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## Merleau-Ponty and the Question of Phenomenological Architectonics

### 1. THE ARCHITECTONIC PROBLEM OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL EIDETIC IN THE YOUNG FINK

It is in his well-known study published in the *Kantstudien* in 1933, and approved as we know by Husserl,<sup>1</sup> that Fink conceives of phenomenological reduction in such a way that "the idea of being" must itself be "reduced" in order to allow the concept of "transcendental being" (p. 158) to emerge. The result, according to Fink, must be a transformation of the eidetic, as naïve ontologizing of the pre-givenness of the world, into transcendental eidetics. On the difficult question of the relation between eidetic reduction and phenomenological reduction, Fink even states very precisely: "It is a fundamental error to strive to comprehend the nature of the (*scil.* phenomenological) reduction by starting from the still obscure eidetics or, inversely, to question the nature of the transcendental *eidos* as a *problem* born out of the accomplishment of the reduction" (p. 159). For, as he specifies a little further, "the attitude of knowledge with regard to eidetic states-of-things . . . and the philosophical understanding of the aprioristic form of the world are dogmatic" (p. 172). This attitude is based, by "eidetic fixation of essences" (p. 171), on natural worldly experience as athematic pre-knowledge of the essences of the pre-givenness of the world (p. 171). At least this leads phenomenology to question, by reduction, "*in a constitutive manner*, not only the experience, transcendently reduced, of a singular 'being' (*l'étant*),<sup>2</sup> but also the knowledge of essence which belongs essentially to man, thereby making the aprioristic style of the world the theme of a constitutive analysis" (p. 171). Otherwise stated, this leads phenomenology to consider the transcendental constitution of the *eidos*, and to cast upon the eidetic the kind of critical look which can free phenomenology from appearance or from the *transcendental illusion* in which phenomena would finally intermingle and disappear along with the eidetic states-of-things. Already the introduction of the Kantian problematic of transcendental illusion should avert us to the fact that we are

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dealing with an *architectonic* problem, that is to say with a change of register or of level induced by the phenomenological reduction.

Fortunately, since the recent publication of the *VITH Cartesian Meditation* by E. Fink,<sup>3</sup> things have become much clearer; within the framework of a "transcendental doctrine of the method" (which we will not explicate here) the question of the architectonics of phenomenology, as architectonics or systematic organization of its *problems*,<sup>4</sup> comes to the fore. It is, as we know, within the framework of the close collaboration between Husserl and Fink, both in editing the German text of the *Cartesian Meditations* and in the elaborating the project of a systematic account of phenomenology, that the *VITH Meditation* was born. We cannot undertake here a study of the detailed structure of Fink's very original point of departure – which obviously did not satisfy Husserl completely –, nevertheless let us say, in order to understand what is going to follow, that it consists, by taking absolutely seriously the phenomenological *epoché*, in considering a "phenomenologizing spectator" who is not totally concerned ("*unbeteiligt*"): we are reminded of the philosophical consciousness in the Introduction to the *Phänomenologie* by Hegel) with what he is supposed to see, and this strictly insofar as he *actively* suspends or disconnects, in a doing (*Tun*), any ontifying and ontologizing "thesis". It could happen that, in this extremely loaded system, all that would be left for this spectator would be to find the *Vorhandenheit* indifferent. But this is not the case. Again this is only a transcendental appearance, as is shown for instance, in § 9 ("phenomenologizing as ideation") by the orderly rethinking of the problematic of the "transcendental eidetic".

First, Fink explains (*VITH CM*, 86–88) that in the phenomenologizing experience which constitutes theory there is a "particular logification" which can be characterized as "eidetic method". This raises immediately the question of knowing if this "logification", which is in reality "ideation", is the same for the phenomenologist and for the scientist who is attached to worldly realities, the question therefore of searching for the possible status of the transcendental eidetic. In the "regressive" process of phenomenology among constitutive analyses, we can go as far as the "constitutive origin" of the *eidōs* in the "constitutions of invariant structures" within the "transcendental life", that is to say as far as the "accomplishments of granting meaning" (*Sinngebungsleistungen*) within the framework of transcendental constitution of horizon. In that case, the transcendental theory of the eidetic starts with the monstration of the process of transcendental constitution guided by worldly essence. The object is, if we borrow Merleau-Ponty's own terms, to gage what connects and articulates an experience with its variants, in order to untangle the *eidōs* which seems "incrusted" in its horizons. This corresponds *more or less* to what Merleau-Ponty states himself, brilliantly, about the eidetic in the Foreword to the *Phénoménologie de la perception*.<sup>5</sup>

But Fink goes further in two pages (*VITH CM*, 88–90) that are remarkable by their density and no less so by their boldness. Examining the eidetic in regards to transcendental being, that is to say in regards to the logification

of the *phenomenologizing* explication of the constitution of the world, he emphasizes that transcendental subjectivity does not become, by being factitious (*factice*), merely an object of theory for the phenomenologizing spectator, but manifests itself first and foremost in its *possibilities* of essence. Essences are therefore related to constituting *possibilities* which in turn are no longer simply, in a quasi-Leibnitzian sense, logico-ontological possibilities. In fact it is then a matter of knowing, Fink goes on to say, whether the *eidōs* thus considered from the point of view of transcendental being must, by being naïvely brought back to a "unity of ideal validity", still be "brought into relief" (*herausgehoben*) from that being, this, without going as far as the constitutive accomplishments which are located at the foundation of such unities; or if, precisely, along with the transcendental *eidōs*, it would not show the difference between "the direct attitude" (*Geradehin-Einstellung*) which is directed toward thematic essence, and "the reflective attitude" (*reflektive-Einstellung*) which reflects the transcendental constitution of essence, that is to say the higher transcendental constitution of the coextensive *sense* *grantings* of essences. If we read coherently the text that we paraphrased above (see *VITH CM*, 88), this means that the eidetic granting of meaning is no longer immediate in the *Wesensschau*, but that it is connected to constituting possibilities of transcendental life, possibilities that must not be brought back beforehand to idealities ready-made in their thematic unity. Here, Fink indicates quite clearly a change of register: "The phenomenologizing spectator's eidetic is not of the same kind as the eidetic of the natural attitude, nor does it indicate an affinity with its constitutive-transcendental explication" (*VITH CM*, 88). Indeed, all this comes from the fact that in the latter, the worldly *eidōs*, that is to say the essence which is (*seiende Wesen*), cannot serve as guide, under pain of transcendental illusion, namely architectonic error. What the phenomenologizing spectator is supposed to "see", as transcendental *eidōs*, in the life of transcendental subjectivity, is *not* the *eidōs* or the eidetic state-of-things as 'being' (see *VITH CM*, 88–89). The opposition or the difference between the two is, finally, that found between, on the one hand, eidetics as invariance of the *possibilities of ontic beings* (see *VITH CM*, 89), that is to say, beings that are always linked to 'being' and to the finally logical possibles of 'being', and, on the other hand, the eidetics, if it still remains, as linked to "transcendental being", that is to say to "what, properly, is not" (*VITH CM*, 89), but "has the mode of being (describable only paradoxically) of the *pre-being* (*Vor-Sein*)."<sup>6</sup> (*VITH CM*, 89).

Let us weigh carefully what is involved here, for it is of the utmost importance, and Fink, moreover, takes refuge behind the impossibility of giving fuller explanations (cf. *VITH CM*, 90). Indeed, this "pre-being" can always be interpreted, even if looked at only in a cursory manner, as that of the "pre-giveness" (*Vorgegebenheit*) of the world, and, qua its *Vorhandenheit*, the object of a "vision". Indeed, the term "disinterested spectator" applied to the phenomenologizing self is, to say the least, ambiguous. But it must be observed that this "disinterestedness" comes only from the radical phenomenological

*epoché*, which affects not only the *praxis* but also the *theoria*, and which therefore conjointly modifies their meaning. Consequently we understand that, when Fink tells us that the transcendental being is not, he means that it is not a 'being'. This is sufficient to exclude it from the sphere of the *Vorhandenheit*. Neither is it the being of a 'being', but the pre-being, precisely, of possibilities, and of possibilities which precede ideality. This is why Fink still wonders about the possible status of ideation, if indeed ideation occurs, in the phenomenologizing activity: does ideation participate in the *productivity* (underlined by Fink) of the phenomenological theorizing experience? We notice in return that if, under the circumstances, there is a risk of transcendental subreption or of architectonic error, it lies in the confusion of the meanings of the theory before and after the *epoché*, or in the fact that there may not be any possible theoretical phenomenological productivity other than ideation such as it takes place in the natural attitude. If this were to be the case, the transcendental eidetic would not make any sense, it would be forever impossible, or transcendental eidetics would precisely fall into transcendental illusion.

In a certain way, such is the architectonic aporia on which Fink stumbles in this *VITH Meditation* and also in the 1933 study initially quoted. Besides, the question concerns not only ideation, but also predication and scientificity which are, rightly, peculiar to transcendental phenomenology, and it concerns ideation's "secondary" "worldification" (*mondification*) or "worldization" (*mondanéisation*) (*Verweltlichung*), through which the "pre-being" is reconverted into being, in other words into the being of 'being'. In this § 9 of the *VITH Meditation*, as if to better disentangle himself from the aporia – for we are going to see that the aporia will prove intractable –, Fink comes back to the constitution of ideation in the natural attitude. He starts by making a distinction between the kind of non-thematic knowledge of the pre-giveness of beings, where the eidetic structures of 'being' and the mode of givenness of essentialities in the *act* of ideation float in a non-thematic manner (cf. *VITH CM*, 90–91). Therefore there is, already and always, in the *natural attitude*, an implicit pre-knowledge of essences – the very same pre-knowledge on which Merleau-Ponty will insist as early as the *Phénoménologie de la perception* – and there is ideation, as an act that makes this pre-knowledge thematic. Hence ideation manifests a certain "productivity", therefore a certain intellectual "spontaneity" which, on the basis of the *anamnesis* of this pre-knowledge, leads the non-thematic essence to *self-giveness* (*Selbstgegebenheit*) in a categorial way – since any eidetic intuition is a categorial intuition. The "*anamnesis*", which has, as we see, something active (before receiving the ready-made *eidos* in the *Wesensschau*) is therefore, according to Fink, already directed by the eidetic pre-knowledge: there is no eidetic creation, nor any logico-eidetic nominalism, but so to speak abstractive reflection or reflecting abstraction of the *eidos* which was supposed to secretly articulate the natural experience of real existence. In that way, eidetics constitutes really an express thematization, in and by categorial activity, of the worldly *a priori*, and consequently eidetics takes the meaning of "analytics of the pre-giveness of the world" (*VITH CM*, 91–92).

What is the present state of transcendental eidetics? It is in this regard, on the last page of § 9 (*VITH CM*, 92–93), that the aporia apparently becomes intractable. Fink states in a very consistent manner that "the transcendental *eidos* is not an *a priori*" (*VITH CM*, 92) because it does not partake of the *Vorhandenheit* of the worldly 'being' and of the worldly pre-knowledge of its eidetic structures, or rather, quite simply, because transcendental subjectivity freed by phenomenological reduction *does not depend on the pre-given* (*VITH CM*, 92). What then of the aporia? Let us read here the entire text:

The ideation which is related to it, is not a simple anamnesis, by objectivation of an already possessed knowledge, or by a simple method of access and of appropriation, but it has, considering the (*scil.* transcendental) essence, a fundamentally superior function. Productivity comes back to the phenomenologizing spectator's theoretical experience by bringing into play what, as 'being' ('being' transcendently), has the constitutive nature of the pre-being, – this *productivity* is also peculiar to the *transcendental ideation which logifies* this theoretical experience. It *ontifies* the pre-being's pure possibilities in validity formations of transcendental eidetics. (*VITH CM*, 92–93)

The aporia is intractable since the transcendental eidetic of the pre-being originates from ontification, by logification, of the pre-being which, as we have seen, is not a 'being'. And we must not think that the analyses of logification that Fink offers together with those of § 10 bring the beginning of a resolution, since, in the end, they lead to a strong demand for a fluidification of the language and of the concepts, by a methodical practice of the neo-Platonic *coincidentia oppositorum*. As if, when dealing with the transcendental eidetic, the philosophical means of expression failed us. To tell the truth, Husserl himself repeated this experience many times, in his courses, in his preparations for seminar work and his *Forschungsmanuskripten*. That is the aporia of "transcendental language".

As always in philosophy, when an aporia is intractable, the situation appears hopeless. Either we admit that the transcendental eidetic, insofar as it originates from ontification, is decidedly impossible, and then, in a sense, transcendental phenomenology itself is impossible – which is an attitude shared, as we know, by certain schools of thought, whether they are "analytic" in inspiration, or, at the opposite end, Heideggerian; this attitude leaves Husserlian eidetics in its state of still "naïve" practice of "the" metaphysics. Or we admit that the transcendental eidetic is possible, which is Fink's position, and certainly Husserl's, insofar as he shares Fink's point of view. In this instance then the ontification by logification of the "pre-being" is supposed to bring back, from the depths of reduction, 'being', in a sense other than that of the natural attitude. But two cases may then arise. Either we admit that the ontification which logifies the phenomenologizing experience of the pre-being originates directly from the "disinterested spectator's" phenomenologizing productivity and catches itself flayed alive so to speak, and we end up immediately in the transcendental illusion of an understanding



simultaneously archetypal and intuitive, of an understanding which is transparent to its productivity, to something like the Hegelian "absolute spirit" – this is to some extent, at least tendentially, the attitude of Fink who conceived transcendental phenomenology as "meontic" –; or we return, in a critical manner, from this transcendental illusion, by turning this transparency of the spectator who phenomenologizes for his own productivity into a regulating idea of transcendental phenomenology, the *telos*, which is situated in infinity, beyond any possible experience: but then, precisely, transcendental phenomenology exists at any time only as an idea, in a *silent* manner for those who understand it, and never in the effective train of thought, in what, at the very least, can be expressed in a language and in concepts – this is also, in an unstable way, Fink's position, and it is, it goes without saying, Husserl's position.

Now, this situation seems hopeless only as long as we keep its terms *as such*. It is enough to acknowledge that here, *aporia* comes from an *architectonic* difficulty: if by transcendental and phenomenological *epoché* and reduction we radically change from one level to another, if we effectively reach this level from the field of 'being', and from the being of 'being' to the field of non-being, and from the pre-being into its possibilities of essences, it means that *any ontification and any logification must thereby be rejected*. It means that transcendental productivity is not reduced to reproducing and logifying from 'being', but is reduced to *something entirely different* which depends neither on the *eidos* nor on the eidetic state-of-things in the classical sense. We cannot help thinking, here, of Heidegger, whose starting point in *Sein und Zeit* is in fact different. But he is far from appearing to us, if we think about it, as a "remedy" to the *aporia* stated here: if there are kindred relationships between the "pre-being" set forth by Fink and the being – the sense of the being – which is discussed in *Sein und Zeit*, the Heideggerian "remedy" is "a drastic remedy", since transcendental eidetics is swallowed up by it inasmuch as the categorial is brutally set aside from the existential.<sup>6</sup> The *Dasein's* possibilities are never, in Heidegger's work, possibilities of essences, but possibilities of existence, and in addition, taking into consideration all of these possibilities under the exclusive horizon of death leads Heideggerian thinking to a very subtle kind of second degree "archetypal and intuitive understanding". In the latter, the *Dasein's* existentials (*les existentiels*) should disengage without any solution of continuity from the ek-statical horizontal structure of "authentic" temporality and temporalization – according, therefore, to a repetition of the architectonic *aporia* disengaged here, even if, by that Heideggerian stroke of genius, it is, so to speak, set off by one notch. We know how Heidegger, in turn, stumbled during his whole life on the question of original temporalization, not to mention his veritable "forward flight" in the "deconstruction" of "the" supposedly unitarian metaphysics. It is precisely there that, for one or two generations, phenomenology also evaporated.

However if we come back to the *aporia* encountered by Fink, there is a place, that of the possibility of essences of the transcendental pre-being, where

something of the Heideggerian genius can prove to be very valuable: why not consider that this possibility, enclosed *later on* in eidetic ideality, therefore so to speak proto-categorial or proto-eidetic ideality, is simultaneously, in the same moment or in the same movement, an existential ontological possibility in Heidegger's sense? In other words, why not consider that "essence" – between phenomenological quotation marks –, that is to say the *Wesen*, which is not a 'being' nor a state-of-ontic things, stays somehow at the same distance from the ontic fact (the *Vorhandenheit*) and from the eidetic ideality (equally *vorhanden* and arrived at by ideation), and is, not factual, but itself *factitious* (*factice*) in the Heideggerian sense (*faktisch*). Why would there not be *facticity* of the *Wesen* in the same sense as facticity of existence? Why would the Husserlian "I can", "I can" of flesh, incarnated in a *Leib*, a body-of-flesh, and not a pure intellectual possibility, why would it not be an ontological "I can" of existing, and simultaneously of existing the world (*exister le monde*) and its *Wesen* which would "ester" (*wesen*) instead of being beings? To have shown the way of such a possibility for phenomenology, to have already started on that path before being interrupted by death: such is, as we would like to show now, Merleau-Ponty's inestimable and profoundly original contribution to phenomenology in *Le Visible et l'invisible*, even though his too short life did not allow him to give it his full measure. The course he took was so much in line with the phenomenological heritage and with its necessities that, we mention in passing, another phenomenologist, in Prague, Jan Patočka was, at that time, elaborating something – his "asubjective" phenomenology<sup>7</sup> – which echoes thoroughly the breakthrough undertaken in *Le Visible et l'invisible*.

## 2. THE DISCOVERY OF THE WILD *WESEN* in *Le Visible et l'invisible*

It may appear extremely curious, even excessive, to some, that we would look for one of the origins of Merleau-Ponty's thinking in Fink's *VITH Meditation*. Yet the filiation is obvious if we remember that Merleau-Ponty quotes the *VITH Meditation* twice in the Foreword to the *Phénoménologie de la perception* (PP, I, XV–XVI; PhP, vi, xxi) – first in regards to "constructive phenomenology," then in regards to the "disinterested spectator" and the phenomenologizing institution of phenomenology by its reflective return on itself –, and he quotes also the extensive study of 1933 (PP, VIII; PhP, xii) concerning reduction as "wonder" before the world. Merleau-Ponty, as we know, had read the *VITH Meditation* in a copy that Gaston Berger had sent him. Also, the conception of the eidetic that Merleau-Ponty develops in the same Foreword is very close to what Fink understood by transcendental constitution of the *eidos*. For instance he writes: "looking for the essence of the world does not mean looking for what it is in idea, once we have reduced it to a discursive theme, it means looking for what it is in fact for us before any thematization" (PP, X; PhP, xv). Or also: "On the contrary eidetic reduction is the resolution to make the world appear such as it is before any

return to ourselves, it is the ambition to match reflection with the non-reflective life of our consciousness" (PP, X–XI; PhP, xvi). And we find the proof that Merleau-Ponty was already foreseeing, in 1945, the resolution of the aporia encountered by Fink in the sense that we have indicated, in the following two texts, that we isolate in order to give a brief illustration. First: "The necessity to go through essences does not mean that philosophy takes them as its object, but, on the contrary, that our existence is set too tightly in the world to be able to know itself as such when it throws itself in it, and that it needs the field of ideality in order to know and conquer its facticity" (PP, XIV; PhP, xiv–xv). Further on: "This facticity of the world is what creates the *Weltlichkeit der Welt*, what makes the world be world, just as the facticity of the *cogito* is not an imperfection in it, but on the contrary what makes me certain of my existence" (PP, XII; PhP, xvii). However, this rapprochement of facticity and eidetics is still unstable and ambiguous since Merleau-Ponty adds immediately to the last text quoted: "The eidetic method is the method of a phenomenological positivism which bases the possible on the real" (PP, XII; PhP, xvii). This is indeed an extremely ambiguous formula because of the words "positivism" and "real": it is as if the eidetic had only a heuristic role – apart from any formal or material ontology – exactly when, as exhibition of possibles for thought, it bases these possibles on a "reality" about which we wonder whether it is composed of the reality of things or of beings, or if it is ultimately of a different order, precisely the order of existence in its facticity. Or, in still other terms, facticity does not seem to be completely disengaged from the *Vorhandensein* of the state-of-things and of the state-of-facts, and it does not seem to be clearly understood, in its Heideggerian sense, as facticity of existence, as the always already there of a *Dasein* which, when discovering its being-thrown, must henceforth be or truly exist by returning to the obscure decision which makes its being and its world. We will have to wait for *Le Visible et l'invisible* for the "phenomenological positivism" to be questioned again and left behind: be that as it may, it is in this tension which creates his working space that Merleau-Ponty, for a period of slightly more than ten years, will elaborate his phenomenology, his thinking as phenomenology. In any case this is what constitutes, according to us, one of the threads in the continuity of his work and justifies our reading retrospectively his work, starting with *Le Visible et l'invisible*.

The resolution of the architectonic aporia encountered by Fink can be found, in fact, throughout *Le Visible et l'invisible*, but clearly in the chapter entitled "Interrogation et intuition," in which Merleau-Ponty takes up again in depth the question of eidetics, of the opposition between fact and essence. He accomplishes this resumption explicitly in the opposite direction of the *VITH Meditation* – which is not quoted – since it rejects the idea of a "pure spectator"<sup>8</sup> and rehabilitates through the notion of "perceptive faith", the Husserlian *Urdoxa*. By virtue of this faith we are always already in the world, somehow we accept readily the world since we are ourselves set in the world without any possibility, other than imaginary, of retreating from it. This implies,

as the whole work shows, extremely subtle differentiations in this "perceptive faith" according to whether it is a matter, for instance, of pre-language experience ("mute" according to Husserl's expression in the *Cartesian Meditations*), a matter of the *praxis* of the operating word, or of science directed towards idealities. In any case this implies a fantastic and formidable inchoativity of the experience of the being-in-the-world, and Merleau-Ponty's genius shows in the way he returns to us, in an exceptionally fluid style, all the *indeterminations* which run through this inchoativity. The rehabilitation of the *Urdoxa* is in reality, for us, a rehabilitation of the phenomenological indeterminity in principle (*princielle*), and the discovery, in Husserl's spirit, but undoubtedly more subtly than he, of the fact that what is the most difficult about phenomenology is to succeed in creating in our mind, so to speak, connecting series of indeterminities that are always only very partially determined, and are as variable and ductile as these determinations. Most certainly, Merleau-Ponty never lacked this "phenomenological sense" but it reaches its *acme* in *Le Visible et l'invisible*.

This distancing from the *VITH Meditation* is however only apparent; for it allows the introduction in the "impartial phenomenologizing spectator" of the "good" difference, which precisely forewarns him of any ontifying and any logifying and which transmutes the meaning of the "theory" which only the excessive – and in a sense scandalous – interpretation of Plato by Heidegger<sup>9</sup> has unilaterally reduced to the ontic vision of 'being'. The notion of a "disinterested" or "unconcerned", "impartial spectator" is in fact ambiguous, and we have seen how Fink himself was a victim of this notion when he thought that the ontification of the "pre-being" was inevitable. But on the other hand another meaning of spectator is possible – moreover exactly as in Hegel, in the Introduction to the *Phänomenologie* – since he "phenomenologizes", *practices* phenomenology, or to use our own terms "phenomenalizes". This doesn't mean, most certainly, that he might be the pure and simple actor of this phenomenalizing, as master of the "process" of phenomenalization (as Hegelian philosophical consciousness is, in a sense); but it means that he might, with the *epoché*, which is a "conversion" of the way we look at things, be the "locus" where this process happens – a critical and single "locus" from which the infinite nuances of "perceptive faith" may be differentiated. Therefore, what Merleau-Ponty actually takes exception to, is a spectator who, because of dread, fear, or anguish of no longer seeing anything, ontifies the "pre-being" so as to see something therein, namely the essence as what gives meaning to beings, to states-of-things and states-of-facts. Such is, from the architectonic point of view, the transcendental subreption, namely that what we personally call *phenomenalization's radical contingency*, which could just as well be called its facticity, is converted by a spectator who retreats in horror from the anguish of no longer seeing anything ontic, by being divided between the *Vorhandenheit* of the factuality of facts and the *Vorhandensein* of essences which are supposed to articulate its linkings. This is a "secondary" division which depends in fact on what Merleau-Ponty calls "ontological diplopia" and which cannot,

on the other hand, be disconnected entirely because it depends on the categorical-ontic field by elaborating for itself the existential-ontic field, without displacing thereby the diplopia of this division between facts and essences to the division between existential facticity and regional-categorical factuality.

It is in this context that Merleau-Ponty's resolution of the aporia must be understood. "The possibility of essences," he writes

can surround and dominate *facts* well (Merleau-Ponty's emphasis), *these possibilities derive themselves from another possibility, which is more fundamental* (our emphasis): the possibility which works my experience, opens it to the world and to Being and which, most certainly, does not find them on its path like *facts* (Merleau-Ponty's emphasis) but animates and organizes *their facticity* (his emphasis). When philosophy stops doubting in order to become unveiling, explication, *since it detached itself from facts and beings* (our emphasis), the field it opens is indeed made of meanings or essences that are, however, not sufficient, that relate openly to our acts of ideation and that are *removed by them* (our emphasis) *from a brute being in which one must find again, in their wild state, the respondents* (our emphasis) of our essences and of our meanings (VI, 149; VI, 110).

Consequently, the *possibilities* of essence – terms that are almost identical to Fink's terms – emerge directly from a possibility which is more fundamental than the logico-eidetic possibility of ideation and the variations based on facts. These are the very possibilities that open my experience to the world and to Being: they are, therefore, in the Heideggerian sense, existential-ontological possibilities, possibilities that I exist the world (*j'existe le monde*), in the transitive sense, in the world. Henceforth eidetic possibilities are not there, present under our eyes, in terms of *Vorhandenheit*, they do not depend on the play of variations on something factual, and they do not detach themselves like positive invariants present in the *Wesensschau*, but they appear themselves like *factual* possibilities of *existing* that are organized by the possibility which opens my experience to the world and to Being. When philosophy ceases to doubt (as if to find the basis of what, from its unshakable positivity, must make us stop doubting), when therefore, in fact, "by detaching itself from facts and from beings", that is to say from the ontic level, it practices the well understood phenomenological *epoché* and suspends the capture of the *Urdoxa* in the 'being' rather than the *Urdoxa* itself. It still discovers effectively essences and significations, and the corresponding acts of ideation, but instead of "obstructing the view", of "saturating" the horizons, these essences or significations "*are not sufficient*"; they seem to be in an unstable situation relative to what is appearing, insofar as they show themselves as "removed" or abstracted by ideation from a brute and wild being, that preceded them, and is non-coincident with them: however there exists therein for them *respondents* (and not "correspondents"), *in the wild state* that must be precisely found again. These "respondents", that do *not belong to the same register* as our essences or significations, are, as we know, *wild*

"essences". Or rather, if we refer to the passage of *Le Visible et l'invisible*, in the same chapter where Merleau-Ponty speaks of their way of being as a way of "ester", of *Wesen* in the *active* or verbal sense (VI, 154; VI, 115), we prefer to name them wild *Wesen*. A thorough study of the chapter and of the whole work, especially of the "Working Notes" published by Claude Lefort, would show<sup>10</sup> that the change of register which forces us out of the ontic field is remarkably respected in an *architectonically coherent* way by Merleau-Ponty, since the wild *Wesen* do not belong to 'being', do not partake of the *Vorhandensein*, and even less, given their wildness, of the *Zuhandensein*, but are not, however, nothing. At the frontier of presence and absence, they are "the tie which connects secretly an experience to its variants" (VI, 155; VI, 116), for they are, to use a formula which is not specifically Merleau-Ponty's, but which, we think, condenses well what he was looking for, *incarnate existentials*. *Wesen* are indeed each time *Wesen* of flesh; here we must understand by flesh the *Leiblichkeit* of the *Leib*, of the body-of-flesh or "lived body", and of the world. It is in this sense also that we will be able to find in Merleau-Ponty, and in filigree, as we have attempted to show elsewhere,<sup>11</sup> the concept, which seems very strange at first glance, of "existential (*existentiale*) sedimentation", in a most original condensation of Husserlian sedimentation and of Heideggerian existentiality.

Therefore if there is a "transcendental eidetic" in the sense that Fink was aiming for, it is the "transcendental eidetic" of the wild *Wesen*. But we would like to indicate now, at least briefly, that the difficulty that this "eidetic" presents lies in the fact that it must be without concept (or meaning), because it is, necessarily, "upstream" from concepts and ideas, from the *factual* possibilities of existing. Wild *Wesen* cannot be reflected in an abstractive manner, from the logico-eidetic, in the act of ideation, but they must be reflected *differently*, without prior concept, that is to say in the same "esthetic" manner, as Kant called it in the third *Critique*, which brings us back to an entirely different conception of the "disinterested spectator", close to what Kant thought with esthetic contemplation. It is this reflection, and it alone, which can properly be called *phenomenological*. This does not mean that phenomenology must turn into esthetics – the latter is the only proper place of phenomenology in Kant's strict architectonics –, but on the contrary, it means that esthetics, already phenomenological in its Kantian sense, must be generalized into phenomenology, in what is required by the phenomenon as *nothing but* phenomenon, namely its phenomenological reflection devoid of previous concept.<sup>12</sup> Only this can preserve phenomenological thinking from the transcendental illusion of a simultaneously intuitive and archetypal understanding, for phenomena, henceforth, can no longer be identified nor abstracted, reduced to the donation in presence of the manifest, but they are "fluidified", as nothing but phenomena, in the always enigmatic links between *our* essences and *our* concepts and the wild *Wesen* that we must consider as their wild phenomenological concretudes – and in this respect, Merleau-Ponty's fluid style in *Le Visible et l'invisible*, most often misunderstood by "philosophers



belonging to specific schools of thought", is a brilliant illustration of this. That is to say, how very necessary it appears to us who come *after* Merleau-Ponty that his phenomenological attempt be pursued in phenomenology by a *phenomenology of language* whose lineaments Merleau-Ponty gives us with what he conceives of as "operating speech" or "speech *praxis*" – where we can uncover, we think, what we call language *phenomena*.<sup>13</sup> It is indeed phenomenological reflection without any concept of language phenomena which allows us, with the *hiatus* that it opens between this reflection and abstractive reflection – or reflecting abstraction –, to measure the large *gap* which creates what Fink calls "logification" and "ontification", and this, without the phenomenality of language phenomena being dependent in any way on self-donation – to believe this would mean to be once more a victim of transcendental illusion. But if, in compliance with the most fundamental demands of Kantian architectonics, we uphold that this *hiatus* or this *gap* is in fact – unless we make a "dogmatic", or, if one wishes, a "metaphysical" leap – *insurmountable*, if then we conceive of *Wesen* as being truly *wild* and meanings and concepts as really *ours*, if we admit thus that between these *Wesen* on the one hand and significations and concepts on the other hand, there is no possibility of "derivation" and even less of "deduction", phenomenology's most fundamental architectonic division becomes the division that must be performed between the *wild* phenomenological field and the *instituted* symbolic field, between language in its phenomena, and speech in its enunciations and its statements. But this, even though it is indicated here and there by Merleau-Ponty, goes already beyond what he had time to elaborate explicitly.

### 3. CONCLUSION: ARCHITECTONICS AND PHENOMENOLOGY

In the end Merleau-Ponty devoted very little thought to the symbolic institution of symbolic "systems" and "networks" which cover, as we know, the whole field of human experience. Although he reached that point around the end of his life – he contrasts, in notes from his 1959–1960 lectures published in his *Résumé de cours*, "a tacit symbolism or a symbolism of indivision" with an "artificial or conventional symbolism"<sup>14</sup> – in a manner which is obviously still very unsatisfactory, or, at the very least, heuristic, he remained an extraordinary thinker of phenomenological inchoativity rather than the philosopher of an architectonically complete elaboration of phenomenology – and we would be entirely wrong to criticize him for this since he was not granted the time to finish his work. This gives the impression when we read him of a remnant "substruction" of his thought by "metaphysical" structures, or of a kind of quasi-ontological "immanentism" of the flesh, where everything seems to happen "from within" and where finally even the most apparently "artificial" would find the key to his enigma. In a sense, this is what makes him a classic in the best sense of the term and what brings him much closer to Husserl and to Fink than at first it seems – closer, in any case, to

this phenomenological "great tradition", than to Heidegger, whose exclusive concentration on the question of being – devastating in reality for it engulfs everything – must have repulsed him as much as attracted him.

There is a profound reason for this classicism which makes Merleau-Ponty, to our thinking, one of phenomenology's essential "links", at least of phenomenology taken as a movement: it is that the division which, in our opinion, *must* be thought between the phenomenological and the symbolic is architectonic and by no means ontological, and this insofar as, if we borrow Husserl's language, there is not a single *Gebilde*, or rather not a single *Sinngebilde* (that we human beings encounter), which is not penetrated simultaneously, exactly as it *appears*, by the phenomenological dimension and the symbolic dimension. In this respect, endowed as he was with the genius for the "unstable condition" which is present in any *Sinngebilde*, Merleau-Ponty was extremely sensitive to the phenomenological dimension. But his being constantly open to the so-called "social sciences" made him always pay attention to the symbolic dimension, and he always took care, as compared to Heidegger, not to turn into "truth" – even if only in the very refined sense that we know – the symbolic which is supposed to be taken back to the abyss of its "basis" or of its "foundation". There is no "phantasm" of the "founder" or of the "beginning" in Merleau-Ponty. Undoubtedly, no one can imagine what he would have done and thought if he had been allowed to live longer, but the published work gives at least the idea of a remarkable finesse for architectonic distinctions, even if this finesse is not reflected in a method. Most certainly, his thought gives sometimes the impression that there is no possible return from the phenomenological inchoativity that he has shown us better than anyone else, that we are always, as he used to say more or less, in an "origin which explodes". But what we mean is that "what remains" of his unfinished work is undoubtedly that he has made us more sensitive, at the same time, to the blindness of the operative, in all the fields of human experience, sensitive to that which, whatever we may think in a living way in *praxis*, appears to think in it and to work in it by itself, and to prevent us, in so doing, from thinking by ourselves. After Merleau-Ponty, as we know the "structuralist wave" has stressed excessively what seems to "work by itself". After this "wave", and when we come back to him, we realize that this is only a *tendency*, that symbolic "systems" tend to become autonomous, and if this tendency were fulfilled, it would lead us to the automatism of repetition as blind "economy" of death – moreover it is useless to insist on the extremely profound and extremely corrosive nihilism of any structuralist "ideology". We realize today that Merleau-Ponty's work has also been a defense of the *Lebenswelt*, in all its infinite complexity, against the attacks of a *Todeswelt* which unceasingly invades us no less subtly. And the reflection of his work, thirty years later, shows that we must balance the complexities of the "life" of the "world of life" with the subtleties of the "death" of the "world of death". For this is possible for us only by means of the architectonic – that is to say non-ontological – division between the phenomenological

dimension and the symbolic dimension. Moreover, in regard to this, the "transcendental doctrine of the method" that Fink contemplated in the *VTH Meditation* deserves to be re-written again, in a different way, although this cannot be undertaken here. And it would be necessary to put at the center of this doctrine the problem, whose difficulty Merleau-Ponty began to measure, of the *phenomenological encounter* of these two dimensions, which is undoubtedly the problem of *any* human life and of *any* human thought.

## NOTES

1. E. Fink, "*La philosophie phénoménologique d'Edmund Husserl face à la critique contemporaine*", Fr. tr. by D. Franck in E. Fink, *De la phénoménologie*, Minuit, Coll. "Arguments", Paris, 1974, pp. 95-175.
2. Translator's note: there are many neologisms in this text which are peculiar to phenomenological literature in French. In order to reflect the author's style and the article's content, I will give the anglicized version of these neologisms throughout the article.  
In order to render in English the distinction between the substantivized infinitive, "*l'être*", generally translated as "being", and "*l'étant*", which is the French equivalent used for the German "*das Seiende*" which means literally "what is being", I will use respectively "being" for the substantive "*étant*" in the singular, and "beings" for the plural.
3. E. Fink, *VI. Cartesianische Meditation*, Teil I, *Die Idee einer transzendentalen Methodenlehre*, hrsg. von H. Ebeling, J. Holl und G. Van Kerckhoven, Kluwer Acad. Publ., *Husserliana Dokumente*, II, 1, Dordrecht, 1988. We will quote with the acronym *VTH CM* followed by the page number.
4. See the study by G. Van Kerckhoven, "*Consensus, dissension, construction*", and our own, "*La question d'une doctrine transcendantale de la méthode en phénoménologie*", in *Épokhè*, No. 1, *Le statut du phénoménologique*, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble, 1990, pp. 45-89 and pp. 91-125.
5. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Gallimard, Paris, 1945, pp. IX-XII. We will come back to this work and quote with the acronym *PP* followed by the page number. (In English: *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), hereafter cited as *PhP*.)
6. Translator's note: We retain the author's distinction between "existential" and the related substantive "existentiels", which refer to existence's modes of being or categories, and, on the other hand "existentiel", which concerns existence's qualitative features.
7. See our study: "*Possibilité et nécessité de la phénoménologie asubjective*", in *Jan Patočka, Philosophie, phénoménologie, politique*, Jérôme Millon, Coll. "Krisis", Grenoble, 1992, pp. 101-120.
8. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Le Visible et l'invisible*, text established by Cl. Lefort, Gallimard, Paris, 1964, p. 147. We will quote henceforth with the acronym *VI* followed by the page number. (In English: *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. A. Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), hereafter cited as *VI*.)
9. See D. Montet's work, *Les traits de l'être. Essai sur l'ontologie platonicienne*, Jérôme Millon, Coll. "Krisis", Grenoble, 1990.
10. See our work: *Phénomènes, temps et êtres*, Jérôme Millon, Coll. "Krisis", Grenoble, 1987.
11. See our work: "*Communauté, société et histoire chez le dernier Merleau-Ponty*", in *Merleau-Ponty, phénoménologie et expériences*, Jérôme Millon, Coll. "Krisis", Grenoble, 1992, pp. 7-25.
12. See *Phénomènes, temps et êtres*, op. cit.
13. See our works: *Phénoménologie et institution symbolique*, and *La crise du sens et la phénoménologie*, Jérôme Millon, Coll. "Krisis", Grenoble, 1988 and 1990.
14. *Résumés de cours, Collège de France, 1952-1960*, Gallimard, Paris, 1968, p. 180.

## PART II

## Nature, the Unconscious, and Desire