

Becoming and Auto-Affection (Part II): Who are we?ⁱ

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Let me begin by recalling for you a short text by Husserl, his 1929 Encyclopedia Britannica entry for phenomenology.ⁱⁱ Here, Husserl tries to lead his readers into transcendental phenomenology by purifying psychology of anything physical or natural. The purification, made possible by the epoche, results in “genuine inner experience.” But genuine inner experience is still only the experience of the human psyche. As Husserl stresses frequently in his late writings like the Encyclopedia entry, phenomenological psychology is *not* transcendental phenomenology. For Husserl, the relativity of the whole world to the *cogito* (as in Descartes) cannot be the relativity to the “human mind” (as in Locke), since that sort of relativity amounts to psychologism. To say that a part of the world, the human psyche, is the ground of the world in its existence is to argue in a circular way. Husserl concludes that the subjectivity and consciousness required by transcendental phenomenology cannot be the subjectivity and consciousness with which psychology deals. And then he asks, “Are ‘we’ then supposed to be double – psychological presences, as we humans, in the world, subjects of psychic life, and *at the same time* transcendental, as the subjects of a transcendental world-constituting life.”ⁱⁱⁱ The apparent *doubleness* between psychological subjectivity and transcendental subjectivity is central to Husserl’s final version of transcendental phenomenology.

I am summarizing this late version of Husserl’s thought in order to bring forward the one problem that drives all phenomenological investigations. Evolving out of the paradoxical doubling between the transcendental and the psychological, the most basic phenomenological problem is the question of *who we are*. Merleau-Ponty expresses it very simply in the opening paragraph to *The Visible and the Invisible* when he asks, “What is this we?”^{iv} I am stressing the

question of who we are in order to confront the recent philosophical movement of *naturalism*, a movement which aims to swallow phenomenology up. Without any question, the idea of naturalizing contradicts Husserl's entire conception of phenomenology, and yet, we have seen the process of philosophical naturalization continue to try to integrate phenomenological insights into a naturalistic or scientific framework.^v The most prominent attempt to integrate phenomenology to cognitive science can be found in the Introduction to the 1999 collection called *Naturalizing Phenomenology* (the Introduction is co-authored by the editors of the collection: Jean Petitot, Francisco Varela, Bernard Pachoud, and Jean-Michel Roy).^{vi} While acknowledging the limitations of the project of naturalizing phenomenology, the Introduction to this volume, it seems to me, covers over the discoveries that phenomenology has made, discoveries concerning precisely *becoming and auto-affection*, hence the title of my essay.^{vii}

The first discovery, that of becoming, which I shall take up in the first section of my essay, arises out of what Husserl has called the *an-exact* which is something different from the exactitude-inexactitude opposition. In his late *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Husserl argues that sensible qualities are anexact because their variation has no guiding pole, *a lack* which sets qualities such as colors free for the most extraordinary changes -- for instance, the changes that we find in the art of painting.^{viii} The second discovery, that of auto-affection, the concern of my second section, will take us to Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*.^{ix} When Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* describes the touching-touched relation, he discovers within the relation of auto-affection a kind of *distance*, or even a blind spot, which makes auto-affection heterogeneous. The claim that auto-affection is always hetero-affection brings Merleau-Ponty's thought very close to that of Derrida. This closeness in their thinking is not surprising since, after all, both

were influenced by Husserl's idea of phenomenology as a process of desedimentation. Therefore, in order to draw out the implications of the distance found in auto-affectation, we shall engage in something like a *deconstruction*. And here, since my first concern will be the relation of phenomenology to naturalism, we should not forget that throughout his career Derrida aimed his deconstructions *relentlessly* at the concept of nature. In any case, the implications we shall be able to draw out will lead us to reconceive how we think of ourselves. Therefore in the conclusion I shall suggest an answer to the question of who we are. The answer will involve three names: the carriers, the latecomers, and the followers. These three names, as we shall see, are substitutes for the names we have most frequently given ourselves (at least in the West): the thinkers, the autonomous, and the leaders. But before we turn to our first section, let me stress that the problem of who we are is not only, as I said, the problem that drives all phenomenological investigations. It is also, I would argue, the most important philosophical problem we have. We must start to think differently about who we are and *become* different from who we are -- so that, as I shall argue, we end the global enclosure of the earth in which all the animals other than us are threatened with death.^x

1. "The Sea is so Blue that only Blood is Redder": The Discovery of An-exact Variation
The Introduction to *Naturalizing Phenomenology* is interesting because its authors openly lay out the limitations of the project to naturalize phenomenology. They identify two such limitations. On the one hand, there is the limitation that Husserl himself is hostile to naturalism (see NP 73). Like his hostility to psychologism (to which I alluded at the beginning), Husserl's hostility to naturalism is based on his method of the *epoche*, that is, the suspension of all natural attitude beliefs in the existence of a world in itself. The *epoche* determines that all phenomenology is transcendental, that it is concerned with the problem of how the world, in its existence, is there

for us.^{xi} But the problem of how the world comes to be there for us implies that no explanation of the world's ontological status can be based on forms of thought or knowledge found in the world.^{xii} These sorts of explanations, as I mentioned at the beginning, amount to circular reasoning. So, all forms of naturalism (or psychologism), insofar as their starting point is the human brain as it is found in nature, and insofar as nature is within the world, cannot solve this specific transcendental problem.^{xiii} On the other hand, there is the limitation that naturalism seems to be irreducibly bound up with mathematization. The authors of the Introduction to *Naturalizing Phenomenology* are well aware of Husserl's story in *The Crisis* that Galileo's mathematization of nature brought about the contemporary crisis of the sciences (NP 40).^{xiv} Yet, they insist that "phenomenological descriptions of any kind can *only* be naturalized . . . if they can be mathematized (NP 42, my emphasis)." However, the "displacement" of the qualitative descriptions of experience into mathematical *formulas* – with the stress on the word "formulas" – this kind of formalization, indeed formalization itself, according to Husserl empties the descriptions of sense (K 44/44, section 9f).^{xv} The technique of working with formulas in fact brings forth the *forgetfulness* which is the crisis itself (K 44/45, section 9f, also K 49/49, section 9h). We must conclude that the project of naturalizing in general and in particular and especially the project of naturalizing phenomenology only make the crisis worse.

What does the naturalizing project forget? The short answer to this question is that the project forgets the experience of the earth.^{xvi} But to be more precise, let us take up some of the descriptions that we find in the *Crisis*' very long section 9. Here Husserl is reconstructing the train of thought of what gave rise to Galileo's "basic thought" (K 31/33). His train of thought begins with the old tradition of mathematics and especially geometry, from which Galileo learns that, by means of a method of idealization, one is able to construct ideal forms of the spatial

shapes of the world (ideal forms of *just* this side of the earth, the shapes of the earth). These ideal forms are exact and univocal essences and the knowledge of these ideal forms is pure geometry. But then from the ideal forms, one descends to the real shapes and produces true knowledge of the real shapes (K 30-31/32-33); this knowledge of real (not ideal) shapes is applied geometry. So far, Husserl has only been describing how geometrical thinking functioned in Galileo's basic thought. Now we can turn to that thought itself.

So, what was *also* obvious to Galileo was the Greek idea of philosophy as *episteme*, aiming to achieve objective knowledge of the *entire* world. Both pure and applied, geometry realized this idea for one side of the world, the side of shapes. Therefore the obviousness of geometrical idealization and the Greek idea of *episteme* sketched out for Galileo in advance the idea of a nature (or a world or an earth) which is constructively determinable in all its sides, that is, not just in the side of its shapes, *but also* in the side of the sensible qualities. As Husserl shows, Galileo is able to make progress on his basic thought of the mathematization of all of nature because he treated the sensible qualities or appearances as *signs*. Treating the appearances as signs, we then see the appearances as referring to the shapes which can be *directly* mathematized (this direct mathematization is pure and applied geometry). By making the appearances refer to what is directly mathematizable, Galileo was able to make the sensible qualities *indirectly* mathematizable. Directly and indirectly, both sides of the earth, the shapes and the qualities, are *now* mathematized, and Husserl means *now*, right up into the Twentieth and for us the Twenty-First Century. It is possible therefore to view *any* attempt at mathematizing sensible qualities, including the most contemporary attempts, as the continuation of "Galilean science."^{xvii} The project of naturalizing phenomenology then is working within the same obviousness as Galileo was. Even more, to engage in this sort of mathematization is a betrayal of

phenomenology insofar as it requires that we treat or continue to treat, as we have for centuries, the phenomena as signs. We can put this point in even stronger terms: if to mathematize nature requires that we treat sensible qualities as signs, then to mathematize nature betrays what Husserl has called, in *Ideas I*, “the principle of all principles” and this is the principle for phenomenology and for philosophy in general (section 24).^{xviii} This principle instructs us to accept as evidence only what is intuitively (not semiotically) given. In short, the principle of all principles instructs us to go back to the things themselves.

But what does the betrayal of phenomenology in mathematization cover over in the experience of the earth? By asking this question, we are still pursuing our earlier question of what naturalization forgets. In order to answer the question of what mathematization covers over, let us continue to follow Husserl’s meditation on Galileo’s train of thought. Husserl of course returns to the lifeworld, to the experience of the intuitively given surrounding world, to show how the idealization of shapes takes place. The idealization of shapes starts from our experience of bodies, bodies whose shapes can be varied in fantasy. Fantasy, according to Husserl, gives us shapes which are more or less straight, more or less circular (K 22/25). He calls these more or less shapes “types.” Because the *types* are more or less, they are equivocal; they continuously flow into one another. However, because of the gradations (the “more and the less”), one is able to perfect the types by means of the praxis of the art of measuring (K 24/27). Given technical progress in the art of measuring, in mathematical praxis, one finds an open horizon of thinkable improvement to be further pursued (K 23/25).^{xix} As Husserl concludes, through the improving mathematical praxis we attain exactness, which is defined as the recognition of the ideal shapes in absolute identity; we attain univocal forms, not equivocal types (K 24/27). These univocal

spatial forms can then be constructed into a world, “one total infinite extension of the world,” and this world of forms acts as the “guiding pole” for approximation in the variation of shapes.

Here Husserl is trying to show that Galilean science in fact posits something like a Platonic second world. However, according to Husserl, it is precisely this ideal world of forms which is missing with the sensible qualities. Husserl calls the sensible qualities “the material which fills in the shapes,” meaning that in the lifeworld sensible qualities do not appear as indications or intimations (K 35/36) or more generally as signs (K 20/21).^{xx} Not being signs, the material that fills in the shapes is *no way* analogous to the shapes. There is no analogy between the material and the shapes because the material that fills in the shapes cannot be idealized as the shapes are able to be. Instead of a world of colors whose “form is idealizable and can be mastered through construction” (K 33/35), we are confronted on the side of the material that fills in the shapes with the experience of impossibility (see K 32/34). It is impossible for us to make the sensible qualities be exact. As Husserl says, “there is no exact measurement [with the material that fills in the shapes], no growth of exactness or of methods of measurement” (K 32/34). This is the crucial idea: approximation to an ideal color (or to an ideal affect such as an ideal pain) makes no sense here (K 33/35; see also VI 138/101). Husserl implies therefore in *The Crisis* that it is absurd to speak of an ideal form of blue which could be applied to real blue things, as circularity is applied to real round things. With the material that fills in the shapes, Husserl speaks of generalized color types which allow for recognition.^{xxi} But, never does the generalized blue type eliminate the equivocality of the color, never does it eliminate the continuity of one color into another, as shades of blue pass into shades of red.^{xxii} The essential ambiguity to the colors means that the variation of them *cannot* be equivalent to a determinate progression; they do not march in a straight line to a perfect or ideal end or *telos*. Instead, there is an essential

indetermination to all colors, which grants them an infinite continuous variation. Colors therefore contain the potentiality of a non-teleological *becoming*,^{xxiii} which means that we can say with Merleau-Ponty, who quotes the poet Paul Claudel, that “the sea is so blue that only blood is redder” (VI 174/132).^{xxiv}

II. The Blind Spot: The Discovery of Distance

Husserl’s discovery of the an-exact variation of a sensible quality provides us with a rich idea of becoming. Thanks to him, we are able to think about the variation of a color, not by means of teleology conceived as an approximation to an ideal form of the color. Simply colors lack an ideal form. When I think about blue, I cannot see an ideal blue (like an ideal triangle) off in the distance which I could follow.^{xxv} And yet, if I were a painter, I would be following something, the variations of blues becoming greens, the variations of blacks becoming reds. I would be following, we could say, a kind of blind spot in the variations.^{xxvi} It seems to me, and this is what I shall now argue, that we find this blind spot not only at the root of the idea of becoming we have been discussing, but also in the experience of auto-affection, in particular in the experience of touching oneself, as we find it in Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and the Invisible*.^{xxvii}

In order to be brief, I am going to summarize this discussion of *The Visible and the Invisible*, which is well known. Merleau-Ponty thinks that through the touching-touched relation he will be able to show that the one who experiences (the subject) is made of the same stuff as what is experienced (the object), indicating sameness or more precisely *proximity* between the one sensing and the things sensed. Merleau-Ponty therefore turns to the touching-touched relation because the experience of one of my hands touching the other hand seems to be really auto- and not hetero-affection. But, in *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty does not stop

with the “auto” and the closeness. In Chapter Four, Merleau-Ponty insists that the reversibility of the touching-touched relation is always *imminent* and *never reaches coincidence* (VI 194/147).^{xxviii} Here it is important to recall that the title of this book is not *The Tangible and the Intangible* but *The Visible and the Invisible*, just as his last published text is not called “Hand and Mind” but “Eye and Mind.” In order to understand this imminence, we must turn not to touch but to vision. For vision to function, it must be the case that we do not press the thing seen right up against our eyeball. In other words, there must be some sort of *distance* between the seer and the thing seen so that we are able to see at all (VI 23/8). But this very distance between the seer and the thing seen is itself nothing; it is a sort of abyss between. More precisely, since the distance between the seer and the thing seen is the very condition of vision, the distance itself cannot be seen. If I try to look at it, I turn it into something seen, which, being seen, requires distance. In every attempt at making it visible, it recedes into darkness. The distance between the seer and the seen, and therefore between the touching and the touched, is a kind of *blind spot*.

If we take seriously Merleau-Ponty’s insistence on the imminence of coincidence between the touching and the touched, his insistence on the “failure” of coincidence, his insistence on the fact that it always “miscarries” (see VI 27/9), then we have to say that when my right hand touches my left hand, there is a sort of *gouged out eye* right in the palms of those two hands. The blind spot breaks apart the closeness of the touching-touched relation. We know that traditionally psychologists have called the touching-touched relation a double sensation. But the sensation can really be *double*, can really be *two* and *not one*, only if there is no *fusion*. The absolutely necessary condition for a double sensation is a hiatus, even a very small, infinitesimally small hiatus. If there was no hiatus, if there were fusion or coincidence, then *either* everything would be touching, fused into activity, *or* everything would be touched, fused

into passivity (cf. VI 163/122), but not *both* touching and touched. At best, with the touching-touched relation, we have, as Merleau-Ponty says, “a privative non-coincidence” (VI 166/125). We have nothing more than a mixture; we never have the activity and the passivity, the subject and object, the transcendental and the natural “intrinsically joined” (NP 61).

“Intrinsically joined” is the phrase that the authors of the Introduction to *Naturalizing Phenomenology* use when they speak of the touching-touched relation. They recognize the importance of the auto-affective experience of one’s own body, and they recognize that, when Merleau-Ponty speaks of the touching-touched relation, he is indebted to Husserl’s numerous descriptions of the *Leib* (the lived-body or the flesh). But they do not recognize that, while no Cartesian dualism is implied in this experience, the “sameness” of the hands which touch while being touched implies a paradoxical difference which cannot be conceived as a “joining.” And by speaking of the two hands as “intrinsically joined,” the authors of the Introduction to *Naturalizing Phenomenology* cover over this greatest of all of phenomenological discoveries, given to us by Merleau-Ponty: the infinitesimal hiatus in auto-affection.^{xxix} This hiatus is more than a gap because it cannot be closed, and it is less than a gap because the distance it opens cannot be measured. It is so minuscule that it cannot be seen. Because of the infinitesimal and invisible hiatus, auto-affection is always “out of joint.” And it is this disjointure which allows us to become, to become different from what we are right now.

III. The Four Implications of Distance

Before we turn to the four implications, we are going to engage in a brief phenomenology in order to specify the condition that makes auto-affection necessarily non-coincident. The condition lies in the fact that all experience is temporally conditioned.^{xxx} Every experience, necessarily, takes place in the present. In the present experience, there is the kernel or point of

the now. What is happening right now is a kind of event, different from every other now I have ever experienced. Yet, also in the present, I remember the recent past and I anticipate what is about to happen. The memory and the anticipation consist in *repeatability*. Because what I experience now can be immediately recalled, it is repeatable and that repeatability therefore motivates me to anticipate the same thing happening again. Therefore, what is happening right now is also *not* different from every other now I have ever experienced. *At the same time*, the present experience is an event and it is not an event because it is repeatable. This “at the same time” is the crux of the matter. The conclusion is that the general structure of auto-affection (which is the process of time, temporalization) includes the inseparability of two forces, the force of repetition and the force of singularization, the force of universalization and the force of an event. The inseparability implies that neither force is absolute. Instead, since they necessarily pass into one another, we must say (echoing Derrida) that what is *absolute, is passage itself*.^{xxxix}

The claim that the absolute is passage contains four implications (and these are the four implications of distance which I mentioned a moment ago). *First*, experience as the experience of the present is never a simple experience of something present over and against me, right before my eyes as in an intuition; there is always another agency there. Repeatability contains what has passed away and is no longer present *and* what is about to come and is not yet present. The present therefore is always complicated by non-presence. In the present, there is always a kind of a trait, or trace, or tracks left behind by the past, tracks that can be followed into the future.^{xxxix} *Second*, if the present always contains necessarily a trace of the past and a track leading into the future, then the present is never first all alone. The present always comes second. If the present always comes second (that is, second in relation to what has already happened and second in relation to what is still ahead), then every experience contains an aspect of lateness and

an aspect of prematurity. I am always late for the origin since the origin has always already disappeared; I am always early for the end since the end is always coming. Every experience then is always not quite on time or, as we have already said, disjointed. *Third*, if time is always disjointed, if a trace of the past and a track of the future always cover over the present, then nothing is ever given *as such* in certainty. Whatever is given is given as other than itself, *as* already past or *as* still to come. What becomes foundational therefore is this “as.” What becomes the origin and the end (as in finality) is the heterogeneous “as.” Immediately or earlier than the origin is a kind of fold or doubling; likewise immediately or later than the end is a kind of fold or doubling. We are able to see in the first three implications the terms of traditional philosophy: essence, foundation, origin (*arche*) and end (*telos*). These terms bring us to the fourth implication.

So, *fourth*, auto-affection being non-coincident disturbs the traditional structure of philosophy, which consists in a linear relation between foundational conditions and founded experience. In traditional philosophy (as in Kant’s transcendental philosophy for example), an empirical event such as what is happening right now is supposed to be *derivative* from or founded upon conditions which are not empirical. Yet, the description of experience that we have established shows that the empirical event is a non-separable part of the structural or foundational conditions. Or, in traditional philosophy, the empirical event is supposed to be an accident that overcomes an essential structure. But now we see that this accident cannot be removed or eliminated. If the origin is conceived – as it always has been in philosophy – as self-identical, then we must say now that the origin is always already, immediately divided. If we conceive the origin as the purity of nature, then nature is always already technologized (the technology of repeatability, as indicated in the description of temporalization). If we conceive

the origin as the pure vitality of life, then life is always already death. The claim that life is always already death implies furthermore that it is not the case that life is contaminated with disease, disease being then conceived as the cause of death. *Instead*, life is always contaminated with death so that *disease* is in fact the slow work of death on life. We are able to extend the idea of doubling further. If we conceive the origin as something like perfect peace and non-violence, then this peace is always already war and violence, and here we must speak of a radical violence, radical in the literal sense of the word, violence at the root. And finally, if we conceive the origin as something like a Garden of Eden principle (a prelapsarian principle),^{xxxiii} then the fall into evil has always already taken place, earlier, immediately.^{xxxiv} All of these claims about the origin could be converted into claims about the end.

Before we turn to the conclusion, let me summarize the four implications that we have seen. First, due to temporalization, the present is always contaminated with the non-presence of the past and the future. Second, the contaminating non-presence implies that the present always comes second, turning the experience of the present into the experience of lateness and prematurity. Third the experience of time being out of joint implies that what is given to us in this experience is never given as such; what is foundational is the heterogeneous “as.” And finally, because of this fundamental heterogeneity, the traditional structures of foundation and founded are disturbed. It is here, in this fourth implication, that we can see a kind of historicism emerge, which contests our transcendental starting point.^{xxxv} There is no prelapsarian principle.

Conclusion: The Fifth Implication of Distance

If, *in us*, the event of contamination, of death, violence, and evil has taken place earlier than purity, life, peace, and goodness, then we must start to question who we are. So far, at least since

the Enlightenment and in the West, we have conceived who we are in terms of Kantian autonomy, Kant having developed the idea of autonomy on the basis of the Cartesian “I think therefore I am.” The Kantian idea of autonomy of course means that I am self-ruling; I give the moral law to myself -- unlike animal life, for instance, on which nature imposes its laws. But, in order to give the law to myself, I must tell it to myself. Although Kant does not investigate this auto-affective relation of hearing myself speak, we see that it seems to include two aspects: on the one hand, I seem to hear myself speak *at the very moment* that I speak, and, on the other, I seem to hear *my own self* speak and not someone or something other. Kantian autonomy therefore is based on the specific form of auto-affection called “hearing oneself speak.” To conclude, let us extend the examination of auto-affection in general (which is temporalization) into the particular experience of hearing oneself speak.

When I engage in interior monologue, when, in short, I think -- it seems as though I hear myself speak at the very moment I speak. It seems as though my interior voice is not required to pass outside of myself, as though it is not required to traverse any space, not even the space of my body. So, my interior monologue seems to be immediate, immediately present and not to involve anyone else. Interior monologue seems therefore to be different from the experience of me speaking to another *and* different from the experience of me looking at myself in the mirror, where my vision has to pass through, at the least, the portals of my eyes. But the problem with the belief that interior monologue (in a word, thought) is different from other experiences of auto-affection is twofold. On the one hand, the experience of hearing oneself speak is temporal (like all experience). The temporalization of interior monologue means, as we have just seen, that the present moment involves a past moment, which has elapsed and which has been retained. It is an irreducible or essential necessity that the present moment comes second. The problem

with the belief that interior monologue happens immediately therefore is that the *hearing* of myself is never immediately present in the moment when I *speak*; there is a delay between the hearing and the speaking. This conclusion means that my interior monologue *in fact* resembles my experience of the mirror image in which my vision must traverse a distance that differentiates me into seer and seen. The distance or delay in time turns my speaking in the present moment into a response to the past. Because of the delay in time, there is a past that always precedes me, a past that has always started without me, from the very moment of my birth. No matter how young I am, it is always later than I think so that my hearing myself speak is like a rendezvous which I had forgotten but which I have just remembered. That auto-affection involves a strange sort of memory leads to the other problem with the belief that interior monologue is *my own*. Beside the irreducible lateness involved in the experience of auto-affection, there is the problem of the voice. In order to hear myself speak at this very moment, I must make use of the same phonemes as I use in communication (even if this monologue is not vocalized externally through my mouth). It is an irreducible or essential necessity that the silent words I form contain repeatable traits. This irreducible necessity means that, when I speak to myself, I speak with the sounds of others. In other words, it means that I find in myself other voices, which come from the past. There is not a Platonic memory of one form, but there is a memory of multiplicity: the many voices are in me. The problem therefore with the belief that interior monologue is my own is that others' voices contaminate the hearing of myself speaking. Just as my present moment is always already late, my interior monologue is never simply my own.^{xxxvi}

I hope you can see that, when we were examining the experience of auto-affection, we were engaging in something like a *deconstruction* of that experience. We were unmaking the experience in order to examine its smallest details, an unmaking which made us see ourselves

differently. It seemed that when we thought of ourselves in interior monologue, we were all alone. But as we took the experience apart we saw that this belief is not true. It seemed that when we heard ourselves speak, the answer to the question came immediately. But, thanks to our deconstruction, we see that there is a delay. Now we shall go still farther and speak of a fifth *transformative* implication of the general structure of auto-affection. The fifth implication amounts to an answer to the question of who we are.^{xxxvii} In the examination of the auto-affection of hearing oneself speak, we just concluded that my interior monologue is not simply my own. Because the voice that I hear in my interior monologue is not simply my own, because there are in fact multiple voices in my head, it is as if I am *carrying* those others around with me, inside of me.^{xxxviii} Who then have we become? We have become the carriers.^{xxxix} But, if the others that I am carrying around inside of me are memories of others, others who have passed away in the agony of death, my auto-affection is the experience of haunting. The others who I carry around inside of me are specters, specters of an injustice done a long time ago. Time is so out of joint that the haunting I undergo is relentless. The experience I am undergoing is so relentless that it feels like a fever, like the experience of bad conscience or shame. This experience is so feverish that I feel myself to be late. In addition to the carriers, we have become the latecomers. We have come on the scene too late. Already these others, these other animals, these beasts have passed away, not only a long time ago but also far ahead of me. They are so far ahead that now I feel myself pressed to hurry up. I can see the tracks they have left behind, the tracks I see ahead of me. I must not only carry them, I must also follow them. Who are we? We are the carriers, the latecomers, and the followers. These new names for who we are open up a way of life. The name “the carriers” means that we experience the burden of being the chosen ones, the ones who hear the voices of injustice. “The latecomers” means that we experience the urgency of the mission,

which is salvation. And “the followers” means that we experience the need to change ourselves, to vary ourselves, to become otherwise.

All five of these implications evolve out of the discoveries made in the phenomenological tradition.^{x1} These discoveries, I have been arguing – the discovery of the an-exact and the discovery of distance -- have been completely forgotten in the attempt to naturalize phenomenology. Indeed, I have been arguing that the contemporary project of naturalism continues or even exacerbates the crisis, which, for Husserl, began with the mathematization of the earth. Naturalism is, perhaps, the ideology of the domination of the earth. And phenomenology, some form of phenomenology, may be, just as Husserl thought, the only way to alleviate the crisis. But, just as we have not been engaged in naturalism here, we have not really been engaged in a phenomenology, at least, not phenomenology in its classical form. If classical phenomenology is a phenomenology of perception, then with our deconstruction, we have been pursuing what cannot be perceived, what remains obstinately invisible, the blind spot at the center of all auto-affection. The recognition that, throughout, we have really been focusing on the experience of blindness leads us to one last name for who we might become. By using the name the followers, we were alluding back to Descartes’ slogan, which in French is: “je pense donc je suis.” There is a word play in the slogan. If we take the “je suis” as a form of the verb “suivre,” the slogan can also mean “I think therefore I follow.” So, in effect what we have done is substitute an “I follow” for Descartes’ “I think.” What we have *not* done however is what Husserl and Merleau-Ponty did. We have not substituted an “I can” for the “I think.” In fact, because all five of these implications evolve out of the experience of blindness, what we have done is substitute an “I cannot” for the “I think.” We have substituted powerlessness for power. We are so powerless that we cannot stop the others from passing away and we are so powerless

that we cannot stop the others from running out ahead. I have already said that the hiatus is not a gap. What it truly is, is a fault (*une faute*, in French), which means that what we have really done is substitute, for the “I think,” an “it is necessary that” (playing on the French idiom “il faut que...”). We have substituted an imperative for the “I think.” And this imperative means that it is necessary – and here is yet another name – that we become the friends of powerlessness. Only by responding to this imperative to become otherwise will we be able to stop conceiving ourselves as the powerful. Only by becoming the friends not just of powerlessness but also and more importantly the friends of the powerless will be able to stop this war being waged against the earth.^{xli}

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ⁱ This essay continues in fact another essay, as a second part. See Leonard Lawlor, “Auto-Affection and Becoming: Following the Rats,” forthcoming in *Environmental Philosophy*.

ⁱⁱ Edmund Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger* (1927-1931), translated and edited by Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997). The original German is found in Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie, Vorlesungen Sommersemester 1925* (Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968).

ⁱⁱⁱ Husserl, *Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology*, p. 171; Husserl, *Phänomenologische Psychologie*, p. 292, my emphasis.

^{iv} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Le visible et l'invisible* (Paris: Gallimard Tel, 1964), p. 17; English translation by Alphonso Lingis as *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 3. Hereafter referred to with the abbreviation VI, with reference first to the French, then to the English translation.

^v For an excellent summary of the various forms naturalism has taken in the Twentieth Century, see Geert Keil, “Naturalism,” in *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy*, editor, Dermot Moran (New York and London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 254-307. I have also consulted John McDowell, “Two Sorts of Naturalism,” in *Virtues and Reasons*, editors, Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence, Warren Quinn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 149-180. Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

^{vi} Jean Petitot, Francisco J. Varela, Bernard Pachoud, Jean-Michel Roy, *Naturalizing Phenomenology: Issues in Contemporary Phenomenology and Cognitive Science* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 18. Hereafter cited as NP.

^{vii} Renaud Barbaras, *Introduction à une phénoménologie de la vie* (Paris: Vrin, 2008). According to Barbaras, life consists in a fundamental duality for which any phenomenology must account. Now, while I think it is necessary to accept the dual conditions he lays out as the only ones adequate for a genuine phenomenology of life, I also think that – and I shall try to show this in the second section -- he overlooks the role that death plays in life. What he overlooks is that, within the very heart of auto-affection, one always finds the experience of death or of powerlessness. A genuine phenomenology of life must account for this irreducible powerlessness. I intend to expand this essay and include a discussion of Barbaras’ book.

^{viii} The most recent comprehensive study of color perception is Evan Thompson's *Colour Vision* (London: Routledge, 1995). If I am understanding Husserl correctly, he is questioning the possibility of there being an exact categorical perception of color. For more on categorical color perception, see Thompson, *Colour Vision*, 245.

^{ix} Merleau-Ponty explicitly conceived *The Visible and the Invisible* on the basis of Husserl's *Crisis* (VI 217/183).

^x In other texts, I have associated globalization with the problem of the worst, a problem based on Derrida's idea of auto-immunity. See Leonard Lawlor, *This is not Sufficient* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

^{xi} Very recently Evan Thompson has echoed what the authors of the Introduction have said. But, in contrast, he himself stresses the role of the reduction. Importantly, he says, "'Transcendental' signifies a radical attitude, one that aims to regress back to the very roots (conditions of possibility) of our experience of a meaningful world." See Evan Thompson, *Life in Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 20-22. See also pp. 239-40 for more on the importance of the transcendental.

^{xii} See Eugen Fink, "The Phenomenological Philosophy of Edmund Husserl and Contemporary Criticism," in

^{xiii} Even more, Husserl would say that the attempt to base the conditions of knowledge in a natural being such as man is an "absurdity" (EB 287/168, section 6).

^{xiv} Page 40 is the only time in the entire eighty page Introduction that they cite *The Crisis*. They say that "Husserl was thus deeply convinced of a necessary incompatibility between the general nature of phenomenological data ... and the basic requirement of mathematization, thereby introducing a sharp contrast between phenomenology and the Galilean sciences of nature" (NP 42).

^{xv} "Displacement" renders Husserl's German "Verschiebung." The term means displacement, but Husserl also uses "Unterschiebung," which has the sense of an under-handed substitution. See K 48-49/48-49. "Verschiebung" is also the exact word which Freud uses to describe the dream work of the unconscious in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

^{xvi} I am speaking of the earth throughout because of the role that geometry plays in Husserl's account of Galileo's basic thought. But also I am speaking of it due to Husserl's own descriptions of it in a fragment from 1934. See Edmund Husserl, "Foundational Investigations of the Phenomenological Origin of the Spatiality of Nature: The Originary Ark, the Earth, does not Move," in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), pp. 117-131. Merleau-Ponty of course comments on this Husserlian fragment in these course notes but also in *Nature* and in "The Philosopher and his Shadow." Deleuze and Guattari also allude to it in *What is Philosophy*.

^{xvii} See Jean Petitot, "Morphological Eidetics for a Phenomenology of Perception," in *Naturalizing Phenomenology*, pp. 330-371. See also Thomson, *Life in Mind*, p. 85, where he claims that sensible forms can be mathematized.

Thompson remains here however quite close to Varela's idea of mutual constraint and "neurophenomenology." But the weight of this view rests on the use of the verb "to integrate": "Starting from a recognition of the transcendental and hence ineliminable status of experience, the aim would be to search for morphodynamical principles that can both *integrate* the orders of matter, life, and mind, and account for the originality of each order" (my emphasis). I have also consulted René Thom, *Mathematical Models of Morphogenesis* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983).

^{xviii} Derrida in the early part of his career had attempted to deconstruct this very principle by arguing, in *La voix et le phénomène*, that one could not eliminate the function of the sign from the perceptual presence of the phenomenon. But he did not do so with the intention of showing that the phenomena are straightforwardly related to mathematical quantities. Derrida's intention was to lead us to the idea of the trace or trait which is prior to both perceptual presence and signifying language. His intention was to lead us to the experience of auto-affection in which my self-presence is contaminated with the trace of alterity, and Derrida's intention animates what I do in the third section of this essay.

^{xix} Husserl says, "we can understand that, out of the praxis of perfecting, of freely pressing toward the horizons of thinkable perfecting 'again and again,' liminal-shapes [*Limesgestalten*] emerge, toward which the particular series of perfecting tend, as toward invariant and never attainable poles" (K 23/26). Here, Husserl uses the word "Limesgestalten." The Latin word "limes" (which exists in English) is the root both of the word "limb" and the word "limit." But the Latin word in fact means a border. So, Husserl's use of the term implies that at first the types in variation are flexible like a limb, but, eventually, through the "again and again" praxis, they become rigid like a fortified frontier.

^{xx} Husserl calls the sensible qualities "die Fülle," the material that fills in the shapes (K 27/30). David Carr, the English language translator of *The Crisis*, renders this word as "plenum"; the French translator, Gérard Granel, uses the term "remplissement." The term "Fülle" is important, it seems to me, since it implies that the sensible qualities are not indications or intimations (K 35/36); it implies that the sensible qualities are not signs but truly appearances (K 20/21).

^{xxi} Here Husserl also speaks of "Limes-Gestalten," but these liminal shapes of colors.

^{xxii} On the continuity of shades of color, see Henri Bergson, “Introduction à la métaphysique,” in *Œuvres* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), p. 1398; English translation by T. E. Hulme as *Introduction to Metaphysics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 7-8.

^{xxiii} This discussion of the anexact is inspired by Deleuze and Guattari. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Mille plateau* (Paris: Minut, 1980), pp. 507-508; English translation by Brian Massumi as *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 407-408.

^{xxiv} Merleau-Ponty paraphrase of the Claudel line is “Cluadel dit à peu près qu’un certain bleu de la mer est si bleu qu’il n’y a que le sang qui soit plus rouge.”

^{xxv} Even if I am able to intervene in the perception of the thing presented to me, and even if am then able to attend to the color alone and fix it (that is, abstractly isolate it from the concrete thing in which it appears), and then use that abstraction for recognition of other appearances of the same color; even if I am able to do all of this, the color always returns from its fixation to the thing, in which it resumes its relative indeterminacy. It resumes “its atmospheric existence” (VI 174/132). The indeterminacy allows for the intensity of the color to vary. But this variation does not give us the essence of the color, an ideal blue, for instance. The variation of the intensity gives us something like the essence of the concrete thing in which the color resides. Using the Claudel quote again which Merleau-Ponty appropriates, we can say that sea becomes a deeper and deeper shade of blue, so blue that the sea varies into blood, in its deepest shade of red. But the variation can go farther. The deepest red of blood is able to intensify and become *lighter* so that we can say that blood is so red that only milk is whiter. While the continuous variation of a color, the color of the sea, does not present us with something like an exact essence of blue, it leads in the direction of this question. Appropriating the old term “element,” we could ask, “What color is the element water?” No determinate answer can be given to this question; the sea is so colorful that it makes all answers to this question be insufficient. The openness in our liquidy color question is due to the fact there is no determining form on the basis of which the color varies.

^{xxvi} Merleau-Ponty speaks of a blind spot in the working notes to *The Visible and the Invisible*. See VI 300-302/246-248. See also my *Implications of Immanence* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2006), where I discuss the blind spot in Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, and in Foucault.

^{xxvii} Merleau-Ponty describes the touching-touched relation four times: VI 24/9; 176/133-34; 185/141; and 194/147. The first time, which occurs in Chapter One, anticipates the third time in Chapter Four since the first description stresses that the experience of sameness “miscarries” and is subject to a “last minute failure.” In other words, it stresses the imminent but impossible sameness of the auto-affection of the touching-touched relation, and this imminence is anticipated when Merleau-Ponty (in the second description of auto-affection in Chapter Four) speaks of the hands touching one another touching someone else’s hand; “imminence” is mentioned at the completion of this description on p. 187/142 (after he speaks of the handshake). And Merleau-Ponty reconstructs the Sartrean idea of auto-affection on VI 83/56-57.

^{xxviii} He says, “To begin with, we spoke summarily of a reversibility of the seeing and the visible, of the touching and the touched.” Here he is referring to the discussion earlier in Chapter Four which I just summarized. He then continues, and this elaboration, I think, is quite important, “It is time to emphasize that what is at issue is a reversibility *always imminent* and never realized in fact. My left hand is always *on the verge* [*sur le point*] of touching my right hand touching the things, but *I never reach coincidence*” (VI 194/147, my emphasis).

^{xxix} See also Thompson, *Mind in Life*, pp. 250-52. Thompson’s presentation of auto-affection here is much more detailed than the authors of the Introduction to *Naturalizing Phenomenology*. By discussing the touching-touched relation, he stresses that “In this experience we can also catch a glimpse of how sensorimotor subjectivity can implicate a kind of sensorimotor intersubjectivity. A dynamic process of ‘self-othering’ takes place in this experience, so that one’s body becomes other to itself” (p. 251). He goes on to say that “The challenge for any scientific account of consciousness is to preserve this unique double character of bodily self-consciousness. Hence any scientific account must meet these two criteria: it must account for the ways in which one’s body is intentionally directed toward the world, and it must account for a form of self-awareness that does not imply identification of one’s body as an object” (p. 252). For me, the question is whether any scientific account is able to account for this doubleness and, more importantly, whether this doubleness, which circles around the hiatus, is not the precise motivation for all thinking in the strongest sense of the word “thinking.”

^{xxx} Here I am following Heidegger’s powerful interpretation of Kant, but Heidegger does not cite the passage that I am citing. See Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, tr. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 129-133 (section 34).

^{xxx}i Edmund Husserl, *L'Origine de la géométrie*, traduction et introduction par Jacques Derrida (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974 [1962]), p. 165; English translation by John P. Leavey as *Edmund Husserl's Origin of Geometry: An Introduction* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989 [1978]), p. 149.

^{xxx}ii This idea of a trait, which can be found not only in Derrida but also in Deleuze, is pre- or non-semiological. It must be understood as something less than a sign, which consists in a one to one relation to an object which could be made present. The trait refers to what can never be made present.

^{xxx}iii Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* has spoken of a supralapsarian bias. See VI 165/123-124.

^{xxx}iv What I have called the problem of worst arises here.

^{xxx}v See Michel Foucault, "*Il faut défendre la société*" (Paris: Gallimard Seuil, 1997), pp. 153-54; English translation by David Macey as "*Society must be Defended*" (New York: Picador, 2003), pp. 172-73.

^{xxx}vi Fred Evans has developed an important conception of the voice in *The Multi-Voiced Body* (forthcoming Columbia University Press, 2008).

^{xxx}vii The answer to who we might be, however, will never be sufficient.

^{xxx}viii The other voices in my head might be the gnashing of the teeth of a pack of rats who have been poisoned

^{xxx}ix See Husserl's *Crisis*, section 15 (K 71/70), where he defines us as the carriers or bearers (*Träger*) of teleology.

^xl The five implications are the following: 1) there is no simple presence (presence is always complicated with non-presence); 2) the present always comes second (time is disjointed); 3) nothing is ever given as such (the "as" is foundational); 4) the traditional linear structure of philosophy is disturbed (there is radical evil); and 5) we are the carriers, the latecomers, and the followers.

^xli In Part I of this essay, I have described this new possibility of life, here called the followers, the carriers, and the latecomers, as "the friends of the outside," where the outside does not refer to the exterior but to the indeterminate and unformed space in between the interior and exterior. These friends therefore are the friends of passage.