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What the Fuck is This?: Aesthetic Nature of Being or Ontology in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

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What the Fuck is This?: Aesthetic Nature of Being
or Ontology in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

What the Fuck is This?: Aesthetic Nature of Being
or Ontology in the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in English

by

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Abstract

“What the Fuck is This?” examines the intersection of phenomenology and poetry arguing for an aesthetic nature of Being and focuses on *how* we know or experience the world instead of Cartesian absolutes. This subjective knowledge does not compete against objective knowledge but simply recognizes the use that poetic language has for communicating the subjective knowledge from experience of being as it unfolds for us. The major movements of the thesis focus on aesthetic objects, aesthetic intersubjectivity, and the aesthetic self. These are labeled “aesthetic” because a phenomenological methodology reveals a dialectic between that which is unfolding and that which is understanding such that the phenomenon is constructed as a unified and individual being. This construction is not a problem but is simply that which we have access to since we do not have immediate and absolute knowledge of a thing in itself as that would be a unification with said thing. Though this knowledge is not absolute, it is constructed from the unfolding of the thing itself and is therefore partial knowledge that builds to a more complete knowledge of the phenomenon. Whether the thing or being that is unfolding can be considered as an object, a subject, or even consciousness of a self, the aesthetic nature of being allows us to accept construction of being as an inevitable partial truth reflective of the way we exist in the world. This reality is further explained with Gerard Manley Hopkins’ poetry, notes, and letters as they shed light on the ability of poetry and language in general to communicate experiences and the partial truths of being that stem from them.

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Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1
<u>On the Count of Three! One, Two, Five!</u>	3
<u>There is Nothing New Under the Sun, Unless You're Kant</u>	11
<u>Chapter Breakdown</u>	14
<u>Chapter 1 Aesthetic Objects</u>	16
<u>Phenomenology of Aesthetic Objects</u>	19
<u>The 5th H: Inscap and the Aesthetic Unfolding of Being</u>	23
<u>Poetry is for the Birds: Contemplation, Construction, and Language</u>	29
<u>Multiplicities, Simultaneity, and Word Choice</u>	31
<u>Chapter 2 Aesthetic Subjectivity</u>	35
<u>The Problem of the Other</u>	38
<u>Solution via Paradox</u>	39
<u>Solution via Analogy</u>	40
<u>Solution via the Dialogic</u>	43
<u>Solution via Aesthetics</u>	44
<u>Poetry and the Aesthetic Nature of the Other</u>	48
<u>Chp 3 Aesthetic Selves</u>	57
<u>Dasein and Heidegger: Man is the Measure of All Being</u>	59
<u>Action, Instress, and Categories of Intention</u>	61
<u>Continuity of a Unified/Fragmented Self: Self as Process and Reflection</u>	65
<u>Free Will and Identity</u>	68
<u>Hopkins' Vocabulary: Selving and Stress</u>	71
<u>Works Cited and Consulted</u>	81

Introduction

Aesthetics and the Modern Shift in Knowledge Creation

When people find themselves asking basic questions about being — What are we experiencing and doing in the world? How can we know what is real? Can we say anything about what there is?— they are essentially asking, “What the fuck is this?” This thesis will examine the intersection of literature and metaphysics in an attempt to answer this fundamental question. More specifically, my thesis follows the long and controversial tradition of phenomenology to argue that the aesthetic is fundamental for knowing what *this* is. This is demonstrated in the notes and poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins.

Though the study of traditional aesthetics is known to “arise mainly with respect to the ontological status of the idea which gets executed” in art or artistic objects and therefore includes aesthetics as a subset of ontology, the aesthetic is not generally understood as a necessary component of our experience of being because the subjective nature of this is denigrated epistemologically (Slater). This thesis examines the role of the aesthetic in our understanding of objects, the Other, and the self as an epistemologically rewarding practice. I use this term to refer to the unfolding and intentionality of a pattern and unity of a being to know partial truths of a thing (concrete or abstract) as a synthesis of pure experience and creativity. To distinguish between the traditional use and my own use, I will use “traditional aesthetics” to refer to the traditional study of art and beauty. Just as we discuss an artist's aesthetic as noticeably unified and iterative throughout their various works regardless of the particular content, the aesthetic nature of Being is iterative, creating the varied, and at times contradictory, experiences of fragmented yet unified beings. My redefinition of “aesthetic” as a useful term in ontology is

partially inspired by the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins' fragmented writings about what he calls *inscape*, which is used by Hopkins to refer to a “pattern” or “patterns” in poetry as well as phenomena. This inspiration has grown into a reading of this aesthetic nature of Being in the works of prominent philosophers. This thesis demonstrates that what we *can* know of a being (beings participate in Being) is necessarily aesthetic, and that language (including poetic language), in its variety and ambiguity, is not a hindrance to understanding but a helpful medium for understanding the nature of Being as aesthetic.

Though “Ontology” entered the English language in the early 18th century as the study of being in the abstract sense, and though traditional aesthetics was also becoming prominent in academia in the 18th century, these areas of philosophical inquiry date back long before modernity got a hold of them (Simpson). Ancient Greek philosophers also discussed the nature of being and beauty, but in the Western modern era of science and analytic philosophy, these areas began to take a new shape with specialized methods, vocabulary, and ends in mind. Analytic Philosophy and other areas of inquiry took shape as separate autonomous disciplines with their own conventions and purposes in an academic setting. Objectivity and the scientific method were quickly becoming the obvious default perspective from which to examine any aspect of the world we are in. Global capitalism and the commodification of life bred a modern consciousness centered around use-value, production, and efficiency in compartmentalization. From this sort of modern consciousness, what the sciences produce has more use for society and the individual than the products of the humanities or art. In this approach to the age-old questions of the self and knowledge of other minds, we see Freud's constructs of the ego and the unconscious and Marx's understanding of social dynamics and economics as things to be studied

scientifically and to know objectively. We quantify and compartmentalize areas of experience and reality to have an objective scientific understanding of it, and this scientific objectivity has produced results; philosophy and the arts have not.

Industrialization, gaps in economic prosperity, and large scale war had an effect on the modern consciousness just as much as scientific objectivity and the theory of evolution. These modern issues left people asking, “How do we make sense of our place in larger systems that have been proven to be unstable? How do we make sense of suffering? How do we create meaning? What is the nature of reality, ethics, or humanity if everything is relative and nothing is given? What is the function of art in all of this?” As made evident with the Romantics modernity struggled with the conflict between the arts, sciences, and industrialization and found the arts to be “useful” outside of or as a supplement for the shifts in modern consciousness. These questions about lived experience have been found to be best addressed by the aesthetic. Poetry was especially starting to fill a useful role for the moderns in attempting to answer these questions, and it was even influential in philosophical circles.

On the Count of Three! One, Two, Five!

When the three big H's —Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger— in ontology and German thought contemplated these questions, a codification of the study of being was in effect. Modernity sought a foundational understanding of humanity and reality, so philosophers were asking, “What is *this*, the experienced world, really? What can we know?” This led to the method of Phenomenology and eventually to Existentialism; we have Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, and Heidegger's *Being and Time* which all influenced

great thinkers including Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Throughout these texts there is an argument about what we can say and know about beings and Being, and *how* we can know. These authors have explored ontology and traditional aesthetics, but these discussions mostly, for obvious reasons, discuss the aesthetic in relation to art not as a nature of Being. Even still, the discourse of these well known authors demonstrates an important relationship between ontology and an aesthetic understanding of it; the aesthetic can be reshaped to understand being instead of focusing only on art as a special kind of being.

Howard Fulweiler's *Letters from a Darkling Plain* also uses Hopkins to demonstrate how poetry can be a part of the "class of knowledge-producing activities" despite the shift in sensibility between the middle ages and the nineteenth century. After Lock in the 17th century, figurative language was seen as working against truth, and literal language was the language of reason (Fulweiler 14). This shift in sensibility is also noticed by Collen Morris in *Discovery of the Individual*, and Jeffrey Cohen in *Medieval Identity Machines* which explain that there was a shift from a unified collective to a consciousness of the individual in modernity. As we learn from Cohen, Fulweiler also asserts that medieval sensibility was a "unified symbolic consciousness" (Fulweiler 18). This loss of a unified symbolic consciousness left many searching for something to unify communities and provide immediate intersubjective knowledge again. The Romantic poets searched for meaningful knowledge by rejecting Lockian realism and becoming preoccupied "with the problem of poetry not only as self-expression but as a valid means to knowledge" (Fulweiler 20). Modern philosophy and the arts were working toward theories of being and human meaning, and some of them found the way to that knowledge through poetry.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel asserts that the only way to know something is through experience. This is the beginning of the modern use of Phenomenology. Hegel argues that through the process of the dialectic and negation of things we find that things are in a state of becoming, and things have an end. For Hegel, there is progress toward unity, and the process for that progress is seen in the state of becoming through the dialectic. In a similar vein, the aesthetic, for Hegel, is in objects created by self-conscious life with an end. The aesthetic is an expression of freedom, of self-determination which is a necessary essence of being human or a self-conscious and rational being as opposed to other kinds of being (Houlgate). This self-consciousness, or intention/orientation, is where the mind forgets that it is not separate. It thinks that things are outside of it and alienates itself; the world is created in this way with thought, with intentionality. Hegel's monism and idealism lead to a world of multiplicity in unity, of differences, and a world where the Absolute, or truth, is the unity of Being.

As it was with Hegel, for Edmund Husserl, intentionality, or orientation to or about something, is an aspect of knowing essence that should not be taken for granted. According to Emmanuel Levinas, Husserl's phenomenology "is not just the fact of letting phenomena appear as they appear; this appearing, this phenomenology, is the essential event of being. ... Because being consists in revealing itself, it is enacted as intentionality" (134). For Husserl, the absolute, the truth, or the essence of a thing is found in experience of phenomena. He used his "descriptive psychology" (phenomenology) as a transcendental approach to knowing. This focus on returning to the phenomena and examining intentionality in the essence of being is the space for the aesthetic. The sensibility that we experience and reference as we sense and construct the world is a necessary component of our understanding of being as it is data to consider. Sensibility in

Husserl's work "is 'intentional' in that it situates all content, and is situated not in relation to objects but in relation to itself. It is the zero point of situation, the origin of the fact of being situated itself" (Levinas 136). To experience or even to know requires direction and intentionality. Thus, Husserl's sensibility and intentionality demonstrate that the orientation of a subject, or subjectivity, is a necessary component of uncovering or experiencing being.

Though there are many examinations of Husserl's metaphysics, there are only a few scholars, like Wolfgang Huemer, who discuss the relationship between his metaphysics and aesthetics. In a letter to Hofmannsthal, Husserl makes explicit connections between his own budding phenomenology and Hofmannsthal's aesthetic theory. Huemer's understanding of this letter is as such:

Once we have taken the phenomenological attitude, our stance towards our physical environment, towards science and what is believed to constitute reality, changes radically. Everything becomes "questionable, incomprehensible, a riddle" (Husserl, 1994, vol. VII, 134). There is only one way to solve this riddle: by bracketing all questionable assumptions and beliefs, especially our existential beliefs, and taking objects as what they are, or better, as what they become in this attitude: phenomena ... According to this description of the phenomenological reduction, we have to apply a universal doubt, a methodological scepticism à la Descartes, and observe and describe those phenomena that cannot be doubted. And here again Husserl equates the "phenomenological look" with aesthetic experience. (Huemer 122)

In this letter, though the connections between phenomenology and aesthetic theories are made explicit by Husserl himself, Husserl does caution against any sort of jump to a conclusion about the connection between the two thinkers as "the phenomenologist and the artist take the same kind of attitude, [but] they do so for very different reasons. In the purely aesthetic experience one looks for pleasure, while the phenomenological reduction serves philosophical and scientific goals" (Huemer 123). This limitation of the aesthetic to an end of pleasure is understandable

from the traditional approach to studying aesthetics, but this distinction is one of convention, not necessity. “Aesthetic” does not need to be cut off from the discussion of the nature of being if it is phenomenologically determined to be an aspect of being.

Following Husserl, Martin Heidegger takes this connection between phenomenology and the aesthetic even further, specifically in regards to the poetry of Friedrich Hölderlin—a poet/philosopher who was a contemporary of Hegel. An important aspect of ontological discussions, and an area that this thesis will explore, is the subject/object distinction. Heidegger does not necessarily deny the dichotomy between subjects and objects, but he does argue that “our experience of this subject/object relation *derives from* and so *presupposes* a more fundamental level of experience, a primordial modality of engaged existence in which self and world are united rather than divided” (Thomson italics in original). This assertion is shared by Hegel and Husserl when they argue that the Absolute is the unity of Being, but the split between subject and object is experienced in intentionality. We normally experience the self as part of the “external” world. The “experience of ourselves as subjects confronting objects is comparatively infrequent and takes place on the background of a more basic experience of ourselves as integrally involved with the world of our practical concerns, an experience of fundamental self/world intertwinement to which we always return” (Thomson). For Heidegger, there is a focus on action and a return to the self-same. His ontology and history is not one of progress and becoming, as it is for Hegel, but being and unity from the start. Our experience with art should be like any other object in this regard, but aesthetics and subjectivism have made it into something else and forced a subject/object dichotomy as the default assumption. Being is therefore considered, in portions of Western philosophy, to be dualistic with an inside being and

an outside being. What if it is not the case that Being is purely an external object for an internal and separate subject to orient itself toward?

For Heidegger, Being is not an entity. It is not this or that object, nor is it a concept or a specific event. Rather, it is the “unfolding” that is the essential Nature of Being. Being, as an action, continually reveals itself bit by bit or unfolds around us. This unfolding and intertwining, this “Being-in-the-world” is similar to my own use of an aesthetic understanding of our knowledge of being and the role of action, as my interpretation of Hopkins will demonstrate. This “unfolding” as Being itself correlates with the turn in Heidegger's writing toward the poetic:

Heidegger not only increasingly engages with poetry in his later thinking (especially the works of the German lyric poet Hölderlin), he also adopts a substantially more poetic style of writing. But why? The language of metaphysics, which ultimately unpacks itself as technological, calculative thinking, is a language from which Heidegger believed he did not fully escape in *Being and Time* ... What is needed to think Being historically, to think Being in its essential unfolding, is a different kind of philosophical language, a language suggested by the poetic character of dwelling. It is important to realize that Heidegger's intention here is not to place Being beyond philosophy and within the reach of poetry, although he does believe that certain poets, such as Hölderlin, enable us to glimpse the mysterious aspect of Being. His intention, rather, is to establish that the kind of philosophy that is needed here is itself poetic. This explains the stylistic component of the turn. (Wheeler)

Poetic language as opposed to or, perhaps, working with “technological, calculative thinking,” allows “us to glimpse the mysterious aspect of Being.” The medium with which we understand what we experience to be Being continuously unfolding is poetic language. Nietzsche used it; Sartre used such literary language; and yet some thinkers (including myself at times) tend to feel that such subjective and paradoxical ways of exploring thought and being are too unstable for academic communication or serious thought. Though the various utilities of language, including

poetic forms of language, have been used in many canonical philosophical texts, the poetic is still considered to be unnecessarily obtuse and is not accepted as a rational or epistemologically useful method of discourse. The study of Hopkins and his poetry in this thesis reshapes these discussions to further demonstrate what Hölderlin and Heidegger have already found: poetry has a use in our discourse on being.

In light of German Idealism, phenomenology, and the potential for an aesthetic lens in ontology, I propose adding two additional writers to these three Hs to make it 5 Hs: Hölderlin and Hopkins. Friedrich Hölderlin was a contemporary of Hegel and Gerard Manley Hopkins was contemporary of Husserl. Though these men were mostly poets, their work is intertwined with phenomenology and theories of Being. After some philosophical work, Hölderlin maintained that poetry, not philosophy, is the method for understanding being. He explores the notion of Absolute Being, as the original unity of subject and object. For Hölderlin, being is a process and poetry is a metaphor for the space of difference in which we dwell, the space between sensible and supersensible (Beistegui 122). As Hölderlin was influential for Heidegger, we can see the shared focus of being as a process and an interest in exploring the way that we can discuss or know this process of unfolding as the nature of Being.

Gerard Manley Hopkins also shares similarities to these theories and approaches, but his work is less organized, and less influential in philosophy than Hölderlin's. Despite this, there are many connections to make between what Hopkins refers to as "inscape," "instress," and "selving" which focus on the unfolding of being and the role of intentionality in our experience and knowledge of being. Exploring what Hopkins has to offer for our metaphysical search for knowledge of being will therefore take place at the intersection of Continental philosophy and

poetry.

Hölderlin, Hegel, Hopkins, Husserl, Heidegger—these thinkers influenced the theories of Nietzsche, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Laclau, and Lyotard, who all use analytic as well as more artistic language to discuss being, the problem of the Other, subjectivity, and universality. As it is with the sciences, models for understanding are important in metaphysics. A model is built to facilitate understanding, and even though it may not be precise, it is still accurate. Though it is not absolute knowledge, it is a partial truth that generates a better understanding of reality. Since philosophy is heavily dependent on language, using various features of language to create better models for thought provides tools and perspectives to encompass the whole range of knowledge that we have access to. Poetic language can be used to model or demonstrate certain aspects of metaphysics that more limiting kinds of language are less capable of communicating. Other scholars have noted the philosophical and aesthetic intersections between philosophy and artists/poets. Daniel Brown, James Collins, Andrew Sean Davidson, Howard Fulweiler, Anthony Kenney, William McNeill, Jeff Mitscherling, Timothy Morton, Anita Seppä, and Dennis Sobolev have all explored Hopkins' relevance for ontology, philosophy, and poetry. Though many philosophers argue that creative literature as opposed to exact scientific and logical language is useless for the philosopher's serious ends, the philosophical tradition is not wholly opposed to utilizing aesthetic language as a means, or model, or kind of understanding, and this thesis intends to make this fact not only more apparent but also more foundational for further discussions of Being.

There is Nothing New Under the Sun, Unless You're Kant

My notion of aesthetic being and its relationship to objects, intersubjectivity, or the self is obviously not completely new, but it is not an idea that I have heard much about in my research. I mostly come across philosophers like A. Walton Liz who say that "most English departments have become the last repository for bad philosophy" (Miller 17). Among the philosophical discussions about the role of the aesthetic in metaphysics or philosophy, there are some who find a common goal between the two. Pamela Matthews and David McWhirter, in the introduction to *Aesthetic Subjects*, argue that

modern thought, since Kant, has subscribed to the insight that the nature of the underlying condition we call reality is aesthetic. Reality has proven itself again and again to be constituted not 'realistically' but 'aesthetically.' Where this insight has penetrated—and by now it is just about everywhere—aesthetics has lost its character as a special discipline relating solely to art and become a broader and more general medium for the understanding of reality. (xviii)

If this has been since Kant, why does it seem that philosophical discourse is against it in favor of objective approaches to knowledge? Since modernism, aesthetics has moved from this notion of its use in knowledge creation and has instead been “relegated to the "depoliticized zone of meaning" (Matthews and McWhirter xv). The goal of *Aesthetic Subjects* is “to signal what we see as productive tensions—the undecidability or fundamentally enigmatic relationships between subject(ivity) and object(ivity), autonomy and repression, art and ideology—in aesthetics" and to ask what "might be gained through a renewed effort to distinguish aesthetics from (or at least to reconsider its entanglements with) the quite startling array of overdetermined concepts to which this experiential realm has been so insistently linked: truth, knowledge, form, the sacred, morality, eros, even art itself?" (Matthews and McWhirter xiii, xvi).

The collection of essays in *Aesthetic Subjects* works to question the realms that aesthetics has been limited to and explore the other possibilities. One such essay is "What Is Construction, What's the Aesthetic, What Was Adorno Doing?" by Robert Kaufman. After Fredric Jameson's mandate to "always historicize" in opposition to aestheticizing, Kaufman argues that "the desire to further such critical engagement has kindled the search for an aesthetic different from the classically Kantian or modernist versions and their legacies in hopes of finding an aesthetic more attuned, or at least less hostile, to the materio-historical" (366). In response to this Kaufman examines Jameson's interpretation of Adorno's interpretation of Kant and comes to the conclusion that "Adorno's constructivism is "a realization, not a refutation, of Kantian aesthetics" (374). Kantian aesthetics and constructivism do not distort reality nor are they hostile to materialism, according to Kaufman, but constitute reality. Kaufman argues that Adorno supports Kant's notion of constructivism, and that this "*constructivism* operates as a term meant ... to counter what is stigmatized as *formalist, static, self-reflexive, Kantian essentialism*" (Italics in original 370). This constructivism becomes generative as Adorno takes up this constructivism to explain how the aesthetic is not just "determinate judgement" but that it *is* the way we conceptualize.

This means simply that within the realm of thought, the aesthetic, rather than being determined by, provides the form for conceptual, purposeful thought or cognition. Aesthetic thought-experience remains "free" (at least, relative to more properly conceptual thought) from the preexistent rules assumed to govern conceptual-objective thought. In the Kantian lexicon, the aesthetic functions as the site of "reflective" rather than 'determinate' judgement. The aesthetic is thus both a boot-up disk for conceptual thought as such (for 'cognition in general,' as Kant puts it; *Judgment*, sec. 9, 62), and, as Adorno and others will stress, the engine for new, experimental—because previously nonexistent (and therefore free of status quo-determined)—concepts. (374-375)

The aesthetic provides a form from which to generate new concepts and connections instead of passively being determined by whatever passes before us. Constructivism recognizes *how* we know. We know and experience by actively reassembling the materials we find and forming “constellations of critical thought” (Kaufman 378). Kaufman along with Matthews and McWhirter agree with me that this sort of construction providing form and relations among the flux of beings unfolding before us is demonstrative of the aesthetic nature of being without denying materialism.

Since it appears to be the case that I am entering into a rather old conversation, how can I say anything new? Fulweiler says there is still a need for an investigation into "the profound epistemological changes that so affected the great romantics" (21). Matthews and McWhirter both agree that this discussion must be revived for a postmodern world which continues to experience a fragmented self and a fragmented reality. Though the “aesthetics of both Poe and Swinburne are directly related to the fragmentation of words, things, self, and reality occasioned by Locke's revolution and the subsequent splitting of poetic sensibility" this is still a relevant issue to contemplate (Fulweiler 21). My thesis adds to this larger discussion by examining Hopkins’ poetry, letters, and notebooks as well as tailoring the term “aesthetic” to be used as a nature of Being itself and a mode of knowledge creation. After demonstrating the aesthetic nature of being by a phenomenology of objects, the argument moves this old conversation about being and the aesthetic from the indubitable cogito and a dichotomy between subjects and objects toward an intersubjective “I” and a monism unified by the aesthetic nature of being known by an aesthetic self.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1, titled “Aesthetic Objects,” justifies phenomenology as the method with which to explore objects as aesthetic beings, thus introducing "aesthetic" as a phenomenological term. From here we will see how the works of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger support and reject the aesthetic approach to ontology. One example is Heidegger's discussion of objects unfolding for the observer as an aesthetic announcement of being as well as Heidegger's movement toward poetic language and the poetry of Hölderlin to make a statement about the way we can understand the metaphysical.

Chapter 2, titled “Aesthetic Subjectivity,” builds on the first chapter by using the aesthetic understanding of being to explain the experience of subjects as such. These implications will be used to accept the paradoxical experience of subjects as objects which offers partial truths in order to respond to Sartre's problem of the Other in *Being and Nothingness* as well as Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. This will necessarily address social ontology and solipsism and will utilize *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber* by Michael Theunissen and many other texts along those lines.

Chapter 3, titled “Aesthetic Selves,” delves into the use of an aesthetic understanding of being and the intersubjective constitution of the “I” to explore the ontological status of a “self.” This chapter will use the work of Hopkins to demonstrate how language is not a problem for epistemological explorations, but a tool. It will also focus on Hopkins' use of “inscape” and “selving” in his notes and poetry to demonstrate the aesthetic nature of being and the self with its elements of action, inscape, instress, and “unfolding” (to hearken back to Heidegger). From here

we find that intention and free will are necessary components for understanding the self as another aesthetic being constructed and in flux.

This project will not be producing any complete or exhaustive ontology to match that of Hegel nor Heidegger as they approach ways of distinguishing specific ontological statuses, though it will obviously discuss those distinctions as they become relevant for discussing the works of these great thinkers. The scope of this project is limited to arguing for awareness and use of the limitations of the kind of knowledge available to us and the partial truths that stem from it as something that is not to be denigrated. Subjectivity is an undeniable aspect of the way we know. Every way of seeing is a way of not seeing, so, as the essential nature of Being, we must add the aesthetic to the many ways of seeing our knowing being.

Chapter 1 Aesthetic Objects

Supports the method of phenomenology and an aesthetic understanding of being as epistemically rewarding. This is demonstrated in what poetic language is able to do as a tool for a discourse on being.

To begin an ontology, we must first build an epistemology and method. Though there are many approaches to knowing the world around us—such as objectivity, the scientific method, a dialectical approach, a Cartesian doubt of the senses, basic physical sensations, or even feminine epistemologies as argued by Luce Irigaray—this chapter argues for a phenomenological approach or way of knowing in order to uncover the aesthetic nature of being. This approach does not suggest that phenomenology is the only way to know, but that this approach adds to the many ways of knowing; Phenomenology is another perspective, if you will.

Phenomenology asserts that as bodied subjects in time and space, we do not have access to noumena, or things in themselves, but phenomena. Phenomena are not the things themselves, but the unfolding of being over time as we, human subjects in particular, experience them to be as filtered through our own being. For example, we can say that an apple is red, but it is only red to the observer. Different lighting environments will change the perceived color of the apple so that the quality of redness is contingent on the situation and way it presents itself. Our focus on the color is not even relevant to the essence of the thing itself, but we do not have access to that essence. We only know the apple in the way that our particular bodies in time can know. The redness of the apple is a partial truth of the thing itself as a phenomena, not noumena. Accepting our limitations — mind as a material part of the body is included in these limitations — as we find ourselves as embodied beings is the most accessible place to start developing an understanding of Being as we participate in it and experience other beings as they participate and

present themselves around us. “Being” as opposed to “being” is a sort of universalizing underlying reality. For many phenomenologists, Being is the Absolute or the Absolute Truth in which particular beings engage. In this way we find that being is not passive, but is instead active. One way of knowing this is in the experience of a phenomenon as an event that is actively unfolded to an observer over time. This unfolding allows for concrete and abstract objects to be known and contemplated instead of limiting the kind of being to be considered to observable objects. Needless to say, things get weird from here.

The experience of any given phenomena is constrained by the type of observer and the observer’s spatio-temporal reality. We can see how this is potentially problematic for many epistemologies in that it is, from the start, subjective, instead of objective. This is because this epistemology avoids Cartesian absolute knowledge in favor of exploring what we “actually” have access to in our given state of being. In the fifth meditation in *Cartesian Meditations*, Edmund Husserl argues that our epistemology should not focus on absolute certainty, but *how* we come to know the things that we do. To do this, Husserl suggests that we focus on what knowledge is like for us. Other phenomenologists agree with Husserl's understanding of this method. Emmanuel Levinas, reflecting on the work of Husserl, argues that as a methodology rather than any sort of dogmatic ideology, phenomenology offers a way to approach truth (130-131). Phenomenology is not the only method to gain knowledge of being, nor is it the most “useful” by scientific standards, but as subjects participating in the world, as embodied subjects, there are truths specific to us that do not need to be ignored.

Instead of a Cartesian approach that, understandably, ignores flawed information in favor of an absolute grounding, the phenomenological approach that gathers partial truths as we

experience phenomena or the unfolding of being carves its own path. To criticize phenomenology because it is not an objective science is to miss the point of using phenomenology as one way of knowing the world around us. Levinas says that when “a philosopher of the classical type insists on the imperfection of a phenomenon of knowledge, phenomenology, not content with the negation included in this imperfection, posits instead this negation as constitutive of the phenomenon” (131). The phenomenological approach is not trying to be a science because it starts from a subjective experience; it examines the phenomenon as it presents itself over time and is how we know. Cartesian exercises are helpful to an extent, but to ignore lived experience is to ignore a wealth of information about Being. The uncertainty and “the incomplete character of the synthesis or perception of the sensible” leads Levinas to assert that the “abstract notions which the terms ‘relativity’ and ‘uncertainty’ express cannot be *separated* from the phenomena or from their unfolding which these terms summarize” (131). Uncertainty is discovered as an inextricable truth of being as it unfolds or actively participates in Being and can therefore be examined instead of discounted. Phenomenological texts examining being tend to argue that being is “Heracleitean” for this very reason.

Our experience of phenomena is problematic in many ways, but these partial truths are not to be discounted as they are part of Being in which we also participate. As Levinas says, we “*are straightaway within being; we are ourselves part of its play; we are partners in the revelation*” (italics in original 134). We are not beings in the 2nd dimension, nor beings existing solely on the Internet (as far as we can tell, not yet at least), but even so we are beings in the world who have perspectives to add to the many ways of knowing. The natural sciences have solved natural observable problems that can be controlled and tested, but the humanities,

including philosophy, ask such foundational questions that are not observable in the same way as the objects of science are. Phenomenology does not replace scientific objectivity; phenomenology supplements scientific knowledge as phenomenology is concerned with our particular being as it is lived and the way such a being knows.

Phenomenology of Aesthetic Objects

Now that phenomenology is defended as the methodology and philosophical tradition from which my arguments are built, I can build a phenomenology of the aesthetic nature of objects. The major revelation is that, in a sense, objects unfold for us. Heidegger and other phenomenologists determined that being “is not simply pure presence or actual presence-at-hand” as traditional metaphysics understood it (Gadamer 144). When we discuss being, we are discussing being as it is revealed, as it is unhidden. Being is an event of truth:

It is not only the emergence into the light but just as much the hiding of itself in the dark. It is not only the unfolding of the blossom in the sun, but just as much its rooting of itself in the depths of the earth. Heidegger speaks of the ‘clearing of being,’ which first represents the realm in which beings are known as disclosed in their unhiddenness. ... this is all made possible only by the fact that revealment and hiddenness are an event of being itself. (Gadamer 150)

Gadamer interprets Heidegger's phenomenology as one concerned with the play between what being reveals and what it hides. This active play within being must also be actively perceived. Levinas understood Husserl's account of being in the same way that Gadamer understood Heidegger's work: Levinas finds that phenomenology “as a revelation of beings is a method of the revelation of their revelation. Phenomenology is not just the fact of letting phenomena appear as they appear; this appearing, this phenomenology, is the essential event of being” (Levinas 134). From Levinas and Gadamer we see that phenomenology is not just concerned with what

seems to be, but what we can know about the essence of being, which is that being is an event unfolding all the time. This is the sensible—the revelation of things to an observer/subject.

Levinas sees a construction or a synthesis of being here through the sensible.

The senses make sense. Every intellectual construction will receive from the sensible experience it claims to transcend the very style and dimension of its architecture. Sensibility does not simply record facts; it unfolds a world from which the highest works of spirit stem and from which they will not be able to escape. From the threads intertwined with the ‘content’ of sensations are woven ‘forms’ that—like space and time in Kant—mark every object that will subsequently be presented to thought. (Levinas 135)

This construction of reality and the aforementioned uncertainty as essential to the nature of being is what is meant by the aesthetic nature of being. There are gaps that are filled by the sensible, constructing partial truths about being. Heidegger goes so far to say that the “nothing” belongs to the “essential unfolding of being” (Heidegger 91). The revelation, the unfolding, the unhiddenness of being as the nature of being, as it is disclosed from the nothing, “opens up an open place” for the aesthetic and the unnameable (Gadamer 151). It is a place of flux and ambiguity such that unity requires an aesthetic/subjective lens to shape it. The nothing, the gaps in between being and not-being, the uncertainty and contingency found in the unfolding of being before us must be discussed as aesthetic synthesizing sensibility and phenomena into unities.

Our experience as subjects who experience objects as objects (experiencing subjects themselves comes later in this thesis) assumes that being is unified and stable. After all, my chair that I am sitting in right now is always the same chair from day to day. Objects are stable and therefore observable as such; there is a stable truth outside of the subject that can be known as a truth. A phenomenological approach looks at the object as a phenomenon: my observation of my stable desk chair has been constructed over time from multiple perspectives and is therefore

fragmented in nature. The particularity and being of my chair has unfolded for me; the experience of the chair is not an instantaneous unity but a constructed unity created out of fragmented experiences over time; the chair is constructed from a perceived pattern in the experience of the object. This may also seem to state the obvious, but the key here is that the unity of the thing as I experience it is constructed. I have filled in the gaps. The object as a unified particular and individual being is constructed from the sensible. Levinas agrees that “intellectual construction will receive from the sensible experience it claims to transcend the very style and dimension of its architecture. Sensibility does not simply record facts; it unfolds a world” (135). The chair exists as my desk chair persisting over time as a unified being because I have co-created the experience of the object as such. The being unfolds over time, and I fill in the gaps perceiving unity in the fragmented unfolding. The breakdown of the experience of an object as an object is therefore not objective, but always subjective, always created by a subject, and always already a fragmentary unity brought together in the sensible.

Our experience of creating unity in a fragmented world is the aesthetic sensibility for identifying patterns. It is like autostereograms: 2D pictures that look like random patterns, but if you look at them just right, you will see a hidden 3D image (or so they tell me — I’ve never been able to get it to work for me). Experience is not a pure or direct sensation of being but, rather, is something that is made sense of; it is constructed. Human beings know and experience the world as a constructed reality, which is something epistemologically valuable as opposed to the understanding of this ability to construct objects as faulty and therefore useless.

Through the phenomenological approach we see that participation in being as it is found to be fragmented, unified, and constructed is necessarily contradictory. This is where my

redefinition or shifted focus toward an aesthetic understanding of being comes in. The aesthetic nature of being is the flux and paradox contained in being that is then known to an extent through an aesthetic sensibility unifying the phenomenon. In the aesthetic nature of being, subjectivity, objectivity, patterns, unity, fragmentation, and contradictory states or meanings all exist together. The aesthetic is the space where the "unnameable" can become defined—defined in a way that provides the outlines of the possible, not the necessary and sufficient conditions describing a thing in and of itself. “For Heidegger, poetry cannot name the unnameable, but it can keep open the space for it” (Onof). In order to create that space, in order to converse about this nature of being, the conversation requires a specialized language: poetry. Hölderlin saw this; Heidegger saw this; Hopkins saw this. Heidegger’s turn in his writing even came about when he read Hölderlin, who decided that philosophy would not answer his questions and, thus, turned to writing poetry (Onof).

Though, as a skeptic myself, I may understand that such contingent and fluctuating paths to “knowing” are grounds for doubt, I am also an embodied being with sensibility. The sensible is one way to gather knowledge about our encounters with objects, subjects, and even the self; it is another tool in the toolbox for gathering and synthesizing partial truths about being as a supplement to, not a replacement of, what the natural sciences seek to understand. The epistemic value is found in the way we engage in conversations of experience of being, or the way that we are able to construct an intersubjective understanding of being through language (intersubjectivity will be examined in relation to the aesthetic nature of being in chapter 2). I will explore how explicitly aesthetic types of language, such as poetry, provide tools for discussing and modeling being as it is experienced as a constructed fragmented unity. The fragmented unity

of an object constructed by a subject can be seen in Hopkins' concept of "*inscape*" as it is found in his fragmented notebooks and letters. After exploring what Hopkins' *inscape* has to offer for my theory of aesthetic being, this chapter will examine the experience of *inscape* as it is expressed in a language best tailored to express such paradoxical and "irrational" thinking: poetry— specifically the poetry of Hopkins.

The 5th H: Inscape and the Aesthetic Unfolding of Being

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) was a student at Oxford, a professor of rhetoric, and a convert to Roman Catholicism who took up vows as a Jesuit in his adult life. He was also familiar with Greek and modern philosophy as he commented on Parmenides's fragments and wrote in response to philosophers like Hegel (Hopkins, *Journals*, 127, 119). The body of work left by Hopkins consists of correspondences with friends, notebooks, journals, sketches, undergraduate essays, and poetry, including fragments of poems and poems ready to be published which, unfortunately, were considered to be too strange for 19th century England. When he *was* published it was mostly letters to magazines about natural phenomenon and articles about literature. He was a poet nonetheless, and some of his poems were published, despite how queer the poetry was to his audience. This fragmented body of work makes a unified theory of ontology from Hopkins difficult to find and makes a definition of "inscape" difficult to form. Nonetheless, an understanding of Hopkins' work as a phenomenological endeavor, coupled with the phenomenological understanding of being as aesthetic, we come to find Hopkins' prose and poetry to be useful in this exercise.

To ground my discussion of Hopkins in metaphysics at the start, I will begin with what he wrote about this area. In "The Probable Future of Metaphysics," Hopkins predicts that

metaphysics will be barren with little content left after psychology becomes a legitimate science and reveals more about the human consciousness, but this barrenness will not last, as metaphysics will be filled with a purpose in light of science and Realism:

It will always be possible to shew how science is atomic, not to be grasped and held together, 'scopeless', without metaphysics: this alone gives meaning to laws and sequences and causes and developments—things which stand in a position so peculiar that we can neither say of them they hold in nature whether the mind sees them or not nor again that they are found by the mind because it first put them there. (Hopkins, *Journals*, 118)

Being, as the natural sciences observe it, is stable no matter the observer, but “laws and sequences and causes and developments” are revealed through naturalistic endeavors even though these are patterns created to be understood as such by the subject. With this in mind, what can we say about the ontological status of a natural law? Metaphysics is necessary to discuss these patterns of knowledge as constructed for which the natural sciences have no scope. This is where I see a connection between metaphysics, phenomenology, and the poetry of Hopkins: the patterns in the fabric of reality that we perceive even in the sciences. This fragmented yet unified, created yet stable, paradoxical nature of being is what I call the aesthetic nature of being, and is noticeably similar to Hopkins' term *inscape*. I have come to understand *inscape* as the fragmented and constructed unity of being; it is the pattern that is both created and revealed in the aesthetic space between a subject and an object.

Many scholars of Hopkins, including myself, have found *inscape* to be a rather difficult term to define. Some students of Hopkins, for example, tend to equate “inscape” with *haecceitas*, literally “thingness,” which is often used synonymously with essence, but Dennis Sobolev and Bernadette Ward both conclude that this is an incorrect understanding of *inscape*. Even in this

respect, they reach this conclusion for different reasons. If *haecceitas* is the individual essence of a thing, then, Ward argues, inscape cannot be considered an individual essence because inscape is the perception (or multiple perceptions) of the thing, and she argues that Hopkins believes the essence of the thing itself is only accessible to God (Ward 160). Sobolev, on the other hand, argues that inscape cannot be conflated with *haecceitas* because inscape has an “emphasis” on repetition that *haecceitas*, as a unique individuality of a thing, cannot. Robert B. Martin, who wrote the impressive biography *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, understands inscape as a way “to know what was essential and individual in whatever one contemplated. It was a form of identification” (206). This sounds rather close to *haecceitas* if defined as “the intuition of singularity” (McGrath 341) or “a non-qualitative property responsible for individuation and identity” according to John Duns Scotus, who coined the term *haecceitas* (Cross).¹ In fact, McGrath's initial focus on *haecceitas* as “intuition of singularity” sounds rather similar to one of Ward's definitions of Hopkins' inscape as “the individual perceptions that the artist can share,” so maybe these definitions are not so different after all (Ward 24).

So we understand that inscape is multiple, unified, individuating, and yet also repeating. How is this possible? Surely it is not the case that all of these scholars are correct even as they contradict one-another, therefore it seems that *inscape* must either be equivalent to Hopkins' predecessor's (Scotus') notion of *haecceitas*, or it simply is not. If one follows the issue that Hopkins is attempting to engage with his term “inscape,” it is easier to see a pattern throughout

¹ Cross, “Medieval Theories of Haecceity.” “First proposed by John Duns Scotus (1266–1308), a haecceity is a non-qualitative property responsible for individuation and identity ... : it is a “thisness” (a haecceitas, from the Latin haec, meaning “this”) as opposed to a “whatness” (a quidditas, from the Latin quid, meaning “what”).”

his seemingly contradictory or loose use of the word.

As other writers have determined, Hopkins was engaging in a phenomenological endeavor to understand being. To study Being and the unity of beings, Hopkins does what anyone beginning such a study would do: He observes the phenomena to gather information. Hopkins was an observer. He wasn't just passively watching or loving nature in general; he was a deep observer. He was such an observer and lover of the natural world that he even published some correspondence letters in *Nature*. In the index for *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, there are two columns worth of entries under “Trees, shrubs” and almost two columns of entries under “Clouds,” almost all with strange descriptions such as “flaky” or “scaly” clouds. The entries under “‘inscape', 'inscaped'” take-up only about one third of a column, even though inscape is widely understood to be the most important aspect of Hopkins' poetics and his ontology. Hopkins was an observant man (especially if that observation concerned trees or clouds). This level of observation and intense contemplation is not simply an oddity about Hopkins' personality but is his method for understanding being.

Hopkins' phenomenological approach eventually concludes that experience of unity is not simply the “mere sense that such a thing is one” (as Scotus' haecceitas claims) but that one must work to make sense of the multiplicities (scapes) that recede and come forward (the unhiddenness) to create objects and unities (Hopkins, *Journals*, 125). Contemplation of a thing requires repeated energy or action of the will “on the same matter” and there is “a contemplative enjoyment of the unity of the whole” in order to even have a “mere sense that such a thing is one” (Hopkins, *Journals*, 126).

The more intellectual, less physical, the spell of contemplation the more complex must be the object, the more close and elaborate must be the comparison the mind has to keep

making between the whole and the parts, the parts and whole. For this reference or comparison is what the sense of unity means; mere sense that such a thing is one and not two has no interest or value except accidentally. (Hopkins, *Journals*, 126)

This work, this active contemplation of things, taking into account the relationship between the parts and the whole, is what makes the phenomenon of the unity more than a “mere sense that such a thing is one.” This work, this action, is also synonymous with *stress*. *Stress*, another term that Hopkins employs in his journals and poetry, is important for pattern and tone in visual art (lines or colors emphasised), music (volume, etc), and especially poetry (emphasis or stress on certain syllables) (Hopkins, *Letters*, xxi–xxii). Contemplation/work/stress is necessary to experience the unity of the thing as well as the *inscape* (revealed/constructed patterns and fluctuations) of a thing. It is through emphasizing certain aspects of a thing that creates a pattern and draws the flux of being into a pattern of unity.

We know that Hopkins emphasizes the role of contemplation and work in order to comprehend and create the unity of a fragmented being, so how does this help us understand *inscape* and its use for our purpose of uncovering an aesthetic nature of being? One way of understanding the unfolding of being, as we saw with Heidegger and Husserl, is to discuss the experience as a revelation of a pattern. In a letter to Robert Bridges, a close friend who published Hopkins’ poetry after his death, Hopkins writes that “melody, is what strikes me most of all in music and design in painting, so design, pattern or what I am in the habit of calling 'inscape' is what I above all aim at in poetry" (Hopkins, *Letters*, 66). Now this pattern as with melody or design in painting is understandably within the realm of traditional aesthetics, but Hopkins uses *inscape* to refer to other objects outside of art. He examines the inscape of a flower and trees suggesting the pattern that he strives for in his poetry exists in all natural objects as well

(Hopkins, *Journals*, 209 and 199). Inscapes is the pattern that is paradoxically revealed to and created by the observer, is both individuating and multiple, and both unified and fragmented in all objects and in being.

Hopkins experiences emphasis (stress) and patterns (inscapes) when he contemplates things, but often times these unified things will have multiple patterns. Not only is the world of being filled with multiple kinds of being, but each being can be singular and multiple. While contemplating chestnut trees in the wind, Hopkins observes “that motion multiplies inscape only when inscape is discovered, otherwise it disfigures” (Hopkins, *Journals*, 199). The element of motion suggests that spatio-temporal things have multiple inscapes depending on time and place. Notice how this multiplying of inscapes happens during movement, suggesting that inscape cannot be the *necessary* individuating principle of the thing itself but is a distortion contingent on space, time, and observation. Again, we see that being, or the being that we have access to, is not pure presence, but is being in the world, is active, and is unfolding or stressing individuating aspects of itself. As stated earlier, Ward argues that for Hopkins, the individuating characteristic of the thing, its haecceitas or thingness, is only accessible to God. Hopkins does not experience the thing in itself, but only the inscapes, instresses, or characteristics of a thing at any given moment. He says that he knows the thing as one knows a body by its shadow, as “the being a thing has outside itself” (Hopkins, *Letters*, 83). In the same way, phenomenologists from the start accept that we do not have experiential access to the thing itself (noumenon), but we do have access to the phenomenon providing partial and important truths. These are distorted fluctuations of the thing itself yet they are unified and tell us something of being. This insight into being, these patterns, these emphases, are striking for Hopkins; the beauty in the world is what reveals

aspects of things themselves and causes one to stop and contemplate. Hopkins finds that objects, as objects, are constructed, being is both presence-at-hand and unfolding, and that this space of being as it is lived and experienced in all of its paradox and unnameableness is one of poetry.

Poetry is for the Birds: Contemplation, Construction, and Language

Word choice is of major importance for Hopkins, but such choices were at times annoying to his 19th century readers. In Bridges' preface to the editor's notes in the first edition of the *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, we find that contemporary criticism of Hopkins' work is based on the oddity and obscurity of his language. Hopkins is guilty of omitting relative pronouns and mixing identical forms so that "such ambiguity or momentary uncertainty destroys the force of the sentence" (Hopkins, *Poems*, 99). Bridges says that Hopkins

had full skill and practice and scholarship in conventional forms, and it is easy to see that he banished these purely constructional syllables from his verse because they took up room which he thought he could not afford them: he needed in his scheme all his space for his poetical words, and he wished to crowd out every merely grammatical colourless or toneless element. (Hopkins, *Poems*, 98)

Here, Bridges defends, or at least attempts to explain, Hopkins' strange syntax and play with words with the observation that he had a scheme that he put before convention, but Bridges assumes that the oddity and obscurity of Hopkins' language "were not a part of his intention." Bridges also tells us that, as Hopkins was a professor of rhetoric and poetry, he had mastery of the poetic form and "had full skill and practice and scholarship in conventional forms" (98). This leads me to, instead, assume that the oddities or "extravagances," as Bridges calls them, were absolutely intentional, even if the response from his audience was not what he would have preferred. This assumption is further justified when we look at how Hopkins' phenomenology and notion of *inscape* inform his poetics. His strange ambiguous form and word choices are not

contemplate the poem as an object, as being. As Hopkins suggested, we must consider the relation of the parts to the whole and really work at it. The importance of work or stress, as it is mentioned in Hopkins' prose, to create beauty and being is also in the metaphor here in the "sheer plod" of the plough uncovering or making unhidden the rich, moist, fertile and dark soil that would otherwise remain below the surface. Working on or contemplating the object reveals or makes unhidden the rich layers of meanings in the poem as well as the fragmented yet unified nature of being as we encounter it. Contemplation, working to really experience the world around us, uncovers the inscape of being or the aesthetic nature of phenomena. Poetic language demonstrates this in a way that analytic writing does not; it provides experience of this ploughing in one unified moment to find the inscapes in being.

Multiplicities, Simultaneity, and Word Choice

To analyze what Hopkins is doing with this language and what this means for our understanding of being, let us start from the beginning of "The Windhover." "I CAUGHT" is used right at the start instead of "I saw." He did not literally seize the bird as it is still in flight in the poem, but to catch something can also be to stop, to come upon, or to understand (if you catch my drift). The word choice is not one made with intention to clarify but, rather, to multiply meaning and bring attention to this multiplicity and ambiguity of being. This bird is also "drawn" ("dapple-dawn-drawn") which could be drained, tired, or produced as with a pencil, or perhaps the bird is brought along by the dawn like a horse drawn carriage. Not only is "drawn" ambiguous, but the hyphenated hybridity with "dapple" suggests fragmentation AND combination. Dapple is not just an adjective, but the hyphenation suggests that these are necessary components of the falcon's being and inscape. The phrase "dapple-dawn-drawn" forces

a buckling of an adjective, time, and action, which demonstrates the fact that experience is not in a vacuum, but that this particular falcon, this inscape as a repeated individuating and unifying pattern, is not able to be separated from the moment in time and space. The dawn is part of the bird itself, and it is no accident that the only difference between “dawn” and “drawn” is an “r.” As we see with Hopkins’ poem “Spelt From Sibyl’s Leaves,” the flow between sounds and slight visual and verbal mutations between words is playful, but is also a tool for communicating (sharing) the experience of inscape as fluctuating patterns changing over time in the unified fabric of being.

These ambiguities point to the complex relationship that the subject has with the object where the object is both fragmented and a unified whole. The experience of the thing is itself paradoxical and multiple. Here, the ambiguities inherent in language are not seen as errors to be minimized but are instead used to suggest that in a unified being there are simultaneous multiplicities. An understanding of the nature of being as aesthetic allows us to accept this seemingly contradictory statement and accept being as it is experienced as a partial truth; poetic language is a tool for expressing the unnameable and the paradoxical. What could be said in a poem takes pages to explain in analytic prose, and even then the effect of the experience or phenomenon is lost to some extent.

Even the form that poetry can take—fragmented sentences, turns in tone or focus, as in a sonnet, and the separate stanzas often found in poetry—is both fragmented and yet unified and is therefore analogous to being as it unfolds for us in a unified moment. In Derrida’s discussion of Levi-Strauss’ observations of mythology, Derrida agrees that “structural discourse on myths —*mythological discourse* — must itself be mythomorphic. It must have the form of that of

which it speaks” (Derrida 204). Here we find poetry being able to take the form of that of which it speaks: the poem’s fragmentary yet unified state imitates the fragmentary yet unified nature of being. Poetry is more capable of recreating the experience of the aesthetic nature of being and is, therefore, a tool or model for a discussion and understanding of being.

This fragmentation in “The Windhover” demonstrates the simultaneous multiplicities in the fragmented experience of a thing. “[K]ing-dom,” for example, is intentionally split over two lines as a hyphenated word while others are forced together with hyphens. These fragmented unities are double named. “Doubled-natured name” was used in “The Wreck of the Deutschland” stanza 34 describing Christ as “heaven-flung, heart-fleshed, maiden-furled” (Bridges 22). Christ’s name, and therefore Christ himself, is doubled in nature, hyphenated, and defined by heaven and the flesh and his birth. These are things within and without Christ as he was the word made flesh (*English Standard Version Bible* John 1:14). As Hopkins’ God is fragmented yet paradoxically unified (word as flesh; spirit, son, and father all in one) he finds the fragmented and at times paradoxical unity of the falcon in its “dapple-dawn-drawn” being, in its time, and place, and movement, in its doubled-natured name as simultaneously adjective, time, and action.

Hopkins does not merely provide a poetic description of a falcon in this piece—by poetic *here* I mean a hifalutin embellishing of a simple moment— but instead brings the experience, the phenomenon, to a buckling of time and place. Time and place are part of the inscape of a thing. As expressed earlier, as movement and repetition are components that multiply inscapes of a single object or being, the spatio-temporal existence of the being is inextricable from the phenomenon, which is the only partial truth or aspect of the thing that we have access to. It is fleeting and in flux (like a heraclitean fire) but in those moments of being, there is awe, there is

poetry, and there can be an elevated sense of the ever elusive sense of connection to and understanding of Being. Though an explication of the poetry as informed by the phenomenology and terminology of Hopkins is potentially enlightening and clears up the strangeness of Hopkins in some ways, it is the ability of language, and especially poetic language to allow ambiguity, paradox, and a shift in our understanding of time and the unfolding of being that must be stressed and contemplated here.

Poetry, as opposed to a conversational manner of discussing the flight of a bird, uses language to its full extent to convey a way to make stable the unstable element of being as it is witnessed. That sense here is not of an accurate objective depiction of a falcon, nor is it a politically motivated attempt to persuade a population to save the falcon, but is instead a moment of contemplation. In contemplation we see objects not in the every-day mundanity of being, but as complex events. Our heart can stir for a bird, and that moment of contemplation, connection, and awe in the strangeness or “the mastery of the thing” comes to a knowledge of being as fragmented if not a little absurd. What we see is constructed; what Hopkins saw of the falcon and contemplated was as constructed as anyone else’s view of a falcon. Though it is understandably and thankfully of little interest to the natural scientist to think of a falcon as “dapple-dawn-drawn,” the speckled/fragmented and ambiguous nature of the phenomenon is of interest to the phenomenologist or the everyday subject who is also participating in Being, and this participation is best explored and contemplated in poetic form.

Chapter 2 Aesthetic Subjectivity

The Other and Intersubjectivity

Builds on the first chapter by using the aesthetic understanding of being to explain the experience of the Other as a subject. These implications will be used to accept the paradoxical experience of subjects as objects as this offers partial truths in order to respond to Sartre's problem of the Other in Being and Nothingness. This will explore Theunissen's The Other and his argument for a social ontology as well as Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception.

In chapter 1, I defend phenomenology as a method for gathering information about Being, and that from this method we can understand the aesthetic as one among many natures of Being. By using the word aesthetic I am bringing attention to the flux and construction of being and what Hopkins calls inscape or the patterns simultaneously unfolding from being itself and constructed as such by the observer. This construction is not the thing in itself, but is instead reflective of partial truths and is what we have direct access to; it is that which we synthesize into an understanding of a unified thing.

Though some may say that I am as guilty as charged of idealism, this is not a claim that reality is *only* in the mind, for such solipsistic thinking is problematic and not a component that exists harmoniously with the phenomenological method. To claim that phenomenology ends in idealism or solipsism, is to say that phenomenology makes an absolute claim about what is or is not, but this is antithetical to the exercise. Some phenomenologists may eventually find refuge in idealism (I'm thinking of Hegel's German Idealism specifically here), but both idealism and solipsism are problematic because one must make an absolute claim about what is and is not. We do not have direct access to things in themselves or direct access to Being; we only have access to phenomena. To make an absolute claim about being (whether concrete or abstract) is not intellectually honest here, and it is outside of the scope for this exercise, so to claim that the

experiences examined by phenomenology are just “ideas” in the “self” or “mind” contradicts the entire methodology which avoids existence claims and absolutes in favor of what we can learn from paying attention to *how* we know.

This goes back to why one would use phenomenology in the first place. Phenomenology does not make claims about quantum physics or whether or not the sun goes around the earth, for these are questions that only objective methods or mathematics can come close to making accurately. Even in these objective scientific approaches, *absolute* truth is not *knowable* in a Cartesian sense because the scientific method keeps a level of scepticism to guard itself against stifling dogmatism. Things *could* be other than the evidence suggests, but for scientific inquiries, the possibility of being wrong does not outweigh the strong evidence that a theory about objective reality is the best understanding for what we know at that time. Just because we could be wrong about the existence of other minds or that our experience of external reality could be a hallucination, does not mean that the philosopher must then double down on something as absurd as claiming that the world only exists as ideas as an absolute truth since this is what we have access to despite evidence and experience to the contrary. As explained in chapter 1, according to Husserl we must look at *how* we know, not what we know; phenomenology is concerned with what we can and do experience instead of creating Cartesian mind-games that do not resemble how we construct knowledge no matter how useful and interesting they may be.

Because solipsism is so problematic and an aesthetic understanding of being is considered weak in its subjectivity, an understanding of the intersubjective and subjectivity is necessary. Phenomenologists have had to wrestle with the charge of solipsism from the beginning of the methodology. In Husserl’s “Fifth Meditation” of his *Cartesian Meditations*, he

also begins his refutation of the charge of solipsism by examining the experience of the Other (Husserl 90). But unlike Husserl, this section of my thesis brings it back to an understanding of the aesthetic nature of being and an acceptance of partial truths instead of grounding knowledge in an indubitable “I.” I began this entire exercise with experience of the objects/beings that a subject finds itself amongst, but Husserl starts his entire endeavor by having a self, an anonymous bracketed self, as the indubitable grounding that does not hold any preconceived notions. My first response to this approach is that like the being of objects, the phenomenon of a self is also constructed over time in its unfolding and its sense of unity (more of this is covered in the next chapter) and that it cannot be a grounding for metaphysical inquiries nor especially phenomenology as the method focuses on *experience* not absolutes.

Husserl argues that phenomenology examines the first personal experience without any preconceived notions or questions in order to provide a pure truth about phenomena, but this stance is difficult to hold in light of the subjective and aesthetic nature of being in time that is displayed by both Hopkins and Sartre. There is no way to avoid the subject's construction of being over time which necessarily builds expectations and preconceived notions. Though Husserl acknowledges that expectations form over time, he does not think that this invalidates a bracketed anonymous self uninhibited by expectation and instead is the subject of pure experience. Since I do not start with the attempt to ground phenomenology in an indubitable, perfect, anonymous self but instead begin with the phenomena that are experienced, my account of subjectivity does not start from a self but is what brings us to the experience of the self (which comes in chapter 3). Husserl offers a phenomenological way to avoid solipsism grounded in the indubitable self, but I offer an understanding of the aesthetic nature of being as the prime

experience (instead of a prime subject/anonymous self) to provide a way out of solipsistic thinking.

The method of phenomenology simply examines what it can from where it finds itself, so the grounding here is the axiom that we only have access to phenomena, not the thing itself, therefore we must learn what we can from how being presents itself. The immediate experience is not one of a stable blank self, but objects and subjects. Only after reflecting on objects as opposed to subjects does the notion of the necessary subject in observation and experience form. Jean-Paul Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness* argues that the particular self as subject doesn't even really come into view until we are objectified by the gaze of the Other because a subject cannot objectify itself. If this is the case, the subjectivity of others is necessary for any self to be known in the first place, so to argue that the thinking subject/self is the only being that *is*, is not a claim that easily comes from a phenomenological method.

The Problem of the Other

From the initial understanding of the aesthetic nature of being as we saw in chapter 1 with experiences of objects, the aesthetic construction of being unfolds over time. For Hopkins, that unfolding demonstrated the nature of God as he was affected by other subjects constructing being through the understanding of a particular theistic tradition. We create ways of understanding phenomena based on the reported experiences of other subjects.

Phenomenologically, we find ourselves not only surrounded by beings as objects, but are enmeshed in intersubjectivity which is constantly constructing and destructing objects (concrete or abstract) or phenomena in between subjects. This intersubjective phenomenon in which we find ourselves is where the problem of other minds comes in or the question, “How do we *know*

the subjectivity of the Other?" Again, this exercise is not looking for absolutes, but an honest approach to observing the phenomenon (the event of unfolding and constructing that we have access to) of the subject, which is examined in the encounter with the Other, or the other subjectivity apart from my own. The rest of this chapter addresses the issue of the Other and intersubjectivity as previous phenomenologists have examined them in order to explain why an understanding of the aesthetic nature of being in relation to the subject is a helpful approach.

Solution via Paradox

The phenomenological method starts with the phenomenon: the subjectivity of the Other. Going back to Sartre's notion of the look or gaze in the encounter with the Other, Sartre assumes a dichotomy between subject and object making the subjectivity and objectivity that is simultaneously experienced in that encounter contradictory — a paradox begging to be solved. From here, Sartre knows the subjectivity of the Other encountered in the woods because he experiences being an object for this encountered subject. As a subject, Sartre cannot objectify himself since that would be contradictory, therefore the fact of his objectification means the Other is a subject. This is how Sartre solves the problem of the Other; this is how Sartre obtains absolute knowledge of subjectivity constituting the Other.

There is obviously a difference between the sort of being of a rock vs. the sort of being of a human. Sartre is right to say that rocks do not cause us to feel objectified like the Other does, but my issue is that Sartre neglects the basic aesthetic nature of being as it unfolds and that this phenomenon is constructed due to socialization that leads to a construction of the Other as a subject. For example, the toddlers and babies that I have cared for have not constructed my otherness/subjectivity yet. They know that a hug from me would not be the same as that of a

robot, but this does not require an absolute object/subject distinction. Recognition of a human subject as a subject with agency and inner thoughts is learned as subjectivity simultaneously unfolds itself over time and is constructed as such by the observer as a pattern of being over time. The feeling of objectification by a subject is definitely real, but as we saw with Hopkins' religious background as it affected his phenomenology and construction of being, so too does general socialization affect the way we construct phenomena and our understanding of them. Sartre is conflating his particular with a universal, but should instead examine how phenomena are not given completely but unfold, present themselves, and are simultaneously constructed as beings. The problem is in the question itself which assumes an absolute dichotomy between subject and object as well as a pure encounter with the Other ignoring the intersubjective/social construction of the subjectivity in question. In staying with a phenomenological approach, it is apparent that just like objects reveal themselves overtime and are constructed, so too is the subjectivity of the Other. Subjectivity is essentially another “object” as it is another phenomenon of being experienced as such.

Solution via Analogy

In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty argues that as embodied individuals with knowledge of our own self or consciousness, we see our own “I” in the bodies of others and assume similar subjectivities. But Merleau-Ponty wants to know how this singular “I” can be multiple, how we can know the subjectivity of the Other through analogy. In the chapter “Other Selves and the Human World,” Merleau-Ponty moves from the solipsistic “I” to a Husserlian intersubjectivity that we are inescapably surrounded by. This intersubjectivity is

understood as such because of that indubitable self which is first known as a subject, but the subjectivity in question, unlike Sartre's, is one of multiplicity and relation.

But this is precisely the question: how can the word *I* be put into the plural, how can a general idea of the *I* be formed, how can I speak of an *I* other than my own, how can I know that there are other *I*'s, how can consciousness which, by its nature, and as self-knowledge, is in the mode of the *I*, be grasped in the mode of Thou, and through this, in the world of the 'One'? (348)

As a phenomenologist, he especially has a problem in this contradiction of a multiple singularity because he does not have immediate access to this person's subjectivity as he does with his own; this subject is outside of himself, and therefore this should be an object but it is contradictorily a subject that he cannot access.

How can Merleau-Ponty avoid solipsism when he does not have access to the subjectivity of the Other? As we can see in the quotations above, Merleau-Ponty (just as Sartre and Husserl do) couches the encounter with the subject in an immediate and absolute knowledge of the "I" (or the *self* as opposed to the Other) which makes the multiplicity of consciousnesses problematic. If I constitute the world, and the subjectivity of the Other also constitutes the world, it would still be *the self* constituting the Other (Merleau-Ponty 350). Merleau-Ponty expresses a concern for avoiding solipsism here, but the problem is with plurality not just conflict, as others have argued. This notion of an "I" as a subject that knows itself immediately and undeniably is constituting the encounter with the subjectivity of the Other; the foundational assumption that the "I" is the only thing that a subject can possibly know for sure, and has colored the way these theorists have constructed their understanding of the phenomenon of the subjectivity of the Other, but this means that, contrary to the phenomenological enterprise, preconceived notions are dictating the experience of the Other causing it to be characterised as a violation of an individual

and free self. Theorists like Merleau-Ponty argue that the self is objectified and made less powerful in the presence of another self as the *I* must concede its own construction of reality as simply one among many. This is only a problem if the construction of intersubjectivity rests on the primacy of the “I” as the unified constituting agent of the world.

Eventually, Merleau-Ponty comes to an understanding of intersubjectivity that does not create an absolute proof of the Other, but comes to recognize what Husserl recognized, which is that *how* we know is more important here than *what* we know absolutely. If we accept the obvious phenomenon that we are embodied and that consciousness “reveals in itself ... the opacity of a primary past,” then “the perception of other people and the plurality of consciousnesses no longer present any difficulty” (Merleau-Ponty 351). How we know is intersubjective in itself.

In short, just as the instant of my death is a future to which I have no access, so I am necessarily destined never to experience the presence of another person to himself. And yet each other person does exist for me as an unchallengeable style or setting of co-existence, and my life has a social atmosphere just as it has a flavour of mortality. We have discovered, with the natural and social worlds, the truly transcendental, which is not the totality of constituting operations whereby a transparent world, free from obscurity and impenetrable solidity, is spread out before an impartial spectator, but that ambiguous life in which the forms of transcendence have their Ursprung, and which, through a fundamental contradiction, puts me in communication with them, and on this basis makes knowledge possible. (364-365)

Just as Husserl concluded, knowledge is made possible by intersubjective constructions of reality. How being unfolds before us, what is focused on, and how we understand it must necessarily be from the work of contemplation, comparing the parts to the whole and parts to other things that we have come in contact with. The argument from analogy falls under this understanding, but the phenomenon of the Other is necessarily constructed over time through

intersubjective communication, not from a primary experience of an “I.” It is through construction and dialogue with subjects that knowledge is created. This leads us to Michael Theunissen’s social ontology.

Solution via the Dialogic

In *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, Theunissen calls his approach to the question of the Other “social ontology” as an ontology of the in-between. It is a dialogical approach to understanding the Other and by that very fact, the “I.” It is the in-between that is immediate and creates the subject and the Other, the I-Thou and the being-with. Theunissen’s project is the best summarization and analysis of philosophy’s work on the question of the Other that I have come across. The first part examines philosophers who start with the undeniable I and try to find another *I* in the Other, and

In its broad outline, the presentation juxtaposes or opposes two major theoretical frameworks or conceptions: transcendental phenomenology, abbreviated as 'transcendentalism,' and the 'philosophy of dialogue' or dialogicalism.' Starting from the premise of the ego, the first position seeks access to intersubjectivity by construing the Other basically as an 'other I' or alter ego, whereas the second position derives ego or self in some manner from an original encounter with a 'Thou. [...] [D]ialogicalism insists on the immediacy and reciprocity of interpersonal relations and on the simultaneous genesis of both partners through encounter (defined as an 'in-between' realm). (Theunissen xi)

It is the immediacy of the intersubjective phenomena as a space without the cogito that is of interest here. This is why Theunissen labels his enterprise as a social ontology— not a sociological approach, not just a metaphysical approach, but an ontology that happens in the dialogic, in the intersubjective relation, in the in-between, in the phenomenon itself. It is in the dialogical phenomenon that subject, the Other, and the self are simultaneously existing, and only exist as such in the in-between and define each other in their relations.

This means that Husserl's bracketed pure subject/cogito is not possible. The existence of subjectivity only existing in intersubjective actualization solves Sartre's paradox and Merleau-Ponty's problem with the multiplicity of a singular "I." Theunissen is also in harmony with previously mentioned notions of the nothing as a necessary aspect of being (harkening back to Heidegger's phenomenology).

The two sides of the dialectic do not fall apart in absolute incompatibility. Rather, they agree in the *emptiness* of the being-present-at-hand that is attributed to the subject as its own being. In spite of its individual determinateness, the being-present-at-hand of the subject does not contradict its punctual functionality because it is itself completely substanceless. ... from this standpoint of the actual act, it looks as though the subject did not exist outside of this act precisely because it only exists in the abstract pallor of a potentiality that gains fullness only in its actualization, that is, the worldly fullness of objectivity. In reality, however, it is in the moment of acting that it stands out of the background of its empty being-present-at-hand. (Theunissen 282)

As chapter 1 stated, being is active and unfolds. Here we learn that a subject is a process and action, not a material thing that can be known immediately or as being "present at hand." The experience of the subject (the self or the Other) is not a phenomenon in a vacuum, but is intersubjectively constructed overtime as a partial truth as the pattern of actions is synthesized into one being. This is how and what we can phenomenologically know of being.

Solution via Aesthetics

As Theunissen and Buber both start with the phenomenon of the experience of the Other and find that existence of self and the Other (I and Thou for Theunissen) is in the in-between space or within the intersubjectivity itself. Husserl and Merleau-Ponty concluded that knowledge is created intersubjectively, but Theunissen takes it a step further and says the "I" of any subject only occurs intersubjectively. As chapter 1 discovered, the grounding for the method of

phenomenology is in the event of being and the same goes for the phenomenon of the subject (either I or Thou), only now that phenomenon includes objects and subjects as sharing the basic nature of being as aesthetic—not just aesthetic from a singular “I,” but aesthetically constructed by multiple subjects simultaneously and constantly in flux.

As we found in our observation of the aesthetic nature of objects, inscapes of an object are multiple and constructed from that multiplicity over time. A being (object, idea, subject, etc.) has multiple inscapes or individuating patterns that fluctuate and must be contemplated to be known by the observer as unified and individual. Again, absolute being is not something that an observer has immediate access to, so the inscapes are not the thing itself but are instead the phenomena created between unhiddenness/unfolding of being and contemplation/construction of being. Being *is* in the in-between space (for Theunissen), the space for the unnameable (from Heidegger), the event, the dialectic, or (as I call it) the aesthetic space. As we have seen over and over again in these phenomenological works and this thesis, it is the event of being, the phenomenon, that exists for us and demonstrates being as active not a passive absolute truth that we can reach out and grab. Being must be contemplated and semi-constructed in the space between beings (object and subject or subject and subject).

Phenomena are multiple in themselves with multiple inscapes even in their singular events. What Hopkins' religious phenomenology and Sartre's socially taught construction of the subjectivity of the Other show is that these multiple/singular truths produce knowledge not so much as individual or isolated constructs but as intersubjective and interconnected or related discoveries; knowledge of the Other is not an instant sense of objectification in the woods but is developed by multiple subjects constructing reality overtime as being unfolds. Like objects,

subjects unfold and are constructed and synthesized as beings presenting the pattern of subjectivity.

We know the subjectivity of the Other (experience the phenomenon, that is) because we are immersed in intersubjective relationships and intersubjective constructions of reality since birth. The entire reason I think of a tree as a tree or a person as a subject and not the other way around is because of previous experiences with similar things unfolding before me repeatedly. To ignore this construction over time is to ignore the foundational behavior of being as we experience it. We *know* through being among inscapes or particular phenomena of being participating in Being; we *know* by constantly relating, comparing, and contemplating what has been experienced before and identifying patterns.

Husserl uses the notion of intersubjectivity to defend his phenomenology against solipsism in the *Cartesian Meditations*. To do this, Husserl rejects Cartesian absolutes as impractical and instead focuses on what we have access to: phenomena. Even if a single subject's knowledge is not absolute, collective knowledge as experiences and phenomena are communicated between subjects getting intersubjective knowledge closer and closer to that absolute knowledge. Like an asymptote approaching 0, we infinitely approach but never completely reach that absolute as the subject only has access to phenomena, not noumena. Husserl recognizes that experience of the subject is one of corroboration constantly providing perspectives on constructs of objects, others, and selves that work together and constantly change and evolve synthesising new information (part of the aesthetic nature of being is its constant flux). As Hopkins' construction of a religious aesthetic in phenomena (his poetry tends to bring it back to the Christ) is necessarily intersubjectively created (religious or other social/cultural

frames of thought are experienced overtime in collaboration with other subjects), other forms of socialization are also unfolded/created as such by and between subjects existing intersubjectively over time building more kinds of knowledge on top of one another.

These constructs of being and the intersubjective reality that we find ourselves in are more like assemblages of truths affecting each other and mutating instead of being a singular or absolute knowledge gained from a linear logic. By assemblage I mean assemblage of multiplicities within being that can be contemplated by subjects that are always already constructing truth in a dialectic. Without these assemblages, without intersubjectivity, Sartre's random guy in the woods with a specific feeling of objectification (and later in his text, guilt) would not be possible.

A multiplicity has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature (the laws of combination therefore increase in number as the multiplicity grows). Puppet strings, as a rhizome or multiplicity, are tied not to the supposed will of an artist or puppeteer but to a multiplicity of nerve fibers, which form another puppet in other dimensions connected to the first: "Call the strings or rods that move the puppet the weave. It might be objected that its multiplicity resides in the person of the actor, who projects it into the text. Granted; but the actor's nerve fibers in turn form a weave. And they fall through the gray matter, the grid, into the undifferentiated... An assemblage is precisely this increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections. (Deleuze and Guattari 8)

An aesthetic approach to being is similar to this notion of constellations or assemblages. The flux of multiplicities could be experienced as otherwise and change as the assemblages change. These are Hopkins' inscapes or individuating patterns that multiply; these assemblages are the intersubjective event in which subject and self become. We are in a world of becoming not being. Deleuze and Guattari's notions of constellations and assemblages with their complex networks existing only as multiplicities constantly multiplying instead of a linear understanding

of time and relations allows a space for our aesthetic understanding and knowledge of being (including objects and subjects). The fluctuating multiplicities unfolding overtime and simultaneously constructed in the in-between approach the aesthetic understanding of and way of speaking about Being.

Poetry and the Aesthetic Nature of the Other

Communicating these phenomena, discussing the multiple constructs of being or the aesthetic nature of being is the intersubjective nature of reality as well. What a particular subject actually constructs affects how others construct being and is influenced by other subjects expressing their partial truths about being. It all happens as an assemblage. As knowledge of objects is constructed and synthesized by subjects, the truths that we uncover through one method of gathering knowledge as opposed to another are partial. Together they can construct something like a monadology where multiple perspectives construct the world.

This is why the aesthetic can be so important. I am not writing this because I like the sound of my keyboard, nor am I writing simply to record my random thoughts (that would be a journal entry, not a thesis). I am writing to change the thoughts and orientations of others—to continue the intersubjective construction of reality and alter the assemblage. For many in academia, a well reasoned argument will do it, but even academicians love a good turn of phrase, a well crafted and aesthetically pleasing paragraph, beautiful images, or a powerfully simple yet inspiring quotation. *How* we talk about experience and knowledge affects how we understand and construct that same knowledge. This entire writing exercise that you are reading is haunted by seemingly innumerable moments where I tried to find the right word or phrase to express an idea. The aesthetic plays a role in our construction of experience and therefore knowledge This

sort of aesthetic use of language that I am referring to is best left up to the poets, and I am not one.

“Pied Beauty” and “The Golden Echo” by Gerard Manley Hopkins demonstrate how an aesthetic approach to subjectivity participating in being provides a framework or model to communicate the experience of these assemblages and the aesthetic nature of being.

“Pied Beauty”

Glory be to God for dappled things –

For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;

For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;

Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches’ wings;

Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;

And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;

Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)

With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;

He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:

Praise him.

(Hopkins *Poems* 30)

“Pied Beauty” is obviously a religious poem inspired by Hopkins’ Christian background, but this influence is a necessary component of being able to experience the world; it is the intersubjective as an assemblage in which Hopkins exists, it is a reference point that allows him to contemplate the part in relation to the whole of being. It is the intersubjectively created being of religion that provides the stress (“stress” as Hopkins intends) necessary for Hopkins to notice or construct certain inscapes that he finds in the world. We have to choose what to look at and Hopkins’ framework for making those choices is a particular intersubjective content and form.

Phenomenologists will “bracket” this aspect of the self off in favor of a pure subject that only experiences phenomenon free from preconceived notions, but even though this is the most

privileged or desired objective approach, phenomenology recognizes from the beginning the inherent subjectivity of experience and the necessary aesthetic nature of what we have access to: *phenomena*.

Aside from the fact that Hopkins' construction is of a religious nature, his subjectivity still finds those aesthetic aspects of the nature of being that have been explored in previous sections. "Pied Beauty" explores by demonstration the multiplicity in unity similar to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of assemblages. The hyphenated names that are used in many other poems by Hopkins use language to aesthetically provide a substitute or supplement for the being referred to in its multiplicitous nature. There is not just a description of a sky, but the sky *is* couple-colour in the same way as a cow. The network of being is an assemblage of multiplicities within multiplicities. Individuating principles are shared and multiplied in being. These assemblages, this multiplicity in being, the pied beauty ranges from animals, landscapes, and even trades created by men. The pied, dappled, doubled nature of being—that imperfect, ever changing, paradoxical ("swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim") nature in everything—is succinctly expressed in the hyphenation and juxtaposition recognizing unity and relationships as assemblages, as unified multiplicities in flux.

Though Hopkins experiences the world as a world in flux, a world of becoming that is dappled and beautiful for that, in the end he finds God as the stability from which this flux comes as a beauty that does not change. Beauty is simultaneously perfect and imperfect. In "The Golden Echo" Hopkins takes a slightly different approach to the multiplicities in the world and what beauty is.

“The Golden Echo”

Spare!

There is one, yes I have one (Hush there!);
 Only not within seeing of the sun,
 Not within the singeing of the strong sun,
 Tall sun's tingeing, or treacherous the tainting of the earth's air,
 Somewhere elsewhere there is ah well where! one,
 Oné. Yes I can tell such a key, I do know such a place,
 Where whatever's prized and passes of us, everything
 that's fresh and fast flying of us, seems to us sweet of us and
 swiftly away with, done away with, undone,
 Undone, done with, soon done with, and yet dearly and
 dangerously sweet
 Of us, the wimpled-water-dimpled, not-by-morning-matchèd face,
 The flower of beauty, fleece of beauty, too too apt to, ah! to fleet,
 Never fleets móre, fastened with the tenderest truth
 To its own best being and its loveliness of youth: it is an ever-
 lastingness of, O it is an all youth!
 Come then, your ways and airs and looks, locks, maiden gear,
 gallantry and gaiety and grace,
 Winning ways, airs innocent, maiden manners, sweet looks,
 loose locks, long locks, lovelocks, gaygear, going gallant,
 girlgrace—
 Resign them, sign them, seal them, send them, motion them
 with breath,
 And with sighs soaring, soaring sighs deliver
 Them; beauty-in-the-ghost, deliver it, early now, long before
 death
 Give beauty back, beauty, beauty, beauty, back to God, beauty's
 self and beauty's giver.
 See; not a hair is, not an eyelash, not the least lash lost; every hair
 Is, hair of the head, numbered.
 Nay, what we had lighthanded left in surly the mere mould
 Will have waked and have waxed and have walked with the wind
 what while we slept,
 This side, that side hurling a heavyheaded hundredfold
 What while we, while we slumbered.
 O then, weary then why should we tread? O why are we so
 Haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged,
 so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered,
 When the thing we freely fórfeit is kept with fonder a care,
 Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept
 Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer, fonder
 A care kept. — Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where. —
 Yonder. — What high as that! We follow, now we follow. —

Yonder, yes yonder, yonder,
 Yonder.
 (Hopkins *Poems* 56-57)

The poem is not just the voice of an individual (as many of his poems are), but multiple voices searching for the “one” that is “Yonder, yes, yonder, yonder, yonder.” The singularity that the voices are striving for or searching for is “Not within the singeing of the strong sun” as it is not the type of object or matter to be illuminated. While “Pied Beauty” was in awe of the beautiful imperfections of the world, “The Golden Echo” is more perplexed at our love for the fluctuating fleeting beauty that does show under the sun and is within “the tainting of the earth’s air.” Why waste our time with these multiplicities that change and are undone with time, when there is the yearned for singularity beyond this world, yonder?

The multiplicities and fluctuations of being are found in both form and content of the poem. There are multiple voices that must be hushed, words are multiplied and in their multiplication morphed (“swiftly away with, done away with, undone, /Undone, done with, soon done with,”), hyphenated names multiplying the referent, as well as multiplicity in meaning. “Spare!” exclaims the poem from the start so succinctly and singular, but what is meant by this?: As in addition to (more multiples adding to multiplicity), to keep from loss or damage (as the poem claims “the thing we freely forfeit is kept with fonder a care”), more than enough to spare, or as in an exclamation that there is little left? As a singular term from the start, “spare,” is simultaneously multiple words and meanings. Even the “one” is multiplied in its repetition and its relative position to those seeking it with “yonder” repeated again and again. The multiplicities are always changing as they unfold tumbling over each other like Deleuze and Guattari’s assemblages or Hopkins’ notion of inscape; “Fonder a care kept than we could have kept it, kept

/ Far with fonder a care (and we, we should have lost it) finer, fonder / A care kept. — Where kept? Do but tell us where kept, where. —” constantly churns the words making different patterns in their multiplication over time.

Perhaps our time is best used with this tumultuous multiplicity of being that we have access to. The one, the absolute, the singularity, that is forever yonder, just out of reach, is like the Cartesian absolute which is always just out of our reach. We may know that the world is not always exactly as it seems at times, and that beings exist in some way apart from the subject that they unfold before, but we do not have immediate access to Being or Truth in and of itself. We have its echo.

Sake is a word I find it convenient to use:... I mean by it the being a thing has outside itself, as a voice by its echo, a face by its reflection, a body by its shadow, a man by his name, fame, or memory, and also that in the thing by virtue of which especially it has this being abroad, and that is something distinctive, marked, specifically or individually speaking, as for a voice and echo clearness; for a reflected image light, brightness; for a shadow-casting body bulk; for a man genius, great achievements, amiability, and so on. In this case it is, as the sonnet says, distinctive quality in genius. (Hopkins *Letters* 83)

For the sake of Being (or in Hopkins’ case, for Christ’s sake), it is the echo that we have access to. We know a person by the echo of their voice, the shadow of their body, or their being outside of itself; we may not have immediate and pure access to the subjectivity of the Other, but the echo of any being (subject or object) is good enough in its own sake, for anything else is simply “yonder” and forever more so.

So for its own sake, for the aspects of being as it unfolds that we have access to, why love or waste time on this constant flux that we do not have complete contact with? Why find beauty in the inconstant? This poem is initially a tumult of random words and ideas with the fleetingness of earthly beauty, incomplete sentences, constant iteration and reiteration, change, female

beauty/maidenhood; yet in the end, you feel something. Read it out loud. You feel something, but you aren't quite sure what. This is a recreation of the initial experience of a phenomenon. This is the aesthetic nature of being and even subjectivity as constantly just out of reach. We get bits and pieces of action, of beauty mixed with deterioration or a loss of stability, and this poetic language brings us to the primal experience of the phenomenon as fragmented and confusing while we try to make sense of it.

After this primal experience, we must contemplate the poem, find the stresses and patterns, and construct some sense of unity and meaning from the mess. Again, following the footsteps of Husserl to some extent, it is not *what* we know but *how* we know that is of interest. We know intersubjectively, we communicate with other subjects, and *how* we communicate defines the way reality is known in that in-between intersubjective dialectic. Poetry and art are traditionally thought to produce beauty, but what we see here is a way of experiencing, knowing, and communicating those partial truths learned from that experience. Just as we saw the multiplication of meaning unfolding over time from individual words and phrases in "The Golden Echo," the intersubjective assemblage changes over time as experiences alter each other. Hopkins' poetic language plays with paradox, rhythm, and sound like a melody. It has its own inscape, and the experience of it is multiplicitous as it unfolds and changes with each read. Different patterns are found in different moments and yet, the poem is unified right there on the page. It is an argument via demonstration attempting to pass on the individual experience to the intersubjective assemblage of reality.

These poems are assemblages, multiple and fragmented yet unified and constantly incorporating the social (female beauty, religion, trades) with objects and the natural (tools of the

trade, landscapes). How does this relate to the subject and knowledge of the Other? The “otherness” and the subjectivity of the Other, just as the subjectivity of the self or the objectivity of objects, is always already constructed intersubjectively. As with Merleau-Ponty’s point about knowledge of one’s own mortality, we know and experience what we do intersubjectively and there is no way to escape this. The singular I, the one, is multiple in some partial truth as known from the golden echo of being. We do not stumble upon subjectivity suddenly when caught in the gaze and guilt of the Other, as Sartre claims. Just as Hopkins learns to see Christ in nature and man, we learn to see subjectivity as such in man as it unfolds and is constructed in a sort of socially aesthetic ontology.

Objects and subjects, are patterns both unified in contemplation and in stress, yet necessarily multiple and fragmented as they unfold over time and exist in (in Theunissen’s terms) the in-between. This is not, again, the same as saying Being (absolute truth) is thought, but that being as we have access to it is in the event between beings, between subjects. We have already demonstrated in chapter 1 that objects have an aesthetic nature as they are constructed and unfold themselves, and now we have reason to understand this aesthetic nature as part of the *phenomenon* of the subjectivity of the Other. Though we may not have absolute certainty about the particulars constructed as objects and subjects, Cartesian absolutes are not necessary for knowledge of such. This is why the problem of the Other is only a problem because of the assumptions within the question that is posed. The dichotomy between subjects and objects is useful, but not absolute or complete. Objects participate in being, as do subjects, as they are all unfolding over time. The ontological difference is that we learn to perceive intention and a will behind a subject acting among inanimate objects. A recognition of the subject as aesthetic being

brings an acceptance of ambiguity and a lack of absolutes. The Other may be constructed or synthesized as such out of its unfolding, but knowledge itself is constructed as we saw in chapter 1. Accepting this and finding ways such as aesthetic/poetic uses of language to discuss this allows for complex discussions (instead of oversimplifications) involving multiple perspectives and truths coming together to form a more complete understanding of being.

Though Husserl and many other phenomenologists build their knowledge of the Other from absolute knowledge of a self, I argue that intersubjectivity is what constructs the self where self is not a static being to stumble upon, but is created. Obviously a major problem is going to be that Husserl's self is a bracketed self without preconceived notions, but I argue that the phenomenon of the self as it unfolds for us to be experienced does not exist before these categories and relations. I have saved an understanding of self for the last chapter, because it is through intersubjective construction that an individual self is created as a phenomenon instead of treating the self as a phenomenological primacy. The self is logically primary as there must be an observer to observe or a thinker to think, but this is not how the self is experienced or *known* as such.

Chp 3 Aesthetic Selves

Identity and Free Will

Delves into the use of an aesthetic understanding of being and the intersubjective constitution of the “I” to explore the phenomenon of a “self.” This chapter will focus on Hopkins' use of “inscape” and “selving” in his notes and poetry to demonstrate the aesthetic nature of being and the self with its elements of action, inscape, instress, and “unfolding” (to hearken back to Heidegger). From here we find that intention and free will are necessary components for understanding the self as another aesthetic being.

The “I” for many phenomenologists is bracketed off from preconceived notions. I intend to examine the phenomenon of a self *as* a phenomenon and explain why I do not begin an exploration of being with an indubitable “I” as pure observation and foundation for phenomenology. The exploration of an aesthetic self is the last chapter in this thesis because we come upon the phenomenon of the self in the midst of reflections on and constructions of the phenomena of objects and subjects. The self *is* reflection not immediate and absolute knowledge of the self as an object.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the self (that which is reflected back on as the self same observer constructing perceived being as it unfolds) is constituted by intersubjectivity. Self is an inscape, a pattern that exists in the intersubjective event unfolding over time amongst other beings (objects and subjects). In chapter 2, I explained Theunissen’s social ontology as an approach similar to my own which does not start with absolute knowledge of the cogito, and instead examines the subject “not so much as a fixed premise but as a derived category emerging through interpersonal encounter” (ix). Theunissen’s dialectic approach demonstrates that the self does not exist as an isolated object hurtling through space, but is a phenomenon, an event, or a pattern and has an aesthetic nature as a being existing in (as Theunissen terms it) the in-between. This is because the self is known aesthetically by deductive reasoning. It is constructed as a unity

when it unfolds over time as a unique perspective observing phenomena. This is not the immediate and bracketed “I” of Husserl or Sartre as that is a logical construction of something that must be observing and synthesizing phenomenon around it, not an experience of self as it unfolds. The self is known—to use Hopkins’ analogy from the previous chapter—as a voice by its echo or a body by its shadow.

Objects and subjects unfold over time and are experienced and constructed as such into unified particulars stressed or emphasised out of the background noise of other beings. Out of the mess of being and inscaping and selving and changing and becoming, objects/subjects/beings seem to exist as such or are understood as unified and singular or individuated by some stable unity that continues to exist over time such that fragments are recorded or gathered in some way to be recalled, referred to, and compared. After one gathers and unifies the phenomena of objects and subjects, the phenomenon of an “I” (or the evidence of the of the I, not the noumena) is also able to be reflectively experienced as a unity out of the fragments of perception and memory. The unity of an I or self is constructed to account for persistence of experience over time. There is a pattern of a specific self unfolding and is experienced over time as this flow or pattern. This is why we cannot start with the I. It does not experience itself as itself immediately. A self is constructed out of the revelation of its unfolding, gathering perceptions, organizing, recalling, and unifying fragmented objects and categories spread out over time; the self is a phenomenon, the self *is* knowing what it does, and is not the phenomenological foundation that is known immediately.

This final chapter examines what previous thinkers have found in their endeavor to understand being and the human subject, and will then use Gerard Manley Hopkins’ terminology

and poetry to demonstrate how language is a useful tool for constructing an understanding of the aesthetic nature of the self as we have established the aesthetic nature of being in previous chapters. Though this is not an absolute approach, it is a human approach that recognizes the limitations of the kind of being that we find ourselves to be. Ignoring those boundaries means we miss the layers of aesthetic possibilities in the daily and even foundational elements of life, the flux of reality, and potential freedom that comes with knowledge of the aesthetic self.

Dasein and Heidegger: Man is the Measure of All Being

Before the poetic turn, Martin Heidegger attempted to explore being through the human existence. He would later turn to poetry and language instead of human existence. From this endeavor to bring philosophy to a discourse on being through human existence, “Dasein” became the foundational component of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. In “What is Metaphysics,” Heidegger explains that Dasein (literally “there-being” in German) means “being held out into the nothingness of being” (Heidegger 6). As transcendent and in the nothing, Dasein can “adopt a stance toward beings, [or] even to itself” (Heidegger 91). Scholars of Heidegger, including Gadamer, are careful to explain that this stance toward beings, this Dasein, “is not a self-projection. Rather, it knows that it is not master of itself and its own Dasein, but comes upon itself in the midst of beings and has to take itself over as it finds itself” (Gadamer 145). Dasein as a transcendent stance toward being and itself does not *begin* with itself, but reflects on itself as it finds its actions in relation to Being and beings.

What is so interesting to me about Dasein as “being held out into the nothing” is that this is similar to my understanding of an aesthetic self as it is a being relating being to being and to the self constantly constructing in relation to phenomena of beings. In some footnotes from his

translation of *Being and Time*, Stambaugh tells us that “Da-sein is not an instance of being for the representational abstraction of being; rather, it is the site of the understanding of being” and reminds us that Dasein is “being held out into the nothingness of being, held as relation” (7, 6). Dasein is defined by what it does. Heidegger seems to be arguing that the subject, the “I”, or subjectivity itself is *understanding*, is *thinking*, is *consciousness*, is *process*. Dasein relates being to itself out of the nothingness of Being. In “What is Metaphysics,” Heidegger argues that the Nothing is the fact that Being is mostly hidden and is not necessarily a group of clearly differentiated beings. Dasein is the *action* of perceiving and synthesizing phenomena unfolding out of the nothing (or being such that it is no thing, it is hidden or not yet un-hidden). To experience phenomena as individuated or differentiated beings, there must be a contemplation of the parts to the whole and their relation to other beings. Dasein, here, is human existence perceiving and contemplating Being itself while participating in Being at the same time. Dasein is like Heidegger’s alternative to the bracketed “I” avoiding the subject as object and jumping straight to action. Being is action for Heidegger as we see in his description of the nature of being as unfolding. This event, this Dasein, is aesthetic in nature as it is what constitutes being for Heidegger by relating being to itself to construct an understanding of it.

Dasein is an understanding of a self that is not in a vacuum but is the action or process of relation and reflection. Dasein is not pure perception, passively receiving stimuli, nor is it, as Gadamer reminds us, simply a projection, but is the phenomenological position of Being contemplating itself; it is reflective and contemplative constantly relating parts to the whole and to themselves. Dasein as being “held as relation” is like saying that human existence (or anything that contemplates Being and itself) is held as the measure of all things. Gadamer reminds us that

Heidegger's Dasein "finds itself in the midst of beings and has to take itself over as it finds itself" (145). Instead of thinking that the subjective approach projects or distorts reality and should therefore be rejected, and instead of beginning with the bracketed and impossible "I" as the most foundational and undeniable point to build an argument, Heidegger starts from the phenomenon itself, which is experiencing reflection and construction of being among beings and making relations between what the self experiences as itself and other beings. This constant construction through relations between phenomenon unfolding over time is similar to my notion of an aesthetic self that builds knowledge of itself as such out of relations between objects, other subjects, and the phenomenon of the self.

Action, Instress, and Categories of Intention

Dasein finds itself building a self from relations between other beings by contemplating being as well as itself; it contemplates the phenomenon which brings it to that which must be contemplating. Dasein, for Heidegger, seems to be a way of potentially avoiding the problem of a unified self persisting over time by focusing on the action instead of self as a static *thing* or object to be observed by a subject. When the process of contemplation or reflection is understood as a thing or object, and when that which contemplates is constructed as an individual and particular "I" persisting over time, a dualism forms, and the mind-body problem begins.

In *An Ontology of Consciousness*, Ralph Ellis examines consciousness and the self and comes to the conclusion that the transcendental ego is necessary and only known through philosophy, not psychology since the transcendental ego transcends the specific moments of consciousness that psychology can study. Ellis finds that consciousness is not a thing as a rock is a thing but is a process consisting of attention, memory, synthesis, analysis, and creativity (Ellis

21). It can also be known as a pattern, as in a pattern of brain activity or a "complex process constituted by interrelations" among things (Ellis 44, 68). As with Heidegger's Dasein, Ellis' consciousness depends on action and patterns, not an object.

To perceive relations requires contemplation, not passive absorption of random stimuli. As Ellis, Heidegger, Husserl, and Hopkins all point out, contemplation of phenomena as such is an action requiring intention. What we perceive are not "things" but "rather relationships among 'things'" that we intend or contemplate as relations (Ellis 68). Ellis reminds us that Husserl argues that attention to phenomena *is* intention; there is direction there.

Categorical intentionality (as we shall call this broader type of intentionality) functions to facilitate experiencing, precisely *by* limiting it. If we had to approach the world without categorical intentions, we could never make enough 'inferences' from 'sense data' to organize our experience meaningfully. (Ellis 86)

To experience phenomena is not to passively be affected by them, but to have frameworks and intentions to direct what to take notice of and how to relate the parts to the whole. This intention of Husserl's is further complicated or expanded on Ellis' distinction between "looking-at" and "looking-for." Looking-at is simply to take in the experience, but it is the looking-for that provides the ability to make inferences and construct patterns and unities from the mess of being constantly unfolding around us.

The motivational stance which influences the perspectival limitation in this way may well be intentional in a sense, but in another sense it cannot be. It is conscious on the level of 'looking-for' rather than 'looking-at.' In the same way, it is possible for the human person to 'become' his own already-functioning transcendental unity, without thereby making the subjectivity previously at work in that unification into an object. (Ellis 85)

This is why the "I" cannot be bracketed. To look-for beings or even the self, that which is contemplating being and that which relates must have categories or preconceived conceptual

limits for there to be a phenomenon of a self. What we know of the self comes only after these intentions form and after a bracketed “I” which cannot be known or experienced in itself without said intentions or categories. The categories change over time as more and more relations are constructed, therefore a phenomenological description should “include not only a description of the thing seen, but also of the system of categories that contributes to his perspective on the thing” (Ellis 82). We see that this is the case with Hopkins’ Christianity or Heidegger’s anti-semitism. We experience the self as always already defined by or limited by intersubjective categories for knowledge production. Again, we are concerned with *how* we know, just as Husserl argues for in the *Cartesian Meditations*. We know, we experience, we construct being as a dialectic in the in-between (just as Theunissen argues) as being held out in the nothingness. The self as the phenomenon that we have access to, as a being, is also constructed. There is a sort of terrifying freedom here but this free will, intention, or self is limited.

The self intends toward being looking for what the constructed or given categories limit for us as the self is experienced as the point where multiplicities are unified and related to each other. This self that is defined by its action of intention toward being: to know it must it be objectified? If it is made an object, then it is no longer the subject and there is another perceiving subject which must be the true self or “I.” As explained in chapter 2, the subject/object dichotomy is not as clear cut as we would like as the “body, in its role as substrate for meanings, is the prime example of the inappropriateness of a subject-object paradigm which would regard subjectivity and objectivity as separate spheres, as opposite sides of an ontological dualism” (Ellis 105). The body is both subject and object as a material existence in the world and as a being with consciousness; though it is a prereflective or pre-personal consciousness, it is

conscious of the environment and some bodily functions though it is not a consciousness that reflects or “looks for,” but looks at being. As Merleau-Ponty argued, we cannot deny the role of the body in the perception of a self. It is through the body that we perceive at all and the body, the psycho-physical, is a natural self that is already given to exist even before what is normally considered to be consciousness as a reflective knowledge of a self. This is *part* of the phenomenon of the self, but self consciousness requires reflection.

Once consciousness is reflective (bringing it back to and symbolizing the self same), Merleau-Ponty and Ellis agree with me and Theunissen that the self is constituted here intersubjectively. "Reflection on myself, according to Merleau-Ponty, always throws me back toward other people as toward my origin" (Ellis 106). The phenomenon of the self is not an object preexisting reflection, nor is it simply consciousness, but the self as a being-for-itself or a unified particular consciousness that is looking-for as always already constituted by the sort of being that it is immersed in; Intersubjectivity and how being unfolds for the self are created by the categorical intentions of that embodied self. “The body is one pole of that experience which 'I' am, and the world and others constitute the other pole. The 'I' is the relationship." (Ellis 107). The self is a process, and the self *is* experience of which the body is one pole among many. It transcends its component parts like a wave transcends the water molecules through which it travels though the wave is inseparable from the molecules themselves.

Phenomenology of Perception covers a lot of ground in 456 pages, but on that very last page, Merleau-Ponty concludes with a quote by Saint Exupery from *Pilote de Guerre*: "Man is but a network of relationships." Though embodiment is a major component of his phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty does not confine the self to a solipsistic vacuum sealed world,

and instead recognizes that the the self is also tangled in an intersubjective web of assemblages. As Ellis says, it is transcendent because it is more than the totality of its parts. It is a process, a wave, a pattern that needs conditions to exist. As with Roman Ingarden's ontology and his questions concerning cause and effect, to say what is cause and effect or to say if the self is mind or body is to ignore the fact that a cause is only considered as such if the conditions allow it. To take Deleuze's concepts of assemblages and constellations instead of a linear approach, it seems clear that the way a self is to be known is to categorize it as a process requiring intersubjective conditions, conceptual categories, and materials performing that action (bodies for human beings, but this is still open for non-organic selves).

The point here is that the self, as a unique and transcendent personal self that persists over time, is not an object to be perceived but a process or pattern. It is an action, which is a necessary observation of its nature in order to explain its unity as well as a helpful notion once we approach Hopkins' notion of the self as action.

Continuity of a Unified/Fragmented Self: Self as Process and Reflection

Sartre's argument against the transcendental ego is that if it is transcendent, we do not have immediate access to it and therefore cannot say anything about it, but if it is not transcendent it is trapped in the particular moment and does not account for a unified self experiencing multiple moments. Ellis responds to this by saying:

The ontological status of the self consists in being both a concretely experienceable mode of consciousness and a unifying and directing principle which provides the continuity and structure of the ego... Both the saliency of certain objective ways of organizing experience and the process of selective attention provide unity in the stream of consciousness, but only the consciousness which motivates selective attention in the interest of the self-explication of consciousness is the 'self.' ... "The creative component of cognition, which is the self, motivates this transcendental unity because it insists upon

the continuation of the conscious process through self-explicating symbolic activities. ... It is the opportunity to symbolize each moment in the stream of consciousness that determines whether this self-explicating process will be possible or not. (Ellis 188-189)

We experience a unified self that persists over time, therefore a non-transcendental and thus non-unified self would be an absurd conclusion. But Sartre is also concerned with a transcendental self that may account for the experience of unity but is unknowable. Ellis' solution is one of an aesthetic self that “exhibits the unity of a flow from one perspective to another, and this flow—which is both *unifying* and *directly experienceable*—is the transcendental ego” (Ellis 88). I can agree with his continuity of the flow and that the experience itself is what we have access to, but his reasoning is circular. I argue that this is immediate experience of the phenomenon of a self exhibiting the aesthetic nature of Being.

Most people focus on the continuity of the body or memory as faulty and therefore impermissible, but again, we do not have access to absolutes or noumena, only phenomena that change over time as we constantly reconstruct reality in relation to multiple truths. The same goes with Ellis' solution to Sartre's transcendental ego. This transcendental ego as that which unifies is a sufficient partial truth in light of the categories and experiences unified by that self. Just as I see a pattern in being form over time as a chair and construct it as a chair though I only have access to its appearance or unfolding, a pattern of unification and construction flowing over time is also unified as that which must be unifying even if I only have access to the phenomenon of that self, the phenomenon of unification. There is continuity in the flow of the inscapes. Inscapes multiply and change over time; my patterns, my selves, have changed over time, but there is a continuity in the flow of those inscapes over time. The self is a process as a pattern creating patterns, and that process is what persists over time, not unchanging identity or object.

This is what we mean by the unfolding of the self as “*both* a principle of unification *and* an immanently experienced concrete consciousness” (Ellis 77). The sort of consciousness or self that is aware of itself, like Dasein, exists as an experience since it is in the reflection upon the unfolding experience that brings us to such knowledge. "I am like the flight of a bird as opposed to the bird itself...I am *this particular* happening, *this concrete* flux of a peculiar sort" (Ellis 111). Consciousness is always already happening; it is a phenomenon unfolding over time, and unifying that experience is similar to unifying objects and subjects (chapter 1 and chapter 2). In this respect, the self is transcendental in that it transcends its particular components as a higher-order process but the process unfolds in the moment making it concrete, coextensive with material reality, and experienceable to an extent similar to any other phenomenon.

This unified self as an aesthetic and constructed being is necessarily an assemblage “as a complex interrelation of body, figure and ground. This interrelation exists before it is attended to or focused upon by reflective consciousness” (Ellis 94). Remember that Merleau-Ponty concludes *Phenomenology of Perception* with a quote by Saint Exupery from *Pilote de Guerre*: “Man is but a network of relationships.” The self is formed among many other selves; the I is plural, therefore, the consciousness of the Other and their ability to construct or perceive aspects of being “strips my own cogito of all value, and causes me to lose the assurance which I enjoyed in my solitude of having access to the only being conceivable for me, being, that is, as it is aimed at and constituted by me” (Merleau-Ponty 353). The cogito provides no absolute reference as it is not a bracketed “I” in solitude, but a process in flux constantly creating knowledge of partial truths.

The self which perceives is in no particularly privileged position which rules out a perceived self. ... But we have learned in individual perception not to conceive our

perspective views as independent of each other; we know that they slip into each other and are brought given to together finally in the thing. In the same way we must learn to find the communication between one consciousness and another in one and the same world. In reality, other people are not included in my perspective of the world because this perspective itself has no definite limits, because it slips spontaneously into the other person's, and because both are brought together in the one single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception. (Merleau-Ponty 353)

There is no perceived self, only an assemblage of “anonymous subjects of perception” constantly slipping spontaneously into one another creating new constructs of the single world as it unfolds. For Merleau-Ponty, the antiquated concept of the self as stable does not hold, therefore the self needs to be reconsidered not as a persistent unified thing across time, but as Ellis argues a transcendental pattern or a flow. There is a constant “slipping” of content and particular constructions, but the flow from one construct to another is what is reflectively used to construct a phenomenon of a self.

Free Will and Identity

The self is constructed by itself and intersubjectively, the self *is* experience, it is transcendental, and it intends or has a direction when it pays attention to being (objects, subjects, and the self). This all brings me to an important point about how we should conceptualize the individual self not only a pattern transcending its components (though this an extremely helpful approach to discussing the individuating aesthetic of being as well as a persistence of perception and apparent unity) but also realize that the self as we experience it is fragmented (Jameson). What unifies a self as the phenomenon that we have access to (again, we do not have immediate access to the self only the shadow of the thing or process or piece of the pattern itself) is that intention, that direction and stress applied to a phenomenon unifying or constructing the

phenomenon as such. The self is a pattern, process, form, or wave filled with or instantiated by content.

So how is it filled with content? Self becomes defined and differentiated when it identifies or actively equates itself with content that is available in the situation that constitutes it. These identifications change over time creating an identity in flux, but an identity none the less. To identify is to make the same, therefore a self becomes an identity when it identifies certain aspects of the particular being as a component of the self same. These components are generally chosen from aspects given by genetics and culture, etc, but once chosen they are a choice none-the-less. What I am talking about, is free will. For a self to intend, as Husserl argues it does, for a self to have a direction for limiting scopes and limiting itself as a finite particularity, it must have a will to choose. Harry G. Frankfurt's compatibilism allows for this free will without abandoning a deterministic universe by focusing on the desires of the "I." These desires fall under certain orders relative to what is available to choose from. Similar to categorical intentions and limits defined by intersubjective reality, the limit on choices is what enables one to make a choice or to intend as opposed to a random spontaneous action as the parts are related to the whole and other parts allowing one to make a choice or construct meaningful understandings and unities of phenomena. Limits on our desires or choices or what one identifies with is what allows for free will in the first place. Recognizing a limited and constructed self allows it to be transcendent and free yet concrete, and for human selves at least embodied.

Merleau-Ponty brings in the importance of the body in perceiving as a natural self or pre-reflective consciousness, but the body is also a social thing. In "The Fact of Blackness," Frantz Fanon argues against Sartre's encounter with the Other by demonstrating that one's

encounter with the Other is always already defined by the social and is not as immediate and neat as Sartre shows it to be. As a black man, Fanon's encounter with the subjectivity of the Other has a different dynamic as this Other is the white man. The whiteness and social and bodily reality of the dynamic, not the subjectivity of the Other, makes him an object.

I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects. ... There is of course the moment of "being for others," of which Hegel speaks, but every ontology is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society. (Fanon 82)

The sort of being that a self finds itself to be limits the scope of what a self *can* be. As the self is experienced as a finite particularity, a transcendent bracketed "I" does not shed light on the self, nor the encounter with the Other, as they are experienced in all of their fragmented limitations. For there to be a self relating being to being and unifying being as it unfolds, it needs intentionality which must be defined by limits or it is *purely* spontaneous, which is contrary to the experience of the self as it intends toward being.

The aesthetic nature of being is called such because it is not just a latent property underlying everything that *is*, but the intention or direction toward aesthetic nature of being reworks the frameworks, the questions, the language, the categorical structures used to construct being and the self. There is choice in that intention toward the aesthetic, there is choice in *how* we know, and there is choice in how the self constructs itself and unfolds over time. It may not be absolute freedom, but with absolute freedom without boundaries or limitations, there are no relations among things, there is no Dasein, there is essentially nothing.

Hopkins' Vocabulary: Selving and Stress

From Theunissen we learn that the self is constituted in the in-between, from Ellis, we learn that consciousness of this self is a process, and from Merleau-Ponty and Fanon we learn that the self doesn't exist as an isolated unity, but an assemblage of body, background, and intersubjectivity. As with the other chapters of this thesis, I will examine what we can also learn from Hopkins and his poetry. The main thing that we learn about the self, is that it is an action, it is in the event of being or a fluctuating pattern, instead of a unified and material object to be directly observed. From here we will be able to explore how this aesthetic construction of the self avoids the paradoxical nature of a self as fragmented and changing over time though it is considered to be unified.

One day, I picked up *The Self*, a lecture by Anthony Kenny from 1988, from the library shelf simply out of curiosity with the subject, and as I was reading through it late one night, I started to doze off and almost put it away. I decided to jump to the last page, just to see the big conclusion; to my surprise, Kenny finished his lecture on philosophical notions of the self with Gerard Manley Hopkins. Kenny ends with the Hopkins poem that begins "As kingfishers catch fire..." This was a pleasant coincidence because I just happened to be working with texts by Hopkins at the time. Like Kenny, I too found a philosophical direction in Hopkins that offered something different from other traditions or schools of thought.

The concept of the self which I have been attacking is that which urges us to look within for that which is most fundamental in ourselves. ... There is a quite different concept which regards the self as what is expressed by the uniquely characteristic actions of the individual. In this sense, it is not only conscious beings which have selves. This notion of self, too, has deep philosophical roots, but connected to a philosophy different from those which have been considered here. It would itself be a topic for a whole lecture. On this occasion I merely mention it to distinguish it from the kind of self which provided the topic today. I can end by quoting verses which express this different concept: for this

notion of self too has found magisterial poetic expression — in the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins. (Kenny 32-33)

Kenny finds the idea of a stable inner self to be problematic, and instead favors Hopkins' version of self which is defined as an action, not a thing; Kenny finds Hopkins' poetic expression of self as “what is expressed by the uniquely characteristic actions of the individual” to be an acceptable if not particularly strong mode of communicating this different notion of self.

Many scholars (such as Daniel Brown, James Collins, Andrew Sean Davidson, Howard Fulweiler, Anthony Kenney, William McNeill, Jeff Mitscherling, Timothy Morton, Anita Seppä, and Dennis Sobolev) have noted the philosophical and aesthetic intersections between philosophy and artists/poets, but they have especially noted Hopkins' relevance to questions about being and the self. Hopkins used Duns Scotus and Hegel, Heidegger used Scotus and Hegel, Morton has found Hopkins useful in his discussions of object-oriented ontology, and Kenny has found Hopkins useful for his approach to philosophical discussions of the self. I argue that the main reason for this is Hopkins' concepts of inscape, instress, and selving. Inscapes are the individuating patterns that unfold and are semi-constructed or actively perceived as patterns by an observer (as explained in previous chapters). Instress is the stress coming from the thing itself to emphasise certain aspects of its being and is related to stress as work or emphasis. Selving is *how* everything—from rocks to people—are selved among the multiple inscapes and stresses in the *event* of being.

We have already explained that being unfolds over time and is an event in the in-between as assemblages, but here I will stress the importance of *stress* and action as Hopkins used those terms to explain phenomenon and why *instress* is such an important term in ontology. To begin

to understand what Hopkins means by *instress*, let us look at a couple passages where the term is used:

Mesmerised a duck with chalk lines drawn from her beak sometimes level and sometimes forwards on a black table. They explain that the bird keeping the abiding offscape of the hand grasping her neck fancies she is still held down and cannot lift her head as long as she looks at the chalk line, which she associates with the power that holds her. This duck lifted her head at once when I put it down on the table without chalk. But this seems inadequate. It is most likely the fascinating instress of the straight white stroke. (Hopkins *Journals* 207)

But indeed I have often felt when I have been in this mood and felt the depth of an instress or how fast the inscape holds a thing that nothing is so pregnant and straightforward to the truth as simple *yes* and *is*. ... [W]ithout stress we might not and could not say/ Blood is red/ but only/ This blood is red/ or/ The last blood I saw was red/ nor even that, for in later language not only universals would not be true but the copula would break down even in particular judgments. (Hopkins *Journals* 127)

Stress and instress are what hold things together. The black table does not hold the attention of the duck in the first section, and the hand does not hold the head down, but according to Hopkins the stress or the distinction of the white line in contrast with the black table is what holds the contemplation of the duck such that it does not raise its head. The line stands out and demands attention. In the second passage a deep instress is an inscape (pattern) that holds a thing. Feeling the deep instress in the second passage is to feel that *is* is the most straightforward truth and is the stress that the copula (*is*) functions as in the English language. Stress is what holds things as they are. Instress is the stress from a thing itself, and stress is the general holding, a holding that usually unifies the fragments of being (or work/contemplation unifying a thing as a thing).

A "being" is not just a particular in a universal set of Being, but is *being* because it *participates* in Being—stressing itself and defining itself like an outline defines or emphasises a shape or pattern, just like the white chalk line for the duck. This use of "action" to describe the relationship of the particular (especially objects, not just subjects) with the universal is mirrored

in Hopkins' use of his term *instress*. Like *inscape*, *instress* is a term found in his notes and letters, but it is fully realized in the play of words and constructs within a poetic language and framework. Where Husserl resigns intention to a subject, Hopkins finds intention in Being where a being is defined by what they *do*, not what they appear to be nor as stable unchanging things. This brings us to “selving.”

All being stresses and selves, but the particular consciousness of a human sort of self or reflective self (Dasein) contemplates. In this world, things reveal themselves and sometimes we observe it. To study Being and the unity of beings, Hopkins does what anyone beginning a study would do; he attempts to observe the phenomena. This phenomenological approach (used by Hegel before Hopkins and by Heidegger after Hopkins) and attention to the phenomenon as it is experienced suggests that experience of unity is not simply the “mere sense that such a thing is one” but that one must work to make sense of the multiplicities (scapes) that recede and come forward to create objects and unities; one must contemplate the thing. Contemplation of a thing requires repeated energy or action of the will “on the same matter” and there is “a contemplative enjoyment of the unity of the whole” (Hopkins *Journals* 126). Out of the fragments of the phenomenon of a self, free will and intentionality unify an experience of a self, but it is not an immediate or direct experience as some want to argue.

Hopkins is working to comprehend or distinguish a pattern in what is already presented to him. In a letter to Bridges he called this design or pattern “inscape.” Though inscape was used to discuss objects, this individuating pattern is also relevant for knowledge of a self: “A person *is* a patterning of conscious events in time or in Merleau-Ponty's sense, a 'form'” (Ellis 74). This contemplation on the inscape is what suggests the phenomena of the unity is more than “mere

sense that such a thing is one” and this work to understand the inscape is also necessary for experiencing the self as a unified and individual phenomenon. This work, this action, is also synonymous with stress. Stress is important for pattern and tone in visual art, music, and especially poetry. Action/ contemplation/ work/ stress is necessary to experience the unity of the thing. This is similar to Ellis’s notion of consciousness as “a process consisting of attention, memory, synthesis, analysis, and creativity (Ellis 21).

Poetry is speech framed for contemplation of the mind by the way of hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest even over and above its interest of meaning. Some matter and meaning is essential to it but only as an element necessary to support and employ the shape which is contemplated for its own sake. (Poetry is in fact speech only employed to carry the inscape of speech for the inscape's sake—and therefore the inscape must be dwelt on. (Hopkins *Journals* 289)

From here we see that form is what should be contemplated and is where being can be found, not the content, which is again similar to Ellis’ notion of the self as a process that is then supported by essential but not sufficient content. From Hopkins' account of poetry above, encountering poetry is also similar to encountering Being in that it is “framed for contemplation of the mind” which could either be that the mind contemplates the poem (experience of being) or that the framing and exercise are for contemplating the mind itself, much like Dasein. Frameworks are necessary for limiting and providing reference points in order to contemplate the phenomenon similar to Ellis’ categorical intentions. The inscape, the pattern, the individuating form of the thing itself “must be dwelt on” because the sake of the thing, the phenomenon, is more than its meaning. When contemplating something “for its own sake,” Hopkins uses the term “sake” to mean “the being a thing has outside itself” (Hopkins *Letters* 83). Much like Ellis’ argument about the transcendental ego, Hopkins sees the particulars as essential, but only as elements

“necessary to support and employ the shape which is contemplated for its own sake.” As with poetry, being is more than its component parts as the particulars can change, but the sake, the inscape, the framework, or the pattern that is the unfolding or presenting of the being is what persists, and so it is with the self as it is also a phenomenon of being coextensive with particulars but only to fill in the pattern or frame of the self.

Hopkins' ontology is not a separate thing to be understood outside of his poetry to inform the poetry. His poetry is argument via demonstration; it is a framework for contemplation of the mind or a reflective thinking self. As the experience of being is a moment involving contemplative energy (stress) used to relate the parts to the whole in order to discern a unique pattern (inscape) to be iterated over and understood as a unity, so is the experience of poetry. As previous chapters and academicians have argued, if poetry is an apt re-creation of the experience of being, the ambiguity of poetic language and the possibilities for simultaneous and unified multiplicities mirrors the experience of being as an aesthetic moment. It is in the aesthetic moment of the in-between, of the Dasein held out in the nothingness, that the creativity of contemplation constructs knowledge of being out of phenomena, including the sake of the self.

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
 As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
 Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
 Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
 Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
 Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
 Selves—goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
 Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*

Í say móre: the just man justices;
 Kéeps gráce: thát keeps all his goings graces;
 Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is—
 Christ—for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
 Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
 To the Father through the features of men's faces.

(Hopkins *Poems* 54)

Kingfishers do not in fact catch fire. They have attributes (red and blue coloring) that could remind someone of fire and could therefore be said to share attributes of fire, but they do not catch fire. The function here is that the apparent inaccuracy is rendered meaningful in the context of the form and relation to other parts of the whole. They are each more than the small part mentioned, but when experiencing being we only get glimpses of some aspects of the being, not the whole. We get aspects of the thing as it presents itself and relate the parts to the rest of being and to the thing itself. The fact that each line must be taken in consideration with the other lines around it mirrors the construction of being which is always among multiplicities, not in a vacuum.

Being is discerned as such (is stressed or made to stand out) by contemplating the parts and the whole, but being also instresses itself. Each object “[d]eals out that being indoors each one dwells” as they reveal the inner self or essence in the event of unfolding and selving. To selve is to act, to stress, to work, to stand out and be unique for its own sake and its inscapes spilling from the essence of the thing itself. A self for Hopkins is not a stable thing with a set identity, but a form or pattern that can be actively filled with content. Self is made into a verb, not a noun: selving.

Nothing else in nature comes near this unspeakable stress of pitch, distinctiveness, and selving, this selfbeing of my own. Nothing; explains it or resembles it., except so far as this, that other men to themselves have the same feeling ... Searching nature I taste self but at one tankard, that of my own being. (Hopkins *Note-Books* 309-310)

Hopkins can taste himself in a way that no one else can. The experience of self, and the uniqueness of it is how he knows his self as such. Hopkins' "I" is one pole of experience

(experience of the unfolding of being or reflecting on consciousness, etc.), and he understands that there are other poles constituting his ability to reflect on the experience of constructing a self.

This notion of a self as an experience, an action, and process requiring content or particulars to exist or propagate through is also similar to Ellis' notion of being as a process, but instead of arguing through an academic style of language and values like Ellis or Husserl, even though as a student from Oxford and a professor of rhetoric he would be more than capable of doing so, Hopkins chose to use poetry. The initial experience of "Kingfishers catch fire" is the sight of it on the paper; it is unified in its placement on the page, and must be contemplated as a unit. This form takes the observer through the understanding that there is a pattern and unity between the parts and the whole. The multiple inscapes and meanings that language can have in this moment of the poem as it unfolds for a reader, the fact that you can contemplate the moment (poem) repeatedly, and the simultaneity of time and being are all caused by the aesthetic form and reflect the phenomenological experience of Being. This experience of being as unified and fragmented, singular and multiple, and unfolding over time with play between content and form is also indicative of the experience of the phenomenon of the self. "The just man justices," every being "[d]eals out that being indoors each one dwells," each being selves "[c]rying *What I do is me*"—the self is that which selves; the self is a process over time so that it is unified though spread over multiple moments in time.

What we find to be the self is a construction of unity out of fragments, and shadows, just like the rest of our experience with being. You may not be able to doubt the Cogito—that there is a perspective thinking and collecting and making networks or assemblages of meaning and

being—but you do not have *direct* immediate access to that absolute “I.” We know the “I” as a self by its phenomenon, just like the subjectivity of the Other or the chairness of a chair.

Poetry allows for communication of these unfolding phenomena through play with grammar, syntax, sound, and form or frame to arrange various meaning making relations between the parts to build a multifaceted whole mirroring the experience of being. Though a novel is another aesthetic space that is the go-to form for expressing and contemplating the interior life of a human self, poetry captures the paradox of the transcendence of self in a particular moment both in a poem’s form on the page and in the unfolding as the reader contemplates the moment making time and form relative to intention and contemplation, just as the phenomenon of the self unfolds in reflection. The aesthetic space is not something added to experience, but is instead ontologically relevant to and phenomenologically discovered in the experience of Being. Inscap and instress, as necessary aspects of experiencing a thing for its sake, are already intrinsically aesthetic in their vague, inconsistent applications and in their structure as relations of parts, pattern, and emphasis. It is through the aesthetic that we first engage with being (subjectively relating parts to the whole and seeking patterns in the moment). The aesthetic allows us to approach and use the paradoxes and ambiguities in the multiplicities and unities of being. The poetic form is a strong tool for recreating and contemplating being as it mirrors many aspects of said being (multiplicity, simultaneity, unity, inscape, instress), therefore a poem is a demonstrative argument detailing the “shape” of Being “which is contemplated for its own sake.” To ignore the aesthetic is to ignore the very thing that makes it possible to experience Being in the world.

So when we ask, “What the fuck is this?,” whether “this” is an object, another subjective consciousness, or the self, we are always already constructing this out of what we have contemplated before and intended before. This gives us a sort of freedom and constant sense of awe when the everyday experiences of objects, intersubjectivity, and the self are never fully but only partially known. This is why there is surprise and anger in my question, and this is why language matters. Such a simple question carries with it many categories, intentions, constructs, sensibilities, myself, my body, and the intersubjective in-between as an aesthetic space, as Being held out in the nothingness, constantly and freely (in Frankfurt’s compatibilist notion of free will) co-creating and recreating phenomena of being. This constant construction in a dialectic with the unfolding of being is the aesthetic nature of being that we have access to. So go on and accept the freedom and limitation that goes with aesthetic knowledge. Take comfort in the fact that it is not an absolute truth, but a partial truth none-the-less, and you have a part in constructing an intersubjective assemblage of truth and your self.

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