THE AFFECTION IN BETWEEN

FROM COMMON SENSE TO SENSING IN COMMON

SERIES IN CONTINENTAL THOUGHT

The Affection in Between

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The Affection in Between

From Common Sense to Sensing in Common

APRIL FLAKNE

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To Gail Lee Flakne
and to her granddaughters, Thaleia and Alma,
a bond unknown, but unbroken

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INTRODUCTION

> Something has been left out from fear. Something has been altered, from vanity. We have tried to accentuate our differences. From the desire to be separate we have laid stress upon our faults, and what is particular to us. But there is a chain whirling round, round, in a steel-blue circle beneath.
>
> —Woolf, *The Waves*

> We suffered terribly as we became separate bodies.
>
> —Woolf, *The Waves*

It begins with the sea, the undifferentiated sea-sky. Encroaching light blocks the amorphous landscape into a scatter of shapes as impersonal as geometry. Then come the children's voices—they were already there!—chattering alongside the birds. They say what they see, sense, each detail, out loud or to themselves, images that flood the air with possibilities, offerings to each other for a dawning day.

> "I see a ring," said Bernard, "hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light."
>
> "I see a slab of pale yellow," said Susan, "spreading away until it meets a purple stripe."
>
> "I hear a sound," said Rhoda, "cheep, chirp, cheep, going up and down."
>
> "I see a globe," said Neville, "hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill."

> "I see a crimson tassel," said Jinny, "twisted with golden threads."
> "I hear something stamping," said Louis, "A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps." (Woolf, 2000, 4)

The Waves[1] reaches beyond stream of consciousness to portray the merging and diverging flows of multiple consciousnesses. Disorienting, the voices, while often ascribed to individual names, tend to blend, inflect, pull a thread from another's prickling flesh, read thoughts, layer perspectives into the gap of one another's sensory immersion. Sometimes, predictably, wrongly, the novel is read as tracing the skirmish between individualism, a collective (un)conscious, and cold, anti-anthropomorphic nature. But it is not that, or not only that.[2] It is a biography of intertwining, enacting bodies, differently composed and alert, coming to inhabit a world already enveloping them. It is a story of how particular, sensitive, and enfleshed characters emerge from and come to share, again and again, sensations and perceptions as they cocreate meaningful worlds and decipherable selves; a story of sensate bodies in the process of making sense together, even when physically separated; a biography of interembodiment through a tangle of affect that runs between the six friends as they rise and fall, like the voices of Rhoda's birds—"a [single] sound" comprised of many—in and out of individuation.

The *Affection in Between* understands co-sensation, a felt cohesion between bodies interacting in shared, expressive spaces cocreated by these bodies, to be the primordial condition from which all differentiation and distinction springs. Before we are ones, we are manifold mixes of affect, sensation, nerve, and flesh, a state we merge into and emerge out of again and again. Yet philosophy and politics too often swing between the ones (particulars, individuals) and a One or Ones (universal, communal), missing this middle distance, the unfolding and recombination of bodies irrevocably linked and linking within space and the possibilities to which this merging and emerging give rise. This book seeks to recover the manifold between of bodies, and their possibilities, by uncovering events of co-sensation—enveloping,

chanced upon, created, worked toward—while acknowledging that these events are both prosaic, pervasive, elusive, and . . . startlingly overlooked!

> "Look," said Rhoda; "listen. Look how the light becomes richer, second by second, and bloom and ripeness lie everywhere; and our eyes, as they range round this room . . . seem to push through the curtains of colour, red, orange, umber and queer ambiguous tints, which yield like veils and close behind them, and one thing melts into another."
>
> "Yes," said Jinny, "our senses have widened. Membranes, webs of nerve that lay white and limp, have filled and spread themselves and float round us like filaments, making the air tangible and catching in them faraway sounds unheard before." (Woolf, 2000, 75)

They (will) all suffer terribly when they (again) become separate bodies. And yet our philosophical tradition endorses and enforces, pushes, this severance. *The Affection in Between* explores the loss endured by individuals inevitably jolted out of co-sensation but also self-exiling from it, as well as the loss for a myopic and hyperopic tradition that has undertheorized it and institutions that have taught us to fear it and so, like Louis, to exaggerate, and even cultivate, our faults. This book invites us to glimpse the occurrences of co-sensation, to feel them as facts, and to nurture them in ourselves and in others as virtues. In short, it asks us to strip back the workings of "common sense" such that we may begin to experience and to assume (resume) our capacities to create and to cultivate sensing in common: "We have come together, at a particular time, to this particular spot. We are drawn into this communion by some deep, some common emotion. Shall we call it, conveniently, 'love'? . . . No, that is too small, too particular a name. We cannot attach the width and spread of our feelings to so small a marker. We have come together . . . to make one thing, not enduring—for what endures?—but seen by many eyes simultaneously" (Woolf, 2000, 70). Hence, "We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too, as we

put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road" (Woolf, 2000, 81).

TWO (FAILED) TRADITIONS OF COMMON SENSE

What would it take to strip back "common sense" so that we might be able to theorize and to experience again sensing in common? To answer this, we must first ask what philosophers and nonphilosophers generally mean by "common sense" and what they hope it can accomplish. "Common sense" is a recursively confusing term, for we all know, as a matter of common sense, what common sense is: it is the opposite of foolishness, group think, dazzling rhetoric, or high-minded theory. But that is quite a bit to oppose. Philosophers have joined the fray, meticulously defining their concepts and methods against common sense (famously and originally: Plato), even when their end goal is to regain common sense or to redeem its truths in more crystalline form. Other disciplines, for example sociology and anthropology, acknowledge that prosaic common sense is their true object of study but debate if it is to be understood as a faculty, a body of beliefs, or an attitude we hold toward a body of beliefs—to name but a few candidate interpretations of the term.

Beyond the dispute of attitude, body of belief, or faculty, our understanding of common sense is also riven by roots in two radically different traditions. The first understands common sense in line with Aristotle's *koine aisthesis,* which under the tutelage of Aquinas and others, comes down to us as a sort of proto-apperception capable of unifying both the subject, in its diverse faculties of sensation, and the object, with its diverse properties, of perception. Understood in this way, common sense is an epistemological, individually housed faculty, one, however, that can in principle stretch out toward any other who possesses like common sense, allowing minimal rationality or epistemic standards to provide a basis for agreement or consensus about what we perceive or, applied practically, about what we ought to do.

Arendt, like Gadamer who did so more systematically, wants to release common sense from this individual, epistemic orientation

and, as *sensus communis,* place it back within a community. *Sensus communis* rose from the Roman rhetorical tradition where it connoted "human sympathy" and "social instinct," virtues indispensable for the Roman *res publica.* In so far as it referred to a living tradition that bound the community together, it resembles Aristotle's earlier rhetorical concept of *endoxa*—the dominant or authoritative opinions that set the standard for any debate or dispute (chapter 1). *Sensus communis* in the Roman tradition and on into modernity aims to preserve a community of belief and value through arts of persuasion that reconcile new situations and conflicting opinions with a stable tradition, especially at moments of crises when the community itself might be called into question.[3] If we think of *sensus communis* as a faculty, rather than a body of belief and value, we might, with Arendt, distinguish *sensus communis* from common sense by thinking of it as a "community sense," a sense that fits us into a community of opinion and discourse.

There is much more to say about each of these traditions, their roots in Aristotelian ethical philosophy (which I detail in chapter 1), the course of their development, the evolution and debate that swirled around *sensus communis* in the 1980s and '90s, and the ways the two traditions track discussions of liberalism and communitarianism. But my question to these two traditions is more focused: Are either of these understandings of common sense able to grant stable selfhood, solidarity, and a "sense of reality" to those who would cohabitate in social and political spaces? Can they continue to do so today, given political, economic, and technological stressors?

Unfortunately, the answer seems to be no—a fact that Aristotle oddly anticipated. Where common sense may (at best) achieve sensory integration and object stability for a given organism, there is no guarantee that this will match or cohere with like accomplishments of other organisms, given different bodily compositions and needs. In cases of conflict, a sense of self may come directly to challenge a sense of reality. Alternatively, a *sensus communis* may provide a grid of interpretation allowing individual members of the community to orient their sensibilities, creating an overlap with which to confront emerging events. This

initially seems to provide both a sense of reality, since it establishes grounds for interpersonal agreement, and a sense of self as a member or participant in this agreement. But there is nothing that guarantees that any given *sensus communis* can or will accurately capture the particular embodied situations of each member and the dynamic relations between them. Indeed, a given *sensus communis* may strive to preserve itself at the price of silencing or marginalizing bodies whose experiences deviate from its pregiven consensus. Should the terms of any given *sensus communis* fail to capture or begin to float free from these embodied conditions, the sense of reality can easily again break off from lived senses of self or dissolve these all together, raising friction, pathologies, even violence.[4]

To think about the failures of the two traditions of common sense more concretely, it may help to compare their ability to confront, or even their complicity in, modern forms of political deception—the very thing they ought to be able to deflect in their shoring up of selves, solidarity, and reality. In "Truth and Politics," Arendt discussed three particular forms of modern lying that she felt target our very "sense of reality" with disastrous political consequences: ideology, manipulative advertising based on behavioral science, and the conversion of all facts into mere opinions, dependent on particular interests and points of view.[5] Where Arendt connected the first mendacity to totalitarian regimes, the others grew from the heart of democratic, capitalist societies. It is easy to see the ominous new constellations these sorts of deceptions have entered into since Arendt penned her essay, as well as the ways new communication technologies have exacerbated them.[6] But why and how did our philosophical traditions of common sense not only capitulate to them but even abet their aims?

Unlike sophisticated Marxian variants, Arendt's understanding of ideology is fairly straightforward.[7] For her ideology is an "ism" that begins with a first premise that has gained some scientific support or other plausibility and from there attempts to explain "reality" with the full force of deductive or dialectical logic. Nazi racial views and Soviet versions of historical materialism offer prime examples of such ideologies. Simple to understand but able to absorb and explain a great many events, ideologies tend to take

hold only after historical forces such as the rise of bureaucracy, imperialistic capitalism, mass society, and the steadily accelerating intrusion of life processes (biopolitics) and efficiency criteria into the political realm have divorced individual members of the population from the *sensus communis,* rendering them atomized, both politically isolated and socially lonely. Clearly, an individually situated, epistemological notion of *koine aisthesis* cannot fend off such ideologies—after toppling our trust in the public sphere and pluralist discourse, ideology precisely relies on our trust in our individual common-sense faculties above all else.

As discussed at length in chapter 1, *koine aisthesis* concerns individuals in their isolation, and its craving is above all for a consistency that can stabilize selves in relation to ever-changing objects of perception and consumption. Such need for consistency is exactly what grand ideologies, as well as well-crafted conspiracy theories and prettily packaged opinion systems such as brands, can best provide. But such ideologies and opinion systems work *against* the absurd contingencies of facts and events that precisely disrupt, overwhelm, and disorient our sensibilities—and must be allowed to do so if a sense of reality is to be able to sustain connection to rapid environmental flux. Given the complexity, multiplicity, and barrage of environmental stimuli, we need others who are also navigating environmental pressures to help us process ever-changing events and convert them into stable "facts," that is, (relatively) fixed reference points within the shared landscape. If we are thrown back onto our own devices and lack trustworthy access to actual others to help us processes the flux, any cogent narrative or logic that can heal our sense of unease or incomprehension in the face of tumultuous events and processes will have to do. Consistent ideologies can seem like a lifeline of stability to individuals cast adrift.

Can a rehabilitation of a "community sense" battered by processes of modernization fare any better against modern mendacity than *koine aisthesis* did? There seem to be reasons to hope so, since the call to community, to respect and vigilance against its dissolution, may serve to gather the lonely and isolated individuals rendered so vulnerable to the ideological manipulations of *koine aisthesis* to a common project. Community might ride to

the rescue against atomization, as if reclaiming the lost virtues of *sensus communis* might be enough to stave off long-swelling historical trends. Unfortunately, there are also many reasons to be pessimistic about this solution. For one, we might doubt that anything like a sufficiently robust community—of steady, reliable information, much less of values and intentions—exists in modern pluralistic societies and the technologies they employ. We might also be pessimistic because traditions of the sort that *sensus communis* promises, even if they do or can exist, may well inhibit a genuinely moral and political expansion capable of creating spaces for all the diverse bodies and histories that must inhabit it. Can the activity of "fitting us into a community" ever render a community fit for all? Don't references to a preexisting community that will always be susceptible to crises rather favor reaction and restoration, demanding that new events and ideas adhere to old terms of intelligibility at pain of being villainized or rendered aberrant? Finally, the ideal of a community sense, where the forces of history have intervened to erode living traditions capable of founding and preserving community wholes, may well splinter into multiple communities, or community substitutes, each with their own beliefs and practices of verification, entrenching the relativization and group-interest based conversion of facts into opinions to be mobilized against similar, competing conversions of facts into opinions on the other side (leading to cultural or, in the worst case, actual, warfare).

Far from inoculating us against modern political lies, the risks of common sense as *koine aisthesis* and as *sensus communis* have been used against each other as liberal individualists rally around one approach and communitarians around the other. *Koine aisthesis* bolsters our confidence that, if we only sharpen our critical skills, we will be able to make sense of all contingent events on our own, making the need for community appear either as a luxury or as an unnecessary burden. Community-based commonsense belief and reasoning appears primitive and prejudicial by comparison and is derided as a kind of relativism where one set of opinions can have no inherent superiority over others—all are viewed as self-interested, parochial, and partial. *Koine aisthesis* demands a central standard or test of rationality to replace these

schisms, concealing that what is taken to be a rational coherence criterion itself has roots in local practices or procedures. From the pseudosuperior position of a more seamless logic, the patchwork nature of community sense as an evolving fabric of contingent events, stabilizing facts, and evolving and compromising perspectives can easily be dismissed.

From another angle, though, it is precisely the hodgepodge and local nature of *sensus communis* that constitutes its strength. In its weave are anchored durable and salient "facts," events that gave heft and direction to the community members' sense of belonging to that community, providing thereby moorings for their senses of self. Such a community has a higher stake in resisting the conversion of anchoring facts into individualized opinions, even if it lacks a court of higher appeal regarding the feasibility of its encompassing interpretation of these facts.

At the same time, however, a tight *sensus communis* will always have difficulty reconciling facts, opinions, bodies, and perspectives that do not conform to its terms of intelligibility, making it a poor fit for modern pluralism, migration patterns, and global communications. While its cohesion may well be better equipped to maintain the solidity of facts as stable reference points below the hum of opinions that come and go, when confronted with competing interpretations, it has no choice but to integrate and appropriate what it can while dismissing the rest as faulty opinions. Finally, those with greater access to the core traditions of *sensus communis* will always win at the game of persuasion, and the "facts" purported to sustain that tradition may well come to look—to those whose persons, bodies, and ideas are systematically excluded, silenced, or assimilated—exactly like . . . mere opinions, driven by a desire to maintain the interests and power privileges the *sensus communis* has entrenched. At that point, for better or worse, such facts that served to secure the fabric of common sense will begin to disintegrate, and the conversion of facts into opinions will embark on its dizzying, reality-depriving work.

Put simply, *sensus communis* as a defender of what *is* common is not very good at catching the coming into being of what *can become* common. Before "facts" can become fixed reference points undergirding a stable sense of reality and selfhood, they must

track events. Events are pivot points in the common in the sense that something happens that changes the common and alters relations to and within the common. Events are unique and highly contingent inter-ruptions of the common—ruptures that immediately call for collective repair. They can become memorialized as facts that acknowledge that "something has happened," a pivot in shared perceptions has occurred, even if opinions about that event—what exactly happened, what it changed, and whether for good or ill—diverge.

It turns out that neither of the two traditions of common sense offer a very good way to catch the event as it crystallizes a new commonality—a capacity crucial to ensure stable selves and a shared sense of reality and to fortify these against deceptions that may flood in to fill the breach. Indeed, as antagonists these two traditions may well ally with such deceptions to further their reach. But as *The Affection in Between* will demonstrate, there is another concept of common sense that can better reach the collaborative, creative processing of events as they occur, precisely in their shared quality: those moments when sensation itself must be shared in order to produce trust-accruing perceptions. This shared quality of sensation, a feeling of interior coherence intersecting with and furthering coalescence with others as described episodically in *The Waves,* is what allows events to solidify into orienting markers (i.e., *facts*) and so secures the ground for the further sharing of sensations and perceptions. Aristotle indicated this sort of common sense through the verb *sunaisthanesthai,* or the noun *sunaisthesis—aisthesis,* sensibility and awareness, in common. The rediscovery of *this* capacity and its promise to produce ethical selves capable of choosing themselves as sharing sensation where *koine aisthesis* and *endoxa* (proto-*sensus communis*) have failed provides the conceptual ground of this book and motivates the idea that shared sensation is ripe for a renaissance against the abysmal failures of the two traditions of common sense.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO EMBODIMENT AND THE OTHER

A return to a neglected and forgotten concept cannot come out of the blue, however, or be motivated by mere nostalgia—especially one as

initially strange, and to some, surely, distasteful, as the idea of sharing sensation. Beginning in chapter 1 but fully elaborated in chapters 2 and 3, I argue that a certain "intercorporeal turn," initiated by Merleau-Ponty and carried forward by cognitive and developmental psychologists, phenomenological philosophers of social cognition, affect theorists, and critical phenomenologists, prepares the way for taking the idea of sharing sensation seriously again today.[8]

The old Cartesian conception of consciousness as a theater of representation, and of subjectivity as providing unique reflexive access to the inner workings of this theater, held for several centuries before beginning to fissure, with decisive blows dealt by the early phenomenologists. Of particular interest to this project are recent efforts to challenge representationalist accounts of cognition that have been lumped together under the convenient title the "4Es." According to 4E accounts, cognition cannot be conceived solely, or even primarily, as a process of passive imprinting or active generation of representational content. Instead, it must be viewed as embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended.[9] Embodied cognition means that mental processes cannot be understood apart from the bodily systems that support them. Embodied organisms are, further, embedded in social and biological/environmental contexts. They are enactive insofar as their perceptions and cognitions depend on action and movement relative to these contexts, which in turn shape and alter the contexts. Finally, they are extended insofar as mental tasks can be linked and even outsourced to elements of natural and built environments, including technological ones. Together (though naturally the accounts of how these terms ought to be understood differ and often come into conflict in their details), the 4E accounts point to cognition as belonging to active organisms who ingeniously navigate and contribute to dynamic environments that are at least to some degree of their own making.[10] Meanwhile, a group of phenomenologically inflected thinkers have built on parallels between aspects of 4E approaches and classical phenomenological ones.[11] These phenomenologists have also inherited their school's longstanding interest in exploring how such ingenious organisms are also primordially *intersubjective*. Thus, alongside 4E challenges to representationalist consciousness sprouts a renewed interest in

embodied social cognition under various aspects, including mind reading and empathy. Various "phenomenological proposals" have produced compelling models of social cognition that can compete with empirical Theory-Theory and Simulation-Theory models.[12] Phenomenologists tend to follow Husserl in rejecting an inferential or "argument from analogy" approach to other minds and advocate instead for a perceptual one, so long as perception is rightly conceived as both active and "smart," that is, literally incorporating, embodying, some sort of protoconceptual content (such as sensorimotor skills, know-how, and gestalt principles). No longer closed on themselves, enactive, embodied, embedded, and extended organisms have access to the minds of other like organisms as they mutually participate in a shared and co-implicating environment.

Now this contemporary phenomenological approach to other minds—which I take to be mainly right (though I will quibble with some particulars, especially in chapters 2 and 3)—has some far-reaching *ethical* implications. Namely, if we follow Aristotle in understanding *ethics* as concerning *characters,* that is, *acting-selves-in-context,* and if we understand cognition and perception as fundamentally social, we may well end up with something like ethics as first philosophy (though not necessarily in its Levinasian form).[13] To put this another way, to the popular 4E accounts, this book wants to add a fifth: I want to claim that any cognition so embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended must also be *ethical.* This is so because such embodied, embedded, extended, and enactive beings find themselves dispersed, exteriorized, while also always acting and thinking among and with other such entities. They are *affectively intercorporeal.* To be *affectively intercorporeal* places one in a relationship of care not only toward ourselves and our own organisms, which must counter centrifugal disruptions and dispersals of self with centripetal self-constructions (*autopoiesis*), but also toward the networks that connect us to other 4E beings in ways that transcend narrow egoistic or altruistic claims. To care about affective networks is to care about self-others in a way that is primarily *ethical* in the sense of actively requiring us to develop selves-in-situ, selves in co-implicating environments, affecting one another, in between.

What is the correct way to conceive of an affectively intercorporeal ethics? What are the ethical implications of such a permeable and open-ended conception of human organisms as selves-in-situ? What might affective intercorporeity teach us about self and other, about the environments they shape and inhabit, and about the virtues that might attach to such affective cognizers?

The discussion of Aristotle in chapter 1 provides some guidance about how such an ethics might proceed. Aristotle's philosophy of mind was certainly enactive in ways that included embodied, embedded, and extended elements. But precisely these features of mindedness led Aristotle straight to the heart of ethical considerations, some of which have been overlooked or distorted with the drift toward individualist and representationalist biases in subsequent philosophy of mind. For Aristotle, enactive perception is always also, for social species such as our own, social sensation, and as chapter 1 shows in detail, he even coined a word for this: *sunaisthanesthai,* "shared sensation." For Aristotle, it is precisely because we, as organisms, are open-ended systems in constant active exchange with our environment—including other organisms that we encounter within that environment—that ethical selfhood is an aspirational term, developed through a virtue or skill that must be *aimed at* and *practiced* rather than presupposed or achieved once and for all. Theorizing 5E cognition takes us to the heart of a *virtuosity* of becoming an ethical self, a virtuosity that must be critically unearthed from ethics and philosophies of mind that have developed instead a *technology* of sealing off the self where an ethically *affected* and *affecting* self, attuned to the bodily presence of others and our relations to them, is urgently required. Developing such virtues will release us from certain barriers erected between self and other, barriers that have led to unnecessary and misleading puzzles about "other minds" as well as grave ethical errors of objectification and projection (chapter 3). Showing that we are directly affected by the sensation of others (chapters 4 and 5) will lead the way out of these errors.

OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

The Affection in Between examines an ethics of shared sensation from three perspectives: historical, conceptual, and experiential.

The book argues that fully ethical selves can only arise out of practices of sharing sensation that stabilize meaningful environments of care and action and are explicitly directed at doing so. Organisms, including human organisms, are too porous to preexist the encounter with others as fully fledged *selves,* capable of choice and action, but while sensing the sensation of others, such porous entities gain a "sense of reality" that can (at least in humans) become the basis for the conscious construction ethical selfhood (character in context). *Ethical selves* acknowledge the sensation of the other within them, both as codirecting sensation at intervals of in-distinction and as dialogically, choreographically, falling in and out of tempo as they are thrown back on themselves. Such ethical selves can further construct *character* by cultivating an interembodied virtue of openness to the other, intercorporeal affectivity, and care for the shared environment that affects both self and other.

The argument unfolds over two parts. Part 1 (chapters 1–3) offers a historical-conceptual reconstruction and philosophical defense of sensing in common. Chapter 1 charts Aristotle's invention of the term *sunaisthanesthai*—co-sensing as a capacity to generate intra- and inter-corporeal coherence—at the origin of ethical selfhood and virtue ethics. Chapter 2 shows how Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercoporeity, alongside contemporary critical and empirical appropriations of it, makes something like *sunaisthanesthai* plausible again today. Porous and combinatory selves that are embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended redirect ethical attention away from intentions and consequences and toward bodies in motion, spaces, and possibilities. Chapter 3 fleshes out what stands to be gained and what lost for relations between selves and others, and therefore for ethics and politics, by a fully interembodied and affective turn. Through a survey of familiar approaches to others, I show that the dominance of projective and analogical approaches promotes an egoism that has damaged our ability to perceive the intercorporeal currents that allow a world to be shared while fostering intracorporeal consistency and self-other differentiation. I conclude that the cultivation of perceptual and agential relationality to others is worth the cost of immediate self-access and the self-ownership (autonomy,

authenticity) that makes conflict and dominance unavoidable, placing others forever beyond reach.

Part 2 (chapters 4 and 5) acknowledges that the intercorporeal ethics and selfhood developed and endorsed in part 1 may still appear too alien, implausible or even undesirable. It may ask us to abandon too much of what we value in ourselves as unique, autonomous, and bounded entities. To address this, and to cut through deep layers of philosophical neglect and the expulsion of sunaisthetic common sense from our ethical and political self-understanding, chapters 4 and 5 shift tone. Drawing on a wide array of cultural sources, these chapters evoke the operations of others not just on us but from within us, permeating and enabling any sense of self we may come to have through extreme but universal experiences of death (chapter 4) and birth (chapter 5), grieving and caring. Far from providing stable frontiers demarcating "a life," birth and death splinter "the" body, which now must strive for new centers and new sources of agency between bodies. This "in between" opens a site for new forms of ethical virtuosity. Interembodiment is a fact, not an ideal; but an ideal world must build upon this fact to enact norms to support the sorts of intercorporeal and intracorporeal selves that flourish by cultivating—neither resisting nor presupposing—lived experiences of the common riven by difference.

The concluding comments summarize how new approaches to mind/body—embodied, embedded, enactive, extended—demand new kinds of affective ethical thought. Chapters 4 and 5 showed how fragile and intimate resources we already possess can help cultivate a new ethics of affective awareness as a kind of intimate perception of the other, a kind of alloception.[14] This affective awareness, in turn, contributes to the virtuosity of enacting common sense neither at the individual nor at the community level but in the spaces between moving and intercoporeally entwining bodies. Given the vulnerabilities of intercorporeal bodies within fragile networks, the concluding remarks propose a series of critical inquiries and projects appropriate to the reclamation of an ethics of affection, in between.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

ARISTOTLE AND THE BIRTH OF THE SUNAISTHETIC SELF

> Like long echoes that intermingle from afar.
>
> —Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

"Sing the ecstasies of the mind and senses," beckons Baudelaire.[1] He invokes his muse, synesthesia—an intoxicating mingling, merging, and substitution of the senses—to reveal latent dimensions of experience in the artistic soul. More prosaically, psychologists and neuroscientists speak of synesthesia as an intriguing intermodal, intracorporeal phenomenon considered neurologically abnormal, even pathological; even so, they can't deny its creative power.[2] There are rich literatures on synesthesia, both scientific and artistic, but by swapping out suffixes and exploring *sunaisthesis,* I wish to dig deeper in time, and also to mean more—much more. *Sunaisthesis,* I will show, beyond poetic and psychological (mis) understandings, names a vital *ethical* faculty, a faculty that springs from and shapes an intercorporeal layer glimpsed but obscured through centuries of individualist (and symmetrically, reactive and communalist) thought. With Baudelaire, I want to awaken *sunaisthesis,* but not only for isolated geniuses or dandy aesthetes. The time is ripe, or so I maintain, for a reinvigoration of this complex ethical faculty, after long centuries of warp and dust.

When we use the language of synesthesia in contemporary scientific and poetic parlance, we forget that Aristotle first coined the noun *sunaisthesis* and the verb form *sunaisthanesthai*—sensing

together—to fulfill a specific, puzzling, and crucial ethical function: the birth and consolidation of ethical character through the practice of friendship.[3] This forgetting had powerful historical and political sources, and as a result, *sunaisthesis* remained buried in the history of ethical thought. In this chapter, I seek to show that this forgetfulness has been a genuine loss for ethics and that the current revival of other important forgotten or despised categories—such as the enactive body and communal, material, and interactive sources of knowledge—may open our ears anew for a critical retrieval of *sunaisthanesthai*.

So what is *sunaisthanesthai?* For Aristotle, it captured the crossover point—the chiasm, Merleau-Ponty would say—between the intra-organism and the inter-organism. In humans, this means the chiasm between the natural and the normative, the *zoon* and the *logon*. *Sunaisthanesthai* points to nothing short of the origin of ethical selfhood or character as a *bios* deeply connected to a community of context-making interactors. As I shall show in some detail in this chapter, Aristotle coined the term *sunaisthanesthai* precisely to account for how the human organism and the socialized beast can combine in an *individual* to form a robust *ethical* entity capable of *voluntarily* contributing to a shared, practical environment.

Despite the important work Aristotle entrusted to this term, as early as late antiquity *sunaisthesis* shifted to mean something quite different from the birth of ethical character at the intersection of the organism and the institution. It comes to mean an inward-looking self-awareness, a principle of unity, even proto-self-consciousness.[4] Quite like another important Aristotelian term, *koine aisthesis, sunaisthesis* comes to indicate for many commentators in late antiquity "common sense" understood as a faculty to sort through and combine sense data. While still retaining an echo of Aristotle's original ethical connotations, the term comes to be increasingly understood as an individualized moral sense or even "conscience." How these two conceptions of "common sense"—epistemological and ethical—were to fit together was less clear.

What happened to the concept of *sunaisthanesthai* reads like a microcosm of Arendt's story of the decline of the Greek *polis,*

attendant deterioration of the public sphere, and turn inward in late antiquity.[5] What had been an eminently social process with political-ethical overtones—a social sense—became privatized. Yet there are telling indications along the way that this turn inward was not simple or seamless. Hierocles, for example, uses *sunaisthesis* to name a body-environment awareness, as when a frog is said to use *sunaisthesis* to "sense" how to leap from one place to another, indicating something much more embodied and closer to modern ideas of *proprioception* than philosophical *apperception.*[6] Meanwhile, as late as Josephus, *sunaisthesis* could still denote a moment of collective insight or recognition among allies engaged in a shared action—what today might be understood as collective intentionality.[7] The hypothesis I explore in this chapter is that these four very different senses of *sunaisthesis*—as a faculty to cohere diverse sense data; as an individualizing moral sense; as bodily proprioception; and as shared or collective insight—all have a common root in Aristotle's original ethical project. As distinct from each other as they are, they each trace a strand of a concept Aristotle meant to keep whole and foundational for moral psychology and character formation. *Sunaisthanesthai,* according to Aristotle, forges coherence not only within organisms, intracorporeally, but between them, intercorporeally, as well, with each species possessing distinctive modes of *sunaisthanesthai,* that is, distinctive modes of affecting the intermingling of senses in other individuals of their kind toward a sense of coherence in an emerging, shared environment.[8] This social and psychic process is, then, the condition for anything like individual moral conscience. Indeed, as I will show, for Aristotle, *sunaisthesis* meant not the preexisting interior conscience of an established ethical individual but the very birth and condition for anything like ethical selfhood or character at all.

In order to reunite the diverse trajectories and indicate the original ethical significance of *sunaisthanesthai,* I will first discuss the context in which the term emerges, pointing to the sorts of perplexities it has raised for a long line of commentators. Next, I will contrast it to two related terms that may promise a similar common sense–selfhood matrix but that actually sever the bodily, perceptual, and social bases of our ethical character and

so are insufficient, for several reasons, to serve as the seat of a virtue-based ethics. The final section will show in detail how *sunaisthanesthai* can begin to provide just that basis.

ACT SUCH THAT YOU SHARE YOUR DEAR ONES' CONSCIOUSNESS OF THEIR EXISTENCE

Can we imagine such an imperative today? Can we even think, from our individualist ethical perspective, what it might mean? The most we could come up with, I think, is an idea of *empathy,* or a polite plea for milquetoast *consideration.* Certainly empathy and consideration are important! Empathy means I feel your feelings, and consideration means that I take your interests into account in my thinking and acting—both of these may well be counted as significant virtues (often lacking) in our culture. But can either of these reach the philosophical heft implied by the term *existence?* Do I reach what it means *for you to exist* by considering your perspective, feelings, or interests (assuming I have some way of doing so)? Moreover, can *consideration* or *empathy* convince us that the intimacies of *consciousness* could ever—truly, meaningfully—be *shared?* Yet here we find Aristotle's blithe exhortation at the conclusion of a discussion about virtuous relationships: "Therefore one also ought (*dei*) to share-his-friend's-consciousness of his existence (*sunaisthanesthai hoti estin*)" (NE 1170b11).[9]

Suppose you want to follow his advice: What is Aristotle actually asking you to do? What would it mean for you to *share* your friend's *consciousness* of *her existence?* Surely you are aware, are conscious, *that* she exists. You are even glad about it! (That she exists, and that she exists as your friend.) And perhaps you agree that you ought to be both aware and glad. But can you share her own *consciousness* of her *existence,* as Aristotle maintains you ought to do? What kind of consciousness would that be, exactly, this consciousness of *her* existence? And how might it ever be shared?

To get at what Aristotle is calling for and why he does so demands careful scrutiny of the stunning term that he coined for the occasion: *sunaisthanesthai.* Rendered in Rackham's translation above as "sharing his friend's consciousness," the prefix

sun tagged to the root *aisthesis* might just as well be translated as "common sense," or as some might prefer, con-sensus. What it literally means is sharing (*sun*) sensations (*aisthesis*), or sensually based *awareness*.[10] But having inherited the prejudices of our tradition, offering a literal translation of *sunaisthesis* can only sharpen our perplexity. How could two bodily discreet, perspectival individuals ever *share sensations?* Naturally, they can share *objects* of perception—we both see the red wall, the vast field, the thickening clouds—but this does not seem to capture what Aristotle had in mind. For the sensation/awareness that he enjoins friends to share in this passage is of nothing less than *existence* (*hoti estin*)—an unlikely candidate for intersubjective confirmation or joint attention (find being! point to it!). *Perceiving* our own *existence* indeed seems to convey a doubly intimate self-access—both because of the private, idiosyncratic nature of bodily based sensations and because "existence" (*hoti estin*) as *existing* (as opposed to a trivial sense of positing) is not something that "appears" to our outer senses and so might be intersubjectively corroborated. Thus we return to our questions, sharpened and redoubled: First, how could such an intimate self-access in any sense, ever, be *shared;* and second, why would this sharing ever be *required of us ethically?*[11]

The first clue is that these two questions may not be so easily disentangled for Aristotle. Strange, delimited, and overlooked as it is, *sunaisthanesthai* appears not only as a significant term at a key juncture in both of Aristotle's major ethical treatises (as we shall explore shortly) but crops up in his biological writings as well.[12] That is, *sunaisthesis* appears in Aristotle both as *a natural capacity,* probably present in some way in all gregarious species (though this fact raises particular problems for ethical agency and self-determination in human beings), and as a *virtue* arising out of that capacity (now deployed to answer to the very ethical problems it raises).

To make sense of *sunaisthesis,* and of Aristotelian ethics more generally, then, we must first acknowledge that for Aristotle, *one is not born, but one becomes a self.*[13] While there may be degrees of selfhood including some important intermediate stops toward self-awareness along the way, the road to full-fledged selfhood

(that is, becoming an *ethical character capable of decision and voluntary action*) is called ethics, and its subject matter is biological organisms whose permeability to environmental and social factors, even on the highest cognitive levels, throws its unity as a self into constant question.[14]

What kind of processes does the precarious emergence of ethical selfhood demand, then? Aristotle's treatment of "friendship" (*philia*) is meant, I think, to answer just this question, and what I call the "*sunaisthesis* argument" clinches Aristotle's treatment of friendship through his examination of "*self-sufficiency* (autarkeias) *and friendship and the interrelationship of their potentialities*" (EE, 1244b1–2).[15] In the terms of the *Nicomachean Ethics, sunaisthanesthai* enters at the very point where Aristotle penetrates "into the nature of the matter" (NE 1170a12), this matter being none other than the relationship of selfhood and otherness that lies at the heart of ethics.[16] Aristotle introduces *sunaisthesis* at the "crest of the crest"[17] of his ethical inquiries because it helps both to pose and to answer an urgent question, highly relevant again in today's intellectual environment: how ethical agents who, as "embodied and extended," display an extraordinary permeability to their physical environment, and as "embedded and enactive," are significantly shaped by contingent social contexts, might nonetheless reliably come into being.

The reference to contemporary 4E—embodied, embedded, enactive, and extended—philosophy-of-mind jargon is as intentional as it may be jarring. Aristotle may well be understood as the first "embodied and embedded" theorist.[18] But this can prompt a problem, for Aristotle as for us, concerning the fifth *E*—how can entities so thoroughly pervious to their environment and their social milieus ever be ethical, self-determined seats of autonomous choice and decisions? Must we abandon ethics if we go down the 4E path? Aristotle gives us hope, via *sunaisthesis,* that such a drastic result may not be inevitable.[19]

Biologist that he was, Aristotle saw clearly how the sense apparatus of the various species interact within shared environments to form "an environment" for practical—intelligible and intelligent—conduct, which conduct shapes further perceptual and action-oriented possibilities.[20] Human cognition responds

to nonneutral environments, teleologically informed as for-the-sake-of the entities moving and acting within it. Perceptual capacities enact a coherent action context, and in response, a coherent agency geared into this environment comes into being. But such complex processes never happen in isolation. They are intimately and extensively patterned by overlap with the perceptual capacities of others who share and shape that environment. This is manifest in functions such as joint attention, where the perception of another being draws my attention to elements that then become mutually salient. The more closely perceptual capacities echo ours, the more they intrude on our own, and in the case of humans, those perceptual capacities are thoroughly shaped by the words we use and create in common through speech and deed, the social arrangements we weave through these, and the technologies we deploy to manipulate our practical contexts and satisfy our practical interests.

Aristotle was deeply concerned with how, given the intricate biological and social interdependencies he investigated, one might shape *a life (bios), a self (autos), or a character (ethos)* and become the author of significant, voluntary words and deeds. Moral agency in the sense of "ownership" of words and deeds and the concomitant self-shaping of character through chosen actions out of social and environmental pressures were the primary goals of his ethical teachings. Due to the profoundly embodied, biological basis of his psychology and the deeply socially embedded nature of his ethical theory, such ethical accomplishments are clearly hard won. In fact, they turn out to depend on friendship—itself an ethical relation—and friendship will depend on *sunaisthanesthai,* which for this very reason he clearly insists we ought to "do."

BETWEEN BIOLOGY AND SOCIETY: THREE CONCEPTIONS OF COMMON SENSE

We have remarked that "common sense" is a reasonable translation of *sunaisthesis* (sensing in common), and much of late antiquity would endorse this—but only at the high price of understanding it as an individually based, inward-looking faculty

akin to conscience. To get a clearer idea of what *sunaisthesis* originally meant for Aristotle, it will help to contrast it to two terms that also reasonably translate into English as common sense and that also work to secure some sort of identity for complex organisms in constant interaction with other systems: (1) *koine aisthesis*—to which *sunaisthesis* has both lexical (*aisthesis*) and textual connections—and (2) *koine doxa* (common belief), or the more specific *endoxa,* as a set of shared, authoritative assumptions or norms. Both terms will significantly impact our tradition of political philosophy. *Koine aisthesis* is often interpreted as a principle of unity that an individual perceiver must possess to hold together two or more different sensibles as discerned by two or more distinct faculties, for example, the sweet and the white as perceived simultaneously by taste and sight. As such, *koine aisthesis* has been read (problematically, as we shall see shortly) as proto-apperception, a critical, individual faculty that in discerning anything necessarily discerns also itself, minimally as that which must be doing the comparing, combining, and contrasting of the diverse sense data. *Koine doxa* and *endoxa,* by contrast, can be seen as forerunners to *sensus communis* in the rhetorical tradition as a solid backdrop of shared beliefs *according to* which and *against* which one might form individual judgments or specific positions. As I shall show, despite a long polemic which made rivals of the two, neither *koine aisthesis* nor *endoxa*—neither common sense nor *sensus communis*—could deliver the kind of *ethos,* ethical self or character, Aristotle sought to ground voluntary ethical action. For this he needed to articulate the strange—to our ears—sounding phenomenon of sensing in common: *sunaisthesis*. The remainder of this chapter will focus on how a proper understanding of *sunaisthesis* might scratch the itch raised by Aristotle's complexly embodied, extended, enactive, and embedded agents on the way to ethics in a manner that neither *koine aisthesis* nor *endoxa* could do.

A. From Organisms to Social Bodies: Koine Aisthesis *vs.* Sunaisthesis

For the attentive reader of Aristotle, the connection between *sunaisthesis* and *koine aisthesis* seems unavoidable. First, there are the apparent uses of *sunaisthesis* where, evidently, *koine aisthesis*

might have served just as well (for example, in *The History of Animals,* 534b18, discussed in more detail below).[21] More directly, even when choosing the term *sunaisthanesthai* in both *Ethics,* Aristotle summons the definitive formula for *koine aisthesis* as it appears in *De Anima* 425b12–13, explaining that we must somehow be able "to perceive that we perceive," for example, to perceive that we are seeing, hearing, and so on (cf. NE 9.9 1170). As I will argue below, both of these indications, together with the switch from *koine* to *sun,* warrant understanding *sunaisthesis* as an *expansion* of the much-debated *koine aisthesis* found in Aristotle's psychology and an expansion precisely from a narrowly individual, biologically based awareness to a *social-ethical* conception. This move toward the social-ethical pushes *sunaisthesis* into the conceptual vicinity of the later Latin concept of *sensus communis,* with its own rhetorical roots in Aristotelian *endoxa,* while retaining, crucially, the link to individual, embodied awareness: *aisthesis.* What we witness with *sunaisthanesthai* is precisely the shift that Arendt notes in Kant's theory of judgment between *common sense* and a *community sense,* except that in Aristotle this goes in a single, clear direction: "community sense," or better, sensing in common, is brought in to solve problems insoluble from any individualistic perspective—the problem of self-generating ethical agencies amid social and biological flux.[22]

Koine aisthesis has long been considered a beckoning but baffling figure in Aristotle's psychology. It beckons because Aristotle appears to ask so much of it, but it baffles because he tells us so frustratingly little about it.[23] This soft demand swings the door wide open to all manner of intriguing suggestions and reconstructions of *koine aisthesis,* from the most expansive to the most restrictive.[24] My interest is less to intervene in these intricate and learned debates than to focus on the specific function that links *koine aisthesis* to *sunaisthesis* through the formula that defines them both, namely, that if perception is to be possible at all, we must possess a capacity to perceive that we perceive. The question remains, in what sense might we "perceive that we perceive" without falling into the regress that Aristotle explicitly warns against? Kahn's authoritative suggestion that *aisthesis* be read generally as "awareness" is key. If that translation

is legitimate, Aristotle would simply be saying that to perceive, strictly speaking, we must be "aware" *(aisthesis)* that we are perceiving. For example, we must not be asleep or unconscious but actually engaged in the activity of seeing, hearing, and so on. Yet given some of the more extravagant claims about *koine aisthesis* as a sort of proto-apperception, we might still wonder precisely what sort of "awareness" this involves and what capacity allows us to have it. Is Aristotle implying that a higher-order faculty such as consciousness must be at work in any simple act of perception? Might we even require full-out *self*-consciousness in order to perceive the slightest smell or color? Finally, what is the significance of the "common"—whether as *koine* or as *sun*—attached to the formula that we "perceive that we perceive"?

To answer these questions, let us look briefly at what Aristotle says such "awareness" involves at various stages.[25] In *De Anima,* the *awareness* Aristotle speaks of appears quite minimal, and it is not immediately apparent why it would require a "common" sense beyond each specific sense at all. There we might read "awareness" as merely indicating the actuality, *energeia,* versus capacity, *dunamis,* of a specific sense organ. For example, it is not sufficient that the bell sounds and that my ears are functional; my ears must *actually* be *functioning* to hear the sound. This straightforward reading is complicated in DS (455a15ff), however, where Aristotle again returns to the theme of "perceiving" that we see or hear and again relates it to something "common." In this text, awareness through actualization is explicitly linked to an additional power, itself the property of a "master sense" or common power (*koine dunamis*). Moreover, this "common power" refers to the "one thing" that compares and discriminates the data of different senses at DA 426b20ff.[26] The consistent reference to the *koine* and the overlap between the descriptions of functions shared by *koine aisthesis* and *koine dunamis* suggest that, for Aristotle, awareness entails at least *a minimal unity of perception.*[27] But if this is the case, where might such unity come from?

It seems reasonable to look for this unity at the level of the *organism.*[28] We saw that Aristotle maintains that an organism may be said to be aware of its perception insofar as (1) there is something to perceive, (2) the organs of perception are functioning

properly, and (3) the organism is awake or otherwise "conscious." If we take being awake as opposed to being asleep as a paradigmatic example of "awareness," it makes sense to locate an organism's unity of perception in a certain sensorimotoric comportment toward its environment, namely *an engaged attunement to the sensorimotor possibilities that any given environment affords.* This sensory motoric engagement can be contrasted, on the one side, to the kind of passive contemplation associated with dreaming, and on the other, to a disembodied fully reflexive Cartesian subject.[29] Interpretations lumped under the physiological (better: psychosomatic, or perhaps misleadingly "materialist") label maintain that the common power / common sense is what "actualizes," or completes, the discrete activity of the various sense organs as they converge and cross-reference according to the needs and actions of the organism as it navigates its environment.[30] This actualization is due to each organ's participation in a general function, that is, on the enactive picture, in the *organism as a self-perpetuating system* acting within and in relation to larger environmental systems. This would account for why Aristotle locates *koine dunamis/aisthesis* in the heart as a center of life-activity (but if it pleases contemporary sensibilities, one can substitute "brain" or nervous system here with no loss of Aristotelian intent).[31] The idea is that some governing agency refers each of the individual sense organs so that the *system, the organism* as a whole, can function as one within an environment, delivering a flowing or quickening sense of living. Crucially, though, the importance of this feedback system among the parts of the organism does not for Aristotle deliver a *self* (even in the sense of an intensive *autos,* much less as an ethical self-choosing *ethos*). Rather, the focus of *De Anima* 425b5 ff. is not on delivering a discreet self-centering entity but on explaining the "common sensibles" (*koina:* movement, size, etc.) inherent in the perception of objects. However, if we take together the notion that the *koine dunamis/aisthesis* is a physiologically locatable "master" sense and that it accounts for a synthetic, multimodal perception of objects, then it may also imply an "organ" or "faculty" charged with integrating a teleologically groping organism with a view to its functioning in an environment—though not, necessarily, to the *experience* or

awareness of *itself as a unity* while it does so.[32] *Koine aisthesis/dunamis* on this reading allows the sense organs to cross-reference their data for an environmentally active organism; in so doing they can be said to *create* an environment as *a meaningful theater* for the realization of the actions and desires of this organism.[33] So, for example, a dog can use his eyes and nose to synthesize the sight and scent of the rabbit and conclude—via perception, not syllogism—that the rabbit went "thattaway." *Koine aisthesis/dunamis* appears to be the organ that allows animals, including human ones, to put together a consistent but intermodally dimensional environment into which they can act. *Awareness* would here then just indicate the enlivening of the capacities of this organism with reference to each other and to an *actionable* environment, an environment where the organism can *do something*.

Such sensorimotor unity of the perceiving organism within a coherent environment does not, however, secure any full-blown assumption of *self*-awareness; very primitive biological organisms can function in this way. For anything like "self-awareness," we will have to wait until we reach the ethical writings, where Aristotle first uses an intensive form of *autos*.[34] For it is one thing to *exist* and function as a coherent organism or biological system. It is quite another to become "aware" (*aisthesis,* perceive) of our *existence* (*hoti esmen*)—something he says only happens under certain conditions discussed in the ethical writings.[35] And of course, we are also told in the same ethical context that we can (even must!) be aware of—co-perceive—the *existence* of our friend (*sun-aisthesis*). The concepts *koine aisthesis* or *koine dunamis* are unlikely to get us to this *self- or other* awareness, which helps explain Aristotle's motivation to coin a new word, *sunaisthanesthai,* in their stead, while referring to the same function of "perceiving that we perceive."

Before returning to the ethical writings, there is a biological use of *sunaisthanetai* at HA 534a18 that deserves special attention in relation to the organism-integrating faculties of *koine aisthesis* and *koine dunamis*. Here Aristotle is arguing that cephalopods, crustaceans, and insects possess all five senses. He demonstrates this by pointing out how such animals use smell to compensate for deficiencies in sight (e.g., when objects are distant), and then

goes on to present similar evidence for touch, hearing, and taste. The use of *sun* in this context seems to echo the multimodal use of *koine* in *koine aisthesis/dunamis*. Insects and like creatures appear to need to employ their discrete senses together if they are to function well in their environment.

So why does Aristotle use *sunaisthesthai* instead of *koine aisthanethai,* even in this strictly biological and *not yet ethical* context, and to discuss fairly low-level organisms? It seems to be because Aristotle is speaking here not simply of the sensory capacities–including a "master faculty"—of each individual member of the species qua functioning organism but instead of *the peculiar combination of sense capacities that make the individuals members of this and not another species.*[36] The activity of *sunaisthanesthai* in HA refers, then, not just to the activity of a master organ within an isolated individual but to the fact that the organs coordinate in *similar ways in all the members of the species in relation to the creation of a shared, meaningful environment.* So, for example, a bee who is close enough to *see* the honey can communicate meaningfully—through sounds, bodily movements, and so on—to one who can only smell it, thereby expanding the sensuous reach of each organism through an interorganism exchange. What each species takes to be their environment depends on this *sun*–sharing between species members and not just on an intermodal comparing and coordinating of the various senses *within* each *individual* member. It is this "intersubjective"—but more accurately, *interorganismic* or even *intercorporeal*—meaning of *sunaisthanesthai* that reappears in Aristotle's ethical treatises and does so in a way that leads straight to the heart of ethics.

In sum, the difference between the idea of *sunaisthesis* and the *koine aisthesis* of the *De Anima* is that the former concerns not *just* an individual capacity for organismic integration within an actionable environment—on an embodied, enactive account—but to a *species capacity to interact collectively and significantly within a shared environment, an environment that appears as it does because it is shared.* In *sunaisthesis* what enlivens our entire sense apparatus is not simply our needs as a coherent organism within a cohering environment but the *life of at least one other of our species taken as a whole in its practical, sensory engagement*

with a dynamic environment or world we cocreate through participatory practices. When *sunaisthanesthai* crops up in Aristotle's ethical account of friendship—and does so precisely to define the phenomenon that Aristotle had called in *De Anima* "*koine aisthesis*," namely, the capacity to perceive that we perceive, or to be *aware* that we perceive—we must pay close attention to this other, intercorporeal meaning. For with *sunaisthesis* the awareness that *one* perceives is brought about not through individual functions of cross-reference but by the presence of *another perceiver.* Aristotle's use of *sunaisthanesthai* in both *Ethics* suggests that the kind of *sunaisthanesthai* humans engage in with "friends" or "dear ones" (*philoi*) may well provide the pivot that allows a biological organism with *no, or only a very minimal, sense of self-awareness* to become a fully ethical self, one with the sort of *robust self-awareness necessary to found meaningful ethical agency*.

B. Endoxa: *Common Sense for an Embedded Ethics*

This conclusion might put Aristotle in uncomfortable (for some) proximity to social theoretical accounts that locate ethical conscience, for better or for worse, in the domain of sociological processes or even an anti-individual "collective consciousness." In this section, I will show that while such a social theoretical approach is not completely alien to Aristotle's way of thinking, the role of a shared ethos, or ethical life, neither exhausts nor excludes the vital contribution of *sunaisthanesthai* as an intercorporeal dynamic between individual bodies to ethical identity formation. It is precisely because neither the moral virtues, inculcated through social, institutional means, nor the individually cultivated intellectual virtues are sufficient to guarantee moral character that active, intimate relations of *philia* between concrete embodied actors are brought in to help account for character formation.

Are friendship and *sunaisthanesthai* really necessary to produce robust ethical characters? While many critics might willingly agree that nothing in Aristotle's biological or psychological writings could get us to a character fully capable of the very voluntary ethical action he demands, they argue that socialization into the moral virtues and development of the intellectual ones is

enough to do so—this is, after all, what Aristotle spends the first six books of the *Nicomachean Ethics* investigating. Interpreters sympathetic to this line of thought can point out that the question of friendship is introduced through the relatively minor issue of why someone who has had a virtuous upbringing and rightly developed his mental faculties and virtues might still desire the good that friendship offers. Sure, it is nice to have friends, but is it really ethically important? Does it not even risk eroding the self-sufficiency (*autoarkeia*) that we lucky, well brought up, and virtuous ones have achieved? Such interpreters sometimes even appear impatient with Aristotle for spending so much time—two whole books!—on the question of friendship before finally finding his way back to the (solitary) good of contemplation that a well brought up, moderate soul deserves.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will show in some detail how such a view is mistaken, and for reasons both textual and philosophical. First, by the end of book 5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle may have shown us how decent characters can emerge through a proper education in the virtues, but he admits that this is only enough to *act* virtuously, not to *be* virtuous. The key to being virtuous lies in the cultivation of intellectual virtues, especially *phronesis.* But here he hits against a well-known and menacingly vicious circle: *phronesis* as the intellectual virtue that must help such characters continue to hit the ethical mark beyond their formative years remains thoroughly embedded in the social milieu that produced it. There is nothing "self-sufficient" about the *phronimos* who must act according to social norms to be positively appraised by their means. To get at how intractable this problem is for Aristotle, I will focus on the specific way the circle of moral virtues and *phronesis* repeats on the cognitive level of judgment between *endoxa,* or commonly held beliefs, and good judgment, *sunesis.* An isolated act of self-contained wisdom cannot penetrate beyond these shared beliefs, since the judgments and perceptions of others constitute the very yardstick which would measure it as good or otherwise. Cultivation of *sunaisthanesthai,* by contrast, escapes this circle by focusing on the creation of shared perceptions and opinions rather on the relay of judgment within a preexisting horizon of shared beliefs.

Second, and immediately following book 6's treatment of the intellectual virtues, Aristotle returns to the problem of the relation of happiness to pleasure. The good character built up through book 6 is said to be actively engaged in an arduous but ultimately joyful auto-construction. In this case, the circle is pleasingly self-reinforcing—positive and not vicious: the better I act, the better I become, the better still I am able to act, and so on. Like a music student who dutifully practices, this activity of character formation is said to provide its own rewards and to bring about lasting happiness, *eudaimonia,* whatever transitory states of pleasure and pain it might occasion along the way. But Aristotle would be the first to admit that the problem of how this new understanding of happiness meshes with more conventional notions of a life pleasurably lived is not thereby resolved. The persistent fact of *akrasia,* or weakness of will, shows that the joy such self-formation brings about is not reliably affectively stronger than the promise of passing pleasures that tempt us away from practicing virtue. *Akrasia* puts on full display the embodied weakness of the organism, its failure to achieve stable, coherent selfhood, but Aristotle resists the urge to reduce so persistent a phenomena to the status of mere error, as Plato and his rationalist followers are quick to do. To combat such *akrasia,* Aristotle goes on to argue, we must confront the pleasures it offers with another sort of pleasure altogether. It is immediately after the introduction of the need for *higher* pleasures—the sort that accompany uninhibited activity—that Aristotle claims a "discussion of friendship would *naturally* follow" (NE 1155a3). Friendship—and its activity, *sunaisthanesthai*—comes to our aid in confronting *akrasia* insofar as it provides a higher-order pleasure, and one that need not leave sensual pleasure behind in pursuit of disembodied, godlike contemplation.

Defenders of the significant role friendship and its activity of *sunaisthanesthai* play can do more than weigh the sheer amount of words Aristotle devotes to it, in both *Ethics* and in *Magna Moralia*.[37] Baldly put, Aristotle needs the passage through friendship because the case for self-sufficiency (*autoarkeia*) that friendship detractors rely upon has not, in point of fact, been successfully secured in books 1–6 of NE. Consider the following:

(1) First, as Aristotle will state repeatedly, we do not yet really have a firm grasp on what *autoarkeia* can even mean for beings like us, as opposed to what it might mean for a god. This is partially because of bodily weaknesses but also because (2) whatever self-rule we might be able to muster has been inculcated and is therefore, ironically, utterly *dependent* (not autarkic) on our educational opportunities and social background (prompting the famous question of whether a good person could ever come out of a corrupt environment). Finally, (3) our *embodied* biological nature as an organism-in-environment means we are constantly assailed by needs and wants driven by exterior circumstances. In enactivist terms, we are precarious systems inevitably enmeshed in other systems, and therefore any self-sufficient virtue could at best only be partially so. This aspect comes to a head in Aristotle's return, *after* the discussion of intellectual virtues, to the danger of *akrasia,* which the intellectual virtues are incapable (contra Socrates) of warding off, since *as enactive entities,* bodily imperatives precondition any such intellectual virtuosity.

To explore these tensions in depth and argue for the necessity of friendship and *sunaisthanesthai* in forging a virtuous character, I will first treat the circle of moral virtue to see why resorting to an embedded common sense as *endoxa* falls short of delivering coherent selfhood. I will then return to the problem of pleasure and *akrasia* to show how even the "moralized"—in this case, socialized—organism requires friendship and its peculiar activity of *sunaisthanesthai,* understood as a *collaborative, enactive practice of creating a shared environment of action,* to accomplish full-blown ethical character.

B.1. *Phronesis* and the Moral Virtues. The circle between *phronesis,* the cognitive faculty of practical wisdom, and moral virtue as learning and embodying a "community standard" providing the "mean" (e.g., what is courageous vs. what is rash or craven) at which an agent should aim is well known.[38] For Aristotle, the quest for moral agency and selfhood involves the cultivation of *phronesis* understood as situated ethical judgment against the backdrop of a moral education according to societally defined virtues initially mimed and only later freely adopted. Aristotle

claims that we must be well brought up according to these moral virtues if we are to have any chance to cultivate practical wisdom; yet cultivate it we must, if we are to *be* "good," that is, to be virtuous selves or characters. *Being* virtuous means that we act from a standpoint of consciously chosen virtuous states rather than just *acting* virtuously at this or that time as if through a script. *Phronesis* thus presupposes moral virtue; yet these virtues are in turn products of a society that will judge which actions, choices and judgments count as examples of sound practical judgment, *phronesis*. The *phronimos* will not be called such, however, if she simply apes a script. She will be judged by standards which yet cannot define her, precisely because she must demonstrate her *phronesis* at exactly those crucial moments when the standards offered by the "mean" implied by the moral virtues are insufficient to tell her precisely what to do. To be able to engage in ethical action by way of a deductive use of determinative judgment or a skillful deployment of the practical syllogism where the standard is given in advance does not enable one to *be* truly good, to be a *phronimos,* that is, to be someone who can offer exemplary rather than merely common or baseline moral judgment.

To take an example, certain virtues may accrue to roles held within society—general, mother, teacher, and so forth—and these roles may help holders of those roles act in ways generally regarded as virtuous. But to be truly virtuous is to be able to figure out how to act when roles conflict, or in unprecedented situations, or when it is not immediately obvious that there are ethical implications of one's actions at all. What is required of the *phronimos,* in fact, is to see the particularities in each situation so as to see each virtuous act as *sui generis,* to act as a *standard setter* rather than a rule follower. In Kantian terms, to be a *phronimos* is to practice "reflective," rather than "determinative," judgment. Only then can one be said to choose one's self as a character shaped through one's actions and not merely to conform, more or less perfectly, to a role.

This circle between the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* and the practically oriented moral virtues finds an intriguing echo on the level of Aristotelian judgment between *doxa* (opinion/belief in general, and more specifically *endoxa,* socially sanctioned belief/

opinion) and *sunesis* (the faculty by which we "judge of what someone else says about matters with which practical wisdom is concerned—and of judging soundly" [NE 1143a13ff]).[39] *Endoxa* and *sunesis roughly* prefigure the relationship between a hegemonic, normalizing common sense and an individualized exemplary sense in relation to this. *Endoxa* as a proto-*sensus communis* provides a basic orientation shared, though necessarily perspectivally differentiated, through individual, situationally based *doxai,* throughout the society. Exemplary sense, by contrast, is required when the beliefs encapsulated by this common sense either come into conflict with each other or create a problem of novelty or application.[40]

Whereas for Plato the *doxai* that comprised the bulk of Greek education through poetry and rhetoric darkened the capacity for human intellect by pulling the soul in inconsistent directions, for Aristotle education through *doxa* is a necessary first step toward enabling practical reason. While Aristotle himself does not consistently do so, I think it is helpful to label the kind of *doxa* that Aristotle endorses as a necessary component of moral education *endoxa,* and so to distinguish it from perspectival *doxai*—the kind successfully manipulated by the sophist—in general. Aristotle's definition of *endoxa* in the *Topics,* where it refers to the opinions of the many and/or of the wise, warrants this; in brief, *endoxai,* which for Aristotle supply major premises and constitute the origin point for both dialectic and rhetoric, are not mere opinions but *socially sanctioned opinions* (either directly, by the majority, or indirectly, by those who are considered—by some significant segment of the society—to be wise). Given this technical definition, we can understand *endoxa* as forming the tissue of implicit or background beliefs that generally inform members of a given society; so much so that when one or another of these beliefs come into question, the very process of questioning some of them will be guided by others of them, operating within a hermeneutic circle.

This understanding of *endoxa* makes plausible Aristotle's developmental picture in which potential moral agents are born into a given society with certain norms embedded in *endoxa* through which they are formally and informally educated. They are treated

as "selves" and therefore "recognize" themselves as selves only to the extent that they internalize and act on these norms. One such norm, in our society as in Aristotle's, is critical thinking, that is, development beyond the mimicry of norms of a critical capacity, or what Aristotle calls *sunesis*. But like the circle of *phronesis* and moral virtue that it repeats, the possibility of a fully critical *sunesis* presents difficulties. *Sunesis* depends on *endoxa,* both because it *begins* with endoxa (for it must judge between existing opinions on deliberative matters), but also because, as an *evaluative* expression (*sunesis* is always *eu-sunesis,* "judging soundly"—cf. NE 1143a1 and 15), it relies on the very *endoxa* it sorts through and critiques for its endorsement. Those who have sound critical sense are *believed* to have sound critical sense, *recognized* as having sound critical sense, either by the majority or by the wise—the respective reference groups of *endoxa.*

The particular process of subjectification involved here becomes apparent when we consider the intensification that the *en* bestows on the reflexivity already inherent in the root word *doxa. Doxa* means both opinion and reputation: who we are is a function of whom we are thought to be, our reputation; but this "reputation" is itself a function of the opinions we take up, express, and endorse.[41] *Endoxa* intensifies this reflexivity insofar as it means "reputable opinions/reputations." So, as a first step to establishing ethical agency, we find a self whose opinions, the positions she takes up from the point of view of a given perspective, define her—the reflexivity here belongs to the circle of opinion and reputation—*not to a self in any privileged epistemological or ethical relation with herself.* One's selfhood here is simply her "reputation," how she appears in a community of opinion makers, where what may appear as a valid opinion is always circumscribed in advance by that community.

Endoxa as *sensus communis,* then, as in the case of *koine aisthesis* as common sense, can provide some sort of principle of unity for a self—this time as a reputation that appears to others, and through them, to oneself—but it certainly cannot provide unmediated self-awareness or self-access. As with *koine aisthesis,* the self is bestowed by the externals in which it is enmeshed; in the case of *koine aisthesis,* it is through objects of perception

determining organs of perception in an environmentally evolving organism; in the case of *endoxa,* we "appear" only as "recognized," through the opinions of others. Can this really provide the sort of ethical agency Aristotle requires when he advocates self-sufficiency (*autoarkeia)* for the agent capable of deliberation, choice, and voluntary action? Where we want *sunesis* and *phronesis* to guide us as a compass despite the prevailing social winds, what do we get? A self as the reputation that appears to others. What can Aristotle's embedded account of ethical agency offer, then, to the formation of solid ethical character? Since an ethical self cannot be presupposed but must be achieved by the very same process through which socialization occurs, where might any consistency and ability for self-definition find anchor?

B.2. *Akrasia* and the Failure of the Intellectualist Answer. Such questions are often given an "intellectualist" answer. Aristotle describes the soul as having nutritive, appetitive, desiderative, and rational/intellectual parts. The porousness we have been describing apply to (1) a "self" understood as a body in dynamic interchange with its environment and (2) a habituated self whose desires, emotions, and lower-level cognitions (doxa = belief) are brought into line (often through discipline) with the prevailing norms of the society. But it is often argued that the measured equilibrium that would balance these lower, porous parts and provide relative consistency merely preconditions the development/actualization of the rational part, which is much less porous, much more "sovereign" (*autoarkeia* as self-rule) and thereby finally able to provide a solid ground to build ethical character. Where appetite, emotion, and will/honor remain necessarily open to environmental or societal determination, the rational part of the soul alone can act reflexively to unify the discreet parts of the soul and provide a life plan, a reasonable blueprint around which a unitary character or "self" might be formed. The rational part can project a coherent telos and thereby stabilize a self capable of choosing in light of the goals with which it identifies, and with due consideration to the fluctuating circumstances that continue to affect the appetitive and desiderative elements. Thus, when Aristotle speaks of a soul capable of *eudaimonia* as being "self-sufficient" *(autarkeia)*

and "complete" (NE, 1097b20), he is already stacking the deck in favor of the only capacity of the human being which might be relatively self-sufficient and complete in its activity: the rational soul.

Relatively, however, pushes two caveats. First, for Aristotle, the ideal ethical self is one who masters *prohairesis* and *phronesis*—rational choice and practical wisdom—rather than one who masters the more abstract faculties of *episteme, sophia* or *nous* (knowledge, wisdom, insight). But *prohairesis* and *phronesis* are, as we have seen, situated skills that always come substantively entwined with appetites and emotions; indeed, these are the very "matter" to which these faculties are applied (e.g., how much anger ought to be expressed involves finding the mean of righteous indignation, as opposed to the extremes of rage and indifference). Second, even the highest order rationality, *nous,* is for Aristotle never self-enclosed or purely reflexive. *Nous,* Aristotelian mind, is thoroughly transitive and determined by its objects of thought (whose form, Aristotle tells us in *De Anima,* the mind "takes on"). Thus, whether we are discussing simple perception or logical reasons, humans are never wholly self-sufficient and complete. According to Aristotle, God alone can engage in immediate, reflexive self-contemplation for and of himself—so much so that God alone is "thought thinking itself"—a feat of intellectual dexterity no mere mortal could accomplish. But humans can—unlike God and unlike brutes—attain virtue (*arete* NE 1145a25). To do so, they must be more than reasonable; they must also be *continent,* that is, be in a position to bring their bodily inclinations toward pleasure in line with what their reason demands. But this means that reason, linked to embodied experience, must take the body and its pleasures as an object of thought and take this thought as a directive for action; an accomplishment, Aristotle concedes, that is much more difficult than Plato made it out to be.

B.3. Bodies and Pleasures: The Problem of *Akrasia.* Articulating a concept of self robust enough to found self-aware, self-sufficient ethical characters within an embodied and embedded framework is challenging. Biologically, the organism is in active, interdependent exchange with its environment; it must stabilize its identity

as a discreet system under precarious conditions in relation to other systems. But this stabilization seems necessarily reactive to the other systems in which it is in contact—how might it become *active,* that is, voluntary and affirmatively self-forming and self-sustaining?

Socially, character development is equally dependent on educational and disciplinary systems and mechanisms at the earliest stages and is always subject to prevailing opinions. Even in its highest cognitive capacity, *noeisis,* according to Aristotle, the human soul must take on the form of the objects that it thinks about. By the end of book 6 of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle's notion of ethical character seems suspended between dependence on lucky birth and circumstances and a dogmatic demand for an autonomous self-relation (*autoarkeia*) where little in Aristotle's biology, psychology, or ethical theory seems able to provide sufficient seal against the endlessly open circuits of relationships that constitute the self. Each part of the soul receives its principle of unity via the imprint of and orientation toward an object, goal, or end (telos) exterior to itself, be it objects of appetites and perception, social norms, or the eternal objects of contemplation. Nor can help come from a Platonic, intellectualist answer. For even if there were a Form of the Good to contemplate, Aristotle rejects its usefulness for worldly affairs at the very beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics.* Having taken his inquiry into the moral and intellectual virtues as far as he can in books 2–6, he reiterates his rejection of the "Socratic solution" in the very opening pages of book 7 of the *Nicomachean Ethics.*

An intellectualist or rationalist approach, Aristotle explains, is impotent to answer the problem of *akrasia,* weakness of will, because *akrasia* counts on the strength of the same intellectual approach charged with dissolving it. In other words, we can only speak about "weakness of will" once we establish that intelligent dictates are well in place and that these manifestly fail to compel action in the manner Socrates promises they will. Whereas Socrates assumed that anyone who *knows* the good would immediately pursue the good, the frequent revolt of the will that knowing the good gives rise to (i.e., *akrasia)* proves otherwise. Nor is *akrasia* simply a species of error or, yet again, mere confusion. Aristotle

maintains that *akrasia,* if it means anything at all, names that phenomena, familiar to us all, of knowing what the right thing to do is, but choosing not to do it.

So how best to account for this phenomenon? Aristotle reasonably maintains that to understand *akrasia* deeply, we must learn more about the nature of pleasure. He concludes that pleasure is the *feeling* that accompanies unimpeded activity, introducing a crucial turn for our discussion. Since the beginning of the chapter, we have been asking what sort of awareness might constitute a self-awareness capable of converting the outward-reaching embodied and embedded organism back toward the self so as to initiate a project of character building. The feeling of pleasure provides just this awareness.

The placement of the *akrasia* and *pleasure* discussion at this juncture, immediately preceding the extended discussion of friendship, is no editorial accident. Aristotle argues that ethical success (*eudaimonia*) demands a certain kind of "self-sufficiency." But we have repeatedly shown that human agents cannot be self-sufficient in any straightforward sense—they are thoroughly embodied and embedded, thoroughly porous to their social and biological environments. Moreover, even if they were to cultivate their rational faculties in order to approximate as closely as possible the self-sufficiency of a god through contemplation of eternal objects, such contemplation would remain exterior directed and impersonal. Such a rational soul would be incapable of founding a self as an individual ethical character who could choose well precisely as an individual confronting specific circumstances—the very criteria qualifying a character as displaying good practical judgment as *sunesis* and *phronesis.*

Akrasia turns out to be a symptom of diverse pleasures originating in different functions or systems in which the organism participates and of the ways in which these can either enhance or compete with each other. *Akrasia* arises as each subsystem transitively connects to relevant objects in exterior systems to complete and stabilize itself, with each activation and stabilization prompting a corresponding degree of pleasure. But these systems can and do conflict, leading to the (unpleasurable) experience of *akrasia* between the subsystems (or parts of the soul) as one gains

dominance in its pleasure seeking and causes blockages or stops in the other parts. For example, an appetite may reach out to fulfill itself, but in doing so, it may inhibit or disrupt the ability to achieve certain social and intellectual pleasures through connection and actualization with social, institutional, or mental forms. A minimal awareness of self can be said to emerge in any experience of pleasure insofar as attention shifts from the object of anticipated pleasure to the experiencing of it. Pleasure can be achieved through a wide variety of activities, but it strengthens to the extent that the various systems coordinate rather than conflict and to the extent that the *activity* of coordination can itself be sustained.

Aristotle's famous distinction between types of pleasure falls according to these lines. On the one side there are subsystem-specific pleasures, thoroughly enmeshed with and determined by environmental objects, opportunities, constraints, and the needs of the organism—*reactive* pleasures. On the other side there is the activity of the organism relating the parts or subsystems to each other and building the organism as a sustainable, individuating system—*active* pleasure. Both these pleasures relate to the self, the *autos*—because pleasure just is a kind of self-awareness as opposed to object awareness—but one pleasure does so in a transitive manner that depends on object-interaction and the other pleasure does so in a directly reflexive sense: it takes pleasure in the ability to sustain pleasure. Herein lies the key to how an embodied and embedded organism might turn away from objects and toward itself to generate resources for self-stability.

So far all of the opportunities to unify the self have come only from the outside, from objects within the environment and norms taken over as directives or goals. Immediately after his discussion of *akrasia,* pleasures in conflict, Aristotle raises the possibility of a "higher" pleasure which might win out over the dispersive pleasures tempting the akratic in multiple directions. Such pleasure, he suggests, might be able to override the temptations of the lower ones and offer a sense of self-awareness robust enough to provide a basis for building ethical character. But since at this point in Aristotle's text there is no unmediated route to such self-awareness, promoting it will depend on a detour through friendship and

indeed through *sunaisthanesthai* as *sharing the consciousness of another's existence.*

Pleasures are commonly, and in one way correctly, understood to refer to appetites and desires, connecting pains and pleasures to deficiencies and satisfactions connected to our organism in its biological and social contexts. Such pleasures are necessarily located and piecemeal, exterior directed, dispersive rather than unifying. To this Aristotle contrasts higher pleasure, which appears to issue not from any deficiency and reactive correction in the organism-environment relay, but from the well-functioning of the living organism *experiencing itself as a functioning whole.* Here we find an echo not only of the idea of self-sufficiency but also of happiness as *eudaimonia,* which higher pleasure is said to accompany as a "subjective" indicator. Higher pleasure is not dependent on the transitory objects that occasion it but appears *instead to coincide with the awareness of existence itself,* of life being lived in the wholeness of the moment as if divorced from the chain of conditional in-order-tos constituting the ordinary flow of time.

Higher pleasure is not linked to specific lacks and satisfactions but to an exuberance we might associate with this feeling of pure, active life.[42] In keeping with the embodied and embedded interpretation, one can say that the organism's link to the environment is not so much overcome in this exuberance (though some would—wrongly I think—understand the emphasis on contemplation in this way) as perfectly harmonized with it. The friction with one's environment—the lack, the struggle and conquest—is minimized. So, odd as it might seem, one feels most whole, most coherent and self-sufficient, when one is most "at one" with one's environment, perhaps even "lost" in it. Examples would include things like fluid, virtuosic flute playing or javelin throwing—instances where the body, the task, and the setting are all harmonized.

In book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle famously links the feeling of higher pleasure with the contemplative life, prompting many to read higher pleasure as contingent on stepping away from or repressing embodiment and our practical, social engagements. But what is more surprising and receives much less attention than the return to the topic of pleasure and

its connection to contemplation in book 10 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's earlier introduction (also in the *Eudemeian Ethics*) of a certain "excess of pleasure" experienced uniquely in the company of friends. In a key quote, no less puzzling and occurring quite close to the *sunaisthesis* quote with which we began this chapter, Aristotle writes:

> To perceive and to know a friend, therefore, is necessarily in a manner to perceive and <in a manner to know> oneself. Consequently to share even vulgar pleasures and ordinary life with a friend is naturally pleasant (for it always involves our simultaneously perceiving the friend), but more so to share the more divine pleasures; the reason of which is that it *is always more pleasant to behold oneself* (heauton theorein) *enjoying the superior good,* and this is sometimes a passive, sometimes an active experience, sometimes something else (EE 1245a35-12-1245b3, emphasis mine).

There are two especially bizarre and notable features of this important passage. First is the "pleasure value added" of perceiving the friend, no matter what sort of pleasurable activity may be involved. Second is the baffling convertibility between perceiving the friend and perceiving oneself. Both of these claims will take us to the heart of the puzzle of *sunaisthanesthai* with which we began and will show how, for Aristotle, passing through an anonymous, shared awareness of existence (*per se,* not yours or mine) can allow for the emergence of what might properly come to be called full self-awareness, thereby potentially providing a ground for ethical selfhood.

SENSING YOU SENSING ME SENSING YOUR SENSING: I EMERGE, AWARE

Scholarship on *sunaisthanesthai* has been thin, perhaps because anti-individualist tendencies in passages such as the above strike many interpreters as strange at best and pernicious or self-defeating at worst.[43] Below I will track some of the controversies around the central texts, while arguing that they neglect the

fundamental ways our bodies are intertwined with each other while we navigate a shared environment. If we understand *sunaisthanesthai* as the word Aristotle uses to get at the awareness involved in the collaborative project of existence as creating a common sense through engaged, embodied interaction within an environment that comes to be explicitly shared, we can avoid some of these concerns. Understanding that *sunaisthanesthai* is at the root of anything like *ethical* self-awareness and therefore need not conflict with it, we can come to see how we-awareness can alone *birth* self-awareness.[44] World-Others-Self coemerge; but self as an other to others who together actively constitute worlds and can choose in some sense how to do so is a gift of the self-other exchange in mutual, embodied awareness.

A. Mirrored Selves, Merged Selves, and Mineness

Taking their lead from the author of the *Magna Moralia* (probably not Aristotle), some interpreters read Aristotle's proverb "The friend is another oneself" to mean either that the friend somehow mirrors the self, thereby providing an otherwise unattainable access to *knowledge of myself as an object,* or that the friend literally *merges* with me on the abstract level of *nous*.[45] The problem with both of these interpretations is that they treat the self as already in place, with the friend acting as a mere "tool" for self-knowledge or an "aid" in reaching or maintaining my intellectual-contemplative vocation. In other words, both of these interpretations share an instrumental approach to the friend, where Aristotle means something completely different. Indeed, an instrumental understanding of friendship would reduce friendship to what Aristotle claims is only one—and a lesser—form of it, namely friendship of use. The self-sufficient person would of course have no need of such friendships, hence the perplexities around why we need a double-chapter treatment of friendship at all.

To understand the highest sort of friendship is to return to the original exercise of the activity of friendship as *constitutive of* not *instrumental to* ethical *selfhood.* I do not make friends in order to have the best life; practicing friendship, *sunaisthanesthai,* grounds my ability to have an ethical life at all. Understanding this properly helps avoid two problems in the existing literature on

Aristotle's theory of friendship: On the one side, the *merged-self theory* of friendship effaces the necessarily individualized embodied and embedded self. On the other, the *mirror theory* substitutes an epistemological question (How can we know ourselves?) for the ontological-ethical one (How might such embodied and embedded contingent entities become ethical selves at all?).[46] Such epistemological bias foists on Aristotle a host of problems alien to him; for example, how the "knowing subject" can become an "object of knowledge" for itself; how the self could "recognize" itself in another, and so on.[47]

There are good philological and philosophical reasons to reject the reflexive, epistemological "mirror" reading.[48] As Sartre well knew, the price of such self-knowledge, namely allowing the other to objectify me, is simply too high. Aristotle sought not a self that *knows-itself-qua-object* but a self that *knows, is knowing,* that *actualizes* itself through the activity of knowledge.[49] Such knowledge is necessarily transitive though and *not,* or at least not immediately, reflexively capable of building itself as a character.[50] In contrast to the constant *energeia* of a God, it is the perceiving and knowing of things that are *not* the self that brings the self as *knowing* into *energeia,* actualization. Such a transitive self, qua embodied, will always be a particular self, or better, a *particularized* self (through past chains of *aisthesis,* which govern individual memory, *phantasia,* habits, beliefs, etc.) and a *particularizing* self (through "chancing" to be determined by this very perceptual object, here and now, and acting or reacting to those perceptions). This particularized-particularizing self, a self in a process of determination by concrete sensual experiences, is what Aristotle meant to affirm in his contrast between such a self and selves engaged in projects of absolute knowing at EE 244b29–33. The latter selves—the same Platonic selves often sought after, and often found, in NE book 10—efface the particularistic processes of coming to know through contingent sensory experience in favor of concepts known, and necessarily known in exactly the same way for whomever has gotten to know them rightly, however this knowing took place. Moreover, it is not clear why isolated individuals couldn't attain this merger with these self-identical highest objects of contemplation through *nous,* in which

case, as Aristotle imagines an objector might point out, social life would indeed appear "stupid" (NE 1245a11)—a view Aristotle considers before siding decisively in favor of the phenomenological evidence for the desirability of friends.

Human beings are "indeterminate" insofar as they are merely a capacity for perception and consciousness; they become determinate only through the actualization of their embodied consciousness through and by a specific object, that is, they are *objectively determined,* a view that Aristotle recapitulates with respect to *sunaisthesis* at EE 1245 1–10. So the question is less how I might *know* myself than how I might be able to return to determine myself and so constitute my character amid an open-ended activity of perceiving that determines "me" in the act.

Taking Aristotle's objective determination very seriously, it would be hasty to equate the awareness we have of ourselves when we perceive with anything like *subjectivity*.[51] The convertibility of what is the friend's and what is mine—the second puzzle emerging out of the long quote in section 3b3—already seems to block such a starting point: ownership of consciousness is itself what is in question when beholding the friend beholding the actively engaged self. Again, insistence on "subjectivity" is part of what makes interpreting Aristotle's exhortation that we *must* or *ought* to share our friend's consciousness of his existence so difficult to swallow. In standard subjectivist terminology, this would mean that we must share *his or her subjective experience of his or her self.* Such sharing is quite impossible if we *assume subjectivity is a special transparency or access I have to myself to begin with.*

To take another example: ethically we might want to claim that an action is "mine" if I *experience* it as issuing from my deliberations and choices ("sense of agency"). But then we are left flabbergasted when Aristotle says: "So the man who is blessed will need such friends, if it is his policy to look at actions that are both just and his own, and the actions of a friend who is good are of that sort" (NE 1170a1). As one commentator rightly remarks, "What is difficult to understand here is not how I can be aware of the excellence of my friend's life, but how I can be aware of this as *mine* or as *belonging to me.*"[52]

It is the very the idea of "mineness" or "ownness" that must first be interrogated in order to make sense of our two puzzles: first, how the activity of friendship (*sunaisthanesthai*) bestows a higher-order pleasure beyond the pleasure connected to any mere object of the friends' combined activity, and second, the convertibility between self and friend. Assuming a concept of subjectivity will only mislead us, prompt us to wonder fruitlessly how one might enter into the subjective universe of another to the extent that Aristotle would call this foreign landscape, and any actions issuing from it, "mine." Yet since in both ethical treatises, Aristotle treats the ability to share consciousness with another being (*sunaisthanesthai*) as homiletically obvious (for "the friend is another oneself"), it becomes clear that our problem of "other minds" rooted in the assumption of subjectivity was not his. Rather the difficulty for Aristotle, given the transitive character of *aisthesis* (and therefore also its derivatives, including *sunaisthesis* and *koine aisthesis*), lies less in the modern consciousness's temptation to solipsism than in the question of how one can say "mine" to experiences—my own or another's—at all.[53]

Such problems obviously inhabit Kahn's otherwise consistent merged-selves account, where the two individual friends become subordinate to and submerged in a divine and abstract *nous* (and so he apologizes for the "unappetizing" anti-individualism at which he arrives). Indeed, it would seem that for Kahn's Aristotle, the "better" I am, the less "mine" I am. But this "merged"-selves thesis is difficult to square not only with Aristotle's endorsement of social life transpiring between concrete selves and others (as against those who would say such friendship is silly or trivial compared with higher things); it is also difficult to square with a virtue ethics that insists that we must be able to engage in acts as "our own acts, voluntary acts" (NE1169a3–5).

It is precisely a need for some sort of ethical self-ownership, distinct from modern subjectivity, that may well have motivated Aristotle's shift from the language of *koine aisthesis* to *sunaisthesis,* even though the problem that introduces it—perceiving that we perceive—remains the same. For *ethical purposes,* Aristotle must secure a self who can say "mine" in a much stronger sense than an organism can say "mine" to the objects of nutrition or

even perception in the open-ended oscillation of determination-determinability characteristic of *koine aisthesis*.[54] Doing so *will* obviously require reflexivity, but *this cannot be an epistemological reflexivity through which we become objects for ourselves, separated from ourselves as experiencing selves*. We have already found a clue for what might provide such an experiential reflexivity in the discussion of higher pleasures as a sort of exuberance rather than a lack or need that attaches the organism to other systems. But this higher pleasure itself exhibits a strange anti-individualism (considering that pleasures and pains are what we often consider most private or individual, most "mine"). Yet Aristotle will claim that this exuberant pleasure is not even initially "mine" but indeed experienced necessarily as shared, as "ours": *sunaisthanesthai*.

B. Sunaisthanesthai

This chapter commenced with the question of how I *might* share the awareness of my friend's existence and why I *must* do so. Since this "must" is an ethical demand, it seems to be addressed to someone; but when we tried to look for someone capable of answering this demand on its own terms and in the usual places (moral and intellectual virtues) we ran into a slew of difficulties. If we stuck with the prejudices of a modern autonomous and reflexive subject, it seemed we could never share another's consciousness of *her* existence. But once we looked more closely into Aristotle's own articulations of selfhood, we could only find an embodied and enactive organism enmeshed in environmental systems; an embedded social self, defined by its roles and norms; or a cognitive entity robbed of individuality or agency. Where is the self that *must* or *ought to do anything at all?* The voluntary agent who might choose itself as ethical or otherwise?

In substituting *sunaisthesis* for *koine aisthesis,* we noticed that Aristotle does tell us something new, namely, that "to perceive that we are perceiving or thinking is to perceive that we are existing" (NE 1170a 30). Thus we explicitly move from the intersensory or intermodal cross-referencing that allows an organism to function within an environment (*koine aisthesis*) to the awareness of *existing*. But this happens not within our organism, as a function of

koine aisthesis, but between organisms, in *sunaisthanesthai.* Moreover, we are told that in performing such *sunaisthanesthai,* we are not only aware of our own existence but we can and even must be aware of the existence of others: we must somehow enter into the other's ability to "perceive that she is perceiving," her very awareness of her existence. But I could not do this if awareness is strictly or narrowly "my" property or "her" property. Accordingly, Aristotle smudges the expected border between what is "mine" and what is my friend's in his repeated statements about convertibility between us. I have been urging that rather than allow this convertibility to vex us, or trying to explain it away, we take it as the heart of Aristotle's ethical project. "Mineness" as a sense of agency and a basis of ethical action emerges out of impersonal awareness elicited in the company of one or more of my species and the pleasure this arouses. If we add this to the idea from the convertibility quote above that to "perceive the perception of my friend perceiving" intensifies "my" perception, makes it "more pleasant" than if I were simply to perceive that I am perceiving (*koine aisthesis*) in isolation, we glimpse the birth of mineness out of shared pleasure, specifically out of the superlative pleasure of perceiving in common (*sunaisthesis*). Co-perception on this enactive account would mean nothing less than a common projection of an environment as an arena for shared action. In humans, as Aristotle repeatedly tells us, such robust awareness is brought about "in shared living, and in sharing conversation and thought. For this is what shared living is thought to mean in the case of humans and not, as in the case of cattle, feeding in the same place" (NE 1170b12). *Sunaisthesis,* then, puts us in a position to bridge the gap between *koine aisthesis* as a unity of the organism-environment and *endoxa* as a unity of self in society, pointing to the birth of self-awareness as an agential, embodied "mineness" out of a "we-awareness" that allows us to act together in a stabilized environment. The following two chapters will explore this idea further through the phenomenological concept of *intercorporeity,* but we will conclude the present one with a slightly more detailed account of Aristotle's *sunaisthanesthai,* how it is possible, and why we "must" do it, setting up the return to an ethical reconsideration of intercorporeity in the remainder of the book.

B.1. Acts and Objects. As noticed in the *History of Animals,* the *sun* in *sunaisthesis* draws the *koine* of *koine aisthesis* away from the individual and toward the species and its social life. This means that the kind of *aisthesis*—perceptual awareness—involved in *sunaisthesis* is not just any event of determination by any ordinary object of perception; instead it names a *codetermination in a reciprocal occurrence by and of* two or more organisms. *This takes place through a double intentionality,* but not of the familiar apperception sort. In *sunaisthanesthai,* not only are we both oriented to a common object (joint attention), but we are oriented to each other's perceiving of the object. But how can I "perceive" the other's perception? Only through a perception of the bodily manifestations of her perceiving in gesture, comportment, and in the case of human beings, speech. Still, the perception of the other's perceiving body is not any ordinary perception of any ordinary object; it provokes *sunaisthanesthai,* shared perception, through a determination of my own bodily being-in-environment.

In her "visage," her appearance, the other embodies an activated life (of which perception and knowledge are the *telos*) that I somehow *experience* (but do not cognize) as *my own.* I can do so because "a man stands in the same relationship to his friend as to himself" (NE1171b33) through a process of taking on "the impress from the other of those traits in him that give him pleasure" (NE 1172a13), that is, of "whatever pursuit it is that constitutes *existence* for a man or makes *his life worth living*" (NE1172a3, emphasis mine). How is this so? How can I take on the impress of the other? Quite simply because we are both embodied and acting within the same environment with bodies that share certain similar morphologies and perceptual capacities, just as bees pursuing nectar do. It is not that I figure out or interpret what the other is perceiving through a third-person interpretation of her gestures; instead, I actively respond directly with and to her gestures as they shape the environment we are coming to inhabit by co-perceiving and acting within it. In short, in the kind of *aisthesis* that is *sun-aisthesis,* the sensible form that I "take on" in perceiving the friend's perception is that of a human living, a life organized around ends which tie together past, present, and

future capacities for determination in the act of perceiving that actualizes her *existence,* understood as *a determinate life of active embodied response capable of generating a life worth living.*[55] This kind of co-determined perception, Aristotle goes on to say, increases the pleasure of whatever other pleasure we might have experienced by ourselves when confronted with the same environmental opportunities. Why, exactly, would that be so?

B.2. The Pleasure of *Sunaisthanesthai*

> It surely seems that we all find it pleasanter to share good things with our friends, as far as these fall to each, and the best that each can.
>
> —EE 1245a19–21

The "pleasanter" Aristotle refers to here is not simply additive, as in "good wine, good company." Instead, Aristotle seems to be saying that the wine *actually* tastes better in the company of friends, indeed that any pleasure, from the vulgar to the highest, is enhanced by the presence of friends. In turning his attention to the riddle of "*self-sufficiency* (autarkeias) *and friendship and the interrelationship of their potentialities*" (EE, 1244b1–2) that leads him to discuss *sunaisthesis,* Aristotle finds an instance of the sort of pleasure he mentions at the end of book 7, a pleasure capable of defeating the body divided against itself by *akrasia,* namely, a pleasure arising from a perfection that exceeds a mere return to equilibrium from a state of excess or deficiency in one or another part of the soul. Such pleasure, he suggests, provides a pleasurable sense of wholeness of existence that is capable of overriding bodily *akrasia* without an impossible flight into a disembodied or divine *nous.* The wholeness of the organism that brings about this pleasure is no longer that of *koine aisthesis* as a cross-referencing system function; it is *sunaisthesis,* an awareness of *existence,* the wholeness of *this life* in the process of being lived as an active immersion in a specific actionable environment as *shared.*

The strange convertibility of the perception of the friend and my "own" perception now comes into focus. Such convertibility, I am arguing, arises because our sensory activation in an environment

is primarily neither yours nor mine; our bodies enact it together. In *sunaisthanesthai,* the perception of an action-orienting environment occurs alongside the sensing of another's sensory uptake of an action-orienting environment. But in this sensing of another's sensing, I become aware of her sensing, including her sensing of me, not—contra Sartre—as an object perceived but as an activity of co-sensation. The other's activity activates me and brings about a pleasurable awareness of this activation that would otherwise be residual to the object perceived. I become aware that *we* are engaged in an activity, building a shared sensory world to sustain the *energeia* of our existence.

As we will explore in the following chapters, phenomenology—particularly that of Merleau-Ponty—will have much to say about this experience of co-sensation. Though the phenomenological articulation of the living-body/object-body dualism departs from Aristotle's focus on the organism/environment, the two meet in a concept of enactivism. As will be explored more in chapter 2, Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeity should be understood as the enactive interlacing of constituting, lived bodies and, as such, allows for a refreshing and nuancing of Aristotelian *sunaisthanesthai* while, reciprocally, *sunaisthanesthai* lends ethical significance to Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeity, that is, allows for its development in the direction of virtuous character formation.

In sensing in common, I sense your pleasurable *attention* not as an *object* of perception but as pleasurably arousing my own attention, a lived-body to lived-body connection. I "feel" your attention as my own attention: attention in company is first and foremost "our" attention. This *attention,* this ability to attend *as a sustained activity,* itself provides the higher-order pleasure of bodily coherence while stabilizing and focusing fleeting sensations into a coherent world of action and possibility, banishing thereby isolated objects that compete for the reaction of different subsystems within the living organism.[56] Attention flows when various sensual capacities harmonize to facilitate living and perceiving as a more, rather than less, unimpeded activity—Aristotle's very definition of what gives rise to the higher-order pleasure—thereby stabilizing, for however long, the continual oscillation of determined-determinability that is the self.[57]

In this way, by sensing you sensing, I am also able to catch myself in the act of sensing: *in pleasure, I sense that I am sensing, "perceive that I am perceiving,"* become aware of actively co-perceiving (constituting, in phenomenological terms) a shared environment of action *as my way of existing*—but not because my sensing is "mirrored" in yours. Rather, I *witness* the bloom of your actualization in the face of a world coming into being as shared and in the face of the activities it promises, and simultaneously I *feel* the bloom of my own actualization in light of those same possibilities, which in turn enlivens your sensing of me in relation to these. This experience of seeing and feeling, the *convertibility* of sensation in the moment, is itself *sunaisthetic* in the narrow sense (*synesthesia*), namely converting what I see (your bodily engagement in the world) into what I *feel*. I *become* what I see; I do not have to think myself into this experience, take myself as an object, or discursively compare or analogize the physical moments of actualization. My eidetic experience is of actualization itself ("yours"), and I, qua actualized by sensing you in the act of sensing me, am part of that *eidos*. In sensing your *energeia* I experience the pleasure of my own activated intentionality, *energeia,* toward you in our dynamic but shared milieu of co-perception.

Sunaisthesis, then, begins in the moment of convertibility discussed above, an awareness characterized by heightened pleasure but also an indistinction between self and other within the joint project of activated existence. It does not end there, however, since this convertibility can always lead to controvertability; the shared, standing "now" of actualized attention, awareness, and pleasure, can give way to lapsed attention, elapsed time, a falling apart of the ends and attention. "Mineness" emerges in this lapse from "our-ness," as my attention moves on, or remains after yours disperses. "Mineness" occurs in a deprivation and loss of the impersonal we-ness which initiates an ethical self, a character capable of perceptual unity and attention who now must choose what to pursue, including whether to actively engage in *sunaisthanesthai* as the cultivation of a common sense (*sunaisthesis*) between us, rather than the pursuit of narrow self-interest or the imposition of one's "owned" sensibilities upon others.

We are at last in a position to understand how we both can and must *sunaisthanesthai*. We *sunaisthanesthai naturally* when we are in the presence of another sensing body, as our living bodies orient themselves to each other and to the environment as shared possibilities. This brings about a co-sensation between two or more organisms that produces a pleasurable sense of unity and life within each organism as they actively construct and sustain a shared world as an arena for action. Each can do this because they are not first isolated reflexive subjects but are open to the world and others within this world. They are bodily affected by these others and the ways these others enact their shared worlds. But the pleasure aroused by enacting a shared world with another draws attention not just outwardly toward the shared world and the activities and objects possible in it but to the self that is so pleasurably participating in this co-sensed world and as participating in it: the lived body, in phenomenological terms. The bodily self that is pleased enacting a world with others is the self that *can be* awakened to *eudaimonia* and to actively choosing the virtues that constitute it.

Perfectly coordinated attention cannot be maintained indefinitely, however, due to the differential pulls of the history of *aisthesis* as sensual determination that makes each organism what it is—past *aisthesis* in each organism carries its own drag and plunder. When the us-awareness is severed, for whatever reason, a new sort of self-awareness, or mineness, emerges in its wake. On the basis of *this* awareness, an awareness of a perfect pleasure now interrupted, the organism can take itself up as an ethical character, as an agent of perception and activity, rather than being reactively determined by deficiencies within a compelling environment. Mineness is constituted on the tatters of we-ness but becomes the basis upon which ethical character can be built either in turning toward the origin in we-ness, rebuilding possibilities of energetic flow for the bodies co-participating in environmental possibilities, or in turning away from it, privatizing experience as an individual, autonomous accomplishment.

Aristotle retains the particularity of each person—a particularity tied up with empirical contingencies, the individual histories

of sensual determination of each organism in a temporal flux. This individuality need not drop out of the picture with *sunaisthesis,* as it must with abstract *nous*. So too, the particularity of each friend is not effaced. With some friends, Aristotle tells us, we will have the experience of perfected appetitive pleasures, with others, artistic pleasures, with still others philosophical ones (EE 1245a32–35; NE1172a3–8). But these ordinary pleasures will be accompanied by a higher-order pleasure that points to a self as a precarious whole capable of choosing to enact a world with others through sensing in common.

In *sunaisthesis,* unlike in a platonic mystical union of contemplation, the feeling of oneness with a particular friend or loved one in our shared awareness creates a heightened pleasure which activates me and makes me aware of my existence and my living body as I perceive "the existence of the friend" in her coenacting of our shared world. Unlike ordinary acts of perception in which I as an object body am determined by objects of perception, *sunaisthesis,* in its very convertibility, gives rise to an actualization that moves in two contrary directions—toward the other and toward myself. This awareness-of-myself-with-and-through-another provides the basis and bridge for a selfhood that remains embodied and embedded in social interaction without dissolving into its environment or into social norms that define and integrate the larger milieu. This larger milieu can become a substitute for co-sensing, constituting not an ethical but a social self (*sensus communis)* that can also function to stabilize perception and integrate action, though at considerable loss to virtue and a freely fashioned world.

We must *sunaisthanesthai,* then, because the creation of shared realities out of inevitable affectivity is imperative for ethical selves as virtuous characters. *Sunaisthanesthai* is necessary to create and sustain, actively and voluntarily, a common world where ethical selves, including our own, can flourish. Ethical selves are born of *sunaisthanesthai,* and friendship is the last and highest virtue Aristotle discusses in his *Ethics* precisely because it can first foster and then shelter ethical selves from the vicissitudes of precarious environments and social determination, thereby grounding ethics not as behaving well, but as being well.

EMBODIED, EMBEDDED, ETHICAL

Higher pleasure has its origin in shared pleasure as it accompanies *sunaisthanesthai* as the "perceiving that I am perceiving" which simultaneously enlivens the experience of each of the participants as whole, living organisms collaboratively shaping a world which is, for gregarious animals, at the same time a social milieu. Such shared awareness is primary, but temporally uneven, giving rise to the experience of mineness after it withdraws and I long for the pleasure of coherence the other elicited. Mineness, understood as such, is a position of loss, but not necessarily of lack; it puts me in a position to choose to act on myself. As such, *sunaisthesis* forms the ideal starting point for considering the emergence of ethical selfhood out of an embodied and embedded perspective. Aristotle's discussion of *sunaisthesis* shows how a sense of coherent, living selfhood might emerge despite our being embodied and embedded and thus always vulnerable to social and biological forces as well as to self-lacerating *akrasia*. But while Aristotle has pointed us in this direction, much more will need to be said. Merleau-Ponty and contemporary embodiment theorists who focus on intercorporeity provide new tools to approach sunaisthetic co-perception, as detailed in chapter 2. In chapter 3, we will return to the problem of "mineness" by asking what the sunaisthetic approach might contribute to discussions of otherness that have for too long repressed sunaisthetic phenomena. Chapters 4 and 5 will show concretely how "ordinary" experiences, such as grieving and caregiving, reveal sunaisthetic experience even in individualistic cultures that tend to deny or repudiate it. Finally, we will return to propose directions for a sunaisthetic virtue ethic that cultivates the affection between us as a way of sensing in common capable of dethroning destructive "common sense" and its endless vacillation between individualism and communal, social determination.

CHAPTER 2

INTERCORPOREITY AND THE COMING TO BE OF COMMON SENSE

In a dark and profound unity.

—Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

The previous chapter introduced Aristotle's discovery of sunaisthetic sensation. Such sensation is neither yours nor mine but comes into being between two or more bodies collaboratively making sense of an environment of possibilities for engaged activity. This approach brakes any too-hasty focus on the either/or of a self-world relation as opposed to a self-other relation. Instead of formed selves opening out into an environment or toward others, we have living bodies in movement with fluid sensory possibilities in a process of interacting with other such bodies to actively form an environment that in turn forms them. Multiple bodies create and take up these possibilities as they move and perceive; when two or more such bodies enact sensation together, there emerges a "world," a coherent arena for action, which is therefore always shared. Ethical selves emerge only in relation to such collaborative world creation.

The last chapter found friendship and its activity of *sunaisthanesthai* at the birth of an ethical selfhood engaging in such collaborative sense-making. This point of birth, like all points of birth, cannot be insignificant. Aristotle's word for friends is *philoi* (dear ones), yet he maintains that even bees and crustaceans

engage in a primitive sort of *sunaisthanesthai.* So, I argued, it may be best to understand *sunaisthanesthai* both as a general capacity, at least for all members of gregarious species, and as linked to friendship in the more strict sense as virtuous activity and the ethical actualization of this capacity: a repetition of an event of self-emergence with and through otherness that I began to articulate in the last chapter and will connect in chapter 5 to a revised conception of *natality.*[1] In this chapter I will continue to explore the sunaisthetic event in light of Aristotle's guiding thread, now aided by phenomenological insights into the living/object body distinction and the immense resources of Merleau-Ponty's concept of *intercorporeity.* To take the concept of intercorporeity seriously, I will show, requires us to continue questioning the self as something that is manifestly "mine," for it is to question the mineness even of one's own body: it is to understand instead that bodies are fluid and that they merge, form, and impact each other at every level. The flesh that is a boundary, barrier, and border, is also a point of contact and permeability to sensation. The posture and proprioception that allow us to orient ourselves in the world are also only and always relative: they are initiated, prolonged, or terminated in response to others. Bodies collide, cleave, duck, quicken, focus, expand, and flinch in relation to other bodies. Even purportedly interoceptive features such as pulse-rate, digestion, and menstruation coordinate with other bodies. Bodies are open-ended, improvisational affectivities in relation to other bodies: they *sunaisthanesthai.* They may become bundles, or sets, of affectivities and actions through intercorporeal habits. Such habitual affectivities may form into a "style," comfortable to myself and recognizable to those I interact with, and to the extent that such a style becomes conscious and perhaps even intentional, it may stabilize into a body *image* or awareness of myself as an object body for others. Such a body image, appearing to others, can be retrospectively appropriated and called "mine," but this act of appropriation always comes as a lag, a lack, and a reaction to a body that is always underway: aging, growing, perceiving, in play with other living bodies and the world they co-constitute.

Merleau-Ponty's term *intercorporeity* as a fundamental capacity unwittingly replays Aristotle's approach to *sunaisthanesthai*

as an intertwining of the intersensory and intercorporeal aspects of sensation and possibility in movement, reinvoking it, though not by name, after long centuries of latency. Working directly at the level of living bodies in direct connection to other living bodies as the birth of consciousness and subjectivity, the concept of intercorporeity was in a certain sense polemical; under the guise of elucidating Husserl, Merleau-Ponty introduces intercorporeity as the foundation of, and therefore as more primary than, any *intersubjectivity.* While inquiring into intersubjective processes is certainly also crucial, from the perspective of intercorporeity, it simply comes too late, as would any ethics that takes intersubjectivity alone as a foundation or guide. I will begin this chapter by sketching out Merleau-Ponty's radically new concept of intercorporeity and the ways in which it both recapitulates and advances the bases of *sunaisthanesthai* before linking and contrasting it to recent empirically and phenomenologically inspired work in social cognition such as "direct perception," interaction theory, and participatory sense-making. Finally I will explore *sunaisthanesthai* conceived as intercorporeal practice: *choreography* as improvisational ethics.

WHAT IS INTERCORPOREITY?

We live in an environment populated by multiple bodies, some in motion, some inert. Such bodies are themselves comprised of forces, affects, and relations in continual interchange with other forces, affects, and relations. But if bodies are always intermingling and interacting through forces, affects, and relations, does it makes sense to speak of *a* body, much less *my body,* at all?

This question is particularly puzzling for those sorts of bodies we are inclined to call living bodies: growing, aging, sensing, feeling, even thinking bodies. Arendt follows Aristotle in pointing out that living beings appear and tend toward some recognizable shape—although this too is always altering—until they dwindle and eventually disappear. That is to say, living bodies are born, they flourish, they die. But what if this flourishing is not the achievement of a predetermined *entelechia* or individual morphological destiny, as Aristotle might have it, but is just the

acquiring of a certain intensity of affections and relations that accrue, accumulate, and then disperse?

Morphology certainly matters, and genetic input will surely chart a certain trajectory of development. It certainly matters if I am tall, or sickly, upright, full, or have this or that tendency of hormonal surge. Moreover, it matters if I stand on two feet, have fins, or fly. But all manner of environmental and intercorporeal influence will impinge on such relative morphological givens and their significance for the individual, species, and environment. Merleau-Ponty's notion of intercorporeity zeroes in not only on bodies in general as they are morphologically objectified but on living bodies of this affected and affecting sort. For all of his controversial talk about anonymous bodies, all that is meant is the general capacity of bodies, all bodies, to affect and be affected in circuits of intercorporeity. So what is this intercorporeity?

At its deepest, or highest and widest ontological level in his late writing, intercorporeity is linked to Flesh, conceived as the ultimate carnality of world. For Merleau-Ponty, this carnality does not indicate this or that fleshly affection or composition but a general element enabling reversibility, the capacity for perpetual, mutual impact.[2] Just as flesh, commonly understood, is what allows me to touch and be touched, so Flesh as "the stuff" of the world is the name given to circuits of affection in general—the affecting and being affected of all matter.[3]

But at the next order of concretion—the focus for this book—intercorporeity gets at the way lived bodies impact other lived bodies, creating spaces of sensation and movement in the process.[4] Now bodies impact other bodies on multiple levels, from the most superficial—I step out of your way as we walk toward each other on a crowded sidewalk—to the most profound, that is, bodies interpolating themselves into *the very lived body schemas* and most intimate life processes of other bodies.[5] Intercorporeity must be understood at various levels, from the highest ontological to the most banal iteration. If Flesh is the very condition of reversibility—a touching that is necessarily touched—intercorporeity is also a dis-ruption: a primary rupture of an only seemly choate body that always cancels itself in a new alliance, a temporary cohesion with something foreign or other, a

hand that reaches to touch and feels itself touched. The moment of recoil, ruptured intent, is also its coming into being *as this hand:* such coming into being through contact is the dis-ruption.

In this chapter I will concentrate on how intercorporeity affects intimate domains usually associated with proprioception and interoception rather than the more familiar focus on bodies experiencing bodies merely through exteroception, that is, the interaction of surfaces or object body images in external space. As will become clear in this chapter and the next, approaches to "other minds" have too long foundered on distinctions between subjective/objective, internal/external. But intercorporeity, like *sunaisthanesthai,* precedes and exceeds such distinctions. For this reason, I will focus primarily on intercorporeity at the level of *lived body schemas*. Following some English language interpreters of Merleau-Ponty, I use the term *body schemas* in distinction to body images to mean sets of prereflective, felt capacities that impact "how the body shapes the perceptual field"—how bodies constitute it—rather than how bodies might appear within such a field (body image).[6] Bodily schemas as prereflective do not refer to how I or others see my unitary, discrete body, or how I might, if asked, describe it or locate it within objective space. Instead, body schemas are operative when I scratch an itch, reach for a glass, jump over a puddle. Moreover—and this is the crucial point for intercorporeity—they are operative each time I walk (or even, prosthetically, when I drive) down crowded or empty streets, negotiate a market, drink from a glass, climb into an elevator, or occupy a room. Body schemas indicate *felt capacities* which may or may not rise to the level of intentional awareness, for example, if one straightens their posture or focuses on a specific muscle group in a dance or exercise class. But even when such movements are deliberate, they engage a whole body-schematic background that is *nonthematic* in order to be exercised at all.

Say, for example, I straighten my spine. I may unwittingly call upon abdominal or thigh muscles, unbeknownst to myself. Moreover, these background influences are never entirely "internal." My body schema at any given moment is influenced simultaneously by the lunch I ate as well as by the proximity of other bodies, their heart and breath rates, tones of voice, spatial proximity, and postures. Body schemas are directly impacted by other bodies as

well as by the atmosphere, by natural and by built environments. *Intercorporeity, in the sense that will be most relevant for this project, names this constant, dynamic impact of other living bodies on our very intimate bodily schemas, and the fact that there is no bodily capacity—notably sensation and movement—that is not already structured and mediated by the presence of other sensers and movers and through a full range of temporalities, from the bodily efforts exerted in making the material things that I use and avoid to the bodies whose intentional arcs collide or connect with "my own." Intercorporeity works at the prereflective and constituting levels of our lived bodily schemas such that all of our capacities, real and felt, originate in interrelation to other sets of such capacities in an environment of shared possibilities.*

To get at the significance of bodily schemas, we might fruitfully compare them to Kantian schemata.[7] Kant's schemata, produced by the transcendental imagination, are not themselves images but are the structuring of time and space that make empirical, spatio-temporal images possible. So, too, for Merleau-Ponty, our body schemas do not appear to us objectively so much as they condition whatever can so appear to us. The content of perception—what we think we see, hear, touch, and feel—will be shaped by bodily capacities of motility and sensibility influenced by bodily schemas, which as I will explain, are always themselves intercorporeally informed.

This is certainly not to deny the intercorporeal significance of *body images* as the constituted content of spatiotemporal perceptions. Body images, as a conscious *content* of self-perception, are an undeniable part of the shared environment and are liable to rebound to affect intercorporeity on the level of the schemas that are conditioning those very images. In this way an anorexic may well preconsciously and on a body-schematic level feel herself too massive to move through the space between two barriers through which she could readily slide. The capacity to move in this way, which she "objectively" possesses, has become barred to her lived experience of her body. In such a "pathological" case, a socially mediated body image has come to inhabit and inhibit her body-schematic capacitation.[8] Nor should the pathologization of such situations lead us to believe that the circuit from image, or

constituted element, to schema, the constituting one, is in any way rare.[9] Precisely because body images can and do rebound on the very conditions of their formation, body-image manipulation can be a site of extreme social and political coercion and distributions of power.[10] But focusing exclusively on the level of body-image manipulation may miss the intercorporeal ways schemas function *beneath* the formation of such images and condition the very conditions of possibility of image formation.

Body schemas must be understood to constitute all perceptive contents and motor intentionalities. They are *incipient* and *felt possibilities,* responsive to actual and imagined situations and states of our bodies and environments while reaching out toward new horizons of sense. While body schemas are felt conditions of possibility, they cannot be conceived of as static or limiting transcendentals. Body schemas are only relatively stable, habitual substrates through which our bodies cope with the environment, and these habitual patterns are dynamically linked to environmental pressures with intercorporeity being a *sui generis* motor within that dynamic.

In sum, intercorporeity operates on the lived body schematic level and not merely on that of body image. It is not only that how I interact with you as an object of perception affects your subjectivity (and vice versa), but how we each move and behave as perceiving subjects mutually affects our subjectivities and sense of possibilities at the most fundamental level. As we saw in chapter 1 with *sunaisthanesthai,* in the presence of the other we co-sense, and this interactive (or inter[en]active) mode of sensation affects both what we perceive and who we are as perceivers.[11]

Intercorporeity is the condition of possibility of intersubjectivity; it is what allows "subjects" to emerge and to interact at all, overcoming specious problems of "other minds" (as will be explored further in chapter 3). Certainly intersubjectivity may, once subjectivities have developed and stabilized, in turn affect the modes and channels through which intercorporeity appears as an intentional object. To put this phenomenologically, intersubjectivity is a *founded* mode made possible by intercorporeity but one that may in turn *thematize* intercorporeity as an object of thought. This is quite a different matter than the usual

assumption that intersubjectivity is founded on subjectivity. As early as the *Phenomenology of Perception* (and perhaps before), Merleau-Ponty tended to reject this view and attempted to show instead the primacy of interacting bodies facilitating any "meeting of minds."[12] This becomes abundantly clear in two of his late essays, "The Philosopher and His Shadow" and "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other," even before it gains the status of a general ontology of the Flesh in *The Intertwining*. "The Philosopher and His Shadow" provides a particularly lucid access to the discovery, as it were, of intercorporeity working "beneath" intersubjectivity. But it has also led to certain misunderstandings. The next section explores Merleau-Ponty's articulation of intercorporeity in response to Husserlian intersubjectivity while attending to Derrida's significant reminders of the dangers lurking in the radical intercorporeity emerging from this move.

HUSSERL, DERRIDA, AND THE HAZARDS OF INTERCORPOREITY

Merleau-Ponty's articulation of intercorporeity emerges in his thinking through the presupposition of embodiment supporting Husserl's arguments for appresentation and empathy.[13] For Husserl, the ability to encounter the other depends first on an ability to encounter one's self as an "objective" body (*Körper*) through the experiencing or lived body (*Leib*).[14] To show how this occurs, Husserl develops his famous example of the left hand touching the right, where each can adopt the roles of touching and of being touched. Touching my "own" body in this way, I can make of my experiencing body an object, a touched thing among other things. Still, touching my body—which can in turn touch—is unlike touching other objects. Through the intimate touching-touched relay, I can be said to "intuit" myself as a touching or lived body and so to have direct access to my self different in kind from my access to objects I constitute. Self-reflection can, on this intimate basis, be rethought: instead of an unbridgeable gap between noumenal and phenomenal egos, there arises a fleshy, touching and touchable, ego to mediate between them. On the basis of this bodily ego's ability to self-objectify while remaining an animacy or lived body for itself, Husserl goes on to claim that

one can "appresent" a lived body or animacy as belonging to the objective bodies one perceptually encounters, that is constitutes, in the world. Similarly, Husserl maintains that the function of empathic intentionality enabled by such appresentation arises from a bodily sense of inhabiting a "here" that is reciprocally a "there" for another.

Husserl insists that the whole procedure of appresentation and empathy just outlined are noninferential.[15] I do not deduce the animacy of another; I experience it bodily, within my lived body as a perceiving, kinesthetic entity. But this produces a kind of riddle: How can I feel *within myself* the *otherness* of the other? How, if it is *my* feeling, can it ever indicate something *other?*

Where Derrida takes this "riddle" of *Einfühlung* to be evidence of alterity itself (the fact that I can never coincide with another's hereness), and therefore insists it was never meant to be "solved"—as this would result in dissolving alterity altogether—Merleau-Ponty instead blames the appearance of the riddle on an inappropriate recurrence of cognitivist, analogical bias precisely where Husserl insisted that his "pairing" and "analogizing transfer" are noninferential. Merleau-Ponty pushes us to exorcise this cognizing, subjectivist tendency and dwell instead on the intercorporeity he generously credits Husserl with having discovered. While Merleau-Ponty's shift from embodied intersubjectivity to a radical intercorporeity seems to Derrida to be an "audacious" step beyond Husserl, according to Merleau-Ponty, the foundational role that the body plays in Husserl's approach to the other indeed warrants it. Intercorporeity is, for Merleau-Ponty, quite simply a more accurate name for what Husserl describes than intersubjectivity, since intercorporeity allows us to think the relationship to the other that begins with our bodies without the temptation to inference and mediation prompted by terms like "analogy," "projection/introjection," and "appresentation."

What remains to be spelled out is exactly how one should understand this radical "intercorporeity." Staying true to the denial of inferentialism, Merleau-Ponty insists that when I see a body over there, I do not analogize from its gestures to the existence of a mind or soul "like mine" that governs them. Nor is it enough to say simply that I "sense" that that body stands in the same

relationship of propriety (mineness) to itself as I have to myself. What would such sensing mean? What would it feel like? Surely the movements and behavior of the other are perceivable by my senses. But how, if not by inference, might I therefore conclude that the movements and behaviors that I perceive stem from an animacy or lifebody like my own? Indeed, why would I ever think that they might, since what I see on the outside shares and can share nothing in common with what I feel from the "inside."[16]

Husserl's answers to such questions are notoriously vague. According to Derrida, his evasiveness stems from the impossibility of any phenomenal account of the other, an impossibility that shelters the very place of alterity. Alterity is at the limit of phenomenology, or what can appear, since it is what shows itself by refusing to be shown; it can be indicated, and nothing more. But Merleau-Ponty disagrees, and he tries to think through what it might yet mean to "sense" something necessarily *invisible,* like the animacy of the other.

According to Merleau-Ponty, I do not passively sense or actively observe the behaviors of the other and thereupon conclude that the other is animate like myself. Instead, upon perceiving the other body, my own body *takes up* the gestures and sensations of the other as a capacity or an obstacle: for example, my gaze is directed to the focal point of the other's gaze, my body feels warmth when the other noticeably sweats, I cringe with her sudden movement, and so on. As we saw with *sunaisthesis,* the other presents as a bodily opportunity, an affordance or surge of capacity or depletion. And while this might also occur when I face an object, say a boulder or a lift, in the presence of an other I experience my own body differentially; difference occurs, is intimated, at the heart of my organism. I am one with the other, and yet we split. Nor is it incidental that Merleau-Ponty often calls this encounter with an other a kind of "pregnancy," even a birth—a feature we will explore in greater detail in chapter 5.[17]

What takes place in Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeity is certainly not understood as well as cognitive acts like synthesis, analysis, or belief-formation, but this does not reduce it, as Derrida suspects, to a kind of intuitionism. Rather, it is best understood as a complex embodied process; a kind of *choreo-graphy*—a mutual

marking, writing, or drawing [*graphein*] of space [*chora*] between two (or more) bodies, in and through these bodies. The other body impacts my body, even when there is no direct touch, because my body is in constant contact—even if indirect—with other bodies that share and inscribe the spaces between them. As we saw with *sunaisthesis,* perceiving bodies move to enact a shared world as an action context. Thus, for Merleau-Ponty, "sensing" the animacy of the other means neither that I intuit it directly nor that I approach it indirectly through signs and interpretation. The animacy of the other affects me—in fact, also *effects* me, brings me into being as something that can claim experiences as mine, as we saw in *sunaisthetic selfhood.* Here animacy is not analogized to my lived body but is part and parcel of the living of lived bodies, directly affecting our bodily schemas and so our possibilities of sensation and movement as they unfold in and for us.

Is Derrida right, then, to locate in this living through of the lived body of another a kind of "direct approach" and "appropriation" to which he might oppose his own "indirection" and "ex-appropriation"? To evaluate this question, as well as to gain a clearer picture of an intercorporeity I have already qualified as sunaisthetic, we must turn to Derrida's next, and closely linked, objection to Merleau-Ponty, namely, the charge that Merleau-Ponty collapses the difference—so important to Husserl—between the senses of sight and touch.

For Husserl, as discussed, touch can be said to govern our access to self in the figure of the left hand that touches the right. Sight, by contrast, governs our relationship to objects that we constitute and therefore totalize. In terms of self-reflexivity, sight can never allow us access to ourselves as wholes, totalities, while touch resides in the flesh that is coextensive with our bodies. Accordingly, sight, which must be directed outward and can never see its own controlling organ in an unmediated way, governs perception, while the touch that can touch itself uniquely—that is, uniquely possesses reflexive sensation—provides for a kind of sensual apperception. On this view, our access to the other takes place in the irreducible gap between touch (which gives me access to myself) and sight (which gives me access to objects). When I see that another *sees* or *touches,* I can have only an indirect access, through

pairing or appresentation, to this seeing and touching—that is, to the direct self-relation another has with herself.

Merleau-Ponty's talk—metaphorical or otherwise—of the eye that palpates and the reversibility/intertwining or "chiasm" between the visible and the tangible, appears to diminish this clear demarcation, this division of labor, between seeing and touching, the very one that according to Derrida clears space for alterity. For Merleau-Ponty, the figure of the chiasm attempts to undo dualisms such as subject and object, self and other, or touching and touched. Playing on both the anatomical (*chiasma*) and the rhetorical (*chiasmus*) senses drawn from the Greek *khiasmos,* Merleau-Ponty draws attention both to a process in which the data from two distinct eyes "cross over" or "intertwine" in the optic nerve to forge a single picture and to the way in which a switch over of subject and object from one clause to the next in a single sentence alters the meaning of the whole sentence, and so of each distinct phrase. What these two senses of chiasm have in common is the engendering of a new meaning, picture, or gestalt out of irreducible difference. The new meaning depends, then, on the possibility of a reversal of the distinct elements, but would collapse were there to be an identity between the elements. The key concepts making up Merleau-Ponty's notion of chiasm are those of encroachment and divergence (*ecart*), rather than the traditional identity and difference. I will return to the significance of this for Merleau-Ponty's sunaisthetic intercorporeity shortly.

On Derrida's (mis)reading, meanwhile, Merleau-Ponty forges an ill-advised haptic-scopic alliance in at least three ways. First, he presents the relation between seeing and the seen and touching and the touched as having the same "chiasmatic" structure, thus asserting a parallelism between them that obscures their very different reflexive functioning in the Husserlian account. Second, he speaks of a chiasm between sight and touch themselves, leading to a "metaphoric displacement" that allows one to be substitutable, presumably without remainder, for the other. In neither case can the specificity of the tasks of the senses be maintained, nor their irreducible contributions appreciated. Third, Derrida concurs with many feminist critiques that, in the final analysis, Merleau-Ponty retains an exorbitant privilege for sight. The initial parallelism

and displacement thereby give way to a hierarchy in which the dominance of sight casts apperception with its irreducible gap (or *ecart*) between the touching and the touched in the totalizing, object-constitutional mode of perception, and perception of the other in the mode of intuitive apperception of myself. The charge of intuitionism concerning the other follows directly from this blurring of the boundaries between seeing and touching, perception and apperception.

Take, for example, as Derrida does, the following quote from Merleau-Ponty's *The Philosopher and His Shadow:* "It is never a matter of anything but co-perception. I see that this man over there sees, *as* I touch my left hand while it is touching my right."[18] With this single "as," claims Derrida, Merleau-Ponty collapses not just (1) ego and alter but also (2) sight and touch, thereby constituting a "double unfaithfulness to Husserl." Co-perception allegedly reduces the "irreducible difference between the direct intuition of my own body proper touching itself . . . and the indirect appresentation that, by way of sight (and *Einfühlung,* this time), gives me access to this man there, *insofar as he sees—to this seeing man.*"[19]

Derrida notes the close link connecting the double betrayal, but he fails to notice their common hinge, namely, in Merleau-Ponty's prior *disavowal of mineness*. In fact, this retreat from mineness, which blossoms in his late work, can already be glimpsed in the move to intercorporeity described above. For Husserl, appresentation effects an analogizing transfer from my own animacy (mineness) to the mineness of the other. Merleau-Ponty does without this analogy, however, and by putting bodies into constant intercorporeal contact, he does away with the very mineness, or special self-access, that undergirds any such analogical transfer. I do not first found an identity with myself through self-touch that I then extend to the "other," the "different." Instead, the other always "touches" me through her "encroachment" on our shared, dynamic space. Conversely, "my" sense of space, my distinct center and self (*ecart*), only emerges through this encroachment and in response to it.

This is possible because, as we saw with *sunaisthesis* in chapter 1, I never coincide with myself to begin with and so cannot be the sole or original basis of my own identity. As Merleau-Ponty

explains in *The Intertwining,* my left hand *never* actually touches my right hand *touching;* there is always a chiasmatic relation that brings with it an *imminence* and a *near miss*.[20] Merleau-Ponty writes: "My left hand is always on the verge of touching my right hand touching the things, but I never reach coincidence; the coincidence eclipses at the moment of realization, and one of two things always occurs: either my right hand really passes over to the rank of the touched, but then its hold on the world is interrupted; or it retains its hold on the world, but then I do not really touch *it*—my right hand touching, I palpate with my left hand only its outer covering."[21] From this quote, it is clear that Husserl's direct or intuitionistic self-access precisely becomes impossible for Merleau-Ponty. The body is strange to itself and this is why the stranger's body can affect it so profoundly. It is only from the perspective of this primary abandonment of mineness through self-touch that we can properly understand Merleau-Ponty's slighting of the sight/touch difference and of appresentation that so irritates Derrida.

When Merleau-Ponty says, "I see that this man over there sees, *as* I touch my left hand while it is touching my right," this "as" does not indicate that my access to the other is as direct or intuitive as self-touch is for Husserl. Rather, Merleau-Ponty is saying that just as I never quite touch my right hand's touching of something when I caress it in the act with my left hand, so too, my seeing *that* the other man sees is constituted by a lag and an imminence. I do not see what the other man sees, from his perspective—how could I? Yet my seeing is *affected* by my seeing that he sees. As we saw with *sunaisthesthai* in the previous chapter, his seeing becomes part of my seeing, of what I am capacitated to see. I do not appropriate his seeing *as my "own"*; through his seeing, my attunement is *alter-ed,* from "within."

Understood this way, it seems that Merleau-Ponty concurs with Derrida's "temptation" "to extend rather than reduce the field of appresentation and to recognize its irreducible gap even in the said touching-touched of my 'own proper' hand, my own body proper as a human ego and so forth."[22] Yet Derrida claims that this temptation—his own temptation—"would strictly be neither Husserlian nor Merleau-Pontian."[23] Clearly that is right to say

about Husserl; but if it is correct to say about Merleau-Ponty, it is only because, as discussed above, "appresentation" remains too cognitive and disembodied a concept for Merleau-Ponty—not for the reasons that Derrida offers. For Derrida maintains that despite all of Merleau-Ponty's oscillations between coincidence and noncoincidence, his thought remains governed by a unity implied by the "with"; in Derrida's phrasing, "it is a non-coincidence that I coincide with here."[24] Thus, according to Derrida, instead of extending indirection or appresentation from my relation to others to my self-relation, Merleau-Ponty's coincidence with noncoincidence simply allows for an intuition of a difference that is no less *mine* for being different—it is merely a second degree of difference.

Yet I have just argued that Merleau-Ponty has already rejected any notion of mineness that might support this conflation.[25] While it is true, as Derrida maintains, that Merleau-Ponty wants to abandon a model of appresentation and "solve" the problem of empathy, this is not in order to return to an immediate intuition of the other that he has already rejected, even for the self. Instead, his model of self-relation is itself choreo-graphic. The right hand, being touched by the left, may spring to life and feel itself touching the left. In this moment, the right hand has been prompted by the actions of the left, but the left cannot be said to *cause,* as if it were manipulating a mere object, the touching that the right hand may, in turn, assume. The left hand *motivates* the right to spring to life, arouses its liveliness in the direction of a variable coherence.[26] Just as to see another seeing means that I follow her gaze and bodily orient myself according to, but never identically with, her orientation, so my hands respond to each other in imbrications and modulations of sensation. Their coincidence is never with each other and therefore never with myself but emerges, for example, in the heat that rises from the rubbing of the palms and rebounds to warm them both, priming them for other sensations. The chiasm, the intertwining, of the diverse is the creation of a third that informs and orients the original, differential elements. So too, the "coincidence" that Derrida refers to is never for Merleau-Ponty a coincidence of myself with myself, which can therefore appropriate all encounters with the

other as being "mine." The coincidence of noncoincidence is always something provisionally crafted through an encounter that effects a rapport that temporarily shapes and orients each of the always noncoinciding (*ecart*) elements: it is a *choreography,* an inscribing of space through which each can, subsequent to the encounter, find their space, create their here in a relation to a there.

The narrowly sunaisthetic chiasm, that is, the one that Merleau-Ponty explores between the senses of sight and touch, must also be understood in this "choreographic" fashion. If I touch something that my eyes perceived to be soft and it turns out to be hard, it is not so much that I "correct" my eyes with my finger pads as that my notions of hard and soft alter to accommodate the possibilities of this surprise. There is certainly no "hierarchy" here, because even concerning "proper" sense data—such as color for sight—each sense accommodates the gifts of the others (for example, we perceive a "soft" orange light) in their intertwining. Nor is there a "metaphorical displacement" between the senses, as they work in conjunction without ever collapsing into each other or becoming indistinguishable. The light is not metaphorically soft, even though it is seen and not touched. The seeing that goes on in this fleshly organism is a seeing that feels because "*sunaisthetic perception is the rule.*"[27] Finally, the only "parallelism" involved is the chiasmic relation that specifies the nonidentity intrinsic to all reflection, the third that rebounds on the original two—be it the seen sight, the touched touch, the witnessing of touch, and so on—and the ability of each sense to affect the other and so jointly to bring about or effect a provisional coincidence or coherence, an unfolding space for movement, perception, and action.

Despite the sunaisthetic implications of Merleau-Ponty's concept of the chiasm, Derrida flatly denies that Merleau-Ponty ever released the potential of a playful and/or prosthetic synesthesia that would dethrone the hegemony of the haptic or the scopic.[28] Yet Derrida himself notes, as we have, Merleau-Ponty's emphatic assertion in *The Phenomenology of Perception* that "synesthetic perception is the rule." When we combine this assertion with the creative chiasmic process I have been describing, it seems that Merleau-Ponty offers a synesthesia as playful as it is fecund. Moreover, when we take into account Merleau-Ponty's insistence

that the intercorporeal relation to the other is also chiasmic, we arrive at our familiar notion of *sunaisthesis* as simultaneously embracing both self-world and self-other relations as these intertwine in an imminent coincidence, a "now" that occurs in between the encroachment of past and future, self and other, and that we call a world as an intelligible action context, a situation ripe for sunaisthetic improvisation.

EMPIRICAL CONFIRMATIONS AND CONTESTATIONS

I have spoken of intercorporeity as an ontological conception of Flesh and as an interaction of bodies conditioning the formation of subjectivities at the body-schematic level, that is, at the level of felt possibilities and not only of thematic content. But of course the effects of intercorporeity are also observable as concrete, empirical facts. In recent years, phenomenologically informed scholars have been drawing on emerging data from neuroscience, the cognitive sciences, and the developmental sciences to confirm, critique, and expand classical phenomenological approaches to interembodiment.

Gallagher's groundbreaking *How the Body Shapes the Mind* led the way, providing an extended study of how embodied perception must be understood as both intrinsically intermodal and largely intersubjective. Gallagher uses these insights to articulate what he calls an "interactionist" theory of other minds, in which "the understanding of the other person is primarily neither theoretical nor based on an internal simulation. It is a form of embodied practice."[29] Such embodied practice has much in common with what I explored first through Aristotelian *sunaisthanesthai* and now have been developing with help from Merleau-Ponty as a choreographic intercorporeity. But while Gallagher has done so much to set various research programs in embodied social cognition in motion, he frequently stops short of investigating the ways in which intercorporeity intervenes in body-schematic functioning, preferring to emphasize proprioception as a primitive sense of mineness and a basis for embodied interaction.[30] In contrast, I am arguing that body schemas are themselves always intercorporeally mediated and that any sense of mineness emerges as the

result of a retrospective appropriation of certain coincidental and transitory stabilities in relation to an other—ones that happen naturally but can also be consciously pursued and actively shaped and encouraged by both parties or not.[31] I will return to this difference and the ways it is (and also sometimes isn't) significant, below. But first, let me sketch what I take to be the most helpful building blocks of Gallagher's intercorporeal, interactionist theory.

> (1) *Consciousness is in its very nature embodied.* This is to say that consciousness is neither attributable to a separate mental substance nor reducible to the brain. It arises out of complex embodied experiences, including motor and perceptual experience, as these unfold in concrete spatiotemporal situations.
> (2) *An embodied consciousness is also an embedded one,* as bodies are always in the midst of situations comprised of natural, pragmatic, and intentional contexts. What an embodied consciousness thinks and does is always responsive and relative to these contexts that the body both reacts to and helps to shape.
> (3) *These situations, including but not limited to such pragmatic and intentional contexts, are "intersubjectively" shaped.* Humans are not just one aspect of these contexts; in responding bodily to other bodies within their perceptual and kinesthetic environment, they actively coshape and reshape these contexts. Although many of these responses are conscious, many also occur on bodily, pre- and subpersonal and prethematic levels—influencing contexts of further action and perception.
> (4) *The capacity to respond in distinctive and specific ways to other humans and animate beings is either innate or developmentally very primitive.* Gallagher supports this conviction, tracking classical phenomenological insights into our special modes of access to "others" as compared to worldly objects, with studies of infant imitation and research into mirror neurons.[32] Supported by these, he contends that such responses can be the result neither of conceptual, theoretical understanding, third-person reasoning, nor intentional acts of simulation such as empathy. Instead, we take up possibilities afforded by other bodies in our own bodies (perhaps via mirror neurons,

etc.), giving empirical support to the very intercorporeity that informs our understanding and uptake of shared contexts of interaction.

(5) This innate or very early capacity to interact with other animate organisms differently than we react to objects depends on likewise innate or primitive body schemas.

This work substantially agrees with points 1–4, though I have already argued for why it is imperative to substitute the word *intercorporeal* for *intersubjective* (which Gallagher does not consistently do) in point 3. For the point is this: bodies in sensory interaction with other bodies shape the landscape of perception and action on both conscious and unconscious, personal and prepersonal levels, but they also shape our body-schematic capacity to take up the world. This has many implications for understanding the relationship between "selves" and "others," the primary one being that intersubjectivity talk is as misleading as "other minds" talk from an embodied perspective. This is not to deny that there are important things to study about other subjects and other minds; it is just to say that these questions are secondary and belong to discussions of constituted subjects, not to the constitutional question of subjectivities themselves. The primary level that Gallagher so astutely retrieves, therefore, is much more accurately called intercorporeity than "primary intersubjectivity."

As articulated mostly in point 4, Gallagher musters tremendous empirical support for just the sort of intercorporeity we have been exploring and, indeed, for its *primacy* and *prevalence* in human interactions. However, what may encourage Gallagher to evade the title of "intercorporeity" and stick to intersubjectivity is his insistence—explicitly aimed against Merleau-Ponty's position—on a primary self-awareness vested in early, neonatal, or possibly even innate proprioception.[33] But does the research into neonate imitation he presents really confirm this idea of proprioception as primary self-awareness? Or does it not, rather, point toward the coming into being of such proprioception, which in due time, through intercorporeal interactions and the habits they support, opens onto a path of self-awareness, bodily or otherwise? We will explore this question and its implication for

building block number 5 (that an innate or very early capacity to interact with other animate organisms differently than we react to objects depends on likewise innate or primitive body schemas) in the following section.

ON MARVELOUS THINGS HEARD: INFANT IMITATION

Gallagher reports:

> In one experiment (Meltzoff and Moore 1983) forty normal and alert newborn infants ranging in age from less than 1 hour to 71 hours were tested. The experimenter presented each infant with a mouth-opening gesture over a period of 4 minutes, alternating in 20-second intervals between the mouth opening and a passive facial appearance. The same procedure was then followed using tongue protrusion as the target gesture. . . . The study showed a clear and statistically significant result in terms of both the frequency and duration of the infants' response gestures, demonstrating that *normal and alert newborn infants systematically imitate adult gestures of mouth opening and tongue protrusion. Notably, even the youngest infant in the study, 42 minutes old at the time of the test, showed a strong imitation effect.* Other experiments have extended the range of gestures that young infants imitate to a wider set, including lip protrusion, sequential finger movement, head movements, smile, frown, and surprised expressions.[34]

That such imitation is possible so early, according to Gallagher, flies in the face of what he calls the "traditional view"—which he attributes to an empiricism initiated by Locke and encompassing, among many others, James, Piaget, as well as, on Gallagher's telling, Merleau-Ponty. On this view, infants inhabit a world of sensory bombardment—James's famous "booming, buzzing confusion"—that they only slowly begin to articulate as they develop an adequate body schema/image that provides them with stability and distance from this sensory onslaught. Specifically, according to Gallagher, the "traditional" view maintains that

infants lack the intermodal abilities to render coherent diverse sense data. They must slowly learn to "translate" between different sense modalities, a translation that involves a developed bodily schema both to unify and to differentiate this data (reminiscent of the discussion of Aristotle's *koine aisthesis* in chapter 1). Against this view, Gallagher argues, studies of infant imitation show the neonate mapping visual stimuli—observing the face of another—immediately and directly onto proprioceptive ones in order to direct their own bodies accordingly. In response to the other's facial gesture, the infant forms her facial muscles to imitate the other's expression, all in the absence of any mirror image or any visual information whatsoever about her own face. For Gallagher, this shows that the infant can rely on a body schema with no reference to a developed body image. Gallagher sees confirmation of the workings of such intermodal capacities rooted in the proprioceptive body schema in other experiments as well, for example, when infants were observed maintaining a prolonged gaze at textured pacifiers just removed from their mouths, preferring to look at these than at smooth ones or ones with unfamiliar textures or shapes, suggesting intermodality between touch and sight. For Gallagher such intermodal transfers indicate a much earlier primitive body schema capable of unifying and comparing sensory modes than the so-called traditional view would suggest.

Beyond these intermodal transfers, Meltzoff and Moore argue for the early operation of memory in these imitations. In one experiment, they placed pacifiers in the mouths of the infants while the target facial gesture was performed. As the pacifier was removed, the researcher's face went blank. Nonetheless, the infant would begin to attempt to imitate the initial, target gesture, whose simultaneous performance had been inhibited by the pacifier. The aim here was primarily to rule out merely reflexive imitation, for example, one that was a result of resonance systems. In another truly remarkable experiment, the researcher displayed one of the target gestures to six week old infants. Twenty-four hours later, when the same researcher returned to the infant, now wearing a neutral face, the infant would nonetheless attempt to form the target gesture from a full day prior. The infants were indeed able to do so with increasing accuracy over the course of repeated exposure.

The latter experiment is extraordinary in a number of ways. Not only does it rule out mere reflex; it shows the operation of memory in very young infants and their ability to strive for increasing motor accuracy.[35] Even more remarkably, *it shows the recognition of an individual face associated with specific expression.*[36] The infant imitated the gesture she associated with a specific face, even when that face remained passive. For Gallagher, the infants' ability to increase accuracy in mimetic expression at this tender age is particularly significant, as it bolsters the hypothesis of an innate or very early acquisition of intermodal proficiency guided, presumably, by a proprioceptive body schema: the infant is early able to "map" what she sees (or has seen) onto her own face, and she can even improve on this performance without, presumably, any additional information about her body image. In other words, she appears to be able to gain significant body-schematic information and an ability to control and correct herself without any idea of how she might appear to others in objective space.[37]

These experiments and the insights they bring into early sunaisthetic—intersensory/intermodal capacities intertwined with intercorporeal lived experience—are indeed marvelous. They show the infant stumbling toward bodily integration when faced with others at the earliest hours after birth—and there is no good reason to assume that these intermodal and intercorporeal processes do not even precede birth.[38] However, what these experiments do *not* show is that the developing proprioceptive self already has a sense of mineness and is defining and distinguishing herself *against* others, as if the attempted puckering response is *hers* and the target puckering face is *his*. Instead, her emerging selfhood is entwined with others, pre- as well as postnatally. The movements of others are not so much reflected as elongated in her movements; her movements are motivated and enabled by the suggestions the other offers as part of a contextual circuit. Like certain balletic postures possible only in partnering, the face of the researcher acts like a prosthetic, opening possibilities specific to them, in their facial dance, their interaction with the infant.

Gallagher forestalls this interpretation, arguing that the infants' improved performance points to the existence not only of proprioceptive information (PI)—which seems likely at some level—but

also what he calls proprioceptive awareness (PA). He distinguishes the two as follows: PA allows for "a self-referential, but normally pre-reflective, awareness of one's own body. PI . . . contributes to the body-schematic control of posture and movement, and plays an essential role in the operations of body schemas."[39] Gallagher further explains PA, stating: "Proprioceptive-kinesthetic awareness is usually a pre-reflective (non-observational) awareness that allows the body to remain experientially transparent to the agent who is acting."[40] Gallagher characterizes this awareness as goal directed, even "performative": "an awareness that comes along with knowing that I can do certain things."[41] So where PI seems confined to sensory data concerning my body and its spatial/postural configurations even as these are dynamic, PA directs the body (prereflectively) to itself and to the tasks at hand. But how distinct is PA really from PI? Does the language of "goal" and "target"—already used in the experimental design referring to "target gestures"—smuggle in presumptions about self-reference, self-awareness, and experiential transparency as *agents* that overstate what is happening in the dance of infant imitation?

Notably, Gallagher expresses the phenomenon himself in language that comes startlingly close to Aristotle's discussion of convertibility in *sunaisthesis:* "The infant, faced with novel motor and gestural activities, has the capacity to act out what it sees in the face of the adult—*it recognizes what it sees as one of its own capabilities*" (emphasis mine).[42] Following what we learned from Aristotle, though, this convertibility between self and other ought to call any initial mineness into question rather than confirming it as a solid presupposition. The face of the other initiates or convenes a capacity for the infant, for the first time, namely, a certain configuration of facial muscles. Though the muscles obviously existed before the ability to imitate (however latently), the capacity to enact this *gesture* did not exist before the encounter. It is less a matter of *recognizing* the capacity as her *own,* as Gallagher says, than of *responding* to a possibility proffered, not radically different than wrapping a small hand around an offered finger (or pencil) or suckling at a breast (or bottle). Only retrospectively, after performing it, could any of these capacities be said to "belong" to the infant—they are simply affordances provided by the

environment that the infant relationally takes up.[43] Muscles can form into meaningful gestures only in relation to an other as a choreographic partner in embodied dialogical possibility.

Of course talk of affordances is not meant to deny that one can analyze crucial differences between the child's interaction with her environment and her interaction with others within that environment: this thesis I share with most phenomenologically inclined theorists, explore throughout this work, and treat most extensively in the next chapter. Instead, what I am denying is that any "self-reference" or "self-awareness" as agential "self-transparency"—in short, PA—is required here. Diverse PI impulses are sufficient for the infant to engage in the researcher's initiated dance, just as diverse PI was sufficient to dance, prenatally, in the mother's womb.[44] Proprioception is initially nothing else but a body underway in pleasurable, outward-oriented response to another or other bodies. PI is responsive, interactive with others, long before it can be agential and self-aware, that is, "mine."

Still, Gallagher insists that the "improvement" experiment supports the idea that proprioceptive awareness as agential and goal directed (PA) must be in play: "Proprioceptive performative awareness allows [the infant] to correct and improve its imitative performance. The infant knows, pre-reflectively, in the very act of gesturing, whether the gesture is on target or not."[45]

But does she? Proponents of the "traditional view" Gallagher assails—including Merleau-Ponty—would be skeptical. Wouldn't a "performative," goal-directed awareness require the mediation not just of body schema, proprioceptively accessed, but a body image *toward which* one would aim in presenting oneself to the other? That is, the very goal implied in such "proprioceptive performance awareness" seems to be a goal of *appearing* in such and such a way, which would imply possessing a full-fledged body image. But this, according to the traditional view, is precisely what the infant cannot have—how could a neonate have any idea of how she appears to others?

Instead of "proprioceptive performative awareness," I would suggest, following up on the Aristotelian suggestion from the last chapter, that whatever proto-self-awareness may be in play is much more like "pleasure" than intention, goal, or target—pleasure

in the body unfolding itself in new ways interactively with others, and pleasure in the other responding to the new exploratory movements. The infant is "motivated" to imitate the other, not as I am "motivated" by an exterior goal, say hitting a perfect fifth arabesque, but as I am motivated in stretching my muscles to the sweet spot where pain mediates release to reach sustainability. The infant is less concerned with "getting it right" than with feeling right, which would mean, in enactive terms, maintaining concurrently her own proprioceptive system in conjunction with the self-other system she is engaging in with the researcher. Approaching and hitting of the mark are felt by the infant not as learning processes mastered according to a pregiven goal but as instances of pleasurable expansion of capacity; with repetition, capacity increases a repertoire of muscular habits, and new powers are born in and through the body. Such pleasure in expanding capacities in dialogue with another requires no performative goal, no audience, and no projected body image. It is occasioned by the capacities of the other and points toward the development of a self, without yet requiring or assuming one.

The studies in infant imitation lead Gallagher to assert: "This intermodal intra-corporeal communication, then, is the basis for an inter-corporeal communication and has profound implications for the child's relations with others."[46] But why should he conclude that the intracorporeal is the *basis* for the intercorporeal and not vice versa, or as I am arguing, that they do and must transpire simultaneously? Why not, as the earlier quote suggested, understand intercorporeal interaction as *awakening* or even *creating* intracorporeal, intermodal capacities?[47] I agree that the act of imitation is not merely mechanical—it is not *caused* like a reflex, at least not in cases where the infant repeats a past gesture in response to a now passive face.[48] But neither is it done for a *reason,* a telos or goal, toward which the infant behaves agentially and with awareness, whatever beneficial evolutionary effects such imitation surely also bestows. Instead, infant imitation appears to be a *motivated* act of *free ex*pression in response to the *bodily im*pression another makes on me.[49] As Merleau-Ponty would say, "The other presents me with 'themes of possible activity for my own body.'"[50] Or as Gallagher puts it, "The infant does not

perceive the other person as an object so much as it senses at a behavioral and motor level, that the expression of another is one the infant itself can make."[51] The expression of the other acts as an "alt-erior motive," a motive that does not initiate from me but that alters me from within by awakening possibilities within bodily movement to *prolong contact*. Simply put, the other introduces possibilities to me that are anything but "my own," however they may appear to me after the event.

It is not, then, because the infant has the intermodal capacity to imitate that she does so, thereby actualizing a potential intercorporeal bond. Instead, intercorporeity creates the capacity, capacitates intracorporeally; the *im*pression of the other motivates *ex*pression. The neonate's plastic brain seethes with myriad impulses and possibilities, including capacities awakened in response to directed gestures of the other. The infant responds to what she sees with a movement that stirs within her body conceived as part of "an expressive space" she occupies with the other.[52] Provoked through intercorporeity, her body orchestrates intracorporeality/intermodality to sustain connection and promote a stability she had not known before the encounter.

On this account, the repetition and acquired accuracy of the infant's gestures speak less to a performative, proprioceptive awareness (PA) and more to an awakened, motivating pleasure associated with an increasing intracorporeal synthesis and syncopation occasioned by the intercorporeal sensation erupting within her body. Such pleasure, as we have seen, subsequently awakens self-awareness; self-awareness does not proceed it. Equally important—and Gallagher neglects this—the repetition after twenty-four hours in response to neutral faces points to the infant's ability to distinguish particular others through their gestures that generate distinctive responsive repertoires, opportunities for shared pleasure with this particular person. The repeated attempts at mimicry after lapses in time remarkably enacts a singular response to a specific other, a specific opportunity to effect coherence between and within self and other. The infant's increasing "accuracy" may well be accounted for by maturing muscular, kinesthetic, and PI abilities—the pleasurable coming together of various bodily impulses into a generated capacity. It may *also* be

the product of a resumed opportunity for continued intercorporeal dialogue, despite the researcher's best efforts to remain *facially* neutral. The infant may well have other bodily means to appreciate the researcher's suppressed pleasure in her imitative accomplishments, running somewhere below the scientist's best efforts at flat facial affect but plainly palpable to the infant.

What these experiments show, then, is less a preexisting capacity for proprioceptive self-awareness and goal-directed behavior than for *responsiveness, intercorporeal capacitation,* and the *pleasure* that sensing together, elicits. This is a picture of body-schematic intertwining of self and other, well expressed by Gallagher's almost sunaisthetic idea that what "I see of the other's motor behavior is reflected and played out in terms of my own possibilities."[53]

So on the one hand, Gallagher's "primary intersubjectivity" remains quite close to what I have been calling radical or sunaisthetic intercorporeity. Yet on the other, he wants to demarcate sharply his proprioceptive self from Merleau-Ponty's idea (following Wallon) of a "syncretic sociability." As he puts it, "Syncretism here is the indistinction between me and the other, a confusion at the core of a situation that is common to us both."[54] In our terms, such "syncretism" is indicative of the intercorporeal affect circulating in between our bodies; neither yours, nor mine, but what exists between us in a cycle of *im*pressions and *ex*pressions as we enact sense together in our shared perceptions and action orientations. Gallagher, by contrast, insists that the proprioception involved in the earliest infant imitation requires a primitive and performative self-awareness that guarantees that "the original indifferentiation is never complete."[55] According to the intercorporeity outlined above, though, it is rather the differentiation that is neither primary nor ever quite complete; bodies may strive toward differentiation as they mature, and their habits—initially formed in relation to others—harden and acquire distinctive patterns or styles. But these same bodies frequently fall back into the indifferentiation that grounds differentiation, and in fact they *must* do so if so-called "intersubjective understanding" is to work at all, including the sort of embodied intersubjective access—direct perception and interactionism—that Gallagher defends. I will return to this in the next chapter, after

briefly outlining how our findings here have developed the Aristotelian *sunaisthanesthai,* discussed in chapter 1 in the direction of a Merleau-Ponty inspired concept of choreographic intercorporeity, both as a natural capacity of animate organisms and as a virtue to be cultivated.

SUNAISTHANESTHAI AS INTERCORPOREAL CHOREOGRAPHY

Studies of infant imitation demonstrate a strong intracorporeal and intercorporeal link, but there is no reason to suppose that either the intracorporeal or the intercorporeal has priority over the other—they instead interpenetrate. Indeed, the studies of early imitation support the idea that intracorporeal configurations are realized through intercorporeal interventions, implying that the achievement of a coherent perception requires the cooperation of both intracorporeal and intercorporeal aspects, a cooperation that we have called *sunaisthesis*.

It seems misleading, then, to assert that developed body-schematic processes provide a sense of ownership through primitive proprioceptive awareness (PA), for body-schematic process are initiated intercorporeally: bodies connect with other bodies to establish intracorporeal possibilities that provide cohesive proprioceptive information that may, afterward, lead to distinctive proprioceptive awareness as body habits and action contexts stabilize.[56] But intercorporeity initially operates on the level of intertwined bodily schemata: the other expresses capacities *which I take up;* I feel her *capacities in "my" body as our body schemas merge*. The studies of infant imitation seem to demonstrate a continuation of the prenatal body-to-body impact as the infant finds her way toward world and self with and through others.

Nor does this impact disappear even with the achievement of a more or less stable body image, whenever that emerges. As Merleau-Ponty frequently pointed out, the perceiving body is a body in movement, and the body in movement is engaged in an inextricable dialogue with others and with its environment. There can be no "mineness" at this level, only relays of affection and perception created and distributed between us. We have seen that Merleau-Ponty's move back from intersubjectivity to

intercorporeity abandons primary mineness or, rather, relegates it to secondary or "founded" status. Merleau-Ponty's work invites us to see at this intercorporeal level the vulnerability and the possibilities involved in embodied selves continually in the act of formation in relation to others. Moreover, this deep layer of intercorporeity runs through all of the additional founded layers of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and selfhood that we collaboratively, collectively, and choreographically, construct. Merleau-Ponty's conception of intercorporeity retrieves Aristotle's early notion of *sunaisthesis* as an intra- and intercorporeal coherence *and allows us to think anew the intimate relationship between sensation and ethics.*

For Aristotle, as for Merleau-Ponty, the encounter with another sensing being is just what activates and attunes multiple sensibilities and orients their creative capacities. Only in an encounter and choreography between bodies in shaping space can we begin to speak, first retrospectively, and eventually prospectively, of the achievement of one's "own." By the latter, the late Merleau-Ponty can mean nothing but a sense of "being on this side of my body"—a side which can only be sensed in relation to another side, a *here* that is brought into being and subject to multiple shifting by irreducible *there*s within space as an action context we cocreate at every instant.[57] The shifting sensibilities of myself and an other fashions, but never assumes, a provisional "style" witnessed from without and experienced from within as a center "towards which we proceed" before the weight shifts and forces us to proceed toward a new one.[58] Like a toddler taking her tentative first steps, the self and its "proper" body are not to be assumed in advance, nor are they the result of mastery and technological self-creation. They are instead nothing but an ever-improvised centering in contact with the improvisations of others in an open, dynamic space: choreography as contact improvisation. In Merleau-Ponty's words:

> What there is, is therefore perspectives, each of which experiences itself as different in relation to the others, lack of others and experiences them as differences in relation to the self (= X)—each of which are its [thick linings] because

> they are all the sedimented others: my body is their bodies, my "psyche" the other psyches, me as transcendental subject like any other . . . and that is the case not because of a solipsistic universality, but because I place my foot where something is ready to receive it, I straddle the "conditions," I imply them in my gesture, each of my gestures takes the unknown *for known* (V/I notes).[59]

This echoes *sunaisthesis:* what is called proprioception is a gift negotiated between bodies through combinatory body schemas. Body schemas are simply open-ended sets of capacities in interaction with other body schemas that are motivated toward proprieties, that is, that locate centers and orientation amid a flux of opportunities. These "temporary centers" equate with what Gallagher calls "proprioceptive awareness," but they are hard gained through the intercorporeal encounter, not presupposed by it. The self/other distinction is not "innate" but gained through temporal lags, as communicative and expressive capacities form layers and lacunae, as we will develop in the following chapters.

Merleau-Ponty's conception of intercorporeity allows the other to introduce possibilities we could not have conceived of or executed prior to its appearance and to be *transformed* by these. He says, "The perception of a veritable alter ego presupposes that his talk, at the point where we understand him and *especially at the moment he withdraws from us and threatens to fall into nonsense, be capable of remaking us in his image and to open us to another meaning*."[60] Nor should "talk" be especially privileged; "talk" is but a variety of corporeal practice, one sort of choreography, though one shaped through tongue, lips, teeth, air currents, and ears. The auditor leans closer to hear a dropped voice or grimaces and backs away from a sharp sound. Dialogue can solidify into a familiar dance, or it can remake us in the image of the other, into something utterly strange, induct us into a world only possible from a retrospective view: conversion through conversation. Intercorporeity, properly understood, allows centers, surfaces, and significances to be produced ever anew in the possible interactions not of structures or mute elements but of living, breathing, expressive bodies.

CHAPTER 3

OTHERS, UNCOMMON AND UNSIGHTLY

And others corrupted, rich and triumphant.

—Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

The last chapter focused on intercorporeity as affective and sensory circuits linking bodies to bodies in making and sharing contexts of perception and action. As we saw in chapter 1, this was also central to Aristotelian *sunaisthesis* as the natural-ethical emergence of selves through the shared activity of making sense of enactive perceptual worlds. Intercorporeity shows how what each individual senses is always a function of co-sensation, not merely an aggregate or overlapping of multiple individual perspectives and perceptions. Co-sensation occurs because of the ways bodies are constantly—from before birth to death (and perhaps beyond, as will be discussed in chapter 4)—interacting with other bodies to make sense of shared environments as potential action contexts. The very ability of bodies to achieve perceptual gestalts through intermodal or intracorporeal means depends on interactions with other bodies intercorporeally on the level of what bodies in motion can feel and sense together. Other bodies bring about a stable coherence in our "own" sensory capacities—they are not there merely to confirm, correct, or provide intersubjective validation for perceptions achieved in isolation.

As such, intercorporeity and *sunaisthesis* challenge presumptive individualism and along with it, as this chapter will pursue,

three ethically and epistemologically vexed relations to others that correlate with such individualism: (1) a master-slave dialectic where selves vie for the title of subject at the price of objectifying the other, (2) a scopic or narrative core that weaves the third person around privileged first-person perspectives, and (3) an analogy where I stand always as a first term or standard to the other, putting me in a projective relationship to any other I might encounter.

In this chapter, I cluster overlapping families of approaches to otherness together under titles such as *The Scopic, The Narrative, The Metaphorical, The Dialogical,* and *The Affective,* pointing out the ethical and epistemological strengths and deficits of each while engaging classical and recent phenomenological theories of social cognition. Then, drawing on sunaisthetic and intercorporeal arguments laid out in chapters 1 and 2 in collaboration with a Deleuze-inspired affect theory elaborated here, I move away from agent- and target-centered analogies between subjects and objects to highlight the role of embodied, interactive capacities in creating overlapping meaning through the cultivation of a sensibility that is neither individual nor communal but unfolds in between bodies in movement. This approach entails epistemic modesty with respect to "other minds" but fosters ethical attunement to environmental, interactional possibilities and bodily states, thereby cultivating the capacity to sense in common as an ethical virtue (*sunaisthesis*). Two objections to the intercorporeal-*sunaisthesis* thesis are also entertained: First, the Levinasian concern that intercorporeity diminishes alterity, thereby curtailing ethics. Second, the worry that an intercorporeal, sunaisthetic account damages phenomenal confirmations of reflexive self-access, ownership, and agency and that sacrificing these great pillars of ethical and political thought is a cost too dear. I make the case that the ethical and political gains of *sunaisthesis,* particularly sensitivity and solidarity, are well worth the blow to more familiar individualizing, cognitivist, and autonomy-based accounts. I then introduce part 2, which seeks to reveal the phenomenological workings of intercorporeal *sunaisthesis* beneath reflexive self-access through an examination of everyday experiences of mourning and of caregiving.

THE SCOPIC

Look out the window. According to Descartes, there is no way to know whether the people you see bustling or strolling by are minded beings, such as yourself, or automatons who just resemble human beings. Your relationship to yourself differs from your relationship to these others because only you have direct, reflexive access to yourself. Everything else appears as objects extended in space. According to the most common view of others, which I will call *scopic,* we always begin our approach to others with the perception of bodies in space, bodies we see, hear, touch, smell, and could (in principle) taste. By *scopic,* then, I do not mean a view simply and narrowly governed by sight but one of exteroceptive perception more generally that *takes its rule and standard of objectification through sight.*[1] A scopic approach to otherness grants an active perceiver (me, the subject) and a passive perceived (you, the object). The essence of the scopic lies in this: the other is first encountered as an Object, and the question becomes how we can "add back" and verify those necessarily invisible features of subjectivity—such as mindedness, animacy, and reflexive self-access—that ensure that this object is an Other, that is, an "other subject." The main features of a scopic approach to otherness, in sum, are a focus on exteroceptive perception that takes vision as paradigmatic and a subject/object dichotomy in which the other appears as a bafflingly mediate case.

It is easy to see why the very terms that set up the scopic approach—subject-object, perceiving-perceived—lead inevitably to paradoxes that seem to find relief, or at least to approximate it, in analogical thinking. This holds true no matter how subjectivity is defined. If subjectivity is defined as a sheer constituting activity, then it is precisely what can never be an object, what is irreducible to any objectivity. Meanwhile, if subjectivity is characterized by *sui generis* reflexive transparency—an access uniquely distinct from exteroceptive perception—it is necessarily unobservable to anyone other than the subject (and possibly not even to the subject, as Kant's problem of transcendental reflection makes clear). In either case, there is simply no angle from which we could ever view an object to reach its subjectivity. From a strictly scopic

point of view, the other is by right and acquaintance (knowability) an object, and only a subject or other by privilege—a sort of ethical grace—founded on unsubstantiatable inference. As a result, scoped others cannot but be and remain ethically and epistemically second rate.

This state of affairs is (as Heidegger rightly declared) a scandal. A long tradition in Anglo-American philosophical circles, stretching back at least to John Stuart Mill, concludes that since the other cannot be apprehended directly, the best approach is an indirect, analogical one. Analogical arguments come in many shapes and sizes, but the basic idea remains the same: I start with some sort of third-person, observable phenomena, for example others as bodies or behaviors. I connect this observed feature of the other to an analogous observable feature of myself—my body, my behavior—then connect this back to my own consciousness, to which I have direct reflexive access, when I behave or express myself in those observable ways. I do so in order to determine something about the missing term: the consciousness X of the other. As problematic as this analogical approach may be, both theoretically and ethically, it continues to survive to some extent in contemporary Theory-Theory and Simulation-Theory approaches to other minds.[2] Theory-Theory claims that we approach potentially minded beings as scientists who form hypotheses about their observed behavior. The hypotheses can be based on our own experiences, on scientific information, or on folk-psychological notions about how people generally behave under the influence of certain beliefs or desires. These hypotheses are then open to confirmation or defeat in light of further observations. In Theory-Theory, we either directly analogize the other to ourselves, or we assimilate the other to what we already think we "know" about behaving subjects in general, including ourselves.

Of course one could object that if we bypass privileged, first-person access to our own consciousness and rely instead on established folk-psychological beliefs in the formation of our hypothesis, Theory-Theory can dispense with analogy. But such an objection would have to disregard the fact that ordinary folk-psychological beliefs gain plausibility only insofar as they appear able to account for actions rooted in motivations—emotions,

desires, and beliefs—I can at least imagine I could also have. Thus even someone who is not inclined to be jealous and may even find jealousy morally corrupt can still find some experience of rejection or fear of loss of a loved one to help them make sense of a folk-psychological interpretation of Othello's deeds. Without some such crutch linking back to otherwise invisible, psychic experiences, it would be hard to convince them that they are dealing with other subjects or minds at all. Insofar as we are dealing in minds or subjectivities in Theory-Theory (and not reductively with brains or other purely physiological processes), the bare datum of comparison would still have to be the only mind I can "observe" firsthand: my own.

Simulation-Theory, a more direct descendant of the argument from analogy, claims that through resonance mechanisms such as mirror neurons we are able to replicate the interior experience of an other whose outward expressions and intentional behavior we feel directly within ourselves. In this way, the emotions that we "see" are prompted physically in our own body. The observed effects provoke a felt empathy either directly or indirectly (through further reflection and interpretation) that allows us to "put ourselves in the other's shoes."[3]

Husserl, as mentioned in chapter 2, stands in an ambiguous position to contemporary analogical approaches, even though he strenuously objected to the idea that our encounter with an other involves cognitive analogy or inference. Nor are his objections empty protest. Husserl must reject analogy if he is to argue that the other is not constituted by us and therefore can truly transcend us and be other. The other as an "immanent transcendence" is a necessary step in Husserl's argument for intersubjective verification of the "objective" world. To avoid a wholly constituted other—who could then be a mere figment or desired accomplice in our heads—Husserl begins to articulate the direct body-to-body connection that he calls "pairing." As we saw in chapter 2, it falls to Merleau-Ponty to develop this body-to-body contact into full-blown intercorporeity. Husserl, meanwhile, unhelpfully retreats to language of "analogical transference," even as he insists that this experience is immediate, perceptual, and intuitive, a matter of direct "appresentation" rather than inference.

Husserl's move to the body in pairing could be a promising one, but he roots the pairing capacity in an ability to reflexively access ourselves not through mental reflection but through self-touch. Since I can, as an animacy or living-body (*Leib*) objectify my own body by touching it while also feeling it touched, I likewise can, when encountering a touchable body similar to my touched self, analogically transfer the sense *living body*—a touching-touched—to it. But how far does this body-oriented move escape the argument from analogy? What I pair is object-body to object-body, as things that appear as touched and touchable, while what I hope to reach is an animate touching which I experience first-personally but can never reach in the other through third-person means. As Scheler pointed out, such "pairing" that is supposed to set off the direct experience of the other's animacy must itself rest on an assumption of "similarity" of touching-touched that it cannot then be said to "prove" since the "touching" will remain as ever out of my grasp as the original consciousness did.[4]

In pursuing a route to the other through embodiment and, more specifically, through touch, Husserl does begin to loosen the dominance of a scopic, Cartesian legacy and its analogical impasse, but only partially. On the one hand, by emphasizing touch rather than sight as the model of self-access, he draws attention to kinesthetic and interoceptive sensations rather than exclusively exteroceptive ones. Living bodies are bodies in motion, and this motion is something we can see from without as well as feel from within. But on the other hand, Husserl's scene of encounter remains that of a constituting subjectivity who meets the other first as an object in its field. Thus an abyss opens, precisely where it is meant to be crossed.

Instead of focusing on moving bodies in abstract space, then, we might be better served by understanding the Husserlian emphasis on bodies in movement to be about *behaviors in meaningful environments*. But this shift might itself lead to double dead ends. One path would lead back to a scopic behaviorism in which my observation of an other's external behavior amounts to my knowledge of her mental states. Such behaviorism either discounts the significance of first-person, subjective experience altogether

by claiming that observable behavior tells us all we need to know about others, or it assumes that third-person observation contains clues or signs revealing first-person processes—clues or signs that can only be interpreted by reference to my own uniquely available first-person processes, that is, analogically. If others just are their observable behaviors, though, we are not reaching that very quality that makes them truly *other,* that is, their being subjects unto themselves. In Husserl's terms, they would remain objects constituted by the observing I or ego, as the unique subject. But as we have already said, if their otherness can only appear in reference back to myself as a standard, then we curtail the possibility of genuine otherness in advance and fall back on projective interpretations with myself as a first term.

The second path would refuse to reduce 'behavior' to mechanical, observable physical display as a direct register of mental states, as a crude empirical behaviorism might.[5] On an expanded, hermeneutic reading, behavior manifests intentions, motivations, and reasons *only within a lifeworld or intelligible context.* This hermeneutical turn in understanding others can give a more specific meaning to the "similarity" Husserl had in mind when he discussed "pairing" and meant to distinguish it from cognitive analogical inference. In light of hermeneutics, we can understand the salient similarity not as an always impossible linking of living-body to object-body but as taking place between ourselves and others who intentionally move within an environment or legible context. I see that the other behaves in some situation or context "like" I might behave, not by inferring that her behavior must be motivated by mental states comparable to my own but simply because she behaves as an *agent* moving toward and through *the same* (or at least an overlapping) context in which I am also moving *as an agent.* In this sense we are both immersed in a motivating milieu not as mental entities interacting with extended ones by means of our own private extensions (bodies) but as impacted, preconditioned, and responsive meaning-making entities alongside other meaning-making entities. Such emphasis on motivating, immersive *contexts* and agencies-in-context (beings-in-the-world) elicits distinctive ways of approaching the other that may well dispense with the crudest mentalist analogies—without, however,

necessarily abandoning the old scopic biases. The focus on *context mediated* agent-agent relations (rather than subject:body::body:-subject relations), makes literary models relating self to others as characters in context increasingly attractive. I turn to these now to see if they might evade the objectifying, projectively analogizing traps of Scopic otherness.

THE NARRATIVE

Any approach to the other must assume enough similarity between self and other to get off the ground. The shift to context means that the similarity is now located not in perceived, comparable features of objective bodies in relation to invisible minds but in habituated and practiced abilities to comport oneself within shared or overlapping contexts or meaningful environments. Intentional agents inhabit contexts with at least enough overlap to provide some shared understandings or background assumptions. From there, certain differences emerge, but, the argument goes, we can only perceive these differences against the backdrop of the assumed similarities. If the other were completely foreign, that is, had no familiar modes of engagement with an environment, we would not even be able to "recognize" them as other. Recognition of difference requires that similarity precede it. Consider an example:

> You are standing on a street corner in foreign city. You have very little knowledge of the local language. Your hands are filled with heavy market bags, and you have just stepped off the curb to get a better view of the passing traffic over a row of parked cars. It is bitterly cold. Ice crackles on the road, and many cars whiz by left to right—too fast, you think, for the icy conditions. So you wait. The wind is bitter, shattering against scant inches of exposed flesh at the wrist and upper face. You want to hurry back to your rented flat, several blocks away. A bicyclist heads in your direction, traveling with the passing traffic at an even clip. Suddenly, an aproned man appears to your left, as if from nowhere. Red faced, he barks words you don't understand.

> He begins to run after the bicyclist. Despite his bulk, he nearly overtakes him. With the man nearly in grasping distance, the bicyclist suddenly glances behind and immediately jolts forward, toward you, fast—very fast. The running man shrieks and gestures wildly. Your first thought is that the bicyclist has stolen something. You consider trying to stop him, to block his path, but in a flash you think, If the bicyclist stole something, why was he riding so calmly just seconds ago? Maybe he simply cut the man off in traffic, and this is just a case of senseless road rage or mistaken identity or . . . The bicyclist zooms past you, and the man fumbles before jumping into a car, screeching off behind the cyclist in reckless pursuit.

All of this goes on "in your head" in the space of a few charged seconds. What are "you" doing as you navigate this scene? You are spinning mininarratives or perhaps even offering small-scale hypotheses. On a very fundamental level, though, you are responding to physical information with your body. You are twisting your torso and craning your neck toward the scene but also taking a step back, toward the curb, between the cars that you sense but do not focus on or touch. All the while, you are adjusting your body to the weight of the groceries and balancing the shifting burden on treacherous ice. All of that is happening as if "beneath consciousness" as you processes and interpret irregular signals. In a flash, you weave these signals into branching ministories. The bicyclist has stolen something from the man! He will escape! But why is the running man is shouting? What is he saying? Is he addressing you? Calling for help? Cursing the bicyclist? You search his body for clues. For a moment, you even consider swinging your grocery bag into the wheels of the bicycle to stop the thief and relieve the shouting man's distress. But wait—the shouting man is not even looking at you. You are not even part of his story, are not being asked to step into it. If the runner were a victim, wouldn't he be looking for help from all possible sources? You teeter precariously backward and watch the bicyclist pass. The runner jumps into a car and takes off in hot pursuit, presumably after the bicyclist who has, by now, gained considerable

distance, sprinting past a traffic signal that has just now flashed to red. You find yourself taking two more quick steps backward, reaching blindly up the curb to the slick and foreign sidewalk, shifting your heavy groceries again as you do so. Your heart is pounding. Though nothing has happened to you, you are shaken, yet you don't once lose your bearings, slip, or fall down.

This entire story took a matter of seconds; much faster to live than to read or tell, much less to analyze. But this does not mean that complex narrative interpretations of others are not going on as the scenarios unfold in real time. "You" is rapidly pivoting between perspectives and stories—her own (getting across the street to go home), the agitated man's (he's been robbed!), and the bicyclist's (he's speeding up because he's guilty! No, it's because he's frightened!). "You" weighs her own role in the story, and her perspective shifts. The shouting man is not looking for help. She does not understand a word of what he is saying yet realizes he is not addressing her in his posture or appealing to her with his eyes. The bicyclist was only riding along steadily; he did not begin to flee until he realized he was being chased. "You" quickly concocts a new narrative to fit the emerging perceptions of the given actions, each filtered through her own bodily reactions.

This story about stories is meant to illustrate the most ordinary, daily kind of narrative approach to others as it is rooted in bodily behaviors embedded in overlapping contexts. In our everyday interaction with others, we concoct micro- and macrostories about them. To be more precise, we conduct ourselves already within a setting with certain saliences dictated by our practical and emotional tasks and requirements, saliences that have built up through a lifetime of contextual intersubjective (though more precisely, intercorporeal) encounters. Yet concrete interactions with other agents can shift those saliences. The encounter with others takes place through certain *acts*—however minimal—within the shared setting. If we notice these acts, if they acquire some degree of salience, it might be because they can fit into some overarching "plot," however minute. That is, if we sustain focus on them, we may well begin to process them as mininarratives, related sequences involving situated agents, often linked through motivating reasons. The narratives needn't be complex: "'You' stepped

back on the sidewalk because she was frightened of the speeding bike" is already a tiny narrative in its own right, but it is experienced first and foremost as a set of affects within an engaged body, a point to which we will return.

A narrative approach to others, in its most general form, just is this understanding of the acts of others as intentionally directed to at least partially comprehensible contexts. Agents relative to such contexts are characters, in a literary sense, and a narrative approach centers on motivated acts as stories traditionally centering on plots, however minimal. This is where the narrative approach connects to standard folk-psychological accounts. According to folk psychology, we tend to understand others as acting on "common sense" reasons—including beliefs and emotions—while recognizing that those reasons, issuing from "other minds," may well differ from our own while still being comprehensible to us. For example, the proposed "road rage" of the shouter above would be comprehensible. The similarity of types of possible reasons that a shared background situation makes plausible plays off against a wide variety of other possible reasons for a given action of which I am not immediately aware to deliver a sense of otherness to the characters inhabiting the scene.

Analogically inclined narrative accounts of otherness would assume we begin with our own stories as an "I am" state combined with an "I was" and "I can"—I am cold, I am hungry, I got the groceries and can now go home—but can also adjust to the perspective that the other is, like me, at the center of her own story: for the shouting man, "you" was at most an obstacle in his goal of catching up with the cyclist, but she may also have been utterly irrelevant and invisible in his absorption in this self-same task. To the extent that I struggle to accomplish this perspective shift, the narrative account merges with the scopic one, such that others and their stories are merely "narrative objects," props in my own unfolding story—"you" cannot help but insert herself in this story, although she was at most a bystander. But insofar as I recognize another as taking an *action* that unfolds and affects our somehow shared situation, the centrality of the I is displaced. The other is not viewed as a thing, an object in my evolving scenery, but fundamentally as a first-person driver of their own narrative,

an agential character who performs the action or actions that affect me. She is a center of beliefs, desires, and intentions in her own right, beyond me.

But *how far* beyond me remains a question. While there is a real gap between a strictly scopic perspective that must somehow work back from a given objectivity to a mysterious and invisible subjectivity and a hermeneutic-narrative account that begins with the interaction of agencies within a shared context, the narrative other may still present as an *observed third-person perspective,* at least initially. Even after the recognition of her first-person agency, her motivations are still interpreted as stories I might live, motivations I *might* have, even if I don't have them, or don't think I have them, or never really thought of them before observing her strange behavior. Coming home from a dinner party, I might say, "He was quiet throughout the meal because he was jealous of his wife's attention to her new colleague," even though *I* certainly would never be jealous in such a situation (or so I think). I recognize jealousy as a *trope,* a possible narrative motivation, and therefore a possible motivation for *his* observed action given the world we share and the intrigues I have read about or lived through.

Gallagher and Hutto want to hold on to the importance of narrative competence in our interaction with others but strive to get around, or really beneath, some of its third-personal, observational—what I am calling scopic—features.[6] To do so, they employ a two-part strategy. First, they articulate two stages in understanding others that are developmentally prior to narrative competence and upon which, they claim, robust narrative competence depends. Second, they argue that narrative competence itself looks somewhat different than the folk-psychological interpretations incorporated into Theory-Theory and Simulation-Theory tend to presume.

Following Trevarthen, Gallagher and Hutto label as *primary intersubjectivity* the kind of direct, embodied "person to person" contact rooted in what I developed in the last chapter as *intercorporeity.* Under their developmental scheme, they emphasize how very young infants engage in bodily contact and responsive, mimetic play. Although infants are dependent on the bodies of

their caregivers, Gallagher and Hutto rightly point out that "children do not simply observe others; they are not passive observers. Rather they interact with others and in doing so they develop further capabilities in the contexts of those interactions."[7]

The developing infant is bodily intertwined first with the maternal body and then with diverse bodies around her in ever growing repertoires of interaction. "You" from the story above was bodily engaged in the scene in much the same way, responsive to the movement of bodies even if they did not (directly) respond to her; indeed, such nonresponse was "read" as a kind of response. If this first body-to-body stage manifests a decidedly Merleau-Pontian incorporeity, the second stage Gallagher and Hutto discuss, starting around nine months, might be characterized as Heideggerian. The infant in this "secondary" or "pragmatic intersubjectivity stage" moves on from intercorporeal relations to person-object-person interactions—relations to others mediated by a world—without, of course, ever losing the capacity for body-body relations. (Gallagher emphasizes across his work that first and then secondary intersubjectivity are not only primary but *pervasive,* continuing even when tertiary intersubjectivity takes hold.) In this second stage, the infant is capable of anticipating and directly responding to purposeful action oriented within a shared environment through capacities such as joint attention. In joint attention, the infant directs her gaze where her caregiver looks and appears to be able to anticipate actions concerning certain objects within this shared environment. For example, if a caregiver looks at a bottle, the infant may follow her gaze to the bottle and then look toward the refrigerator prior to the caregiver moving to get the milk. Moreover, an infant can, at this stage, repeatedly look from an object—say a dropped toy—to a caregiver, to the object, and so on, until the caregiver's attention is drawn to the object of the infant's interest. As Heidegger would say, this sort of interaction transpires with another who is *alongside* us within a shared world. The infant appears already to understand interrelated contexts of things and some of the ways that others interact within that context. They also seem to recognize themselves as being able to influence this interaction. As Gallagher and Hutto explain secondary intersubjectivity, "Others are not given

(and never were given) primarily as objects that we encounter cognitively, or in need of explanation. We perceive them as agents whose actions are framed in pragmatic contexts."[8]

Insofar as it immerses us in a world of shared concern, secondary intersubjectivity already gets quite close to a narrative conception of others, and on Hutto and Gallagher's account, it ought to be credited with doing a lot of the work ordinarily attributed to folk-psychological ascriptions. Indeed, any such folk-psychological account requires first that the underlying pragmatic context to be comprehensible—and not vice versa. This is so for two reasons. First, contexts are prior to action, properly so called, insofar as they supply the motivational frameworks that make actions actions and not mere reflexes or arbitrary motions. Indeed, we assume meaningful, motivational contexts whenever we nominate a bit of bodily agitation as a candidate for folk-psychological interpretation. Second, according to Gallagher and Hutto, narrative practice itself develops out of such pragmatic contexts. Narrative competence is a cultural product, a pragmatic, interactional, habitual mode of communication into which, and according to which, children are trained and prepared for life with others.

While folk-psychological accounts try to unearth reasons, motivations, beliefs, and desires "contained" in the head of the other, actions unfold outside the skull of the other and against familiar backdrops that directly impact our own bodies. "You" already understands a great deal about bicycles and cars and aprons to make her stories intelligible. Such actions, moreover, employ habits, norms and conventions that are played out between our bodies and this familiar environment. These contextual actions may well be *amenable* to narrative structure, but they often take place at a level "below" the explicitly folk-psychological one—a level where primary and/or secondary intersubjectivity is enough. As Hutto and Gallagher put it, "as social cognizers, we do not use *folk-psychological* narratives nearly as often as the tradition supposes. They are not, for example, the basis of all interpersonal interaction. On the contrary, they generally only come into play in those cases in which the actions of others deviate from what is normally expected in such a way that we encounter difficulty understanding them."[9]

To refer again to our example, "you's" body was actively responding to the scene before spinning her narratives. She sensed when to step back and when to try to establish eye contact; her arm tensed in anticipation of swinging a grocery bag into a wheel. Only the surprising features called out for overt narrative explanation: Why is this man shouting? Why did the bicyclist not rush away faster, sooner? Why did the aproned man not appeal to her for help? All the while her body kept responding to the scene as it unfolded, by stepping away, attuning to a tone of voice, scanning a face for visual contact, and so on. The body was never just recording data for future interpretation; it was reacting to and shaping the context all the time, taking itself as an agency being addressed even when it was in fact marginal to the scene.

Hutto and Gallagher conclude that while in many societies, a mature, subtle, and nuanced understanding of others is developed, encouraged, and deployed through early narrative practices in which children develop a shared vocabulary to understand themselves and others, such practices do not exhaust our repertoire of access to others. In fact, excessive reliance on narrative attributions of inner states to agents (folk psychology) may conceal these more basic conditions of the operation of narrative competencies while repressing alternative modes of access to the other. Narrative competence, which develops at a tertiary level of intersubjectivity, depends on primary and secondary intersubjectivity both as *conditions* and as *constituents* of its operation. To disregard these conditions and constituents amounts to a gross reduction and distortion of our actual capacities to access others—a reduction and distortion that can have serious ethical repercussions insofar as the third-person observational stance of narrative approaches may quickly align with scopic and/or analogical ones and lead to projection and neglect of the very interactional spaces in which self, other, and context are in fact being co-constituted.

In sum, while narrative approaches to the other seem superior to merely mentalist analogies because they start with a subject within a shared context that I also occupy, they can still favor third-person perspectives, reopening a gap between the I and the she or he that can lead to projection while obscuring interactional, interembodied dynamics. The gap between first- and third-person

narratives opens a chasm that analogy hastens to paste over, encouraging the growth of arrogant, projective perception. Once again I am tempted to model *her* behavior on *mine,* again deploying a rough folk-psychological tool box. Finally, an overemphasis on folk-psychological narrative in understanding others can repress the developmental embodied conditions and constituents of its operation, reifying such third-personal and analogical approaches as "the best we can do" and leaving bodies and their co-implications neglected and atrophied.

THE METAPHORICAL

Despite its relation to analogy, some philosophers hold that literary metaphor can pull thinking about others in a distinctive and clarifying direction. Where analogy starts with an observed behavior and connects it to what it might be like for me to behave like that in order to reach the black box of the mind of the other who is actually engaging in the behavior, literary metaphor stresses instead an imaginative transfer of the self into the situation of the other, or as Arendt puts it, involves "training your imagination to go visiting."[10] Such an imaginative transfer also differs from the projection of a folk-psychological reason for action on an alien agent in a narrative form (*x* did *y* for reason *a*). In fact, it attempts to *reverse* this procedure by asking instead that you *try to live through the experience of the other in a first-person way.* Ted Cohen explains that thinking of other people means taking on their identity to the extent that: I am *X* where *X* is a person. So, importantly, it is not a question of "How would you feel if this happened to you?" but rather "How would you feel, being *X,* if this were to happen to you?"[11] In this sense, the metaphorical approach demands not that you use your mind in relation to your body to postulate what might be going on in the embodied mind of the other but that *you feel as if* you were inside the embodied and embedded head of another.

Cohen aims the remainder of his monograph at those who might deny the very possibility of such an imaginative transfer. The crux of his argument is that metaphors, properly understood, are not meant to convey literal, propositional content, like

a folk-psychological claim, but to make you "see" something you didn't see before, or, for him more importantly, make you "feel" something you didn't feel before, thereby creating "a community of feeling." The creative aspect is quite important. Cohen denies that metaphors merely highlight certain preexisting properties in the metaphorically linked terms; if this were the case, literal propositions would do just as well, or better, than metaphors, and metaphors could be translated, without remainder, into literal propositions. Cohen maintains that metaphors outrun the cognitive work of propositions to perform a special function, namely to create feelings capable of being shared. In doing so, their product is less "truth" or "accuracy" than a "community of feelings"—which may, of course, become the basis for certain sorts of "truths" down the line.

The work of metaphor can be glimpsed when a simile functions metaphorically rather than as a condensed analogy. To say, for example, that "Juliette is *like* the sun" may be to analogically compare *properties* between two objects (bright, warm, etc.), but when it functions metaphorically, it instead invites the audience to glow and warm themselves in Juliette's presence. Again, a simile such as "old age is like a sunset" could be shorthand for the analogy between properties or relations of properties, "old age is to a life what the sunset is to a day." But insofar as it functions metaphorically, what is cast into relief is not merely logical or temporal relations but a prompted ambivalence of majesty and melancholy.

Arendt points out an important additional feature of such metaphorical relations: they build similarities while being pervaded by nonsublatable differences.[12] This tension sets off an open-ended reflection on the relations between terms, which is itself *productive of* new sets of relations, including affective ones. Just as a sunset is like old age, it is also—for the simile to work metaphorically—unlike old age, which alone will bring an individual death, once and for all and absolutely. In the latter case, tomorrow will not be a new day. And just as one sunset is like every other sunset, and every old age is like every other old age, so too no two sunsets or aging persons are identical. The simile is able in this way to draw our attention to the singularity

of the terms—which assert themselves all the more through the comparison—and at the same time to an overlap that guides an affective response to singular relations thrown thereby into relief.

Unlike analogical projection from one term to the other, metaphors allow similarity to be suffused with difference. This undercuts the temptation toward projective perception prompted by analogies where the common denominator must always be the intimate "I" whose reasons for behavior I alone can access—or also counterfeit. Instead, I am *like* you to the extent that, at least in this set of experiences, I may very well be *unlike* myself (being no Romeo). If the metaphorical transfer is successful, new possibilities of feeling are created in which you and I are joined. I am brought out of myself to feel something that stretches the capacities of my own embodied situation and approximates the feelings of another, in their embodied situation. But how closely?

Arendt stresses a plurification within the reflective process that seems promising for the project of preserving the otherness of the other. Her notion of "exemplary validity" (*x* is as brave as Achilles) also shares a common root with Cohen's metaphorical approach to others, namely Kantian reflective judgment. But where Arendt wants to insist that no two acts of bravery are completely alike, such that the application of the term *bravery* to a new situation, should it stick, always extends the scope of the evaluative term (here, *bravery*), Cohen emphatically insists that metaphors do not create a *similarity* of feeling but an *identity* of feeling. If a metaphor is successful, on his reading, the audience will neither cognitively consider the shared properties of Juliette and the sun (as in analogy) nor enter into an indeterminate reflection on sun-warmth and love-warmth (exemplary validity); instead, they will literally feel warmed and optimistic at the very thought of Juliette. To feel warmed and optimistic, Cohen claims, is not a mere likeness; it *is the same for everyone*. If it were not, such affective words could have no meaning at all.

Here, Cohen insists, lies the key to understanding others metaphorically. If Juliette appears sunlike to me, and I feel warmed and optimistic by her appearance, I have already entered into a further metaphor: I *am* Romeo. For Juliet surely is not the sun

for *me,* she is only the sun insofar as I am *Romeo,* since from *my* point of view (if you're asking), Romeo is foolish and egocentric, and Juliet is a silly little girl.

And yet, if the metaphor works, the understanding of the other works (metaphorically). For a moment there, I was suffused with her warmth. I was affected by it; I longed for her entrance from the east. I *was* Romeo.

For Cohen, this metaphorical entry into another person's feeling is what literature does best, and often by means of other metaphors, as in our example. If a character I am reading about feels grieved at the loss of a loved one, I will feel grief. It makes no real difference, Cohen says, if that character is fictional or even if her loved one is worthy of her—much less of my—grief. I do not have to think, She is crying and shaking wordlessly. That is how I behaved when I lost a loved one! She must be grieving. Nor even, She lost a loved one! I would certainly grieve if I were her. Long before I have these thoughts, says Cohen, I am already grieving *as her.* My reaction is one of immediate *empathy* (about which, more below), no matter how prolonged or brief.

This sort of *identity* of feeling clearly departs from scopic and analogical views by opening a direct affective channel (Cohen's community of feeling) between self and other in which I am engulfed in the emotional landscape of the other. No matter how different I am from her, no matter how I might judge her prior or subsequent to the metaphorical transfer, I can feel her feelings as she feels them. Curmudgeon that I am, I can nevertheless weep at her loss of the plush toy and feel real suffering because of it. Of course the spell can be broken at any time, and *yet I will have had that emotion,* I have felt *as* her, and so entered into affective community *with* her.

This break with the objectifying and cognitivist analogical approach to the other and its tendency toward projection is welcome but also raises ethical difficulties of its own: What becomes of otherness in this identity and merger? If I insist on identification rather than similarity, do I not erase the otherness of the other just as surely as I do when I project my own mental states on her? I will return to empathetic identification (which is but one way to read empathy) when I discuss a variety affective approaches

below. Before turning to these, though, I want to examine the promises and limitations of another approach to otherness with at least some roots in literature: the dialogical.

THE DIALOGICAL

Including the dialogic approach under literary/hermeneutic models can be misleading, for at least two reasons. First, in literary theory, *dialogism* generally calls to mind Bakhtin and is primarily a theory of language. Here, I will be focusing instead on Buber's philosophical dialogism and its legacy while setting Bakhtin's own subtle and impressive typologies to the side. Second, philosophical dialogism objects to phenomenological methods, including contextual, hermeneutic ones, and phenomenological authors have reciprocally viewed dialogism's attempts at direct subject-subject interaction with considerable suspicion.[13] The suspicion targets any attempt to do away with the worldly distance through which selves and others interact. Against what they viewed as a flirtation with mystical union, phenomenologists cautioned that we encounter others *in a world that separates and unites us,* and dialogue can only be enabled through this fact. Still, several authors—Merleau-Ponty's "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other" comes immediately to mind—question whether an opposition between phenomenology and dialogism need be so stark.

While any scopically or analogically inflected approach to the other oscillates uneasily between first- and third-person perspectives, dialogism centers squarely on the second-person dyad. This second-person perspective offers a direct relation—Buber calls it a "between"—and selves and others emerge out of this relation, rather than precede it. Focusing on the in-between of the *I-Thou* provides an appealing escape from the traps of analogical and scopic approaches, avoiding the kinds of projection that starting with a self-certain "I" appears to make inevitable.

Despite their initial appeal, the ethical failures of narrative and analogical approaches become clear when we apply them to "the golden rule." The golden rule states: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. But this inevitably sets "you" up to be the standard, and the contradiction in such a demand is glaring;

what I most certainly don't want others to do to me is to assume that what is right for them is right for me. If I assume that what is right for me is right for them, I have already violated the stated terms of the golden rule. The golden rule, in short, invites and encourages a projective relationship centered on my own preferences and desires, which it assumes are both (1) preestablished before the encounter with the other and (2) normative for all (at least potentially). Every other is substitutable for every other in this picture, all of them circling around a subjective center (mine), which through a reciprocity principle, ends up being substitutable for them as well.

The dialogical principle stands in direct contrast to such leveling. The movement of dialogue is nonnormative and open ended: it is transformational. Whatever I was, whatever collection of reasons, desires, and preferences I had before I entered into the dialogue—all of this is thrown into question by the singular other who joins the dialogue and transforms what happens, what can happen, "in between." It is not that I project my desires and so forth onto the other or she hers onto me; such desires, preferences, and reasons are created in and through the encounter. The event of encounter holds priority over and (re)creates those who encounter each other within it.

The dialogical principle, then, more than any of the approaches we have examined so far, strikes at the heart of scopic analogy; it destroys the relation of subject to object, first and third person, or at the very least renders them secondary and derivative to the event of encounter itself and the second-person participants that emerge from it. This disrupting of scopic privilege can also be conceived as toppling the priority of vision in favor of hearing. Where, in the scopic model, the other appears as an object in "my" field of vision, the dialogic encounter takes place as a call and response. This idea of a "call" needs to be very specifically understood. A call is not propositional. Its contents cannot be detached from its articulation. Instead, the call receives its meaning from its response; prior to the response, it is a cry in the wilderness, incoherent. Yet by the same token, and more obviously so, the response is what it is only in relation to the call. The dialogue enables each of the partners, brings them into being

as response-able to each other. The mutual interdependence of the call-response is the "between" to which Buber refers, and the birth into response-able selfhood is the transformation. Both parties are toward each other on the way to becoming themselves, and the selves they become depend on the singularity of the exchange that transpires between just these two. Each response resonates with certain possibilities of the call to become the response that it is, while making the cry into the proper call that it only becomes upon being responded to.

The auditory approach creates its own truth or meaning that differs from scopic, intersubjective convergence on an object. Taking the auditory dimension seriously, the *I-Thou* encounter produces its own harmonics and dissonances. Instead of perspectives dialectically correcting each other and discarding what cannot be synthesized, dialogics remain open ended as chance harmonics emerge out of a resonance that trails varieties of over- and undertones in its wake—overtones and undertones that help define the dominant tonality as what *it* is. In this way, philosophical dialogism is music-theoretical but can rejoin with Bakhtin's literary version in which historical, perspectival, and ideological differences traverse words as they converge and diverge in any dialogic exchange. All of this disputes the notion of a preexisting, invariant truth awaiting confirmation by qualified, though perspectival, participants and instead points to truths and identities as emergent, transient, and combinatory.

The radical difference between the sort of "truth" at play between selves and the world of objects, on the one hand, and selves directly interacting with other selves, on the other, leads Buber to create an ontological dualism between the *I-It* dyad and the *I-Thou* dyad. Whereas the *I* participates in both dyads, it is differentially constituted and constituting according to its role in each. This points back to the ontological segregation of the Self-World and Self-Other relations that, as we argued in chapter 2, Merleau-Ponty struggled to overcome. On Merleau-Ponty's account, we must understand these relations as necessarily simultaneous to each other and mutually reinforcing; the world appears to us as it does because we see it with others, and others appear to us as they do because they appear within the world that, at the same time, we

are always sensing in common, and so co-constituting. The trick is to avoid a conception of world or context as reifying the identity of selves within that world, and their position in it as subjects and objects, while still allowing selves enough stability to mutually impact a world that will be taken up in their shared projects.

FROM THE SCOPIC TO THE AFFECTIVE: SHAME

In some ways, Buber's separation of an *I-It* world and an *I-Thou* world harkens back to Hegel's shift, in the transition from the first to the second triad of *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* from the problem of individual consciousnesses seeking knowledge of objects to the problem of encountering others through *desire* on the way to self-consciousness. With this move, Hegel uncovered an affective dimension running behind the cognitive and epistemological problem of other minds that allowed him to develop an ethical and political remedy through mutual recognition. Such affective access is the most direct route to the other; however, for Hegel (and others), it was also *dangerous*. Without conceptual mediation, it led to zero-sum domination and the perversities of the master-slave dialectic. While attempts like Buber's to salvage a positive but still affectively direct contact exist, and will be explored, no one has done more than Sartre to plumb the perils of direct affect as this plays out in the ontological schism between subjectivity and objectivity.

Sartre, as a playwright, novelist and short story writer as well as a philosopher, undeniably fused and reinforced some of the more aggressive features of scopic and narrative approaches to the other. But Sartre also developed Hegelian desire, noticing that the unmediated experience of the Other occurs not in exterior, three-dimensional space, as a purely scopic, exteroceptive interaction implies, but in the "interior" landscape of affect. The other announces herself to me not as an object, or even as an Object+, but from the beginning as an Other Subject. This is not something I need to think through, a conclusion I reach. Instead, I feel the subjectivity of the Other directly through what her animate body *does* to me, namely, turn me into an *object for her.* In her presence, I am less spectator and more spectated. I feel her

Subjectivity directly through a feeling of *Shame,* which, for Sartre, is not a mere sensation but an ontological condition: shame reveals to me through affect that I am not only a subject but can also be an object for others.

For Sartre, indeed, my very embodiment prompts shame. As long as I lack awareness of the other, I experience my body directly as a source of power and capacity. I do not feel alienated from it; I exist through it as I exercise my freedom as a for-itself in the world. But when the other arrives, she flexes her freedom through the scopic act par excellence: Sartre's Look. The other gazes at my body and contextualizes it vis-à-vis her freedom, her projects. I become an object in her landscape, an instrument for her designs, a character in her narrative. I am no longer equal to myself qua free; I am now enmeshed in radical discrepancy: a for-itself for myself and simultaneously a for-another for her. This discrepancy is not something I "know"; it is something I feel in the ontological affect of shame.

According to Sartre, only another freedom (subject, for-itself) can trigger shame. No object or in-itself has the power to do so. Again, the body demonstrates that there is no way I could ever totalize it, this body I am living through, these eyes through which I see but that I can never see. Only the other could do that to me, make my active existing as a subject (for-itself) cohere into an object that merely exists (in-itself). To dramatize this, Sartre introduces a jealous lover peeking through a keyhole at his lover with another lover. On Sartre's account, the jealous lover is identical to the act of peeping and the felt experience of jealousy. There is no judgment, no shame, just pure activity and affectivity. But once the peeper hears footsteps behind her (or imagines she does), she is infused with shame at her act; she is no longer a roiling, seething seeing, at turns titillated and enraged; she is a jealous woman, betrayed, petty, and mendacious—a pathetic object.

Simone de Beauvoir gives a powerful, gendered, and developmental spin to this experience in her portrait of the Young every-Girl. She portrays an extreme shame blossoming in the preadolescent girl. Whereas the girl child experienced herself and her body in play and pleasure, with only occasional and surprising bouts of shame (e.g., when receiving punishment for "bad"

behavior), at a certain stage, the girl's body becomes an object of unrelenting, acute scrutiny. However aware she may or may not be of the nature of this scrutiny, she begins to live in a "paranoid" world, internalizing a sense of constant surveillance. Everything about herself and anything connected to herself becomes potentially "embarrassing" to her. She comes to inhabit a persistent state of alienation through the scrutiny of the other, that is, through Sartrian shame. In this scenario, her best hope for redemption from paranoid victimization comes in the shape of a revaluation of her objectification, taking pride in her emerging sexuality and the attention it elicits. Yet as Sartre tells us, this pride is and can only ever be the most superficial and reactive flipside of shame, a form of *ressentiment* as an ontic negation that nonetheless leaves the ontological structure of Shame in place, even reinforcing its effects. The young girl's efforts at "redemption" from shame through pride further trap her within the gaze of the other, on whom she becomes increasingly dependent for confirmation that her ruse is succeeding, that she is right to be "proud" of her powers of attraction. The other is the cause both of the shame and of the pride she clings to as a reaction against it; she becomes wholly a creature of the gaze of the Other.

EMPATHY AND AFFECT

In his central analysis of the Gaze, Sartre's powerful insights into the affective impact of the other who announces itself within my own existence emerge brilliantly only to disappear again beneath a stark and inflexibly scopic subject/object dichotomy in the struggle to attain interpretive sovereignty: Who will look at whom? Yet his key reversal of the problem of otherness undoubtedly transformed the intersubjective dimension from a problem of active cognition into one of passive affect, an affect that inflects my subjectivity beyond any auto-affection I could initiate, including ways I might have used objects and others to affect myself. By altering my subjectivity beyond any auto-affection within my reach, Sartre defeats the specter of solipsism.

Sartre's affective turn, however radical, was prefigured both by Hegelian *desire* and by the early phenomenological attempts to

articulate *empathy* (*Einfühlung*) as a distinctive intentional attitude to grasp the other. Sartre insists that the phenomenological, intentional approach could never escape solipsism. The other as a *noema* constituted as the intentional correlate of my *noetic* activity can never break out of immanence to reach the transcendent other it seeks. Instead of access to others being something we *can do,* for Sartre, it is something that we *must undergo*—that is the only way we can become aware that we are experiencing the intrusion of an exterior agency and not merely conjuring a needed alter ego. To use vocabulary developed in the last chapter, the *ex*pression of the other must *im*press us, affect us "internally," but it must do so as a stamp coming from "outside" of us.

Is this a fair critique of classical phenomenological empathy? The term *empathy* occupies a curious place in affective approaches to otherness. On the one hand, as Zahavi rightly maintains, *Einfühlung* in the early phenomenological tradition was the generic name for any and all access to the mental and affective lives of other subjectivities—an intentional attitude that took other subjects as its object.[14] On the other side, empathy proper was to be sharply distinguished from phenomena like *emotional contagion* and *sympathy* or *compassion.* Emotional contagion indicated those mental states I might "catch" from others around me—say the hysteria of a crowd—but experience as my own. Whatever its source, the panic I am experiencing is *mine.* Sympathy, on the other side, is a feeling that originates in me but is directed toward another; I can sympathize with another's grief without ever feeling grief. Empathy, by contrast, indicates feelings that, while experienced by me, come explicitly tagged as originating in the other—empathy names my first-person experience of *another's* mental or emotional state, but precisely marked *as another's.*[15]

Empathy, on this account, need not even be prosocial like *sympathy* or *compassion* are thought to be. While these latter are said to be *for the other* and may require some, usually positive, attitudinal or action stance in relation to the other, empathy in this neutral sense is *about* or even *from* the other. Empathy is what we grasp from the other's comportments, expressions, and so on in a worldly context we share. It is how we understand *others,* as opposed to *objects* and *things*—through cognitive, affective, and

perceptual means—and says nothing, yet, about how we *evaluate* or what *feel* about this understanding, much less what we ought or might be inclined to do about it.

The emotive and evaluative neutrality of empathy is probably the most difficult thing for contemporary English language speakers to grasp. For example, it is common to hear that school yard bullies lack empathy or that we must try to inculcate empathy in children and adults to create a climate of kindness. But for phenomenologists, empathy could just as well be another, and perhaps indispensable, tool in a bully's handbag. Empathy is precisely what the most sadistic bullies must possess in order to inflict the most cruel, targeted harms on their victims. They must *grasp* their victims' beliefs and affective states to torture them as effectively as they do.

Zahavi objects most strenuously, however, not to the smuggling of prosocial evaluative content into empathy but to insistence on criteria of identity, imitation, or simulation of emotional states between target and empathizer.[16] We have already seen one version of such identitarian empathy in Cohen's metaphorical approach above.

Consider for example an audience member's tears at the end of *West Side Story*. For both Cohen and Zahavi, these reflect an empathetic understanding of Maria's plight and the emotions *she* must feel as her first love is forever lost to a violence both senseless and helpless, to be buried alongside the future they had envisioned together. But if the audience member's state is rightly called grief as she empathizes with Maria, it ought for Zahavi more appropriately be labeled grief-1. You feel sad *about* her sadness, grieve *at* her grieving. Cohen, by contrast, insisted that you cannot say of your grief that it is *different in kind* from Maria's, namely differentiated in the sense of it belonging first to her and only secondarily to yourself. You do not feel detached as you dissolve in tears, perhaps despite yourself; you feel actual pain and actual grief because you are literally identifying with her, experiencing her loss and longing as if you were her. The grief elicited is identical.

Taking heed of Husserl, Levinas, and Derrida, Zahavi strongly resists this identity criterion in order to preserve the very task empathy is supposed to fulfill, namely allowing us to experience the *otherness* of the other. If I *simulate* the other's mental state, there can be no otherness, and therefore no empathy. If I interpret her

feelings according to my own grid, as in the old analogical model, and use her state to project feelings of my own, then there is no other; but if, on the other hand, I wholly assimilate to her feelings, identify with her as Cohen would have me do, and so become manipulated and swept up in her state, there is no "I." Against these extremes, Zahavi insists that, like Cohen, I indeed experience, first-personally, your emotion, but also that, unlike Cohen, *I* always experience this emotion *as yours*—not that I *experience it as you experience it* (Cohen) but that I *experience it as belonging to you who are experiencing it* (Zahavi). While I experience the pain first-personally (in distinction to sympathy), I experience it as issuing from you, belonging first to you, and only secondarily becoming mine. What remains less clear is in what cognitive or affective register this empathetic encounter transpires.[17]

Let us consider another example. You are cooking dinner after a hard day's work. Your child runs into the kitchen in tears, and before you know it, you feel your eyes start to fill and your heart begin to pulse. Your body automatically mimics the bodily manifestations of your child, and you feel a mixture of sadness, frustration, and fear. You feel this yourself, first-personally, but there is another feeling: a rush of compassion *for* your child who is in such obvious pain. This mingling of compassion with the other set of emotions would not be possible if empathy were really just an instance of emotional identity bordering on contagion. You may feel your child's pain acutely—it really hurts you—and yet you feel that it is *her* pain, first and foremost. You do not confuse your empathetic response, however acute, with her primary feelings, and this, Zahavi thinks, is what allows us to distinguish experiences of emotional contagion (crowd hysteria, babies crying at a nursery) from genuine cases of empathy.

But is this how empathy actually operates? The child's suffering in this scenario has irrupted into your own state. You were feeling anger at a coworker's careless remark, while worrying vaguely whether there was enough garlic for the sauce. Now a new feeling emerges, shoving these others aside, as if out of "nowhere." It irrupts into your emotive life with all of the violence of Sartrian shame—but you are no object.[18] The suffering the child's visage has introduced is no less real, no less emotionally acute, than

pains you have suffered directly; perhaps it is even more vibrant, yet Zahavi would still insist that it is not *yours*.

Zahavi's account depends on a strong sense of mineness that allows for the tagging of even the most strongly empathized emotion as "other." This is consistent with his understanding of the layers that comprise self-awareness, beginning with a basic proprioceptive sense of my body in relation to the environment and other bodies. The emotion of the child in the above example is experienced as an irruption into some sort of preexisting flow, in this case, moving between the past of your workday and the future dinner you are preparing. Meanwhile, of course, many other thoughts, anticipations, and memories have likely intervened, been taken up or dismissed, caused new associations, and so on. But now the *ex*pression of the child has interrupted all of that and pressed a strong new emotion that does not seem to flow out of the stream of "your" associations. It inflicts itself on these and breaks them up, causing an alteration of focus. You see and hear the child, your face crumples, you put down the knife and bend to your knees to pull the wailing child toward you . . .

While it would be odd to think that parent and child have merged into each other in this scenario, we may nonetheless question the affective status of the "mineness" Zahavi presupposes. Isn't the sadness prompted upon seeing and hearing the child every bit as much—or as little—*your sadness* as *your anger* at your colleague was, or *your worry* about the dinner is? How does one "own" the sadness that floods one now, pushing out all other emotions, but "own" it as different than one's own anger and worry and also different in at least one crucial sense (mineness) from the sadness the child herself is experiencing?

Imagine further that through the few words the child is able to sputter through her tears, you discover that she is crying because her sister is playing with a toy she wants. Your anguish dissipates and is perhaps replaced with irritation. But the child's distress has not dissipated. Your emotions now diverge, and retrospectively you evaluate her sadness as petty—and also, now, as *hers* alone. This can surely occur, but is it accurate to say that the initial emotion that overtook you came tagged with "otherness" all along? Isn't it rather an act of *retrospective disowning,* a postmerger sorting into

self and other, that is occurring here? As we saw in the discussion of *sunaisthanesthai* in chapter 1, the sense of "mineness" is always a kind of compensation that occurs on the ruins of an "ours," the intensity of which has been broken. Ownership is an alien latecomer to the affective event and requires something like an act of reflection rather than being pregiven or "tagged" all along.

Empathy understood in this way as an *affective event* may depart from classical phenomenological empathy, but it does so for good phenomenological reasons. According to classical phenomenology, empathy is one mode of intentionality among others, a mode that allows for something that, whatever its cognitive status, still approximates a kind of *understanding of* and *about* the other, *an understanding* that belongs to a subject. But empathy understood affectively instead of cognitively reveals something else: a primary intercorporeity and exposure *between us*. Affective empathy is not a mode of intentionality but an event and an aperture through which an otherwise possibility intrudes, irrupts upon us. In it I do not analogize you to the model that I am; how could I, when, as in the dialogical model, you have transformed me, taken me out of a self-affecting stream? But neither am I an object to be manipulated, either intentionally by another subject or neutrally, as in mechanical emotional contagion, since your *ex*pression depends upon my uptake. Affective empathy amounts to an inter-ruption that dis-rupts any tenuous ownness I may, through prior losses of sunaisthetic integration, have established as you are disposed of your *ex*pression and I, *im*pressed, can no longer be identical to myself. For those moments, we sense together what has come to be between us. When the affective event is over, we each will resume apparent ownership of affective streams on the basis of a renewed loss of sunaisthetic orientation and reaction(s) to this such as disavowal, nostalgia, desire, and so on.

THE AFFECTIVE

Until now, I have been referring to "the affective" to indicate a general shift away from primarily cognitive acts of understanding others, such as inference and analogy, and to highlight the ways in which we are directly *affected by* others through moods, drives,

and emotions such as felt desire and shame. But the example of the crying child above exposed an affective event and aperture to others through the transmission of a state that is neither yours nor mine. To parse this experience and move away from any notion of affect as purely passive or as the possession of a self-enclosed subject, a Deleuze-inspired concept of impersonal affect will help.[19]

Deleuze and Guattari distinguish Affects from affections—their subjective manifestations—just as they distinguish Percepts from perceptions. Affects are blocs or assemblages that are embodied in some material—paint, tones, words, flesh—and that give rise to new affections while being independent of particular subjectivities or fleeting subjective states. This means that even though Affects necessarily adhere to perishable materials, and even though they exist as commingling with multiple subjective perceptions, sensations, and affections, the affect that they are *endures* beyond the subjective states in which they may or may not lodge as affections. Deleuze and Guattari compare them to monuments erected to give enduring testimony to the affective event they convey, paradigmatically as works of art.

Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of Proust's novels. What Proust conveys through Swann is an affect of Jealousy, and this affect stands quite apart from any jealous affections Proust or his readers may or may not have suffered. It is larger, more saturated, than the jealousies that slosh about as affections in mere readers and writers' hearts and heads, vying with love and rage and reason, and *failing to endure,* even if, for the time they do, they feel unendurable. Through the character of Swann, jealousy invades the reader, affects them. While they read, they inhabit an affect powerful enough to structure a legible life. We do not understand Swann because we too have felt jealous. What is our jealousy compared to his! (Or his compared to ours, for that matter.) We do not, contra Zahavi, feel empathetic jealousy-1 while knowing that it is safely tucked in Swann's mind or heart or body. Nor, contra Cohen, do we identify with Swann and feel his jealousy as he does (really not). Instead, in Swann we encounter jealousy as force, something capable of affecting our affections, needing them for sustenance, yet remaining independent and beyond them, greater than them, contorting them in its image while capacitating them.

Now reconsider the despair the child bodily *ex*pressed to her harried parent. It is quite apart from its immediate causes, about which the parent has no clue, and which even to the child may, in another affective time and place, make no sense. But for now neither party judges. The child's face, her wails, convey the complete Affect of despair. The *ex*pression of her affection becomes an *im*pression on her parent via the mediation of an impersonal Affect lodged in a damp and crumbled face. Parent and child meet and meld in this Affect which creates its own bond, belonging to neither and in the control of neither, but shaping both so long as they meet and inhabit it, neither questioning nor judging, and thereby possessing it.

Deleuze repeatedly states it thus: the other is the expression of a possible world. In his late work with Guattari on Affect, they explain that artworks can create universes of possibles where "sensory becoming is otherness caught in a matter of expression."[20] Artworks, as conveying Affects (and Percepts), enjoin us to step outside of the flows of our own perceptions, affections, and cognitions. But embodied others, no less than artworks, can come to us through an *ex*pression of affections to impact our bodies and likewise create a possible world of Affect between us. This expression ir-rupts, freeing us from sameness, flow, or the gravitational pull of "our" affective associations. The irruption—felt on our side—is also an inter-ruption, a rupture from the side of the other, who ruptures an "interior" flow to *ex*press, to turn a personal affection into an impersonal Affect, whether through conscious decision and cultivation or not. The two-sided inter-ruption can become a dis-ruption—a rupture that cancels itself out in the creation of an impersonal Affect that we, together, come to inhabit. The parent doesn't enter into the despair of the child as an affection, as merely the child's despair, empathetically entertained as "other"; this despair has already been transmuted through *ex*pression into a conduit or meeting place, ready to receive parent and child alike, and awaiting further transformation through activated embodied responses to it.

Affect conceived in this way does not necessarily or even usually "stand on its own" to become a fully realized work of art. A tantrum is no monument. The fleshly Affect does, however, have

some duration, some standing—the standing of an intercorporeal meeting place where self and other are, for a time, indistinguishable.[21] Impersonal Affect confronts the child not as the devastating actuality of mood (which it also may be) but as a possibility to be transformed in the interaction with another—more performance art then monument. As *ex*pressed, it is beyond the one who expresses it, forming an embodied presence of its own. But this *ex*pression works not, as Cohen thinks, because we already know what sadness means and must be able to recognize it if it is to have any meaning at all. The *ex*pression, as Deleuze says of the artwork, creates the Affect. It is not sadness in general that affects the other in its expression; it is *this* sadness that affects, is able to affect, you and me in this assemblage of affections into Affect, and neither of us knows what it means—what relations and combinations it will attract or deflect—in advance. Affects conceived of this way are both singular (neither general nor generic, as Cohen thinks) and impersonal (not tied to their specific, prompting trigger or flow of personal affections residing within the subjects involved).

Deleuze often offers the example of a frightened face looking past me, over my shoulder; I share in the fright long before I can possibly know what it is she sees or if she is "right" to be afraid. Affect adheres in an *ex*pression that creates something other than mere having been affected—a bubble, an atmosphere, that includes me and that my inclusion cannot help but *also* affect, creating new compounds of Affect, for however long they last.

Conceiving of Affects as impersonal but singular allows us to root self-other relations in affectivity, as Sartre rightly enjoins us to do, without succumbing to his subject-object trap because Affect no longer "belongs" to subjects where one is doing and the other is done-to. It likewise gets around (displaces without dismissing) the idea of ownership of affective states in Zahavi's treatment of empathy, while refusing any agent-target identity condition that analogical and simulation theorists might demand.[22] Here Affect enables what might be called an empathetic connection, but what is shared is neither yours nor mine. We "become" together through the Affect created in the *ex*pression–*im*pression relay between us. This does not mean that I feel *as* you do, or that

I "recognize" your emotion as the "same" as ones I already know or am capable of knowing. Instead, your *ex*pression prompts me to participate in this impersonal but singular Affect, which, as made of flesh invisible to you, except through my fleshly, *im*pressed and *ex*pressive reception of it, will become a project of cocreation of it and of us in relation to it. We together prop it up or transform it or destroy it. And it is this final feature that sets Affect apart from emotional contagion: instead of passive invasion and manipulation by the preexisting affections of others, there is a mutual, dialogical cocreation of an impersonal Affect in the space between us.

Herein lies the power of an Affective approach to otherness. The other is announced through an *ex*pression capable of making an *im*pression that opens a possible world for us to cocreate and experience together: *sunaisthesis*. That world is not possible for me prior to the other's introduction of it through her *ex*pression, but neither is the *ex*pression identical to or even representative of some interior life of hers. It is an offering, an invitation as an *activity,* not a (mere) sign or symbol referring to a prior affection. Nor is the Affect "latent" in me, through personal experiences or knowledge of generic emotions. Just as the newborn infant is capacitated by the facial contortions introduced by the other (chapter 2), we learn to feel *this singular* Affect for the first time when the *ex*pression of the other *im*presses us. In this her *ex*pression ought not be taken to be identical to "her" affective state, as in a crude behaviorism. In being *ex*pressed, her affective state is transformed, torn from a milieu of associated affections, impregnated by my uptake, and made to stand in a world that we come to share. It beckons as a possible world, for both of us, and for better and worse.

LEVINASIAN CONCERNS

For worse: Might the very singularity and impersonality of Affect pose an ethical threat of the most serious, Levinasian, sort? Levinas's worry—echoed by Derrida, as traced in the previous chapter and again by Zahavi above—is that affective approaches to the other, like epistemological and aesthetic ones,

might diminish what is most vital about the other, the very thing that makes her other, namely her transcendence and irreducibility to me. The strength of the affective approach over epistemological, analogical ones is that it allows the other to prompt something *in* me that could not be produced *by* me, allowing a bridge or access to an other who nonetheless, by the novelty she is able to introduce, remains truly other. Sartre supports this by showing that only other subjects can objectify me, shame me; *I can never shame myself*. Therefore, if a feeling of shameful objectification emerges within me—a tendency to view myself from a third-person perspective—this must have a subjective source outside myself, even if there is no one else present at the moment (which only means that I have thoroughly internalized the external gaze). Objectification must have its origin in an alien subjectivity, transcendent to myself.

Zahavi means to take the Levinasian imperative to maintain the space of transcendence seriously with his idea that empathy comes to us marked as foreign. Like Heideggerian anxiety, empathy appears to be for Zahavi an uncanny attunement, something that requires us to break with our mineness, the flow of our consciousness, all the while presupposing this mineness. Such an uncanny exposure fits with Levinasian transcendence. For Levinas, I can play host to the other, but she is never a guest I can anticipate, or for whom I have prepared. Instead, she takes me hostage; my hosting, to be good hosting, must accommodate her, answer to her; I must become the host that she demands as a guest, and I can never adequately anticipate what this would mean in advance of her visitation.[23]

Does impersonal, intercorporeal Affect, in which mineness and yoursness dissolves, likewise threaten the transcendence of the other? Might not "meeting the other" exclusively through the ways in which she affects me—letting her "be" only to extent that she affects me—amount to narcissism *par excellance?* Levinas directed a version of this critique at Buber's dialogism, which shares with the intercorporeal Affect model a similar emphasis on a transformative and de-subjectifying in-between. If the other confronts me in a dialogical encounter, and I feel singularized and singularizing in this encounter, then what I am

having, according to Levinas, is an *aesthetic* experience, not an ethical one. My "I" is not so much called into ethical question, exposing the processes and costs to the other of constituting myself as a subject, as allowed to find repose and wholeness in the presence of another as an escape from the demands of an alienating and reifying *I-It* world.[24] According to Levinas, such aesthetic relation is still an act of intact and voracious subjectivity, not an overcoming or questioning of it. By contrast, Levinas's ethical imperative *ex*poses the subject, lifting the veil of the privileges of subjectivity and revealing the raw nerves and price of processes of subjectification that would usurp for itself the role of constituting others and objects. The ethical relation, far from securing a subjective foundation, should uproot it, reveal its crevices and the illusions that support our everyday assumptions of subjectivity.

Zahavi's appeal to Levinas in the context of Levinas's larger project, then, appears half-hearted. For he maintains that we must first secure the borders of self and other if we are to answer the Levinasian worry about the *transcendence* of the other. Like Levinas, Zahavi worries that an affectively oriented approach that creates an indistinction between self and other would obliterate any such transcendence. But if the real ethical issue for Levinas is not just the transcendence of the other, but the premature closure of the boundaries of subjectivity that *restricts the capacity to be affected by the other,* then Zahavi's presumption of mineness and stratified levels of self cannot be the answer. The other's transcendence becomes manifest insofar as she capacitates me and decapacitates me in ways I am powerless to effect by myself, and she does so by *ex*posing me through an affect that I do not, that I cannot, *recognize as my own,* and which in turn motivates a response I could never have prepared. Transcendence consists not in the other being unto themselves a minimal or separate self, but in their *capacity*—a felt capacity, not a known one—to induce an othering, a transformation, within me, in "my" (prior) capacities, while they themselves are never identical or reducible to the affect they elicited and that occasioned my alter-ation. Transcendence properly understood, then, is a power, a capacity, not a predicate of an enclosed self or thing.

AFFECTIVE RECOGNITION

Hegel demonstrated that the route from isolated epistemic subjectivity to existence in the world is a dead end. A consciousness that denigrates biological life to affirm its essence as more than biological life undercuts its own direct access to the world through affected and affecting *desire.* According to Hegel, it is as a desiring being—not a "knowing" one, as the term recognition, *Anerkennung,* seems to connote—that the other first confronts me.[25] She challenges my grasp on and possession of the world by making claims on it that are similar to mine, compete with mine. Desire confronts desire. If my desire and the cognitions fueled by it have negated the abundance of the world in-itself and defined it as something *for me,* this conflicting desire, this *other* desire, negates that negation. The world is not *for-me,* it is *for-her.* This Hegelian road leads quickly to Sartre's conclusion: if the world is *for her,* then she must experience me as part of her world. I am, in shame, reduced to an object for her, immanent to a world she understands and masters. And this is where the eternal drama stalls for Sartre—self and other lock in a continuous battle and oscillation between objectivity and subjectivity, lived through various unstable islands of love and desire.[26]

Not so for Hegel. For Hegel the confrontation of desire and desire, the negation of negation, births a higher-order desire—not the desire that a *for-itself* be *for-me,* but the desire that the other qua *for-itself recognize* me as a subject of knowledge and desire, another *for-itself,* and not merely an object *in-itself,* to be overcome. This recognition is a matter of *right* in the proprietary and eventually conceptual and institutional sense. If my old desire was to understand and possess the world, my new desire is for the other to witness and affirm this understanding and possession, to fix it by saying to me, You are right in your interpretation and intervention; I concede that the *in-itself* really is as it is *for you.* If my old desire was simply to consume this apple, my new desire is to have the other defer to my *right* to consume this apple—for her to grant willingly the very right her existence, desire, and claim have called into question and negated. Right aims to put an end to the endless cycles of violent consumption and destruction—the

world of nature—as well as the endless threat of skeptical despair that haunted my unchecked ability to convert a world of *in-itselves* into a mere tableau *for-me*. With the other comes a possibility to refuse my right but also, and because of this ability to refuse, to truly affirm and secure my right for the first time. Opportunity is simultaneously threat; it places me in the clutches of the other—from now on, I desire something only she can give me, her recognition, on which my right stands or falls.

For Hegel and many Hegelians there is, eventually, a positive outcome to this story. Desire for recognition can, through many hard-won dialectical twists, after violence and failure, become mutual desire for mutual recognition. But for some, including Levinas, such stories are too optimistic and proceed too fast. Recognition presupposes a similarity of subjectivity, of right—but fails to ask the questions: With what right do we presuppose this similarity? On what waste and plunder have we established this subjectivity and projected it onto the other? Rather, the genuinely other other always encounters me asymmetrically, making demands on me from on high, commanding my assent, and yet also beseeching me from below. Right that disregards such singularity and dissymmetry cannot yet be Righteousness. Hegelian right claims to know too much about the other and her desires, which turn out, just as in the old analogical reasoning, to mirror my own. Righteousness issues instead from heeding a demand and an appeal from a genuine, unknowable, and unmasterable exterior. It issues *from* the other and cannot, unlike my right, be demanded *of* the other.

According to Levinas, righteousness precedes right; it trembles in the face of the call and is forced to question not only the right response but its very right to respond. Recognition and right presume a question that can be affirmed or rejected; righteousness hears the call that calls that very question into question. The question the call provokes cannot be anticipated. The other offers me not recognition but testimony, to have seen what I do not see, cannot see, until she shows me. No reciprocity can be assumed: what she has seen I cannot see, cannot have seen until she, in her *ex*pression makes me see. If I assume in advance her experience is "like" mine, that I "recognize" her desire and perception in my

own, I am not listening. I have stopped listening. Her testimony shatters me in the face of her story. It forces me to ask myself, Who must I become to hear her story, to make it possible, even true?

For Levinas, this disturbance of symmetry is all important to open an ethical space capable of disrupting self-satisfied and self-re-enforcing epistemological and the aesthetic subjectivity. The other is "higher" but also "poorer" than I. The other as higher is the other whose capacity to bring about something new transcends me. I must listen and learn from her, for she is genuinely other and beyond my power to constitute or conjure. I have in relation to that transcendence no reciprocal right to speak or make a claim. Religious experience may serve as a model here, but this is not a scenario of passivity or blind faith, for it requires action, and reception.

God calls on Abraham to sacrifice his son. Abraham does not obey blindly (as Kierkegaard well taught us). Abraham trembles in his self-understanding as a participant in a covenant, a covenant that gives him a "right" to certain expectations on the basis of a mutual promise. But faith transcends covenant and the parties to it. Abraham is forced, by faith, to ask himself, Who am I such that God might require this of me? Abraham is who he is because of God, so if he cannot "recognize" this request, if this request annuls the very terms of the right and identity he has established through God, he, Abraham, can only be "wrong." His faith requires that he learn at God's bidding to be who he is, which is nothing more than a response-ability, an ability to respond to God. God is higher and calls on him; his being lies in how he will respond to this call and what new relationship will thereby be enacted.

Yet in another sense, God is also "poorer" than him. Having issued a call, God "needs," in a very specific sense, Abraham's response, a response that can only come from Abraham as having been called. The call, to be a call, requires a response.

If theology is to be our guide, of course, God "needs," can need, nothing of the sort, in fact, can need nothing at all. Recognition is curtailed on both sides. First, Abraham can in no way recognize God's unrightful demand. He recognizes neither original partner

in the covenant: not God, who cruelly demands an unimaginable act that will destroy the very basis of the promise, nor himself, who was to be the father of a great nation, in this singular, horrific call. Nor can Abraham comprehend God's call as a "need," though as a call, it begs for response. God does not "need" Abraham's acquiescence the way Isaac needs air and water and paternal protection, or as Abraham "needs" the warmth of Isaac in his arms and the flicker of immortality in his tissue. But neither are those needs reciprocal, or even specific. As the Other appeals to me, her demands can never be wholly anticipated by me, as I understand myself, so she calls me into question: Can I transform myself into a person capable of responding to her call, or must I always translate her call back into one to which I stand ready to respond, one based on a pre-established self or subjectivity? Ethics precedes "legitimacy" and right and brings us face to face with an abyss of genuine difference, genuine otherness. The other's transcendence is the capacity to call me into question while her poverty means that the call is empty and will remain so until I take it up and respond, however I am able.

Hegelian recognition surpassed cognition to reach the other directly through desire. Yet this birth in affectivity was also bathed in violence. Long epochs of fear and work were required to build a space to support anything like mutual recognition. But what if subjects and their recognition come too late? What if the ethical challenge is in the space-shaping (*choreography*) itself, a space traversed by higher, poorer bodies with their different capacities and in their unanticipatable demands? What if ethics requires that we peel back our aspirations for recognition as free and sovereign subjects, at least for a moment, to do the hard work of choreographing a shared space of Affect, one we sunaisthetically inhabit on the way to becoming selves worthy of recognition?

INTERCORPOREAL *SUNAISTHESIS*

In chapter 2, we examined Derrida's Levinasian worries about Merleau-Ponty's intercorporeity, namely that in "solving" the problem of empathy through a direct, embodied access to the other, we force into appearance that which can never appear but

which harbors the otherness—the transcendence of the other. I argued that transcendence, otherness, and difference need not be abandoned with intercorporeal *sunaisthesis,* though they may need to be rethought. At point of contact, which we now understand as an affective space, elements of combinatory potential never exhaust the entire capacity of the partners-in-flux that meet there; indeed the encounter always generates at least as much excess capacity for and in the engaged partners. I compared this process to the practice of contact improvisation where habituated bodies interact with other habituated bodies to find new solutions to movement problems generated by contact. The body of the other and the space of encounter both pose those problems and promote the solutions, precisely at the moment when the boundaries of the bodies seem to dissolve and the partners sense with the other and through the other, as if growing a new sense capacity that I have labeled elsewhere "allo-ception."[27]

To achieve this affective, embodied openness to the other, though, means suspending the habits that centered me and made "me" and trusting that a new center can be found between us. So too, on the ethical level, admitting the influence of interactive embodiment and affectivity risks eliminating, or at least demoting, the role of reflexive self-access, ownership, and agency—traditional hallmarks of selfhood—in the open-ended transformational contact with an asymmetrical other. Hegel (and others who have traveled down his path) understood that agency and individuality worthy of recognition are not immediate givens but are end goals of a long wrought process in collaboration with others with whom we are entwined. Having retained Levinasian asymmetry and transcendence of capacity, not substance, which opens to the transformative and decentering potential of the event of bodily encounter to gain accessible otherness, what remains of the bases of ethical individualities as identifiable, free centers of decision and action? Or, to put this another way, having accepted intercorporeity as "primary and pervasive" (Gallagher) but also dis-ruptive and dispossessing, can we then disavow or domesticate these influences and carry on with our standard notions of ethical agency and responsibility as before?

Our discussion of affective approaches to others began with Sartre's account of shame as the *experience* of objectification that

testifies to the presence of an other subject. Sartre's move marked a significant reversal of the standard epistemological and analogical approaches through which an other appears first as an object to a subject, a data point to be analyzed, confirmed, or refuted according to a standard set by myself. But a merely affective approach that leaves subjective structures intact risks romantic aestheticization, since the proof of otherness would reside in a one-sided subjective experience of transformation or singularization—I cannot point to it or know it, but I can *feel* it. A contextual dialogical approach goes some way to remedying this, first, as in hermeneutic-literary approaches, by displacing the center of inquiry from the interiority of subjects to a shared context between us. But unlike in hermeneutic frameworks, this shared context cannot be rigidly fixed in advance or viewed as predetermining the subjectivities involved, as a reified context prescribing the conditions of intelligibility or, in a more narrow, ethical or political register, a *sensus communis,* might do. If we rightly avoid emphasis both on preestablished context and on a preexisting "I" and "Thou"—and for that matter, a preestablished "I" and "S/he"—we might get to an in-between of shared sense and affect. Bodies intermingle there, transforming affections into Affect, sensations into Sense, creating commonalities that belong, properly, to neither party but shape them both.

We spoke of "participatory sense-making" in chapter 2 as a promising anti-individualist empirical model of social cognition. Deleuzian Affect can help us better grasp the role of intercorporeity in such processes. What comes into being between the participants is not the projection and introjection of subjective affections, not even a mere commingling of these, but a new compound, both *impersonal* and *singular,* of contexts comprised of such Affects and Percepts as they interact with historical sediments and are imbued with future combinatory potential, which in turn shape the affections and sensations of the participants in this contextual dialogue of bodies.

Such "dialogic affects" are made not just of words and things but of bodies and behaviors in the widest, intercorporeal sense: a "dialogue" of interactive bodies as improvisational choreography. Bodies appear not first as dull objects or automatons but as interactional opportunities (which can include negative modes,

such as obstacles, as well). Affect emerges between these bodies, in the interaction between affections *ex*pressed and *im*pressed and the uptake the bodies engage in as possibilities for sensory affect merge. Affect can "stand up" (for as long as it can) insofar as it unfolds in the choreography, a spatializing between responsive bodies that allows each to see as they see, to be capacitated as they are capacitated, in other words, in so far as it helps each to make and maintain sense as they interact with the sense-making of others in the environment.

We are our behaving bodies, then, but not as crude behaviorists believe we are. We are our behavior, but our behavior is itself directed toward others and toward the worlds in which we dwell, choreographically. We are never, as Merleau-Ponty insists, "transparent to ourselves"—how could we be, if our bodies are manifestations of our behavior and our behavior is always under development, always incomplete and engaged in evolving affective worlds more or less explicitly shared with others?

While Merleau-Ponty insists that we just are our behaving bodies, then, he also resists a simple reduction of behavior to mechanistic cause and effect. Behaviors are instead comprised of motives in relation to affective motifs that structure them. Other bodies may certainly cause me to do things. For example, they may push me down or deprive me of food to the point of desperation. Yet they also provide motifs of behavior and expression that directly and indirectly affect, inspire, or discourage me.[28] These motifs as well as mundane causes and effects are swirling about my body in conscious and subpersonal ways at all times. It is the body caught up in a whirlwind of environmental inter- and intrapersonal streams that can never possibly be transparent to itself. The conclusion drawn from this *might be* that if we are never transparent to ourselves, how much less could others be clear to us, or us to them. Yet Merleau-Ponty argues the other way around: it is this very obscurity to ourselves that allows others to "be evident to me." In bodily affecting me, I may become more aware of "their" behavior than of my "own"; but I become aware of it through my "own" behaviors as I respond and take up "theirs," not passively, as objects suffering obstruction or manipulation, but as coconstituters of sense, cobodily capacities.

With the manifestation of the others co-implicating the obscurity of the self, Merleau-Ponty maintains but transforms the paradox of otherness: the other is a possibility that I did not "possess" before its appearance. The other opens a possible world in which I am (in other words, my body is) transformed beyond my consciousness or intention. Otherness is not a variation of sameness; "sameness" is a catching up to, an assimilation toward, intrusions of otherness, inhabiting an inevitable lag. It is in this sense that "we find the other in the same way we find our body."[29] Behaving bodies are first of all *experiences* of openness to others, processes of affecting and being affected in a common space, in search of a common ground to propel the bodies forward.

Merleau-Ponty explains it like this: "We find the other in the same way that we find our body" because "my right hand was present at the advent of my left hand's active sense of touch. It is in no different fashion that the other's body becomes animate before me when I shake another man's hand or just look at him."[30] In the phrase "my right hand was present at the advent of my left hand's active sense of touch," the stress ought to be on *advent*—the presence of the perspective on a touching hand that another touching hand provides births a new sensation, strictly impossible before the hands meet. Here lies the difference between Merleau-Ponty's version of Husserl's famous exercise in self-objectification—when hand touches hand—and Husserl's own view, the difference that allows Merleau-Ponty to extend this quasi-reflective experience to others. Instead of a simple self-objectification or reflection, the interaction of my hand with my hand creates a new perspective. (This can be called reflection only if we remember, with Merleau-Ponty, that reflection or mirroring is always *creation;* it is not identity but productive of difference, nonidentity.) When I touch my other hand, which is touching the touching hand, I do not objectify its behavior, in this case by touching it (for I cannot *feel* its touching by touching it touching any more than I can reach another's "there" by projecting myself into it from my "here"); but neither do I merely experience the sensations in the actively touching hand (thereby being forced to "analogize" what it means for the other hand to touch, on the basis of my touching). Instead, there is a new sensation—lodged in an external,

impersonal Affect—created by the touching-touching, a sensation strictly impossible before the contact. To feel the movement and to feel through moving simultaneously—this creates a new experience of anticipation, reaction, and possibility for action. So too when we establish contact with an other; their behavior affects ours from "the inside," through affection, but we take it up actively, through our "behavioral" response to it *outside* in the emerging shared, affective space. We *experience* the other through the sensual and affective possibilities it offers not as an *object* within an existing field might prompt us to do, for example, by testing our pre-existing capacities, fulfilling or disappointing expectations, nor even as a structured subject might do, by bringing to light possibilities or perspectives already latent within us. Instead, we experience the other as augmenting or diminishing our bodies' potentials, surprising us and opening new possibilities (even if only negatively). Consider a prosaic example: when the yawn of the other elicits a yawn from me, the rush of air affects my organism differently than it would have if the yawn were a reflexive response to my own lack of oxygen. The other opens a new field as growing a new leg or ear—or even a totally unimaginable organ of perception, a prosthesis, or a fetus—might.[31] When, to take a different example, I direct my gaze to follow that of another, imagining I can see from here what she sees from there, I do not "appropriate" her perspective, reduce her "there" to my here, or even project my "here" into her "there"; instead, the two perspectives inaugurate a new field of possible perception that exists, could have existed, nowhere, *neither* here nor there, before the contact. The effect is like looking at a painting that complicates natural perspective, offering a view that is impossible from any "actual" angle, and thereby bringing not simply a new perspective but a new *kind* of perceptual approach, into being.

Contact with the other prompts me "to give birth" to something that Merleau-Ponty tells me is "made from my flesh and blood and yet is no longer me." Possibilities give way to new possibilities, impossible before the event of impact. I have likened this process to the choreographic technique of contact improvisation which does not *assume* a discreet body with a center of gravity that determines the range of its movement but discovers

new centers of gravity and possibilities for movement and expression in surfaces and gestures possible only in relation to a variety of others.[32] In the process, bodily habits become destabilized and open to new formations which take into account the presence of others, past or present. Like any event (for the other is a productive process of *temporalization,* the lags and correspondences in our shared sensations, as well as of *spatialization* between us), the advent of the other opens me to possibilities that are prospectively impossible, even if retrospectively they appear as always already having been possible, or even as necessary. *Ex*pression, occurring always between self and other(s), names the dawning of this impact—this contact—that inaugurates a possible world.

All of the approaches to otherness discussed in this chapter circle around but somehow miss this event of contact, the cocreation of the choreographic affect between bodies. We are never self-enclosed entities trying to reach out to others across an abyss; we are constantly in contact, intermingling through bodily *ex*pressions and *im*pressions that co-mingle to form impersonal affective space. Narrative approaches to others are fine so long as they understand themselves properly; they are not *projecting* or *reflecting* third-person selves in the world, but are *prolonging and expanding the reach of the commingling of self and other.* In other words, it is not so much that my narrative, analogy, or application of folk psychology gets the other "right" or "wrong." Rather these are modes of expressive behavior prompted by the *ex*pressions of the other who gives birth to stories in me; by responding to them, I create certain alternatives, opportunities or stoppages, for the other as well as for myself.[33]

Dialogism does a better job than narrative at getting at interactive transformation in *sui generis* encounters, but it can come across as either dependent on preexistent and intentional speaking subjectivities, or at the other extreme, as a meeting of mystical and disembodied beings, bypassing mundane contexts and bodies in the attempt to flee the "it-world" of objects and transactions. Merleau-Ponty's essay "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other" revives the promise of dialogism by making sure the dialogue partners are not idealized "I" and "Thous" but embodied participants who affect each other's very sensibilities through

word and gesture, forging an expressive space: "The expressive operation and speech in particular considered in its nascent state establish a common situation which is no longer only a community of *being* but a community of *doing*."[34] Alongside this remaking of space/world is a remaking of self as a doer of deeds enabled by this affective space. The self, after all, is only as it is in relation to world and to others: "The perception of a veritable alter ego presupposes that his talk, at the point where we understand him and especially at the moment he withdraws from us and threatens to fall into non-sense, be capable of remaking us in his image and to open us to another meaning."[35]

For Merleau-Ponty, intercorporeity, like *sunaisthanesthai* for Aristotle, is a not only fact, but also a *praxis* that can be virtuous or otherwise. It is a carnal dialogue in which our bodies interact through the creation of meaning that affects us both, transforms us. Indeed, pregnancy, germination, and birth are metaphors he often invokes for the intercorporeal sunaisthetic event that "abolishes the limit between mine and not mine."[36] Others affect me, they impregnate me; our interaction creates something that is ours but not ours—of us, from us, felt within us, but distinct from us—defining us but with an affective force all its own. Deleuze was right to give Affects an impersonal power; they arise through us but stand in the spaces between us on their own in the world to mix and mingle with other affects and create affections in subjectivities yet to be met or even imagined. But what of those who create and embody them? The selves whose *ex*pression of affections give rise to them but who also come under their sway?

Pregnancy can be a powerful metaphor; it is also a powerful corporeal reality. It arches an eyebrow at an entire ethical tradition, one that privileges strict borders and individuality. *Sunaisthesis* reaches into the depths of our intercorporeal entanglements, which become undeniable in pregnancy but run along beneath everything we are and do. And like pregnancy, taking the sunaisthetic self seriously gives rise to profound ethical questions: Once we open ourselves to intercorporeity and become implicated in impersonal affect, what ethical demands are made upon us? Can autonomy-based right and reciprocal recognition still capture what we owe to others and to ourselves?

The following two chapters turn to two traditional boundaries of selfhood, death and birth, in their phenomenological significance as mortality and natality. These chapters aim to show how an intercorporeal, sunaisthetic approach to otherness is both more intuitive and more concrete than it may first appear, but also how its traces run beneath our individualistic tendencies, displacing them at their center, and prompting us to rethink selves and others in light of intercorporeality. At the same time, though, these chapters will show how sunaisthetic impulses within and between us issue certain kinds of demands on the sorts of selves we and others can be, pointing toward the dangers that linger and the virtues that beckon. Such lessons may appear particularistic and located, but as I will show, they harbor more general lessons once we fully prepare to take the intercorporeal, sunaisthetic turn.

PART II

CHAPTER 4

MORNING SHADES OF DEATH

Vast like the night and like the light.

—Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

Intercorporeity as the basis of an enactive approach to cognition provokes a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between selves and others that inevitably raises *ethical* concerns of the widest and deepest kind. For to take enactivism seriously means to look at multidimensional "self" organizations within dynamic and precarious organism-environment systems. For Varela—who was influenced by Buddhism as well as phenomenology—enactivism meant we should understand organisms as "a meshwork of selfless selves."[1] Enactivism leads inevitably, on his account, to a "no-self" position. My suggestion, against this grain, is that attention to the affective and intercorporeal dimensions informing inter-enactive approaches might help us catch ethical selves in the process of emerging. Organisms are co-implicated in sense-making projects with other organisms—sense-making projects that also retroactively determine how these organisms understand themselves as ethical agents, characters, or selves. But this is precisely why these processes cry out for special ethical attention. Whatever bases for selfhood neuroscience and philosophy of mind may or may not provide, the notion that entities cooperatively construct environments that retrospectively define their self-understanding as potential agents must be brought to sharper focus. This chapter and the next propose to look at two traditional markers of individuation, selfhood, and agency within the phenomenological tradition—mortality and natality—through

the lens of the affective and choreographic intercorporeity we have been developing thus far.

To briefly review the findings in part 1: chapter 1 traced the concept of co-perception (*sunaisthanesthai*) as the basis for ethical selfhood or virtuous character to the origins of western philosophical thought. For Aristotle, co-perception constituted an alternative to both individually rooted epistemological "common sense" (*koine aisthesis*) and to rhetorical community sense (*endoxa*), neither of which were capable of fostering a robustly ethical self. In lieu of these, and in answer to the open question of the emergence of ethical selfhood prompted by his biological and psychological writings, Aristotle coined the term *sunaisthanesthai* to indicate an event of co-perception that mutually orients two or more organisms toward an emerging, shared world of sense they collaboratively bring into being. For Aristotle, such *sunaisthanesthai* was both natural and normative, with surprising consequences. On the natural level, Aristotle argued that there must be a capacity through which individual members of species coordinate their own sense organs with those of other members of their species in order to forge a practical environment.[2] This merging of sense capacities does not *converge* on an already existing environment for shared action but *creates* it as a theater for practical action. From there, Aristotle proceeds to make his *normative* point. *Sunaisthesis* is not only something we *can* do but something we *ought* to do, insofar as it integrates and capacitates the sensory possibilities of multiple organisms to produce an environment ripe for practical action. Insofar as this means injecting the environment with affects and, for humans, values that stabilize perception and in turn shape the individual species members, this is for humans an inherently ethical, and sometimes an overtly political, act.[3] Each species has its own way of engaging in *sunaisthesis* (*sunaisthanesthai*), and for human beings, according to Aristotle, this way is not only living together but speaking and acting together, building a community through words and deeds. Such a community is epitomized, Aristotle tells us, not by the *polis* (which, as integrated by institutions and formal rules of justice, may or may not echo it) or by the *oikos* (which may provide the natural conditions for it) but by groups of *philoi,* affectively linked "friends and dear ones" engaging in the activities of

friending and loving. Practicing friendship as active *sunaisthanesthai* may therefore be the highest ethical demand.[4]

Chapter 2 explored Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercorporeity as the intertwining of intra- and inter-"subjective" (i.e., corporeal) processes, arguing that his phenomenological insights can provide a more contemporary and informed basis on which to refound a virtue of *sunaisthesis.* Merleau-Ponty's work, supplemented by recent empirical findings in developmental psychology and the cognitive sciences, rearticulates Aristotle's embodied and embedded approach to co-perception. Intercorporeity emphasizes the ways movement and gesture shape bodies and environments. Because of its emphasis on the cocreation of interior and exterior landscapes, intercorporeal *sunaisthanesthai* prompts us to think about ethical *praxis* choreographically, as a bodily opening of expressive possibilities for selves and others. But this requires some rethinking of who these selves and others are to begin with.

Chapter 3 contrasted intercorporeal *sunaisthesis* with traditional approaches to otherness that rely on analogy and scopic interrogation. A wholly intercorporeal basis allows us to reconceive affective and dialogical approaches to others in line with sunaisthetic choreographic praxis. More specifically, I argued that intercorporeity shows how the other announces herself within us affectively as an alien capacity (or incapacity) that calls to us and motivates us to attend to it *as other.* The otherness of the other breaks with interior cognitive or affective chains and lodges in the shared environment through the creation of impersonal affects, blocks of affectively significant *ex*pressions—gestures, works, artifacts, and so on—that bodily *im*press us and guide or motivate novel affections and responses within us.

By focusing on others who bodily affect me by capacitating or obstructing me in novel directions, the others nonetheless remain transcendent to me; what they introduce in me must come from outside of me, since I was not capable of seeing or feeling it before. The affect they introduce, which mingles with my own affections to create new compounds, is in a specific, Deleuzian sense, "impersonal," separate from them and from me and standing on its own to affect us both as *ex*pression. This raises certain ethical quandaries; if the other comes to me as an impersonal affect that I take up in my response to her, have I responded to *her?* Can the

other retain a singular status as an inherently valuable and irreplaceable origin of an *impersonal* affect? And there is a flipside to this question: If I am so easily, basically, and bodily affected by others, as if from within, who am "I" to begin with?

EVERYDAY ISOLATION: SEEKING THE COMMON

So far, the work on *sunaisthesis* and intercorporeity has shown that what we take for granted as intra-"subjective" processes, including so-called proprioception, are throughout infused with and informed by inter-"subjective" ones. The other is not merely beside me, or over and apart from me (though she can be those things as well). She first of all comes to presence for me within me, as an annunciation of something foreign, a capacity or potential *of myself* but not *by myself*. This is to say that she *affects me personally* in *subpersonal ways through impersonal means*. Most of the time, I can function in ignorance of these affects, incorporate them and (mis)take them as "my own." But *ought* I do so? What is the cost of doing so, to myself, and to the other? What, under these *subpersonal* and *impersonal* conditions, can *personally* even mean?

To put this in yet another way, If we admit this degree of intrusion and infection by the other, what can we mean by "self" and "other" at all? We reach the toughest point, then, the point that any "embodied and embedded" or "radically situated" philosophy must confront, as Aristotle also realized. Given that we are beings-in-the-world-bodily-intertwined-with-others, what can we make of selfhood conceived as wholeness, integrity, distinction, and so, ultimately, of ethics and the flourishing of self and other?

Two of the most powerful answers to these abiding questions have come from Heidegger and Arendt with their respective focuses on mortality and natality and the contrary tugs that make up "a life." But while Arendt and Heidegger both understood humans as always embedded in the world, neither paid sufficient attention to the intimate bodily intertwinement of self and other that I have been developing. What I propose to do—in this chapter and the next—is to explore the double bind of mortality and natality not only as these complexly define a life but as they bodily

intertwine us with others while still allowing space, however permeable, for selfhood, otherness, and ethics.

HEIDEGGER: SELFHOOD AS BEING-TOWARD-DEATH

For Heidegger, only being-toward-death could move us from a diffuse being-in-the-world-with-others toward authentic selfhood (*Eigentlichkeit*). Authenticity—literally enownment—requires traversing from experience given generally and vaguely as "mine" (as something that attracts me and provokes my attention and concern) to an active appropriation or "enownment" of my life. To live authentically means transforming a life lived as always "underway"—an oscillating and contingent thrown-projection—into some sort of owned "whole" within the vicissitudes and entanglements of living. Obviously such enownment and achieved wholeness can never be simple or complete: the forces of mundane temporality, embodiment, and sociality always disperse selfhood centripetally, requiring stalwart resistance and resolute action in response.

"Mortality"—as being-toward-death in life—is, according to Heidegger, the only solution to the problem of continuous dispersion that mocks being-in-the-world. We always find ourselves thrown into a wholly contingent situation, not of our choosing or making, in which and out of which we must project a future as a not-yet, as only possible. On what basis can we do so, though?

Heidegger famously points out that we are the "null basis of a nullity," meaning a contingent result of circumstances whose future lies always outside of ourselves. As a nullity with a null basis, we are thrown into a set of possibilities for futures we can envision, choose, and act on. These futures govern actions and choices as a series of "in order tos": in order to do this, I must do that. But for Heidegger no less than for Aristotle, the endless cycle of in-order-tos can only end with a postulate of a "for the sake of something." Yet, Heidegger argues, the ultimate for the sake-of-which of any action or desire can only be the Dasein itself; that is, Dasein must *care* about something beyond what that thing is *good-for* on pain of infinite conversion of any end into a further means and, as means outstrips means, unto meaninglessness.

The problem remains, though, that Dasein, dispersed in a world of pressing concerns, has, and can have, no solid self capable of legitimating itself as the ultimate reference of all values. Whereas values must have worldly ballast to guide action, Dasein is the null-basis of a nullity. The values themselves and therefore even the self as valuing them appear to be as contingent as every other possibility into which I have been thrown. Each possibility, then, appears to be of as little or as great a value as any other, prompting profound anxiety.

But are all values and the future possibilities of realizing them really of equal or exchangeable weight? Amid this dizzying anxiety, it may appear that one future possibility stands out as indeed being ultimate insofar as it puts an end to the chain of all other possibilities for me: death. This realization is double sided. On the one hand, Dasein realizes that death means an end to all possibilities leading to a final and radical dispossession from the self of the only (no)thing it ever possessed: its "own" possibilities. Death as impossible possibility puts an end to the entity for whom existence was a thrown-projection, a continual though contingent reaching toward a future state. Now Dasein is the null basis of a nullity that will be nullified, once and for all. But Heidegger adopts the opposing perspective. For him, death as the ultimate possibility, simultaneously inescapable and im-possible, forms the condition sine qua non for a radical repossession, or enownment, of the chains of in-order-tos that were only ever accidentally "mine." Only when Dasein confronts the possibility of its own impossibility can it return from its dispersion in contingency and an endless, linear temporality where a voracious, moving present will always devour the past and shape the future according to its own narrow purposes.

My death, whenever it will come—and it will inevitably come—is a singular death, radically severing me from all others ("nonrelational") and shutting down all possibilities to revisit, reconstruct, and recontextualize my life ("not to be outstripped"). While all values and goals in life are communally crafted according to networks of worldly, situational possibilities, my death alone as a singular possibility among all possibilities belongs to me alone, and alone allows me to take ownership of the life and the possibilities

that this death will terminate and render impossible once and for all. Being-toward-my-death as a feature of existing—as opposed to my death as an actual, factual event, which is an event for others to endure without me—is what allows me to enown this life span, this thrown-projection, whatever it will be and however it will end. Only from this perspective can each projection become an act of self-definition according to a finite and graspable horizon, converting each choice into part of a whole, a for-the-sake-of-which that defines each living moment as part of *my* life, an authentically lived life.

Because the prospect of my death removes me from the generality of mineness as the lived experience of open-ended thrown-projection and alone facilitates a first-person ownership of a finite life span, it is understandable that, for Heidegger, the death of the other, however devastating it might be for an individual Dasein, can never have the weight that my own ever-imminent death has for my existence. The death of the other can certainly be *lived through* as a world-shattering event, even one that changes or casts my own possibilities into an estranging and altering light. It can also be a heuristic that forces me to face my own death, my own finitude, and therefore the temporal structure of my existence as finite thrown-projection. But for Heidegger, no matter how profoundly the loss of another affects us, it cannot prompt the existential conversion occasioned by being-toward-my-own-death. Death as impossible possibility is the only *pure* possibility, and therefore the only thing about my living that is *purely and nonderivatively mine.* Through it and its absolute negating power alone can I reappropriate the other kinds of negation that inhabit "my" life; the contingency of being thrown into a world of values and entities I did not choose and the uncertainty and indeterminacy of all projections toward an open future.

Only Being-toward-death can individualize a Dasein whose very worldliness renders it thoroughly pervious. Heidegger assumes a vague and general mineness of experience (any experience I can have must by definition be an experience *for-me*) and works toward an ownness (authenticity) accomplished by taking responsibility for this, my finite life. Affective intercorporeity, by contrast, calls this very starting point in mineness into question; experience is necessarily shaped by and shared with coparticipants and mineness emerges as

both a loss and an accomplishment with *sunaisthanesthai* or shared perception at its root. Is death, then, which is distinctively mine in the ways just articulated, irrelevant to processes of *sunaisthanesthai?* Or is death, the corruption of embodied vitality, a blind spot in or cul-de-sac for any embodied account of self and other, an abyss that reveals *sunaisthanesthai* as always derivative or even inauthentic?

In what follows, I will maintain that death is every bit as ontologically significant but also as paradoxical for my sunaisthetic account as it was definitive for Heidegger's. In sunaisthetic terms, though, it is not my *own* death that is key but rather the death of the other—something that Heidegger took to have only ontical significance as an intraworldly event. I will argue against this that death, as David Grossman expresses it, entails the other's radical "falling out of time." This falling out of time provokes mineness through a complex and intricate process of loss-accomplishment, perhaps better caught in literature and psychoanalysis, to date, than in philosophy. Rending the fine mesh of coherence *sunaisthanesthai* had woven, the other's drastic falling out of time reveals a lingering but attenuated sunaisthetic presence often passed over in life. The death of the other, at whatever age it occurs, creates the sad condition of "adult solitude" (Merleau-Ponty) that makes mineness haunt us like fate. To get at this experience of falling out of time, let us look to some antinomies of the death of the other and its manifestations —phenomenalizations—in the experience of mourning.

DEATH AND AFFECT

> Surely it makes a difference whether the [person] for whom one has feelings is thought to be [alive], and yet it is not so clear just what difference it makes.
>
> —T. Cohen, *Thinking of Others*

Phenomenology has paid a great deal of attention both to death and to otherness, but there is a phenomenology and an ethics of being with the dead other that has received much less philosophical attention than its significance and paradoxical nature seem to warrant. Laplanche blames a similar lack within psychoanalysis

on a naive realism that would insist that the dead other does not exist.[5] And this is certainly true if we think of the dead other as an object, in which case the other is reduced to a corpse that will sooner or later decompose. Phenomenologists, however, ought to know better than to locate the other there, in this inert item, since what makes others others is that they can never be (mere) objects. But even for phenomenologists, if the self and the other are conceived in terms of a living, corporeal self-relation (*Leib*) or a being-toward-death or an auto-affecting temporality or any other familiar phenomenological formula—surely all of these markers disappear with the factual death of a corporeal other. Thus, it is difficult not to agree with Heidegger that all authentic being-with-the-other must disappear along with the corpse, since there is simply no other there to be with.

Yet for anyone who takes an embodied, affective approach to others—as we have done—the matter cannot be so simple. For from the first-person perspective of the bereaved, the dead other surely continues to produce powerful bodily affect and does so in a way that is dynamic, surprising, and singular—wrapped up in every way with the longed for *singular, irreplaceable, other.* Whether within or outside of a psychoanalytic perspective, we are much too quick to pathologize or trivialize the nearly universal experience of the bereaved, what I have called, echoing Merleau-Ponty, the abiding condition of "adult solitude." Confronting a survivor in acute mourning, we may whisper, One must go through this, and one must "get over it." We are willing to read devastating accounts of mourning such as Didion's *A Year of Magical Thinking* only because in it "one's" mourning is already put in the past: A Year! Thank God that is done.[6]

Still, there is plenty of evidence, compelling and sane—from literature and blogs, elegies, mythologies, ethnologies, and case studies—that from the first-person point of view of the survivors, the dead dear one continues to affect us actively many years beyond the so-called acute mourning stage, probably for the whole of our remaining lives. No third-person psychoanalytical account of mourning and melancholia, introjection and incorporation, will convince the honest bereaved person that the singular embodied affects the dead person continues to arouse in her are

merely projective/introjective acts of narcissism or auto-affection. In the utter solitude of loss, which no living other can take from me, including other grieving survivors, I am nonetheless affected in a *singular way* by this *singular, unsubstitutable, absent* other. Though she is *really, truly* gone, *irretrievably* gone, it is *she* who continues to affect me—I do not affect myself (or when I do, I am frequently aware that I am doing so, e.g., using the absence of the other to feel sorry for myself). Such acts of self-affection can be contrasted to those other, equally real occasions when suddenly, with no meditative or reflective self-prompting, I see something through her eyes, or find her words in my mouth. Her otherness and distance from me has never been more acute than after her death—there is an uncrossable abyss between us—and yet her ability to affect me, *through me,* as if within me, remarkably remains, beyond her death.

So how ought a serious phenomenologist confront the powerful appearance of the dead's continuing power in and over us? Can this phenomenon say anything about *the dead, as singular others,* or must we insist, positivistically, that such phenomena can only ever be about *us,* our sickness or health, our auto-affection? And if it is—despite its arbitrary affective violence, like a blow—only ever about us, does that equally imply that all affective response, which we take in day-to-day life to be *responsive to* the other, a genuine other, might also be exposed as always and only about us? What is the difference, if there is one, between affects aroused by the living and by the dead? Finally, what if anything might the dead other, as a radically and irredeemably other Other, teach us about Otherness and affect in general?

THE ANTINOMY OF THE DEAD OTHER

> Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove
>
> —Shakespeare, Love Sonnet 116

Let us think through a certain antinomy in relation to the death of a loved other. It is a question that can, as Shakespeare knew, be asked

of any loving relationship that undergoes significant change but takes on special force when the "alteration" in question is death: If I love someone, and she dies, must my love for her also change?

Intuitively, both negative and positive answers to this question seem impossibly wrong. If I say yes, it does change, then something in the quality of the original love appears to be weak, needy, or selfish. The love appears to be based on something I want or need from the deceased, something that she can no longer provide (through no fault of her own, presumably, and suicide may be an exceptional case prompting a certain subset of grief responses). So we might think that a person whose love changes or even ceases when the loved one dies did not really *love the other,* only what she could get from the other—a relationship of "pleasure" or "use" as Aristotle might say. Even if the things I needed or wanted from the other were of the most admirable sorts, virtuous, sparkling qualities of character—her surprising company, her sage advice—if my love alters after her death, it is what she offers to me that I seem to love, not *her.* And this seems to violate much of what we think we are talking about when we talk about love.

Yet one might still want to insist that the love changes, but only because the change the loved one has undergone in dying is of a categorically different nature than ordinary ontic changes, such as aging, weight fluctuations, even betrayal. Such love is then not dependent solely on the affected subject but on the departed other in a way that reaches beyond merely identifiable properties, summarized in an obituary. So while there may be very real practical and ethical issues of how much change in the loved other any love ought to tolerate, dying seems to far surpass the issue of our ability or obligation to continue to love someone who has, say, gotten a new job, left us, joined Alcoholics Anonymous, or become an irritable insomniac. As detailed in the first section, it seems more accurate to say, in agreement with Heidegger, that not only has the departed one changed but that she has changed in a very specific sense insofar as she is *no longer capable of change:* she is no longer a Dasein, a Being-in-the-World or thrown-projection that we might toss our fate in with. There is no being-with possible with her anymore, since there is no more possibility *for her.*

This more accurate formulation seems also to reach a deeper truth about love. We love an other not insofar as they are mere objects with properties, pleasant or otherwise, but insofar as they are subjects, others, or better, Dasein, sources of possibility in themselves, oriented, like us, toward creative futures. If they die, and their possibility becomes impossible, our love for them qua a possibility directed toward their (and our) possibilities (authentic solicitude, as Heidegger would say) must likewise end.[7]

This is a highly plausible account of love and of loss, and yet it too raises *aporias*. First, what does it mean to love someone in their possibilities, what they are *not yet?* If we only love someone for what they *are not yet,* can we be said to *love them at all?* Either we love their possibilities, and therefore love something that they *are not,* which seems counterintuitive, or we love them as *having* these particular possibilities, for example, having them as a latency, which risks subordinating possibility again to actuality and turning Dasein back into an object with properties, albeit now latent or potential ones. It would again be the properties we love, which we estimate as standing a good chance of coming into being—rather than their ownmost and pure possibility, their existence.

A route that reduces possibilities even to dispositional propensities would, as Heidegger thinks, surely eradicate any possibility of an authentic or existential-ontological relationship to the dead other. Mourning would then have no more than *existentiell-ontic* significance—it would be essentially narcissistic. When we mourn the dead other, what we really mourn on this account are the possibilities they will never actualize in *our* world, "what" they will never become, not the being-toward possibility that they were, their "who" as a Dasein actively constructing an authentic life for themselves.

On this basis, Heidegger trivializes the often world-shattering significance (or antisignificance) of mourning. If I can only love another with authentic solicitude for so long as they are a being-possible-for-themselves, then mourning seems to be a case of mere loss of one possibility among others *in my world,* perhaps ontically more acute but ontologically indistinguishable from a loss of the present-to-hand or ready-to-hand things that populate my world.

But this is not the experience of mourning; what has died with the beloved other but died incompletely is not only the possibility-for-the-sake-of themselves of the other but the we-possibility of the other within me and the world we could cocreate. It has died, that is, in one sense, as a cohabitation within time, but it lives on in another sense that only now becomes *mine,* alone.

Let us now consider the other side of the question and agree with Shakespeare that love does not change when the other changes, even in the radical case of the death of the other. The initial implausibility of this idea might be overcome if we retain the possibility that the core that comprises the (unchanged) love might remain constant even while entering into new combinations with interior affective streams of pain, longing, anger, and so on. One might even go so far as to say that in death the core love could solidify into an essence purified of the extrinsic irritations and volatility of a love lived together, in the day-to-day demands of mundane concern. While those around mourners may deride this process of purification as a sentimental tendency to "idealize" the departed and the relationship to them, perhaps even attributing it to guilt or bad faith on the part of the bereaved, this very process could be read, on the contrary, as a sorting through and rejection of various narcissistic associations, allowing them to fall away precisely as extrinsic to the nature of a love too often obscured by those same needs and associations while the beloved lived. A love that in life flickered and scorched may then become a steady flame that continues to affect—warm and illuminate—the chaotic life of the survivor who continues to shift around and through it. Does this outcome risk in any way demeaning the lost loved one, reducing her to a mere sentiment within the survivors?

The intuition that it might lies in this: If love is an affective relationship *between* us, and the loved one is gone, how can the love continue? Isn't love in this purified state precisely purified . . . *of the other?* Isn't the loved one, as a separate being, an independent origin or source of affects, yet again reduced to something within my control, a locus of auto-affection? Doesn't she become an internalized object rather than a Dasein who inspires by existing, only thus becoming worthy of genuine love?

If there is anything to these protests, it seems to be that the pivot to avoid a superficially narcissistic version of love lands us instead in a profoundly narcissistic romantic excess. In such romantic love, all that matters is my affective sentiment in relation to the other—not any qualities, capacities, activities, and so on of the loved other herself. (See the tradition from *Don Quixote* to *Lucinda* and beyond.) When confronted with the death of the other, such romantic love tends toward a necrophilia that might even be caught *preferring* the death of a loved one, the better to preserve our love for her in its truest and least corruptible state, removed from the vicissitudes of age, weakness, and irritation.

MELANCHOLIC INCORPORATION

Is there a way out of this antinomy of affect with the dead other? After the discussion in chapter 3, we might suspect that such antinomies are provoked by the persistent oscillation between subjective and objective approaches, and that affective, dialogical intercorporeity might help us resist this. Freud's early work on mourning remains wed to the "objective" approach to the other. He promotes a therapeutic exorcism in which the successful mourner does the "work" of transforming the dead other from a cathected object—a source of libidinal affect—to an ordinary representative object, thereby making way for new libidinal attachments via the reality principle. In short, in "healthy" mourning, the bereaved agrees to survive the death of the beloved, transform her into a mere proper name that designates an absent object, in order to reestablish a full range of libidinal objects to accompany flourishing life instincts. Here mourning indicates an ideally temporary negation of life drives that is to be overcome through survival as a negation of that negation.

In pathological cases, by contrast, mourning passes into melancholia, in which the other becomes installed as a fantasy object, now attracting destructive libidinal drives directed against the narcissistic self that harbors the object. Such pathology may take many forms, but all must be combatted. Interestingly, though, a more mature Freud, entering "adult solitude" after the death of his daughter, backed down from a decisive distinction between

mourning and melancholia. He writes to Biswanger: "Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually, this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish."[8] In this important shift, Freud moves beyond an either/or of mourning and melancholia and acknowledges that the dead other remains unsubstitutable and will always remain "something else"—that is, really other, never fully incorporated into any libidinal *or* representative economy.

Abraham and Torok suggest a way to alleviate the sharp contrast between mourning and melancholia, viewing "healthy" mourning as a *process* of introjection, whereas pathological or melancholic mourning involves the "incorporation" of a fantasy object. This suggests that the way out of the antinomy discussed above is to dissolve the language of objects into that of processes. Instead of looking for ways to retain the lost other as a literal but now intra-psychic object—the way melancholic incorporation seeks to do—a process of introjection allows the mourner to replace the lost object with processes of meaningful speech. The process of introjection allows the self to be enlarged as it puts "the original oral void" provoked by the loss into words through a metaphorical displacement of the loss into a new capacity to forge libidinal ties not *to* substitutional objects but *through* speaking about the loss.[9]

Such solution helpfully emphasizes the pathological nature of exploiting the death of an other in order to turn that other once and for all into a narcissistic object for me, for the sake of me—the risk of morbid romanticism. But despite that considerable advantage, several severe problems remain.

First, the implication that "incorporation" must have pejorative and objectifying features is misleading. Viewed from the perspective of intercorporeity, incorporation might refer instead to a positive and continual process of bodily receptivity to the other—even when, as in the case of death, the other is "no longer there" in the flesh—rather than a transformation of the other into

a fixed fantasy object installed in the self.[10] We will return to this perhaps initially odd sounding suggestion below.

Second, Abrahams and Torok's process of introjection remains too tied to the individual speaking subject without allowing for the "gap," the "something else," that is, the genuine contribution of otherness. It is not enough to focus on mourning as a process of the speaking subject as opposed to a directedness toward the dead object. A genuine "solution" to the antinomy of the dead other must—as we have seen more generally concerning the antinomy of otherness—dissolve the subject/object distinction altogether. But we have argued that this dissolution takes place through a proper understanding of the intercorporeal affection between bodies, and it remains to see how that can take place once the body of the other is irrevocably lost.

If intercorporeal affection means that the living other always manifests in affective relationships that are within me but also beyond me, beyond my control, then the successful work of mourning would seem to demand allowing the dead other to affect me beyond her bodily presence as a "something else"—something other to me. The process of introjection described by Abraham and Torok seems to remain too firmly *our* process—what is to prevent the process of introjection from being arbitrary or even mercenary, fitting the dead other to the needs of a living dialogue with another other? It seems that even in this reworked version, healthy mourning continues to require us to "put the other to death in order to survive her," though the survival, in this case, would be the construction of a narratable other confined to the changing contours of our own experience of loss.

I suspect that Merleau-Ponty would not be satisfied with this outcome. In his essay "The Philosopher and his Shadow," he explicitly formulates a way of reading texts that spills over from our animate relations to others and thereby explicitly attempts to escape narcissistic processes of introjection and projection. In intercorporeity, he insists, "the other, in my eyes, is thus always on the margin of what I see and hear, he is this side of me, he is beside or behind me, but he is not in that place which my look flattens and empties of any 'interior.'"[11] In other words, regarding the living other, our relation to her is neither one of introjection-projection

nor of one-sided incorporation but of mutual incarnation through shared perception. The other is always she who adds depth to my perception, as I add depth to hers, as our perspectives link in co-perception. The animate other is capable of impregnating me with her sensibility; she alters me from within and thus enlivens me. But if this is true of the animate other, what of the dead one? Might Merleau-Ponty lead us past the shadows all the way to survival not as putting the other to death (again) but as a kind of reincarnation through intercorporeity? And if so, might this mean that psychoanalysis has been misconceiving even the process of mourning as "work" all along? In a context where the other may truly be conceived as other, it may well be better to speak of a *praxis*—in Arendt's sense—of mourning. Mourning is not a "work" of establishing objects but a plural creation of shared contexts of action and meaning with no predictable or predetermined trajectory.

DARK SHADOWS: MERLEAU-PONTY AND THE APOLOGY FOR INCORPORATION

An affective approach to the other based in intercorporeity holds that the other reaches us directly through the bodily affections she elicits through the creation of affects in the space between us (e.g., upon her face, which is not visible to her). If I see a suffering child, I am directly pained, even if retroactively I recognize the "source" of this pain to be exogenous; it comes from an other and teaches me something about this other while entrenching me in a shared affectively inflected world impossible before the advent of this other.[12] The "other" is experienced as that which introduces an abrupt and discontinuous *alter*ation in my affective trajectory as this coheres my sense of self and world. For Sartre, the other alone was capable of inserting a dimension of Shame where there could have been none without her. For us, the affective range the other elicits is much wider than shame and its mechanics of objectification—affect occurs between us in the world as a material meeting place of affected bodies—but the other still announces herself always through affective *alter*ation within me.

We have suggested that this intercorporeal, affective approach might defeat three varieties of reductive violence toward others: (1) that of a master-slave dialectic where each vies for the title of subject at the price of objectifying the other; (2) that of a narrative core that weaves the third person about privileged first-person perspectives; and (3) that of an analogy where I stand always as a first-term or standard to measure the other. In contrast, the affective intercorporeal approach sees us as piecemeal, combinatory, and fluid, in search of coherences that give meaning to each of us. But danger lurks here as well; with an affective approach, might self and other be so torn asunder—decomposed into elements of an impersonal composition in the making and only retrospectively and provisorily re-collected into self-standing unities—that the terms lack individual meaning altogether?[13] This chapter has been suggesting that a phenomenology of death—both as a radical boundary for the self a la Heidegger and as a radical loss and separation of and from the other—might test the ethical viability of affective, intercorporeal approaches to others. So far we have mostly run into antinomies and blind alleys, and the proximity to psychoanalysis might even lead us to wonder if intercorporeal affectivity might share with the death drive itself a will to decomposition into dispersed elements, on the one hand, and to a totalizing convergence or a monism of stillness beyond all silence on the other.

We have postulated that an adequate phenomenology and ethics of mourning would need to capture both the potency of *the affective capacity* of the dead person, whose body is no longer "with" us and therefore cannot be the original source of this affect, and her *separate singularity* beyond the way her death *affects us*. The death of the other is particularly suited to exploring the possible limits of Merleau-Ponty's approach because intercorporeity appears to rely on the living presence of another's body actively affecting my body. But doesn't this mean, despite strong, recurrent testimony, that the death of her body must mean exactly that the other can no longer "truly" or "really" affect me? Merleau-Ponty must be able to show how, *through intercorporeity*, an *incorporeal* (no longer corporeal) other can have lingering *corporeal* affects, and how these might issue from a place where

the alterity of the other can yet be maintained. Merleau-Ponty explores just this through his essay in honor of Husserl and through a phenomenology of shadows.

A. Animacy and Intercorporeity

Like Husserl before him, in whose "shadow" he places himself, Merleau-Ponty approaches the other directly through the living, animate body. But unlike Husserl, Merleau-Ponty claims that I do not begin as a living, animate body who views an object-body "over there" and must work back from this third-person perspective to a first-person one. Instead, the other directly impacts me, but not, as Sartre would have it, by imposing her first-person perspective on me and transforming me into an object. For while Sartre made great strides toward an affective approach to the Other, his conception of affect was too mired in subjectivity and therefore in pathos. To be affected by the other for Sartre meant being rendered passive, pathetic; if I respond to this freely, it can only be as a *reaction* to, a rebellion *against,* my passive state. But Merleau-Ponty does not merely flip Sartre on his head, as Levinas might be understood to do when he argues that the other does not objectify, but rather subjectifies me, both by holding me hostage and by enabling me to act ethically. Nor is a simple switch to a second-person, dialogical perspective sufficient, insofar as this might be reductively viewed as turn-taking by first-person subjects.

Instead, Merleau-Ponty endorses a complex view of the body of myself and of the other in keeping with his switch from intersubjectivity to intercorporeity and from passive pathos to active affect. He tells us that "each one of us is pregnant with the others and confirmed by them in his body."[14] The other announces herself as a pregnancy; I discover her from within my body, as she alters it through her own distinctive powers, creating new perspectives and capacities (and sometimes incapacities) that did not exist before this encounter with her otherness. According to intercorporeal affectivity, the other affects me bodily with her bodily being: her breathing, tone of voice, posture, movement through space. All of these impact and may be taken up by me in conscious and very often unconscious—what Merleau-Ponty calls

esthesiological—ways, affecting what I perceive and think and say and feel.[15] Merleau-Ponty says that the "riddle" of *Einfühlung* is solved the moment that we realize that empathy is not an emotion but itself a kind of perception—a perception that is active, situational, and perceives that all perceiving is "never a matter of anything but co-perception."[16]

The living other invites me, beckons me, implores me, or even forces me to participate in this co-perception. She does this through the activities of her expressive bodily interactions with me and with the world. But Merleau-Ponty insists the animacy of the other isn't exhausted in the capacity of the perceived expressions to affect my perceptions and expressions. Merleau-Ponty writes: "This is what *animalia* and men are: absolutely present beings who have a wake of the negative. A perceiving body that I see is also a certain absence that is hollowed out and tactfully dealt with behind that body by its behavior. But absence is itself rooted in presence."[17] Behavior, affected and affecting, hollows out a space of whence and whither that never exactly coincides with the affects that reach me and settle around and within me to announce the other to me. In the face of my being-affected, there is always something more that I may try to anticipate or re-create, even while the behavior affects me, becomes a part of me, alters me toward new expressions that are my own but not wholly my own, bearing impress of this Other with whom I can never exactly coincide.

In light of so dynamic a theory of intercorporeal affect between living bodies, the dead other would seem to stand, still and silent, at the opposite pole. The presence of her body and expressive behavior is gone from me forever, and with it the "absence" that allowed her behaviors to glance me but kept their origins and destinations at a distance, thereby harboring futurity in their ability to affect me anew. If the living other was a present absence, the dead other would seem to be an absent absence. What kind of absence is this? Does it amount to an absolute absence: a "nothing" as "realists" like the early Freud suppose? Why, then, does it feel from the mourner's perspective—instead, and so dreadfully—like a harrowingly absent presence?

Merleau-Ponty answers surely: "Negativities" also count in the sensible world—an answer that hearkens back to the beginning

of the "Philosopher and His Shadow," where he insists that shadows and reflections are not "nothing." And while the opening to this profound essay might reasonably be read as a preemptive apologia for the exegetical excess to come (as Derrida believes) or as mere methodological musings, it actually reveals the very heart of the matter: namely, how to conceive of an other intercorporeally but nonprojectively and nonintrojectively—that is, nonnarcissistically—and it does so precisely through an absent, deceased other, whose presence nonetheless remains palpable.

B. Death and Intercorporeity

Before offering his interpretation of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty empathizes with the grieving colleagues and students of Husserl, while gently distancing himself from two types of interpretation their warranted grief might prompt: "Like all those near to us, Husserl present in person (and in addition to the genius's power to fascinate and to deceive) could not, I imagine, leave those surrounding him in peace. Their whole philosophical life must have lain for a time in that extraordinary and inhuman occupation of being present at the continuing birth of a way of thinking, and of helping it exist as communicable thought."[18] But he continues, "Husserl's death and their own growth . . . committed them to adult solitude." In their melancholic grief, they may try to shore up an unassailable Husserl-object and defend its solidity against all interpreters or interlopers; they might seek to *"canonize" an official* Husserl. Alternatively, they may reject or repress their own youthful dependency and the vulnerability of the very philosophical births Husserl facilitated within them, claiming that these conceptions are immaculate ones now that the overshadowing father is maddeningly dead. But Merleau-Ponty enjoins them instead to let their grief give way to the shadows that provide Husserl's motifs with "full relief," such that their solitude may give rise again to new births, engendered by this other who is now corporally absent but may yet "occupy a place all his own" within the bereaved. In this way, one could argue, not only interpreting disciples—who after all have the benefit of texts and thought-things left behind by the lost one—but *all* mourners might reincarnate the mourned through themselves, as they

open their perception to new depths and dimensions impossible without the shadowy place of the other. Authors leave behind texts and tracts, but *all* of the living leave their traces, if only on and in the bodies of the bereaved and creviced worlds they inhabit. For this reason, interpretation—but only a certain kind of interpretation—can point toward a proper, phenomenologically satisfying way of being with the dead other.

The problem of interpretation, Merleau-Ponty asserts in these opening paragraphs, is intimately linked to the problem of the "communication of 'egos'" which, he notes with some irony, the dead Husserl did not leave us without resources to confront. But Merleau-Ponty's decision to leave *egos* in quotes foretells his objection to Husserl's approach, while respecting its productive resistance, and sets the tone for the kind of interpretation he will go on to endorse and practice. His conception of interpretation, like his approach to "others" in general, hangs on the double genitive in the phrase (used as the title of another, related essay) "the perception of the other." We must pause to allow this phrase to puzzle us. For if the "perception of the other" is our goal, our object, and we mean it to be the perception that the other possesses, we shall never reach it. How can I ever know how you perceive the red dress we both admire? But if we understand the object of the genitive instead to be the other herself, we are still in trouble. For how can we ever perceive the other—that is, what makes her other, *her otherness?* If I perceive her, it is as an object, and then I have already lost *her,* her *otherness,* which is what I presumably set out to perceive.

The double genitive means instead of either of these alternatives that "the perception of the other" involves us in the same strange process of convertibility and indiscernibility witnessed in Aristotelian *sunaisthanesthai.* Merleau-Ponty expresses it like this: "I borrow myself from others; I create others from my own thoughts. This is no failure to perceive others; it is the perception of others." Notice the importance of possession (my *own* thoughts) but also its denial or impossibility (I *borrow* myself from others). In "The Philosopher and His Shadow," Merleau-Ponty does not shy from stating that all perception—which we have already seen is always co-perception—is more dispossession than possession.

This is because perception—like interpretation—draws me out of myself in an ek-stasis toward the other and toward the world. Merleau-Ponty continues: "We would not overwhelm them [the others] with our importunate comments, we would not stingily reduce them to what is objectively certified of them, if they were not there for us to begin with. Not to be sure with the frontal evidence of a thing, but installed athwart our thought and, like *different selves of our own,* occupying a region which *belongs to no one else but them.*"[19] Being different selves *of our own,* they nonetheless occupy a region *within us, athwart us,* that *belongs to no one else but them.* Merleau-Ponty uses this metaphor of occupation to parse Heidegger's notorious idea that "the greater the work accomplished . . . the richer the unthought-of element in that work. That is, the richer is that which, through this work and through it alone, comes toward us as never yet thought of."[20] Like Laplanche's notion of an enigmatic message, the other implants in us something which we do not quite understand—because it is other, has it source in a genuine other—but which in another sense *we must understand,* insofar as we respond to it and in doing so give it sense. Abraham *does not understand* what God means in asking him to sacrifice his promised son, the bridge toward a covenanted future, nor does the author of *Fear and Trembling understand* how Abraham could have agreed to do so. But their nonunderstanding creates the understanding retroactively—this is the sort of interpretation that Merleau-Ponty seems to recommend with respect to the dead other: to be traversed with the life of the other (which I cannot understand, which intrudes on me from an epic past to inform my living present) *and* her death (which I cannot understand and intrudes on me as an absolute, unchanging present: [n]evermore!)

But we cannot stop there. We must combine this death-soaked approach to interpretation with Merleau-Ponty's guiding metaphor of pregnancy as the affective access to the other. We can then see that interpretation is always also *re*production, an act that creates something that is neither strictly speaking "there" in the written work nor is it a "projection" of our own thought onto the work. The unthought "comes to us" and "through us" but could not be created by ourselves alone, without the contribution

of the other. Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty aims for an interpretive approach in which "the philosopher who is speaking" and the "philosopher who is spoken about" are "present together" "although it is not possible even in principle to decide at any given moment *just what belongs to each*."[21]

Such an interpretation is possible on Merleau-Ponty's account only if we refrain from viewing articulations as "objects of thought" which would provoke a false dichotomy between "objective interpretation" and "arbitrariness," thereby leaving the edifice of possession and appropriation intact. Instead, Merleau-Ponty enjoins us to view these articulations as themselves "shadows and reflections" "which are not things and are not nothing, but on the contrary mark out by themselves the fields of possible variation in the same thing and the same world."[22] Just as reflection allows us to create a new "I" in the act of a perceiving that seems to presuppose that "I" that is doing the perceiving, so "shadows"—which are not things—allow us to find ourselves in the presence of an "absent" but still affecting other. If we turn to confront the shadow head-on, like an object, it will be flat, distorted, or disappear altogether. But if we allow ourselves to be overshadowed, our perceptions will change and give way to "other" perceptions, glimpses of possibilities latent in our supposedly illuminated, perceived world.

The word *shadow* in "The Philosopher and His Shadow" can now unfold in its multiple meanings and their co-implications for our topic: the shadow cast by a great philosopher on those of us who come after him; the shadow of the unthought that could not be thought by the mourned-for person while she lived, sometimes because it trailed behind her, sometimes because it blocked the illumination in front of her; the shadow that adds dimension, or casts things into relief; and even the shades or shadowy presence of others who continue to affect us though their bodies are absent. These are all profound and provocative nouns. But as a verb, *to shadow* also means to follow along in an effort to see what the other does, to reenact their movements within my own body, and therefore to enact their perception within myself. For Merleau-Ponty, to be faithful to a thinker is neither to construct a corpus to be installed within the history of philosophy (which is not a

fiction but is a "Husserl, disencumbered of his life," put to death by his survivors) nor to respect that life only by bearing tenacious and frozen, hostile or adoring, witness to "my" memories of the no-longer-living author. Both of these approaches reify and objectify the dead. Instead, Merleau-Ponty calls on us to willingly take up residence in the shadows the dead cast and let their play with light inaugurate a "thinking again."[23] The shadows cast by a real, singular—though now dead—other guide the shadow-plays we continue to construct in surviving, living through their absence.

ETHICS: WHAT THE DEAD OTHER TEACHES US ABOUT OTHERNESS

> I have known for a long time:
> it is you
> who decides
> how to appear in me
> and when. You,
> not I, who chooses
> how to speak
>
> —D. Grossman, *Falling Out of Time*

In the beginning of this chapter, I said that a phenomenology of being with the dead other must be able to account for the continuous affective impact the dead have on us while allowing that this impact has its origin in something that remains singular and genuinely other to us. Any account of self and other—philosophical or psychological—that diminishes the experience of bereavement is overlooking a profound and general human experience to its own detriment. But we have seen that even Heidegger's unsurpassed phenomenology of our own being-toward-death could not adequately account for the significance of the death of the other on our selfhood, understood affectively. We therefore turn now to the testimony of literature to help us chase a phenomenon so elusive, banal, and terrorizing to a core that it creates.

> O brother, taken from me miserable! with thee, all our joys have vanished, those joys which, in thy life, thy dear love nourished. Dying, thou, my brother, hast destroyed all my happiness. My whole soul is buried with thee. Through

> whose death I have banished from my mind these studies, and all the delights of the mind. Shall I address thee? I shall never hear thy voice. Never shall I behold thee hereafter? O brother, dearer to me than life. Naught remains, but assuredly I shall ever love thee.[24]

Derrida, thinking of Montaigne's great essay, remarks on the special connection of friendship and mourning, where the former is infused by the latter.[25] From the study of Aristotle in chapter 1 we can see that this arises from the nature of an always punctual sunaisthetic alliance with the other: the accord of a sensory coherence that can at any time initiate or break off, leaving us with a sensation that is as if yours or mine, though it has always already been brought about, empowered, affected each by the other. Yet this chance of slipping away, out of accord, with the other brings an intimation of their death, of a loss of mutual affective empowerment or intensification. The death of the other inhabits and harbors their otherness as a constant imminence of withdrawal. In loving them, we take their possible absence upon ourselves as part of their empowering or disempowering presence. The other affects me, but I may in my very affection be led beyond or elsewhere, and the other will slip out of my grasp. If she is a living other, this slippage will be part of a larger choreography; it is itself part of the power she has engendered in me, a power that can, in principle, allow us to find each other again. In this way, the living other temporalizes me as we fuse and re-fuse. The death of the other that I fear is a future beyond restitution, when the other will be fully gone from me, leaving me to be fully my own, on my own: adult solitude. But this fear is part of my *living* relation to the other. The actual death of the other, and my survival—my living with the dead other—will temporalize me in a more radical way still.

Roland Barthes's *Mourning Diary* captures this temporality.[26] The death of the loved other constitutes a radical event, a *before* and *after* that colors every experience. Barthes repeatedly remarks on the changed character of his solitude, of his writing, which he insists he had always kept separate from his now dead mother. And yet, although always separate, it is not the same solitude after she dies. This new "adult" solitude is a solitude of privation,

an ownness I gather with the other in mind, and a solitude of deprivation, where the loved one is equidistant in her absence. A mourner may lament, I will no longer focus on what she is focusing on; my heart will no longer speed up as she excitedly conveys the events of her day; I will no longer feel my body relax in her warm and embracing arms. But her absence will nonetheless act as a temporalizing marker in a very specific and dimensional way: on the one hand, as a fixed point of loss, ageless, on the other, as a motivating presence she reincarnates through me as I take up or "interpret" her bodily traces within my own body at times of her bidding, not mine.

For Barthes, suffering took on a solidity that measured out the remainder of life. He would proceed with life, having dinners and traveling, shopping, meeting friends, writing and preparing courses. But at any moment, the pain could overtake him, a pain he felt was without movement or variation; a monolithic suffering that could return at any prompt. It did not age or weaken. But what is this eternal return? Mustn't a loving relation be dynamic, change with the partners who carry it? Is this monolithic, unchanging pain the very meaning of the other's death? To be deprived of the dance of affective presence and absence that temporalizes me and makes for mineness?

Three-quarters of the way to the end of the diary, Barthes quotes approvingly Proust's wise words to a grieving friend:

> Now there is one thing I can tell you: you will enjoy certain pleasures you would not fathom now. When you still had your mother you often thought of the days when you would have her no longer. Now you will often think of days past when you had her. When you are used to this horrible thing that they will forever be cast into the past, then you will gently feel her revive, returning to take her place, her entire place, beside you. At the present time, this is not yet possible. Let yourself be inert, wait till the incomprehensible power . . . that has broken you restores you a little, I say a little, for henceforth you will always keep something broken about you. Tell yourself this, too, for it is a kind of pleasure to know that you will never love less, that you will

> never be consoled, and you will constantly remember more and more.[27]

Barthes struggles to find the traces of his mother within him, and he despairs when he realizes that his very suffering in her absence makes him less able to embody the *values* of selflessness, generosity, and kindness that he realizes must be her greatest bequest to him. He is caught in a paradox: the suffering that he takes to hold the place of his loving relation blocks him from being that which he most loved her for being. But gradually he finds a new access to her. Strangely, he finds her animating his work, the product of the very solitude and progress he jealously guarded from her while she was alive. His initial desire to make a monument to her increasingly gives way to "something else."

Obliquely, Barthes's mother returns to him, to be "beside" him in a place—"her entire place"—but one he never permitted her to occupy, despite his love for her, while she was alive. He discovers she is not in the suffering that laments her loss, nor is she in the frontal place as a monument or an exemplar of the values he associates with her and would try to imitate. She does not return, as he learns from Nietzsche, and one might say, against a youthful Freud, as an idol to be prayed to, but as something to be blessed. She existed, her values affected and made whole, cocreated a coherence, for a time. She empowered and affected Barthes, and the "work" of mourning turns out to be a praxis of taking up that affect, making it effective, allowing the affectivity of the other to live even beyond the other's death, allowing that death, that affecting act, too, as Grossman would have it, to live:

> He is dead.
> he is
> dead. But
> his death
> his death
> is not dead.[28]

Nothing of this denies the suffering or the implacable and repetitive nature of it amid the stupidities of survival. I feel the

affectivities of the dead other on me in my living present, and this may be a kind of Proustian pleasure, the pleasure of a *sunaisthesis* that adds a roundness, an excess, to any pleasure experienced in a now banished isolation. But my suffering and loss is no less real; it is no less one of her affects. I am broken. She affects me, persists in her intercorporeal contact, but I suffer in that the circuit is broken. The flesh coils back upon itself, harboring her pulsing absence. She can no longer take me up. She touches but cannot quite be touched, lest her "you" dissolve into a "her"; her "there" that shadows and "deepens" my here become eclipsed and flattened by its greedy, insistent light. Grossman explains:

> This void.
> this absence,
> death alone can render—
> and it is not at all
> a disappearance,
> a cessation,
> nothingness.
> It has one final place,
> a window opened
> just a crack, where still
> the absence breathes, still loosened,
> palpitating, where one can still
> touch the *here,*
> still almost feel
> the warming hand that touches
> *there.*[29]

The possibility that *I* will be taken up by this irreplaceable you is what has become impossible, shut off forever from both of us. While her possibilities continue to reverberate and be articulated through my living, the one-sidedness of the affect marks an absolute breech. I will hear her voice forever in mine, but never again mine in hers.

Barthes rejects the term *mourning* because of its psychoanalytical distortions, as discussed above. Instead, he recasts mourning as a "loving-relation," albeit one marked by suffering.

Merleau-Ponty has given us a way to materialize this loving relation. While his emphasis on intercorporeal affect as the key to otherness initially seems to limit otherness to what attaches to and emanates from living bodies, the fact that the perceptions of others serve to multiply our perspectives from within allows us to grasp the very palpable ways others mark and shape our bodily being—that is our *ex*pression—in inhabiting the world. Living others leave affective traces both within our bodies and in the world, and these traces can, without our bidding and beyond our control, continue to animate and affect us, even when their animacy passes. If I can no longer reach out toward the enigmatic hollow "behind" the other's living behavior, I can actively respond to the enigmatic hollow their death has installed within me and around which my flesh circulates.[30] This "negativity" is no mere memory, can have no "positive" content, but it can become an alternative style and a place of productivity and fecundity as the other calls to me in her voice, even through "my" language, my gestures. In this way, we may finally understand the phenomenology of mourning both as a demand that the love never change and yet as a dynamic, alter-ing relationship that pushes through not as a work of mourning but as a praxis and ethics of mourning, creating a meeting space to receive the other, dead or alive.

COURAGE AND COURTESY: AN ETHICS OF LIVING IN COMMON WITH DEATH

A. Two Scenes in a Park

Scene One

> I am in a public park. Not far away there is a lawn and along the edge of that lawn there are benches. A man passes by those benches. I see this man; I apprehend him as an object and at the same time as a man. What does this signify? What do I mean when I assert that this object is a *man?*[31]

Sartre is quick to answer his own question:

> Suddenly, an object has appeared that has stolen the world from me . . . the appearance among the objects of my

> universe of an element of disintegration in that universe is what I mean by the appearance of a man in my universe.[32]

In other words, the object is a *man*—an other and not simply an object—when he is a subject capable of shaming me, which is to say, making an object of me.

Scene Two

> An old woman with an umbrella was sitting very still on one of the park benches. She had the kind of stillness that draws attention to itself. Sitting there on the park bench, she was determined to be noticed. A man with a suitcase walked through the square with the air of going to a rendezvous he kept every day. Afterwards a woman carrying a little dog in her arms—both of them looking very sad—passed, heading down towards the Avenida da Liberdade. The old woman on the bench persisted in her demonstrative stillness. To whom was it addressed?
>
> Abruptly, as I was asking myself this question, she got to her feet, turned and, using her umbrella like a walking stick, came towards me.
>
> I recognized her walk, long before I could see her face. The walk of somebody already looking forward to arriving and sitting down. It was my mother.[33]

There is a twist in this story. But before exploring it, I want to compare Berger's park population to Sartre's. In Berger each denizen is noticed in embodied form in relation to a setting shared by the narrator. The man with the suitcase and the sad-looking woman with the dog resemble the man walking by Sartre's park benches, except that their gestured bodies are placed in more or less developed narrative contexts with which they are busying themselves. In Berger's telling, each is not merely a person whose ontological status is to be questioned. They are *characters* in minor narratives defined through teleology and intention, interpreted through gestures read as signs. Their narratives are peripheral to the narrative of Berger's protagonist. As *characters* from a

third-person point of view, however, they may also be *subjects* of their own stories from a first-person point of view. This is implied in the attributed meaningfulness of their intentional activities and the density of their moods. We rejoin Sartre's philosophical inquiry at this point. What qualifies them to be such subjects in our eyes? Is it simply the assumption that Berger's narrator is likely as peripheral from their point of view as their stories are to him? After all, they do not even show any indication of registering him. Is Sartre right that if Berger's narrator were to adopt their perspective, his organized world would disintegrate and he would become a bit part of their scenery, leaving it to them to interpret his action, moods, and intentions as they wish? Ought we conceive of the relationship between self and others as a competition over authorship, over ownership of a "null-point perspective" (Husserl) from which and about which stories unfold with graduated importance?

As discussed in chapter 3, Sartre's exaggerated embrace of the scopic perspective even when (perhaps especially when) merged with a narrative account locks us into a Hegelian struggle to the death of subjectivity with no hope of an overcoming recognition. His concept of the Gaze means that when you are subject, I am object, and when you are object, I am subject. As a gazing subject, I have access to you as a whole that you can never have of yourself—I have access to your eyes, to your face, and to the scene unfolding behind your back. And you have this of me. "Otherness," from a scopic perspective, names a battle and potential reversal, a battle and reversal which doesn't occur with "mere" or "ordinary" objects. When combined with a narrative approach to otherness, it is as spectators that we become authors, at least until we realize that we too are viewed and are therefore minor characters in others' narratives. The other possesses us, and we them; desire unfolds as a battle to control of the gaze and the story that the other will tell. We vie for an ultimate prize, namely, that the other will author us as a character worthy of our own adoration, or at least attention.

But now let us return to Berger's still, old woman. In a scene filled with intentional, teleological movement and micronarratives—the man toward his rendezvous, the woman toward the avenue—the

old woman's stillness "draws attention to itself." Can stillness, too, be intentional? The narrator takes it instead as *dialogical:* To whom is it addressed? he wonders. Not, What is it meant to accomplish? but Who is to be awakened in response to the address? The second the narrator raises this question, the woman breaks her stillness and her body "abruptly" launches into intentional movement, walking toward the questioner. His response, his understanding that her stillness was a call brings about her own embodied response. Her body in movement is familiar to the narrator in a way that her stillness was not. Her stillness provoked a question, but now she is recognized as having "the walk of somebody already looking forward to arriving and sitting down." Intentionality is at play again, but this time the narrator cannot be in any simple way the author of her story, for she is in a significant sense already the "author" of his: she is his mother. Her gaze has been there from the beginning, and before the beginning. His body, his senses, the germs of his gestures came from her. Later he, an aged, successful author, will tell her explicitly, "Language for me is inseparable from your voice." But here is the twist: She has been dead for fifteen years.

B. Returning to the Park

When Sartre continues his description of the man in the park, he tells us: "The grass is something qualified; it is *this* green grass which exists for the Other; in this sense the very quality of the object, its deep, raw green is in direct relation to this man. This green turns toward the Other a face which escapes me. I apprehend the relation of the green to the Other as an objective relation, but I cannot apprehend the green *as* it appears to the Other."[34] In a different text, Merleau-Ponty offers a kind of riposte:

> It is said that the colors, the tactile reliefs given to the other, are for me an absolute mystery, forever inaccessible. This is not completely true; for me to have not an idea, an image, nor a representation, but as it were the imminent experience of them, it suffices that I look at a landscape, that I speak of it with someone. Then, through the concordant operation of his body and my own, I recognize in my

> green his green. . . . There is here no problem of an alter ego because it is not I who sees, not he who sees, because an anonymous visibility inhabits both of us, a vision in general. . . . For the first time, through the other body, I see that, in its coupling with the flesh of the world, the body contributes more than it receives, adding to the world that I see the treasure necessary for what the other body sees.[35]

As discussed in chapter 2, Merleau-Ponty's move to intercorporeity consists simply in thinking through to its completion the presupposition of embodiment supporting Husserl's arguments for appresentation and empathy. According to Husserl, I do not *deduce* the animacy of another; I experience it bodily, within my lived body as a sensing, kinesthetic entity. But for Merleau-Ponty, Husserl's analysis falls short of these noncognitivist goals. Simply saying that I "sense" that that body stands in the same relationship of objectivity and animacy to itself that I have to myself is not saying very much. What would such sensing mean? What might it feel like?

With "intercorporeity," Merleau-Ponty posits a direct interrelation between my perception and that of others. It is not that when I see a body over there, I analogize from its movements to the existence of a mind or soul "like mine" that governs it. Instead, when Merleau-Ponty defines perception itself as "the impact of the world upon me and the catch of my gestures toward it," this sets up a field in which the gestures of others, in turn, impact me and influence my gestures toward them and toward the world.[36] My perceptions—impact/gestures, impression/expression—are directly infiltrated by the impact/gestures, impression/expression of others. From the moment I sense it, at whatever conscious level, the animacy of the other shapes my environment and is taken up by my body in a wide variety of spontaneous and reflexive responses. The other always "touches" me through her "encroachment" on our shared space. Conversely, "my" sense of space, my distinct center and self, always only emerge through this encroachment. And so, to return to the park, the green of the grass comes to be shared by us. I speak of the green grass and feel the familiar production of sounds in my throat and on my lips

and tongue; she leans down to stroke it or run her feet across it. Suddenly its greenness is inhabited by a texture that I hadn't noticed before. I see the green through her fingers or feet but also in my throat. Or I speak "green" and she shields her eyes to look; I realize that my green is haloed by a crown of gold, its particular green has been green-gold all along. The presence of the other does not steal my world, as Sartre's scopic view had it; nor do I sculpt my perceptions and hand them up ready-made to the other who passively receives them. The presence of the other multiplies my world from within, gives it depth, and renders it internally dynamic and fecund. To repeat Merleau-Ponty's words, quoted above: "The body contributes more than it receives, adding to the world that I see the treasure necessary for what the other body sees."

With this sense of intercorporeity, we understand why our relation to the other is never merely "projection." This is intimately related to the question of a narrative approach to the other whereby we interpret her "behavior" according to intentional or teleological norms or purposes we might pursue in the other's place. This was, recall, how Berger's narrator conceived of the man with the suitcase and the woman with the dog. But it was also precisely what was interrupted through the intercorporeally dialogical otherness that is his mother, albeit his deceased (i.e., not "really there," but a thereness rending his very hereness) mother. For Merleau-Ponty, the otherness that is contained in the gestures of the other transcend the embedded intentions of behavior which give us a cognitive prompt that the other may be an other subject (insofar as they behave like us). In yet another park scene, Merleau-Ponty describes a man who wakes up from sleep on a hot, sunny day, and reaches for his hat, *just as we might*. However, he proceeds from there. "The moment the man wakes up in the sun and reaches for his hat, between the sun which burns *me* and makes *my* eyes squint and the gesture which from a distance *over there* brings relief to my fatigue, between this sweating forehead and the protective gesture which it calls forth on my part, a bond is tied without my needing to decide anything."[37] Note the peculiar grammar. The strange play of pronouns is highly significant; it is nothing less than the sort of sunaisthetic

convertibility noticed in Aristotle. It is not simply that the man's gestures are teleological and therefore comprehensible to me according to familiar norms and narratives, that is, that he is now doing something that I imagine I would do in his place. We share, here and now, in the heat and in the relief, even if I have been in the shade the whole while, or conversely, if his covering his head can do nothing to protect my own exposed one. Indeed, I will not remain unaffected by his gesture even if I am suffering the chills of a fever. I do not feel what the other man feels, from his perspective. How could I? Yet my feeling is affected by my sensing that he senses and by what he appears to sense. I do not appropriate his sensing, yet through his sensing, my attunement is alter-ed from within: "If the other person is really another, at a certain point I must be surprised, disoriented."[38] This alter-ation from within and beyond us is what gives us access to otherness. And it is precisely this internal alteration and interior multiplication or differentiation that emerges when his mother touches, "haunts," the narrator's sensory access to Lisbon. Though she is dead, it is her familiarity and strangeness that opens his access to the city, and he is not alone amid its hard surfaces.

"So time doesn't count, and place does?" Berger's narrator asks his mother. Like a persistent child, he asks her this twice, as if trying to conjure away the individuating effects of time, highlight the equipresence of the deceased, and root into the shared choreographic space her unexpected visit has opened. The first time she ignores him, as she often does in the story. She affects him, appears and disappears without his warrant or bidding, but in her radical absence his affect on her is extremely limited and subject to her whims. The second time he asks, she does reply: "It's not any place, John, it's a meeting place." She goes on to speak about trams and memories of trams. The trams in Lisbon differ from the trams in Croyden, and the memories of mother and son overlap but fail to correspond exactly. Throughout the story, the boy—now an old man—and his mother spar and laugh, misunderstand and irritate each other. He seems to have no more control over the way she interacts with him now that she is dead than he presumably had when she was alive. His memories are joyful and painful; some are surely counterfeit insofar as they rely

on information he did not possess in the past he once occupied. Lisbon shifts to accommodate the old man and his mother, long dead. She appears and disappears among its markets and monuments. He does not will these entrances and exists. She directs his hand and eyes to its stones and its water; they share a pastry she favors. Is she a ghost, a fiction, a memory? She may be any or all of these things, but she is not a mere projection: she is an other, and now we understand this to mean that she is a bodily, sensory impact with a continuing resonance and style enacted in the very movements of her son and in tension with other impulses, even beyond her death. “Language is inseparable from your voice,” says the narrator, who is also an author, to his mother. Who is dead. Who is a character in his short story, crafted in “his” language, which we are reading. But she is far from a projection or creation. Her presence persists, but is not predictable, not within his control. In death, in the absence of her corporeal presence, she remains a factor of differentiation in the narrator’s choreography as together they animate Lisbon, a shared space, a space unfolding between life and death, self and other: a place where bodies meet at the intersection of here and there which gives space its dimension.

In her parting dialogue with John, the narrator of “Lisboa,” his dead mother enjoins:

> Just write down what you find, she said.
> I’ll never know what I’ve found.
> No, you’ll never know.
> It takes courage to write, I said
> The courage will come. Write down what you find and do us the courtesy of noticing us.
> You are no longer here!
> Hence, the courtesy, John![39]

Living with the dead other in the fullness of our “adult solitude” turns out to teach us a great deal about intercorporeal affective otherness in general. To notice the other, living or dead, is to notice their affects in us, but as truly issuing from an atmosphere between us, not solely shaped by us, beyond our reach or

control, and not to appropriate these contributions, much less to repress them. More than the realism that the youthful Freud required and that damned the dead to projection and introjection, adult solitude in the face of the other requires two things: the courtesy to feel and allow for the impact the other brings and the courage to confront the intimacy of enigmatic otherness. Confronting the otherness within us, we will "never know" what we've found—ethics before epistemology—but courage enjoins us to try to *ex*press it, to reach out through this otherness within us, and let it take its space in the meeting place that is an always already shared world. Courtesy, meanwhile, teaches us to notice this otherness in an epoche of "ownness," even if we cannot know it—to notice it and refuse to either repress it or appropriate it, but to foster the perception it shapes and let it flourish in our embodied response to the world. Grossman explains:

> Like a fetus hatching
> from its mother's womb and body
> his death made me the father
> I had never been—
> it bored
> a hole in me, a wound,
> a space, but also filled me
> with his ubiety
> which churns in me now
> with an affluence
> of being I have never
> felt before[40]

CHAPTER 5

GIVING RISE TO THE OTHER-IN-COMMON

Perfumes fresh like the skin of infants.

—Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

Chapter 4 showed how death as the loss of the other opens an awareness of the other's "ubiety" within the self and the world it must now inhabit. Grossman's narrator claims that the death of his son made him "the father" he "had never been," but it did so by turning him into a perverse "mother," harboring the dead boy's living, growing, sensing body within his own. The radical absence of the son carves a hollow or wound within the author's masculine body, sheltering a "churning ubiety" that fills him with "an affluence of being [he had] never felt before." Death, in other words, reveals in its radicality the sunaisthetic structure of the mourning father's selfhood. His selfhood emerges as thoroughly permeated by the deceased other, affecting ever forward his sense of the world. Even though the other's literal bodily presence is gone, his place (ubiety), and the profuse toward-which (affluence) that marked this bodily presence, surges to the foreground of the survivors' relation to world.

So perversely, death makes pregnant; death conceives. The dead one returns to a dependency on the survivors but not, importantly, as a phantasy is dependent on a subjective mind. The dead one exerts a physiological force on the survivor that is beyond the

survivor's own power and often in conflict with it. Co-sensation outlasts death, though with a crucial difference. It is now one-sided. I am affected but cannot affect; I am called but cannot call. It takes courage to confront such an affect, to acknowledge one's own dependency on a power that one can harbor (courteously) but no longer reciprocally shape.

Mourning is perverse pregnancy; the possibilities that the bereaved harbors *for the other,* will never be *their own possibilities,* though they are possibilities that would not have been possibilities at all without them. "Mineness" for such possibilities of the deceased other, even as a retrospective grasping, is forever gone; there is no first-person "there" to experience them, but we come to understand in their absence that this first-person experience, supposedly abysmally detached from "mine," was there, making "my" experience what it was all along. The other may still direct "my" gaze, my desires, from a place all their own, but their catch on the world will from now on differ. They will call, repeatedly, eagerly, but no longer can they respond.

In what way, beyond the ache, the hollow, filled and foreign, can grieving be like pregnancy? The "perversity" emerges because the bereaved is harboring death, while pregnancy grows and shelters life, while the continuity lies in the nonsymmetrical *sunaisthanesthai* that runs beneath each, conditioning both. *Sunaisthanesthai* is the co-sensation that makes of the space within and between bodies a meeting place, a place of shared action and meaning—an *affective environment*—and the pulls of birth and death, differentially but certainly, cast the bodily praxis of cooperatively forging this affective environment into relief.

If the death of the other could, in its perversity and withdrawal, reveal the operations of *sunaisthesis* within the body of the bereaved, so much more so might pregnancy itself. Here we have a recognizable and paradigmatic intercorporeal event, the literal intertwining of bodies where a fully individuated being may recurrently lose the ability to say "mine" meaningfully, while another emerging being is nurtured toward a state of mineness before any such state of mineness could be coherently attributed to it. This chapter will chart *sunaisthesthai* in the event of emergence, natality, all the way through to the experience of everyday parenthood,

with its intimacy and temporalization, to glimpse an ethics of intercorporeity beneath the din of individuation.

ARENDT AND NATALITY

Hannah Arendt famously contrasted *natality* to Heideggerian *mortality*. More than pointing to the facts of birth and death, natality and mortality point to conditions that permeate and structure an individualized and individualizing human life. Where mortality points to the ultimate individuation and separation of an entity, Dasein, from the worldly contexts in which it is enmeshed, natality indicates the coming into being of those contexts themselves by virtue of the insertion of something new into them. With respect to individuation, natality marks the break between a time when one was not, a time before one existed, and the time one begins to affect objects and persons in the process of existing. It marks out the origin point of one's impact on the world and thus, like Kantian spontaneity, carves out a space in every established context where novelty can erupt and intervene in the established order.

Yet this thought of natality is intrinsically paradoxical. As is the case for factical birth, it calls upon the existing context to present the conditions of recognition for that which, as novelty, is defined as unrecognizable: as *new,* the birthed entity, *this* birthed entity, has never yet existed. Arendt insists that, however implausible this may sound metaphysically, such a breaking through of the new factically occurs with every human birth: some *one* radically new, the infant, appears in a constituted world of appearances which can never be the same after that appearance. The birth of a child represents a predicted unpredictability—we know that a child will be born, what a child is, and how it came to pass that this child will be born; but we do not and cannot predict the short- and long-term effects of this particular birth on us, and on the world that we think we know, will share, and pass on.

In this sense, Arendtian natality can well be understood as a kind of secularized nativity, a dis-ruption of existing narratives, point zero on a chronological scale measured prospectively and retrospectively by its light. With the birth of each child, there is a

before and after, separated and linked through this singular event. Each new birth demands that existing narratives make way for new narratives and open themselves to the impact of a "who" who is never content to remain a "what"—even a what with a proper name—in another's story.

It is often said, though I think too simplistically, that a narrative is initially projected upon the newborn, thoroughly interwoven with the narratives of others around the newborn, but that as the child grows, it increasingly becomes the author of, and not just a character in, such narratives. On this telling, narratives increasingly wind themselves about the actions and choices of the once newborn herself until she can begin to shape those stories reflexively through crafted words and deeds as well as deliberate self-narration. But as I shall argue in this chapter, alter-ation begins much earlier than the evolving reflective (re)appropriation of the maturing human narrative being. Alter-ation begins already with the dis-ruption of the maternal body brought about by the developing zygote and fetus. Pregnancy brings with it a disruption, a rupture that cancels itself toward a new cohesion: the natal inter-ruption. As we have seen, *sunaisthanesthai* operates natally in this sense; the other inter-rupts my patterns of sensation, affect and cognition, introducing a strife to bring about new sensorial coherence both within me and between us. Like death in which this sunaisthetic event is highlighted by the radical withdrawal of response—though not of call—making me fall back on the solitude of sensations that while co-sensed rebound on me alone (adult solitude), pregnancy and birth can highlight the sunaisthetic event through a bodily proximity so tight it cannot be repressed, while otherness nonetheless insists upon recognition through its revolving rupture and continuity (inter-ruption).

Pushing the natal event back to the stage of pregnancy challenges both Arendt's individualist bias toward the natal actor and her depreciation of the body, emotion, and affect in general. I do not mean by these amendments to negate Arendt's rightful insistence on the origins of action (praxis) in natality. I do, however, mean to extend such praxis to cover the events of co-sensation that transform environments into shared arenas of action, rather than restricting "praxis" to those actions that unfold within

preestablished action contexts. Nor, as we will explore below, is this idea without Arendtian precedent.

Nevertheless, a convinced Arendtian may fairly object that natality can have nothing to do with the sort of affective selfhood described here, since for Arendt emotions are connected to the inner, invisible operations of the body and have little to do with appearance and individuation (at least until they are transformed by reflective mental life). Indeed, for Arendt emotions are downright dangerous to the political sphere, and she views the violent turn in the French Revolution as tracking the rise of collective affects that collapsed boundaries between self and other and neglected the intervening institutions vital to bolstering a "worldly in-between." But this familiar reading of Arendt is too hasty in two respects. First, her understanding of plurality and of power as a function of plurality, even while excluding the monotonous sameness of emotional life, presupposes something very much like the affectivity being described here—the creation of force fields in between diversely situated persons interacting with each other.[1] As Deleuze would surely point out, a proper understanding of power could and should be aided by a proper understanding of affectivity—one that does not reduce embodied affects to passivity or mere bodily disturbances. Second, our account of affectivity as something at once "inter-" and "intra-" subjective challenges the Arendtian version, very much connected to her critique of romanticism, of emotions as residing in an interiority and intimacy antithetical to the public realm—what Deleuze would call subjective affections. An account of affectivity as an in-between may well restore a Heideggerian appreciation of the role of affects as "attunements" that blur the distinction between inside and outside that arguably dropped out of Arendt's notion worldliness.

Digging deeper, it might even be maintained that Arendt prepares for just such an expanded and affective approach to worldliness, and only a few short pages after her apparent denigration of bodily based emotions in *The Life of the Mind*. There, echoing Merleau-Ponty, Arendt speaks of a "sensation of reality" that fits every individual and the idiosyncratic deliverances of their five senses "into a common world shared by others."[2] What this sixth sense "senses," she tells us, is "realness" as such property adheres

to a "worldly context" without which the sensible bits—including all the sensing creatures, who are themselves sensed—could never endure and attain meaning. While "each single object appears in a different perspective to each individual, the context in which it appears is the same for the whole species."[3] Such context is necessary for the appearing of all that appears and lends to these appearances their "realness," yet this context itself "never appears entirely; it is elusive, almost like Being."[4]

Arendt equivocates about the biological status of this sixth sense, which, she tells us, "cannot be physically localized." At the same time, she claims it is based on a species likeness between organisms that together with "the feeling of realness belong to our biological apparatus."[5] Because Arendt seeks to distinguish this "common sense" from Thinking—which in its negative movement would capture Being precisely in its withdrawal, or in what does not appear—she puts common sense on the side of a denigrated and passive body while granting it the enormous sunaisthetic power to bind together our individual sense apparatai while simultaneously uniting us with others of our species in a shared orientation toward a practical environment. Yet as we have been exploring, there is no reason to assume that "the sense of reality" puts us at the mercy of biological mechanisms; the sunaisthetic slippage of the inner and outer, intra and inter, that we have been tracking clears space to explore various collaborative sensorial and affection-based context-making activities as not only (necessary) precursors to praxis but as themselves a kind of praxis.

If this is right, it calls for a rethinking of natality. While retaining Arendt's focus on spontaneity and novelty, where she highlights the appearance of the individual infant and the spontaneous repetition of this event in contexts of plural action, we might better think of natality as the coemergence of self-other-world in events of affect formation, with natality indicating moments where these reach a certain pitch, intensity, and stability. We would look at natality, then, not as the moment in which a singular, formed individual enters and acts into the public sphere but as the event of dis-ruption, of an instability that heralds a new configuration and stability between and within bodies. To get at this conception, I propose pushing back before birth, to the event of pregnancy, as

exemplary of the destabilization and emergence of new relations that characterize natality.

WHAT KIND OF GREETING MIGHT THIS BE?

> "Greetings (*chaire*), you who are highly favored (*kecharitomene*). The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled (*dietarachthe*) at his words and wondered what kind of greeting (*aspasmos*) this might be.
>
> —Luke 1:28–29

Arendt's concept of natality draws explicitly on a secularized nativity in which each birth, and each spontaneous action that repeats the event of birth by inserting something/someone new into a chain of causal events, is like a miracle. But in Luke's telling, the natal miracle arises even earlier, in the event of annunciation, initiated by a *greeting*. What sort of miracle opens through this greeting?

The Lord is with you is biblically familiar. It appears, for example, in Judges, in Ruth, and in Samuel, and is meant to hearten the addressee who will face a fearsome task ahead. But here the angel Gabriel scaffolds the familiar greeting with an excessive ingratiation that will echo throughout the passage, and indeed throughout Church history, like a refrain: "Hail!" (as to royalty) or "Rejoice!" and "you who are the recipient of favor" (in other words, full of grace). We might expect Mary to be awestruck, flattered, or amazed by this angel and its high-flung words of overwhelming respect and praise for her humble self. Yet instead of being heartened or gratified, we learn that Mary is thoroughly and profoundly agitated (*dietarachthe*). The word *dietarachthe* (from *diatarasso*) is significant, especially since this is probably its only occurrence in the New Testament. While the root verb *tarasso,* meaning "to trouble" or "stir," is not uncommon, the addition of *dia* not only intensifies this meaning; it also connotes a bodily aspect and adds a dimension of movement through or between, echoed quickly in the passage by Mary's *dielogizeto,* pondering

consideration. In the doubling of the *dia,* as Mary's initially voiceless response to the Angel's (overly) generous greeting, we witness Mary herself thoroughly torn apart and casting about for an answer. Distressed and confused, she is riven against herself in body and mind—an aspect often captured by the serpentine shape of Mary's body in depictions of the annunciation—as she wonders what sort of "greeting" this might be?

It seems a fair question. How does Mary's divine "hailing" fit in with other models of the call? *The Lord is with you* appeals to Mary's courage to face the unprecedented story that is about to unfold through her body. Yes, but there is something else: her hailing as one who has received a tremendous gift. Mary is hailed as one already in relation; she is a recipient whose receiving alone renders her great, warranting her royal interpellation, and this before she knows or has acquiesced to her task. How does this stand to the great callings of the patriarchs?

Chapter 3 discussed dialogic approaches to the other in which call/response is central. Rosenzweig develops his concept of "revelation" as a singularizing call that establishes selfhood through a necessarily dual but nonreciprocal I-and-Thou dialogue. On the one hand, insofar as biblical calls are paradigmatic and deal with divine difference, "to call" might be conflated with "to name" and be understood as "creating" the being that we are as responders. If we secularize this divine difference and understand the call as issuing from a preexisting structural hierarchy, then a naming-call can be understood along the lines of Althussarian interpellation: the price of subjectification that all subjects must pay in order to say "I," that is, to (mis)recognize themselves as subjects. In another sense, though, the benign one that dialog philosophers such as Buber and Rosenzweig articulated, "to call" is to achieve an ontological reorientation, placing oneself and the other in a definitive relation. "To call" is to inspire a response, an active engagement with the one who calls that is motivated but never determined by the call. While the call does in this sense condition the response—the response is only response-able vis-à-vis the call—it does not cause or determine it from one direction, as a naming/hailing interpellation would do. The call does not lopsidedly determine but depends on a response to be what it itself

is: this is the ontological priority of relation, relatedness. Thus the call is not only *about* a singular to whom it is addressed; it motivates singularization as a response-in-relation beyond, or deeper than, or even as the condition for a subjectification in which the power of the speaker (who one is) is always subjected to that which can be spoken (language system).

To see the distinction between the call and the hail, notice that when God creates man, he names him the singular, Adam, but this singular is at the same time the generic token of the creature "man." This act of naming becomes distinct from the calling, when post-transgression, God calls out to the creature "Adam." To the question "Where art thou?" Adam must respond and thereby place himself in a "where" vis-à-vis the creator who now invites him to be an interlocutor, a responding singular in relation. According to Rosenzweig, Adam fails to consummate the call, that is, to recognize it as an act of revelation. Instead, Adam remains in a creaturely, juridical relation to the creator, mustering only a He/She/It of reaction and blame. He refuses to utter the "Here I am" by which he might have assumed his place in the invited proximity and presence to the Thou.[6]

In the fall from Eden, Rosenzweig sees an act of defiance and an exercise of *liberum arbitrium,* but neither of these constitute freedom, which can only come from an affirmation of an "I" in response to the call of a Thou in a present relation (where/here). While Adam seemed to act freely in choosing to partake of the fruit rather than blindly obeying God's will, he avoids the responsibility of a more thorough relational freedom by hiding and prevaricating. Adam undeniably chooses (to eat, to hide, to blame), but in failing to respond with an "I"—the Here I am (*hineni*) that Abraham (and Moses and Isaiah) will paradigmatically embody and that answers the call God has issued—Adam fails to constitute himself as a free subject-in-relation to a Thou, and thus he cannot move from a mere created thing to a full-fledged selfhood.

Gabriel's greeting to Mary, notably, is not considered a *call* proper but an *annunciation,* an *announcement.* An announcement states a future chain of events as an established fact; it does not invite response. While defying physical causality (Mary questions *how* this will happen, since she is a virgin, but not *that* it will happen),

Gabriel's words inform that Mary she *will* give birth to a son; he neither asks nor invites her to do so. In this sense, an annunciation is radically opposed to a call as an invitation to relational selfhood. There is little room for the kind of open-ended response through which the speaking subject might constitute her free selfhood-in-relation to an evolving dialogue. Appropriately, Mary never *quite* says (as some translations render it): "Here, I am! (*hineni*)." She says instead, "Behold (*idou,* cognate of the related *hinneh,* here) the servant of the Lord." Instead of asserting the "I," Mary focuses visual, objectifying attention (Behold!) on her body as the *site* (*hinneh*) where her servitude will unfold. She bows and acquiesces that the Angel's "word" will come to pass on her, through her, just as announced. She agrees to be "overshadowed (*episkiazo*)," overpowered, and through this to become not the speaking self of revelation but that strange singular yet indiscernible dyad: the pregnant woman and passage point to a *future* salvation. Her body becomes a hinge, a joint in a collective project that Rosenzweig would associate rather more with *redemption* through a *community-to-come* than *revelation* of unique selfhood.

Mary appears less a respondent then a recipient and conduit; she is not the locus of revelation, but the site of a religious bond: she is a "bondslave" transformed into a "meeting place" (*hinneh*), not only of mother and child (temporal lapse of generation) but of the divine, the human, and the worldly, and all of this long before the "event" of natality as nativity. And it all begins with an uncanny greeting—one that sickens her (*diatarasso*).

NAUSEA AS INTEROCEPTIVE ANNUNCIATION

> Something has happened to me. I can't doubt it any more. It came as an illness does, not like ordinary certainty, not like anything evident. It came cunningly, little by little; I felt a little strange, a little put out, that's all. Once established it never moved, it stayed quiet, and I was able to persuade myself that nothing was the matter with me, that it was a false alarm. And now, it's blossoming.
>
> —Sartre, *Nausea*

These words might have been written by a woman in the early stages of pregnancy, describing the initial stirrings of nausea. Nausea is often the very first symptom of pregnancy, appearing before one "knows" what is happening. Instead, these lines open the initial "dated" pages of Sartre's novel *Nausea*. And while Sartre was busy writing and rewriting this novel (originally titled *Melancholia*), Levinas was also composing a small treatise on a malaise of being that, he argues, in its acute form presents as nausea. This treatise was published before Sartre's *Nausea,* under the title *On Escape* (*De l'evasion*).

Sartre's protagonist describes his nausea as indubitable but not like "ordinary certainty." Instead of reaching a Cartesian presuppositional ground ("I am"), the certainty of nausea ties the protagonist to the sheer contingency of being by means of his body. Nausea cannot be denied, yet in complete opposition to Cartesian certainty, it collapses the subject and object poles; it is precisely the *in*-distinction between subject and objects—through the objects that "touch back" and the inability to say whether the nausea originates from within or without—that prompts Sartre's protagonist's nausea. With Levinas the case is even more extreme. Where Cartesian doubt gives way to the positive assertion of "I think, I am," for Levinas, nausea effects an intimate inversion. It amounts to an impossibility of being what one is [while] we are at the same time riveted to ourselves, enclosed in a tight circle that smothers. We are there and there is nothing more to be done, or anything to add to the fact that we have been entirely delivered up, that everything is consumed; *[nausea] is the very experience of pure being.*[7]

Levinas continues, "Nausea posits itself not only as absolute, but as the very act of self-positing." The nauseated body *insists* on itself but remains "impotent" in this posit. It is locked in its being, where every willed effort at escape empowers only the nausea. In nausea, according to Levinas, we glimpse the "fulfillment of the very being of the entity that we are," a being whose every effort to escape from being entangles it deeper in that being.[8]

Writing at roughly the same time, Sartre and Levinas both invest nausea with enormous ontological significance. Nausea reveals naked being through a body prior to subject-object

differentiation, prior to freedom and transcendence. Yet neither author seems to notice, as even Nietzsche did, the intimate connection between pregnancy and nausea. The next sections reconnect the phenomenology of nausea to the pregnant body in order to show how pregnancy nausea presents being not as stasis, indetermination, and immanence but as an occasion of "ex-cendence" (Levinas), prompted by an intimate impingement by the other(s). In pregnancy nausea, the other announces itself through interoceptive sensations that destabilize the bodily habits that structure identity and prompt the emergence of alter-ed ones. Further, the lessons of pregnancy nausea need not be limited to actual pregnant women; it is a phenomena that can help construct a general model of embodied relatedness to others that combines Levinasian ex-cendence with Merleau-Pontian intercorporeity. I will explore this phenomenological hypothesis in five short sections.

A. A Brief, Anecdotal Phenomenology of Pregnancy Nausea

As noted above, in many cases nausea is the first symptom of pregnancy. It may come even before the "lack" that technically announces a suspected pregnancy: *the lack* of menstrual flow, the disruption of the *period,* of *periodicity,* the punctuation that marks the "normal," often predictable, cyclicity of a woman's reproductive rhythms.

Other early symptoms of pregnancy—such as abdominal cramping and tender breasts—may be misinterpreted as confirming the imminent onset of menstruation, particularly in an accidental or unwanted pregnancy. But then (more often than not) there is the unmistakable nausea. *Something feels strange,* the pregnant woman might say. *There is an awful and inescapable taste in my mouth—is it metal? I am overwhelmed by smells—indeed* everything *has a smell! Why did I never notice that before? Smells from everywhere and all at once. I begin to feel dizzy. I cannot escape it—the smells are too strong, and so is the light. No matter what I do. I want to vomit; I want to sleep. But wait—I am* so hungry. *Foods that once disgusted me exert an attraction, and others that I used to love I cannot tolerate, or even think about.* Pregnancy nausea feels in many ways sickeningly familiar, like other nauseas, the kinds induced by flu, hangovers,

contaminants, migraines, or motion-sickness. But it also often has certain peculiar characteristics that make it feel "different," like one is experiencing something "new," something one has never felt before.

Of course, the experience of nausea differs markedly among pregnant women, and there remains no consensus view of its etiology. Nonetheless, most pregnant women experience some degree of nausea, with extremes of barely bothersome to requiring hospitalization. And for those women who have experienced pregnancy nausea to any significant degree, it is unforgettable. Anecdotally, many women report certain features of pregnancy-induced nausea that may demarcate it from other types of nausea. Differences may include:

> (1) *A different temporality.* Pregnancy nausea is often experienced as *transitory but recurring* over a period of weeks or months, instead of *sustained* with fluctuations in intensity *for a discrete period of time.* The misnomer "morning sickness" refers, though inaccurately, to this quality. A pregnant woman may experience overwhelming, debilitating nausea at some point or points through the day but feel quite fine the rest of the time.
>
> (2) *Little or no reduction in appetite, or even an increased appetite.* Many pregnant women feel simultaneously nauseated and extremely hungry; moreover, some foods that disgusted them a moment before and even prompted vomiting will appeal to them again shortly afterwards. This is in marked contrast to the familiar experience of nausea in which the very mention of any food, particularly foods consumed just prior to the onset of the nausea or vomiting, can intensify symptoms.
>
> (3) *Cravings and aversions.* Relatedly, pregnancy nausea can dictate the strange and ever-changing cravings and aversions so often lampooned in pregnancy satires.
>
> (4) *Sustained metallic taste.* Pregnancy nausea is often accompanied by a strong taste of metal in the mouth.
>
> (5) *Dominance of sense of smell.* The trigger for pregnancy nausea is often olfactory. Many pregnant women who experience significant nausea also link this to the constant presence

> of overwhelming smells and report a dominance of smell in early pregnancy. That is to say, many pregnant women experience the world as strongly, overwhelmingly odiferous. Smells that surrounded them before pregnancy suddenly come into central focus, and odors that went without notice before may become overpowering.

In sum, in cases of moderate to severe pregnancy nausea, nausea irrupts and recedes unpredictably and deranges the “normal” or customary functioning of the exteroceptive senses. But as Sartre and Levinas both point out in their respective phenomenologies of ordinary nausea, this irruption and derangement confuses the very boundaries of exteroceptive and interoceptive sensibility. Is the nausea coming from me and projected onto the outside, or is the outside assaulting me, affecting me in my very interiority? And what does this confusion signify?

B. From Immanence to Imminence: Nausea as Event

Many philosophers have focused on the “event” of birth and look to natality to clarify the nature of the “event” itself. And this is right; birth is a paradigmatic event as advent, the coming-into-presence of an appearing being that dis-rupts the order of appearances, both rupturing that order and prompting a new one. But the event is more general than this. Dastur explains the event as

> what was not expected, what arrives unexpectedly and comes to us by surprise, what descends upon us . . . something which takes possession of us in an unforeseen manner, without warning, and which brings us toward an unforeseen future. The *eventum,* which arises in becoming, constitutes something which is irremediably excessive in comparison with the usual representation of time as flow. It appears as something that dislocates time and gives a new form to it, something that puts the flow of time out of joint and changes it’s direction . . .
>
> . . . The exteriority of the event introduces a split between past and future and so allows the difference of parts of time as dis-located.[9]

In these terms, the nausea that Roquentin undergoes is certainly an event; markedly, as a historian, he can pin it to no specific "events." Sartre's protagonist begins his diary of nausea in an effort to come to terms with the "something" that "has happened" to him. He says "I should try to tell how I saw it *before* and now how I . . ." The sentence breaks off before he can say more, say something that might be able to link the *before* with a *now* or an *after.* For the strangeness he experiences is one of perception itself and the stable, intentional relationship between subject and object in a continuous time flow that it implies. The nausea, which begins with objects that seem to "touch back," dissolves first his world of practical concern and intentional action and then the abstract conceptual order that would hold things in place even in the face of sensory derangement. The event of nausea casts into doubt both the structure of throwness and projection of the ready-to-hand things and the externally imposed chronological order of present-to-hand things. Levinas suggests that, in nausea, the body, cut off from its usual activity, comes face to face with its impotence in the form of a pure presence; nausea constitutes a pure presence that must await its deliverance but can "do nothing" to deliver itself.

But if the event of ordinary nausea disrupts the linear flow of time experienced through projects, of past flowing into future through a now, pregnancy nausea goes one step further. Not only does it disrupt the flow of time that allows external ready-to-hand objects to constitute a stable world of concern but it also disrupts the interoceptive temporality of the cyclical rhythms of life that constitute a woman's menstrual cycle. In Arendt's terms, in pregnancy nausea we are displaced from the ordinary temporalities both of life (biological time) and of worldliness (cultural time). Instead a new temporality invades us, one with rapidly altering, recurring, and disappearing interoceptive sensations.

Certainly such nausea fits Dastur's description of an event. It descends on us as a surprise, disconnecting us from our past as "healthy, functional, predictable" and from a future release we can perhaps anticipate or hope for but can do little to bring about. Will there be a restoration, a return to the familiar "health," or will there be a permanent change in what it means to be healthy?

In the case of pregnancy nausea, the newness of the sensations seems to foretell new possibilities: the world of smells introduces a dreadful latency of sensation of which I was never aware, as if the world has grown a new layer or dimension. The body may seek a restoration of health, but it might also experience the event of nausea as breaking both with worldly and biological time and introducing an *imminence* that opens to a new time, a time of rapid and novel change, of *expectancy* and *awaiting* for a body "out of sorts" with its familiar self. As in the case of the intensity of labor pains that I may feel *I cannot live through* and yet *will survive,* the excess of sensation and its derangement in pregnancy nausea need not simply sink us into the immanence of the body in its sheer facticity of being, as Levinas and Sartre suggest. It is not just that with the event of nausea "something has happened." Rather, pregnancy nausea announces to us, interoceptively, that something *is happening,* about to happen. How is that so?

C. Pregnancy Nausea as Sensory Derangement

One can be skeptical about the phenomenological adequacy of the above description. It may appear romanticized, a view of the pregnant woman who celebrates her very real, yet debilitating, awful, feeling of sickness in the glorious name of the child to come. That is, it may very well be that in the case of a desired pregnancy, however ambivalent the pregnant woman may nonetheless be, the *knowledge* that one is pregnant and that pregnancy will lead to a child, helps to make the nausea of early pregnancy bearable or even exciting. Still this *knowledge itself* is extrinsic to the phenomenon of pregnancy nausea taken alone.

Yet if the anecdotal phenomenology of pregnancy nausea I offered above has any validity—and naturally such anecdotes can never capture all tales—we can see features of this imminence, this *awaiting,* within the experience of pregnancy nausea itself, not as a mere function of exterior knowledge about where the pregnant state leads. This is so because:

> (1) The pregnant body wills a future. First, insofar as hunger can persist alongside or in rapid succession to the bouts of nausea, the body can be viewed as actively willing its future in

a way that does not simply negate the present condition and strive toward a restoration of the past one, as a wish for expulsion might do. The pregnant woman attends to her body's new demands on her in the form of "alien" cravings and aversions. Her body surprises her, breaks her habits, and opens her up to new kinds of desire.

(2) Irregular interoceptive irruptions. Once the pregnant woman has experienced the irregular irruptions of nausea, she is placed in a state of awaiting that tampers with normal temporality. She "knows" that the nausea can "befall" her at any time; she also "knows" that her present nausea may give way to feeling fine at any time. Her life becomes punctuated by foreseeable yet unanticipatable "events" of nausea and health.

(3) Alter-ing of sensory access. Most importantly, the pregnant woman's sensory access to the world becomes altered, or as I would say, deranged, as if from the inside. Even women who do not suffer from nausea report a new prominence of smell, particularly in early pregnancy, with remarkable frequency. In nauseated women, this heightened sense of smell is experienced as oppressive, but we have seen that it also serves to destabilize old patterns of sensation and present new possibilities for sensory coherence.

These features are highly significant, particularly if we follow Merleau-Ponty and Arendt in claiming that our sense of worldly reality is constituted by intra- and intersubjective coherences between our diverse senses (*sunaisthesis*). Perception, no less than and in conjunction with enculturation into ready-to-hand worlds, allows for continuity under ordinary circumstances. Our senses work together to organize environments into meaningful gestalts with spatial, temporal and practical axes of significance. Successful perceptual acts of integration become habitualized to form familiar gestalts.

Pregnancy nausea, however, disturbs these familiar gestalts. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty links nausea to a confusion of levels that violates the normal functioning of perceptual gestalts. Pregnancy nausea may at least partially be a function of the opening of a new sensory layer provoked by the unusual dominance of the sense of

smell. Indeed, smells may assault the pregnant woman from every direction, impacting her normal sense of space. But it does not do so in a way that is world abolishing or self-referential, as Levinas would have it. Merleau-Ponty plays on the *praegnanz* principle in Gestalt psychology to make a similar point. This principle asserts that "strong" or "good" forms will emerge out of an ambiguous background. In the throes of nausea, the room may spin, textures, temperatures, and smells may rise and assert themselves out of a familiar and normally benign background. It may feel as if the habitually formed sensory world has, in nausea, dissolved into molecules, streaks or "dots," imminently awaiting new, "good" or "strong"—that is orienting and stabilizing—forms to emerge. The pregnant woman, even while suffering acute nausea, does not turn away from the world, but, with certain senses heightened and others blurred, looks for a new form, a stable state, to emerge. Merleau-Ponty plays between various derivatives of the Latin *praegnans* when he muses, "Pregnancy: The psychologists forget that this means a power to break forth, productivity (*praegnans futuri),* fecundity."[10]

D. Nausea and Ex-Cendence

This power to break forth and this fecundity return our focus to Levinas's early discussion of nausea. Although neither fecundity nor maternity appear in this early essay, Levinas speaks in *On Escape* of a need for what he calls ex-cendence, by which he means a breaking forth out of oneself but not rising above the self (transcendence). Whereas for Sartre the experience of nausea implies a falling into immanence and requires the exercise of freedom as *trans*cendence, Levinas sees nausea as revealing the impossibility of such free action. He writes: "Nausea refers only to itself, is closed to all the rest, without windows on to other things. . . . The nature of nausea is nothing other than its presence, nothing other than our powerlessness to take leave of that presence."[11] Self-transcendence, according to Levinas in this essay, is the admirable illusion of idealists who believe we might, through our own agency, escape our situated and embodied existence. But nausea shows how every intentional act issues from us but also points back to us as an "in-itself." Every attempt to

posit transcendence for ourselves is an act of bad or unhappy conscience, a self-positing that tries to elevate and mask itself as such, and so further sickens itself. Such bad conscience is a sickness, but as Nietzsche reminds us, it can be a sickness as pregnancy is a sickness—a sickness that under some circumstances can bring about something powerful and life-altering if it can reach outside itself and refrain from chasing illusions above itself.

Levinas notices that in the throes of nausea every attempt at "free" action will rebound on ourselves and worsen our condition. Instead, we must passively await expulsion, a release from our condition that comes from us and yet is not willed by us: an ex-cendence that would bring us out of ourselves without falsely denying its origin in embodied agency.

Levinas does not tell us much more about ex-cendence in this essay, perhaps because he "forgot" to link nausea to pregnancy, just as he will largely forget the role of the female in tracing fecundity from fathers to sons. So I will sketch a possible link, thinking ex-cendence through pregnancy while drawing on intercorporeity.

E. Greeting the Other

Continuing with his play between the gestalt principle of "pregnancy" (*Praegnanz, prégnance*) and literal embodied pregnancy (*praegnans*), Merleau-Ponty muses in his notes: "pregnancy is what, in the visible, requires of me a correct focusing, defines correctness. My body obeys the pregnancy, it 'responds' to it, it is what is suspended on it, flesh responding to flesh."[12]

My body "responds" to the pregnancy and "obeys" it by taking up sensory derangement, multiplicity, and allowing for a refocusing that accommodates "otherness." In their respective phenomenologies of nausea, both Sartre and Levinas agree that in a state of nausea, distinctions blur, both distinctions between things and distinctions between inside and outside, myself and the objects toward which I might intend. Intentionality itself is out of whack. We have seen the distinctive ways in which this occurs in pregnancy nausea as taste and smell—intimate but exteroceptive senses—assume new, interoceptive importance which may well overpower more "objective" senses like sight and hearing.[13] The pregnant woman is called to her body, by her body and the

otherness emerging within it, she is not simply sunk into it. Hers is a nausea that genuinely prepares for ex-cendence, a moving out of oneself, not above oneself, toward an other who calls, announces its imminent arrival.

Both the recurring, occasional nature of pregnancy nausea and the phenomenon of cravings attest to such a "calling." The pregnant woman has bouts of illness that come and go beyond control; she is neither healthy nor unhealthy. Her appetites seem to originate in her, but they are alien and unfamiliar to her. Indeed, within the most intimate confines of her body, the incipient body of an other is slowly taking shape. And for all its incipience, its utter dependency, it affects her body from the inside out, altering her receptivity to the outside in the process.

What is the nature of the calling to which pregnant bodies "respond" and "obey"? And how do they do so? Although our bodies may allow the incipient form that initially sickens us to come into focus, it is not due to a command but is the bringing into focus of a greeting, a salutation. Artistic renditions of the biblical story of the annunciation illustrate this point.

Recall how Luke described the angel appearing to Mary, saying: "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." But also recall that Mary is neither flattered nor joyful. Instead, we are told that "Mary was highly agitated (*dietarachthe*) at his words, and wondered what kind of greeting (*aspasmos*) this might be."

In his study of fifteenth-century Italy, the art historian Michael Baxandall reveals artistic renderings of the annunciation according to five distinct stages in Mary's reception of the angelic greeting: Disquiet (*Conturbatio*); Reflection (*Cogitatio*); Inquiry (*Interragatio*); Submission (*Humiliatio)* and Merit (*Meritatio*).[14] According to these successive conditions, a complex choreography of angel and Virgin emerges. Sometimes Mary is standing or sitting erect on a throne, conveying dignity, strength, regal bearing. Other times she is kneeling or bowing with crossed arms, expressing her humble servitude to her lord, or gently raising her palm in interrogation. Likewise, her gaze may be directed toward heaven, or modestly cast toward the ground.

But perhaps most arresting are those portrayals of Mary, whether sitting or standing, as severely, often unnaturally, twisted, her body

turning both toward and away from the annunciating angel. This strikingly serpentine pose communicates extreme ambivalence, if not outright physical distress. Hasn't Luke reported that she was *dietarachthe,* deeply agitated, perhaps even—nauseated? The moment of annunciation catches her between past and future; her book is cast aside, and although her head and feet turn toward the angel, her torso twists violently away.

The angel, meanwhile, often kneels before her, staring intently, trying to capture and perhaps steady Mary's gaze in response to her precarious posture. (Both Sandro Botticelli's depiction of the subject [1489] and Simone Martini's [1333] are particularly strong representations of the angel's steady gaze counteracting the Virgin's twisted pose.) Mary wonders what kind of greeting this might be. The word for *greeting—aspasmos*—literally means contact, touch. But of course there is no touch, no "contact" with an angel announcing an immaculate conception. The only contact is his focused, steady, and steading gaze. Yet Mary's whole body responds to his announcement, as if in a dance. She is both agitated (undone) and steadied by the presence of the strange, ghostly other. As noted, in contrast to other biblical callings that issue commands, Mary is here greeted, she is contacted, touched without violence or caress and summoned to create of and within herself a point of contact with a strange other that will give rise to an impossible, natal event.

Merleau-Ponty has described our contact with the other, any other, like this: "To the infinity that was me something else still adds itself; a sprout shoots forth, I grow; I give birth, this other is made from my flesh and blood but is no longer me."[15] In this analysis of pregnancy-induced nausea, we have seen it function not merely as a sinking into bodily immanence but as an interoceptive annunciation of otherness and a call to ex-cendence, to come out of oneself toward an external other in a mutual creation of shared space. The incipient other announces herself to me interoceptively, from within me, as the sensory habits that contribute to my body schema, exteroception and proprioception, become deranged, forcing me to adjust my relationship to the environment through her incipience and imminence. But of course nausea and the sensory derangement of early pregnancy

is only an extreme case. If Merleau-Ponty is right, every encounter with the other—flesh suspended on flesh—prompts some degree of contact, of greeting as sensory re-arrangement. I speed my walk on the city street to keep up with the crowds, and my breath quickens; I adjust my posture toward you, lift my face or slouch, affecting my interior organs. The fact that we live in a world populated by others as living bodies means we live in a world of intercorporeal affectivity. Other bodies affect us on interoceptive, proprioceptive, and intersensory "levels" at all times, and the other greets us, announces herself somatically, even interoceptively, as well as ideationally. And so a new dance is initiated, and with it, a new response, an new *responsiveness*.

MATERNAL DESIRE

But what does it mean to respond to such strange greetings? This question demands a more general answer that we began to sketch in the last chapter under the title of "Courage and Courtesy." There we suggested that pregnancy and the "overshadowing" of mourning may be extreme but also exemplary cases that invite such courage and courtesy at the limits of death and birth, structuring not merely narrative but affective, choreographic selfhood. In both these limit cases, the other is "invisible" but nonetheless intercorporeally efficacious, though in incommensurably differing ways. A focus on pregnancy draws attention to accumulating alignments and realignments of inter- and intracorporeal sensations and affectivities and thus might be seen to diminish the event of natality as dramatic individuation and the advent of concrete alterity in the face-to-face encounter with the newborn.[16] But attention to these intra- and intercorporeal alterations within the mother-fetus dyad in fact only adds to and amplifies the radical significance of the moment of the infant's coming into visibility that is her *birth out of the dyad and into the plurality* and the relative shift from the intra- to the intercorporeal to which we now turn.

Kristeva's "Stabat Mater" remains one of the most powerful accounts of this coming-into-presence (visibility) of the infant which is simultaneously a rebirth of the pregnant woman as mother—her reindividuation as a suture back into one from

the two-in-one she had been.[17] Kristeva inquires about this, with lament, in the "semiotic" section of her text: "What relationship is there between me or, more modestly, between my body and this internal graft, this crease inside, which with the cutting of the umbilical cord becomes another person, inaccessible? My body and . . . him. No relation. Nothing to do with one another."[18] From this perspective, the moment of birth might be seen as the movement from an extreme sunaisthetic intimacy to estrangement. This moment of estrangement is prepared for in the body by the transition of labor, so often longed for as a release from the oppressive heat and heft of late pregnancy, but experienced as a physical trauma so intense that the birthing mother cannot help but be in this moment of release of life in proximity to death, through a pain so acute that she might tremble as before death or even wish to be delivered from her suffering by death. Yet this estrangement announced through unendurable pain can also be conceived along the lines of a dis-ruption of *sunaisthesis*—a breakage, but one motivated toward a reestablishment of sunaisthetic coherence, now within and *between* two bodies, irrevocably altered to prepare their new in between. Kristeva writes:

> A mother's identity survives only thanks to the well-known fact that consciousness is lulled by habit, wherein a woman protects herself along the frontier that divides her body and makes an expatriate of her child. A kind of lucidity, however, might restore her, cut in two, one half alien to the other—fertile soil for delirium. But also, and for that very reason maternity along its borders destines us to experience a frenzied ecstasy to which by chance the nursling's laugh responds in the sunlit ocean's waters. What is the relationship between him and me? No relation, except that abundant laughter into which some sonorous, subtle, fluid identity collapses, gently carried by the waves.[19]

Birth as a sunaisthetic dis-ruption will prompt the maternal body to reach out toward old habits of stabilization, even while new demands are made, new potentials (e.g., milk production, heroic sleep-deprivation) awakened. The child's body also enters

a stage of rapid intensification of opportunities and potentials outside the womb, a new phase of autopoeisis in response to less predictable environmental prompts. Nonetheless, should they not be forcibly parted, the current between mother and child continues to operate at multiple frequencies with or against the moments of bodily coherence they achieve, together and apart.

The natal dis-ruption prompts multiple levels of ambivalence no doubt often present in the natal event, but this ambivalence at the birth of the mother/child/others *plurality* out of the pregnant woman-fetus dyad must be differentiated from other kinds of ambivalence, specifically those that rely on dyadic self-other relations that have already been called into question in chapter 3 on sunaisthetic grounds. In *The Second Sex,* Beauvoir speaks of the pregnant woman's ambivalence toward herself as both a representative of the species and as an individual (which, Beauvoir believes, prompts what she takes to be psychosomatic bouts of the nausea that I have been analyzing otherwise). Kristeva focuses on the ambivalence between nature and culture (or semiotic/symbolic) of the pregnant and birthing mother. But neither of these, however they might present for the pregnant and new mother, map precisely onto the ontological ambiguity of continuity and division, where each side is simultaneously a loss and a gain in diverse registers of sunaisthetic dis-ruption. Least of all, however, does sunaisthetic dis-ruption mirror the conflict of interests and projects in the struggle for recognition between two selves who understand themselves to be already fully individuated prior to the encounter, as in various versions of the master-slave dialectic.[20] In contrast, *sunaisthesis* may well be the condition for any and all recognition of selves as separate to arise.

The natal event is undeniably ambivalent, for it is an event of both regained coherence and separation and loss for both the mother and the child, albeit in nonsymmetrical ways. Indeed, the separation and loss occasions and intertwines with mutual, though again nonreciprocal, events of individuation and identification, hence the peculiar variety of flavors of ambivalence emerging at the natal event.

From the maternal side, the end stages of pregnancy may be excruciating, and delivery may be viewed as an impending liberation

from physical discomfort. But on the other side, labor and delivery can involve a pain so intense that a woman can doubt her ability to withstand and survive it. The pain of labor counts among those pains whose enormity radically desubjectivize the body; the body is given over to its sensations and desires only relief. Death can be a desired end to such pain, and a woman in advanced labor may well feel more than the mere theoretical possibility but even the very proximity of death. And yet in fortunate circumstances, she will survive, and the after effect will not merely be exhausted convalescence but the emergence of "more life" in the form of an infant, open eyed, bruised, with beating heart and life reflexes; a curled, tiny being placed on one's chest like an exterior heart, clutching, and beginning to root for new connection, from womb to breast.

Every birth story is unique—this idea itself is a cliché, a form of kitsch, with its own sentimental and political temptations. Yet many women feel a need to forge a narrative capable of conveying both the singularity and universality of this passage and limit situation that creates from the dyad fetus-pregnant woman the plurality mother-child-family-social world. Ambivalences are multiplied and feed the affective circuits that will create, and re-create, the individualities. First there is the ambivalence of the new life created through the proximity and real possibility of death. The infant looks into the eyes of a mother who very shortly before may have longed for death, or feared it, or both simultaneously, while being entrapped in a painful present and entrained to the coordinated rhythms of dyadic bodily imperatives. At the same time, there may at this instant emerge a new, overwhelming surge of survival drive, braided together with the emergent need to protect the fledgling vulnerable life beyond the contours of her own life.

We witness in birth the fundamentally nonsymmetrical ambiguities of life and death, attachment and separation. Kristeva describes well the ambivalence this ambiguity provokes. The child who once occupied us and created in and through us a "semiotic" affective bond now confronts us "face to face"—an alien other. The dyad of pregnant woman and child becomes a visual gestalt of self and other as subject and object, gazing and gazed at across a startling abyss. The prehistory of pregnancy, the immediacy of

the bodily contact and shared corporeality, appears as if "through a glass darkly" in comparison to this visual gestalt, the wholeness of the body and the face to face, a face and body exposed immediately and also implicitly to the gaze of all the other others. But unlike in that biblical passage, I do not "know as I am known" when the child emerges. Instead, I am inaugurated into a disharmonious temporality. I know and race ahead but also lag behind the "knowing" that unfolds for a sensate creature making her way in the world with shaky hands and clouded eyes.

Simultaneous to the level of ambivalence through separation and dis-synchrony, Kristeva describes an additional layer, the ambivalence that splits again the singular mother-child dyad in the process of emerging and the cultural "overcode" of that experience, captured in Kristeva's terminology by the ambivalence between the semiotic and the symbolic. Kristeva describes the cultural weight of the tradition of maternity and natality that drags on the dual birth of mother and child in the natal event she depicts. To portray this vividly, she places her description of the birth of her child side by side with a discussion of representations of motherhood in general, and specifically, depictions of the Marian tradition within Christianity. How can these powerful myths and all they have engendered not bear on the excruciating and singular, but also generic, experience of birth and birthing as a unique being emerges from one's "own" body through an unspeakable event that can only find articulation—like all events—in a post facto narrative as an exemplary instance of a loaded cultural trope?

Out of the complexity of these various layers of ambivalence, Kristeva raises a question (that she does not answer): What is this maternal desire to speak the unspeakable passage of laboring-rupture? To retrieve the event where the two-in-one dies to become two ones? Is it occasioned through loss and lack, awakened by the separation at birth? Is it imposed externally by the need to fit one's singular narrative into the overarching narrative of natality and a borrowed significance of motherhood (especially where so few empowering narratives for women exist)? Is there a way to access this event that is not already overwritten, manipulated through loss and culturally parceled (as Kristeva notes so

often happens) to fit into "reactionary" projects of family values, dependency, normativity, neurosis or even psychosis, and inevitably, failure to meet the profile of a Madonna who haunts but alters with the needs of each age?

Or does the desire to narrate labor and birth lie elsewhere? Does the dominant narrative of loss in the irreparable rupture obscure the dis-rupture, the convalescence through a joyful discovery of new inter- and intracorporeal coherences that is the dramatic manifestation of *sunaisthanesthai*? In *Maternal Desire* Daphne De Marneffe describes the carnal character of the ongoing bodily undercurrent of the mother-child bond:

> I feel it in my throat, in my belly, in my involuntary smile, and in a startling, ridiculous welling up of tears. . . . I am not in command of my own joy . . . It seems that on the simplest level, the desire to mother is rooted in this experience—the expectation of it, the living of it, the longing for it. It is a rush of connection, a feeling that both deepens and exceeds us.[21]

And Kristeva adds more solemnly:

> My body is no longer mine, it writhes, suffers, bleeds, catches cold, bites, slavers, coughs, breaks out in a rash. Yet when his, my son's, joy returns, his smile cleanses only my eyes. But suffering—that I feel inside; that never remains separate or alien but embraces me at once without a moment's respite. As if I had brought not a child but suffering into the world and it, suffering, refused to leave me, insisted on haunting me, permanently. One does not bear children in pain, it's pain that one bears: the child is pain's representative and once delivered moves in for good.[22]

The pregnant woman-fetus dyad survives the natal event of separation even as it instigates loss; but against, and also along with, the loss or lack is the surge and excess of sunaisthetic intercorporeity that blossoms in the body beyond one's control. Whether in joy or in pain, maternal desire awakens in waves of

sunaisthetic indetermination even while the child accrues its own distinctive affective powers among the multiplicity of others with which it interacts. The mother and, increasingly, other caretakers accrue new layers of affectivity "within" their bodies in an attunement of response-ability to the child, while the child will take the layer of shared affect, hatched in the womb as an initial spark awakening affective possibility as she interacts with others and with the world.

Thus the dis-ruption of the natal event not only rearranges the intracorporeal coherence with the other characteristics of pregnancy in the direction of intercorporeal coherence; it also inaugurates a new phase of synchronic dis-jointure, that is, an asynchrony that can only be detected and measured against emerging and dissolving sunaisthetic synchronization between the caregiving and care-receiving bodies. Asynchronous temporalization was of course already intimated in the fetal-maternal pairing; the tiny fetal bird's heart beat too fast, and the grumbling hiccups and nocturnal stretching roused its sleeping host from even-breathed slumber. Long before that, the accelerated cell division made demands and exacted nausea, as examined at length. Yet this difference was integrated by a hospitable organism that, generally, found compromise and a resting point somehow, with the other, within itself. That all changes with birth, but Kristeva is not quite right; it is not suffering or pain that one births but their duration, a holding fast while the other rushes ahead: an agreement to hold steady in the face of proliferation, to hold on—parental temporality.

Maternal desire—and not only desire that is maternal—might well be described as this: a longing to return to a precarious sunaisthetic state where bodily driven asynchrony gives way to co-sensation that stabilizes mother and child—however fleetingly—within themselves and with each other in an environment they cocreate and thereby share. It is not pain, or even joy, *per se,* but a radically other temporality that one births. And while an asynchrony that becomes perceptible in its contrast to sunaisthetic synchronization can birth conflicts of the sort that Hegel, Sartre, and Beauvoir emphasize, such outright clashes of projects and interests due to natural asynchrony only rarely, in fertile

social soil, develop into a pathology. For impatience with the lag and drag of the asynchronous other can, quite understandably, lead one to demand and insist on the priority of one's projects and their most efficient realization. This provokes ethical hazards. Courage requires we notice temporal diversity, and courtesy that we inhabit it—though it rends our hard-won coherence—at least some of the time. It is hard to bear an asynchrony, a loss that becomes palpable only on the background of the excessive joy of fleeting durations of shared sensation, but one risks ethical lapse if one suppresses it in the name of one's own project or, as Beauvoir cautioned, one instead takes the temporal unfolding of the other as one's own project. Doing so risks a Heideggerian inauthentic solicitude that "leaps in" for another person, in effect hijacking their self-care and appropriating it rather than fostering their self-relation and allowing it to accrue through the child's own projects in the thickness of their distinctive temporalization (as authentic solicitude would do). But neither competition between nor the pathological imposing or blurring of distinct projects can be the primary parent-child relationship, at least in the earliest modes we are interrogating here. The fact is that a lucky many of us are born into relationships of inauthentic solicitude that aim to develop the conditions of authentic ones (with more or less success, alas). And this growth of "authenticity" or enownment out of a prior "ours-ness" intrinsic to parenting seems like a condition many of us are willing and able to endorse. But this possibility rests on a primary sunaisthetic dis-ruption that complicates the existential anthropology of ambiguity between subject-object poles with accruing layers of affective interaction. This plays out in the peculiar temporality of the parental relation, which now needs to be articulated in detail.

PARENTAL TEMPORALITY

To have a child is to intervene directly in social ontology; it is to fashion the future of the social world and to make daily decisions about how it ought to look. Every act of discipline, every teaching or encouragement is to act and to act normatively, often fueled by love and passion. A parent's stake and investment in the world

frequently feels very concrete and very powerful, which is why social and cultural cleavages around parenting practices can erupt so violently and why they can also be manipulated by political and economic interests so successfully. Indeed biopolitical projects, aimed at maximizing certain lives at the expense of others, may have no more avid dupes and audience than ever-anxious parents.

Nonetheless parental activity, and the distinctive temporality it imposes, is much less explored than the natality Arendt and those inspired by her describe primarily from the perspective of the natal individual actor. And this is odd. Parenting more precisely describes that activity which changes the world by introducing something new into a plural situation—even if this is not the explicit goal or motivation of the parent in having children—than the passive act of being born or coming into appearance could ever do.

Recall that for Arendt, natality's significance lies in its proximity to Kantian spontaneity. Like spontaneity, natality disrupts an order of appearance through the insertion of something radically new that escapes exact predetermination by the chain of events that precedes it. Arendt draws our attention to the crucial fact that the birth of a human is always the birth of a freedom, a power to alter and disrupt. But of course the natal agent is not responsible for its own birth; its inability to be responsible for its initial entry is both part of the radical freedom that Arendt is articulating as well as a motivation to *repeat* the event of birth that it can in no way remember, master, or control. This repetition takes place through consciously deliberate acts of self-insertion into a pre-established context—breaking through this "is" of what appears in the name of an "ought" imagined by the agent and working to make that "ought" appear. Such disruption simultaneously discloses the world as it has appeared as well as the agent who imagines and wills something else to appear. And because, just like a birth, this appearing is always an appearing to a plurality of other actors, it unleashes unpredictable effects as these actors react with free responses of their own to the natal intervention.

According to Arendt, natality, still viewed from the side of the natal agent, is tied to a temporal process unique to human activity as *praxis,* or action, in distinction to the temporal processes of alternative human activities of work (*poeisis*) or labor. The

temporality of labor, as the very name implies, is linked to biological reproduction. Labor implies the repetitive tasks we must perform—again and again—to maintain our organism and meet its bodily imperatives. The name also implies, of course, the labor of childbearing as the repetitive act of species reproduction. Whether for the species or for the organism, labor-time is experienced as cyclical, like metabolic and reproductive need. Housekeeping and meal preparation are paradigm cases of labor, but wage-labor, which exchanges labor power for depletable means to sustain life processes, subsumes varied human activities, such as office work and factory production, into the single metabolic labor form.

Work-time, in contrast to labor-time, is finite and linear. It has a defined end goal—a tangible, finished product—that is projected from the start and that sets the activity in motion. The product of work endures substantially beyond the process of production that brings it about. Building a table, creating an artwork, and enacting legislation are some examples of the finite, linear structure of work in which time pursues a means-end course from start to finish of the project, resulting in a product.

Finally, there is the time of *praxis,* action. This has a definite starting point in time—a natal instance—but unlike work, it has no definitive end point and results in no stable artifact. This is because, just as the natal individual depends on a plurality of spectators for its visibility, action depends on a plurality of coactors to take it up, interpret it, and interact with it, whether this be to carry it forward, derail it, or alter its scope or tenor. Action takes place in what Arendt calls the public space, which simply means a space where "what is" appears to a plurality and does so with a high enough degree of overlap between participants to secure a "sense of reality" for the spectator/participants. We must be able to agree on at least a thin description of events and things in common, even if our evaluative stances about the shared things and events differ radically. These different evaluative stances are indeed the impetus for action, but there can be no telling what the future of an action may be, despite the dearest hopes and intentions of the actor who began it and thereby inserted herself into the public space. Moreover, this action produces no stable product outside of the performance of the action, even when it is taken up and

prompts subsequent responsive actions. A public demonstration against an act of perceived injustice exemplifies such praxis or action: whether it will catch hold and start a movement, fizzle out in silence, be violently suppressed, or follow innumerable other possibilities all depends on the performance itself and the others with whom the agent shares the space and to whom the agent and her action will appear in a certain light and in varying shades, depending on the circumstance and situation of all involved.

According to the differences in the type of activity involved, labor-time is often sketched as a circle, work-time as a finite segment of a time-line, and praxis-time as a point with arrow stretching toward infinity. Among these options, which sort of activity is parenting, and what sort of temporality does it involve?

Given the connection to species-reproduction, it makes sense to describe parenting as labor, and both Beauvoir and Arendt are consistently tempted to do so. Here parenting is nothing but the reproduction of the species, and the tedious and laborious aspects of catering to the cycles of need of young children certainly support that characterization. But Beauvoir and Kristeva also acknowledge that motherhood is not simply laborious; they expose all the ways that mothering represents a deep ambivalence between biology or species/nature and culture. Parenting clearly reproduces not only the species but also the culture through the upbringing and education of the child.

Should we view the child, then, as a sort of cultural product? An artwork, so to speak? The auto-construction of narrative selves has sometimes been likened to creating a work of art, but regardless of the claims of this tradition, there is something chilling in characterizing child-rearing in this way. Irresistibly, child-rearing as the creation of a work of art conjures images of narcissistic parents who treat their child as so much clay to be molded, an item to be trotted out for guests, its successes and failures mere representations of the strength or limits of the parents' artistic skill. Such a model gives rise to the conception of the parent (often but not always the mother) turning the free child—to its obvious detriment—into her own project. From this can only arise precisely the sort of pathological resolution to parental ambivalence so often described in existentialist and psychoanalytic

literature: as the child, a human freedom, necessarily develops its own projects, it will come into conflict with its parent, which will in turn provoke hostility on the side of the parent.

A view of the child as artwork, the parent as artisan, and the parenting activity as project-like and occurring according to work-time is not only morally wrong; it distorts the sort of relations and subjectivities involved and sets up a necessary conflict, a struggle over who gets to be the narrator in the unfolding stories.

We have been displacing natality away from the pole of the natal individual and into the set of embodied and affective relations to which the natal event gives rise. Doing so suggests that parenting is, rather, praxis-like. To think about parenting this way, though, is to realize immediately the limitation of the simple diagram of praxis-time as an arrow toward the infinite. For to acknowledge the centrality of natality for all praxis must also be to notice the shape of repetition, of the return to a past in order to repotentialize its possibilities in the present context—which is distinct from the past context—for the sake of a future. Each birth is new, but each birth as new repeats the event of newness of all past births. The circular progression of species reproduction becomes, through the natal event, the ever-return of the new. As we have already mentioned, in the case of natality for the individual actor, the fact that this event of natality is immemorial, inaccessible, and not due to the infant's own effort, gives natality the appearance of a free *ex nihilo* event that may well be a motivating precondition for daring to alter the world through action.[23] But how is this natality experienced from the point of view of caretaker-child constellations? Here one must note that natality is an irrevocable event. (Having delivered the child, I could give her up for adoption, neglect her, or even murder her, but there is no action through which I can reverse the event of birth.) Just as pregnancy broke into the maternal interiors and brought about new sensations that disrupted the mother's interoceptive selfhood, the ways in which the child will alter existing interpersonal relations is unpredictable for all involved in its care and upbringing. This is dramatically true with a first child but no less so with subsequent ones who bring their own needs and patterns into the existing constellation. Natality indeed unleashes

new relations and events—for caretakers and also for the loved ones of these caretakers. But while introducing something new, birth also replays the equally immemorial past of the parents' own births. In the psychoanalytic literature, it does so precisely by provoking memories of a prelinguistic, immediate bodily contact with our own mothers and caretakers—a sunaisthetic relapse that traverses the bounds of a narratively composed self.[24] In moments of in-distinction, so these theories suggest, the caretaker is thrown back to their original bodily embeddedness with their own caretakers. In this way, becoming parent is a looping arrow, a repetition within generational-contextual difference toward an indeterminate but also finite future.

This "finitude" deserves scrutiny, for it is neither the finitude of the external goal or product of work nor the absolute finitude of death. What gives parenting its special temporality is that it is an ongoing process not—as in the performing arts to which praxis is often compared—of realizing the goal in the very occasion of acting or performing, like a flautist for whom the telos of excellently delivering the melody is present at each moment of playing its constituent parts. Instead, parenting is a continual process of obliterating itself, making itself obsolete at the point of its accomplishment. Parenting does to some extent follow the virtue theoretic model of a circle in which each good (or bad) act of parenting constitutes the character of the parent, rather than simply being a means to an external end (as if the child were a work of art or an end product). It can also, to some extent, be likened to a skill that (ideally) improves over time and in which sensitivity to context is an outsize part of what is to be evaluated as "good" or "bad" parenting. But whereas a pianist or ballet dancer may increase their skill—and their characteristic excellence as pianists or ballerinas—through repeated practice that aims to get more habitually right while cultivating expressive and situational sensitivity, the context the parent must attend to is one in which yesterday's help is today's hindrance, where the skills must revolutionize and readapt rapidly with each developmental change against an encroaching horizon in which these hard-won skills are eventually no longer needed at all. This is what I would call the elegiac structure of parental temporality.

Elegiac time is acute in the early stages of parenthood, where the developing infant changes so rapidly that attuned bodily practices must be abandoned almost as soon as they are, or even before they are, fully mastered. Parents are constantly awaiting new milestones or stages while mourning the one that has just passed. There is, as noted, no simple reversal, and a number of lives are irremediably altered by the event of becoming a parent. At the same time, virtuoso parenting will never come about once and for all but takes place through *constitutive affective actions* over the course of *rapidly changing circumstances*. The virtuoso parent of an infant will not, without conscious alteration, be the virtuoso parent of a toddler, and so on through adolescence to adulthood. It is this special virtuosity within the overlapping but diverging temporalities of parents and children that comprises the distinctive temporality of parenting, in which a relatively stable "adult" state must confront the rapid development of the child; the efficiency of adult functioning confronts the fledgling attempts of the young child; and the technical accomplishments of youth in dealing with their contemporary situation tend to outstrip the know-how of the adult.

But parental time is not only natal, repetitive, finite, and elegiac; it is also irregularly punctuated—the inter-rupted time that Lisa Baraitser discusses—occasioned by the constantly new demands of the rapidly changing child that breaks up the much more often bewailed tedium of repetitive care.[25] This inter-ruption carries forward the dis-ruption of prenatal life. Prenatal dis-ruption, as we saw, prompts attention to the alterity within me as I am forced to strive for a new bodily coherence as I accommodate the other that grows within me. Just as this can be profoundly disturbing, it can also occasion joy, wonder, and self-(re)creation in response to the "encounter" with the other. Baraitser details how this dis-ruption transmutes to inter-ruption after birth, breaking into parents' linear projects as well as constantly altering whatever cyclical rhythms of life we tentatively achieve. Such inter-ruptions remain, in my understanding, sunaisthetic; that is, they are simultaneously acts of inter and intracorporeal dis- and reorientation. The parental inter-ruptions are not identical to the prenatal dis-ruptions, however, as they shift weight from the intracorporeal

side to the intercorporeal side; but the emerging choreography of parent and child as they coparticipate in the dizzying process of development require virtuosic balance and transformation from both within and without the parent and child.

In chapter 1, we said that *sunaisthesis* provided the intra- and intercorporeal orientation necessary to provide a sense of reality for members of a species. But we also said that *sunaisthesis* could not be a lasting state; one slips out of it, and the means to reenter it, while always bodily, may take specific forms, such as linguistic ones for humans. In parenting we see an extreme form of asynchrony, moored by instances of *sunaisthesis* modeled on an originary maternal instance. The natal child is not an accomplished product but immediately, upon birth, a member of an affective plurality and therefore always underway. The estrangement Kristeva details is a result of this slippage from intimate dyad to (still intimate) plurality. The child is not just an object to your subjectivity but immediately a center of independent production of affective power—not simply the outcome of an action and affections but the source of independent actions and affections. By now we should no longer be tempted to say simply that she is another subject and thereby fall back into Hegelian, Sartrian, or Lacanian struggles for recognition. No, the estrangement is not of subject to alien other as object but of an affective dyad that has become open-ended and plural, initiating new trajectories of affective interaction and therefore multiplicitous temporalities.

AFFECTIVE ENCOUNTER AND THE BIRTHING OF THE COMMON

The parent-child relationship is nonsymmetrical and, as we have just explored, radically asynchronous. Yet from the extreme case of an interoceptive annunciation that destabilizes the borders of the pregnant woman's body as she interacts with the incipient other inside her on through the inter-ruptions of childhood that require diverse and overwhelming affective response, we see drawn into the natal event a constellation of participants beyond the individual birthed. The event is a dis-ruption of the intra- and intercorporeal order that defines stable selfhood. *Dis*-ruption indicates both the rupture of a prior order *and* the creative and

collaborative effort of two or more to reach a new intra- and intercorporeal cohesion. The bodily intertwining of mother and fetus accrues complexity with the birth of the child as the child emerges into plural relations. Yet she remains bodily dependent for a considerable amount of time, and caregivers become (even more) porous through the intensity, extensity, urgency, and irregularity of that care. There is indeed a blooming-buzzing confusion, as William James so poetically noted, but it envelops not just the infant but all in its proximity, even while we emerge sometimes, or she does, at irregular frequencies, whose durations will swell over time and stabilize.

In our study of death in chapter 4, we noticed that it does not end the ability of the dead other to affect but only to be affected. In birth, by contrast, and starting with pregnancy, there is a rapid affective expansion that is not symmetrical between those involved but deeply intertwined to the point of a loss of what is "yours" and what is "mine" in the affective encounter: *sunaisthesis*. While pregnancy seems to be a limit case, I am arguing that it merely dramatizes events of sunaisthetic merger (and subsequent withdrawal) that continue to operate as an ever-present condition and possibility in all human relations. The less literal but no less intense corporeal intertwinement between caretakers and children just carries this forward.

Varga and Gallagher argue that in his examination of phenomena of reification, Honneth discovers a "transcendental condition" for his three kinds of recognition (love, respect, and social esteem) in a layer of "primary intersubjectivity." Such "primary intersubjectivity" draws bodies into tight interaction but stops short of the merging of sensation found in *sunaisthesis* that I have developed here. To distinguish the condition of primary intersubjectivity from the three stages of recognition, indicate its conceptual and genetic priority to these, and preserve its bodily sense, Varga and Gallagher rename Honneth's primary recognition or intersubjectivity "affective proximity."[26] The authors follow Honneth's diagnosis that "forgetfulness" of this primary condition leads to the social pathology of "reification," by which Honneth understands "a habit of thought, a habitually ossified perspective, which when taken up by the subject, leads not only

to the loss of its capacity for empathetic engagement but also to the world's loss of its qualitatively disclosed character."[27] This affective proximity, as but one component of what we have been exploring as "*sunaisthesis,*" is what enables not only understanding between and acknowledgment of other persons but allows for the building up of a "qualitatively disclosed" world—a world we can care about and from which we can take our orientation.

Honneth depicts this early relation as an "impersonal" precondition "that lies below the threshold at which that particular form of mutual recognition takes place in which the other person's specific characteristics are affirmed."[28] In other words, before we can begin to speak about recognition between concrete individuals, either morally or descriptively, we must affirm "an element of involuntary openness, devotedness, or love" that capacitates infants to interact with others, rather than merely act on them or be acted on by them.[29]

Such precondition is impersonal in the sense that it is indicative of a mere capacity, but one that will only unfold with concrete others and most intensively with primary caregivers. Before an infant can "recognize" concrete others, she is already able to interact with them on a bodily, perceptual, and affective level—plausibly already in the womb. This chapter has argued that it is through these early interactive practices that the infant gains, and the mother/caretaker regains, a trust in the stability of self and world; but this trust indeed rests on—rather than being wrested from—our continuing ability to access a primary level of co-sensation with others, especially in times of perceptual and affective disorientation.

Varga and Gallagher sketch some of the considerable empirical "evidence to suggest that such a proximity relation should be spelled out in terms of embodied emotional and perceptual processes, and that such proximity rather than exclusively pertaining to infants, continues to characterize our adult interactions with others."[30] I have argued that a similar fundamental proximity (*sunaisthesis*) is not only necessary for nonpathological human relations but is the neglected basis for "the sense of reality" that comes from an active and creative process of coming to share the world, perceptually, affectively, and as an arena for shared

action, long after the chains of new affections pull us into discrete temporal trajectories that retrospectively become the basis for individual identifications. Caring for this proximity therefore becomes an ethical and political task of the upmost importance.

Recent research on infant development that stresses a "core self" at the origin of self-other relations, as discussed in chapter 2, cannot, as Honneth also maintains, obliterate the real fact of fusion as a recurring event not only in child development but in certain instances in the adult as well.[31] Honneth suggests that a multidimensional anxiety about separation and fusion may itself fuel social pathologies, though these would play out differently in diverse historical contexts. Varga and Gallagher further confirm that access to affective proximity is culturally stratified: "The ability to enter into primary relations characterized by affective proximity is highly context-dependent. For example, the processes of smooth mimicry of others' expressions, gestures, and body postures that we usually connect to 'primary intersubjectivity' are significantly less frequent for disliked out-group members (Likowski et al., 2008). Also, the motor-resonance mechanisms that are taken to contribute to primary intersubjectivity are modulated by cultural factors and inextricably bound to group membership" (Molnar-Szakacs et al., 2007).[32] Strikingly, Aristotle noticed a similar limitation in the case of the *sunaisthanesthai,* but for him this limitation attaches to a certain difficulty; it is neither strictly necessary nor is it desirable. He says: "For if it is possible to live with and share the perceptions (*sunaisthanesthai*) of many at once, it is most desirable for them to be the largest possible number; but as that is very difficult, active community of perception (*sunaistheeseoos*) must of necessity be in a smaller circle" (EE1245b22–24).

In this work, we have been arguing that *sunaisthesis* is both a capacity and a virtue; that is, it is intrinsic to our social natures as embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended, but it is also something that can be chosen and purposively developed once selves are (always temporarily) stabilized through sunaisthetic contact. It may be "very difficult" to extend a community of sensation widely, but the fact that 4E organisms have such capacity indicates that it can be done and that it should remain

before our eyes, as detailed in chapter 1, as an ethical responsibility, something that "ought" to be done. The trick, then, is first to acknowledge the operations of *sunaisthesis* in our intimate lives as valuable and worthy of cultivation and then to identify the contextual "difficulties" plaguing the expansion of *sunaisthesis* beyond intimate spheres. From there we can aim toward an open-ended and inclusive "common sense" where a wide variety of different and differentially affected bodies can contribute to the shared projection of intra- and intercorporeally sustainable and desirable action contexts where all affected and affecting bodies might thrive.

The difficulties on the way to cultivating sunaisthetic communities are rife and surely culturally and historically dynamic. This work has argued that individualism and a possessive relationship to the body, its sensations and affects, contribute substantially to this difficulty. I have focused on unearthing a specific form of body-to-body sensory and affective interaction from beneath traditions of common sense that privilege either individual-based faculties or closed community-level bodies of belief. I sought a sense of reality instead in the interaction of bodies building up affective and expressive environments through which selves are constantly constructed, disrupted, and reconstructed at the intersection of the intracorporeal (sensory integration) and the intercorporeal (other "minds"). Having unearthed this interembodied level from beneath its traditional neglect, I also explored how experiences of intimacy have preserved it (for example, in practices of mourning, parenting, love, and friendship), even where philosophical and political trends neglected or even damaged it. In the concluding remarks, I will suggest a way forward from beneath the burdens of the philosophical and common-sense biases that winnowed sunaisthetic experience to intimate spheres, offering a three-pronged program aimed at reviving a more generalizable sunaisthetic ethic. The proposed program will focus on: (1) cultivating a virtue of attunement to the sensation of others and to affective spaces; (2) acknowledging possible dangers of sunaisthesic praxis while (3) criticizing habits, institutions, and assumptions that hamper its positive development and expansion to wider circles of inclusion.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

TOWARD A VIRTUE OF CREATING THE COMMON

The expanse of infinite things.

—Baudelaire, "Correspondences"

This work set out to articulate and render both plausible and relevant a forgotten ethical concept: *sunaisthesis*. *Sunaisthesis*, shared sensation, treats two persistent philosophical problems, the problems of sensory integration (intra-corporeally) and the problem of other minds (inter-corporeally), simultaneously. *Sunaisthesis* indicates that a selfhood stable enough to assume an ethical attitude can only emerge in relation to a shared sensory environment capable of equipping purposeful, moving bodies with a "sense of reality." Sensing others sensing orients our "own" sensibility from within, guiding it not just toward salient exterior objects in the world (joint attention, secondary intersubjectivity) but cocreating the context that supports salience itself. Sensing the other sensing stabilizes the multiple sensory modes and allows us to sense coherently; depriving us of the sense of others can, as accounts of long-term solitary confinement confirm, derange our "own" sense, driving us literally mad. Understanding the crucial role that the sensation of the others' sensation plays in our "own" sensation means reevaluating what we mean by otherness at the same time (chapter 3). From a sunaisthetic perspective, the other stands neither over and against us as an object, nor arrayed and

opposed to us as an antagonist or competitor struggling to control reality—at least not initially. First, and always at some level, the other must be a cocreator of a sense that holds the sensibility of self and other together through temporal rhythms of greater and lesser coalescence and divergence.

In this respect, *sunaisthesis* resembles what some phenomenological interpreters of the social dimensions of 4E cognition (embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended) call "primary intersubjectivity," perhaps with some elements of "secondary intersubjectivity" (joint attention to worldly objects) folded in. While there may be instructive overlaps, and a philosophy of *sunaisthesis* certainly welcomes the empirical insights these philosophers and theorists bring to bear, *sunaisthesis* differs from primary intersubjectivity in a few key respects. First, it is not really *intersubjective* at all. While Gallagher and Zahavi defend a minimal embodied self that guarantees proprioception, a sense of agency and a distinction between self and other at or even before birth, a *sunaisthesis* perspective takes all of these things to be achieved by, not granted to, developing bodies in motion—and never achieved once and for all. From a sunaisthetic point of view, because our sensibilities are always caught up with our movements (embodied) within an environment of opportunities and obstacles (enacted); past perceptions, affects, and cognitions are lodged in our technologies and pragmatic environments (extended); and social and cultural norms and institutions shape our values and interactions (embedded), we always interact with others piecemeal, forming more or less stable assemblages on subpersonal, impersonal, and suprapersonal levels. Only insofar as these assemblages can "stand up" to support a sustained sharing of sensibility that grants a sense of reality can the sunaisthetic partners subsequently stabilize a sense of wholeness or selfhood. In other words, they must share a sense of reality in order to *enown* retrospectively a coherent stream of affections and perceptions consistent with an ability to act and choose to continue, recommence, or disrupt this stream, and its interconnections, through projects, values, and commitments to renewed collaborative processes. In sum, *sunaisthesis* cannot be equated with primary intersubjectivity, because it is a protosubjectivity, a reaching behind or beneath subjectivity, and a condition

for the construction and sustainability of any subjectivity, even in the case of the more or less secure identities achieved by maturing humans, who nonetheless remain open to others on this basic "primary and pervasive" level throughout their lifespans.

Second, while *intercorporeity* does a better job at reaching *sunaisthesis* than does *intersubjectivity,* here too we must abandon the idea that bodies can ever be discreet and self-enclosed. Insofar as bodies are *socially embedded, extended through pragmatic environments/technology,* and *(inter)enactive* as perceiving and moving together with others, embodied selves are necessarily porous, permeable, and shape-shifting, depending on occasions of interactional opportunities and obstacles in dynamic, active response to others. As events of dizziness, nausea, and disorientation show (chapter 5), even proprioception is a product interembodiment, not a condition of it.

Third, such interembodied, fluid, and interdependent beings call into question integral, self-reflexive, and autonomous selves and others, suggesting instead partializing affective and sensory admixture and exchange. Others disrupt selves piecemeal, set selves into pieces, but also coassemble affective clusters to rebuild a sense of stable, actionable environments and, always in relation to these, senses of self. This means that any ethics or politics that assumes robust individualism is bound to falter, either because it does not acknowledge (represses) the sunaisthetic turbulence on which it is built and will therefore tumble or because it actively tries to root out or eliminate this sunaisthetic basis, thereby depriving itself of a vital ethical source of *creating* a common sense, rather than assuming (*koine aisthesis*) or imposing (*sensus communis*) one.

Which brings me to my last summary point. Acknowledging these processes of constant affective and sensory upheaval and coalescence, a sunaisthetic perspective demands that a fifth *E*—ethics—join the first four. But by ethics I can't mean the familiar individualistic ones such as deontology or utilitarianism; but neither do I mean simply to substitute communal ones. Instead, a sunaisthetic ethics requires tuning in to embodied others and attending to the active coconstruction of environments in which 4E organisms interact with the goal of stabilizing (always relatively, always temporarily, and always as a matter of degree)

self and other within sensory milieus. Such ethics is built into the very (inter)enactive projects and pursuits of 4E organisms. Ethical attention to this interactive layer of activity is thus primary and paramount for reflexive organisms that participate in these processes, and our tradition has neglected it to our peril. It is imperative that we come to see how deeply we are enmeshed with others, to be attuned to them, and also to be aware of our impacts on them in the affective worlds we are always coconstructing. This, if anything does, stands a chance of enhancing our "sense of reality" against alienating aspects of technological and social and political arrangements.

All this means that a program of inter(en)action should not treat ethics as an afterthought, an appendix to emerging philosophies of mind that present to traditional ethics just a small slate of reforms. Instead, it demands that we rethink ethics from the ground—the roiling ground of sunaisthetic interaction—up, beginning with an acknowledgment of the interpenetration of self and others developed in chapters 1–3, and illustrated in chapters 4 and 5. Below I will merely adumbrate a few directions a contemporary sunaisthetic ethics could take. Most broadly, it should: (1) cultivate a virtuous attunement to others and to building hospitable and actionable shared environments; (2) focus alert, critical attention on the dangers *of sunaisthesis,* on the one side, and (3) on hazards *to sunaisthesis* on the other. A tradition that long ago recoiled from *sunaisthesis* may well have had a clear-sighted view of the vulnerabilities it entails, and it remains important to acknowledge and address these. At the same time, if attention to this interembodied, interenactive layer can expand the relative stability of selves (conceived now as self-others), the openness to others, and a sense of reality between them, we would do well to root out habits, ideas, and institutions that might undermine such expansions.

A VIRTUE ETHICS OF *SUNAISTHANESTHAI*

At the end of chapter 4 I discussed how the (deceased) mother of John Berger's narrator enjoins him to practice two virtues, courtesy and courage. Courtesy is required to allow her sensibility

to inhabit his, to impact his sensory access to the world despite her bodily disappearance. Although she "is not really there," she calmly asks him to have the courtesy to notice her *ex*pressions in the present (beyond death, beyond memory), and those of the other dead as well.[1] "Courage," meanwhile, is required to "write down" what he has found in his interaction with her, even if he "will never *know* what one has found."[2] He cannot *know* what he has found in this strange encounter with his dead mother, because she is not, cannot be, an object of knowledge, a perceived thing among other perceived things—but neither, for that matter, is any other Other, living or dead. She belongs, instead—and to quote an earlier Berger title—to "a way of seeing" that lodges inside him, merges with him while also diverging from him at different moments as they take in the sights and sounds, textures, tastes and smells of Lisbon. He cannot "know" what he has found in his encounter with his dead mother because co-sensing with her has become a condition of any such knowledge. How can he write this experience, narrate this visitation of inhabited seeing and sensing, when it lies below the level of narration, surging from deep within his felt body? How can he narrate this alongside a world of objective facts that makes of the deceased inert objects and introjected memories? Berger's story begins with a narration but becomes a story of intercorporation, of letting the other live in and through our "own" bodies, while also realizing that these bodies are not properly "ours" when we do so, accepting intersensory permeability as part of selfhood.

Sunaisthanesthai, Aristotle tells us, is a fact, a capacity of all gregarious beings, allowing them to weave practical environments of shared sensation, affect, and concern in which to act and to perceive. But these environments are only sustained to the extent that the gregarious beings continue to sense the environment together, to make it coherent for the participants inter- and intracorporeally. In sensing the other sensing the environment with us, we actively sustain it. This active sensing together becomes a choice when we *affiliate* with others by choosing to maintain the sunaisthetic flow beyond the inevitable lags, disruptions, and distractions, for doing so brings about a pleasurable state of wholeness and capacitation for self and other *beyond* their discreet

abilities (themselves accomplishments of sunaisthetic merger and subsequent divergence).

The bulk of this book has tried to make the case, both philosophically and experientially, that something like this is not only possible but indeed happens all the time and is, moreover, desirable, despite its initial strangeness, if only we have the courtesy to recognize its operation within us and the courage to continue to enact it in shared space.

The current philosophical juncture may finally be on the way to recovery from the stubborn prejudice that our bodies are something that we own, that they are possessions to be presided over. While bodies may be something that we can come to *en*own to varying extents, come to construct and direct authentically in full acknowledgment of their interdependence on other bodies within the environment, we can only do so in the company and with the collaboration of others with whom we build this sense of ownership, deciding what it means and where it begins and ends.[3] While doing so, we must be vigilant that any such enownment not arrive at the price of either denying or dispossessing others. Embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended cognition embeds the mind in the situated body, and then makes of that same body a site traversed by sociality, technology, and action contexts. But sociality is not limited to institutions and norms, vital components along with technology and action contexts in any *sensus communis*. Sociality also occurs dynamically between bodies that make collaborative sense of their movements within shared space. A virtue ethics of *sunaisthanesthai* would aim to cultivate attunement to the flourishing and action of other bodies and other sensibilities within our "own," allowing them to inflect our sensibilities and movements, such that our bodies are no longer experienced strictly as our own. At the same time, as we become aware of the bodily impacts and expressions of others as they emerge within us as affections and impressions, their sensings and our sensings of their sensings surge up between us as an affective atmosphere that is shared by us both—by us all—and that has a life of its own. A virtue ethics of *sunaisthanesthai* will care for our bodies, the bodies of others with whom we necessarily interact and interdepend, and the shared space in which this interaction can flourish or stagnate.

The affective upspring of any encounter can result in a reflective space of enownment. Recollection of sensations and affections can provide an opportunity to curate these only once the shared sensation breaks, as it inevitably does, as temporalities accelerate and lag, and we are left behind or surge ahead with the affects and sensations that were collectively wrought. In those moments of lag between the intensities of shared sensation, of withdrawal and remove, we can chose either to attune and rebuild or to repress and possess, to occupy what was common as ours alone, entrenching and defending it. Should we choose to rebuild, we will need to attune again to others' impact on us, in us, through us, and in our shared world. We will need to practice this, with every stumble and repetition of being affected, sharing, breaking, until other-attunement and sensory self-otherness become the sort of virtue Aristotle had in mind: an embodied habit arising out of a natural capacity that becomes readily available as a tendency, even in times of crisis and decision, and at which we come to excel; a courteous and courageous sensitivity and attunement to the sensing of others and to the sharing of affective space as a way of being, seeing, and selving.

What we owe each other, then, is attunement to the sensing and affects of bodies with which we share spaces, listening to postures and gestures and tempos and pulse; but we also owe each other a cultivation of these spaces themselves, making them hospitable to an expanding variety of bodies and expressions. Finally, we must respect the lags and lulls, the inevitable falling out of time and withdrawal that allows for durations of enownment of bodily selfhood, others carrying pieces of ourselves beyond our control as we carry forth pieces of others, to shape again and to contribute to ongoing environments of action and concern.

Cultivating a virtue of interembodied attunement (courtesy) can only be one part of this project, though. The other part must focus critical attention on blockages and obstructions, courageously defending opportunities for interembodied flourishing and diminishing obstacles to it. Such critique must be wide-ranging and adopt many strategies. In the concluding section, I point to several critical projects aimed at enlarging the prospect of a generalized virtue of interembodiment, and with it a rebounded and expanding "sense of reality" and the living stakes we take in it.

TOWARD A CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF *SUNAISTHESIS*

This work embarked from a critique of two kinds of common sense that could not redeem their promise of a stable sense of reality, robust ethical selves, and bonds of solidarity. *Koine aisthesis* and *sensus communis* (and its precursor, *endoxa*) equally obscure the coming to be of sense between moving, interenactive bodies investing in and interacting to create and sustain a shared sense of reality. Aristotle already realized that neither *embodied koine aisthesis* selves nor *embedded endoxa* selves could provide an ethical agency capable of lifting itself out of its immanence in biological and social milieus to become a center of choice and voluntary action (chapter 1). At the same time, Aristotle knew as well as anyone in our tradition that we *are* so embodied and embedded. So what can we—and ought we—do?

For Aristotle, the answer is that while we can and do *sunaisthanesthai,* sense together with others, we also *ought* to *sunaisthanesthai,* that is, actively choose to pursue and cultivate sensing together with groups of perceivers and actors who are, ideally, worthy. *Sunaisthanesthai* belongs to our nature as gregarious beings, but it is also the proper chosen activity of *cultivating friendship*.

"Cultivating friendship," however, along with my own examples of mourning (chapter 4) and parenting (chapter 5), might make it seem that *sunaisthanesthai* is a virtuous praxis between an intimate few. Aristotle concludes as much when he says that, while it is desirable to *sunaisthanesthai* with as many as possible, this is very difficult, so we must limit it. It seems not only easier to do so but also *safer,* since the intimate layers of interpenetration and interdependence *sunaisthanesthai* involves pose potentially devastating hazards to the organisms involved.

At the same time, the exploration of *intercorporeal sunaisthesis* had another critical function; it aimed to free us from conceptions of self and other as sealed off and self-contained, instead allowing elements of each to intermingle and alter one another through mutual, though asymmetrical, impacts as affective *ex*pressions and *im*pressions (chapters 2 and 3). While conceiving of self and other in this way helped get past problems of objectification and narcissistic projection that have consistently dogged

theories of intersubjectivity and other minds, it also crippled strong notions of transcendence and autonomy, notions meant to fortify us against the damage raw exposure to the other can bring (chapter 3).

The critique of damaging analogizing and objectifying models of self-others in chapter 3 was intended to be ontological and generalizable—not limited to an intimate and privileged few. If it is so generalizable, a critical phenomenologist might wonder why it should be "difficult" and "dangerous" to practice *sunaisthanesthai* beyond the few? At the same time, it takes nothing away from a critique of common sense as policed by a concern for borders, circumscribing individual bodies and individual communities, to acknowledge that the sort of permeability that *sunaisthesis* promotes can itself be hazardous. A critical phenomenologist might want to know if there are ways to encourage attention to the interenactive coming to be of common sense without endangering the individuals who open themselves to others in this way.[4] Surely some circuits of sensibility and affect are pernicious, not positive, debilitating rather than capacitating? Is there a way to encourage one and discourage the other without setting preestablished, fixed boundaries, boundaries that would limit sunaisthetic flows and demarcate good and bad combinatory potentials in advance of the sorts of sense they might make?

These are important questions, but ones that the current work does not, and did not, set out to answer. By pointing to the ways the sunaisthetic layer has been covered over by individualistic and communal understandings of common sense and the ways these have been institutionalized (via procedural and substantive versions of liberalism and communitarianism, for example), this work points to a perspective shift aimed at encouraging modes of sharing sensation latent in our tradition and in ourselves that contain the potential for bolstering selves (rightly understood as self-others), expanding solidarities, and grounding a sense of reality in concrete, interacting bodies. To explore these potentials, while heeding the above warnings, several existing and emerging critical empirical and phenomenological projects might be pursued from a sunaisthetic perspective.

- One such project would supplement feminist interrogations of the conditions for and constructions of intimacy. This book queried vestiges of *sunaisthesis* lodged in spheres currently considered intimate—a narrowing and parceling of *sunaisthesis* that Aristotle both anticipated and lamented. Experiences of intimacy are impacted by ideas and institutions about what robust and capable maturity must look like (for example, norms of rationality, of bodily repression, of competence to participate and ideally "win" scarce and stratified goods). In constructions of the intimate versus the public, sensation and affect have been privatized, as have those spheres in which sharing sensation has persisted and from which it might be tested and cultivated: love, child-rearing, and mourning, for example. A critical phenomenology of *sunaisthesis* should look simultaneously at ways existing ideas and institutions curtail intimate expressions and expansion, and how values nurtured sunaisthetically might inform those institutions and public expressions of value.[5]

- Related to studies of intimacy, a critical appraisal of abuses and of the maldistribution of sunaisthetic capacities, virtues, and requirements is in order. It is easy to see and criticize the encroachment of neoliberal values sedimented into the term *emotional labor,* for example. At the same time, while the term mistakenly and perhaps derogatorily places sunaisthetic powers within a market economy, it does capture the sort of abuses nonmutual approaches to *sunaisthesis* can engender and intensify.[6] As became clear in chapter 3, while *sunaisthesis* is asymmetrical, it is necessarily mutual—bodily sensations and affects do not flow in one direction and can only appear to do so as a result of violent rejection, appropriation, or repression. If this mutuality is manipulated or curtailed, it can become a locus of domination where the perceptions of one party are imposed on the other, never giving way or entry to genuine, reality-enhancing sensory collaboration but instead controlling the field while forcing the other to

sustain the affective and sensory connection that maintains that field, resulting in a kind of "arrogant perception."[7]

- An effort to construct a normative critique that is not indebted to the sorts of individualism that block *sunaisthesis* from view might draw on Deleuzian and Nietzschean categories of active and reactive, healthy and unhealthy, relations, applying these terms not to individuals but to sunaisthetic, affective environments. While the term *healthy* comes with its own menace, inquiring whether affective environments are not only sustainable but also dynamic, expansive, vigorous, and inclusive, as opposed to rigid, narrow, paltry, or exclusive, could be a way to diagnose pathological systems of interaction and root out potentially pernicious or damaging results to individual bodies.
- Charting thwarted desire for sunaisthetic connections could encourage evaluation of practices with an eye to whether they promote sunaisthetic, interembodied interaction or offer only manipulative substitutes for it. Here one could look, for example, at the ways social media has both provoked and exploited the desire for a sense of reality and solidarity, fostering group affiliations but on the ruins of the sort of atomization Arendt warned was fertile soil for ideology and propaganda. Atomization plus pseudocommunity warmly welcome both conspiracy thinking and virulent brand association, and new technologies allow these evils to flower.
- Cultivating awareness of the ways the marking of bodies—racializing, gendering, stratifying—can hamper sunaisthetic interaction is crucial. This project would obviously stand on the back of the great founders of critical phenomenology, such as Fanon and Beauvoir and their contemporary cohorts, but following the conclusions of chapter 3, instead of looking at full-scale patterns of reifying Objectification and Otherness that prevent the emergence of transcendent subjectivities, a sunaisthetic

approach would look at how such bodily markers have been deployed to prohibit full participation in building sensory communities and interembodied selves and seek ways to minimize these effects. It would ask if all bodies are being capacitated, achieving affective strength, within emerging environments. If some are differentially weakened, the environment constructed is less sustainable. A critical phenomenology would diagnose signs of this and seek remedies.

- Maintaining a critical eye on the institutional construction of bodies in their habits, interaction, and affects would help loosen the hold of communities of sense (*sensus communis*) built on exclusion and the rendering of some bodies as invisible or ineffective. This work would clearly draw heavily on Foucault and the multiple domains and disciplines he has already influenced. A sunaisthetic contribution to these crucial and ongoing projects would focus specifically on constructions of sensory and affective availability and the extent to which bodies and abilities are enabled to contribute to livable, sharable spaces.

- Finally, a sunaisthetic approach would seek to push deeper into the promises and limitations of traditional ethical values such as respect, autonomy, and recognition.[8] A sunaisthetic approach would reject such projects that still assume individualism as an input rather than a possible—and not necessarily always optimal—output of interactive systems. *Sunaisthesis* embraces the fecundity of preindividuation, recurrent periods of deindividuation, and emergent, collaborative reindividuations as the basis for affective ties and solidarity. Such affective ties are not necessarily incompatible with traditional ethical values, but these and other values would always be viewed as the result of sunaisthetic engagement and subsequent avowal only insofar as they maintain and support connectivity and the experience of intra- and intercorporeal coherence within and between the participating bodies.

Much work, in other words, remains to be done. The present project means to contribute to efforts of critical phenomenology and the construction of a virtue ethics of interembodiment by rooting under individualist common sense and communal *sensus communis* to reach the coming to be of shared sense. Motivating this was a hope that such coming to be of sense could speak to the unraveling of common sense, an unraveling endemic to the reification of the atomized individual, on the one hand, and closed, exclusionary communities on the other. Such an either/or of common sense may speak to selves that are embodied *or* embedded, intracorporeal *or* intercorporeal, but not to selves that are *both* at once and indeed enactive, extended, while striving to be *ethical* as well. A new "common sense" needs to link to the actual ways we make sense in common, valuing bodies, the affective environments they create, and the sunaisthetic self-others that emerge and thrive through this process.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. The epigraphs refer to Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (Ware, UK: Wordsworth Classics, 2000), 76, 137, respectively.
2. Miriam Wallace details the dichotomy-defying complexity of the permeable, relational, and metonymic subjectivity presented in *The Waves* in her "Theorizing Relational Subjects: Metonymic Narrative in 'The Waves,'" *Narrative* 8, no. 3 (2000): 294–323.
3. Arendt, on her way to developing a novel conception of reflective judgment, seems to have something like this in mind. She notes of Kant's alteration from paragraph 39 of *The Critique of Judgment* to paragraph 40: "The term is changed. The term 'common sense' meant a sense like our other senses—the same for everyone in his very privacy. By using the Latin term, Kant indicates that here he means something different: an extra sense—like an extra mental capability—that fits us into a community." H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 70.
4. For example, a community value of abstract equality may organize a shared perception of what persons or attributes of persons count as equalizable, and this will govern how institutions are arranged and texts are interpreted. But what happens when gendered, racialized, or laboring bodies disrupt this formal equality? Jacques Ranciere discusses the problem of unavoidable perceptual conflict and the coercion of establishing and maintaining a *sensus communis*. J. Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy,* trans. J. Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).
5. Arendt sometimes conflates this "sense of reality" with common sense and *sensus communis,* but I think this is a mistake. While she leans heavily on a "sense of reality" and its violation from her earliest writings on totalitarianism to her last work, her clearest discussion of it, while surprisingly brief, brings it close to what I

will be unfolding as *sunaisthesis* in distinction to common sense and *sensus communis*. Compare Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971) for the "threefold commonness that contributes to the sense of reality": "the five senses . . . have the same object in common; members of the same species have the context in common that endows every single object with its particular meaning; and all other sense-endowed beings . . . agree on its identity" (50).

6. For a fuller discussion of these issues, see A. Flakne, "Can Facts Survive? Lies and the Complicity of Common Sense," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 34, no. 4 (2020): 545–60.
7. Arendt, "On the Nature of Totalitarianism: An Essay in Understanding," in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954,* ed. J. Kohn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 328–60.
8. Contemporary work in cognitive, neuro- and developmental psychology has made Merleau-Ponty's ever elusive notion of intercorporeity less arcane and more approachable. At the same time, it is important to avoid naturalizing intercorporeity. Two recent works that provide nuanced and detailed reconsiderations of intercorporeity while successfully evading the temptation to naturalize it are Scott Marratto's *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012) and Joona Taipale's *Phenomenology and Embodiment: Husserl and the Constitution of Subjectivity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014). Taipale defends embodiment as *constituting* experience, and intersubjectivity as arising genetically from such embodiment, but misses the emergence of bodily experience itself from an original interembodiment. Marratto identifies intercorporeity as a primary anonymous layer and worries about how we might restitute a chastened and reformed subjectivity once we acknowledge this primordial layer. For Marratto, intercorporeity as a "mysterious contact, a communion with otherness" always "involves a threat of dispossession" (*The Intercorporeal Self,* 9). My sunaisthetic account, in contrast, dwells within this mysterious communion and views prepossessive sensuous entanglement as a fecund invitation to ethical engagement. Indeed, any return to subjectivity, however perforated by intercorporeity, risks siphoning attention from the ethical significance of interacting, cosensing bodies themselves. (For more about the ethical traps of subjectivity and its illusions of otherness, see chapter 3.)
9. Dave Ward and Mog Stapleton provide a helpful overview of 4E theory, arguing that the sense of embodied, embedded, and extended can be effectively captured by "enactive." "Es Are Good: Cognition as Enacted, Embodied, Embedded, Affective and

Extended," in *Consciousness in Interaction: The Role of the Natural and Social Context in Shaping Consciousness,* ed. F. Paglieri (Rome: John Benjamins, 2012), 89–104. I agree with this, but I would add that we are intercorporeally enactive; what counts as affordances is intercorporeally mediated and (as the authors do stress) affectively colored; and much of this affective coloration is intercorporeally mediated as well.

10. Ward and Stapleton.
11. Although 4E approaches to cognition are sometimes called "new," they are not terribly new to phenomenologically inclined philosophers, who are often happy to trace their pedigree much further back. Still, many contemporary phenomenologically inclined thinkers enthusiastically embrace the myriad empirical confirmations of their theories found in recent work in the cognitive, developmental, and neurosciences, as well as the points of overlap they enjoy with some distinguished contemporary analytic philosophers of mind who endorse some version of the 4E approach. I will not spend time here distinguishing or uniting the various 4E theories, nor arguing for their points of convergence and difference from traditional phenomenology—that important work has been done well by others, with Sean Gallagher and Dan Zahavi's *The Phenomenological Mind* (London: Routledge, 2012) serving as a key resource for the terms of exchange.
12. The term *phenomenological proposal* is Zahavi's. See Zahavi, "Empathy and Direct Social Perception: A Phenomenological Perspective," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 2/3 (2011): 541–48. I have in mind not only Zahavi but also philosophers like Gallagher, Overgaard, Krueger, etc., who have recently challenged both the cognitivist assumption that we form hypotheses about the mindedness and thoughts of others that are later cashed or rejected through their behaviors (Theory-Theory), or that we understand others primarily through subpersonal systems (such as mirror resonance systems) that allow us to experience the feelings of others through embodied simulation of their bodily states (Simulation-Theory). For an overview, see Gallagher and Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind.*
13. Susan Bredlau's *The Other in Perception: A Phenomenological Account of Our Experience of Other Persons* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018) explores how phenomenology's recognition of the other as a structural aspect of all perception requires exacting ethical scrutiny of intimate acts such as caregiving and sexuality.
14. A. Flakne, "Contact Improvisation and Embodied Social Cognition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisational Dance,* ed. V. Midgelow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 528–44.

CHAPTER 1: ARISTOTLE AND THE BIRTH OF THE SUNAISTHETIC SELF

1. All Baudelaire chapter epigraphs refer to C. Baudelaire, "Correspondences," trans. H. Heyrman, Art and Synesthesia (website), 1995, http://www.doctorhugo.org/synaesthesia/baudelaire.html.
2. But not always. Some research has confirmed Merleau-Ponty's hunch that *synesthesia* is the norm and not the exception. Still, even those tempted to defend such a thesis tend to think of synesthetic perception as somehow developmentally backward or unripe.
3. I have been able to locate no pre-Aristotelian usages of the term *sunaisthanesthai* or its derivatives, although Plutarch (retrospectively) reports that Solon's aim in allowing citizens to pursue suits on behalf of other citizens was to engender *sunaisthesis* among the populace. The root "sunaist-" is used five times in Aristotle's ethical works, all in a short span of text dealing with the question of why the self-sufficient man still requires friends. There is also a probable use of "*sunaisthanesthai*" in the *History of Animals* (HA 534b18), which I will discuss, and another in the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Audibilibus* (*Aud. 803b36*), which concerns the simultaneity of sensations—something close to synesthesia in its contemporary sense—which I will not treat at length.
4. See, for example, Priscian, *On Theophratus' On Sense Perception,* 21.32–22.23, in R. Sorabji, *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200–600 AD: A Sourcebook* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 147; and Simplicius *DA* 187.27–188.35; 173.3–7, in Sorabji, *Philosophy of the Commentators,* 147. The sense of inwardness is especially strong in Plotinus and, in a particularly strong reversal in Philoponus, even means a release from bodily burdens. For these references see Sorabji, "Self-Awareness," in *Philosophy of the Commentators,* 160.
5. H. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958).
6. This meaning is to be found in Hierocles, *Elements of Ethics,* in which *sunaisthesis* contributes to "an important theory of oikeiosis according to which newborn animals and children and already have an awareness (sunaisthesis) of their own persons, which it would be natural for them to extend to others of their own kind. This knowledge of their own bodies and how to use them was not based on reason, at one extreme, nor at the other extreme was it mere 'nature,' i.e., instinctive behavior. Rather it involved something in between: self-awareness." Sorabji, *Philosophy of the Commentators,* 159. A. Long ("Hierocles on Oikeiosis and Self-Perception," in *Stoic Studies* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996], 250–63) makes an explicit link to proprioception. See also, D. Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch* (New York: Zone

Books, 2007), 118–25; and B. Inwood, "Hierocles: Theory and Argument in the Second Century AD," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy,* no. 2 (1984): 151–83.

7. F. Josephus, *The Jewish War.* Volume 3, *Books 5–7* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 191–93. See, for example, H. B. Schmid, "Collective Emotions," chap. 12 in *The Routledge Handbook of Collective Intentionality,* ed. M. Jankovic and K. Ludwig (New York: Routledge, 2017).
8. This "species" talk arises directly out of Aristotle; I am rather inclined to believe that interspecies *sunaisthesis* exists as well, though perhaps to declining degrees.
9. Translation adapted from H. Rackham, trans. and ed., *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Loeb Classical Library, 1926). All translations of both *Ethics* will follow Rackham's lead. Alterations will be indicated when followed by original Greek in brackets.
10. Charles Kahn has shown that "*aisthesis*" frequently refers not merely to sense-perception but also to "consciousness" or "awareness" in a wider sense. See C. Kahn, "Sensation and Consciousness in Aristotle's Psychology," *Archiv fur Geschichte der Philosophie* 48, nos. 1–3 (1966): 48–81. Kahn's point is that consciousness qua *aisthesis* should be taken as a function of sensory experience—not as an internal landscape like the reflexive, Cartesian "self-consciousness." Thus, it is important to keep the sensory and intentional/transitive (as opposed to reflexive) connotation of *sun-aisthesis* alive even where we accept the translation of *aisthesis* as "consciousness."
11. There is a third, obvious question: What would that requirement look like? But I will defer this until the last chapter.
12. Cf. Aristotle, *History of Animals* (534b18), in *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* ed. J. Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:774–993, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Audibilibus* 83b36 in Aristotle, *Minor Works,* ed. and trans. W. S. Hett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936).
13. Stern-Gillet sums up well the view of many commentators that in Aristotle *self* is "an achievement word" and "an evaluative, commendatory notion" that "differs significantly from modern purely descriptive conceptions of selfhood." See S. Stern-Gillet, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 29. For Aristotle, the self is not something pregiven, but rather is an aspiration (*Boulesis,* rational wish) guided by a life plan (telos, goal) and pursued through decision (*prohairesis,* choice). The question, though, is how one gets into a position to wish for such a life plan and make such choices.

14. Contemporary enactivists provide a quite Aristotelian picture when they talk about "constitutive and interactive autonomy that living systems enjoy by virtue of their self-generated identity as distinct entities in constant material flux." Such "systems" must reach "operational closure" to "sustain an identity under precarious conditions." See H. De Jaegher, "Social Understanding through Direct Perception? Yes, by Interacting," *Consciousness and Cognition* 18, no. 2 (2009): 535–42. For an ethical self to come into existence, it must somehow mediate participation in biological-environmental systems, individual-social systems, and cognitive-conceptual systems and stabilize these into an *ethical* identity. The question is *how.*
15. My position is that the tract of text from EE 1244b25–1245b6 should be read as a problematic but nonetheless unified attempt to explicate "the interrelationship of the potentialities" of "self-sufficiency and friendship" stated as the explicit theme of book 7, chapter 11 at 1244b1–2. Calling this argument by the name *sunaisthesis* is justified because (1) this term does the major work of explicating this interrelationship; (2) the tract of text is bordered by instances of this term; and (3) we should call attention to the strangeness of term in order to reconstruct Aristotle's motive in employing it.
16. While some hold that the books on friendship in both *Ethics* were written separately and only subsequently included in the major ethical treatises, others view (as I do) the doctrine of friendship as central to the entire ethical enterprise. In an important example of this take, Robert Sokolowski makes the convincing case that Aristotle's *Ethics* proceeds through three ascending crests of virtue: first pride/magnanimity, then justice, then friendship. See R. Sokolowski, "Phenomenology of Friendship," *Review of Metaphysics* 55, no. 3 (2002): 551–70.
17. Sokolowski, 551–70.
18. Shaun Gallagher seems to share this view to some extent in his paper "Neo-Aristotelian Neurobiology." Invited Roundtable Discussion "*Le phenomene de la vie,*" College International de Philosophie, Paris (October 2001).
19. A. Flakne, "Embodied and Embedded: Friendship and the Sunaisthetic Self," *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2005): 37–63.
20. This resonates with the enactive approach of H. De Jaegher and E. Di Paolo, "Participatory Sense-Making: An Enactive Approach to Social Cognition," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2007): 485–507; and E. Di Paolo and H. De Jaegher, "Enactive Ethics: Difference Becoming Participation," *Topoi* 41 (2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-021-09766-x.

21. HA 534b18. The use of *sunaisthesis* is editorially contested.
22. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* paragraph 40, as discussed in Hannah Arendt's *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 66–72.
23. *Koine aisthesis* refers to common sense as the common faculty (or *koine dunamis*) responsible, in Aristotle's theory of perception, for a wide variety of functions including (a) uniting the data of the diverse senses into one object that is (b) perceived by one subject, who "perceives that he is perceiving" as well (c) discriminating between which data belong to which sensory capacity within the single subject, and (d) providing insight into the "common sensibles," things like movement and magnitude, which we experience "by means of" the other senses but not as their proper objects. See W. D. Ross, *Aristotle Parva Naturalia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 35.
24. E.g., the relationship between *koina* like movement and number—Aristotle says we probably have more than one sense to help us perceive these things, which cannot be perceived by any one sense—and other *per accidens* perceptions, e.g., perceptions that "this white thing is Cleon." *Koine aisthesis* may also play a role in making perceptions propositional. See R. Sorabji, "Intentionality and Physiological Processes: Aristotle's Theory of Sense Perception," in *Essays on Aristotle's de Anima,* ed. M. C. Nussbaum and A. O. Rorty (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 195–255.

    For some, *koine aisthesis* should be equated with *koine dunamis* and understood as the *sensus communis.* For others we should distinguish between the *koine aisthesis* as simply that which apprehends the common sensibles and the *koine dunamis,* which is capable of comparing between data of different sense organs, etc. See D. Hamlyn, "Koine Aisthesis," *The Monist* 52, no. 2 (1968): 195–209.
25. In *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship,* Stern-Gillet elegantly traces an expanding concept of awareness in Aristotle's work.
26. In "Koine Aisthesis," Hamlyn famously disagrees with the tendency to associate *koine aisthesis* and *koine dunamis,* limiting the function of *koine aisthesis* to perceiving the "koina." I will presume the broader understanding of *koine aisthesis* here.
27. See Stern-Gillet, *Philosophy of Friendship.*
28. For one clear and strong example, see V. Caston, "Aristotle on Conscioussness," *Mind* 111 (2002): 751–815.
29. To understand Aristotle in this way is to view him as a precursor to Noe's enactivist account of perception. See A. Noe *Action in Perception* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
30. L. A. Kosman made it clear that "awareness" or "consciousness" (*koine aisthesis* and/or *koine dunamis*) is nothing more than the

sense of *life* belonging to an *organism* whose organs are, as it were, cross-referenced, i.e., whose organs together constitute a system in active and functional interaction with that organism's environment. See L. A. Kosman, "Perceiving That We Perceive," *Philosophical Review* 84, no. 4 (1975): 499–519. For a defense of this sort of interpretation, see S. Everson, "Psychology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle,* ed. J. Barnes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 168–94.

31. As in the *Parva Naturalia,* but the heart can just be read as the systematicity of the system.
32. Contrast to R. Sorabji, "The Unity of Self-Awareness," in *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights about Individuality, Life, and Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), chap. 14. Features such as movement, magnitude, and number are not for Aristotle, as they were for Plato, objects of *reason;* they are objects of the faculty of perception insofar as perception comes in coherent packages or gestalts for animals as well as humans, despite the diversity and irreducibility of the individual sense organs and their proper (*per se*) objects.
33. Again, compare this to an enactivist account of cognition as sense-making. De Jaegher, "Social understanding?"
34. Cf. J. Owens, "The Self in Aristotle," *Review of Metaphysics* 41, no. 4 (1988): 707–22.
35. Nor should the fact that there is no self-awareness outside of the ethical writings surprise us; there is no self-*awareness* outside ethics because there is no *self* outside of ethics. We will return to the emergence of a tenuous ethical self-concept (*to autos*) in the next section.
36. Contrast this to Sorabji's reading of this passage in *Philosophy of the Commentators.* Sorabji also agrees there is an ambiguity in the passage, but he takes the ambiguity to be between the co-use of the senses and the idea that sensory qualities have effects that take place within the individual members.
37. This is the case whether or not Aristotle is the author of the latter.
38. Aristotle states this circle at many points, for example, when he concludes NE book 6 by summarizing, "It is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral excellence" (NE 1144b30, Ross translation).
39. *Doxa,* as the lowest cognitive faculty, was for some of the ancients itself a candidate for the status of a "common sense" rationally rather than perceptually conceived. Cf. Sorabji, *Self: Ancient and Modern Insights.*
40. Of course, problems of application can be manifold, e.g., how to apply a given standard, say courage, to this particular case, or which standard is the relevant standard, etc.

41. A. Flakne, "No Longer and Not Yet: From Doxa to Judgment," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 21, no. 2 (1999): 153–75.
42. Cf., for example, NE 1170b1: "And to perceive that we are perceiving or thinking is to perceive that we are in existence (for existing was perceiving or thinking), and to perceive that one is living is one of the things that are pleasant in themselves. For life is necessarily a good thing, and it is pleasant to perceive the good in oneself." See Sorabji's translation and interpretation in "The Role of Intellect in Virtue," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 74, no. 1 (1974): 107–29.
43. Bucking this trend, H. B. Schmid finds in *sunaisthanesthai* a very early indication of a sort of plural or "us" awareness. He therefore links *sunaisthanesthai* to social cognition just as I have done both here and in my 2005 "Embodied and Embedded." But even Schmid's intriguing and correct account comes somewhat later than the phenomena that I want to explore; namely, the "we" awareness that proceeds an "I" awareness and makes it possible. See H. B. Schmid, "Being Well Together—Aristotle on Joint Activity and Common Sense," in *Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Methods and Perspectives. Proceedings of the 37th International Wittgenstein Symposium,* ed. S. Rinofner-Kreidl and H. Wilsche (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 289–308.
44. Contrast this to Schmid's similar view, in which plural or "us" awareness is adjunct to self-awareness. On my view, a robust self-awareness as a potential agent is only possible on the basis of an "we" awareness. Schmid, "Being Well Together."
45. C. Kahn, "Aristotle and Altruism," *Mind,* no. 90 (1981): 20–40.
46. Paul Ricoeur's account in chapter 7 of *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) has the virtue of always keeping this ontological-ethical horizon in mind. However, in doing so, he forefronts the role of lack in friendship whereas my account of *sunaisthesis* and pleasure emphasizes exuberance and abundance instead.
47. I have discussed the reasons for rejecting this type of view at more length in "Embodied and Embedded."
48. L. A. Kosman details these in "On the Desirability of Friends," *Ancient Philosophy,* no. 24 (2004): 135–54.
49. I continue to follow Kosman's excellent analysis in Kosman, 135–54.
50. Kosman makes the important distinction between a reflective self-consciousness that takes itself as an object and an intentional consciousness that is simply aware of a *perceiving* in any perception of an object. Presumably this distinction underlies Kosman's denial that Aristotle is interested in "self-knowledge" as a self-objectification in the *Eudemian* (but the same could be said for the

Nicomachean) *sunaisthesis* argument (Kosman, "Perceiving that We Perceive"). I would stop short, however, of calling this awareness of perceiving "subjectivity."

51. This is where I part ways with Kosman's otherwise superb analysis. Cf. Kosman, "Desirability of Friends" and Flakne, "Embodied and Embedded."
52. Kahn, echoing Hardie, in Kahn's "Aristotle and Altruism."
53. So when Aristotle says that "we stand in the same relationship to our friend as to ourselves," we should understand this to mean *both* that a friend is as intimate to the self as its own self is, *and* that the self is as other to itself as an other is.
54. Stern-Gillet also argues that *koine aisthesis and koine dunamis* do not yet offer a reflexivity robust enough to be a ground for ethical selfhood. In her nice phrase in *Aristotle's Philosophy of Friendship,* "'self' is an achievement word." However, she views self-knowledge as the building block of this achievement in a way that I must reject.
55. *Sunaisthesis* is here not called by name but referred to as a kind of *aisthesis* actualized in social life. I am basing these thoughts on the somewhat corrupt and convoluted text at EE 1245a ff. I support this reading in "Embodied and Embedded."
56. Cf. G. Striker, "Emotions in Context," in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics,* ed. A. O. Rorty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 286–302.
57. For life as defined by modes of attention enabled through pleasure, Cf. NE1175a12ff.

CHAPTER 2: INTERCORPOREITY AND THE COMING TO BE OF COMMON SENSE

1. "Species bodies such as ours" is not categorical but admits of degrees. There are certainly interspecies worlds of perception, however it is likely that a sense of coherence/reality increases with morphological likeness.
2. See S. Marratto, *The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), for a thorough discussion of this most general, "anonymous" level.
3. For another good summary discussion of this level, see L. Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), esp. chap. 5.
4. Marratto's *Intercorporeal Self* also focuses on the spatialization and enactive possibilities of intercorporeity between bodies as present already in Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception.* But we must retain that while the space in which bodies interact is impersonal or "anonymous," the bodies themselves become individualized sedimentations of affective and perceptive

histories. These are further repotentialized through possibilities of spatialization and co-perception in lived body to lived body inter(en)active activity.

5. Gallagher argues that Merleau-Pony was consistent in his use of *schema corporel* "to signify a dynamic function of the body in its environment. The schema operates as a system of dynamic motor equivalents that belong to the realm of habit rather than conscious choice." S. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20. EM loc 304. However, Gallagher goes on to complain, "Nonetheless, the schema works along with a marginal awareness of the body, and Merleau-Pony often left the relation between the schema and the marginal awareness unexplained."
6. I follow Gallagher in this controversial distinction between body schema and body image as articulated in Gallagher, *How the Body,* chap. 1.
7. Taylor Carman productively does this in "Sensation, Judgment, and the Phenomenal Field," in *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty,* ed. T. Carman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 50–74.
8. This close interaction and necessary circuit is why any distinction between body schema and body image may seem specious or redundant. See G. Weiss, *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Still, I think it is helpful to keep the two terms in their dialectical interaction distinct for clinical as well as social and political reasons.
9. Susan Bordo famously argues for the generalized social manipulation of the body images that produce anorexic bodies in *Unbearable Weight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
10. Weiss's work is most eloquent on this aspect of intercorporeity. Weiss, *Body Images.*
11. In[en]active is a good way to express the sorts of selves we are as participatory sense makers. See H. De Jaegher and E. Di Paolo, "Participatory Sense-Making: An Enactive Approach to Social Cognition," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2007): 485–507.
12. R. Barbaras claims, plausibly, that the dual primordiality of self-world, self-other relation was always at the core of Merleau-Ponty's project. See R. Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomena: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology,* trans. T. Toadvine (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). J. Slatman discusses the increasing cleavage between Merleau-Ponty's concept of the lived body and a "subject body" and "proper"—owned—body in J. Slatman, "The Sense of Life: Husserl and Merleau-Ponty on Touching and Being Touched," *Chiasmi International,* no. 7 (2005): 305–24.

13. This section is in constant dialogue with J. Derrida, *On Touching—Jean Luc Nancy,* trans. C. Irizarry (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005) and draws heavily on A. Flakne, "Contact/Improv: A Synaesthetic Rejoinder to Derrida's Reading of Merleau-Ponty," *Philosophy Today* 51 (SPEP Supplement, 2007): 42–49.
14. This brief discussion summarizes Husserl's complex arguments in the Fifth Meditation of his *Cartesian Meditations,* trans. D. Cairns (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1988), 89–151.
15. Appresentation of the other is a species of apperception and "Apperception is not inference, not a thinking act." Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations,* 111.
16. This is essentially Scheler's critique of any analogical approach to otherness. See M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy,* trans. P. Heath (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954).
17. I am playing with cognates, from the Latin *praegnans,* that have allowed the French prégnance and *prégnant,* meaning "containing a number of possibilities and virtualities," to be translated (albeit somewhat misleadingly) into the English pregnancy and pregnant. Merleau-Ponty encourages such play, for example, when he says that "I give birth" to the other; or when he scolds "the psychologists" by reverting to the Latin *praegnans* to remind them that "Pregnancy" (*Praegnanz* in Gestalt theory, which indicates precision or strong form) also means "power to break forth, productivity, *fecundity.*" For the first reference, see M. Merleau-Ponty, "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other," in *Prose of the World,* ed. C. LeFort, trans. J. O'Neill (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 134. For the second, see Merleau-Ponty, "Working Notes," in *The Visible and the Invisible,* ed. C. LeFort, trans. A. Lingus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 208–9. The tension between the French multiplicity and the German strong form plays out in the literal pregnant body as a meeting place of multiplicity and possibility while simultaneously being a striving toward coherence between the bodies and within the bodies, both disrupted and underway, as I develop further in chapter 5.
18. Derrida's emphasis, quoting Merleau-Ponty in Derrida, *On Touching.* Cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," in *Signs,* trans. R. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 170.
19. Derrida, *On Touching,* 198.
20. Slatman, "Sense of Life."
21. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* 147.
22. Derrida, *On Touching,* 193
23. Derrida, 193.

24. Derrida, 198.
25. Renaud Barbaras also reaches such conclusion, writing "there is coincidence with the self only as divergence [ecart] from the self, self-presence only as self-absence (VI 246/192). The condition of all possession is the dispossession by the world, in which perception is summed up." Barbaras, *Being of the Pheomena,* 160.
26. See Carman's helpful discussion of "motive" in "Sensation, Judgment," where he distinguishes motives from both intellectual reasons and mechanical causes.
27. "*For the subject does not tell us merely that he has a sound and a color at the same time: it is the sound itself that he sees, at the place where colors form.* . . . It falls to us to construct our definitions in such a way as to find a sense for this experience, since the vision of sounds or the hearing of colors exist as phenomena. And they are hardly exceptional phenomena. Synesthetic perception is the rule and, if we do not notice it, this is because scientific knowledge displaces experience and we have unlearned seeing, hearing, and sensing in general in order to deduce what we ought to see, hear, or sense from our bodily organization and from the world as it is conceived by the physicist." M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. D. Landes (New York: Routledge, 2013), 238 (emphasis in the original).
28. Cf. Derrida, *On Touching,* 203–7.
29. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 42 (my emphasis).
30. Actually, Gallagher is equivocal on this point in *How the Body Shapes the Mind,* with formulations that both press toward this more radical, intercorporeal interpretation and ones that decidedly stop short of it. In *The Phenomenological Mind,* however, Gallagher and his coauthor come out strongly in favor of an innate or at least very primitive proprioception as an elemental mineness. S. Gallagher and D. Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind* (London: Routledge, 2012). Meanwhile, in another work, Gallagher and his coauthors take seriously the idea that interaction constitutes social performance in a way that is compatible with my more radical approach to intercorporeity. Cf. H. De Jaegher, E. Di Paolo, and S. Gallagher, "Can Social Interaction Constitute Social Cognition?," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 14, no. 10 (2010): 441–47.
31. This is in keeping with the inter-enactive sense of "autonomy" as articulated, for example, in De Jaegher, Di Paolo, and Gallagher, "Can Social Interaction Constitute Social Cognition?" But using the term *autonomy* to indicate relatively self-sustaining systems within precarity remains underspecified and requires further investigation, including ethical investigation, some of which occurs in Gallagher's *Action and Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2020) and in E. Di Paolo and H. De Jaegher, "Enactive Ethics: Difference Becoming Participation," *Topoi* (2021), https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-021-09766-x.

32. Gallagher explains, "I refer here to what neuroscientists now describe as processes that involve mirror neurons (Gallese 1998; Gallese et at. 1996; Rizzolatti et al. 1996). Mirror neurons link up motor processes with visual ones in ways that are directly relevant to the possibility of imitation. . . . Mirror neurons respond both when a subject performs a particular (goal-directed) action involving arm, hand, or mouth and when the subject observes such actions being done by another subject. This class of neurons thus constitutes an intermodal link between the visual perception of action or dynamic expression, and the intrasubjective, proprioceptive sense of one's own capabilities. Their functioning clearly helps to account for the communication between proprioception and vision, and between specific movements and the visual perception of those movements in others. In principle there is no reason to think that mirror neurons do not function at birth." See Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 77. Gallagher characterizes these nonintentional and responsive mechanisms as "primary" intersubjectivity on which secondary levels of subjectivity can be based.
33. "For Merleau-Ponty, motor experience and perceptual experience are dialectically or reciprocally linked. The mature operation of a body schema depends on a developed perceptual knowledge of one's own body; and the organized perception of one's own body, and then of the external world, depends on a proper functioning of the body schema." Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 67. Gallagher assimilates Merleau-Ponty's position to a "traditional" view—which Gallagher disputes—according to which the child requires experience with a body image, particularly in the mirror stage, in order to develop a body schema adequate for perception properly understood.
34. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 70.
35. Gallagher, 70. This will be very important in the discussion of mirror neurons below.
36. Gallagher strangely underemphasizes this amazing aspect. Cf. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* chap 3.
37. For Gallagher, this early proprioceptive body-schematic capacity forms the condition of what will develop into a body image: "The neonate, however, does have, in the most general sense, a proprioceptive awareness of its own face. I want to suggest that this proprioceptive awareness is a tacit, pre-reflective awareness that constitutes the very beginning of a primitive body image. It is in the intermodal and intersubjective interaction between

proprioception and the vision of the other's face that one's body image originates. The body image, then, is not innate, although the capacity to develop a body image can be exercised from birth." Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 73.

38. J. Lymer hypothesizes the development of proprioception out of the maternal-foetal "choreography" in utero—a view I endorse and will develop later. See J. Lymer, "Merleau-Ponty and the Affective Maternal-Foetal Relation," *PARRHESIA* 13 (2011): 126–43.
39. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 73.
40. Gallagher, 73.
41. Gallagher, 74.
42. Gallagher, 74.
43. An equivocation in the term *capacity* is operative here. In one sense, the sense that is (mis)leading Gallagher, if the infant puckered her lips—or something like it—she was clearly capable of doing so. This is the familiar metaphysics of potentiality and actuality, where actualities turn out to determine the potentialities that are said to condition them. My argument here, on the contrary, is that since the infant's ability to pucker might never have been realized had she never imitated a puckering face, it is quite wrong to label puckering as one of "her own" capacities; a pucker response belonged to the relation *between* puckerers.
44. For further discussion of this, see Lymer, "Merleau-Ponty."
45. See Lymer, "Merleau-Ponty."
46. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 76.
47. One can think of Lacan's famous pigeons here, who could not enter puberty unless they encountered another of their kind.
48. Still, nothing excludes the idea that mirror neurons might so cause the initial imitation.
49. Cf. Carman, "Sensation, Judgment."
50. Merleau-Ponty as quoted in Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 15.
51. Gallagher, 83.
52. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* 147.
53. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 81.
54. Merleau-Ponty quoted in Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 83.
55. Gallagher, 83.
56. Gallagher approaches my stronger formulations about the mutual dependency of intercorporeal and intracorporeal coherences when he thinks about partnered dance: "When I am immersed in experience, however, the limits of the body and environment are obscured. In dance, for example, I may in some instances be conscious of precisely where my body stops and where my partner's body begins. In a certain movement, however, to maintain proper balance, my body has to take into postural-schematic account the

moving extension of my partner so that, one might say, the body schema includes information that goes beyond the narrow boundaries defined by body image. . . . The body schema functions in an integrated way with its environment, even to the extent that it frequently incorporates into itself certain objects." Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes,* 36–37.

57. Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and the Invisible,* 147.
58. Merleau-Ponty, 146.
59. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader,* ed. L. Lawlor (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 409.
60. Merleau-Ponty, "Dialogue and the Perception," 143 (emphasis mine).

CHAPTER 3: OTHERS, UNCOMMON AND UNSIGHTLY

1. Thus the scopic approach to otherness is in line with the entire modern, epistemological privileging of sight, itself reaching back to the earliest Greek elevation of *theorein.*
2. As Scheler rightly points out, any theory of analogy must assume the very similarity it is supposed to defend. Since there cannot be any similarity between objects I see and subjective self-experience, any such similarity must be fabricated. See M. Scheler, *The Nature of Sympathy,* trans. P. Heath (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954). All arguments from analogy inevitably take "my" consciousness as primary and paradigmatic, thereby effacing the other through varieties of "arrogant perception." See A. Flakne, "Is Direct Perception Arrogant Perception?," in *Feminist Phenomenology Futures,* ed. H. Fielding and D. Olkowski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 277–98.
3. For a thorough review of these approaches, see K. Stueber, *Rediscovering Empathy: Agency, Folk Psychology, and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).
4. Scheler, *Nature of Sympathy.*
5. Pierre Jacob's quarrel with proponents of Direct Perception revolves around this ambiguity about the meaning of behavior from a properly phenomenological-hermeneutic perspective. See P. Jacob, "The Direct-Perception Model of Empathy: A Critique," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 2 (2011): 519–40; J. Krueger and S. Overgaard, "Seeing Subjectivity: Defending a Perceptual Account of Other Minds," *ProtoSociology: Consciousness and Subjectivity* 47 (2012): 239–62; D. Zahavi, "Empathy and Direct Social Perception: A Phenomenological Perspective," *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 2/3 (2011): 541–58.
6. S. Gallagher and D. Hutto, "Understanding Others through Primary Interaction and Narrative Practice," in *The Shared Mind:*

Perspectives on Intersubjectivity, ed. J. Zlatev, T. Racine, C. Sinha, and E. Itkonen (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008), 17–38.

7. Gallagher and Hutto, 22.
8. Gallagher and Hutto, 22.
9. Gallagher and Hutto, 27.
10. H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
11. T. Cohen, *Thinking of Others* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).
12. H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971).
13. Michael Theunissen provides the canonical presentation of the tensions between the two schools in *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Buber,* trans. C. Macann (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984). Beata Stawarska revisited these tensions with hope of reconciliation in *Between You and I: Dialogical Phenomenology* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009).
14. D. Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy: Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8, nos. 5–7 (2001): 151–67.
15. Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy," 151–67.
16. Zahavi, "Direct Social Perception."
17. Zahavi is quick to acknowledge that phenomenologists have held a wide range of positions about this. Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy."
18. Unless it turns out that you are being manipulated by the child, but set that aside for now.
19. G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, "Percept, Affect, and Concept," *What Is Philosophy,* trans. H. Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 163–99.
20. Deleuze and Guattari, 177.
21. Deleuze and Guattari seek to distinguish their conception of Affect in artwork from Merleau-Pontian Flesh as receptivity and reversibility. On my reading, Affect is not an ontological element but a place where bodies exchange, augment, circulate, or decrease force. See Deleuze and Guattari, "Percept, Affect, and Concept."
22. Zahavi gets closer to a concept that encompasses "we consciousness," but he calls this intersubjective sharing and wants to demarcate it sharply from empathy. This intersubjective sharing approaches what I am discussing, though he still maintains that a mineness and thineness must precede any such sharing. See D. Zahavi, "Empathy Not Equal to Sharing: Perspectives from Phenomenology and Developmental Psychology," *Consciousness and Cognition* 36 (2015): 543–53.

23. E. Levinas, "Martin Buber and the Theory of Knowledge," in *The Levinas Reader,* ed. S. Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 59–74.
24. Moreover, this aesthetic experience easily dissolves into an epistemological one: through this satisfying sense of wholeness in myself in the face of the Thou, I ground my knowledge that I am encountering an other, a Thou, and not an object, an It, which I categorize. See Levinas, "Martin Buber."
25. This interpretation is heavily influenced by Kojeve's, which in turn arguably prompted Sartre's affective turn. See A. Kojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel,* ed. A. Bloom, trans. J. H. Nichols Jr. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969).
26. J. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square, 1984).
27. A. Flakne, "Contact Improvisation and Embodied Social Cognition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisational Dance,* ed. V. Midgelow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 528–44.
28. Thus we may see the extreme cases of sadism, torture, and cruelty as the effort to deprive motive-driven animate life of its existence and reduce it to machine-like mechanism.
29. M. Merleau-Ponty, "Dialogue and the Perception of the Other," in *Prose of the World,* ed. C. LeFort, trans. J. O'Neil (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 138.
30. M. Merleau-Ponty, "The Philosopher and His Shadow," in *Signs,* trans. R. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 168.
31. Merleau-Ponty wonders, "How could there be an outside view upon this totality which I am? From where could it be had? Yet this is just what happens when the other appears to me. To the infinity that was me something else still adds itself; a sprout shoots forth, I grow, I give birth, this other is made from my flesh and blood and yet is no longer me." See Merleau-Ponty, "Dialogue and the Perception," 134.
32. For a more detailed discussion of contact improvisation as a model of self-other encounter, see A. Flakne, "Contact/Improv: A Synaesthetic Rejoinder to Derrida's Reading of Merleau-Ponty," *Philosophy Today* 51 (SPEP Supplement, 2007): 42–49; and A. Flakne, "Contact Improvisation and Embodied Social Cognition," in *The Oxford Handbook of Improvisational Dance,* ed. V. Midgelow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 528–44.
33. Storytelling practices get at this kind of narrative exchange; the story unfolds through the intersections of many stories, and the encounter of storyteller and audience—who themselves may become story makers in response and rejoinder—echoes this encounter. See A. Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood,* trans. P. Kottman (London: Routledge, 2000).

34. Merleau-Ponty, "Dialogue and the Perception," 140.
35. Merleau-Ponty, 143.
36. Merleau-Ponty, 145.

CHAPTER 4: MORNING SHADES OF DEATH

1. Cf. F. J. Varela, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991).
2. This can fruitfully be compared to the "moral sense" dear to Scottish and English Enlightenment thinkers, as well to Feuerbach's and young Marx's conception of "species being."
3. For an empirical account of this production of values through (inter)enactive perception, see E. Di Paolo, M. Rohde, and H. De Jaegher, "Horizons for the Enactive Mind: Values, Social Interaction, and Play," in *Enaction: Towards a New Paradigm for Cognitive Science,* ed. J. Stewart, O. Gapenne, and E. De Paolo (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 33–87.
4. Compare this to what Deleuze and Guattari have to say about the Platonic friend in the introduction to *What Is Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). Just as Aristotle steps back from Plato's conception of the Good in the first book of *Nicomachean Ethics,* by these late books Aristotle develops a view of friendship as a genuine relation to Otherness and as that which capacitates, as it were, from within (as discussed in chapter 1 of the present work).
5. See J. Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness,* ed. J. Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999), 246–48.
6. J. Didion, *A Year of Magical Thinking* (New York: Vintage, 2007).
7. Deleuze illustrates an interesting flipside to this in *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life* (Princeton: Zone Books, 2005). There he depicts the mourners expressing genuine sadness over the presumed death of a cruel, intransigent man, a sadness that dissipates the moment it appears that the dying might live after all. Deleuze's idea is that the mourners are indeed capable of genuine sadness concerning the loss of the old man's *impersonal possibilities,* while they nonetheless continue to despise his actual personal qualities.
8. Cited in T. Clewell, "Mourning beyond Melancholia," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 52, no. 1 (2004): 43–67.
9. N. Abraham and M. Torok, "Mourning *or* Melancholia: Introjection *versus* Incorporation," in *The Shell and the Kernel,* ed. and trans. N. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 125–38.
10. For a complementary take on incorporation, see T. Fuchs and H. De Jaegher, "Enactive Intersubjectivity: Participatory Sense-Making and Mutual Incorporation," *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 8, no. 4 (2009): 465–86.

11. M. Merleau-Ponty, “Dialogue and the Perception of the Other,” in *Prose of the World,* ed. C. LeFort, trans. J. O’Neil (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 133.
12. *How* I recognize it as exogenous and *what* it teaches me about the other was discussed in the last two chapters.
13. This sort of anxiety is well expressed in Hass’s chapter on “Elemental Alterity: Self and Others,” in *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 100–123.
14. M. Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosopher and His Shadow,” in *Signs,* trans. R. McCleary (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 159–81.
15. Merleau-Ponty, 168.
16. Merleau-Ponty, 170.
17. Merleau-Ponty, 172.
18. Merleau-Ponty, 160.
19. Merleau-Ponty, 159 (emphasis mine).
20. Merleau-Ponty, 160, who is crediting and paraphrasing Heidegger’s *Der Satz vom Grund,* 123–24.
21. Merleau-Ponty, 160.
22. Merleau-Ponty, 160.
23. Merleau-Ponty, 160.
24. Catullus, lxviii, 20, lxv, as quoted in M. Montaigne, “On Friendship,” in *The Essays of Michel Montaigne,* ed. W. C. Hazlitt, trans. C. Cotton (Delhi: Lector House, 2019), 144.
25. J. Derrida, “By Force of Mourning,” trans. P.-A. Brault and M. Nass, *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 2 (1996): 171–92.
26. R. Barthes, *Mourning Diary,* ed. N. Leger, trans. R. Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009).
27. Quoted in Barthes, 170–71.
28. D. Grossman, *Falling Out of Time,* trans. J. Cohen (New York: Vintage, 2014), 193.
29. Grossman, 133.
30. For Laplanche this is the “enigmatic message” the other implants in me, in which the “difference between the living other and the dead other is relativized.” Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness,* 248.
31. J. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square, 1984), 341.
32. Sartre, 343.
33. J. Berger, “Lisboa,” in *Here Is Where We Meet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 1–56.
34. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* 343.
35. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* ed. C. LeFort, trans. A. Lingus (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 142.

36. Merleau-Ponty, “Dialogue and the Perception,” 137.
37. Merleau-Ponty, 137 (italics in the original).
38. Merleau-Ponty, 142.
39. Berger, “Lisboa,” 54.
40. Grossman, *Falling Out of Time,* 103.

CHAPTER 5: GIVING RISE TO THE OTHER-IN-COMMON

1. H. Arendt, *The Life of the Mind* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), 30–37.
2. Arendt, 50.
3. Arendt, 50.
4. Arendt, 51.
5. Arendt, 51–52.
6. F. Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption,* trans. W. Hallo (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985), 175.
7. E. Levinas, *On Escape,* trans. B. Bergo (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 67 (emphasis in original).
8. Levinas, 67.
9. F. Dastur, “Phenomenology of the Event: Waiting and Surprise,” *Hypatia* 15, no. 4 (2000): 182.
10. M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible,* ed. C. LeFort, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 208–9.
11. Levinas, *On Escape,* 68.
12. Merleau-Ponty cited in F. Wynn, “The Early Relationship of Mother and Pre-Infant: Merleau-Ponty and Pregnancy,” *Nursing Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2002): 9.
13. The pregnant woman “feels” the smells in the depths of her stomach, which hungers and searches while it also revolts. The taste of metal seems to run through her entirety, seems to course from her very blood. Cf. Arendt’s discussion of the conversion of the most intimate senses, such as “taste,” into common, communicable ones. H. Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).
14. M. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).
15. M. Merleau-Ponty, “Dialogue and the Perception of the Other,” in *Prose of the World,* ed. Claude LeFort, trans. J. O’Neil (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 134.
16. Gail Weiss emphasizes the ethical implications of this in “Birthing Responsibility: A Phenomenological Perspective on the Moral Significance of Birth,” in *Coming to Life: Philosophies of Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Mothering,* ed. S. Adams and C. Lundquist (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

17. J. Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," trans. A. Goldhammer, *Poetics Today* 6, nos. 1–2 (1985): 133–52.
18. Kristeva, 145.
19. Kristeva, 146.
20. While she rightly emphasizes the irreducible ambiguity of connection and individuation in all human relations, S. Adams tends to overemphasize the conflict of projects and interests between mother and child. This move assimilates the maternal relation too quickly to existential models of self-other, marking only a few notable exceptions, and thereby elides its specificity. Cf. S. Adams, *Mad Mothers, Bad Mothers, and What a Good Mother Would Do: The Ethics of Ambivalence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
21. D. Marneffe, *Maternal Desire* (New York: Scribner, 2019), 54.
22. Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," 138.
23. S. Heinämaa, "An Equivocal Couple Overwhelmed by Life," *PhiloSophia* 4, no. 1 (2014): 12–49.
24. A. Stone, *Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and Maternal Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 2012) provides an excellent catalog and analysis.
25. L. Baraitser, *Maternal Encounters: The Ethics of Interruption* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
26. S. Varga and S. Gallagher, "Critical Social Philosophy: Honneth and the Role of Primary Intersubjectivity," *Journal of European Social Theory* 15, no. 2 (2012): 243–60.
27. A. Honneth, *Reification: A Recognition Theoretic View* (Berkeley, CA: Tanner Lectures on Human Values, 2005).
28. Honneth, 123.
29. Honneth, 117.
30. Varga and Gallagher, "Critical Social Philosophy," 252.
31. Cf. A. Honneth, "Recognition and Psychoanalysis: An Interview with Axel Honneth," *Communists in Situ* (blog), April 1, 2009, https://cominsitu.wordpress.com/2018/04/01/an-interview-with-axel-honneth-on-psychoanalysis/.
32. Varga and Gallagher, "Critical Social Philosophy," 255.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

1. John Berger, "Lisboa," in *Here Is Where We Meet* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 54.
2. Berger, 54.
3. These are questions of value, not of fact. Sunaisthetic bodies cocreate environments, but which environments can best sustain stable, pleasurable selfhoods will be matters of negotiation and accommodation between the particular bodies involved. Entrenched

positions regarding dynamic embodiment—for example, debates around abortion legislation—are clearly the result of polarized, closed communities of common sense (as *sensus communis*) foreclosing any ability to sense in common. The latter would begin with contextual bodies in interaction and actively seek their flourishing without predetermining the meaning of "life" or "individual right," all the more so because pregnancy—like pandemic—throws those very terms into question.

4. Rosalyn Diprose sorts out the social justice implications of a "corporeal generosity" that, like *sunaisthesis,* begins in corporeal porousness between bodies. She is right to worry that existing virtuosos of intercorporeal generosity are often invisible and exploited in the name of a pseudovirtue of generosity that can only be exercised by possessive and self-possessed individuals who wrongfully appropriate and diminish more originary intercorporeal efforts. See Diprose, *Corporeal Generosity: On Giving with Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).
5. Kym Maclaren has begun this critical work in "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom," *Puncta* 1 (2018): 18–39.
6. Again, Di Prose's *Corporeal Generosity* is instructive here.
7. A. Flakne, "Is Direct Perception Arrogant Perception?," in *Feminist Phenomenology Futures,* ed. H. Fielding and D. Olkowski (Bloomington: Indiana Universtiy Press, 2017), 277–98.
8. Gallagher has recently expanded this critical work with his examination of autonomous systems and relational autonomy as consistent with interactionist theories of social cognition. See S. Gallagher, *Action and Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

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