of the very markings that maintain their position within the components of the dimensions of image itself. I attempted to lift the veil on the specific ontological structure of the video-image, in that it has its own way of erasing being to an inversion of presence inside an active scene of horrific violence committed on human beings: Lifting the veil, to see traits from Oresteian ritual in their perversion of norms from every social institution, still prevalent from the evidence of their powerful gazes outside the central field of the image. And to apotropaic patterns of ritual that keep the distance needed from perversion in order to make distinctions of the dimensions of violence and of its harm. Lifting the veil to the act that points to the subject-with-holes, who is used only to presence the lost and briefly re-found gazes; to the exhibitionists, who take delight in the *jouissance* from gazes of the perversion of norms and from the victim's gaze upon the exhibitionists; to the drives and its needed register of gazes; to the controlling gesture in the scopic field of vision; and to deceptive metaphors that still appear valid.

      I raised the veil on the momentary view of the dimension in which the image, behavior, and ideological law meet but do not cross into the presence of one another; and on cultural conditions of violence that date back as far as the Neolithic era, still active in present-day communication systems. The purpose for this brief cessation of the gesture's movement is for all voyeur-exhibitionists to see the malicious eye, where vision only holds together all that is discretionary in the law of the signifier. Simultaneously, this moment of seeing can banish the malevolent eye and carry the video-image voyeur to the distance needed, where voyeur again

becomes the spectator, able to distinguish the fullness of clarity in the events behind the image of its own dimensions; behind behavior of separate dimensions; and behind ideological law in its full dimensions of the perversion of norms from the *fascinum* of absolute narcissism. However, placing these separate dimensions together as one single dimension allows all their markings to disappear and then reappear as contradictions only.

Finally, I lifted the veil to why multiple thinkers (not just one) have to come to the table of humanity to bring their sound reasoning and passion for the human other. Without Merleau-Ponty, we do not get Lacan's phenomenological reduction of gazes outside the image and his insight on the blow of violence; and without Nancy and Arendt, we do not arrive at the discovery of the different facets of language in the image and language in the act of violence. These are the necessary reasons why different lines of phenomenological, ontological, and ontic thought cannot be left out but must be added to the thinking behind Lacan's assessment of the events present within and outside the central field of image.

CONCLUSION

The end of this journey leads back to the foot of the Sphinx, awaiting a question for the answer given to the riddle of violence: What profound question do I have to present for such a perplexing answer; or have I myself lost the question overnight in the unweaving process in my attempt to look at the phenomenon of violence? Perhaps, merely one penetrating question does not even exist. Nevertheless, I present to the Sphinx: Why do we not even know what we ask about violence itself? And at that moment, the answer echoes: *From which it seems to follow that the business of thinking is like the veil of Penelope: it undoes every morning what it had finished the night before.*

This work presents a critical phenomenology of violence by looking with an ontological and ontic vision forged from philosophical, political, and aesthetic thought in order to address and comprehend the complexities and paradoxes of thought confronting the phenomenon of violence and its many internal and external reimages. These findings are not strictly Arendtian in thought alone concerning the "banality of evil," which constitutes a willing harm done to the community. Neither are such findings solely Merleau-Pontian insightfulness on the phenomenon of perception and a type of thinking that pairs with perception, which is different than thinking itself. This intertextual Merleau-Pontian and Arendtian arc is absolutely key to my foundational argument representing a new way in looking at violence itself, and why the act of thinking on the visible and invisible must first be addressed in order to reach the unreflected of the phenomenal field and work through how violence and reimage operate. The many lenses of thought that I have chosen from past and current thinkers present the mismatched puzzle pieces that I have placed together in order to ontologically trace the presence of the pantomimes of deception

within the paradoxes themselves. Such pantomimes farcically play with consciousnesses and move freely in and out of language and time; of body and human other; of the physical and lived worlds, and of the phenomenon of violence and its reimages of effects on individuals. All these pantomimes take place within in the phenomenal space of appearance and of being. I have discovered that if we do not recognize how internal reimages of the phenomenon of violence, of self, and of the human other are fashioned, then we will never be fully equipped for the awareness of the events that take place behind the external, tangible reimages of acts of violence against the human other.

How does my project augment the work of my chosen philosophers and develop new avenues for looking at violence? I take Merleau-Pontian and Arendtian insights to substantiate my line of argument that rationales of thought connected to cultural violence and its social images link back to time underneath the subject to show where philosophical misconceptions and inconsistencies alter thinking and then disguise and recycle within the social and cultural worlds. I mark time underneath subjects when Arendt goes back as far as Plato in his choice to veer from this Socratic realization: Diminishing morality to facts or laws in connection to rights and wrongs leads only to a thinking of rationales, where opinions of possession and rights and wrongs are capricious. At this place, thinking beings are overlooked, and misconceptions enter into the thinking process. A thinking being thinks through all facets of high-stake matters and engages in the fullest process of thinking. For violence itself and its array of reimages, thinking beings are essential for the thought necessary in relation not only to the space of violence, but also to the space of appearance, which can easily disappear and then resurface as the misconceived and inverted space of being as appearance. Thinking beings enter the realm of consciousnesses through the dimensions of the cogito and of the consciousness of language so

that time underneath the subject can point to the place, where thinking then alters consciousness. Thus, thinking beings can name the effects of the internal and external reimages of self, human other, and of the act itself of violence. I mark time underneath the subject, when Arendt identifies the introductory point of the philosophical distortion of right and wrong, with Plato's doctrine of Ideas, or Forms. She affirms why a doctrine for thinking changed the nonresults of the Socratic thinking inquiry into negative situational outcomes. The paradox of thinking—that can paralyze thought in order to think or arouse thought to action—then becomes paralyzing thought that cannot act, and of an arousal to cynicism toward the willing harm done to the community of human others. The ways individuals think in relation to rationales worries both Merleau-Ponty and Arendt, in that a default trust in moral and rational ideas end up detached and dormant, and in a constant state of moral flux because the reasoning process is unending. However, I argue that awareness of thinking from Arendt is not enough until it pairs with the ground of consciousness from Merleau-Ponty.

Furthermore, I expand Merleau-Pontian and Arendtian ideas by taking their separates lines of thought to create an arc of thinking on consciousness and apply it to present day law and legalities in relation to reimaged violence. Merleau-Ponty's syntheses of consciousness and Arendt's lines of thought on law, legalities, and moral law work together to evaluate why and where thinking alters consciousnesses. In looking not at the verdict, but at the majority of opinions from the Supreme Court on acts of violence and their reimages, I discover that these opinions of thought think within, what Merleau-Ponty calls, the restrictive traits from the doctrine of the classical subject-object, where subjects view reimaged violence as object. In other words, both violence itself and reimage are objects, as opposed to the phenomenon of perception, where violence and reimage are each real in their own dimensions, with full events taking place

behind each one. However, the intellectual act comprehends the object—through the either-or logical fallacy of only two choices: Either the objects, violence and its reimage, will most likely take place anyway; or both violence and reimage together are needed. With such rationales, the intellectual synthesis goes into full action to permit an intellectual consciousness to think it knows very well all aspects of violence and its reimage, even though such a consciousness can only draw from its personal familiarity of violence. At this point, the knowing event becomes the isolated event of one solitary opinion from one subject-object lens—without concentrating on the perceptual event of violence in the phenomenal field; without considering the ontological structures behind the many external reimages to which these opinions reference; without drawing from the many dimensions of the phenomenon of violence; or without consideration of the presence in an ontic image that can divide itself.  As a result, the idealism of synthesis goes into play: Every element linking to the act of violence and to the different genres of image present themselves as identical views to justify a verdict for a technological reimage of violence. Such a synthesis misrepresents the lived connections of human others and their inactions with the events, affairs, and circumstances linked to acts of violence. Opinions, from such intellects of law and legalities, who participate in the intellectual act, now appear to the social and cultural worlds as natural laws and unquestionable. However, I posit that the certainty of ideas—on violence, on reimages, on consciousness of thought—is not the groundwork for perception but only a basis. For individuals cannot overlay a world of ideas onto the act of perception or overlay other historical eras of violence onto present day acts of violence and its array of reimages since proofs are not always logically certain. If perceptual underpinnings are forgotten, ideas are problematic, when accredited with authority and laws that deal with violence or morality. In the social and cultural worlds, the appearance of authorities and their opinions behind verdicts can

internally reimage as laws themselves, when, in fact, these opinions are formed by individuals, who continually change their beliefs on what is right or wrong, depending on the circumstances involving acts of violence and human other.

I create a unique lens for a genealogy of violence with a direct focus on the human will, as part of the rubric for the aesthetic encounter with tangible reimages of violence. What I have discovered on violence and reimage is twofold: Artists, who enter the problematic ground of violence and of reimage, can reveal the authenticities behind the violent event, the devastation of human dignity, and even the long-lasting effects upon the human other; but they do so only from their lived experience with violence and their delicate choice of placement with the victims of violence. However, without the human will lens in place in the aesthetic encounter of acts of violence and their effects on the human other, spectators are not equipped to recognize why even the finest artists in their best intensions, operating within the confounds of the act itself of violence and victim, can get caught in the snares of thinking from internal reimages of violence and of the other. The nonthinking on violence comes from those, who do not grasp that violence must have anchors to the real effects of violence: emotional, ontological-psychoanalytical, and social and cultural lenses. One's own human will has the power to redirect intellect, memory, and body in order to divide the human will into multiple detachments—vying for their own place as superior until one eventually wins. Yet, the will can only operate within the desires that each subject supplies it. Kristeva's assessment of the abject and the vortex of summons led me to discover that the human will is this vortex of summons that brews inside abjection: Where paradoxically, the human will can resort to acts of violence and to the condemnation of an exhibitionist; but it can also be protected by a trustworthiness that does not resort to shamefulness. Acts of violence are cyclical not because violence is part of the nature of human

beings, but because the human will can affect consciousness of the human other and consciousness of self, when the thinking process on violence, appearance, and being is altered. Thus, the human will can negate the space of violence, the ontological space of the human other, and the presence of violence. During such negation, the undifferentiation of the vast dimensions present in the phenomenon of violence enter into their fullness within the aesthetic experience of violence. I demonstrate that these dimensions merely conceal themselves within the vast webbings of the conscious and unconscious (prereflected or prereflexive) mind, where, as Merleau-Ponty validates, no pre-organization exists for such perceptual actions or reactions. Instead, each behavior operates differently, depending on particular conditions and circumstances, and on the awareness of the many appearances of perceptual constructions.

Why partner Merleau-Ponty with Lévinas? Most of all, both thinkers provide hope and the tools to deal with circumstances when the cogito affects consciousness to the place of the loss of being. Lévinas demonstrates how to regain being before the place of wrongdoing by recognizing the different traits of consciousnesses. Through his lived experience with the horrors of violence itself, Lévinas speaks of a paradoxical love, where the morality of dignity can only be authenticated through the morality of love; otherwise, we create an unwelcomed society. What is this morality of love for Lévinas? It is the beyond of being that reaches a *holy visitation* with the neighbor that stirs an *ethical movement* in consciousness, to comfort and help. Lévinas recognizes that this beyond of being is the good but it does not come through phenomenology alone. I agree with Lévinas, in that phenomenology cannot get to the fullness of being, but that phenomenology does bring the deluge of lights. However, Lévinas alone is one part of a full puzzle piece. The Merleau-Pontian new cogito is the counter piece since such a cogito distinguishes appearance and being as each a phenomenon in their own rights, and *not* one as the

other. This new cogito is the necessary cogito that filters the deluge of phenomenological, reflected lights of perception, which requires many consciousnesses to reach the unreflected thought. But it is Lévinas, who abides in unreflected thought—by tapping into the prereflexive, and for Merleau-Ponty, the prereflected—of awareness in the infinite, limitless being. Merleau-Ponty recognizes the thousand lights that must be filtered, while Lévinas exposes the thousand and one ontological traces of self. I place them together because this placement directs the overflowing play of lights that takes in every light but through the single lens of relationship with the human other. Why are we then deceived by the mental appearances of consciousness?

There is a point of no return for some individuals, who choose the path of harmful deeds on the community, and if this study overlooks the process of how and why things go awry, then, members of the community will not even know how to look for the phenomenological lights entailing perception and ontology, which are essential to confront, what Arendt calls, the phenomenon of evil deeds. Both Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas work within the different dimensions of the cogito and the conditions of language that trace how consciousness is affected by the different facets of the cogito. In my work, I identify these conditions of language as time underneath the subject and why internal reimages of the human other and of violence itself alter thinking, consciousness, and meaning. Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the atmosphere of time as the place, where evidence reveals the authenticity of events. Etched alongside this sound and relevant evidence, is inauthentic thought of the human other and of the event itself. Merleau-Ponty substantiates both language and time under the subject through speaking and motor powers. I advance Merleau-Ponty's insights through specific application to violent ideologies. Once words have been spoken (connected to any violent ideology, even as Arendt indicates racism is a racist ideology), words await the silent consciousness, encircling the social world,

that gives each word its sense connections for the consciousness of language. Lévinas exposes the word connections in necrological discourse: Words now come from a reversible past that suppresses, to a mere concept, the just interlocutor—the thinking being. This place produces only sensations of oneself and is the loss of being, where the cogito is null and void. Present consciousness is mere empty space, where no thinking is possible, because someone, or something, other is behind this consciousness. Consequently, the present human other does not belong to the current moment of existence for the individual of necrological discourse. The word traits from such a discourse are recognizable by their linear time underneath such subjects to verify that individuals construct associations from acts of violence, rather than the condition of associations and conditions of motive linked to the violence itself. An inaudible consciousness awaits each spectator on its own terms: A spectator who reimages the present human other according to bits and pieces of faces and being in the debris from culture and that engulf other particular cultural time periods. When the culminating point of the act of violence then goes into action and when completed, the paradox of thinking operates within the social world to paralyze thought in order to redirect toward a thinking being that arouses thought toward action; or toward nonthinking and toward cynicism for both violence and human other in all their reimages.

Why draw all these disparate philosophers into the phenomenal fold? Lacan sees the perpetrator, the subject-with-holes, and the effects on that perpetrator as victim from the purposes and motives of exhibitionists. He identifies the register of gazes outside the central field of image. Through cultural scholars of Greek tragedy, I extend these gazes to identify where they originate and to name their motives in order to gain awareness of the underpinnings of hero-cult worship, of the perversion of norms present in all social institutions, and to all that is arbitrary in the law of the signifier. The Merleau-Pontian ontological-psychoanalysis allows Lacan to mark

the image on its own as separate from perception itself, and to mark behavior (psychology) as its own complex dimension. Lacan identifies a dimension, where the imaginary and the symbolic meet but do not cross. I expand this dimension of thought to expose that image and behavior cannot be overlaid upon one another because the space of appearance cannot handle the amount of movement from each of these separate dimensions. As a result, these dimensions disappear and reappear as a maze of contradictions. I reveal that the dimension where image and behavior meet but do not cross takes place at the terminating moment, where all gazes stop for an instantaneous look at the malevolent eye of the *fascinum* in all its narcissistic perversions. At this point, I discover that Merleau-Ponty and Lacan are both correct in their opposing views: All vision holds together for Merleau-Ponty; and no vision holds together for Lacan except arbitrariness of the law of the signifier, which cultures and societies have fashioned. I assess that within the ontological structure of the video-image of voyeurs, when the spectacle of gazes has ended, voyeurs can become spectators, when they reject this evil eye of horrid acts on the community and remove themselves as voyeur, and thus vision holds together; or voyeurs can become exhibitionists and embrace such an eye. Lacan reveals the non-entity threatening gesture that euphemizes and civilizes gazes outside the central field of vision from the wells of narcissism that alter thinking and consciousness. I name such a nonentity—the paradoxical human will, which brews inside abjection. This nonentity comes from the individuals, who are capable to choose and willingly commit or aide in acts of violence on the community. Thus, such a nonentity tames and civilizes the motives from the perversion of norms for the act's purpose and the harsh language needed for gazes that presence with the act itself from the phenomenon of evil deeds—every harm enacted against the community of human others.

Arendt recognizes the opposite side of the subject-with-holes. She sees the derivation of the holes themselves that are present but undeterminable, and that is why she holds that violence has to be continually guided and justified and is not the essence for anything other than violence alone and specifically names the roots of violence and how they operate. I extend her findings to expose how she actually operates through the Merleau-Pontian emotional essence in order to track the roots of violence, where, what I call, an essence of motion finds the shifting spaces or situations in order to recognize the concealed guises of the phenomena of violence and power, without diminishing its depth. In turn, Lévinas sees the subject-with-holes in a unique way, through a descent of consciousnesses in their own paradoxes (good, confused, and bad) that get to the urgency of locating the place before any wrongdoing—before all subjects are consumed. Nancy places the blow on its own ground in the full manifestation of violence. I broaden Nancy's discovery of the blow, by placing on this ground, the act itself of violence, where its deceptive metaphors actually point back to the exhibitionist: the in-itself-for-itself. The blow of violence, though it is deadly, is mere fetish for voyeur-exhibitionists, for their *jouissance* comes from all dimension of narcissism that search for the gaze of the victim upon these narcissistic exhibitionists.

This study presents a critical phenomenology of violence with all its complexities and paradoxes. It remains imperative to pursue the question of what kind of time is underneath the willing subject in order to reveal how the cogito fashions internal images and engages the paradoxes and contradictions of the will. These questions remain: Will individuals in the community have the courage to address the paradoxical aspects of violence and reimages, of the human will in relationship with the human other, and of appearance and being; or will individuals choose, with one simple word, to negate these findings so that all unweaves itself

overnight and is forgotten? What certainty is left for humankind against such great odds? Without the distinguishing factor of human beingness, without love extended toward the human other, then the divided human will is entangled within a complex network that keeps it alienated, instead of allowing its needed return to a unified human being in relationship with the human other. We have come full circle to see that in the phenomenon of violence, in the phenomenon of appearance to being as consciousness, and in the phenomenon of harmful deeds on the human other, Merleau-Ponty was in the midst of the Lévinasian ethical movement all along, evident in his very words: *We weigh the hardihood of love which promises beyond what it knows and at the moment of this promise, our love extends beyond qualities, beyond the body, and beyond time.*

ENDNOTES

Chapter One

1. Neuroscientist David Eagleman writes on consciousness: "In other words, the storm of nerve and muscle activity is registered by the brain, but what is served up to your awareness is something quite different. To understand this, let's return to the framework of consciousness as a national newspaper. The job of a headline is to give a tightly compressed summary. In the same manner, consciousness is a way of projecting all the activity in your nervous system into a simpler form. The billions of specialized mechanisms operate below the radar—some collecting sensory data, some sending out motor programs, and the majority doing the main tasks of the neural workforce: combining information, making predictions about what is coming next, making decisions about what to do now. In the face of this complexity, consciousness gives you a summary that is useful for the larger picture" (*Incognito* 22).

He later refers to consciousness as a CEO: "One part of our brain wants to reveal something, and another part does not want to. When there are competing votes in the brain—one for telling and one for withholding—that denies a secret. . . . Without the framework of rivalry, we would have no way to understand a secret. The reason a secret is experienced consciously is because it results from a rivalry. It is not business as usual, and therefore the CEO is called upon to deal with it" (145–46).

2. Merleau-Ponty addresses the conflicts of consciousness: "Even though consciousness can detach itself from things to see itself, human consciousness never possesses itself in complete detachment and does not recover itself at the level of culture except by recapitulating the expressive, discrete, and contingent operations by means of which philosophical questioning itself has become possible" (*Primacy of Perception* 40).

3. Arendt acknowledges Socrates's awareness of the metaphor through the work of Xenophon, in that the process of thinking has to address "invisibles," and is itself without visibility of itself (*Responsibility and Judgment* 175; see also 285).

4. Adam Liptak, "Justices Reject Ban on Violent Video Games for Children," *New York Times*, 27 June 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/28/us/28scotus.html.

5. Arendt (*The Human Condition* 182) references Hermann Diels (*Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*).

6. Merleau-Ponty quotes from the work of Jules Lagneau.


Chapter 2

7. Timothy Foote states that Bruegel was part of the intellectual community influenced by Erasmus, who called for both sides to refrain from increased violence (97).

8. Referring to Paul Ree, Foucault argues that Ree "assumed that words had kept their meaning, that desires still pointed in a single direction, and that ideas retained their logic; and he ignored the fact that the world of speech and desires has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys." Foucault's statements form the methodized sense of this chapter's aesthetic genealogy: ". . . genealogy . . . must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history—in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts; it must be sensitive to their recurrence, not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles . . ." ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 76): e.g., in John Richardson and Brian Leiter, eds., *Nietzsche* (Oxford University Press, 1978).

9.Patrice Smith, commentary on William Bouguereau, *Dante et Virgile*, Musée D'Orsay <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire/commentaire_id/dante-et-virgile-21300.html?no_cache=1>.

10. Marković references Frijda's distinction between "complementing and responding emotions" (Frijda 1989).

11. Smith, commentary.

12. Dante, Canto VII, lines 112–14: "They smote each other not alone with hands, / But with the head and with the breast and feet, / Tearing each other piecemeal with their teeth." See http://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/index-of-works/notice.html?no_cache=1&nnumid=153692.

13. Marković cites the research of G. C. Cupchik, 1994.

14. I follow the defining characteristics of Cupchik's "reflective model" and apply them toward the descriptions of some spectators' visual encounters. See Marković 10, citing Cupchik, 1994.

15. Merleau-Ponty is citing Jules Lagneau, *Célèbres leçons* (Nimes: La Laborieuse, 1926), 132, 128; and Alain, *Quatre-vingt-un chapitres sur l'esprit et les passions* (Paris: Bloch, 1917), 32 (*Phenomenology of Perception* 505).

16. P. Schröder, "Das Halluzinieren," Zeitschrift fur die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie 101 (1926), 606 (cited in Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* 551).

17. Ibid.

18. Stolorow (35–36) quotes Freud to clarify the differences "between fear, which 'has found an [external] object,' and anxiety, which 'has a quality of indefiniteness and lack of object.' " Freud, Stolorow explains, specifies "traumatic anxiety," as " 'psychical helplessness' " and

"signal anxiety," as expectancy of "a (re)traumatized state by repeating it 'in a weakened version' so that protective measures can be taken to avert it."

19. Marković references the research of V. Ramachandran and W. Hirstein, 1999.

20. Ramachandran and Hirstein, 1999; ECO U, 2007.

21. Cochran argues that Delacroix's inspiration comes not from Byron, but from Diodorus Siculus. See "Sardanapalus," ed. Peter Cochran, 3–4, Web <petercochran.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/sardanapalus.pdf>.

22. History does not authenticate Sardanapalus as an Assyrian king, but he seems to be associated with Ashurbanipal and the brother Shamash-shum-unkin. See Marcus Junianus Justinus, "Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus." According to Georges Roux, in his work *Ancient Iraq* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), no evidence exists that the brothers had hedonistic lives. See, historical library of Diodorus the Sicilian, H. Valesius, I. Rhodomannus, and F. Ursinus, Volume 1, p. 118-23.

23. "Sade. Attacking the Sun: Desire as a Principle of Excess, Musée D'Orsay, Web <https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/events/exhibitions/in-the-museums/exhibitions-in-the-musee-dorsay-more/page/7/article/sade-41230.html?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=252&cHash=f093df54d1>.

24. By pornography addition, I mean a condition marked by insatiable desires as fetishes, that which objectifies both the human looked upon and the one, who looks and possesses this condition that continually feeds self alone: in accordance with the degrees for each voyeur and the specific circumstantial contributions responsible for such a condition.

25. Kohák (165) references Husserl's quotes and paraphrasing of them.

26. Here, it is essential to go back to motives and track them back to their origins, where each individual's motives will vary according to the specific social and cultural conditions of environment that motivate such actions.

27. Marković references the research of Scherer, K R 2005 and Frijda 1986.

28. Research of Scherer, K R 2005; Frijda, N H 1986, Leder, H, et all 2004.

29. Marković acknowledges Winston and Cupchik 1992.

30. Research of Berlyne 1971, 1974. See, page 5; Cupchik, 1994; Frijda, 1989. See, page 10

31. Research of Cupchik, G C 1994.

32. See Hrag Vartanian, "The Violence of the 2017 Whitney Biennial," *Hyperallergic*, March 20, 2017, <https://hyperallergic.com/366688/the-violence-of-the-2017-whitney-biennial/>.

33. Research of Furnham and Avison 1997; Rawlings 2003; Rawlings et al 2000; Tobacyck et al 1981; Zaleski 1984; Zuckerman et al 1993.

34. Marković references Berlyne 1971, 1974.

35. Arnheim 1949, 1969, 1980.


Chapter 3

36. Merleau-Ponty writes on Husserl's " 'eidetic intuition'" to clarify the direct awareness of essences: "In our experience, the intuition of some particular essence necessarily precedes the essence of intuition. The only way of thinking thought is to first think of something, and it is thus essential to the thinking of thought not to take itself as its object. To think thought is to adopt an attitude toward it that we have first learned with regard to 'thing,' and this is never to eliminate the opacity of thought for itself . . . .every focusing upon an object, and every appearance of a

'something' or of an idea presupposes a subject who ceases to interrogate himself, at least in terms of this relation (*Phenomenology of Perception* 416 - 417).

37. Arendt supports her argument: "The point is that under certain circumstances violence—acting without argument or speech and without counting the consequences—is the only way to set the scales of justice right again. (Billy Budd, striking dead the man who bore false witness against him, is the classical example)" (*On Violence* 64).

38. Arendt writes: "Rage and violence turn irrational only when they are directed against substitutes, and this, I am afraid, is precisely what the psychiatrists and polemologists concerned with human aggressiveness recommend, and what corresponds, alas, to certain moods and unreflecting attitudes in society at large" (64).

39. Here, Merleau-Ponty quotes from the work of Jules Lagneau.

40. Theorists Katherine E. Buckley, Craig A. Anderson, and Douglas A. Gentile analyze the General Aggression Model, which states that the repetitions of interaction with violent, simulated images do indeed cause catastrophic violent acts affecting society in malevolent ways, and yet this model can also be further explored to find "nonviolent effects of video games" (Buckley and Anderson 363). Social theorists Christopher J. Ferguson and John Kilburn have evaluated theories of media violence using the Catalyst Model, which argues that violence in video games does not produce more violence within society, but instead, participation in the virtual realm helps release aggression so that actual violence does not occur. For strong points of view on different aspects of the issue, see Ferguson and Kilburn 759–63. At present, societal views in both camps of thought, having produced contradictory and inconclusive evidence, leave members of society in an apparent impasse on the topic. For a sampling of materials that reflect

the range of experiences related to media violence, see Buckley and Anderson 363–78 and Gentile and Anderson 225–46.

41. Roger Smith asserts that during the Korean War, war-gaming tools were "new tools for teaching strategy and tactics" for the military, and images of these games were only to educate military leaders, who did not feel the visuals were appropriate for public view; therefore, images for instructing the "craft of warfare" were kept top-secret (3). Through artist and writer Milton Caniff, who created the Steve Canyon fictional American hero, the war games appeared in his comic strip, utilizing the games for his war assignments. Therefore, during an increasing computer-graphic age, Smith indicates more "mathematical and logical algorithms" exist than could ever be produced by hand within the structure of the original games (5). In board games, where the mind had time to contemplate the situation, the computer now places "instantaneous synchronization of multiple views of the battle" (5). Smith expresses concern that the games are "visually attractive rather than accurate representations of battle field activities" (6). See Roger Smith, "The Long History of Gaming in Military Training," *Simulation and Gaming* 41.1 (Feb. 2010): 6–19.

42. "Video Console Death: US Boy, 9, 'Kills Sister, 13, over Controller,' " *BBC News*, 19 Mar. 2018, https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.bbc.com/news/amp/world-us-canada-43455550.

43. In *Eye and Mind*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty unveils pertinent phenomenological insight, whereby he indicates that when a presence is specified, it exists in all areas of place, time, space, vicinity, and depth (*Art and Theory* 769).

44. Dan Schindel, "A New Trend among Superhero Movies: The Villains Are Right," Hyperallergic 9 Apr. 2019, https://hyperallergic.com/492766/a-new-trend-among-superhero-movies-the-villains-are-right/.

45. Quoted passages taken from the movie *Infinity War*. See Works Cited.

46. Ibid.

47. Fred Pearce, "It's Not Overpopulation that Causes Climate Change, It's Overconsumption," *The Guardian* 10 Sept. 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/19/not-overpopulation-that-causes-climate-change-but-overconsumption

48. Quoted passages taken from the movie *Infinity War*. See Works Cited.

49. Climate change has become a controversial topic, where one line of thought relies on the scientific data behind global warming in its natural and human caused progressions, while other lines of thought on climate change embrace lenses such as capitalism, politics, religious, or pseudo-scientific views to form opinions of causes, or merely to indicate that no problem exists at all. See, Weart, Spencer R. *The Discovery of Global Warming*; Dessler, Andrew E., and Parson, Edward A. *The Science and Politics of Global Climate Change*; and Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything*: *Capitalism vs. The Climate*.

50. In his introduction to *Reflections* by Walter Benjamin, Leon Wieseltier argues that Benjamin acts "as if he were a lawyer or a legal philosopher . . . ; and yet on the later pages of the essay ["Critique of Violence"], the entire system of initial reasoning, if not an entire world of preliminary values, is pushed aside, and the expert lawyer changes into an enthusiastic chiliast who rhapsodically praises the violence of divine intervention, which will put an end to our lives of insufficiency and dearth" (xxix-xxx).

51. Ross first documents the opinion of Werner Hamacher, while the second opinion cited here is that of Peter Fenves. See Alison Ross, "The Distinction between Mythic and Divine Violence: Walter Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence' from the Perspective of 'Goethe's *Elective Affinities*,' " *New German Critique* 121, 41.1 (Winter 2014): 100, 101.

52. Ibid., 109–19, specifically 111, 113–14.


Chapter 4

53. *Fundierung* is the Husserlian fundamental, phenomenological ground that unifies connective motifs, which point to awareness instead of the mere idea of knowledge (Kohák 132).

54. I follow the framework of this Merleau-Pontian call (*Phenomenology of Perception*, 383).

55. Here, Merleau-Ponty references Husserl's "eidetic intuition."

56. The Mexican government sponsored the mural to defend the Mexican Revolution of the 1920s and to fulfill the promise of a new way of life for the Mexican people (Rochfort and Folgarait).

57. Another example is the creation in post-Apartheid South Africa of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Victims and representatives could report acts of gross human injustice that occurred from 1948 to1990 to the TRC, thus allowing for prosecution in the court systems. See Madeleine Fullard and Nicky Rousseau, "Truth Telling, Identities, and Power in South Africa and Guatemala," https://www.ictj.org/publication/truth-telling-identities-and-power-south-africa-and-guatemala. Other examples can be found in the Holocaust memorial in the city of Berlin or the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

58. In this instance, Merleau-Ponty references Aristotle's accidental properties of a thing. Anthony Kenny explains another way to understand these properties from Aristotle: "Accidents, confusingly, are per se beings. It is a substance-qualified-by-an-accident that is a *per accidens* being. So while the wisdom of Socrates is a per se being, wise Socrates is not; he is a being *per accidens*" (Kenny 175).

59. Here, Merleau-Ponty cites Léon Brunschvicg's argument on eternal truth from (*Phenomenology of Perception* 415; see also 556).

60. According to Merleau-Ponty: "the founded term is presented as a determination or a making explicit of the founding term, which prevents the founded term from ever fully absorbing the founding term" (414).

61. This "fear of death" seems to be in direct contradiction to Lévinas's notion of the face-to-face encounter. But Merleau-Ponty refers to the "fear of death" as an experience that can catapult the subject out of solipsism, and this notion offers a common ground between the two philosophers.

62. Merleau-Ponty references "modern psychology" as revealing the motor presence of the word.

63. These questions on the hostile environment of social media discourse are posed by Dr. Cathy Joanne, PhD in earth sciences, with work in geology and sedimentology. For an additional perspective on human behavior and the relation of care in communities, see Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Rise in Disaster* (Viking, 2009).

64. Merleau-Ponty argues: "Against the natural world, I can always have recourse to thinking nature and throw into doubt every perception taken in isolation" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 377).

65. Wolfgang Schirmacher poses interesting questions as a " 'techno-optimist,' " though in tune with Heidegger's technological dangers. In *Ereignis Technik*, Schirmacher writes: " 'Life-technology and death-technology concern the same problematic and are struggling in a dialectic of identity and difference.' " In "*Homo Generator*: The Challenge of Gene Technology" (1987), he argues that we have an accountability toward the human world, when embracing "genetic technology" to the point of altering the original compositional genetics for all organisms and species of our world to be distinct only in "degree" and not "quality." He argues: " '…responsibility is a characteristic of our life-technology from the very beginning. If we fail in this responsibility, we shall die as a species, for in artificiality we respond to our nature—well or badly.' " See his biography at https://egs.edu/biography/wolfgang-schirmacher/. For more information, see https://www.zrs-kp.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Poligrafi-65-66_BodilyProximity.pdf.

66. Peter Baker and Michael D. Shear, "El Paso Shooting Suspect's Manifesto Echoes Trump's Language," *New York Times*, 4 Aug. 2019.

67. Mitch Smith, Rick Rojas, and Campbell Robertson, "Dayton Gunman Had Been Exploring 'Violent Ideologies,' F.B.I. Says," *New York Times*, 6 Aug. 2019.

68. Baker and Shear, "El Paso Shooting."

69. I agree with Jeff Lewis in his definition of "discourse, text and coding are all terms relation to organized communications systems that deploy various media technologies and platforms" (Lewis 17).

70. Merleau-Ponty's notion of the inherence and authenticity of linear and sequential time in relation to history contrasts with Lévinas's reading of history. Levinas marks a philosophical language that moves beyond essence and beyond being through an interruption of history, a

disruption of linear time through the face-to-face encounter event that moves toward an ethical encounter—a paradoxical movement that is prior to the ethical. He often refers to that which is preoriginal, older than time itself, an interrupted time or "dead time," which bypasses linear history (not to be confused with a necrological discourse). On some of the above points, see Sigrid Hackenberg y Almansa's essay on Lévinas in her *Total History, Anti-History, and the Face that Is Other* (Atropos, 2013) 89-109.

71. Here, Lévinas cites Abbé de Condillac's premise of a "human being in the form of a statue, adding one sense at a time": "If we present it with a rose, to us it will be a statue that smells a rose, but to itself, it will be the smell itself of this flower" (*Entre Nous* 14).

72. It is important to note that, fundamentally, Lévinas is critiquing the notion of ontology. In fact, he is developing a philosophy that counters Western philosophy's adherence to ontology: "The idea of being overflowing history makes possible *existents* [*etants*] both involved in being and personal . . ." (*Totality and Infinity* 23). He proposes that a way of transcending Western ontology is through the encounter with the "other," the "stranger." See the "Author's Introduction" in *Entre Nous*, where he suggests an alternative to the entire history of ontology. The essay "Is Ontology Fundamental?" raises this very question. While Lévinas praises Heidegger, he also offers a heavy measure of criticism here. See, in addition, chapter 1 of *Otherwise than Being*, "Essence and Disinterest"—1. Being's "Other": "If transcendence has meaning, it can only signify the fact that the *event of being*, the *esse*, the *essence*, passes over to what is other than being" (3).

73. Lévinas states: "Consciousness then does not consist in equaling being with representation, in tending to the full light in which this adequation is to be sought, but rather in

overflowing this play of lights . . . whose ultimate signification . . . does not lie in *disclosing*" (*Totality and Infinity* 27, 28).

74. Lévinas continues to develop the notion of passivity in his later works. In particular, see *Otherwise than Being*, The Self: 109-113; and Substitution: 113-115, including a reference to "anarchical passivity" wherein "activity and passivity coincide" (113, 115).

75. It is not that Lévinas thinks Heidegger's overall work is flawed. On the contrary, he recognizes the "greatness" of Heidegger, but he does acknowledge the flaw in Heidegger's theory of *Befindlichkeit*, as "fear for self," "fear for emotion for self," and "anguish *for* self" but not for the human other (*Entre Nous* 117, 221, 117).

76. Lévinas quotes Plato's *Republic* 505e (*Entre nous* 248).

77. Erazim Kohák emphasizes the Husserlian desire to loosen the bondage caused by "common sense" in viewing the world and its actualities in either a "subject" or "objective" view, and, rather, through "*experience* or, in Husserl's terminology, *as phenomena*" (Kohák 37).

78. Lévinas describes Merleau-Ponty's phenomenal images of appearance to the consciousness of being: "One hand touches the other, the other hand touches the first; the hand, consequently, is touched and touches the touching—one hand touches the touching. A reflexive structure: it is as if space were touching itself through man" (*Entre nous* 111-12).

79. Lévinas refers to Vassily Grossman's description of a time in Moscow before political prisoners could receive information, and people gathered in line formation to read both emotional sufferings and anticipations of freedom on the "nape" of each individual in front of them (*Entre Nous* 232).

80. Though Heidegger's term of authenticity is more complex than its denotative meaning, his discussion of "they-self"—in the sense that is important for Lévinas—covers the choices and

actions that people embrace, which are not really their own; and in this sense, they-self turns the "*authentic self*" toward inauthenticity, or unawareness, in that "others have taken its [Dasein] being away from it" (*Being and Time* 123, 125, 122).

81. Both Lévinas and Arendt agree that authenticity is related to responsibility toward the human other, but they argue that Heidegger falls short in his understanding of the self-responsibility of Dasein, of care, or how humans approach their possibilities for meaning. Lévinas states that "fear and responsibility for the death of the other person" require actions on the part of each person that go beyond the "ontology of Heidegger's Dasein"; and Arendt argues that Heidegger intentionally " 'avoided' dealing with action' " (Lévinas, *Entre Nous* 130, 131; Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* 184-85).

82. J. Childers and G. Hentzi, eds., *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism,* 103.

83. Interestingly, Jacques Lacan states that there can be no universal seer in the scopic field. (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 74).

84. Robert Sokolowski states: "Intentionality as a generic term covers both empty and filled intentions, as well as the recognitional acts that intend the identity of the object; . . . . [I]t not only counters the egocentric predicament of modern thought, but also accounts for our ability to recognize identities in manifolds of experience, to deal with things that are absent, and to register the identities given across presence and absence" (40).

85. Lévinas argues that both Hegel and Husserl do get to "the identity of the identical and the non-identical in consciousness of self recognizing itself as infinite thought" but miss altogether the first case, which should, foremost, be the human other (*Entre Nous* 137).

86. Salomon Malka writes that Lévinas's family was gunned down with machine guns. The pain of the murders were so profound for Lévinas that only on one occasion could he address the family he could no longer have on this earth; he lists them each by name and title—with his rabbi father as his "master," and his mother as his "guide" (80).

87. When a prisoner, from 1979 to 1982, Vaclav Havel, a literary artist and reformist in the Czech Republic, reads a Lévinasian essay and writes in a letter to his wife: " 'Levinas's idea that 'something must begin,' that responsibility establishes an ethical situation that is asymmetrical, and that this cannot be preached but only upheld, corresponds in every detail with my experience and my opinion. . . . I am responsible for the state of the world' " (Malka 82).

88. Malka recounts the story of the main rabbi from Strasbourg, whose father was housed at the same stalag as Lévinas. The rabbi carried with him a pencil sketch of the war prison and posed this question to Lévinas.

89. Jacques Derrida states that it is not merely Lévinas's "call" to us but his continual "recalling" that reminds us of another in need: this is at the heart of the *à-Dieu*. Lévinas recalls us to an " 'uprightness of an exposure to death, without defense' " and to " 'a request to me addressed from the depths of an absolute solitude' " (Derrida, 13, 121).

Chapter 5

90. In identifying deep phenomenon, Bernet states: "The gaze of the other, the Face of the Other, the appearance of the thing on its invisible ground, and the scopic drive and the search for an inaccessible and illusory gaze" (117-118).

91. Bernet describes the Husserlian risk of a given trait and phenomenon: "This given may be incomplete or it may even be "canceled out" for the sake of another given, but the imperfection of its givenness is without mystery and without depth" (105).

92. In the twenty-first century, neuroscience has revealed that we are not blank slates. Therefore, Eagleman asserts the multiple ways in which a person can alter the brain through " 'pathogens,' (both chemical and behavioral,) additionally affect the way a child develops into adulthood. He reminds society that children cannot choose their own developing pathway. "Genetics", exposure to abuse, and chemical substances such as narcotics "*in utero*," all alter the brain's capacity to keep the team of competitors in order (Eagleman 157, 158). He also emphasizes the Charles Whitman case of 1966, where Whitman goes on a murderous rampage in killing members of his family first, and then from a tower on the campus of the University of Texas, he shot random people, killing thirteen and wounding many others. In his suicidal note, he requests that an autopsy be performed on his body, as he writes: "However, lately (I cannot recall when it started) I have been a victim of many unusual and irrational thoughts" (Eagleman 151). Eagleman writes: "Whitman's brain harbored a tumor about the diameter of nickel . . . . that compressed a third region called the amygdala. The amygdala is involved in emotional regulation, especially as regards fear and aggression. By the late 1800s, researchers had discovered that damage to the amygdala caused emotional and social disturbances . . . . damage to the amygdala in monkeys led to a constellation of symptoms including lack of fear, blunting of emotion, and overreaction. Female monkeys with amygdala damage showed inappropriate maternal behavior, often neglecting or physically abusing their infants. In normal humans, activity in the amygdala increases when people are shown threatening faces, are put into frightening situation, or experience social phobias" (153).

93. Though Paul Crowther speaks primarily of the aesthetic experience in painting, he does differentiate between genera, or "modes" of images: "The reason for this omission [other visual images] is that these latter modes of representation will require a substantially different analysis from the one appropriate to painting. This is because painting and photography (and the arts derived from the latter) have a fundamentally different ontological structure, which will, in consequence, tend to produce different cognitive and psychological effects" (111). He states: "The photographic arts, in contrast [to painting], are fundamentally mechanical reproductions of various aspects of visual reality. In recent years, of course, a great deal of work has been done to show that the camera is not an innocent eye. Its images can be staged, manipulate, and even, to some degree, fabricated. But the fact that so much theoretical work has been required in order to clarify this fact is itself of great significance. It shows that we are strongly inclined to read photographs at the level of their basic code alone, as mechanical copies of the visual. This in turn means that we tend not to look for a broader and more complex levels of signification." See Crowther (111-12).

Neuroscientist David Eagleman states: "When people play a new video game for the first time, their brains are alive with activity. They are burning energy like crazy. As they get better at the game, less and less brain activity is involved. They have become more energy efficient [with their "expert" "zombie systems"]. . . . Consciousness is called in during the first phase of learning and is excluded from the game playing after it is deep in the system. Playing a simple video game becomes as unconscious a process as driving a car, producing speech, or performing the complex finger movements required for tying a shoelace. These become hidden subroutines, written in an undeciphered programming language of proteins and neurochemicals, and there they lurk—for decades sometimes—until they are next called upon" (142).

94. Lacan is continually influenced from factual events in the murderous acts of violence by Christine and Léa Papin, two sisters and live-in domestic maids of Monsieur Lancelin, his wife Madame Léonie, and daughter Genvieve Lancelin in February 2, 1933. Both Lacan and Sartre are profoundly influenced by these heinous acts, which explain, at least partly, the extent of their underlying search of where things go tragically wrong for the subject. Lacan's "mirror phase" already addresses this concern in his 1936 lecture. I hold that until Lacan reads Merleau-Ponty's last work-in-progress does he recognize what is happening with gazes behind an image, their power, and how they apply to Lacan's motive of unearthing the desires in the drive and to their many influencing factors that can lead to shocking acts of violence upon the community. Thus, Lacan's view from the perpetrator never leaves him. See, Lacan, *Art in Theory*, "The Mirror Phase as Formative of the Function of the I," page 620.

95. Bernet argues: "Freud thus confirms Merleau-Ponty's intuition that vision travels in an open 'circle' which brings into play different bodies and gazes" (115).

96. Alan Sheridan clarifies Lacan's stance, in that no coequality among "need" or "demand" identifies desire by either of these two, because it is inside the "gap" between need and demand that creates and establishes desire as a very specific totality (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 278).

97 .Sheridan states: "Desire is a perpetual effect of symbolic articulation. It is not an appetite: it is essentially eccentric and insatiable. That is why Lacan co-ordinates it not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it (one is reminded of fetishism)" (278-279).

98. Here, it is necessary to keep to the forefront two factors from Lacan: He uses the Latin *fascinum* to refer to the register of the gaze in the "law of the signifier"—the law that would permit the insatiable persistence for the continual existence of an overtly "ideal father" that

extends beyond what is fitting; and a concept, as Lacan notes, continually scrutinized for the mistrust of its nature and state of affairs (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 35). Also, it is essentially important to consider Arendt's definition of evil, as the harm done to the community through both the acts of violence, willing and knowingly committed against the entire community of human beings, and the nonaction against such violence.

99. At this point, Lacan even disrupts thought by stating that the same unawareness—of the events that surpass vision in the development of ideas and reason—has taken place in past "philosophical research" (77).

100. I maintain here that Lacan does not literally mean the eyes to see, as in vision—which twenty-first century neuroscience has now proven comes from the brain and not the eyes. See, Eagleman page 41. Instead, Lacan differentiates eye, not to see, with the words "desperate" to get beneath the layers of the perpetrator that acknowledges the mystery: why the perpetrator gorged the eyes of her victim ( Madame Lancelin) and why the victim's eyes, placed in a handkerchief, were later found near the perpetrator. The desperate eyes of the perpetrator is the task that influenced him and never left him.

101. Bernet points out that for Lacan this also means "outside of the situation of psychoanalytic therapy" (116-117).

102. Tom Huhn, Professor at the School of Visual Arts, NYC, states: "Hegel believes that nature is split out of spirit and nature is wholly spiritual; wholly knowable; and wholly phenomenological. Nature, for Hegel, is part of human reason and the opposite of Spirit, but correlative opposites are not identical. Thus, when the self cannot recognize human reason of itself, then misconstruction of the self presents an un-fully integrated sense of self. For Lacan,

the mirror phase must take place in the recovery of self. In Lacanian language, Hegel could say that nature is the misrecognition." Berlin Lecture notes scribed June 2013.

103. Sheridan states: "The '*a*' in question stands for '*autre*' (other), the concept having been developed out of the Freudian 'object' and Lacan's own exploitation of 'otherness' " (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 282).

104. Sheridan indicates that the Lacanian "real" evolved over time. It began as "consistency" and eventually became the "impossible": that which is silent and wordless, but meets the obstacle of the situation head on (*Four Fundamental Concepts* 279-280).

105. Interestingly, Lévinas argues: "And thus, with regard to beings, understanding carries out an act of violence and of negation. A partial negation, which is violence. And this partialness can be described by the fact that, without disappearing, beings are in my power. The partial negation which is violence denies the independence of beings: they are mine. Possession is the mode by which a being, while existing, is partially denied. It is not merely the fact that the being is an instrument and a tool-that is to say, a means; it is also an end-consumable, it is food, and, in enjoyment, offers itself, gives itself, is mine. Vision certainly exercises power over the object, but vision is already enjoyment" (*Entre Nous* 9).

106. Sheridan states that for Lacan, the symbolic is subject, speech, language, signifiers, and the ideological, law. It houses desire, where Lacan defines desire as "eccentric and insatiable" (278). The imaginary is contrasted with the symbolic between the ego and images" the "subject is . . . an effect of the symbolic" (279). The image is part of "reality" and not the "real," that which is not spoken or written (279, 280).

107. Christian Metz's "scopic regimes" refers to the scopic drive of seeing through the gaze but in the different ways of seeing according to culture, specifically in film. See

https://humstatic.uchicago.edu/faculty/wjtm/glossary2004/scopicvocative.htm. In addition, Jacques Derrida addresses the arbitrary in adventitious identities through language and power in their hierarchical "logocentric longing" (*Of Grammatology* 167). Consequently, the Lévinasian critique of necrological discourse is not unlike the critique of an unreasonable and unlimited power connected to a patriarchal discourse.

108. I draw from Arendt: "The manifestation of who the speaker and doer unexchangeably is, though it is plainly visible, retains a curious intangibility that confounds all efforts toward unequivocal verbal expression. The moment we want to say *who* somebody is, our very vocabulary leads us astray into saying *what* he is; we get entangled in a description of qualities he necessarily shares with others like him; we begin to describe a type of a 'character' in the old meaning of the word, with the result that his specific uniqueness escapes us" (*The Human Condition* 181).

109. Bernet confirms that the "gaze of the picture (like the gaze of the thing) reverses the subject like a glove pulled inside out, exposing the inside while at the same time internalizing the exterior of the picture (or of the thing)": something that continually intrigued both Lacan and Lévinas (113).

110. In "overlapping domains" of the brain, Eagleman holds: "Scientists have long debated how the brain detects motion," and as a result, different theories produce "decades of debates among academics," where the results in the majority of experiments are "inconclusive, supporting one model over another in some laboratory conditions but not in others" (126-127). However, Eagleman states that the resulting factors conclude: "*many* ways the visual system detects motion" (127). He states: "Biology [specifically the brain here] never checks off a problem and calls it quits. It reinvents solutions continually. The end product of that approach is

a highly overlapping system of solutions—the necessary condition for a team-of-rivals architecture" (127).

111. Surviving film footage of Nazi violence exist at Holocaust museums in the United States and Europe.

112. From his overall research of the "overlapping domains of the brain," Eagleman pulls from numerous neuroscientists and sociologists in their views (126). Regarding the amygdala and social behavior, he indicates that the "hippocampus" is the region of the brain, where everyday events are " 'cemented in,' " but in extreme fear and terror of gruesome events, the amygdala "lays down memories along an independent, secondary memory track" (126). Such memories possess a "different quality to them: they are difficult to erase and they can pop back up in 'flashbulb' fashion—as commonly described by rape victims and war veterans," where memories of the same event are placed not in one single memory but multiplex memories (126).

113. Bourriaud continues: "In a group show, the Danish artist Jens Haaning set up an automatic closure mechanism which shut the visitor away in an empty room with just a video-spy in it. Caught like an insect, the beholder was transformed into the subject of the artist's eye, represented by the camera" (77).

114. Bourriaud refers to "Dan Graham's extraordinary 1974 installation, which broadcast the picture of anyone venturing into it, but with a slight time lapse, the filmed visitor shifted from the status of a theatrical 'character' caught in an ideology of representation to that of a pedestrian subjected to a repressive ideology of urban movement" (78).

115. Massumi states the definitions of Alva Nöe for "virtual" and for "event." See, page 43.

116. Massumi writes: "A semblance of a cosmological truth carries 'magical' power to move bodies without objectively touching them, and to make things happen without explicitly ordering

the steps to be followed, as long as the conditions have been set in place with the appropriate intensity of affective tonality, and with the necessary technical precision" (126).

117. Here, Goldhill refers to Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet and the work earlier scholars developed. "That is, tragedy is viewed as manipulating and exploring ritual patterns to express a sense of order and disorder in the world. . . .In this view, the action of tragedy is presented and needs to be analysed through specific ritual patterns" (335-336). See, *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*.

118. Goldhill references Vernant.

119. Goldhill references the work of Vernant and Louis Gernet in reference to Oedipus in *Oedipus the King* (332, 333-334).

120. Merleau-Ponty states: "The thing, therefore, (admitting all that can happen to it and the possibility of its destruction) is a node of properties such that each is given if one is; it is a principle of identity. What it is it is by its internal arrangement, therefore fully, without hesitation, without fissure, totally or not at all. It is what it is of itself or in itself, in an exterior array, which the circumstances allow for and do not explain. It is an ob-ject, that is, it spreads itself out before us by its own efficacy and does so precisely because it is gathered up in itself" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 161).

121. Here, I am referencing Benjamin's assessments on violence as seen in chapter three. See Benjamin, pages 286, 300.

122. See, Arendt, pages 25-28 in chapter three.

123. Within perceptual awareness, Merleau-Ponty indicates that spectators can process narration: "if pauses are included in the narration and are used to summarize briefly the essential aspects of what has just been recounted" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 134). He clarifies that

"the story has an essence that appears as the narration advances, without any explicit analysis, and that subsequently guides the preproduction of the narration" (*Phenomenology of Perception* 134). Moreover, Merleau-Ponty's explanation of essence and narration explicate how Massumi's virtual events of ritual—through an invoked relational reality—accomplish their intended purpose.

124. Massumi refers to the effects on thought itself from the virtual event present, as perceptual appearance, in that an "object's appearance is an event" (43, 126).

125. Perpetrators and victims both enter a spectral stage. This opens up additional avenues considering the notion of perpetrators and victims. The question of the spectator is central in this instance: access to critical and analytical assessment on the part of spectators. Education and access to education greatly facilitates these points.

126. P. E. Easterling writes: "Messenger speeches are always very closely linked to what the audience are to see and hear: exits and entrances, including the return of killers and wounded victims, off-stage cries, and the display of corpses" (*Greek Tragedy* 154). Peter Burian writes: "The primacy of the word in tragedy is not, however, merely a function of the resources of the theatre or conventions of the genre" (*Greek Tragedy* 199-200). Burian holds: "The power of such words is not easily controlled, and it should come as no surprise that their effects are often diametrically opposed to what the speaker intended or the hearer understood" (200).

127. Lévinas questions: "How is the vision of the face no longer vision, but hearing and speech?" (Entre Nous 11).

128. Bernet offers a perceptual analysis on "appearance" and "invisibility" for both Merleau-Ponty and Lévinas, when Merleau-Ponty argues that whatever appears comes not from "itself but from a common ground which it shares with that to which it appears" (110). Bernet continues:

"Before being expressed in the language of literature or philosophy, before offering itself to the gaze in painting, this invisible flesh of the world makes itself felt in the silent experience of a 'perceptual faith' (*foi perceptive*) which, questioning itself about its gasp and lacks, sets about a search for an equilibrium or order while completely rejecting any pre-established order" (111).

129. Burian states: "Words are tools of power in tragedy. Tragic discourse is still responsive to a notion of the ominous quality of language itself" (*Greek Tragedy* 200).

130. Psychoanalysts Robert D. Stolorow, George E. Atwood, and their colleagues link a "psychoanalytic phenomenology" to an "ontological unconsciousness" and demonstrate the operative functions of the phenomenological and the ontological blended with the psychoanalytical (*World, Affectivity, Trauma* 22; *Trauma and Human Existence* 26). Stolorow and associates, deal with the lived-experience of trauma with no safe refuge for utterings, and where time and language lie dormant and allow for "traumatic states and psychopathology" (*Contexts of Being* 54). Stolorow writes: "Experiences of trauma become freeze-framed into an eternal present in which one remains forever trapped, or to which one is condemned to be perpetually returned through the portkeys supplied by life's slings and arrows" (*Trauma and Human Existence* 20). He discusses specific "vignettes" describing the breakdown of time in the arena of trauma, where the past takes the place of the present and the future is void of all signification except for "endless repletion" (20). Stolorow maintains: "In this sense it is trauma, not the unconscious (Freud, 1915), that is timeless" (20).

131. Goldhill references the *Oresteia* and then acknowledges a conflict in the inability to recognize distortions of "worship of the god," where he then references *Oedipus at Colonus*, upon the death of Oedipus, seen as "superhuman hero" in its existing culture (131).

132. Though Lacan removes all sexual connotations from voyeur or exhibitionist in his phenomenological reduction of the Freudian drive paired with Merleau-Ponty, in this case made by Goldhill, we cannot ignore the perversion of looking, when religious clergy continually debase their own scared religions through that of scopophilia. Freud states: "The pleasure of looking [scopophilia] becomes a perversion (a) if it is restricted exclusively to the genitals, or (b) if it is connected with the overriding of disgust (as in the case of voyeurs or people who look on at excretory functions, or (c) if, instead of being preparatory to the normal sexual aim, it supplants it. This last is markedly true of exhibitionists . . ." (Freud 251). The questioning then involves the descent of motives that point to the origins of such religious perversions that disgrace the scaredness of God and human being.

133. Easterling states: "In *Hecuba* Euripides uses not the perpetrator, but the major victim, to tell his own story: the Thracian king Polymestor, who is blinded by Hecuba and the Trojan women after they have treacherously killed his children. Here too there is great elaboration: Hecuba formulates her plan to punish Polymestor (870-94) and lures him into the tent (968-1023); his cries ring out, and the Chorus respond (1035-43); Hecuba taunts her victim and announces his return to the stage (1044-55); he enters crawling 'like a wild beast', singing a desperate aria (1056-82), and when Agamemnon has arrived in response to his cries for help he makes a long speech which includes a detailed account of how the women trapped him, killed his children and then blinded him (1132-82) – a most unconventional messenger speech which does duty as the first half of a set debate (agon) and is triumphantly countered by Hecuba's brutal response. This is arguably more theatrical, as well as more thought-provoking, than an on-stage scuffle between Polymestor and Hecuba and the women; as in *Agamemnon*, the effect is to draw all the attention to the problematic nature of the violent deeds." See *Greek Tragedy* pp.154-155.

134. The work of Catherine Malabou on philosophy and neuroscience gives insight on how neuroscientists and lay people many times abide within an ideology, wherein the brain is merely molded from the world around it and minus the power of the brain's ability to invent and develop novel ideas. Malabou contemplates her own question: 'What should we do with our brain?' is above all to visualize the possibility of saying no to an afflicting economic, political, and mediatic culture that celebrates only the triumph of flexibility, blessing obedient individuals who have no greater merit than that of knowing how to bow their heads with a smile" (*What Should We Do with Our Brain?* 37).

135. The reference of unalloyed violence is from Benjamin's discussion in chapter three, pages 37-38.

136. Here, Lacan specifically states, the "jouissance beyond the pleasure principle." He references this phrase and title from one of Freud's works that critics indicate is a "turning point" for Freud in his "theory," and for his later writings of a "preoccupation with death": "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (Freud 595). Freud writes: "Another striking fact is that the life instincts have so much more contact with our internal perception—emerging as breakers of the peace and constantly producing tensions whose release is felt as pleasure—while the death instincts seems to do their work unobtrusively. The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts" (626).

137. Though the earliest versions of the Narcissus myth vary within different time periods and different cultures, the basis of the narrative remains intact and indicates the greatest degree of desire: Narcissus's rejection of those who fall in love with him instigates the act of Narcissus falling in love with himself (in one version his twin sister); Narcissus's knowledge of his own attractive beauty that leads to his suicide in his lost will to live, in that he cannot obtain the very

object of his desire; and all that remains left at the end of the myth is the narcissus flower. See, David Keys, "Ancient manuscript sheds new light on an enduring myth", BBC History Magazine, Vol. 5 No. 5 (May 2004), p. 9 (accessed 17 July 2020); Keys, David (1 May 2004). "The ugly end of Narcissus." *Poxy: Oxyrhynchus Online*. Retrieved 20 July 2020; and Mario Jacoby, *Individuation and Narcissism* (1985; 2006).

138. Evident in much of Auguste Rodin's art is his battlement of guilt that entrenched him at the death of his sister, in that Rodin introduced her to the man, who would eventually be responsible for her death. See, Morey, D. R. (1918). "The Art of Auguste Rodin." The Bulletin of the College Art Association of America. 1 (4): 145-54. JSTOR.

Rodin's quest to find answers is genuine: "Clearly, Rodin's preoccupation with expressing elemental fears and passions related him to the Symbolist quest to plumb the depths of the mind, as did his interest in investigating the psychic toll exacted on the individual by civilization" (*Janson's Basic History of Western Art* 542).

139. Lacan reference Merleau-Ponty's "paradox of the gesture" in order to realize the "most perfect deliberation in each of these [the painter's] brush strokes" (114).

140. Arendt argues: "Without the disclosure of the agent in the act, action loses its specific character and becomes one form of achievement among others" (*The Human Condition* 180). Further, she writes: "Human distinctness is not the same as otherness . . . . Speech and action reveal this unique distinctness" (176).

141. Merleau-Ponty writes: Like the flesh—speech is a relation to Being through a being, and like it, it is narcissistic, eroticized, endowed with a natural magic that attracts the other significations into its web, as the body feels the world in feeling itself" (*The Visible and the Invisible* 118).

142. Lewis argues that, overall, knowledge systems are positive and are used to work through social and cultural problems. He states: "Media don't determine violent behaviour: media, culture and humans work interactively to create the condition of violence and violent complexity" (14).

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