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René ten Bos

SUMMARY: Towards an Amphibious Anthropology: Water and Peter Sloterdijk.

The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk can be seen as a philosopher of elements. It is argued that he takes a special interest in air and water. In the paper, the focus is on what Sloterdijk has to say about water. More particularly, it is shown that this element plays a pivotal role in what Sloterdijk himself refers to as his 'amphibious anthropology': like amphibians, human beings have to choose between elements. They can be anthropologically understood as 'divers', 'island builders', and as a 'builders of bridges'. The idea that the human being is a diver is related not only to various legends but also to mysticism and Heidegger's concept 'In-Sein'; the idea that s/he is an island builder is related to technologies of isolation that are characteristic of island dwellers; finally, the idea that s/he is a builder of bridges which tries to overcome isolation is related to Sloterdijk's ideas about globalization which he sees as a crisis of the perfect global form philosophers once believed could be ascribed to planet earth. Sloterdijk claims that the answer to their activities is not a nostalgic longing for lost communities that allow for a medial being. He rather opts for a new 'spatial politics' that allows for diversity and pluralism.

Jan Degraeuwe

SUMMARY: Diversity and Unity in the Creative Evolution according to Bergson

Bergson develops a metaphysical vision of the evolution of life in *L'évolution créatrice*. This vision exceeds the particular scientific theories and is supported by an epistemology. The understanding of our existence from the inside is Bergson's model to think life in general. Bergson explains how mechanistic and teleological explanations of life are rooted in the human intelligence whose aim is manufacturing tools and machines, man is the homo faber. Intelligence is not a further development of the instinct, but instinct and intelligence are divergent developments of a consciousness in general. Only intuition, instinct aware of itself, can give a full account of what life really is. This article is a reading of *L'évolution créatrice* focusing on differences of kind as there are matter/life, plant/animal, intelligence/instinct and intelligence/intuition. These differences of kind are the philosophical ground to refute reductionism. Dualism is avoided by seeing these differences of kind as inverse movements developing out of a common source: universal life or consciousness in general.

Rudolf Bernet

SUMMARY: Bergson on the Driving Force of Consciousness and Life

A comparative analysis of *Matter and Memory* (1896) and *Creative Evolution* (1907) shows how the notion and structure of "duration", first introduced in *Time and Free Will* (1889), is given a new, dynamic meaning as a creative force when used to explain how unconscious memories of the past are actualized in a present perception and how the evolution of life is steered by the "élan vital". It is tempting, then, to draw a parallel between Bergson's account of the "push" of the past towards the present, or life's "explosive force", and Freud's theory of the drive. Such an interpretation makes one aware, not only of what they both owe to Schopenhauer (rather than Aristotle), but also of Bergson's aversion to negative drives and negativity in general. Bergson tries to compensate for this by ascribing to consciousness and life a creative capacity to cope with the external obstacles that threaten their drive towards self-affirmation. His description of how the initial opposition between mind and brain, or between life and matter, is transformed into an order of mutual dependency also opens new metaphysical perspectives that lead beyond traditional forms of dualism or monism. This new metaphysics, which understands the movement of consciousness and life "from within", also requires a new form of non-intellectual knowledge that Bergson calls "intuition". Intuition as a new "method" of philosophical (and artistic) insight remains faithful to the driving force animating consciousness and life, without disregarding its genuine form of rationality.

Roland Breuer

SUMMARY: Bergson on Nothingness and Matter

This article explores the relation between Bergson's concept of nothingness, as he analyses it in his work *The Creative Evolution*, and his conception of life. It is argued that he only can determine nothingness as a "pseudo-idea" at the price of some general presuppositions concerning life and the spirit. Hence, the core question this article deals with, is: "what are these presuppositions and how do they influence Bergson's description of life and matter?"

James G. Hart

SUMMARY:

It is not merely that the multiple schools and departments present a healthy "pluralism" but there are major theoretical, to say nothing of political-ideological, positions that are at loggerheads and often incommensurate. In addition to the commonly held desideratum that we think of the university as a community of scholars, we propose thinking of scholars as "agents of manifestation," or people proficient in displaying, articulating, and making transparent the world. The extant departmental divisions reflect in a rough fashion the way the world is carved up in what Husserl, to whom this essay is foremost indebted, calls "the natural attitude." However, the university community finds its center in the work of the humanities because their work verges on the transcendental phenomenological position of the inseparability of being and display/manifestation. This is to say that they verge on or make explicit the famous or infamous "transcendental phenomenological reduction" in which there is secured the connection of being and display. Thereby becomes clear that "spirit" integrates the multiversity.

Theo de Boer

SUMMARY: Poetry and Philosophy, Need they Quarrel?

Ever since Plato the identity of philosophy has been at issue in the quarrel between philosophy and poetry. Can changing times alter the identity of philosophy, and simultaneously the identity of poetry?

I. Platonism: From poetry to contemplation

In the *Republic* poetry is a third rate illusion compared with contemplation of "the things that truly are". We can trace the background of this disqualification when we distinguish three levels in the relation of language to reality.

1. We can distinguish assertion, melody and rhythm. The first is the same in poetry and prose, the last is superfluous.

2. Speech is superior to writing in virtue of the speaker's inner mastery over himself.

3. The interiorizing move culminates in the soundless conversation of the soul with itself, contemplating the eternal identical "without the stain of speech or sign" (Boutens).

For Plato, then, we move from poetry to prose, from prose to speech, from speech to silence. Is there room for aesthetics in this view?

II. Symbolism: From contemplation to poetry

In the second part of my lecture I reconstruct Symbolism, a current in literature that in every respect is the opposite of Platonism. Although the goal is the same — the search for true reality — the difference is that the route is now reversed. I restrict myself to the French branch.

4. Baudelaire formulated the basic principle of Symbolism: the ineffable does not exist. "The ultimate goal of the universe is to be expressed" (Valéry). The same worldview is expressed later by Gadamer: an ontology "guided by language".

5. The second principle is that the primary language is script, "Book" (Mallarmé).

6. Poetry proves to be the true language. The music (rhyme, rhythm, tune) reveals the things "exactly as they are" (Wallace Stevens). In poetry the linguistic sign becomes a symbol because the sound, the physical aspect of the linguistic sign, plays a role in the production of meaning. A poem is a "sustained hesitation between sense and sound" (Valéry). Is sound not however a disturbing factor in revealing the things 'as they are'?

Three comments: a) Sound has a function in the evocation of meaning (Jakobson). It is not mere adornment. As such this is an emancipation of the 'external' poetical properties. b) Hallmark of symbolist poetry is its crystallized form, appreciation of craftsmanship: the perfection of the form is beauty. c) The cultivation of the art magnifies the ambiguity of meaning, making poetry 'difficult'.

III. Poetry and Philosophy; Need they Quarrel?

A fundamental reappraisal of poetry is contained in Dilthey's dictum: Poetry is presentation and expression of life. Poetry "gives rise to thought" in a philosophy of life. Poetry "lies" the truth, that is, a complex meaning is sometimes adequate to a complex, extra-ordinary reality. Difficult poetry is perhaps a source for philosophy when thinking itself becomes difficult.

Matthias Somers

SUMMARY: The Living Body

In contemporary analytic philosophy, more and more attention is shifted towards the relation between subject and body. The phenomenon of bodily awareness – the subject feels the warmth of a cup of tea, knows the position of his body without looking, etc. – shows, it is said, that the subject is essentially a bodily subject. Hence, the Cartesian position is deemed untenable, and an identification of the subject with the body is put forward to make sense of bodily awareness. Remarkably, the work of Edmund Husserl is entirely absent in this discussion in analytic philosophy, though he has investigated the relation between subject and body in a particularly meticulous and penetrating way. On the one hand, Husserl pays special attention to the way our body shows itself to us, i.e. as a living body: the subject is an essentially embodied subject. But on the other hand Husserl does not want to go as far as to simply identify subject and body: one may not lose sight of what separates subject and body, what stands in the way of a plain and simple identification. We follow Husserl's analyses of the relation between subject and body while constantly referring to the analytic discussion of the same topic, thus showing a middle course between Cartesianism and the currently en vogue identification theory.

Suzi Adams

SUMMARY:

The paper presents an interpretation of Cornelius Castoriadis' ontological turn in his magnum opus, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, as his attempt to develop a regional ontology of human creative institution through his elucidation of the being of the social-historical. It is suggested that *The Imaginary Institution of Society* can be read as four overlapping philosophical responses to the human condition: ontological, epistemological, anthropological and hermeneutical, respectively. The paper argues that Castoriadis' ontological turn drew on a reactivation of the ancient Greek problematic of *nomos* and *physis*, whereby Castoriadis saw in the order of *nomos* the key to his interpretation of the social-historical. It is argued moreover that despite Castoriadis' strong notion of radical creation as *ex nihilo*, he made an implicit hermeneutical turn in the final chapter of *The Imaginary Institution of Society* that opened onto the interpretative contexts of creation and thus relativized his idea of creation *ex nihilo*. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of *nomos* for creative interpretation and Castoriadis' radical vision of autonomy.

Tomas Geyskens

SUMMARY: Gilles Deleuze on Francis Bacon. Painting as Hysteria

This paper explores Deleuze's idea that hysteria is the clinical essence of painting. In Francis Bacon. *Logique de la sensation*, Deleuze develops the project of a purely esthetic clinic that would be completely independent of psychiatric or psychoanalytic conceptions of psychopathology. How, then, can we make sense of this esthetic-clinical relation between painting and hysteria, and why is the work of Francis Bacon more than any other the revelation of this relation? For Deleuze, Bacon's works show that hysterical symptoms are not expressions of unconscious representations. On the contrary, they reveal the pure presence of the body, the body as nerves and meat. In its hysterical convulsions the body tries to escape from itself, but only painting succeeds in this hysterical enterprise.

Filip Kolen en Gertrudis Van de Vijver

SUMMARY: Return of the Repressed? An Analysis of the Subjective Grounds for Objective Knowledge, with Reference to Van Fraassen's Empirical Stance

This paper critically discusses Bas van Fraassen's book *The Empirical Stance*. On the basis of a transcendental/phenomenological reading, inspired by the later work of E. Husserl, it is argued that this work remains trapped in a fundamental ambiguity. Van Fraassen's apparent criticism of the current developments in analytical metaphysics turns out to be quite the reverse, namely a subscription to the fundamental layers of that same metaphysics. This ambiguity is interpreted on the basis of Husserl's plea for a 'personal philosophy'. On the one hand, it is shown that Van Fraassen flinches from such a conception of philosophy by not radically returning to the subjective sources of thinking in which a personal philosophy is grounded. This compels him to conceptualize the stance as existential, that is, as radically outside the scope of philosophical argumentation. On the other hand it is made clear that Van Fraassen's *démarche*, although it looks quite revolutionary and provocative in the analytical world, is in the first place analytical philosophy's symptom, i.e. it is a return of what was repressed during the settlement of that tradition.

Michel Thys

SUMMARY: Phenomenology of Fascination: A Dialogue with Sartre

In this paper, the author presents a phenomenology of fascination along two lines, in terms of perception and affect. Fascination appears to be a marginal, perceptual condition with an extreme intensity of attention and is characterized by a 'minimum of subject' and an 'exclusive object'. The pole of the subject, almost reduced to pure consciousness, attends to the object of its fascination, which imposes itself onto the subject and stands for the world as such. The author contrasts this analysis with Sartre's reflections on fascination in *L'être et le néant*. In this work, fascination is described, on the one hand, as the non-thetic consciousness of being nothing in the presence of being, and, on the other hand, as a state wherein nothing else exists except a single object dominating an otherwise barren world. At this point, the author typifies fascination as a sort of rigid transcendence in *statu nascendi* with respect to a quasi-object. Affectively speaking, fascination receives the status of an implosion of an extreme, affective ambivalence between attraction and repulsion. Fascination is the silent eye at the centre of the affective storm, which we can understand phenomenologically as the struggle (pushed to its extremes) between the fear of being and the desire for being. Fascination is the closest possible approximation of the impossibility of the realisation of being.

In light of Sartre's analysis of viscosity in *L'être et le néant*, the author wonders if fascination can best be understood as the experience of an impending metamorphosis of the ego. Accordingly, he contrasts Sartre's theory of the relation between consciousness and the ego, as presented in *La transcendance de l'Ego*, with his reflections about fascination in *L'être et le néant*. In the final analysis, it looks as if the object of fascination is an object strange to the ego, which nevertheless tends to occupy the ego's place.

Paul van Tongeren

Summary: Nietzsche's Questions

When Nietzsche is called a radical philosopher, it is (among other reasons) because he questions (or at least claims to call into question) what other thinkers take for granted. In the article I concentrate on the way in which Nietzsche asks his questions, and how his questions (and the vocabulary which he uses to express his questions) develop through his writings. This development can be summarized with the help of a comparison between the original preface to *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and the new preface for the edition of 1886: it is a development from only a few and mainly rhetorical questions to a great number of intricate questions that often are self-referential and call the questioner himself into question. The article points out how Nietzsche gradually discovers his proper question and how this search reaches its climax around 1886. This proper question turns out to be a practical or existential one: "To what extent can truth endure incorporation?" (*Gay Science* p. 110)

Ted Toadvine

Summary:

The deepening of Merleau-Ponty's conception of philosophy parallels his investigations of three distinct modes of silence: the pre-reflective muteness of perception, the indirect language of creative expression, and the abyssal silence of Being. Conceived as "radical reflection" in *Phenomenology of Perception*, philosophy's task is to reflect on the unreflective in a manner that expresses what it means to say without thereby violating its opacity and withdrawal. But the account of the tacit or silent cogito in this work obscures the role that silence plays as the indirect or lateral relation animating expression from within. Proposing in his later work to understand philosophy as the reconversion of silence and speech, Merleau-Ponty recognizes a chiasmic relation between the muteness of the sensible and the secrecy of sense. The first two modes of silence therefore converge in a third, the unspeakability of Being.

Judith Wambacq

Summary: The Differential Quality of Merleau-Ponty's Ontology

In this article I compare the way in which Merleau-Ponty gives shape to the differentiability which characterizes being, with Deleuze's elaborated differential ontology. Both authors refuse to think the ontological ground as an abstract or concrete identity but consider it to be a singular unity based on the global disposition of heterogeneous elements. It does not coincide with itself but is kept open by an ever changing blank spot, which is the condition of possibility of the individualisation of this ontological ground. Moreover, both authors recognize the genetic or individualising power of difference. Despite these resemblances however, Merleau-Ponty's differential ontology seems to be

premature in comparison with the one of Deleuze. Not only has Deleuze, in contrast to Merleau-Ponty, developed an extended theory of difference, according to Deleuze's standards Merleau-Ponty's conception of difference seems to be secondary and derived. As is also remarked by Claude Lefort, the ontological differences Merleau-Ponty points out are always differences of a more fundamental unity. And ultimately, the motor of Merleau-Pontian individualisation is resemblance instead of difference. Since Merleau-Ponty's early death prevented him from developing his differential aspirations any further, these remarks cannot be considered as a critique but should be taken as an indication about how the differential ontology that is sketched out in *Le visible et l'invisible* could be elaborated.

Étienne Bimbenet

SUMMARY: The Philosopher and the Mirror Neurons

The discovery of mirror neurons at the beginning of the nineties rapidly engendered a number of varied, more or less speculative hypotheses, which exceed a strictly experimental framework, and could not escape the philosopher's notice. On at least three points, debates arose: concerning the question of motoric intentionality, the relationship with others, and the origin of language. By blending these different debates with Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of perception, carnal intersubjectivity and finally language, we would like to try to produce a more nuanced conception of them. It is often the case that the philosophy of mind, in the first instance, frequently constituted the theoretical framework for the discovery of mirror neurons. This produced a certain 'style' of reasoning, working at least contrastively if not controversially, every opposite position being summoned to define itself the more clearly as it had to give account of itself against the objection. Therefore, it is into a differentiated and distinctly delineated field that the author brings in Merleau-Ponty, in the hope that by 'diffraction', some of his philosophical statements can be specified. Conversely, on many subjects of dispute, the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty appears rich in fruitful anticipations, which the author would like to show have a great deal of promise for the future. In a double sense, then, the author wants to enter into this confrontation: Merleau-Ponty 'revisited' through contemporary neurobiology, but also instructing it in return.

Luigi Corrias

Summary: The Chiasm of Legal Power

Even though he has never written explicitly about law or legal problems, the work of Merleau-Ponty can help to illuminate some fundamental issues in legal theory. This article shows how Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on creative expression and institution can help to enlighten the nature of sovereignty. The first result of this inquiry is that Sieyès' dualism of constituent and constituted power needs to be left behind. The relationship between both types of power should instead be conceived in a chiasmic manner. This, in turn, opens up new ways of understanding history, the public sphere, the unity of the nation and the origin of the legal order.

Silvia Stoller

Summary: Gender Constructs. Repetition and Reprise with Butler and Merleau-Ponty

Until now post-structuralism is widely regarded as an opposite to phenomenology. This is also true for the relation of Judith Butler's post-structuralism and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. The aim of this article is to show how close they are to each other. For this purpose, I will focus on Butler's poststructuralist concept of repetition (German: *Wiederholung*) to confront it with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of reprise (German: *Wiederaufnahme*). Although the acts of repetition and reprise defer from each other in several respects, they have in common the institution of meaning in the very moment of their acts. However, while Butler's repetition seems to be linked primarily to immediate gender norms, Merleau-Ponty's reprise opens up the field to a larger historical and social past. Following Merleau-Ponty, and applying his idea of reprise to the issue of gender identity, introduces new aspects into the debate of the construction of gender.

Jacques De Visscher

Summary: Existential Hermeneutics as a Challenge. Willem Elsschot's 'Will-o'-the-Wisp' as a Parable about Interpretation

The short novel, *Will-o'-the-Wisp* ('*Het dwaallicht*') by the Antwerpian (Belgian) author Willem Elsschot, narrates how one night Laarmans, a somewhat tired middle-aged husband and father, accompanies three Afghan seamen on a search for a woman, Maria Van Dam. The search leads them through the harbouring city, and ultimately fails. The work is enigmatic and invites the reader to engage with it creatively, adventurously and not without commitment. The reader discovers in this way

not only what it means to interpret, but also that by questioning one's own contribution in the understanding of being, interpretation serves as a challenge to clarify one's existence. The enigma of Will-o'-the-Wisp is never solved, but the search for understanding what happened during that nightly search provides a model for every practical methodology of hermeneutics, and can therefore be considered a parable about the nature of interpretation.

Ciano Aydin

Summary: Striving for Ideals in a Post-Modern Era: Charles S. Peirce on Ethics and Esthetics  
After having discovered that (good) reasoning requires a normative grounding, Peirce makes various attempts, scattered in different texts, to provide an ethical theory. According to him, logic, as the science of the means of acting reasonably, needs ethics to guide it by analyzing the ends to which those means should be directed. Ethics, however, is also not self-sufficient: it needs another discipline that studies what is an end or ideal in itself, and so admirable and desirable in any and all circumstances regardless of any other consideration whatsoever. This discipline is, according to him, esthetics. The author tries to show that Peirce's ethical-esthetical theory of ideals offers a perspective that can circumvent a relativistic ethical position without necessarily embracing a traditional absolutist view. Such a perspective is, according to him, much needed in our post-modern society.

Iso Kern

Summary:

The first question starts from Mengzi's (Mencius, third century B.C.) example of an immediate feeling for others and the tendency therein included to act for the sake of others: When someone sees a child on the verge of falling in a well he is spontaneously alarmed, moved to compassion and has the tendency to help him. The question is phenomenologically discussed, whether this emotion provoked by a situation dangerous for an other experiencing subject and whether this tendency to act for the sake of this subject do not constitutively precede any cognitive and re-presentational understanding of another subject from his own point of view. — The second question is about the relation between moral conscience and the consciousness which, according to Husserl, is immanent in all intentional acts. The paper discusses the thesis that the consciousness of singular intentional acts is only an abstract moment of moral conscience which is the consciousness of the concrete personal life as a striving, willing and acting process. — The third question concerns the intentionality of the meditative or tranquil experience which does not distinguish between different singular objects and does not move from one singular object to another.

Anton Froeyman

Summary: Shifts of Meaning in Cassirer's Conception of Causation

Cassirer's conception of causation has until now been treated largely on the basis of Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics. In this article, it is argued that a characterization of this sort can not be complete. There appear to be several apparent contradictions (of which three are discussed) when the concept of causality in Determinism and Indeterminism is compared with treatments of the concept in other works, especially those of mythical causation. A general view of Cassirer's conception of causality is needed to account for these contradictions. The article offers such a view, which is partly universal (in as far as it refers to universals as time and space) and partly contextual (in as far as it refers, through the conception of the object, to principles that are specific to certain symbolic forms). Then are discussed the differences and the resemblances between theoretical and mythical causation, and, within the theoretical world view, between the natural, cultural and biological sciences.

Vincent Blok

Summary: Nietzsche as End and Transition — Heidegger's Confrontation with Nietzsche in the Thirties.

This article investigates the development of Heidegger's ambiguous relation with Nietzsche in the thirties. On the one hand, he claims that Nietzsche embodies the end of metaphysics, and as such is in transition to another beginning of philosophy. On the other hand, he maintains that Nietzsche is the end of metaphysics, and as such obstructs another beginning of Philosophy. Why is Heidegger of two minds?

If Nietzsche is both end and transition, then his way of thinking must be ambiguous. His analysis of Nietzsche's concept of the 'will' shows us, that according to Heidegger, the transitivity of Nietzsche lies in the ambiguity of his philosophical concepts. Because of this ambiguity, Nietzsche's thought is end and transition. Later on, Heidegger changes his mind because of his reading of Ernst Jünger's

book *Der Arbeiter* (1932). After reading Jünger, he realizes that the end of metaphysics cannot herald a new way of philosophical thinking, as long as it is related to the concept of the will. That is the reason why Heidegger later on maintains that Nietzsche is the end of metaphysics, and as such obstructs another beginning of philosophy. We finish this article with a critical question regarding Heidegger's concept of the 'end'.