Archeology of *logos*:

Husserl and Merleau-Ponty on the historicity of rationality

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Abstract

The thesis aims to examine the Ancient Greek heritage and its echoes in the works of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, I undertake this inquiry by focusing on the issue raised by Husserl in his later writings, of the historicity of rationality, and by tracing the legacy of core concepts, such as *logos*, *physis*, *arche* and *telos*. The first part critically reconstructs the arguments behind Husserl's teleological characterisation of European humanity. The second part studies the development of a post-Husserlian project in the work of Merleau-Ponty. I focus especially on his account of Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, and the related sections in *Eye and Mind*, and *The Visible and The Invisible*. I try to defend the suggestion that key features of Merleau-Ponty's post-Husserlian project come into sharper relief if they are read within a framework that relates his thinking to Pre-Socratic themes, notably through his novel us of some of the key concepts mentioned above.

Statement

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled "Archeology of *logos*: Husserl and Merleau-Ponty on the historicity of rationality" has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that this thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The historicity of reason is the idea that there is a historical development of reason. The problem of the historicity of reason leads us, eventually, to the question of the beginning of philosophy as the ultimate search for *logos*. As a preparatory work of a broader project, this problem and its emergence in ancient Greek philosophy will be our main focus and framing in its relation to Husserl and Merleau-Ponty.

Historicity, as a philosophical notion, is the idea or fact that something has a historical origin and developed through history while giving rise to new concepts, practices and values. Historicity also relates to the underlying concept of history, or, in particular, the intersection of teleology, which is the concept and study of progress and purpose; and temporality - the concept of time.

In phenomenology, historicity can be described as the constitutional history of any intentional object, in the sense of history as collective tradition, as well as in the sense where each individual has their own history. These two aspects are often very similar. One individual's history is heavily influenced by the tradition the individual is formed in, but, on the other hand, personal history can also produce an object without being a part of any tradition. In other words, personal historicity does not develop in the same way as tradition. The difference between these two aspects in historicity is also directly related to the question of ideality in Husserl's phenomenology as we shall see.

In addition to this, we must also indicate that Husserl, after all, does not consider history as a scientific progress of 'reason'. He rather is trying to do a regressive analysis about the origins of modern scientific methods. His emphasis on the notion of 'teleology' is related to the sense of the Aristotelian 'entelechy' rather than being a tracing the end 'point' of the process of 'history. Husserl's main aim here is showing why the phenomenological method, notably the reduction, is the only proper way to do this.

In this introduction, it is important to note that this return to the Greek heritage, or a reconsideration and analysis of it, became especially important after Heidegger's famous thesis about how *logos*, being, and history were interconnected. Therefore, we consider inevitable and vital the examination of the connection between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty in their relation to this problem and to the Greek philosophical heritage.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, argued that it is temporality that gives rise to history. According to this standpoint, all things have their place and time, and nothing past is outside of history. For Heidegger, there is a difference between Being and beings, which is concealed by the

tendency to reduce or ground Being in a being in Greek metaphysics as a theological substance. This reduction hides the difference between the process of coming to presence and that which presents itself (objects). As the grounding entity becomes more firm, final and permanent, the oblivion and withdrawal of Being becomes more complete. Moreover, Heidegger indicates that as an axiomatic for classical Greek philosophy, the temporality of presence, of Being as presence is subsequently covered-up. Since this process of Being is reinforced to be displaced by a privileged highest being; it gets determined as constantly present, as eternal, in contrast to the temporal that is evanescent and instantaneous. Since classical metaphysics reverses the primacy of Being that can be found in early Greek thought (pre-Socratics); Heidegger, in return, and through a reconsideration of the meaning of phenomenology, the concept of *logos*, and therefore rationality, wants to overthrow the overturn, making the classical claims derivative.

Through an investigation of the meanings of 'phenomenon' and '*logos*' both in pre-Socratics and in classical Greek philosophy he notices that "we are struck by an inner relationship between the things meant by these terms."[1] And this is where the debates regarding the beginning of philosophy and the problem of origin in phenomenology became more acute, undoubtedly following Heidegger's arguments in favour of a return to early Greek thinking, and his striking yet controversial references to the ancient Greek era. As one of the main successors of the Husserlian project, this struggle of Heidegger causes one to ask how in turn he might have influenced his master in asking how the structures of intentionality in fact might not just be transcendentally, but also historically studied. The question makes one think about the possible legacy or even more or less direct echoes of Ancient Greek thought in Husserl and more broadly the latter's effect on post-Husserlian phenomenology.

As the project focuses specifically on this post-Husserlian tradition, another major figure, Merleau-Ponty, becomes crucial, firstly because of his importance, but also in terms of his unique and transforming relationship with Husserlian thought and his increasing interest in Heidegger. Although at first glance the writings of Merleau-Ponty seem not to include such direct groundings in ancient Greek thought as Heidegger's , the same curiosity or *thaumazein* about the legacy of ancient Greek thought arises for the thought of Merleau-Ponty as well. As one goes deeper in his works with this perspective, what we may discover becomes much more intriguing in fact than what can be found in relation to Husserl's thought.

Although Husserl does directly not borrow particular concepts from Ancient Greek philosophy for the systematization of his philosophy, as Heidegger does in many of this writings, the famous call "to return to things themselves" definitely finds a haunting echo from this era as he

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[1] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 58.

also calls for a return to the *Heraclitean flux*[2]. Beside this vague reference to Heraclitus, it is obvious that he sees classical Greek philosophy; Plato and Aristotle, as the peak of ancient Greek period.[3] Since Husserl presents the ancient Greek spirit as the origin of that for which European humanity is supposed to be the *telos*, the relation between his phenomenological project and the history of philosophy deserves to be examined more carefully.

Furthermore, a number of parallelisms can be established between Husserl's one of the most influential students, Merleau-Ponty, and the ancient Greek era. Taking a "pre-Socratic" perspective on his thought is particularly fruitful in understanding Merleau-Ponty's extension of phenomenology after Husserl. Despite the fact that Merleau-Ponty's references to this era are fewer than Husserl's, his phenomenological approach, also in fact paves the way of a re-evaluation of pre-Socratics and certain Ancient Greek concepts.

In one of his rare direct references to the pre-Socratics, Husserl argues that the relationship between the world as we generally know it and its subjective extent never became a philosophical matter, with a 'tentative' exception of pre-Socratic philosophy and the Sophists. As he writes:

> The correlation between world (the world of which we always speak) and its subjective manners of givenness never evoked philosophical wonder (that is, prior to the first breakthrough of "transcendental phenomenology" in the *Logical Investigations*), in spite of the fact that it had made itself felt even in pre-Socratic philosophy and among the Sophists— though here only as a motive for skeptical argumentation. This correlation never aroused a philosophical interest of its own which could have made it the object of an appropriate scientific attitude. Philosophers were confined by what was taken for granted, i.e., that each thing appeared differently in each case to each person.[4]

Is it possible that what Husserl considers a mere "motive for sceptical argumentation" in pre-Socratics, as the correlation between world and its subjective manners of givenness, can actually have a different or more influential meaning? Can pre-Socratics' understanding of nature and being, through their usage of particular concepts, be still viewed in accordance with one of the most effective breakthroughs of our time in ontology? Our general claim will be that this understanding of pre-Socratics can find its echoes and a highly-esteemed reflection in Merleau-Ponty's approach to the concepts of *logos*, *physis*, and *aisthesis*. Exceeding the Husserlian phenomenological frame and connecting the concept of flesh with ontology, Merleau-Ponty, in a way he was arguably not intending at the time, provides us a novel way of reconsidering the ancient Greek legacy as well as the historicity of rationality, as we will demonstrate.

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[2] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 156.
[3] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 285.
[4] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 165.

Before I begin the inquiry into the relation between Husserlian and post-Husserlian phenomenology and Ancient Greek thought, it is important to establish succinctly what is meant by that. This consideration of the ancient Greek era must explain in particular the distinction between pre-Socratics and classical Greek philosophy, meaning ancient Greek philosophy after Plato. All this matters, since the focus on the problem of beginning in philosophy requires an examination of what distinguishes the first philosophers from the poets of that era, or in more conceptual terms, of what distinguishes *logos* from *mythos* at that time. Only after this examination, which clarifies what makes this era so unique, and what the main arguments are that allow the question of the beginning of philosophy emerge as a decisive one, can a full understanding of Husserl and his famous disciple Merlau-Ponty be considered in their relation with that era.

Still today, for most people the proposition that "Philosophy was born in Ancient Greek" is an unquestionable fact that must be accepted when starting out in philosophy. However, one may still ask since when has Western civilization accepted that philosophy began in ancient Greece? And was this acceptance valid throughout history?

If we focus on the proposition "philosophy was born in ancient Greece", we can see that this proposition itself has a historicity. Before pointing out the major moments in the expansion of this history, it is necessary to cover the arguments that make this proposition valid for our present as well. At this point, the issue that must be primarily questioned, rather than whether philosophy began in ancient Greece, is whether these assumptions of such arguments are problematic or not and what is their relationship with tradition. For instance, both Heidegger and Derrida attract attention to the fact that the origin eludes us. It is impossible to pin down the origin of Being, consciousness and language, without falling into a loop. The question of the beginning of philosophy is a similar matter. To be able to answer this question, one must decide what is philosophical and what is not. In order to decide where philosophy began, uncovering the historical facts would not be enough on its own. The real question is how we draw the line between what is philosophy and what is not, and how such a line could be objective.

How do those who argue that philosophy began with pre-Socratics demarcate this boundary? The thesis that reveals the first and possibly the most important sign is this: In the beginning of philosophy, we witness that mythical way of thinking retreats and give its place to rational understanding. The contemporary sources that explain the birthplace of philosophy find this exact transition in the Miletus region of Ionia in ancient Greece in the 6th century B.C. Milesian thinkers such as Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander abandoned the ways of mythical

explanation and began to see or observe nature from another standpoint. According to Jean-Pierre Vernant, this type of thinking has the qualities of being "systematic" and "detached", because it is not directed by any practical intentions.[5] Philosophy is an investigation that requires a "theoretical attitude". Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander abandoned mythical explanation telling of the formation of gods and the universe, the emergence of the earth and its order in a dramatic format based on imagination. Instead, they began to think with a "rational understanding". What they abandoned is the way of explanation of phenomena that relies on events, wars and compromises between immortal, supernatural deities. For Vernant, the pre-Socratics are the first "physicists" and the explanation they propose is a "positive" account of being in its wholeness. One of the most important scholars that represents these arguments even prior to Vernant, whom the latter refers to in his *The Origins of Greek Thought*, is John Burnet.[6]

It is possible to query this argument through Heidegger's account of the early Greeks, as he will criticise this approach for distorting the experience of being that thinkers such as Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander lived, viewing ancient Greece through the lens of modernity. For Heidegger, the separation between myth and philosophy is problematic because it is based on the assumption that philosophical thinking has to be qualified by terms such as "rational explanation", "scientific explanation". In the historical origin of the term of "rational explanation", we initially notice this concept of *logos*. However, the hermeneutic distance between *logos* and "rational explanation" is quite long. Secondly, using a term such as "scientific explanation" in relation to the pre-Socratics means not realizing the fact that they do not do "science" as modern thinkers, and even Aristotle, understand it. Once we consider the concept of *physis*, we see an utterly different understanding of nature. Therefore, concepts such as "being physicists" and "positivity" would be a false representation of the pre-Socratics.[7] Moreover, it is doubtful to what extent the pre-Socratics split from mythological explanations regarding the formation of universe. They remain within a frame in which nature includes a type of divinity.

For the pre-Socratics, nature is a wholeness that includes Earth, men and the divine one. All existents are on the same unified plane. Plants, animals, men, gods are the parts of nature that shows the same powers everywhere. Besides, the gods of mythology are not "transcendental" beings, rather they are immanent in nature like men are. An interesting investigation that supports the idea that pre-Socratic philosophy continues to show links to mythology, has been presented by F. M. Cornford whom Vernant also refers to:

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[5] Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, p. 102.

[6] Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, p. 104.

[7] Heidegger, "The Anaximender Fragment", *Early Greek Thinking*, p. 15.

"The earliest philosophy remains closer to mythological construct than to scientific theory. Ionian natural philosophy had nothing in common, in either inspiration or methods, with what we call science; specifically, it knew nothing whatever of experimentation. Nor was it the product of reason's naive and spontaneous reflection on nature. … The cosmologies simply took up and extended the main themes of the creation myths. … From the creation myths the Milesians took not only an image of the universe but a whole conceptual apparatus and explanatory schemata: behind the 'elements' of *physis* loom the old gods of myhtology." [8]

Although it reaches a different plane than mythology, pre-Socratic thought is not the product of a pure and spontaneous reflection that reason projects onto nature. What the pre-Socratics did was to adapt the mythical standpoint so that religion has developed into a more secular frame using more abstract, or more "naturalistic", terminology. The pre-Socratic thinkers' explanations about the formation of the universe for instance reconsider the basic themes of myths in this process and improve on them. According to Cornford, pre-Socratic philosophy re-writes the myth with another type of discourse, but remains attached to its basic content.

In our customary reading of the pre-Socratics, we tend to ignore this ambiguity between mythological thinking and rational understanding for the goodness of the desire to stand on a solid ground identifying the birthplace of philosophy. In other words, we read them not by their own concepts but by concepts produced later in history by the tradition that comes from them through us, concealing those original concepts.

The question of the beginning of philosophy and the arguments regarding the interaction between ancient Greek thought and other cultures has a fundamental significance in terms of the relationship between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, notably through their phenomenological understanding and their potential positioning by this era of Ancient Greek philosophy. As I will demonstrate in the next chapters, Husserl explicitly confirms the aforementioned post-Hegelian account and the view that the history of philosophy has been re-written to fit the way that Europeans construct other cultures. Contrastingly, although he does not participate directly in such a debate, Merleau-Ponty will allow us to discern the traces and conditions of a different approach. Merleau-Ponty's redefinition of the conception of *telos* as well as *logos* through his ontological concept of flesh and his aesthetic rationality eventually allows us to discuss a potential re-evaluation of historicity of rationality.

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[8] Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought*, p. 104.

PART I

It would not be an exaggeration to say that 20th century phenomenology establishes itself as an interpretation of Greek philosophy both in an implicit and an explicit sense. It is explicit, since the word of phenomenology is of Greek origin. On the other hand, even if it does not solely depend on ancient Greek philosophers, there are various references or influences of this era especially for post-Husserlian phenomenology. Therefore, the relation between ancient Greek philosophy and phenomenology, which was examined along deconstructive lines by Heidegger, should also be considered in terms of Husserlian thought. Heidegger famously advocated a deconstructive (or indeed "destructive"[9]) attitude towards the history of philosophy, starting with ancient Greek philosophy. It seems warranted to ask what relation his teacher, Husserl, had towards ancient Greek philosophy, and whether his standpoint regarding the same period can be described as constructive. According to Husserl's approach, the fundamental aim of phenomenology is moving philosophical thinking forward while making some arrangements and alterations both to the consideration of ancient Greek philosophy and to the history of modern philosophy through their relation to each other. By way of a shift in understanding of ancient Greek philosophy, Husserl thinks the edifice of Greek philosophical science can be constructed and completed. This Husserlian standpoint orients itself toward a future *telos* and follows a course, which inevitably supposes a certain *arche*.

As Husserl thus establishes a mutual and continuous relation between the notions of *arche* (in the primary senses of the word; "beginning", "origin" or "source of action") and *telos*, it is significant to note here that unlike his understanding of this 'beginning,'[10] the pre-Socratics' usage of this notion of *arche* in the same context of the problem of beginning contained more concrete and earthly (or even bodily) senses since it basically implied a first principle or element.

This difference here regarding the notions of *arche* leads us to one of the most challenging dilemmas in Husserl's project: the controversy surrounding his understanding of life-world (*Lebenswelt*)[11] and *theoria*. As David Carr points out in the preface to *Crisis*, Husserl admits that the attempt to describe the life-world is itself a theoretical activity, indeed, *theoria* of the highest order, phenomenology as a rigorous theoretical endeavour: "The presupposition of the

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[9] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 44.

[10] As we will show in the last part of this thesis, the pre-Socratics' understanding of this concept of *arche* finds an echo in Merleau-Ponty's approach to *telos* as well as *logos* through his concept of flesh.

[11] "'Life-world' or 'world of life' (*Lebenswelt*) is Husserl's term in his mature writings for the concrete world of everyday experience, the 'everyday world' (*Afftagswelt*), the 'intuitive world of experience', the world as experienced in the natural attitude. This life-world has both subjective and objective aspects." (Moran & Cohen, *The Husserl Dictionary*, p. 189.)

life-world is either essential to theoretical activity or it is not. Husserl must show how it is that phenomenology can fulfill the *telos* of all theory without being caught up in its *arche*, its rootedness in the life-world."[12] As we will demonstrate in the following chapters, Husserl establishes European humanity as the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. Furthermore, he speaks of this Greek origin, obviously as *arche*, primarily with respect to classical Greeks, more precisely the attainment of "Platonic idealism" which amounts to the appearance of reason, science, and philosophy, rather than the pre-Socratics.

Before the elaboration of his references to ancient Greek philosophy, we should indicate that, in this part, we will focus mainly on his *Crisis* text (including *The Vienna Lecture* as its appendix) and *The Origin of Geometry*. Through this investigation, we can suggest that there are mainly two ways of measuring the legacy of Greek thought in Husserl.

A first approach would be to study the role that Greek concepts play in Husserl's philosophical lexicon as they allow him to formulate some of the most important moments in his method. To highlight the general role that Greek concepts play in Husserl's philosophical lexicon, we initially encounter the concepts of *noesis* and *noema* that the concepts of the noetic and the noematic in Husserl's general introduction to pure phenomenology in *Ideas* (1913). Other Greek concepts include *nous*; *eidos* from which he derived the term "eidetic"; *epoche*; *hyle* and *morphe* from which he derived the terms "hyletic" and "morphological"; *doxa*, *protodoxa/urdoxa* that were transformed into his reference to "doxic concepts"; *logos* that is related to concepts of logic; *apophansis* which gave the term "apophantic"; *thesis* and *synthesis*; and finally and most obviously, *phenomena* from which he derived the term "phenomenology". His later study, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1936), begins with another Greek term; *krisis*, we again come across a familiar Greek lexicon: *thaumazein*, *theoria*, *episteme*, *entelechia*, *methexis*, *telos*, *epoche*, and *physis*.

A second perspective would be an examination of the narrative that Husserl developed in relation to European humanity, which he described as a historical-teleological fate of Greek thought. In this thesis, our focus will be this second one, as the frame is concerned with the problem of the historicity of rationality in post-Husserlian phenomenology. This will entail a consideration of the use of particular Greek concepts to construct this narrative, not the concepts that are used to define the method itself, but other key concepts such as *arche*, *telos*, *physis*.

Rationality and its historicity is one of the main notions that Husserl deals with regarding his conception of *Krisis*. Husserl, in *Crisis*, raises the question whether history teaches us nothing

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[12] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. xliii.

but the contingency of human events, "an unending concatenation of illusory progress and bitter disappointment"[13] or whether instead there is meaning and reason in history.[14] Regarding these questions, Husserl points out a methodological approach of 'questioning back' (*Rückfragen*) as he believes that this method will penetrate to the essential meaning at the heart of various forms of historically evolving cultural institution. This new approach referring to historical and temporal development is what Husserl calls 'genetic phenomenology'.

Through this approach of 'questioning back', Husserl specifies that the classic rationalism of the Enlightenment was too narrow and naive and overly committed to naturalism. According to Husserl, naturalism consists only one domain of possible knowledge which is nature, as it is considered in the natural sciences. Furthermore, the only method that naturalism recognizes for gaining scientific knowledge is empirical observation and induction. Arguing that naturalism is blinded by the truly remarkable sucssess of modern natural science, Husserl thinks that naturalism consequently ignores the other great source of scientific knowledge that is eidetic intuition. The empiricist prejudice of naturalism causes a misconception of both consiousness and of the absolute norms of rationality.[15]

On the other hand, Husserl also believes that to abandon the ideal of rationalism might lead to irrationalism; and proposes phenomenology as a new form of rationalism. In the *Vienna Lecture*, he specifies that the crisis in the European sciences and culture is rooted in a misguided rationalism. For Husserl, modernity introduced a 'one-sided'[16] notion of rationality that sought to explicate the rationality of the world in the manner of geometry.[17] The narrowness of the old 'rationality' of the Enlightenment led to a narrow and absurd rationalism.[18]

Thus, Husserl believes that the conception of rationality has to be broadened, and in the light of this requirement and as a result of its being historicised, he refers to the origin of this conception in the ancient Greek philosophy:

> Rationality, in that high and genuine sense of which alone we are speaking, the primordial Greek sense which in the classical period of Greek philosophy had become an ideal, still requires, to be sure, much clarification through self-reflection; but it is called in its mature form to guide [our] development. On the other hand we readily admit (and German Idealism preceded us long ago in this insight) that the stage of development of ratio represented by the rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment was a mistake, though certainly an understandable one.[19]

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13 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 7.
14 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 9.
15 Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, p. 80.
16 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 291.
17 Husserl, *Crisis*, see ch. 10.
18 Husserl, *Crisis*, see ch. 6.
19 Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 290.

Moreover, Husserl specifically talks about the 'teleology' of European humanity in the *Crisis* and associated texts (e.g. *Vienna Lecture*): "The teleological beginning, the true birth of the European spirit as such [through] a modification of the Greek primal establishment."[20] For Husserl, modern philosophy has a teleological direction towards becoming transcendental philosophy, and phenomenology is the 'final form' of transcendental philosophy.

As we point out in the first chapter of this part, Husserl, in the *Crisis* text and in the *Vienna Lecture*, seeks to retrieve the ideal-historical moment at which *philosophy*, as the Greeks called it. He points out classical Greece as the era that human culture discovered or invented this "consistent idealization" for the first time which is "a new sort of attitude of individuals toward their surrounding world" that rapidly grows into "a systematically self-enclosed cultural form."[21] On the other hand, in his *Origin of Geometry*, as we notice through our analysis in the second chapter, Husserl's main emphasis are the meanings of geometrical objects and geometrical laws as a-historical notions; they are true independent of when they were discovered and when they were discovered. Although this might seem inconsistent at first, as we will indicate in this part, the idea of a historicity of rationality becomes fundamental, despite the a-historical aspect of *Origin of Geometry*, through his conception of *telos* as a way of seeing where and how rationality emerges, and how it develops.

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[20] Husserl, *Crisis*, p.71.
[21] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 276.

Chapter 1. Husserl's narrative of European humanity as *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy

In this chapter, we will see how Husserl approaches to the historicity of rationality and how he combines it with the ancient Greek heritage. The meaning of history is a central notion in the *Crisis* project as well as in Husserl's later conception of transcendental phenomenology. He describes the *Crisis* as a 'teleological historical reflection'[22] that involves an intellectual 'reconstruction' and 'backwards questioning' (*Rückfragen*) of the history of European humanity (particularly the development of modern philosophy and natural science). In his 'Foreword to the Contintuation of the Crisis', Husserl states his intention to present the whole history of philosophy as possessing a 'unitary teleological structure'.[23]

In *Crisis*, Husserl emphasizes the inner meaning of history. As he is not interested in 'external' history, Husserl wants to explore and investigate what he calls 'inner history'[24] with its 'inner historicity'[25] in contrast to 'factual history'. Thus, we see that a reflective consideration of the treatment of history, or 'critique of history' finally emerges. For Husserl, a definite 'meaning-form' has to be included in the historical evolution of culture and science, insofar as it must have an intelligible aspect to its development.

According to Husserl, the concept of history must be connected to the concept of 'reason' as well as the progress of universal instantiation of the ideals of a rational life. In this manner, philosophy is "nothing other than [rationalism], through and through, but it is rationalism differentiated within itself according to the different stages of the movement of intention and fulfillment; it is *ratio in the constant movement of self-elucidation*, begun with the first breakthrough of philosophy into mankind, whose innate reason was previously in a state of concealment, of nocturnal obscurity."[26]

Human culture, for Husserl, is sustained by a dynamic tendency towards rationalization. His overall approach is therefore that history exhibits purposiveness and inner rationality. Husserl considers historical development as being driven by an impulse towards ever-inclusive rationality. For him, the teleology of European humanity is the life of reason: 'Philosophy, science in all its forms, is rational – that is a tautology'.[27]

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[22] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 3.
[23] ("*eine einheitliche teleologische Struktur*"), Supplement XIII, *die Krisis*, p. 442 – not translated in Carr
[24] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 378.
[25] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 372.
[26] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 338.
[27] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 339.

This focus on 'teleology' (from the Greek *telos* that means 'goal', 'aim', 'puropose' or 'end') or 'goal-directedness' primarily targets philosophy. Husserl believes that the history of philosophy must be considered as exhibiting an intelligible structure and trajectory, and this is where the Greek moment attains a vital importance as the 'beginning' of such a trajectory. At this point, regarding this Greek moment and teleology, Husserl combines this intelligible structure and trajectory with the notion of progress, and sketches the structure of the task of what he defines as the thematization of the forward progression of scientific understanding. Husserl describes such a progression as "teleological", and Greek philosophy has a decisive position in it:

> For we are what we are as functionaries of modern philosophical humanity; we are heirs and cobearers of the direction of the will which pervades this humanity; we have become this through a primal establishment [*Urstiftung*] which is at once a reestablishment [*Nachstiftung*] and a modification of the Greek primal establishment. In the latter lies the teleological beginning, the true birth of the European spirit as such.[28]

> [...]

> But to every primal establishment [*Urstiftung*] essentially belongs a final establishment [*Endstiftung*] assigned as a task to the historical process. This final establishment is accomplished when the task is brought to consummate clarity and thus to an apodeictic method which, in every step of achievement, is a constant avenue to new steps having the character of absolute success, i.e., the character of apodeictic steps. At this point philosophy, as an infinite task, would have arrived at its apodeictic beginning, its horizon of apodeictic forward movement.[29]

The original founding (*Urstiftung*) of modern science, as a modification of the Greek primal establishment, in that sense, is a "first," and thus genuine beginning, but in a peculiar sense. In order to clarify the unifying sense of the modern philosophical movements, he indicates that we must go back to the primally founding genius of all modern philosophy, Descartes. For Husserl, "after Galileo had carried out, slightly earlier, the primal establishment of the new natural science, it was Descartes who conceived and at the same time set in systematic motion the new idea of universal philosophy: in the sense of mathematical or, better expressed, physicalistic, rationalism—philosophy as 'universal mathematics.' And immediately it had a powerful effect."[30] Therefore, through this connection between modern science and philosophy via Galileo and Descartes, Husserl aims to arrive at a reflective form of knowledge concerning this 'primal establishment' in its relation to ancient Greek origin and the teleological story of European science.

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[28] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 71.
[29] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 72.
[30] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 73.

Here, we should also keep in mind that, besides these influential interpretations of modern science and philosophy, this standpoint of Husserl regarding the history of philosophy that combines ancient Greek philosophy (as the beginning) and European humanity (as the *telos* of this beginning) can also be considered as a narrative. As Husserl himself also indicated, this story is really a *Dichtung*, a poetic invention, and that his historical picture is his "poetic invention of the history of philosophy."[31] The genuine beginning in which the idea of philosophy is experienced is not a self-conscious beginning; it is not aware of itself as a beginning. The very theme of *Urstiftung* is meaningful only within an orientation to the problem of the beginning, or the search for the beginning—thus precisely where the beginning has been called into question, or is in need of being questioned. As James Dodd points out, "the 'originary' character of this beginning as an historical problem is thus valid 'for us' alone; it does not apply to the Greeks, for they did not have any sense of being a beginning for us—the Greeks were not aware of the sense in which they would someday become *our* Greeks." However, "This does not exclude the self-understanding of the Greeks as unique, or even as the 'first' to accomplish advances in scientific thinking (all of which is more difficult to establish than it may seem)."[32]

It is true that, in terms of the philosophers he cites explicitly, Husserl seems to be interested only in modern philosophy, notably in Descartes and Hume. Since he considers the classical Greeks as merely a basis of rationality regarding its historicity, he does not examine Greek philosophy as he did modern philosophy. However, although they indicate certain diversions, Husserl understands all these thinkers of the modern age to be in the continuation of Greek science.

The most significant issues for our time - the true struggles - according to Husserl, are the ones between humanity that has already collapsed and humanity that still has roots even though it is struggling to retain them or find new ones. Husserl argues that, "the genuine spiritual struggles of European humanity as such take the form of struggles between the philosophies, that is, between the skeptical philosophies -or nonphilosophies, which retain the word but not the task- and the actual and still vital philosophies."[33] Humanity that has already collapsed signifies for Husserl the philosophical approaches that do not have a task, as opposed to the still vital

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[31] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 394-95.

[32] Dodd, *Crisis and Reflection*, p. 74. On the Greeks' being unaware of their being as a beginning, which requires a later perspective on the significance of their achievements, Plato's treatment of the Greeks' relations to the Egyptians in *Phaedrus*, *Critias* and *Timaeus* should be considered. Plato thinks the Greeks as derivative, good adapters of what others have begun

[33] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 15.

philosophies that have a task. In other words the latter represent a *telos*, as they also still have roots that are related to the beginning or the *arche* in this historicity of rationality.

For Husserl, the philosophical approaches that still have these roots have a vital importance. This vitality comes from the fact that they are in a struggle for their own true and genuine meaning in the context of the comprehension of rationality, and consequently for the meaning of a genuine humanity. To ensure latent reason to understand its own possibilities and thus to comprehend the possibility of European humanity (as *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy) as the true possibility of an infinite task of gaining knowledge through the quest for rational self-responsibility: this is the only path that can be taken in order to reach the awareness of a universal philosophy. Herein, Husserl points out how this sole path and the birth of Greek philosophy and its *telos* (as European humanity) can be congruent:

> "It is the only way to decide whether the *telos* which was inborn in European humanity at the birth of Greek philosophy—that of humanity which seeks to exist, and is only possible, through philosophical reason, moving endlessly from latent to manifest reason and forever seeking its own norms through this, its truth and genuine human nature—whether this *telos*, then, is merely a factual, historical delusion, the accidental acquisition of merely one among many other civilizations and historicities, or whether Greek humanity was not rather the first breakthrough to what is essential to humanity as such, its *entelechy*."[34]

Husserl indicates that "the rationalism of the eighteenth century, the manner in which it sought to secure the necessary roots of European humanity, was *naïve*."[35] However, he still does not want to sacrifice the *genuine* sense of rationalism; and argues that "philosophy and science would accordingly be the historical movement through which universal reason, 'inborn' in humanity as such, is revealed."[36]

Establishing the issue of the historicity of rationality as a central *problématique* in the beginning of *Crisis*, Husserl attempts to clarify the root of the contemporary opposition between physicalistic objectivism and transcendental subjectivism. For him, the first thing that must be understood is the fundamental transformation of the concept of idea. Husserl explicitly uses the term as conceptualised by Plato, and questions how the modern age had taken over that concept of the idea as a task of universal philosophy. Husserl argues that since Descartes, this new understanding of "idea" dominates the whole development of philosophical movements and has become the inner motive behind their tensions. For Husserl, what is unprecedented is the consideration of this idea as a rational infinite totality of being with a rational science systematically mastering it. As a world of idealities, this infinite world consists of a systematically constructed scientific philosophy which must be called *transcendental*

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[34] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 15.
[35] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 16.
[36] Husserl, *Crisis*, p 15-16.

subjectivism. It is conceived as one which is attained by a rational, systematically coherent method, instead of one whose objects become accessible to our knowledge singly, imperfectly, and as it were accidentally. "In the infinite progression of this method, every object is ultimately attained according to its full being-in-itself [*nach seinem vollen An-sich-sein*]."[37] This transformation or the reshaping of the idea begins with prominent special sciences inherited from the ancients:

> Euclidean geometry and the rest of Greek mathematics, and then Greek natural science. In our eyes these are fragments, beginnings of our developed sciences. But one must not overlook here the immense change of meaning whereby universal tasks were set, primarily for mathematics (as geometry and as formal-abstract theory of numbers and magnitudes)—tasks of a style which was new in principle, unknown to the ancients.[38]

The notion of infinite task in its connection to ancient Greek philosophy deserve a specific focus here. Husserl characterises the infinite task "from the standpoint of universal mankind as such, as the breakthrough and the developmental beginning of a new human epoch—the epoch of mankind which now seeks to live, and only can live, in the free shaping of its existence, its historical life, through ideas of reason"[39]. For him, such infinite task is "linked as a matter of course with the concept of geometrical space and with the concept of geometry as the science belonging to it"[40], and they are "ideal acquisitions whose infinity is itself the field of work, and specifically in such a way that it consciously has, for those who work in it, the manner of being of such an infinite field of tasks."[41] On the contrary, what he means by finite task is simply a mere grasping of rationality without the establishment of this infinite field of tasks, and he basically refers to the Euclidean geometry, ancient mathematics and ancient Greek philosophy as they never go far enough to grasp the possibility of the infinite task. For Husserl, these Greek sciences still had practical goals, and even in Platonism "the real" and "the ideal" were distinctively related to each other. Therefore, they were still far from being the *ideal* praxis of "pure thinking". Only with the emergence of mathematical science in the modern period (beginning with Galileo's mathematization of nature), a potentially infinite horizon came into view for philosophers and the world of science.

> For Platonism, the real had a more or less perfect methexis in the ideal. This afforded ancient geometry possibilities of a primitive application to reality. [But] through Galileo's *mathematization of nature*, *nature itself* is idealized under the guidance of the new mathematics; nature itself becomes—to express it in a modern way—a mathematical manifold [*Mannigfaltigkeit*].[42]

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[37] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 22.
[38] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 21
[39] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 274.
[40] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 21-22.
[41] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 279.
[42] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 23.

Since the concept of history, as Husserl insists, "must be connected to the concept of 'reason' and the progress of universal instantiation of the ideals of a rational life",[43] he also sees no inconvenience in the transition of a finite task to infinite one. Moreover, he considers that transition as a necessity especially in the sense of European humanity's being the *telos* of Greek thought. As we have mentioned above, such a transition still includes an aspect that can be described as a narrative which is, in Husserl's terms, a "poetic invention" (*Dichtung*). Husserl argues that philosophy is at the very essence of European humanity's rationality since it was Greek philosophy which originally gave humanity a revolutionary shift of paradigm and 're-orientation' (*Umstellung*), or 'transformation' (*Verwandlung*), through the promotion of the ideas of idealization and infinity: "But with the appearance of Greek philosophy and its first formulation, through consistent idealization, of the new sense of infinity, there is accomplished in this respect a thoroughgoing transformation which finally draws all finite ideas and with them all spiritual culture and its [concept of] mankind into its sphere."[44]

This transition from finite task to infinite task through idealization is revolutionary, as it distinguishes scientific culture from all pre-scientific culture and sets it on an infinite road of discovery. For Husserl, "It also means a revolutionization of [its] historicity, which is now the history of the cutting-off of finite mankind's development as it becomes mankind with infinite tasks."[45] Within the context of this historicity, Husserl acquires the notion of infinite task as a vital aspect to establish a relationship between Classical Greek philosophy and European humanity via the concept of *telos*.

Husserl, before his long discussion of the main figures in the history of philosophy, such as Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant, puts forward the matter of *telos* of Greek philosophy in the beginnings of *Crisis*. This matter is reexamined in *The Vienna Lecture* with a more distinct conclusion, as he clearly states that: "a remarkable teleology, inborn, as it were, only in Europe, will become visible in this way, one which is quite intimately involved with the outbreak or irruption of philosophy and its branches, the sciences, in the ancient Greek spirit"[46].

The way that Husserl meant to reconstruct this history, claiming it was the only way by which the teleology that includes philosophy and sciences that begins with the ancient Greek spirit can be seen, is by establishing what he calls a philosophy of "spirit". This, he thinks, will allow us to grasp and consider spiritual Europe as a subject from within the humanistic disciplines and first of all, in the sense of its own historical trajectory and historicity. By focusing on this,

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[43] Moran, *Husserl's Crisis of the European Sciences*, p. 166.
[44] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 279.
[45] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 279.
[46] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 273.

Husserl believes that the deepest reasons regarding the portentous naturalism which is the modern dualism[47] in interpretation of the world will be clarified. This will finally bring to light the true meaning of the crisis of European humanity. The question Husserl asks and that inevitably will be related to ancient Greek is this: "How is the spiritual shape of Europe to be characterized?"[48]

Before dealing with Husserl's answer to this question, what he exactly means by the concepts of spirit and spiritual requires a brief explanation. Again, Husserl does it with reference to the ancient Greeks. According to Husserl, "the historical surrounding world of the Greeks is not the objective world in our sense but rather their 'world-representation', i.e., their own subjective validity with all the actualities which are valid for them within it, including, for example, gods, demons, etc."[49] The concept of the "spiritual" in the Husserlian sense of a "spiritual sphere" emerges right here, with the concept of this "surrounding world". It is through these concepts that Husserl develops his critique of naturalistic sciences:

> "That we live in our particular surrounding world, which is the locus of all our cares and endeavors—this refers to a fact that occurs purely within the spiritual realm. Our surrounding world is a spiritual structure in us and in our historical life. Thus there is no reason for him who makes spirit as spirit his subject matter to demand anything other than a purely spiritual explanation for it. And so generally: to look upon the nature of the surrounding world as something alien to the spirit, and consequently to want to buttress humanistic science with natural science so as to make it supposedly exact, is absurd."[50]

In the second chapter of *Crisis*, Husserl talks about human beings 'in their spiritual existence' and of the 'shapes of the spiritual world'. As different cultures have their own worldviews, they also have their own historical trajectories or historicities. The concept of spirit is the correlate of "nature", the world understood through the approach of modern natural science. On the other hand, the world of spirit is a world of persons interacting with each other as persons rather than merely as objects of nature. For Husserl, human cultures begin from a natural 'animism', the view that nature itself is experienced as a living person. This mythic perception of the world is animistic. However, the breakthrough to science by the theoretical attitude gave rise to a second stage of historicity. The theoretical attitude as the second stage of historicity that Husserl emphasizes is also what forms the conditions of the spiritual life that depends on tradition. Moreover, this connection between his conception of spirit and the problem of historicity is also important in regard to his consideration of the inner meaning of history, as he wants to

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[47] Modern dualism is the metaphysical doctrine that the world is divided into two different kinds of entity – material entities and minds. Husserl believes psychophysical dualism is a product of the approach of early modern objectivist mathematical science to nature that concentrated on the mathematically determinable primary properties of things (e.g extension) and left to one side all 'subjective-relative' properties.

[48] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 273.

[49] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 272.

[50] Husserl, Crisis, p. 272.

explore 'inner history' with its 'inner historicity' rather than 'external history' and in contrast to 'factual history'.

Husserl began to use the terms 'spirit' (*Geist*) and 'spiritual world' (*die geistige Welt*) especially in *Ideas II*.[51] These terms roughly translate as 'mind', 'soul', but particularly as the opposite of realm of nature, they mean intersubjective culture. Spirit involves human cultural achievements, and it is understood as the product of collective human consciousness. Anything that is encompassed within art, religion, politics, culture, the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) can be included in this product of human mental activity. The late Husserl uses the term of 'spirit' as it means a specific culture of human beings. Furthermore, Husserl also uses the term to signify the general mood or spirit of a culture or discipline such as 'the spirit of philosophy', 'the spiritual battles' of western culture…

Husserl's consideration of Europe in this context, as an attempt to answer the question of "how is the spiritual shape of Europe to be characterized", is an account of a spiritual concept rather than a geographical one. In a broader sense, 'Europe' means the birth of western philosophy, and the cultures that make sciences emerge from philosophy. As Husserl suggested in his Prague lecture, as a 'spiritual, self-enclosed, unified form of life'[52], what creates the idea of Europe is Greek philosophy rather than a specific geographical place. This theme is repeated in *The Vienna Lecture*, as he states there that the name of 'Europe' corresponds to "the unity of a spiritual life, activity, creation, with all its ends, interests, cares and endeavors, with its products of purposeful activity, institutions, organizations"[53]. The roots of the European intellectual tradition is in Greece, and those who embrace this theoretical attitude are described as European by Husserl.

The spreading of European ideas also means that North America and Japan for instance can be included to the "European project of universal rationality", while, on the other hand, ethnic groups such as 'gypsies' cannot. This scientific transformation of European culture according to Husserl occurs since the 17th century by means of Galileo's mathematization of nature. In one of the drafts of his Kaizo articles, Husserl writes that European culture has lost its way and strayed from its innate *telos*[54] of freely-given autonomous reason. Husserl states that his ultimate aim is the "rebirth (*Wiedergeburt*) of Europe from the spirit of philosophy"[55]. The

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[51] It is important to recall here that the concept of *Geist* is a central concept in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and according to Hegel, the *Weltgeist* ("world spirit") is a means of philosophising about history. As the space does not permit here, I aim to explain this connection in a longer PhD thesis.
[52] Hua XXIX 207 in *The Husserl Dictionary*, p. 112.
[53] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 273.
[54] Hua XXVII 118 in *The Husserl Dictionary*, p. 113.
[55] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 299.

West, building on this Greek foundation has a 'mission' (*Sendung*) to accomplish, which is nothing less than the development of humanity (*Menschheit*) itself. After all, according to Husserl, it was Greek philosophy that originally gave humanity a 'revolutionary' change of attitude and a 're-orientation' (*Umstellung*) - or 'transformation (*Verwandlung*) through the introduction of the ideas of abstraction and infinity:

> But with the appearance of Greek philosophy and its first formulation, through consistent idealization, of the new sense of infinity, there is accomplished in this respect a thoroughgoing transformation (*Umwandlung*) which finally draws all ideas of finitude and with them all spiritual culture and [its concept of] mankind into its sphere. Hence there are, for us Europeans, many infinite ideas (if we may use this expression) which lie outside the philosophical-scientific sphere (infinite tasks, goals, confirmations, truths, "true values", "genuine goods," "absolutely" valid norms), but they owe their analogous character of infinity to the transformation of mankind through philosophy and idealities.[56]

As we saw, Husserl believes this emergence of the idea of infinity through idealization to be revolutionary, as it distinguishes all pre-scientific culture from scientific culture. Belonging to the era of ancient Greeks where the idealization began, Husserl directly refers to "the great figures of the first culminating period of philosophy, Plato and Aristotle"[57]. In a more precise statement, he emphasizes "Platonic idealism" as the moment that provides the emergence of reason, science and philosophy:

> Platonic idealism, through the fully conscious discovery of the "idea" and of approximation opened up the path of logical thinking, "logical" science, rational science. Ideas were taken as archetypes, in which everything singular participates more or less "ideally". . . [T]he ideal truths belonging to the ideas were taken as the absolute norms for all empirical truths. If we designate as rationalism the conviction that all reasonable (*vernünftige*) knowledge must be rational (*rational*) . . . then the whole modern conviction is [also] rationalistic.[58]

This turning point that is actualized in Greek philosophy comprises two aspects; first of all, it made possible a "new attitude" towards this world, as Husserl says "the theoretical attitude has its historical origins in the Greeks"; the other aspect being that it ensured "a completely new sort of spiritual structure"[59] that consists of "rapidly growing systematically self-enclosed cultural form; as the Greek called it philosophy, and in the breakthrough of philosophy in this sense, in which all sciences are thus contained, the primal phenomenon of spirital Europe."

Binding the beginning (the emergence of rationality in ancient Greeks) and *telos* is a struggle that goes towards the fulfilment of a "norm" and "poles of infinity". Husserl thinks that such a struggle includes an "infinity of tasks" and it "bears within itself the future-horizon of infinity … an infinity of generations being renewed in the spirit of ideas".[60] For Husserl, in order to

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[56] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 279.
[57] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 282.
[58] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 313.
[59] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 276.
[60] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 277-78.

reach the *theoria* in relation with the infinite task of rationality, and to reach the universal critique of all life and all life-goals, as well as all cultural products and systems that have already arisen out of the life of man; we need a closed unity under the *epoche*[61] of all praxis "that serves mankind in a new way [that is] capable of an absolute self-responsibility on the basis of absolute theoretical insights."[62] According to Husserl, philosophy is different from all other cultural works, as it is not a moment of interest that is bound to the foundations of the national tradition. Emphasizing a universality that can be associated with the classical period of Greece, Husserl states that these attributions make the position of philosophy unique in its own cultural space. In the similar way that it makes European humanity unique compared to other cultures on earth; it makes philosophy the "brain" of its own spiritual life, and locates mankind in an "understanding itself as rational" as well as in an "understanding that it is rational in seeking to be rational", that "signifies an infinity of living and striving toward reason."[63]

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[61] As originally found in Greek scepticism, the term *epoche* means a 'cessation' or 'suspension of judgement'. Husserl uses this notion of reduction to detach from all forms of conventional opinion, including our commonsense psychology, our accrued scientific consensus on issues, and all philosophical and metaphysical theorizing regarding the nature of the intentional. He also uses this concept to return to and isolate the central structures of subjectivity.

[62] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 283.

[63] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 340-41.

Chapter 2. Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* as an inquiry to reach the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy

The most sophisticated interpretation of the relation between science and history among the works of Husserl can be found in the *Origin of Geometry*. In this text, one of his main focuses is the problem of historicism. Even from the title of the work, it would not be wrong to say that the study here would be an "intentional historical" rather than a "philological-historical" approach. Here, Husserl's essential interest is not the 'philological problem' of who were the actual first initiators of geometry. Rather, his main concern is the "originary insight" or "original sense". The term geometry, in Husserl's approach, does not refer merely to a specific mathematical discipline, but it is rather a shorthand for the "whole mathematics of space-time"[64] that is mathematical physics as applied to nature. For Husserl, geometry is considered as the 'foundation of meaning' (*Sinnesfundament*)[65] for the natural sciences. In these terms, Husserl tries to reach for a thematization of the ideal objects of geometry. In addition, he also seeks to understand the self-evidence that underlies all its procedures.

> … our interest shall be the inquiry back into the most original sense in which geometry once arose, was present as the tradition of millennia, is still present for us, and is still being worked on in a lively forward development; we inquire into that sense in which it appeared in history for the first time—in which it had to appear, even though we know nothing of the first creators and are not even asking after them.[66]

As Husserl establishes geometry essentially as a tradition, its character can be described as a cultural object. For the same reasons that makes it a science, it is also able to become a tradition and be handed down. Through the form of concepts or functions, the idealities of geometry can be repeated an infinite number of times through historical time without variation as the initial sense of a geometrical object is already the whole sense. Unlike individiualized events or personal experiences, these ideal objects (*ideale Gegenständlichkeit*) are not limited to temporal-spatial conditions. In this way, Husserl creates a connection between the ideal objectivity of a science and the possibility to reproduce the same essential self-evidence, which defines the very idea of a tradition. Through this connection, the idea of origin as the presence of the Greek moment in modernity will also eventually be related by Husserl to European humanity as the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. For Husserl, geometry has, from its primal establishment, a peculiar supratemporal existence, and its existence is certainly "accessible to all men, first of all to the actual and possible mathematicians of all peoples, all ages; this is true

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[64] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 27.
[65] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 24.
[66] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 354.

of all its particular forms. All forms newly produced by someone on the basis of pre-given forms immediately take on the same objectivity."[67] This is, in Husserl's terms, an "ideal" objectivity. Husserl points out that geometrical existence is not psychic existence. Since it does not exist as something personal within the personal sphere of consciousness, this existence is objectively there for "everyone". Here, we see that Husserl's interrogation of such an objectivity indeed takes him beyond the thought of ancient Greeks. On the other hand, Husserl points out that the condition of ideal objectivity cannot be restricted to scientific or mathematical constructions, and holds true for all cultural products. The main reason for this is that any cultural product - such as music for instance, which is repeated in specific individualized sensible utterances -, continues to stay identical and unchanged from being grasped in the original. Thus, it can easily be claimed that the characterization of such objectivity in a cultural product is its possibility of being reproduced in its original meaning through generations, rather than the production at some particular time and place.

This way of treating science as a form of cultural tradition is important and needs to be emphasized in reference to the Greek legacy as well. According to Husserl, the natural and human sciences are identical because of their essential structure. However this fact is obscured by objectivism, which treats the natural world (including consciousness interpreted naturalistically) as an entirely objective realm of objective things with objective properties and comletely ignores the role of constituting subjectivity. In contrast to this, Husserl wishes to consider the surrounding life-world concretely, "in its neglected relativity and according to all the manners of relativity belonging essentially to it —the world in which we live intuitively, together with its real entities [*Realitäten*]; but [we wish to consider them] as they give themselves to us at first in straightforward experience, and even [consider] the ways in which their validity is sometimes in suspense (between being and illusion, etc.)."[68] The task is then, for Husserl, to comprehend precisely this style, which is directly related to the ancient Greeks, including in its merely subjective and apparently incomprehensible way.[69]

Husserl believes that the question of whether geometry is a special case or not in regard to cultural traditions is still valid. For example, in the cultural traditions of literature, music or religion; as they are the objects of the cultural sciences, we still face the problem of whether a repetition is "authentic" or whether there is a distortion or loss of the original meaning. Geometry can be seen as a "limit case", as we are confident that its elements are grasped in their original sense when they are understood and properly used. Geometry, for Husserl, is a

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[67] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 356.
[68] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 156.
[69] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 156.

limit of an object's identity throughout repetition. This relation between ideality and the corrupting of cultural transmission is fundamental in respect of the connection between tradition and ideality.

Thus, we can say that the central point in *The Origin of Geometry* is how tradition connects with ideality. Husserl believes that language is the basis for continuity through repetition. Language provides the objective foundation for intersubjectivity, and thereby secures not only the formation of idealities but also their re-accomplishment in a tradition. In this regard, Husserl makes an important distinction between the "sensible utterance", which are means of expression (signifiers), and the meaning of what is asserted or said (signified). As a thematic assertion or meaning, the ideal object can be described as signified. On the other hand, we can consider the signifier as a historically contingent vehicle for the signified, as in the example of a certain written or spoken language or group of signs and symbols. Since that aspect of the sign is basically arbitrary, the replacement of the signifier without any loss of ideality or meaning is possible. Conversely, ideality means that the object suffers no loss of original self-evidence. The necessity that is included by geometry then seems to be the limit case of such perfect replication. As both science and cultural production are dependent on the ability of any signified ideal meaning to be continually transmitted and worked over whilst remaining invariant throughout these repetitions, science as a result merges with cultural production in general. Husserl consequently argues that the spiritual products of the cultural world (*geistige Erzeugnisse der Kulturwelt*), such as science, can be encircled by the concept of "literature" or transmission of the written sign.

> That is, it belongs to their objective being that they be linguistically expressed and can be expressed again and again; or, more precisely, they only have meaning and significance from the speech of objectivity, as they have existence-for-everyone. This is true in a peculiar fashion in the case of the objective sciences; for them the difference between the original language of the work and its translation into other languages does not remove its identical accessibility or change it into an inauthentic, indirect accessibility.[70]

The term of "inauthentic" here refers to the problem regarding the distortion or loss that affects the replication or transmission of cultural forms. As some cultural products seem to be originally more "burdened" with the materiality of the sign, the risk of distortion and loss of meaning for them through replication is greater compared to geometry. Yet Husserl still points out that even the purity of geometry is not completely independent from the effects of repetition and reiteration. Since the written sign is not able to transmit the original experience of self-

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[70] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 357.

evidence which is the foundation of geometry, geometry inevitably faces a reification through the manipulation of symbols.

The possibility of such an inauthentic replication and repetition is the very reason why the sciences could go astray and end up in a "crisis". It is precisely for that reason that Husserl undergoes an "intentional-historical" analysis, to return to a moment before the "crisis". Husserl's approach to geometry aims to demonstrate how the "crisis" in science requires an intentional-historical analysis. For Husserl, such an analysis can reveal the original meaning and idealization which is concealed in the conversion of science into technique. The "sedimentation" of signs of a language of science, such as geometry, becomes the problem as it becomes inseparable from the crisis in the end.

Husserl's use of geometry as an example is not a coincidence. Through this example, he aims to specify the effects of the written sign. Husserl thinks that the written sign established a separation between the operational aspects of a science and its original self-evidence. However, if a science is still authentically accessible, then the meaning of the various operations that are transmitted symbolically has to be made explicitly self-evident through a re-experience or re-activation of the primal establishment (*Urstiftung*) of the science. And what *The Origin of Geometry* demonstrates is that the process of reactivation, and of "forgetting", are themselves also bound up with language and speech. In a paradoxical way, language leads to reification but is also the medium for reactivation.

> Clearly it is only through language and its far-reaching documentation, as possible communications, that the horizon of civilization can be an open and endless one, as it always is for men . . . The objective world is from the start the world for all, the world which 'everyone' has as a world-horizon. Its objective being presupposes men, understood as men with a common language. Language, for its part, as function and exercised capacity, is related correlatively to the world, the universe of objects which is linguistically expressible in its being and its being such.[71]

The original self-evidence which is the primal establishment of meaning has to be able to be communicated and therefore retained and repeated in order to achieve ideality and objectivity. For Husserl, the theoretical attitude as single whole is formed by repetition, ideality, and representation through the sign. As the act of meaning-formation is reawakened and reexpressed, we see that this act is identical and therefore the self-evidence remains unchanged. Moreover, using the above quote, we can even say that the capacity to go beyond "forgetting", to retrieve the *Urstiftung,* is grounded not only in language but also in the world itself.

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[71] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 358.

Therefore, it might be possible to retrieve the *Urstiftung* not only via language, but also by retrieving primal experience of seeing the world as the first geometers might have.

This, however, remains only a personal recollection until that reexperience becomes an inter-subjective act shared by a community. Only via a linguistic community and its transmission through a written sign, does geometry go beyond the individual act and become a cultural object. In this communicative act, the object is recognized by another not only similar but also identical in each reproduction. Through this "speaking" of objectivity, while the signified is being thematized as distinct from personal immediacy, it reaches a status of an objectivity for everyone. Consequently, its original meaning is grasped by a community. Moreover, according to Husserl, in order to reach to a status of a cultural or historical tradition, the product must also endure and remain beyond these immediate acts of communication, since actual speech is restricted to a single contemporary community.

> What is lacking is the *persisting existence* of the 'ideal objects' even during periods in which the inventor and his fellows are no longer wakefully so related or even no longer alive. What is lacking is their continuing-to be even when no one has (consciously) realized them in self-evidence.
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> The important function of *written*, documenting linguistic *expression* is that it makes communication possible without immediate or mediate personal address; it is, so to speak, communication made virtual. Through this, the communalization of men is lifted to a new level.[72]

Husserl defines the unity of signifier and signified (the sign vehicle or sensible utterance and the ideality of meaning) as the sign. Speech communication provides a transparency of signifier and signified, and thus, the original self-evidence is immediately re-experienced, and this means an experience as repetition without variance. Yet, this transparency is limited to personal contact and spoken communication. For the object's extension as a tradition, there is a requirement for placing a written sign (in the sense of both the meaning-signified and the reexperiencing of that meaning as self evident) in place of the immediate speech act. Here, the problem is that the written sign is only a passive reexperience. As the sign can be utilized without a return to its original self-evidence and the sign allows objectivity to appear as given passively in phenomena instead of being produced through a constitutive act, this process becomes a passive reexperience. Since the written sign stands between the conceptual structure of a science and its original sense, it advances the sciences toward technical and instrumental success (which allows a complex chains of reasoning without any continuous return to original self-evidence). However, it also blinds the science's being a formation of the theoretical attitude out of the many human interests that can be found in the pretheoretical world of experience.

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[72] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 360-61.

Accordingly, then, the writing-down effects a transformation of the original mode of being of the meaning-structure (e.g.), within the geometrical structure which is put into words. It becomes sedimented, so to speak. But the reader can make it self-evident again, can reactivate the self-evidence.[73]

By reactivation, Husserl means a return to the transparency of signifier and signified, which is a return to the "speech" of objectivity. As we mentioned above, the reproduction of original self-evidence, according to Husserl, initially proceeds from personal recollection. The next step is the empathy of communication and objectivity, and finally we come to the written sign as tradition or history. It is important to be aware that in each of these cases, there is a difference between the passive acceptance of validity and *explication* (*Verdeutlichung*, which means the process of understanding concepts through concepts, as the making explicit of this unfolding history without actually reactivating the whole chain of premises). Through the sedimentation of the written sign, what becomes precisely so difficult is explication; this is how science forgets the "source of its meaning." As Husserl states, "without the 'what' and the 'how' of its prescientific materials, geometry would be a tradition empty of meaning . . . we could never even know whether geometry had or ever did have a genuine meaning . . .' Unfortunately, however, this is our situation, and that of the whole modern age."[74] Since any cultural structure can be considered as a tradition that claims an original meaning, which is often lost to present consciousness, the specific crisis in the sciences of the meaning and purpose of their rationality is faced with the question of whether there can be truth in the history of sciences, within all the variation and contingency of a tradition.

> By exhibiting the essential presuppositions upon which rests the historical possibility of a genuine tradition, true to its origins, of sciences like geometry, we can understand how such sciences can vitally develop throughout the centuries and still not be genuine . . . idealities can continue without interruption from one period to the next, while the capacity for reactivating the primal beginnings, i.e., *the sources of meaning* for everything that comes later, has not been handed down with it. What is lacking is precisely what had given and continues to give meaning to all propositions and theories, a meaning arising from the primal sources which can be made self-evident again and again.[75]

This is a very crucial point in Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*. Here, he tackles the problem of a tradition that essentially entails the irreducible loss or distortion of the meaning replicated and passed on. Even geometry, which is the apparent limit case of ideality, also confronts this corruption of "inauthenticity" which leads it into objectivism. However, Husserl has an explanation; this replacement of the written sign for speech, which allows the sign to maintain itself over time, does this only at the cost of introducing an opacity with regard to original

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[73] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 361.
[74] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 366.
[75] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 367.

experience. As Robert D'Amico points out,[76] "such opacity stands in contrast with the immediacy and transparency of the spoken word as the carrier of meaning. The reactivation and replication of meaning is inseparable from the threat of loss and crisis except now this loss is displaced, not onto the distinction between real and ideal (or contingent and necessary) as it was at first, but onto the more fundamental opposition of speech and writing."[77]

As Husserl revealed, the possibility of tradition, of a cultural world is inseparable from the ideal objectivity that charaterizes the theoretical attitude in general. However, this possibility also causes the original meaning to be forgotten. Through an establishment of the continuity of ready-made, passively accepted methods and practices, these can be passed on "without the ability for original self evidence." This is why Husserl is carrying on this kind of regressive inquiry, in order to reawaken geometry and establish the basis of such an inquiry. In this way, we can say that Husserl will have to think that the Greek beginning is absolutely essential, and indeed, is the source that is to be retrieved, in order to return to a point before the crisis of European sciences. Therefore, the importance of this *arche* (the Greek beginning) does not only come from its relation to its *telos*, but also because it reveals what a true *telos* could be, since it gives the truth of the *telos*. According to Husserl, only after establishing this basis, can we have the possibility of an historical a priori, of a self-evidence that goes beyond historical facticity and retrieves the genuine meaning that was present in the *arche*. As Husserl argues:

> Our results based on principle are of a generality that extends over all the so-called deductive sciences and even indicates similar problems and investigations for all sciences. For all of them have the mobility of sedimented traditions that are worked upon, again and again, by an activity of producing new structures of meaning and handing them down. Existing in this way, they extend enduringly through time, since all new acquisitions are in turn sedimented and become working materials. Everywhere the problems, the clarifying investigations, the insights of principle are *historical*. We stand within the horizon of human civilization, the one in which we ourselves now live.[78]

Here, two standpoints in particular from the conclusion of *The Origin of Geometry* need to be emphasized, before we can clarify what Husserl means by an historical a priori. The first point is that Husserl advocates the continuity between epistemological and genetic inquiry. As we already showed above, Husserl combines the problem of cultural tradition and the truth-meaning of scientific propositions. He argues that tradition is not only a succession of factual situations that can be known by inductive generality, it is indeed possible because what is passed on and remains continuous in the sign or document is an ideal objectivity which excludes the contingent and the variable. However, the explication of a self-evidence cannot be a passive

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[76] As the critique of D'Amico requires an emphasis on Derrida here, I acknowledge that a longer PhD thesis would need to relate my reading to Derrida's *Speech and Phenomenon*.

[77] D'Amico, '*Husserl on the Foundational Structures of Natural and Cultural Sciences*', p. 14-15.

[78] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 368-69.

acceptance, since it is a reflective and genetic inquiry that hails back to sedimented meaning-formations.

> For a genuine history of philosophy, a genuine history of the particular science, is nothing other than the tracing of the historical meaning-structures given in the present, or their self-evidences, along the documented chain of historical back-references into the hidden dimension of the primal self-evidence which underlies them . . . The problem of genuine historical explanations comes together, in the case of the sciences, with 'epistemological' grounding or clarification.[79]

The second point is that Husserl argues that the determination of historical conditions for knowledge does not mean that the knowledge which is produced in those conditions would be relative to the historical context. Therefore, being able to determine and establish facts and the background of certainty in that, provides the constitution of history as a possible object of knowledge, which is replicable and not time-bound. This is why the *The Origin of Geometry* is a philosophical (or epistemological in particular) inquiry rather than a historical one. As Husserl states, "we need not first enter into some kind of critical discussion of the facts set out by historicism; it is enough that even the claim of their factualness presupposes the historical a priori if this claim is to have a meaning."[80] Yet, Husserl goes beyond this argument further on in a more subtle way and adds a new argument while indicating that "only if there is an essential-meaning structure to history would it be possible for there to be a tradition (the extension of meaning beyond the spatial and temporal immediacy of its production) and for a document or sign to be handed down which is capable of repeating, innumerable times, an original insight. Thus only because there is such an essential in variance can one grasp the variability within historical life."[81] Husserl argues that knowledge or meaning in history becomes possible with this always present possibility of tracing the meaning-signs back to their primal self-evidence. As a negative approach that considers what would happen if science only dealt with time-bound facts, he says:

> Were the thinking activity of a scientist to introduce something 'time bound' in his thinking, i.e., something bound to what is merely factual about his present or something valid for him as a merely factual tradition, his construction would likewise have a merely time-bound ontic meaning; this meaning would be understandable only by those men who shared the same merely factual presuppositions of understanding.[82]

These two points that indicate the continuity between epistemological and genetic inquiry, and the possibility of the reactivation of primal self-evidence demonstrates that the phenomenological reduction will always possess an a priori foundational character for Husserl. This a priori foundational character is also one of the key aspects of Husserl's approach to the

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[79] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 372.
[80] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 374.
[81] D'Amico, *ibid*, p. 16.
[82] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 377.

historicity of rationality related to his understanding of *arche* and *telos* as we will elaborate below.

The matter of a priori, or in other words the priority of thematic elements, the priority of the signified in Husserl's standpoint makes everything extra-thematic such as the signifier dissolve into contingency. For Husserl, what is invariant, a priori and therefore not contingent is the thematic meaning, and as a movement history stands between the original meaning formation and sedimented formulations. He states that "we can also say now that history is from the start nothing other than the vital movement of the co-existence and the interweaving of original formations and the sedimentations of meaning."[83]

This historical a priori, thematic meaning which is essential for the historicity of rationality is directly related to the "theoretical" attitude which is "the origin of philosophy" for Husserl. Here, he explicitly follows Plato and Aristotle in attributing the origin of philosophy, stating that this theoretical attitude is "sharply distinguished from the universal but mythical-practical attitude". For Husserl, before Plato and Aristotle, i.e. "the first culminating period of Greek philosophy", there can be seen the first attempts of a theoretical attitude that begins to be independent from this mythical-practical world view, "through isolated personalities like Thales, etc., there arises thus a new humanity: men who [live] the philosophical life, who create philosophy in the manner of a vocation as a new sort of cultural configuration."[84] This also brings the sense of a universal life, through the task of *theoria*, and attempts to build theoretical knowledge upon theoretical knowledge *in infinitum*.

> The mythical-religious attitude exists when the world as a totality becomes thematic, but in a practical way . . . But insofar as the whole world is seen thoroughly dominated by mythical powers, so that man's fate depends mediately or immediately upon the way in which they hold sway, a universal mythical world-view is possibly incited by praxis, and then itself becomes a practically interested world-view.[85]

> Man becomes gripped by the possession of a world-view and world knowledge that turns away from all practical interests and, within the closed sphere of its cognitive activity, in the time devoted to it, strives for and achieves nothing but pure *theoria*.[86]

According to Husserl, when "the transformation from original *theoria*, the fully disinterested seeing of the world (following from the *epoche* of all practical interests, world-knowledge through pure, universal seeing) to the theoria of genuine science" has been completed, then we can define the tradition of Greek philosophy as the second stage of reflection that goes beyond the first immediate attempts for knowledge by relating the theoretical effort of the Greek

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[83] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 371
[84] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 286.
[85] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 284.
[86] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 285.

philosophy to practical concerns of life critically. In that way, cultural life completely turns into a subject of the problem of objective truth, as all of experience becomes the subject of critical reason.

> Philosophy, spreading in the form of inquiry and education, has a twofold spiritual effect. On the one hand, what is most essential to the theoretical attitude of philosophical man is the peculiar universality of his critical stance, his resolve not to accept unquestioningly any pregiven opinion or tradition so that he can inquire, in respect to the whole traditionally pre-given universe, after what is true in itself, an ideality ... Thus ideal truth becomes an absolute value which, through the movement of education and its constant effects in the training of children brings with it a universally transformed praxis.[87]

The third stage is the historical role of transcendental reflection, following the second stage which is characterised by reflection. Preserving the inner teleology of the theoretical attitude against specialization, one-sidedness and objectivism, the transcendental reflection goes beyond reflection. According to Husserl, there is that "constant threat of succumbing to one-sidedness and to premature satisfaction, which take their revenge in subsequent contradictions." To be able to overcome this one-sided rationality that causes obscurities and contradictions, "universal reflection" has a task that is set for thought. For Husserl, this is the exact moment when the European humanity is aware of itself as a culture and questions its foundation and meaning.

> Only through this highest form of self-consciousness, which itself becomes one of the branches of the infinite task, can philosophy fulfill its function of putting itself, and thereby a genuine humanity, on the road (to realization). (The awareness) that this is the case itself belongs to the domain of philosophical knowledge at the level of highest self reflection. Only through this constant reflexivity is a philosophy universal knowledge.[88]

According to Husserl, the historical theory is completely formed by the movement of theoretical reflection. For him, the genesis of ideal objectivities is the "teleology of European history". Furthermore, this teleology also includes Husserl's assumption regarding historical continuity in which history is described in a progressive way that is characterized by cumulative development from lower to higher forms. Husserl claims that, through such teleology, "[the] mythical-practical world-view and world knowledge can give rise to much knowledge of the factual world, the world as known through scientific experience, *that can later be used scientifically*."

Consequently, the priority of the signified meaning over the historical signifier means that Husserl priviliges ideality over reality and necessity over contingency. Thus, the concept of teleology provides a relation between the inner criticism of rationality and the history of

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[87] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 286-87.
[88] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 291.

European humanity (as *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy). And the return to the "origin" of this rationality still includes the continuity of the tradition against any "loss" or "inauthenticity". This is how European humanity can be the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy, since this return to the "origin" is the condition for the possibility of realising the *telos* truly. And this explains why Husserl justifies describing the task of European humanity (in relation with this *telos*) as infinite. Because even writing or the written signs would be a threat to this replication, phenomenology, through this transcendental reflection, can rediscover the experience that connects constitutive subjectivity and the continous historicity of the thematic, ideal objectivity.

> (Transcendental phenomenology) overcomes naturalistic objectivism and every sort of objectivism in the only possible way, namely, through the fact that he who philosophizes proceeds from his own ego . . . of which he becomes the purely theoretical spectator. In this attitude it is possible to construct an absolutely self-sufficient science of the spirit in the form of consistently coming to terms with oneself and with the world as spiritual accomplishment.[89]

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[89] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 298.

PART II

In the previous part, we have analysed the historicity of rationality and the legacy of its relation to ancient Greek philosophy through Husserl's works of *Crisis* and *Origin of Geometry*. In this preparatory work of a larger project that will focus the broader aspects of post-Husserlian phenomenology related to ancient Greek philosophy, we now consider only limited texts of Merleay-Ponty and the related sections within. In this final part we will trace the same theme, the historicity of rationality, in Merleau-Ponty through particular concepts such as the flesh, *aisthesis*, *physis*, and of course in relation with all of these, *logos*. As we have only focused on limited concepts in Husserl in regard to his approach to the historicity of rationality rather than each usage of ancient Greek terms in his work. The same method will also be valid in our consideration of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy.

It is hard to say that Merleau-Ponty interprets or relates directly to the narrative in *Crisis* that situates European humanity as *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. Furthermore, in Merleau-Ponty, it is already not really appropriate to trace a full-fledged heritage of ancient Greek concepts as it is in Husserl's late philosophy. However, his contribution in terms of ancient Greek concepts is probably more remarkable than Husserl's usage of this lexicon. Merleau-Ponty, through only a few ancient Greek origin concepts, claims to change the entire route of Husserl's philosophy of consciousness and his phenomenology and therefore, in a way, invalidates his narrative on the relationship between the ancient Greek era and European humanity.

Drawing Husserl's phenomenology to an ontological basis with his conception of the flesh and through his lectures on Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, he reinterprets rationality and its historicity through connecting the concepts of *aisthesis*, *physis* and *logos*. This radical assertion of Merleau-Ponty regarding rationality, as we will show, also evokes a genuine recall of the pre-Socratics and their understanding of nature and reason. But unlike Husserl, Merleau-Ponty does not try to establish another historicity that in direct relation with a period of ancient Greek philosophy. As in accordance with the philosophical and cultural sphere of the pre-Socratics rather than the classical Greeks, we will find some more venturous accounts on the concepts of *telos* and *logos* in Merleau-Ponty.

For Merleau-Ponty, Husserl's approach was mistaken in thinking that *Lebenswelt* was a determinate realm that defied, but at the same time reductively contained, all theoretical description. The opposite was the case: any 'description' of the *Lebenswelt* is always

historically generated and embedded. This is why Husserl's claim depended on a narrative that goes to the classical Greeks, resembling a renewal of Aristotelianism in particular. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, will establish a completely new ground stating that the lived body is not a besouled organism, but a body "for us".[90]

Despite Husserl's call for a return to origins, Merleau-Ponty, indicating that no theoretical language is innocent for such a return, states that the origin is not simply behind us to be repossessed in a *Rucksfrage*: "the originary goes in several directions, and philosophy must accompany this break-up, this non-coincidence, this differentiation".[91]

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[90] Merleau-Ponty, *L'Institution/Passivité*, p. 166.
[91] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 124.

Chapter 1. The flesh as ontological concept

Merleau-Ponty, in *Phenomenology of Perception*, focused on the distinction between object-body and subject-body. The main framing of that book is a struggle to emancipate philosophy from this duality. In *The Visible and The Invisible* the 'late' Merleau-Ponty gives a wide coverage to the concept of "flesh" (*chair*) in order to exceed and overcome these classical concepts and the problems they generate. Through this concept of flesh, it is possible to say that Merleau-Ponty overcomes the distinction of object-body and subject-body. He also remains influenced by Husserl while developing the ontological foundations of the concept of flesh. When this concept of flesh is considered regarding the relation of me and the other, we will also see that, according to Merleau-Ponty, self and the other unfolds towards the same ontological flesh.

How did Merleau-Ponty begin to examine this new concept of flesh in *The Visible* while in his initial works he focused on the matters of body with respect to the object, body-subject and "my own body (*corps propre*)"? In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty places the concept of body at the basis of his thought, and he tried to demonstrate that body is not simply an object and a subject. Putting aside the dualism between body and soul[92], he mentions the notions of "my own body" and "phenomenal body" with a new approach. Yet, there is still an ambiguity in meaning, a tension regarding his analysis of "my own body". Right after we begin to think that Merleau-Ponty overcomes this dualism, we realize that such a dualism appears again. Because in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body is considered with a differentiation between its organic and psychic sense. The body becomes "the mediator of a world"[93], and consciousness is "being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body"[94]. Body, here, is mentioned as a mediator, but not through what it is from itself as Merleau-Ponty tries to understand it from something else. In short, in this work, he does not clarify the "ambigiutiy" of body, and the duality of soul-body remains. He examines "my own body" through an "impersonal", "anonymous subject", a "prepersonal" subject. He refuses to see and consider "my own body" as object. In other words, he approaches to body completely as a subject, and even he sees it as "a natural self". In other words, the existence of phenomenon is translated into the existence of the consciousness of something.

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[92] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 49, 230.
[93] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 167.
[94] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 159-60.

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, the section that is about "cogito" and his definitions of tacit cogito also remain vague. Late Merleau-Ponty in *Working Notes*, while reconsidering the matter of tacit cogito emphasizes that such a notion is not possible: "What I call the tacit cogito is impossible."[95] He also says that the "tacit Cogito does not, of course, solve these problems. In disclosing it as I did in *Ph.P*. I did not arrive at a solution".[96] In brief, Merleau-Ponty realizes the limits of the descriptions he made regarding phenomenology and body within the frame of philosophy of consciousness. After this realization of the limits of the "my own body", he gives up on that notion, and brings up the concept of flesh. The flesh, according to Merleau-Ponty, is a fundamental subject in terms of ontology. It can be said that, while he gets away from transcendental subject, he aims to consider the concept of flesh without falling into the dualism between subject (consciousnes)-object: "The problems posed in *Ph.P*. are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness'-'object' distinction."[97] Moreoever, as he notes, "the problems that remain after this first description: they are due to the fact that in part I retained the philosophy of 'consciousness'".[98]

The novelty in *The Visible and The Invisible* originates from Merleau-Ponty now seeing the "necessity of a return to ontology".[99] The matters he especially mentions in this work are the relation of subject-object, intersubjectivity, the experience of the other, and nature. It is obvious in this text that he wants to "recommence everything"[100]. All of these matters mentioned above are considered in a more radical way in *The Visible and The Invisible* than they were in *Phenomenology of Perception*. This essential change is nicely summarised this statement: "…the body is not an empirical fact, that it has an ontological signification."[101] Thus, we can say that Merleau-Ponty's approach regarding this matter rolls out the body as a concept into the field of ontology, and lays the foundation of the flesh.

Regarding the meaning of the concept of flesh, it is again something he mainly developed in *The Visible and The Invisible* even though he used that concept prior to that work already. He used the concept of flesh in an "organic" sense in his initial writings. With term of "organic", he means that the organic flesh has the ability to develop itself as well as the ability to sense and to get itself into the act. However, the late Merleau-Ponty drifts away from this biological

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[95] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 171.
[96] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 175-176.
[97] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 200.
[98] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 183.
[99] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 165.
[100] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 130.
[101] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 255.

approach of flesh, and even emphasizes the uniqueness of this new concept of flesh used by him and says, "what we are calling flesh has no name in any philosophy".[102]

Before we talk about Merleau-Ponty's ontological concept of flesh, it is important first to briefly see how Husserl's concept of flesh affected Merleau-Ponty's late philosophy, and wheter these two philosophers' concepts of body and flesh are the same. For Merleau-Ponty, flesh is not another name for the body. In his late writings, unlike his initial works, the flesh does not have an ordinary or literary meaning. The concept of flesh plays a fundamental role in the terms of ontology, only through the flesh does the visible makes itself visible, and the one who sees become visible. The flesh is such an ontological "texture" that gives birth both to object and subject.

It is well-known that Merleau-Ponty was greatly influenced by the concepts of flesh in Husserl's *Ideen II* and in the fifth of his *Cartesian Meditations*. However, did Husserl really give to the concept of flesh the same meanings as Merleau-Ponty did? In *Phenomenology of Perception*, the influence of *Ideen II* can be seen evidently in the example of touched and touching hand, yet it would not be right to claim that Merleau-Ponty uses the concept of flesh with the same meaning as in Husserl's approach. Even though in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the concept of "my own body" is a synonym of flesh (*Leib*) in Husserl, the concept of flesh in *The Visible and The Invisible* is unique to Merleau-Ponty's late project. He attributes a genuine meaning to this concept, and in fact we can even say that, this concept of flesh in his philosophy bears a more ascendent meaning than the concept of flesh in Husserl's thought.

As we just saw, Merleau-Ponty does not only say that this concept of flesh is a new concept, he also underlines that it is not familiar to the history of philosophy: "…there is no name in traditional philosophy to designate it [the flesh]."[103] For Merleau-Ponty, "the flesh is an ultimate notion", it is "thinkable by itself".[104] As a very close reader of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty also must be aware that "*Leib*" in German is a term that is hard to translate into French. While he translates "*Leib*" as "lived body", his translation of the term of "*Körper*" is "corporeal body". "*Leib*" adresses me to "my own body", lived body. The corresponding "*Leib*" Husserl developed in *Ideen II*, as "lived body", explicitly shows that the aforementioned body is my own body in Merleau-Ponty?. However, one of the difficulties in this translation is that, because the notion of "my own body" has been used in a technical and psychological way, it does not seem as if it includes the other's "*Leib*", but Merleau-Ponty's ontological flesh concept includes

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[102] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 147.
[103] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 139.
[104] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 140.

teological, ethical and aesthetic aspects as well. Consequently, although Merleau-Ponty has been fed by readings of Husserl, the concept of flesh developed by him is not just a "borrowing" or quotation from Husserl.

In "Man and Adversity" ("L'homme et l'adversité")[105], Merleau-Ponty intensively analyses the issue of body and flesh, but he does that also by keeping a distance between his own philosophy and other philosophies: "For many thinkers at the close of the nineteenth century, the body was a bit of matter, a network of mechanisms. The twentieth century has restored and deepened the notion of flesh, that is, of animate body."[106]

In "The Philosopher and His Shadow,"[107] a text dedicated to Husserl, the issue of the concept of flesh appears for the first time in Merleau-Ponty after *Phenomenology of Perception*. Therefore, this text is important to specify the development of his thought as well as the beginning of his late era. This article also shows how Husserl's philosophy contributed to this matter. Merleau-Ponty's consideration of the relation between subject and object is different from Husserl's. In Merleau-Ponty an ontological structure, which includes that subject's being in the world and world's being for subject, comes to the forefront. He moves away from traditional subject-object considerations, and questions the relation between subject and object as well as the philosophical basis that ensures this relation. The main matter he tries to understand is "the meaning of being in the world". For him, body is "mediator of a world"[108], body is in constant movement between "to have" (*avoir*) and to be (*être*). The movement between these two is the condition of human quality. Therefore, he says that it must be tried to proceed in-between two (*entre deux*).[109]

Merleau-Ponty, going beyond Husserl's ideas regarding touching, through his notions of "the flesh of what is perceived"[110] and therefore 'the ontology of perceivable' and his related descriptions. In his further writings, he mentions "the flesh of the world", and draws touching and seeing near each other: "We must habituate ourselves to think that every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is

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[105] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 224-43.
[106] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 227.
[107] Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 159-81.
[108] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 167.
[109] Merleau-Ponty's preference of this concept of "in-between two" is not a conscient one, because, through this choice of concept, he aims to completely overcome also Sartre's considerations regarding body-subject as well as the distinction between "being-for-itself" and "being-in-itself". Therefore, his reference is the encounter (*se croiser*) between subject and body. This concept of "in-between two" also determines the position of late Merleau-Ponty since according to him neither "being-in-itself" nor "being-for-itself" is primary; the primary is "common flesh", and subject and object are already the variations of this common flesh.
[110] Merleau-Ponty, *Signes*, p. 167.

encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and the visible, which is encrusted in it, as, conversely, the tangible itself is not a nothingness of visibility, is not without visual existence."[111] Body and objects belongs to the same "world", and their relation sends us to richness of perpetual world. Body and object get their existence from "brute being", this being holds them from inside and make them ready for each other.

Merleau-Ponty rehearses the issue of flesh in his lectures on "Nature and Logos: The Human Body" [112] and uses the statement of "philosophy of the flesh" there for the first time. However, only later, in *The Visible and The Invisible* does he develop this issue of the flesh further. In this work, we can see that the concepts of the flesh and being are used together. For Merleau-Ponty, the flesh is nothing but Being; thinking of the flesh is thinking of Being. The concepts of the flesh and Being have been considered as the basis of both object and subject. It can be claimed that the meaning he gives to Being in *The Visible and The Invisible* is different from his usage of this word in *Phenomenology of Perception*. In *The Visible and The Invisible*, he writes it with capital, as Being, in order to show the genuine place of this concept in his philosophy, and being written in small letter differentiates from the existent. Although he does not ignore the issue of being in *Phenomenology of Perception*, he uses "being for itself" as a concept opposite of consciousness; in other words, what he means with being here is the objective, natural and impersonal being. However, in *The Visible and The Invisible*, he looks for Being where object and subject cross. For him, Being is not a concrete thing that we talk about, it is not something out of us or that stands at a distance. According to Merleau-Ponty, where object and subject come across, "there is something"[113], and the thing that exist here is the meaning of the world.

In short, neither subject builds the world nor objects build the world and subject, but these two movements are "simultaneous", as "the flesh of the world is not explained by the flesh of the body, nor the flesh of the body by the negativity or self that inhabits it—the 3 phenomena are simultaneous".[114] Subject and object build each other at the same time. Then, how can we explain the concept of Being? Can subject unveil Being? For Merleau-Ponty, body opens us to Being, body reveals Being and reflects it on itself. Body moves from this perceivable world to reach Being. It is "phenomenons" that makes it possible to reach Being. Being is not something

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[111] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 134.
[112] Merleau-Ponty, *Résumés de cours,* p. 178-179.
[113] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 88.
[114] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 250.

abstract either that is out of this world. As embodied beings, we take part within the scope of Being, and also because of perception we can get to know Being. The human being, as embodied being is not distant from the world or from Being, objects and body are parts of the same Being, the same whole. Being is the visible and the thing that encompasses. On the other hand, the subject is the being that is in the world, that is an on-going project. The world and subject are not separated from each other, Being encompasses both the world and subject. The relation between the world and Being is like the tie that binds the visible and the invisible. The invisible is not the thing that is hidden behind the visible, but the invisible is the "depth" that encompasses the visible. Being as the invisible, in one word, is the flesh of objects. Being shows itself as infinity, however this infinity does not refer to God as some philosophers think. The infinity of Being shows itself as opening out to the world, therefore it is uniquely related to the finite aspect through body and this world.

Merleau-Ponty mentions "wild Being" and "vertical Being" in *The Visible and The Invisible*: "What I want to do is restore the world as a meaning of Being, … as the vertical Being … [as] the wild Being."[115] What he means by wild or uncultivated Being or vertical Being is nature itself, inasmuch as it harbours the possibility of all meaning. The uncultivated world is the lived world, the perceived world. Vertical Being, then, is the mixture of us and the world, according to Merleau-Ponty. We can see this uncultivated Being at the foundation of the world and in the wild principles of *Logos*. The references regarding this Being does not include a methaphysical space, on the contrary: "All verticality comes from the vertical Being."[116] Moreover, the relations between body and world also comes from a vertical relation: "between these two vertical beings, there is not a frontier, but a contact surf"[117] In short, because of the existence of Being, the world is visible to subject and subject is present in the world. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy is a humanist thought that puts human to the basis of everything, and excludes the thought of God or a higher power. Human and the world get surrounded, intertwined by the same Being and get held together. There is an intertwinement between the one that senses and the sensed. We realize Being through our temporality, perceptions, and our structure made of the flesh.

Although the flesh is one of the fundamental aspects of Merleau-Ponty's ontology, it is hard to ground it in the sense of metaphysics:

> "The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term 'element,' in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense

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[115] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 253.
[116] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 234.
[117] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 271.

of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an 'element' of Being. Not a fact or a sum of facts, and yet adherent to *location* and to the now. "[118]

This explanation of the flesh in Merleau-Ponty is one of the rare direct references to pre-Socratics' understanding of nature. For him, the concept of flesh is a general "thing", a "measurement". The flesh is such an element that connects us to objects; and provides body and objects open out to the same world. The flesh is "prototype of Being",[119] or even Being's itself in the sense of it's being an opening out. When Merleau-Ponty explains the flesh, he explains Being at the same time, in other words, he thinks of Being when he mentions the flesh. We, as bodily and corporeal beings, are intertwined with Being, and involved with objects in the fabric of Being. As we are constantly in connect with Being, this connection also reminds us that we are a corporeal being.

Merleau-Ponty, in *The Visible and The Invisible* also mentions the question of intersubjectivity in a relation with the question of the relations between bodies. For him, there is a general seeing, and this anonymous visibility does never leave the other or me; he also thinks 'I' and the other as the same organs of the relations between bodies. As the seer is not I or the other in the ultimate sense of seeing, we cannot mention the problem of the other, as an anonymous visibility is present in me and in the other.

The flesh represents the being of the visible and the integrity of being of "the visible-the seer". Because of the flesh, the integrity of being of body and the integrity of being of the world becomes possible. If I can see, it is because I am a bodily being and this means that I am a corporeal (related to the flesh) being. I am in the world, surrounded by objects, I see this world and I am not stranger to it. There is a wholeness of the seer-the visible. He emphasizes that only if the seer is related to the visible, can it have the visible, which means, in the end, I and the other have the same texture, fabric of the flesh. It is the ontological concept of flesh that binds me to the other fleshes. Consequently, to understand this concept it is necessity to think "the flesh of objects", "the flesh of sensible", and "the flesh of the world" all together.

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[118] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 139-140.
[119] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 136.

Chapter 2. Aesthetic rationality: The convergence of *logos*, *aisthesis* and *physis*

For Merleau-Ponty, "the chief gain from phenomenology" is the commitment to bring together "an extreme subjectivism with an extreme objectivism through its concept of the world or of rationality."[120] In this context, the return to perception is the discovery of the proper level of philosophy itself, and that level is phenomenology. As Merleau-Ponty states: "The perceived world is the always presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value and all existence. This thesis[121] does not destroy rationality or the absolute. It only tries to bring them down to earth".[122]

From this standpoint, we can say that, even before his transition into ontology from phenomenology through the concept of flesh, Merleau-Ponty tried to connect the rationality with 'the perceived world' in a unique way. For him, beneath every intellectual synthesis is a more primordial operative synthesis accomplished through lived experience and through our body, tending into what Husserl calls the "*logos* of the aesthetic world".[123] According to Merleau-Ponty, the world is nothing less than the "cradle of meanings, direction of all directions (*sens de tous les sens*), and ground of all thinking" that remains upon the horizon of all of our individual experiences and as "one goal of all our projects" which is also "the native abode of all rationality".[124]

After referring Husserl's phrase, "*logos* of the aesthetic world" in *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty establishes a novel approach to rationality through a new conception of *logos* in a later work, *Eye and Mind* as well as in the related parts of *The Visible and Invisible*. We have seen that, for Husserl, the crisis in the European sciences and culture has its roots in a misguided rationalism, in a 'one-sided' notion of rationality that sought to explicate the rationality of the world in the manner of geometry. Consequently, Husserl believes that a broader conception of rationality has to be developed in order to reach a 'higher rationality … a true and full rationality', and this new rationality has to be more than scientific rationality and be grounded in the life-world. Nevertheless, Husserl's aim to reach a new conception of rationality, i.e. *logos*, is not completely independent from his standpoint that considers European humanity as the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. On the other hand, as we will show in this chapter, Merleau-Ponty deepens the meaning of *logos* while applying new aspects to this concept. The intruiging point of this approach is that even he uses the ancient Greek

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[120] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. xxii.
[121] Merleau-Ponty refers to his argument that consdiers perception as an original modality of consciousness.
[122] Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, p. 13.
[123] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 498.
[124] Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 500.

terms; unlike Husserl, he establishes these conceptions without referring such a *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy.

Although he thinks that there is no requirement of a *telos* as in Husserl's terms and such a conclusion is unwarranted, he still argues that there is a rational *telos* of art that unfolds in individual artists. Therefore, he aims to understand the conditions of an aesthetic rationality in art. Following Florensky and Panofsky in that regard, he tries to get out of the perspective model that essentially seems to be only a pictorial account of perception but actually a standpoint that transforms the relation we establish with the world.[125] According to Merleau-Ponty's criticism of this model, the perspective is not only a pictorial fact, beyond this it also becomes the sole concept of the established relation types with the other. Through this model, the relations between I and things, I and my body, I and the other are depicted as the face to face relation of two separate and independent 'whatness' in a homogeneous space. In this manner, the relationship between *logos* and the visibility gets limited by the laws of perspectivism; in other words, the rationality, *logos* is getting misguided through this type of visibility.

In this context, Merleau-Ponty objects to two assumptions implicit in the perspective model. According to the first assumption (the traditional approach), the perspective knowledge is a certain and irrevocable achievement. The second assumption (the realist approach) is that perspective is not the condition of a *possible* world but of an ontologically true space. In other words, the perspective's role for painting is the same with language's for literature. However, for Merleau-Ponty: "The perspective of the Renaissance is no infallible 'gimmick.' It is only a particular case, a date, a moment in a poetic information of the world which continues after it."[126] The aim of Merleau-Ponty is restoring our relation with the world while developing a model against the perspective through the educational meaning of perception. This relation is nothing but the chiasmatic, intertwining structure of the visible and the invisible. In this case, the subject, unlike the condition in the perspective model, is not the only reference point to make the other visible and captured. It is also not the result of a natural or sensible givenness as it is in realism. According to Merleau-Ponty, there must be a mutual determination, chiasm, intertwinement beyond an absolute separation or a total mergence in order to make the other visible and captured.

For Merleau-Ponty, thinking is not enough for seeing. "Vision is a conditioned thought; it is born "as occasioned" by what happens in the body; it is 'incited' to think by the body."[127] On

[125] Merleau-Ponty, *L'Institution, Passivité*, p. 79.
[126] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 175.
[127] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 175.

the other hand, the realist standpoint, which understands seeing as the function that enlighten a hidden existence which waits in the dark to be enlightened, argues that the object is actually there and its being goes on in itself. However, this approach, in the name of opposing intellectualism, describes being as identical with itself in an absolute way and abstracts it from its visibility and sacrifices seeing to the visible. This situation causes a riddle for Merleau-Ponty, and he believes that the path that goes to the solution gets there through the world of the artist:

> "...from Lascaux to our time, pure or impure, figurative or not, painting celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility. What we have just said amounts to a truism. The painter's world is a visible world, nothing but visible: a world almost demented because it is complete when it is yet only partial. Painting awakens and carries to its highest pitch a delirium which is vision itself..."[128]

Since the world is more explicit in seeing; in this type of perception, the one that is being perceived has been considered as it has a unique autonomy that is distinct from the subject. However, this attribution of seeing causes many faults in history of philosophy. The Cartesian approach that addresses seeing into thinking in order to distinguish seeing from the visible, ignores the influence of seeing. It ignores seeing's opening out towards simply what is there. However, Merleau-Ponty claims that seeing is an distinctive relationship that we establish with things, rather than being a thought that is being processed by outer signs that come through body. Beyond the dualism between temporal substance and thinking substance, seeing must be described as what it is in itself. For Merleau-Ponty, from prehistoric man (Lascaux) to today's painters, the enigma is still the same. On the one hand, of course there is a history of art; on the other hand, art only deals with the same question. Merleau-Ponty thinks that we can understand what the Lascaux painters were facing, even though we have no idea what exact meaning they attached to their drawings. Therefore, in the sense of Husserl's usage of the term, there is no such a *telos* in this retrospective glance through history. However, through this standpoint that Merleau-Ponty points out, we can reconstruct the '*arche*' in a very different way than Husserl did, as well as a for a very different reason: through the conception of flesh and for a better understanding of our own flesh's encountering with the world, without any teleology.

This quote above is a call, a summon for the reconnaissance of the visible. Then, for Merleau-Ponty, the relation between *logos* (as reason and as language) and the visibility must be reinterrogated from a reflection on painting. This aesthetic rationality he reaches is crucial and novel in the sense of the framing of our thesis which is the historicity of rationality, as he shifts the paradigm of the concept of *logos* exactly here and reaches a radical possibility for a new

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[128] Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 155-156.

and geunine historicity of rationality. He establishes this new possibility through the engagement of aesthetics and rationality via the relation between the visible and the invisible, the sensible and *logos*. If we focus on his description and comparison regarding the sensible and the invisible through the concepts of flesh and *logos* in *The Visible and The Invisible* as in the passage below, the importance of this above mentioned call for a reinterrogation of the relation between *logos* and the visible might become more clear:

> "As the sensible structure can be understood only through its relation to the body, to the flesh—the invisible structure can be understood only through its relation to logos, to speech--The invisible meaning is the inner framework of speech--The world of perception encroaches upon that of movement (which also is seen) and inversely movement has [eyes?] Likewise the world of ideas encroaches upon language (one thinks it) which inversely encroaches upon the ideas (one thinks because one speaks, because one writes)—"[129]

According to Merleau-Ponty the real philosophy is re-learning to see the world; it is a call to re-see the visible, to re-utter the word, and re-think the thought. Art, then, is a repetition of this invitation, just as Husserl's *epoche* suspends the natural attitude, it suspends what is already familiar to us. On the other hand, he does not suggest a philosophy of art in the same formation as a philosophy of language or philosophy of science. He does not think on art but onwards from art. He figures that art and philosophy contact with being as being a creation instead of being artificial products of cultural and mental universe. And as he insists that the contingent movement of history has a *sense*, if not a "direction", he argues that a *sense* of history emerges through us, but is not our explicit doing; just as art and philosophy is being a creation instead of being artificial products.

However, what makes the aesthetics of Merleau-Ponty different is related to the fact that the border between conceptual creation (the invisible) and perceptual creation (the visible) in his thought is much more flexible than it is in other thinkers. His aesthetics is a 'sensualisation' of thinking through artistic creations, instead of being a philosophical investment in art. In this manner, the aesthetics of Merleau-Ponty takes the "aesthetic" relationship between the one who senses and the sensible, and another ancient Greek concept, *aisthesis* as its starting point since this concept cannot be reduced to value judgement. This relationship is the privileged place of the manifestation of the uncultivated and silent being, which is named by Merleau-Ponty wild *Logos* and wild Being. Philosophical thinking and the kind of retrieval of vision he performs on the work of arts get combined with a certain science of perceptual knowledge. Grounding all experience of meaning in the phenomenal structure of the body, and the ontology of the flesh, Merleau-Ponty brings a new standpoint for the consideration and therefore the historicity

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[129] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 224.

of rationality as well as to the ossified problems such as the universality, expressibility, and shareability of aesthethic experience. This new standpoint is a re-discovery of rationality through the concept of flesh and aesthetics, in a way that liberates us from the historicity that necessitates such a specific *telos* as in Husserl's approach. Because through this conception of flesh and aesthetic rationality, this wild *logos* can emerge in any place or in any time.

After this ontological standpoint, it can be said that the flesh is neither a moment of the world nor a thing upon the surface of the world, nor a combination of these two. The flesh is the epitome of the dimension of belonging that bears all the fate of phenomenalization in the heart, in the depth of the world. Merleau-Ponty explains his view of a new type of intentionality, which as the texture both unites and separates Being and phenomenons, stating that: "The whole Husserlian analysis is blocked by the framework of acts which imposes upon it the philosophy of consciousness. It is necessary to take up again and develop the *fungierende* or latent intentionality which is the intentionality within being."[130]

For Merleau-Ponty, the perceptual contents are not dead atomic impressions, they are already impregnated with meanings, because experience is every time an experience of a world. Therefore, we must think the existence of intentionality as the unity of the active and the passive, without reducing it to the being of the constituent consciousness. The perceptual existence is neither a factual being nor a positive signification. It is a dimension, a tacit *logos* that the events of the world appears and get distinguished beginning from itself. This is, once lost, but now a rediscovered experience of rationality for Merleau-Ponty and corresponds to a distinctive, a genuine approach regarding its historicity as well:

> "In speaking of the primacy of perception, I have never, of course, meant to say (this would be a return to the theses of empiricism) that science, reflection, and philosophy are only transformed sensations or that values are deferred and calculated pleasures. By these words, the 'primacy of perception,' we mean that the experience of perception is our presence at the moment when things, truths, values are constituted for us; that perception is a nascent *logos*; that it teaches us, outside all dogmatism, the true conditions of objectivity itself; that it summons us to the tasks of knowledge and action. It is not a question of reducing human knowledge to sensation, but of assisting at the birth of this knowledge, to make it as sensible as the sensible, to recover the consciousness of rationality. This experience of rationality is lost when we take it for granted as self-evident, but is, on the contrary, rediscovered when it is made to appear against the background of non-human nature."[131]

What Merleau-Ponty implies with the notion of 'the birth' in the passage above should also be considered in the sense of his account on historicity. Merleau-Ponty here can be read as

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[130] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 244.
[131] Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*, p. 25.

suggesting an alternative approach to historicity of rationality through this concept of nascent logos. This recovery and rediscovery of the conciousness of rationality in principle can apply to any human achievement, not only 'European sciences' just as in the way he refers to Lascaux paintings on the quote we emphasized above.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the only *logos* that already exists beforehand is, in and of itself, world; and philosophy is an act of a reconsideration of this incomplete world in order to integrate and contemplate it. Therefore in the pre-reflective life of being in the world, there is a "nascent *logos*" and it is more fundamental than objective thinking, constitutive intentionality of consciousness or the universe of knowledge. Merleau-Ponty underlines how this *logos* is immanent to the world as a concept that inseperably bears both the manifestation and the meaning of the world. Merleau-Ponty here refers to the Stoic differentiation in the meaning of *logos*: '*logos endiathetos*' and '*prophorikos logos*'. For the Stoics, the *logos endiathetos* is "the word remaining within" or simply "internal *logos*" whilst the *logos prophorikos* is "the uttered word" or "the uttered *logos*".[132] Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that we open out to the world in perceptual way through the *logos endiathetos*, and this *logos* "pronounces itself silently in each sensible thing"[133], and it is the "meaning before logic"[134]. For him, *logos prophorikos* or "the uttered *logos*" "[has] internal structure [that] sublimates our carnal relation [which is basically *logos endiathetos*] with the world."[135]

This distinction revived by Merleau-Ponty is also important in grasping how his account of *logos* is bound and connected to the world. As the flesh can be referred to the pre-Socratic echo of the concept of 'element' in the history of philosophy, the world mentioned here is also used in the sense of a specific meaning of nature, which can be referred to another ancient Greek term, *physis* in a way that is closely related to his conception of wild *logos*:

> "In what follows (Physics and Physis—Animality—the human body as psycho-physical), what is at issue is to operate the reduction, that is, for me, to disclose little by little — and more and more — the 'wild' or 'vertical' world. Show the intentional reference of Physics to Physis, of Physis to life, of life to the 'psycho-physical' — a reference by which one nowise passes from the 'exterior' to the 'interior,' since the reference is not a reduction and since each degree 'surpassed' remains in fact presupposed (for example, the Physis of the beginning is nowise 'surpassed' by what I will say of man: it is the correlative of animality as it is of man) -- It is necessary then on the way to form the theory of this "reflection" that I practice; it is not a going back up to the 'conditions of possibility' ... Conversely everything that follows is already anticipated in what I say about Physis -- This is why from the start I must indicate the ontological import of this *Besinnung* [Reflection] on Physis..."

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[132] Kamesar, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, p. 163.
[133] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 208.
[134] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 169.
[135] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisivble*, p. 208.

Merleau-Ponty thinks that the tacit *logos* speaks in us, it catches and encompasses us just as the perceptual world does. *Logos* of the language relies on the *logos* of the world (that can be characterised by *physis*). Beside or behind all the cultural materials given to us, we must find this uncultivated and wild being. What he means by uncultivated and wild being is the "wild", the perceived world in the sense of its irreducibility to our idealizations and syntax yet while are open to it within the perceptual faith. He aims to describe, without the categories of objectivity or reflection, exactly this world that is "non-objectified" or not comprehended in speech. Wild being is the "compound of the world and of ourselves that precedes reflection".[136] And this is nothing but the attempt of a meaning that belongs to pre-objectivity and pre-subjectivity of a dimension of being that will be called as "*logos* of aesthetic world".

As we have mentioned above, the concept of flesh and its connection to tacit or wild *logos* that emphasizes the "birth of knowledge" leads to a new approach to history, that can be illustrated by the history of painting, of how we can in principle reconstruct the previous ways in which knowledge "was born". In the case of painting, it is the same recurrent problem of visibility that each new generation of painter has to face, despite the symbolic worlds in which they operate were different as a matter of fact. This, in itself, is not specifically related to any Greek heritage, indeed the Lascaux example of Merleau-Ponty shows this well. However, the terms used by Merleau-Ponty are all Greek or refer to the Greek concepts: *logos*, *aisthesis*, *physis*. Therefore, even though he does not thematise it as explicitly as Husserl, there is in fact an implicit connection to Greek thinking, as a form of thinking that is particularly close to our modern attempt at retrieving the genuine access to world.

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[136] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisivble*, p. 102.

Chapter 3. Merleau-Ponty on Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*

In this final chapter, it is important to go back to Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* , this time in the light of Merleau-Ponty's course notes on this work. Our examination of these course notes will show how, following Husserl, he directly envisaged the problem of ideality through the historicity of rationality, and we will see how he reconsiders what is ideality through his own account of language. There will also be a focus on his references to Plato in these notes, how they are related to his approach to ideality and their relation to the notion of circularity and *telos*.

In *Husserl at the limits of phenomenology*, the text that combines the philosopher's course notes held in 1960 on Husserl's *Origin of Geometry*, Merleau-Ponty says in the beginning of his lectures that his aim is to explain how our familiar consciousness of the world is grounded on that which is 'the pretheoretical', the 'pregiven' (*Vorgegeben*)[137]. As he goes beyond Husserl's philosphy of consciousness through the ontological concept of flesh, he also wants to examine *Origin of Geometry* and apply his thought of 'the pretheoretical' or wild Being here as well, to reconsider this 'origin' and the historicity of rationality:

> In order to introduce us to this relation with the new Being, *Tiefenleben* <"life of depths">, it is necessary to excavate below ideal identity, *Bedeutung* <"meaning">, Platonism, essence as the given unity of the individual, of the world, and of history.[138]

The topics that emerge through the lectures can be categorised under three themes: First, the attempt 'to reach the originary sense, the emerging or arising sense of the geometry that we are receiving'[139]; second, the 'Language-humanity-world relation';[140] and thirdly, language and the 'ideality' of geometry.

If we remember Husserl's argument regarding the 'crisis' of European sciences, it is easy to see that Merleau-Ponty's aspiration to 'reach the originary sense' of geometry is directly influenced or motivated by his interpretation of that 'crisis'. Husserl thinks that this crisis was the consequence of a failure to appreciate the importance of the *Lebenswelt* in forming the practices and presumptions that are unnoticed necessary conditions for scientific inquiries, including geometry. Merleau-Ponty similarly considers this failure as the sign of a lack of attention to these practices, which is characteristic of the natural sciences. However, he adds, since sciences

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[137] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 15.
[138] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 16.
[139] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 18.
[140] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 37.

such as geometry retain traces of that which has been passed over, we can talk about a role that a type of philosophical/historical reflection can play. This form of reflection, for Merleau-Ponty, has the potential to take us back to the originary sense of geometry "unveil the *Lebenswelt*".[141]

Until this point, one can say that he is largely following Husserl, ye his approach to philosophical/historical reflection becomes different at the end. For Husserl, beginning from contemporary geometrical demonstrations, it is a requirement to reactivate the self-evident experiences inherent in historical practices such as measurement and then, consequently, confirm the unconditioned validity of geometry. Merleau-Ponty, on the other hand, is sceptical regarding any such reactivation as he points out "impossibility of total reactivation"[142]. He also disagrees with Husserl regarding his notion of geometry's 'unconditioned validity'[143] and, significantly, never mentions its supposed self-evidence. Instead of this misconceived foundationalism, Merleau-Ponty underlines the constitutive role of traditions in sciences such as geometry that sustain the future development of the inquiry and also maintain contact with its past:

> Science has a futural horizon (i.e. is not apodictic evidence) in which in principle what it calls true now will be recollected – overcome and conserved – conserved without its *Einseitigkeit* <"one-sidedness">, as a moment of a totality ... The idea of tradition is this double movement: being other in order to be the same, forgetting in order to conserve, producing in order to receive, looking ahead in order to receive the entire force of the past.[144]

To describe the way in which such a tradition works within our understanding Merleau-Ponty uses the term 'field' and says that 'we are moments of the open field'[145]. Considering his notion of 'double movement' and this conception of the 'moments of the open field', it can be argued that this circularity regarding the origin of geometry through the idea of tradition in sciences already gives the hint about his novelty regarding the historicity of rationality. Unlike the notions of "reactivating the self-evident experiences" and "unconditioned validity (of geometry)" which all evidently take us to the idea of progress, 'the infinite task' and the concept of *telos* in Husserl, Merleau-Ponty's position here is based on a 'double movement', which indicates a circularity rather than a progress from *arche* to *telos*. It produces in a different understanding of history, which aims to replace the historicity as conceived by Husserl, that results in European humanity being presented as *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. This

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[141] MP, *HLP*, p. 32.
[142] MP, *HLP*, p. 26.
[143] MP, *HLP*, p. 30.
[144] MP, *HLP*, p. 31.
[145] MP, *HLP*, p. 29.

novelty regarding the history of rationality in Merleau-Ponty represents "not (…) a relativism or an historicism; instead it is the idea that every present contains everything, is absolute: everything is true and not everything is false. 1. The past is as true as present…2. The present is as true as the future…[146]" Therefore, in the light of this approach, we can say that the historicity of rationality can not be restricted to the European humanity as the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. Through this new conception of *logos* as we have demonstrated in previous chapters; rationality can be initiated in any period and any place.

Turning now to the notion of language, we know that in Husserl's conception, language is the embodiment of geometrical truth in the sense of the historicity of rationality. For Husserl, it is only of language in its ideality that its *telos* is presence, and that determines the essence and origin of language. In Merleau-Ponty's lectures on *The Origin of Geometry*, language plays a central role in establishing and maintaining traditions such as that which sustains geometry. Merleau-Ponty, in introducing this role for language, begins with Husserl's holistic 'intertwining' approach which is "men as men, fellow men, world … and, on the other hand, language, are inseparably intertwined (*verflochten*)"[147]. This approach to Husserl is coherent with Merleau-Ponty's final philosophy, as he comes to a conclusion in *The Visible and The Invisible* that this is one of an all-embracing intertwining of perception, the body, language and the world.[148]

In his lectures on Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, Merleau-Ponty's account of Husserl's intertwining thesis is placed in the context of a contrast between the closed *Umwelt* (environment) of animals who does not have language in the same sense we do and the indefinitely open *Welt* (world) characteristic of humanity that possesses a language.[149] Here, as Baldwin points out, Merleau-Ponty argues that "the open-ended capacity to engage with new possibilities that [are] characteristic of human life is intertwined with possession of a language which has the capacity to represent these new possibilities in virtue of the fact that it provides an objective conception of the world. It is suggestive rather than completed, for what needs to be spelled out is the way in which possession of an objective conception of the world as it actually is makes it possible to represent new non-actual possibilities, and vice-versa."[150] Merleau-Ponty situates the relationship between language and objective conception of the world, again, in a type of circularity. Unlike Husserl's establishment of *telos* regarding the

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[146] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 31.
[147] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 359.
[148] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, Chapter 4. "The Intertwining".
[149] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 39.
[150] Baldwin, "Language as the Embodiment of Geometry", p. 322.

historicity of rationality, and without referring to European humanity and its ancient Greek inheritance, he applies the contrast between the closed *Umwelt* of animals who lack language and the indefinitely open *Welt* characteristic of humanity which possesses a language. Therefore he also exceeds the conception of *logos* in Husserl as well as his approach to the historicity of rationality, as he mentions using the method of eidetic variation to "bring to light …a nonlogical possibility"[151] In other words, Merleau-Ponty's novel conception of nascent or wild *logos* that is a rediscovery of the consciousness of rationality through the concept of flesh and aesthetic rationality exactly refers to this contrast mentioned above.

Merleau-Ponty develops his position by introducing the notion of 'operative language.' 'Operative language' is the ground of this objective conception of the world that is bound up with the open horizon of human life. This conception of 'operative language' also becomes elucidated by Merleau-Ponty by means of a double contrast, this time with a direct reference to Heraclitean notion of circularity. On the one hand there is a type of 'original intentionality' that is 'non-objectifying;' on the other hand there is factual language which he thinks as uncreative and fundamentally derivative.[152]

> We take account of that precisely with which reflection endows unreflective language as unreflective. Is it necessary to say that circularity has been substituted for the unidirectional noesis-noema relation (on the basis of the central man-nameable, speaking-expressible relation)?
>
> Circularity a dangerous word. Circularity of Heraclitus, yes: to go in one direction is truly to go in the other. A thick identity exists there, which truly contains difference.[153]

We see that Merleau-Ponty directly refers Heraclitus and distinguishes his understanding of circularity from the "dangerous" one. On the marginal note[154] given by Merleau-Ponty regarding this matter, he states that "because of claimed identification of contraries, Hegel's destruction-realization which makes the circle and the dialectic disappear, into the positively rational, new logic." By this, Merleau-Ponty points out that the notion of progress in the understanding of the Enlightenment, and this type of approach to the historicity causes "the circle" disappear in favour of "the positively rational, new logic" of modern philosophy. Furthermore, what he emphasize with this circularity of Heraclitus can also be seen connected with Husserlian approach: "man, world, language are interwoven, *verflochten*. For Merleau-Ponty; man, language, world (lived world, and objectified, idealized world) is in a relational unity. This relational unity can be reached through a "sensible *Lebenswelt*" and a "sensible,

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[151] MP, *HLP*, p. 39.
[152] MP, *HLP*, p. 41.
[153] MP, *HLP*, p. 41.
[154] MP, *HLP*, fn. 102, p. 84.

primoridal consciousness". Moreover, this specific type of *lebenswelt* and consciousness is related to a radical consciousness that is "an explosion or an emergence of ideality--of man and of the open, human horizon--in the thickness of *fungierende* [operative] language".

Merleau-Ponty emphasises the "immense amount of work already accomplished by language before science"[155] in a way that evokes his conception of nascent *logos*. This points to Merleau-Ponty's radical reconsideration of the historicity of rationality. Because of this understanding of nascent *logos*, there is no need a specific *arche* or *telos* anymore regarding the historicity of rationality. He does not refer to specifically the ancient Greek philosophy as an era by this usage of Greek term, *logos*. His reconsideration of the historicity of rationality can apply to any human achievement as we have also mentioned before. Through his direct reference to Heraclitus as well, we can claim that the the Greek legacy is no longer the teleological story from the *arche* of the Classical Greek philosophy to the *telos* of European humanity. Here, pre-Socratics, those before the official beginning of Western philosophy provide the means to think. Therefore, even if it seems as it is a "going back" to them with this reference to Heraclitus; but this time, it is not related to a story of a progress. This type of going back to the use of Greek concepts is also a demonstration of the idea of circularity in Merleau-Ponty, as it shows "man, language, world in a relational unity" through a "sensible *Lebenswelt*", a "sensible, primordial consciousness".

He also goes further in this direction and makes another distinction regarding language that directly relates to his conception of silent Being or wild *Logos*:

> 1. before language, a "mute" experience and an experience which calls from itself for its "expression," but a "pure" expression, i.e., foundation and not product of language. Therefore a *Vor-sprache*, a down-side or "other side" of language, an *Ur-sprung* of language.
>
> 2. after language, through it, constitution of the nameable, of *Dinge überhaupt*, of objectivity, coextensive with the *Welt*.[156]

Regarding the connection between language and geometry, he recognises that Husserl's answer to the question of "how does expression objectify geometry" includes the hypothesis of a connection between our understanding of written demonstrations and our capacity to reactivate the originating self-evidence of geometry. As we have shown, for Husserl this connection secures its a priori objectivity as well as teleology in the historicity of rationality. However, Merleau-Ponty manifestly rejects this backward-looking account of reactivation. He suggests a better account of reactivation, which is "no longer lost time, reconquest of a certain

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[155] MP, *HLP*, p. 43.
[156] MP, *HLP*, p. 43.

forgetfulness; it consists in going farther in the same direction'.[157] He even states that it would in fact be better to abandon Husserl's talk of reactivation altogether: "The fact is that I do not need to reactivate in order to think along the thread of my thought of yesteryear or along the thread of a thought of someone else."[158]

Concerning the status of 'ideal' geometrical objects, he doesn't deny the specific objectivity of an 'ideal science,' as he remarks: "I know that geometry is not natural like a rock or a mountain".[159] And he follows Husserl in distinguishing geometry, with its ideal truths, from psychological truths concerning real people. As subjects, we have the ability to organise the spatial frame of experience, but despite the fact that this ability enables us "to overcome the frame of passive, psychical, events, [it] does not overcome the frame of the abilities of a subject, and it does not provide ideal being'.[160] The question is then, how does he think that a legitimate conception of geometry as 'ideal being' is provided?

For Merleau-Ponty, geometry is constructed, or 'produced', not discovered as "Platonism" suggests. As we stated above, Merleau-Ponty's starting point in these lecture notes was to 'excavate' below the Platonist's ideal objects, not just to accept them without question. Since geometry is 'produced' in the first instance within an individual thinker's thoughts, "in this emergence, geometry is the complete opposite of objective being".[161] For geometry to acquire its objective status as 'ideal being', a next stage is required and that stage comes with the work of operative language in building and sustaining a tradition of geometry as ideality which is "at the hinge of the connection between me and others".[162]

According to Merleau-Ponty, the historicity of ideality is the positing, through the living human, of a task which is not uniquely his, but one that echoes back to earlier foundations:

> "The living human summons up the whole past and the whole future of culture as its witness. And to evoke this whole story, he has no need of documents: history has its point of insertion in him, in the hinge between his sensible or natural being and his active and productive being. He has only to think in order to know that thought is made, that it is culture and history."[163]

Merleau-Ponty clearly suggests an approach to the theme of philosophy that is "far from being an idea, is a ground (*sol*)", and he states that "philosophy seeks in the archeology of the ground

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[157] MP, *HLP*, p. 64.
[158] MP, *HLP*, p. 65.
[159] MP, *HLP*, p. 28.
[160] MP, *HLP*, p. 43.
[161] MP, *HLP*, p. 54.
[162] MP, *HLP*, p. 24.
[163] MP, *HLP*, p. 7.

(*sol*), in the depth and not in the height (the ideas)".[164] This comment in his lecture notes on Husserl's *Origin of Geometry* can be read as an intense summary of his final philosophy, It shows perfectly his position that prioritizes a type of archeology over teleology, and therefore entails a rejection of Husserl's approach to the idea rationality can be reconstructed in its historicity through an ideal history of European humanity viewed as the *telos* of ancient Greek philosophy. However, although he does not agree with this conception of *telos*, he still holds a meaning for the notion of *telos*, as he mentions a horizon or a future, and as the depth also includes sense, essence, an invariant, or a structure. However, this time, "we will not be able to proceed in a progressive way",[165] but only in a circular way, where "to go in one direction is truly to go in the other".[166]

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[164] MP, *HLP*, p. 67.
[165] MP, HLP, p. 12.
[166] MP, HLP, p. 41.

Conclusion

The Pre-Socratics: Uninvited guests of Merleau-Ponty's ontology

After these examinations regarding Husserl's narrative of European humanity and its relation to the ancient Greek period, his account in *The Origin of Geometry*, and how Merleau-Ponty goes beyond Husserlian phenomenology through the ontological concept of flesh and aesthetic rationality, a comparison between these two philosophers can be interpreted in a reference to ancient Greek philosophy and the question of historicity. Consequently, we are reaching four main differences between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty in the light of these aspects.

1. First of all, Husserl uses the notion of the infinite task or infinitude in order to justify his establishment of a relationship between European humanity and that of the ancient Greeks. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty is closer to a position that can be associated with the notion of finitude. Referring to how antiquity reaches the concept of the infinite through ideality but does not go "far enough to grasp the possibility of the infinite task", Husserl points out how European humanity established this understanding of infinitude:

> What is new, unprecedented, is the conceiving of this idea of a rational infinite totality of being with a rational science systematically mastering it. An infinite world, here a world of idealities, is conceived, not as one whose objects become accessible to our knowledge singly, imperfectly, and as it were accidentally, but as one which is attained by a rational, systematically coherent method. In the infinite progression of this method, every object is ultimately attained according to its full being-in-itself [*nach seinem vollen An-sich-sein*].[167]

Husserl sees reason as universal and as a domain of infinite tasks and goals. However, Merleau-Ponty's understanding of simultaneity differs from Husserl's goal of establishing the apodictic coincidence of consciousness with its object. Husserl's assertion that the presence of the object of thought with thought itself contrasts with Merleau-Ponty's assertion that "simultaneity" is the finite ground of the body.

Husserl's criticism regarding the restriction of the classical Greeks' knowledge to finite tasks (e.g. Euclidean geometry, and ancient mathematics in general) depicts a finitely closed a priori, arguing that antiquity does not go far enough in grasping the possibility of the infinite task. Meanwhile, Merleau-Ponty seemingly embraces the notion of finitude through his ontological works. Besides the finite ground of the body, a further aspect of Merleau-Ponty's relation with the notion of finitude draws on Heraclitus' fragment regarding eternity.[168]

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[167] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 22.
[168] Heraclitus, Fragment 52: "Eternity is a child playing draughts, the kingly power is a child's."

Merleau-Ponty was concerned with the modern crisis of rationality, expressed also in our relationship to nature. For Merleau-Ponty, this crisis requires a revision and even a radicalization of our ontology instead of (or beyond) an approach of historicity of rationality. He argues that this radicalization entails the "rediscovery of *physis*, then of *logos*."[169]

Merleau-Ponty's aim of destabilising and thus rehabilitating our understanding of nature begins with a return to the ancient concept of *physis,* especially as it appears in the work of the pre-Socratics. In his lectures from the Collège de France, gathered and published as *La Nature*[170], he explicitly states that such a rehabilitation of our ontology requires a return to the Heraclitean idea of *physis*[171] as "child at play." In the Heraclitus fragment, the word *aeon* ("eternity") is used instead of *physis*. Here, contrary to the traditional view that considers nature as a totality of necessary causes and effects, Merleau-Ponty links *physis* and *aeon* in order to suggest that nature must be understood in terms of chance and contingency. Therefore, alongside Heraclitus' approach to the term of *aeon*, referring to the notion of finitude through the metaphor of "child at play", Merleau-Ponty also draws the concept of "eternity" into a ground of finitude through this placement of *physis*.

2. Secondly, another important difference between Husserl and Merleau-Ponty regarding the question of historicity can be formulated around the concept of *telos*. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Husserl uses the term *telos* and 'teleology', especially in his later works. By these terms he refers to the specific networks of ends that constitute the driving force of human life and culture. Husserl specifically talks about the 'teleology' of European humanity in the *Crisis* and *The Vienna Lecture*. European humanity since ancient Greeks, for Husserl, manifests a certain inbuilt endeavour towards rationality and living a life of reflective self-responsibility.[172] According to Husserl, only Europe possesses this *telos* in the strict sense, as a driving force behind a quest for a higher mode of living.

On the other hand, despite Merleau-Ponty's attempts to conduct a form of philosophical archeology, his efforts do not necessarily encompass European humanity or modernity in this respect as a *telos*, at least in the same sense of Husserl's standpoint. One of the aspects of Husserl's thought criticised by Merleau-Ponty is the convergence or connection between *telos* and rationality. As Barbaras points out, as a result of the tension in Husserl's own thought and his continuing debt to positivism and objectivism, "far from recognizing the originality of the

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[169] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 183.
[170] Merleau-Ponty's 1956–57 course, "*The Concept of Nature*."
[171] For further arguments related to this relation between these two concepts, see: Keith Whitmoyer, "The Caprice of Being: Aeon and Physis in Merleau-Ponty, Heraclitus and Deleuze", *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Volume 31, Number 3, 2017, Penn State University Press, pp. 385-395.
[172] Husserl, *Crisis*, see ch. 15.

world of experience, Husserl asserts an absolute *eidetic continuity* between the life-world and that of scientific activity, which amounts to saying that the return of reason to perception is dominated [still] by the categorical of reason, that the world of experience is regrasped according to the *telos* of rational activity."[173]

According to Merleau-Ponty, this *telos* and rational framework are problematic because of their reductionism. Merleau-Ponty opposes them by dislocating the Husserlian hierarchy of levels of experience and activity. He also allows the openness of the field of presence in a way that it is revealed to have a gap in meaning in relation to reflection. Merleau-Ponty also refutes the presupposition that a constituting ego plays a central role in history or in daily practices. Bergo argues that "it is, moreover, of extreme interest that the phenomenological field, as understood above all by Merleau-Ponty in light of his 'topological space', is grasped in different but mutually illuminating ways by contemporary multidimensional geometers of curved space and by art and literature."[174]

Yet, it is important to specify why Merleau-Ponty's final philosophy does not include a Husserlian approach to *telos*. As we have mentioned earlier, according to Merleau-Ponty "philosophy seeks in the archeology of the ground [*sol*], in the depth and not in the height (the ideas)." The reason for this shift from 'the ideas' to 'the archeology of the ground' is "the hidden reason in history" [*verborgene Vernunft in der Geschichte* (in Fink's terms through Merleau-Ponty)], a "universal teleology of reason" (*universale Teleologie der Vernunft*) as the theme of Being (Wesen) which can only be grasped in filigree, as a secret or hidden connection. Merleau-Ponty describes this formulation of the "structural" or concrete *a priori* as the horizon of culture. Merleau-Ponty, here, refers to a different type of "universal teleology of reason" other than Husserl's *telos*. He prioritizes archeology over Husserl's universal teleology of reason.

However, this approach of Merleau-Ponty does not mean that he leaves the concept of *telos* aside completely. This is because the "depth" Merleau-Ponty mentions also includes sense, essence, an invariant, or a structure; this vertical depth also includes a horizon or a future. On the other hand, *this* horizon or *this* future of the vertical depth Merleau-Ponty refers to does not necessarily always coincide with the very meaning of the initial usage of *telos* by Plato and Aristotle.

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[173] R. Barbaras, "Merleau-Ponty et la racine de l'objectivisme husserlien," in *Le tournant de l'expérience: recherches sur la philosophie de Merleau-Ponty* (Paris: Vrin, 1998), p. 67. tr. Bettina Bergo, in "Philosophy as *Perspectiva Artificialis*: Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Husserlian Constructivism" in *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*.

[174] Bettina Bergo, "Philosophy as *Perspectiva Artificialis*: Merleau-Ponty's Critique of Husserlian Constructivism" in *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. 165.

Originated in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, the concept of *telos* has a special place in the sense that each thing possesses a *telos* or "final cause" in Aristotle's Four Causes.[175] In the *Phaedo*, Plato through Socrates indicates that true explanations for any given physical phenomenon must be teleological.[176] The common or conventional meaning of *telos,* based on Plato and Aristotle's explanations, is still only one-dimensional. This is where Merleau-Ponty's novel sense of *telos* differs from that of the classical philosophers as well as that of Husserl. As Lawlor points out, Merleau-Ponty, through his concept of 'the archeology of the ground', "implies that we have two inseperable, intertwoven axes or dimensions, a doubling that comprises a vertical depth and a horizontal distance."[177]

Considering that the flesh, in Merleau-Ponty's ontological terms, is an "element" of *Wesen* (Being), and that he states that to designate it, "we should need the old term 'element', in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire"[178] just as the pre-Socratics did, then it is also possible to relate Merleau-Ponty's 'doubling' *telos* (with two inseparable dimensions) to the pre-Socratics' understanding of nature since this account of the flesh is an element of Being and *telos,* as "the hidden reason of history", is the theme of Being. Therefore, unlike Husserl's position that refers to classical Greece as the *telos* of European humanity, it can be claimed that, Merleau-Ponty takes us to the period before classical Greece, to the pre-Socratic notion of the "element" also known as *arche*, with his new account of *telos*. This surprising convergence between Merleau-Ponty and pre-Socratic thought through his understanding of *telos* and flesh as an element is especially striking since, as far as we know, there was actually no such conception of *telos* in pre-Socratic thought. This means Merleau-Ponty's notion of "archeology of the ground" reaches, from the very beginning, an important remnant of the hidden reason inherent to history: a novel relation between *telos* and *arche*, in other word, between "end" and "beginning".

3. This striking shift in the meaning of *telos* in Merleau-Ponty brings us to the third difference between him and Husserl regarding the question of historicity, and the ancient Greek era. Since this vertical depth and horizontal distance comprise "two inseparable, interwoven axes or dimensions", we have the concept of interweaving at work here. Because of this concept of interweaving, it is impossible for Merleau-Ponty[179] to proceed in a progressive way, but only in

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[175] In *Physics* II 3 and *Metaphysics* V 2, Aristotle offers his general account of the four causes.
[176] Plato, *Phaedo*, Arc Mano, tr. Benjamin Jowett, 2008.
[177] Leonard Lawlor, "*Verlechtung*: The Triple Significance of Merleau-Ponty's Course Notes on Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" in *Husserl at the Limits of Phenomenology*, p. xvii.
[178] Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and The Invisible, p. 139.
[179] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 12.

a circular way, where "to go in one direction is truly to go in the other"[180]. Here, Merleau-Ponty again directly refers to Heraclitus[181] and affirms his notion of the unity of opposites:

> In sum, is it not exactly the thought we are seeking, not ambivalent, "ventriloquial," but capable of differentiating and of integrating into one sole universe the double or even multiple meanings, as Heraclitus has already showed us opposite directions coinciding in the circular movement?[182]

For Husserl on the other hand, a sense of the historical moment and progress, and therefore a linear movement instead of a circularity, remains essential to the identity and survival of philosophy. The historical theory of Husserl is entirely formed by the movement of theoretical reflection. Husserl reaches the conclusion that the "teleology of European history" is the genesis of ideal objectivities. Furthermore, this teleology also includes Husserl's assumption regarding historical continuity. In such a continuity, history is characterized by cumulative development from lower to higher forms. Husserl's going back in history is also a way of emphasizing the direction of this movement and of historical continuity. He argues that the "mythical-practical world-view and world knowledge can give rise to much knowledge of the factual world the world as known through scientific experience", and through the direction of this historical continuity, "that can later be used scientifically."[183]

4. The final main difference in this manner is related to how Merleau-Ponty goes beyond Husserl's being European humanity oriented through that new approach of the flesh as an ontological concept. Husserl's standpoint regarding European humanity might not be considered simply as a form of European chauvinism, as it can also be read as an intention of him "for the ideal of the whole and for the common capacity, the actuation of which is the necessary condition that each may be a member of a universal communal whole."[184] Moreover, Merleau-Ponty himself states that for Husserl European knowledge would maintain its value only by becoming capable of understanding what it is not in itself.[185] However, one thing is still certain: Husserl is forced to specify a *telos* through the name of one geographical or cultural sphere, and relate it to an origin.

On the other hand, in Merleau-Ponty's case, phenomenology cannot be limited to this narrative. It cannot remain as a mere philosophy of consciousness as it is, in this form, inadequate to

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[180] Merleau-Ponty, *HLP*, p. 41.
[181] Heraclitus, Fragment 103: "In the circumference of a circle the beginning and the end are common."
[182] Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and The Invisible, p. 91.
[183] Husserl, *Crisis*, p. 284.
[184] James G. Hart, "'Mythos' to 'Logos' to Utopian Poetics: An Husserlian Narrative", p. 153.
[185] Merleau-Ponty, *Primacy of Perception*, (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1968), p.89.

explain our relation to world. In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty moves intentionality from consciousness to the body, and seeks to describe our initial contact with the world through the body. Finally, in *The Visible and The Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty's chiasmic ontology ensures that in a way, the other is always already intertwined within the subject. He explicitly states that the self and the non-self, myself and the other are not two contradictory terms, but rather that each is the obverse and reverse of the other.[186] His final philosophy is, in that sense, an attempt to reinforce the idea that the self and the other are relationally constituted through their potential reversibility.

In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the other is always already encroaching upon us, but this does not mean that they are reducible to us. For Merleau-Ponty, there can and even should be the risk of such overlapping with the other.[187] As Reynolds points out regarding the other, "his philosophy consistently alludes to the manner in which this encroachment is not simply a bad thing. For Merleau-Ponty, interacting with and influencing the other (even contributing to permanently changing them), does not necessarily constitute a denial of their alterity. On the contrary, if done properly it in fact attests to it, because we are open to the possibility of being influenced and changed by the difference that they bring to bear upon our interaction with them."[188]

Therefore, Merleau-Ponty's ontological basis that gives the other a unique connectedness with *I* through the concept of flesh, also, might leads us to a very novel kind of universality as well as an alternative understanding of our societies and history. He argues that history is neither a mere juxtaposition of events or the unfolding of a pre-determined Rationality. Nevertheless, he still argues that the contingent movement of history has a sense, if not a "direction." For Merleau-Ponty, through his new sense of *logos* and aesthetic rationality, we do not need to seek a beginning of ideality through the historicity of rationality, just as we do not have to specify a particular period or geography (in any sense) as the *telos* of another. Instead of the relation framing European humanity as the *telos* of ancient Greece; now the relation between simply I, the other and the world through the ontological concept of the flesh is what matters. Flesh, as a material that primarily exists, ensures the realization of the phenomenological. The ontological concept of flesh unfolds the myself to other selves, because we belong to the same contexture of flesh.

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[186] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 83, 160.
[187] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and The Invisible*, p. 123.
[188] Jack Reynolds, "Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961)"

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