Truth and Experience

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Between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics

Edited by

Dorthe Jørgensen, Gaetano Chiurazzi and Søren Tinning

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III. Phenomenology and Hermeneutics: The Sources

Part IV. Phenomenology and Hermeneutics: New Fields

INTRODUCTION

This is a book on truth, experience, and the interrelations between these two fundamental philosophical notions. The questions of truth and experience have their roots at the very heart of philosophy, both historically and thematically. This book gives an insight into how philosophers working in the fields of philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics respond to challenges posed by these questions, not only in relation to the history of philosophy, but to philosophy itself.

The book contains texts written by distinguished professors and in particular by young scholars. It is the result of a mutually inspired collaboration between the Philosophy Departments at the University of Aarhus and the University of Turin, that is: between Danish and Italian philosophers, who met up in Aarhus during the graduate conference "The Experience of Truth – The Truth of Experience: Between Phenomenology and Hermeneutics," September 5–6, 2013.

As editors of the book, it has been interesting to see how historical awareness was coupled with a strong aspiration towards re-articulating, re-configuring, and re-thinking the past in order to open up to and explore a plurality of possible ways of enriching the philosophical questions at stake.

As a consequence of this explorative spirit, the questions of phenomenology and hermeneutics, and of experience and truth, were addressed in ways that made it meaningless to edit the book along the lines of such distinctions. In fact, some of the papers directly address these questions in the light of how we can rethink limitations and distinctions as such, while others, whilst being conceived within a certain philosophical perspective, open up to other philosophical disciplines, as well as to questions reaching beyond philosophy, e.g., to theology, politics, history, and anthropology.

Generally speaking, the interchange between historical awareness and a both critical and creative approach finds – like many other aspects of the book – a point of reference in the question of *finitude*. The theme of finitude may only be present as an undercurrent throughout the chapters of this book, but it comes forth as the condition *sine qua non* determining the questions they elaborate on. This central role of finitude helps cast light on two other elements running through the contributions to the book:

openness and *complexity*. These two elements can be regarded as methodological aspirations which represent the constant effort to open up subjects critically, of being open to them, and of opening perspectives beyond them. Likewise, when the philosophical potential of this effort is to be captured, the conclusions do not counter this openness, but strive to summon its complexity.

Nevertheless, the elements of finitude as well as of openness and complexity do not merely have a methodological significance, indicating the explorative spirit of the book. They also reflect an engagement with the present historical situation, in which the relation between truth and experience no longer corresponds to how it traditionally was experienced and defined.

Traditionally, experience and truth were considered to constitute knowledge of two different worlds, which corresponded to the traditional distinctions between the particular and the universal, the immanent and the transcendent, and the finite and the infinite. However, in a modern world of finitude "the transcendent" as it was traditionally understood (e.g., as God) is necessarily deemed inaccessible to human knowledge. This doesn't mean that the distinction between immanence and transcendence collapses, but that truth and experience are no longer consigned each to their own world in the traditional manner. On the contrary, they are both found in one and the same world – within immanence.

In an immanent world, the relationship between truth and experience is undecided, or rather: it is un-decidable, manifesting itself in a tension between unity and fragmentation, between dispersal and synthesis, which alters the foundation of how we think philosophically.

An illustrative example of this change is found in the concept of *immanent transcendence*, developed by Dorthe Jørgensen in Chapter One "Experience, Metaphysics, and Immanent Transcendence." In general terms, her concept of immanent transcendence reconfigures central notions of the philosophical tradition. It relies upon the depths and insights of that tradition, but defies the traditionally strong opposition between the immanent and the transcendent by substituting them with a third term, immanent transcendence, indicating how the philosophical configurations have changed.

According to Jørgensen, the immanent is the concrete historical world in which we live, with its rich diversity of relations, contrasts, and changes, and which today seems to be without any mirror in the form of a complementary transcendent world. On the contrary, *the transcendent* has been substituted by *transcendence* understood as an opening up that is constitutive of meaning, but which does not contravene the richness of the

immanent. Unlike what was the case in traditional metaphysics, in the chapter by Jørgensen the word "transcendence" does not denote something transcendent, but an experience happening in the immanence, transcending what is a given without being an experience of something belonging to another world. This transcendence happens immanent to what is present to us, as an opening up of this very world itself, without postulating anything transcendent beyond it. On the contrary, it is an experience of the multidimensionality of immanence itself.

Jørgensen's term "immanent transcendence" thus denotes an *experience* (not an object, be it experiential or not), namely the experience of an *event* (the transcendence in the immanence) that is *ahistorical* (it was present already in antiquity), but *always historically interpreted* (as an experience of e.g. truth, God, or aura) and known only from our historical interpretations of it. Furthermore, in Jørgensen's philosophy of experience the specific term "experience of immanent of transcendence" is reserved for the modern interpretations of this event that are expressed in the works of, e.g., Walter Benjamin and Martin Heidegger. Interpretations that are related to but different from previous philosophical and religious interpretations of the event called *transcendence*.

Still, as Gaetano Chiurazzi reminds us in Chapter Two – "Being as Diagonal and the Possibility of Truth: A Reading of Plato's *Theaetetus*" – the question of a certain experience of transcendence, or put in the terms of Chiurazzi, the question of the excess of Being, has been present at the heart of philosophy since antiquity. Chiurazzi finds this idea of a "surplus" or "excess" in the debate between the V and IV century BC concerning the problem of the incommensurable magnitudes, while he explicitly follows its traces in Plato's *Theaetetus* and in the commentary Heidegger devoted to this dialogue. The main thesis of Chiurazzi's contribution is that the Platonic discussion about the true and the false in the *Theaetetus*, which leads to the definition of Being as *dynamis* in the *Sophist*, involves the idea that in every experience of truth, an "excess of sense," represented by Being, is given; Being, as Heidegger writes, is not being. Being has the same nature of the diagonal: it is incommensurable with being, different from it. In this structure Chiurazzi sees the structure of understanding, the presupposition of every truth.

Therefore, Chiurazzi is in accordance not only with Jørgensen's reference to the natural philosophers (e.g. Thales), but with her emphasis on the historical changes of both human experience and philosophical notions: we must always remember the historical dimension in the equation. This is true both because the history of thought remains an important ground for understanding our present situation, and because the

historical can be found at the very heart of the philosophical concepts themselves. To paraphrase Heidegger, Being and time must once again become a question; and they must become so with an emphasis on time, on change, on history.

Having outlined the general spirit of the book, which is developed in a more elaborate form by Dorthe Jørgensen and Gaetano Chiurazzi in Part I: "Truth and Experience: The Broad Perspective," we can turn to the remaining three sections.

Part II: "Truth and Experience: Responding to Finitude" investigates some of the questions opened by Immanuel Kant, who was the first to philosophically articulate the question of finitude. In Chapter Three, "Kant's Slumber and Hegel's Ontological Gesture," Saša Hrnjez takes up G.W.F. Hegel's answer to Kant's investigations of the transcendental conditions of the possibility of knowledge. Central to this endeavor is Kant's insistence upon the finitude of reason, which demands a critical investigation of the limits of what we can know and of what is beyond our knowledge.

Accordingly, Hrnjez presents us with Kant's question of the transcendental, of the condition of the possibility of knowledge. He then analyses Hegel's reception of and his break with Kant: a reception in which Hegel argues that, for Kant, experience and truth remain completely separated, without any point of intersection. As a response, Hegel's ontological gesture strives to surmount this underlying heterogeneity within Kant's transcendental subjectivity in order to find the true ground of its original synthetic unity and so overcome Kant's subjective transcendentalism.

In Chapter Four, "On What Is Broken Inside: Hegel on Finitude," Haris Ch. Papoulias addresses the question of finitude in Hegel's philosophy. Papoulias traces Hegel's concept of finitude and shows its importance as a driving force on all levels in the Hegelian system. Finitude is thus constitutive to the possibility of negation as well as the possibility of sublating the contingency of the finite itself. This constitutive aspect in Hegel's idealism means that we should not conceive of his concept of the absolute Spirit in terms of a closed system; on the contrary, Hegel's system is driven by its continual openness.

In Chapter Five, "'Subjectivity as Untruth' – Kierkegaard and the Paradoxality of Subjective Truth," Kresten Lundsgaard-Leth analyses Søren Kierkegaard's answer to Hegel's dialectical interpretation of finitude and Spirit. Lundsgaard-Leth develops Kierkegaard's statement that "subjectivity is the truth," showing how the notion "subjective truth"

is essentially paradoxical in a double sense. On the one hand, a paradox occurs between the infinite subjective willing of a meaningful existence and the finite conditions of this very subject itself. On the other hand, this very willing, which characterizes the essence of the subject, is itself paradoxical. The subject is always already a willing subject before it makes any willed decision

Chapter Six, "Heidegger and Metaphysics: A Question of the Limit," investigates the traditional distinction between experience and truth, immanence and transcendence, finite and infinite, as described above. Interpreting this in the light of Heidegger's question of Being, and with Kant as a central point of reference, Søren Tinning shows how this very distinction has a specific historical role and origin as a defining structure in metaphysics.

Part III: "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics: The Sources," engages with some of the most important philosophers in phenomenology and hermeneutics. A chapter is here dedicated to the investigation of a specific question related to truth and experience in the work of each of these philosophers.

In Chapter Seven, Jens Sand Østergaard focuses "On the Temporal-Extension of Moods and Emotions" in Edmund Husserl's writings. Østergaard first distinguishes between emotions and moods as intentionally directed and un-directed respectively, as well as characterized by an extension that is short and transparent (emotions) or enduring and opaque (moods). Thereafter he turns to Husserl and his concept of affectivity. Affectivity is here examined in regard to the temporal characteristics of Husserl's conception of consciousness and passive and active synthesis.

In Chapter Eight, Jens Linderoth poses the question, "What Was Heidegger's Experience in Religious Experience, when Reading Paul?" Linderoth's answer takes shape as a detailed analysis of Heidegger's reading of Galatians, but has a much broader aim. Linderoth challenges the standard interpretation, which, led by Theodor Kisiel, focused upon Heidegger's reading of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians in the same lecture series. This polemical stance further leads us to consider the importance of the Galatians, both in Heidegger's reading of Paul and as a qualification of his hermeneutic phenomenological position.

In Chapter Nine, Damiano Roberi addresses "The Problem of Historical Experience in the Works of Walter Benjamin." He focuses both on the poverty of experience that according to Benjamin characterized his day and the possible historical experience that would open a messianic dimension of truth. Whereas experience belongs to our actual historical

world, messianic truth is of a different order. Yet the two are not to be conceived within the schema of a traditional distinction between immanence and transcendence; they interrelate in a much more complex way, as Roberi shows.

Chapter Ten, "The Role of Ciphers and Fantasy in Karl Jaspers's Work: Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Aspects" written by Daniele Campesi, highlights the fundamental role of symbolic language in Jaspers's philosophy through the analysis of two closely linked concepts: cipher and phantasy. From the definition of the metaphysics of ciphers as a "hermeneutics of the *limit*," the purpose of Campesi's enquiry is to show how the connection between ciphers and phantasy has both hermeneutical and phenomenological implications.

Silvana Ballnat concentrates in Chapter Eleven on Hans-Georg Gadamer, a philosopher indispensable to hermeneutic philosophy. Taking up the question of "Experience and Truth in the Work of Gadamer," Ballnat argues for an essential connection between Gadamer's double structured concept of experience ("negative experience is a truth of positive experience") and his critique of the methodological concept of truth. In accordance with this, Ballnat develops an ontological understanding of truth as "Zuwachs des Seins" (or with Chiurazzi, as a surplus of Being), in which truth does not primordially mean a growth in knowledge but in Being.

Chapter Twelve, the last chapter in this section, examines "Foucault's Concept of Experience." Nicolai von Eggers analyses the concept of experience in Michel Foucault's work, showing how it has a peculiar but important strategic role in his thought. Here, experience is not something done by a transcendental subject or some sort of Hegelian spirit. Instead, experience is that which mediates a core tension in Foucault's thought, namely between the subject and the power structure of discourse – or simply of the Other.

The last section of the book, Part IV: "Phenomenology and Hermeneutics: New Fields," complements the attention paid to the individual positions in the prior section by focusing on how other currents of thought and scientific fields become re-articulated through and by their encounter with phenomenology and hermeneutics.

In Chapter Thirteen, "Between Realism and Idealism: Transcendental Experience and Truth in Husserl's Phenomenology," Simone Aurora explores how the relation between two of the most important currents in modern philosophy is re-articulated or re-configured in and by Husserl.

The basic hypothesis of the chapter is that Husserl's phenomenology is not a realism, nor is it an idealism, but rather it is both.

Ivan Mosca, in Chapter Fourteen "The Four Truths and Their Double Synthesis," carries out another investigation of the complex relation between different fields of philosophy. The approach here differs from Aurora's, who showed how Husserl integrated other currents of philosophy into phenomenology. Instead, Mosca displays how the hermeneutic phenomenological kind of philosophy coming out of Heidegger has been integrated as an aspect of the concept of truth in social ontology, a recent current in philosophy. In this regard, Mosca outlines four different concepts of truth divided into two couples denoted as Tarskian-Pragmatic and Ancient-Modern. After schematically outlining these concepts and also adding a short discussion of "religious truth," Mosca shows how social ontology (e.g. John Searle) can be conceived as a unification of these different lines of thought.

The last three chapters step beyond the encounter of phenomenology and hermeneutics with different philosophical movements, in order to look at their relations to other fields of study.

In Chapter Fifteen, "The Contribution of Heidegger's Philosophy to Geography," Ernesto Calogero Sferrazza Papa explores how geography and philosophy are intertwined, showing that they are not completely isolated disciplines, but actually determine each other. Philosophy may to a certain degree be considered to be geographical, as some central philosophical concepts such as "space," "place," and "world" can show us. Likewise, geography is not an isolated science, but relies heavily on philosophy, as exemplified in René Descartes's concept of "pure space." Developing this common ground in the light of Heidegger's "geographical" concepts of place, dwelling, and Being-in, Sferrazza Papa shows how this implies an ontological questioning in which geography, prior to any measure or mapping of space, is confronted with questions of individual existence as well as of the fields of politics and the social world.

Chapter Sixteen, "Mood and Method: Where Does Ethnographic Experience Truly Take Place?," departs from anthropology's claim to truth grounded in an "I was there." In this respect, Rasmus Dyring raises the fundamental problem of what it means in anthropology to "*be there*." Developing the relationship between moods and postures, Dyring then turns to Heidegger's concept of "Befindlichkeit" as well as to Aristotle, Kierkegaard, and Hans Lipps.

Chapter Seventeen is dedicated to an analysis of "The Experience of Truth in Jazz Improvisation." Jens Skou Olsen here investigates the experience of truth that is characteristic of the event of jazz, as it is experienced in its extremely transient form of improvisation. Jazz improvisation is a *singular* event which demands the participation of both musicians and spectators and involves the specific time and place of the concert. All these elements contribute to the wholeness of the experience, in which they are brought into the openness and uncertainty so essential to improvisation, in such ways that their relations are dissolved and reconfigured.

The texts described above thus take up many open and complex questions and respond to them in a variety of ways. The responses touch upon a long range of questions that revolve around *experience* and *truth* within philosophical phenomenology and hermeneutics, as well as theology, anthropology, geography, art, politics, and history. The responses also touch upon notions such as time, history, language, emotion, and subjectivity, as well as realism, idealism, ontology, epistemology, and aesthetics; they address philosophers ranging from Thales, the Pythagoreans, Plato, and Aristotle, to St. Paul, A.G. Baumgarten, Kant, Hegel, and Kierkegaard, and not least to more recent thinkers central to phenomenology and hermeneutics such as Husserl, Benjamin, Heidegger, Jaspers, Gadamer, and Foucault.

Fundamentally, the contributors of this book all seek to answer the challenge posed by the questions of truth and experience in phenomenology and hermeneutics. This challenge is received in its most positive, but also demanding sense: as a struggle to find words and language adequate to a contemporary world, in which the old articulations must be transformed according to the changed coordinates brought about by what above was called *finitude*. The book thus seeks to contribute to the understanding of a world that has not been transformed once and *for all* (eternally), but is transformed once and *again* (historically).

Søren Tinning, Dorthe Jørgensen, and Gaetano Chiurazzi

PART I

TRUTH AND EXPERIENCE: THE BROAD PERSPECTIVE

CHAPTER ONE

EXPERIENCE, METAPHYSICS, AND IMMANENT TRANSCENDENCE

DORTHE JØRGENSEN

Modern scientism

Western philosophers have long striven to think scientifically, based on an ideal which they have found in the modern experimental sciences. This effort to turn philosophy into science has ensured that philosophy has moved away from the original wisdom-seeking *philosophia*. Not only does the traditional notion of truth as correspondence dominate as usual, but the mental copying of something empirical with which cognition is so often identified is now expected to follow the methodological ideal of the experimental sciences.[1] According to this ideal, we only have cognition if the content is knowledge that is true in the sense that it is consistent with the empirical data. This correspondence is only ensured if it is possible to explain the process of cognition so precisely that others can emulate it and come to the same result. Consequently, the acquisition of true knowledge requires the use of a method that is clearly defined and can be taken over by others. Therefore, experience is not only identified with *empirical* experience; it is also regarded as something done by a *subject* to whom that which is learned has the status of an *object*. Both empirical experience and scientific knowledge rooted in this experience are thus considered to be something that we, ourselves, are in control of.

Although the methodological approach of the sciences prides itself on transparency, much is taken for granted when we make use of it. For example, there is no discussion concerning what is real and what can be realized. The reality is limited to what can be observed empirically, and cognition is supposed to require a methodical processing of the material obtained in this manner. To the extent that cognition is accredited with any possibility of transcendence, its ability to transcend only consists in being

able to reach out for data making up a reality that is given in advance, and which does not evoke *wondering*. Within the framework of this approach, there is no room for the kind of experience and cognition that modern thinkers and artists such as James Joyce and Walter Benjamin were concerned about.[2] The sudden appearances of otherwise inaccessible reality – the experiences of a dimension of the world of which we are not otherwise aware, which Joyce called *epiphanies* and Benjamin referred to as *higher experiences* – are excluded. There is no opportunity to reflect on the unexpected experiences of a "more" – *a transcendence in the immanence* – that deviate from our usual experiences and cognitions of the world in which we live.

Sensitive cognition

It is a long time since the Enlightenment philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten problematized a notion of cognition that acknowledges no other experience than empirical experience. Thanks to this questioning he not only introduced philosophical aesthetics, but also prepared the above-mentioned experience of immanent transcendence. Baumgarten's rationalist contemporaries only had eyes for sensibility and understanding seen as *sense perception* and *rationality*, a limitation still prevalent today.[3] In analogy to other rationalists of his time, he distinguished between a lower and a higher part of the cognitive faculty; but he broke with the established notion that the lower part is nothing but a provider of material for the higher part and does not, by itself, result in cognition. According to Baumgarten, the lower part of the cognitive faculty does in fact generate a certain kind of cognition, which he referred to as sensitive, and by which he did *not* mean sensual. As early as in *Reflections on Poetry* he stressed in § 116 that the *aistheta* (sensations) observed by the lower part of the cognitive faculty are not identical to sensory impressions.[4] The aistheta comprise all sensitive ideas, including imaginations, and they are perceived differently depending on whether they are *obscure* or *clear*. Furthermore, clear ideas can be *distinct* and lead to logical cognition, or they can be *confused* and lead to sensitive cognition. It was the latter (the confused clear ideas, which Baumgarten also referred to as *extensively* clear ideas) he was concerned about, not only in *Reflections on Poetry*, but in *Aesthetica* as well.[5] He dealt with these ideas not only because of the sensitive cognition they allow for, but also because of the *beautiful thinking* associated with this kind of cognition.

Because the sensitive cognition is a product of the lower part of the cognitive faculty it is not logical, but sensitive; so it is not rational or

conceptual, but aesthetic and intuitive. However, sensitive cognitions do have epistemic value, and they even represent an individual aesthetic-intuitive kind of cognition which is not subordinate, but analogous to the logical-conceptual cognition.[6] As a consequence of this acknowledgment, Baumgarten eventually abandoned the conventional distinction between two parts of the cognitive faculty. He began distinguishing, instead, between two independent cognitive faculties: a lower and a higher, respectively, the former being the origin of sensitive cognition.

According to Baumgarten, philosophical aesthetics is the philosophy of sensitive cognition, and for this reason aesthetics is a kind of epistemology. Philosophical aesthetics explores the epistemologically rather unexplored phenomenon that sensitive cognition was at the time of the emergence of aesthetics, and which it still is. Before the formation of philosophical aesthetics, the epistemologists took nothing but rational understanding seriously, and this kind of cognition had only logical and metaphysical truth to relate to. Only conceptual thinking, which formulates explanations and provides proofs by subsuming particular phenomena under general concepts, and which therefore is characterized by abstraction, was regarded as true. Thus, true thinking only comprised thinking that results in general concepts and lawfully constructed explanations of relations. But philosophical aesthetics made it possible for epistemologists to explore *aesthetic* experiences as well, and thanks to philosophical aesthetics there was now also an *aesthetic* truth to relate to. Baumgarten's aesthetics created the basis for examining a beautiful thinking, which thanks to its eye for the uniqueness of the particular retains the complexity of observation and, thus, is characterized by liveliness. Henceforth, thinking leading to truth could also consist of thinking resulting in understanding marked by palpability and meaningfulness.

According to *Aesthetics* § 14, it is the perfection of the sensitive cognition that is the goal of aesthetics, and perfection is identical to beauty. Logic is not just about logical cognition, but aims at the *correct* logical cognition. Similarly, philosophical aesthetics is not just about sensitive cognition, but strives for *perfect* (i.e. beautiful) sensitive cognition.[7] Furthermore, Baumgarten regarded perfection/beauty as a matter of *unity in diversity*. Logical cognitions explain specific phenomena and causal relations by subsuming them under general concepts. Therefore, rational understanding is characterized by abstraction, and it is marked by unity, only. Sensitive cognitions, on the other hand, are specific and characterized by both unity and diversity. They are distinguished by not moving from the particular to the general, but rather alternating between the poles. Therefore, in sensitive cognitions the many individual marks of the

specific are not lost in abstraction, and not only complexity is experienced, but meaning as well. In sensitive cognitions we do not only sense a multitude of marks. We also perceive a whole that is characterized both by liveliness thanks to this wealth, and by meaningfulness thanks to inner consistency.

According to Baumgarten, the optimum solution is to allow the beautiful thinking associated with sensitivity to supplement the logical thinking of the intellect. The *aestheticological* (both aesthetic-intuitive and logical-conceptual) knowledge which this may result in is the highest it is humanly possible to reach cognitively. If we really want to obtain significant insight, we need both sensitive openness and logical rigor. Both intellect and sensitivity are of an individual epistemic value and give true knowledge, but they each do so in their own way, and they should complement each other.

Creativity

Baumgarten was aware of the creative aspect of the aesthetic experience, which means that it contributes to what is being experienced. This is evidenced, among other things, by his presentation of what he called *felix aestheticus*, i.e. the successful aesthetician. Felix aestheticus is Baumgarten's term for a person whose sensitive cognitions are of the perfected kind and who thus meets the goal of aesthetics. Such an aesthetician is, according to *Aesthetics* § 28, equipped with "innate natural aesthetics" in the form of a natural disposition in all of his soul for beautiful thinking. According to § 29, this natural disposition requires that the person is in possession of an "innate graceful and tasteful spirit," understood as a talent for letting the different dispositions of his lower cognitive faculty be encouraged, work together in appropriate distribution, and thus contribute to tastefulness in his cognition. Furthermore, such a graceful spirit requires a certain measure of higher dispositions for cognition (i.e. understanding and reason, § 38), as well as the following dispositions of the lower cognitive faculty (§§ 30-37): 1) increased sensitivity (*acute sentiendi*); 2) the disposition for imagining something (*dispositio ad imaginandum*); 3) the disposition for penetrating insight (*dispositio ad perspicaciam*); 4) the disposition for recognizing something and memory (*dispositio ad recognoscendum et memoria*); 5) the poetic disposition (*dispositio poetica*); 6) the disposition for having a taste that is not ordinary, but refined (*dispositio ad saporem non publicum, immo delicatum*); 7) the disposition for anticipating and expecting something (*dispositio ad*

praevidendum et praesagiendum); 8) the disposition for characterizing one's perceptions (*dispositio ad significandas perceptiones suas*).[8]

Concerning the creative aspect of the aesthetic experience, it is worth noticing dispositions number two and five, which are related to the faculties referred to in Baumgarten's *Metaphysics* as the imagination (*phantasia*) and the poetic faculty (or faculty of invention, *facultas fingendi*).[9] Imagination is the basis of the *capacitas infinita* of the human being, i.e. our inclination and ability to imagine something that does not already exist. Without imagination the poetic faculty would not function, and imagination is, in fact, a prerequisite for all the dispositions of the lower cognitive faculty, including memory. However, according to Baumgarten imagination as such is not creative, but merely reproductive. Imagination is the ability to restore a bygone state, and therefore it is bound to the perceptions and the related representations recalled and made palpable by its mental images (*phantasmata*). But in analogy to reason, the poetic faculty is genuinely creative, and this faculty is thus particularly characteristic of the successful aesthetician, who is essentially a *poeticus*. This aesthetician is the creative person who poetically calls forth new worlds, thus making new insights possible. Therefore, unlike the traditional notion of what it means to cognize and think, the cognition and thinking of the successful aesthetician is not a passive gazing that simply copies something mentally, be it ideas or anything else, and in which truth is thus a matter of correspondence between the observed and its imprint in the mind. In addition to being contemplative, the aesthetician's sensitive cognition and beautiful thinking are formational, and are therefore by their very nature creative acts. They are not only dependent on the usual cognitive potential of the human being. They also rely on the *poiesis* acting among the dispositions of the lower cognitive faculty, namely in the form of imagination and the poetic faculty.

Although the successful aesthetician does not follow the principles of conceptual cognition when he cognizes and thinks, he is not merely fantasizing. He wishes to effectualize not only aesthetic plenitude (*ubertas aesthetica*), but also aesthetic magnitude, truth, certitude/persuasion and liveliness (*magnitudo*, *veritas*, *certitudo/persuasio et vita aesthetica*), as well as aesthetic light (*lux aesthetica*). Thus, besides the logical clarity and distinctness characterizing conceptual cognition and the associated logical thinking, a specific *aesthetic* clarity and distinctness is possible in sensitive cognition and beautiful thinking.[10] There is both a light emanating from the things, and a light that we ourselves make the things shine with. Our sensitive cognitions take place in the space established by this duality of objectively given and subjectively added light, and they take shape as

unfinished and fundamentally infinite processes unfolding in a field in which it is difficult to keep subject and object strictly separated from each other. Consequently, despite Baumgarten's rationalist point of departure he actually negated the rationalist separation and opposition of subject and object, thereby opening the paradigm of the dualist philosophy of mind from within.[11] His understanding of the aesthetic experience as an unfinished and fundamentally infinite process that unfolds in the space of light between subject and object and commutes in a constant alternation between the particular and the general implied that he actually regarded the aesthetic experience as an *event*, and that he also considered this event to be *creative*.[12] The aesthetic experience brings something forth – aesthetic knowledge – that would not exist if no aesthetic experience was taking place.

Phenomenology is aesthetics

The latter point shows that Baumgarten's conception of sensitive cognition contained traits of hermeneutic phenomenology, but philosophical aesthetics was often badly reputed among hermeneutic phenomenologists. Through Hans-Georg Gadamer's criticism of the so-called aesthetic consciousness (the aesthetics of Immanuel Kant and Fr. Schiller, primarily), this aversion can be traced back to Martin Heidegger's critique of aesthetics *as such*.[13] According to Heidegger, aesthetics is an expression of metaphysics, just like logic and ethics are, and he criticized *modern* aesthetics for subjectivism, as well. In this context, the word metaphysics means "objectifying scientific theory." Because Heidegger did not distinguish between art theory and philosophical aesthetics, he thought that aesthetics arose as early as in antiquity, when Plato and Aristotle expected to be able to explain art theoretically. The way of thinking introduced by them included a distinction between matter and form, as well as an understanding of the exterior as an expression of something interior, which has since paved the way for the subjectivism of our day.[14] According to Heidegger, it was this subjectivism that determined Baumgarten's focus on sensitive cognition. The result was an understanding of art that – besides turning the work of art into an object of scientific study – thought of it as an expression of an artist's subjective feelings and notions which caters to the subjective feelings and notions of a viewer. This understanding of art meant that now there was only an eye for the emotional side of the work of art, whereas what such a work is rooted in and originates from faded away completely.[15] In order to avoid this, Heidegger, by contrast, related to the artwork in a phenomenological way.

He wanted to describe the work of art as it appears to us, and therefore he abstracted from both the artist and the viewer. He wished to let the work of art appear as what it truly is, thus making way for the possibility that truth could happen again in the field which had been called "aesthetic" since Baumgarten.

Nevertheless, Heidegger's texts also show that emotions actually played an important role in his thinking – also for cognition and even for the experience of truth. "What we call a 'feeling' is neither a transitory epiphenomenon of our thinking and willing behavior nor simply an impulse that provokes such behavior nor merely a present condition we have to put up with somehow or other."[16] On the contrary, feelings can be better promoters of insight than the rational way of thinking is, because the latter makes us think of the existent as something present-at-hand. "The founding mode of attunement [*die Befindlichkeit der Stimmung*] not only reveals beings as a whole in various ways, but this revealing – far from being merely incidental – is also the basic occurrence of our Da-sein."[17] This emotionally given disclosure is identical to the *aletheia* (unconcealedness) introduced by Heidegger as his alternative to the traditional concept of truth as correspondence. In attunement, we are next to what is both the most distant and the closest, i.e. Being. However, Heidegger's reflections on the fundamental importance of emotionality do not only refer to the way of thinking with which he tried to do away with traditional metaphysics. They also arouse associations with Baumgarten's philosophical aesthetics. As stated above, the sensitive cognition so crucial to aesthetics is an insight of emotional origin, and sensitive cognitions are not only analogous to the logical cognitions provided by the intellect. They even surpass them, at least potentially.

This is not to say that there is no significant difference between Baumgarten's and Heidegger's ways of thinking; Baumgarten belonged to the dualist philosophy of mind, whereas Heidegger was an existential philosopher. Nevertheless, they shared an interest in a felt kind of "cognition," as well as the view that the logical-conceptual way of thinking is of a limited scope. Furthermore, they both considered the notion of a subject who only recognizes conceptually to be an abstraction, and they were both of the opinion that the language of philosophy must be processed – for the sake of thinking.

According to Heidegger, even truth understood as correspondence is based on aletheia, because no cognition can correspond to anything without something having shown itself.[18] So the more "poetic" experience that aletheia is considered to be is a precondition for conceptual knowledge. In *Being and Time* Heidegger thematizes this as a matter of

attunement and of the understanding opened by attunement regarded as a precondition for all knowledge, including theoretical-scientific knowledge.[19] This also points back to Baumgarten's aesthetics, i.e. sensitivity understood as something fundamental and sensitive cognition seen as an independent kind of knowledge that is distinguished by an individual strength compared to logical cognition. Furthermore, it points back to the "aestheticological" truth regarded as the furthest and highest man can reach cognitively, and the aesthetic, i.e. sensitive, aspect of the associated aestheticological cognition seen as the source of this cognition's strength. Therefore, in my book *Den skønne tænkning* (Beautiful Thinking) I conclude that Baumgarten's philosophical aesthetics anticipated the hermeneutic phenomenology of our time, and that the latter is aesthetic by nature.[20] Hermeneutic phenomenology actualizes the potential in the form of which philosophical aesthetics wintered during the dominance of the study of art in the 19th-20th centuries. But to the detriment of aesthetics, thinkers such as Heidegger have practiced this actualization without any awareness of their own debt to aesthetics. Indeed, they have even shown contempt for aesthetics.

The nature of all things

The book *Den skønne tænkning* is subtitled "Veje til erfaringsmetafysik" (Pathways to Metaphysics of Experience). Our different experiences of transcendence, including aesthetic and religious experiences, and not least experiences of immanent transcendence, are the subject matter of what I call *metaphysics of experience*. This philosophy is formulated in opposition to the current trend of having an eye for two options only, meaning *either* we commit to metaphysics (which today is perceived as problematic) *or* we reject all kinds of metaphysics (from which follows that there really is only one way forward, namely to leave metaphysics behind). This trend is based on a widespread belief that metaphysics represents a historically invalidated learning about two worlds, one of which is immanent whereas the other is transcendent. Or the trend mentioned is based on the idea that metaphysics is identical to the theoretical-scientific way of thinking discussed by Heidegger that reduces Being to a being. However, the word metaphysics can also be used to denominate something else, and this is precisely the case in what I call metaphysics of experience. According to this third use of the word, philosophical thinking is metaphysical by nature, and the metaphysics thus referred to is characterized by something as significant as: 1) being open to experiences different from sensory/empirical experiences; 2) being willing

to reflect systematically on one's experiences of this other kind; 3) doing the latter in a meaning-seeking way, which requires interpretation and, hence, openness to something going beyond the experience itself (something that is more universal, a larger context, an idea).

According to this third understanding of metaphysics, philosophical thinking was metaphysical from its very beginning. Even the so-called natural philosophers (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes) thought metaphysically, i.e. they looked for more in the world than what can be observed empirically, and it was this "more" they were concerned about. Furthermore, the natural philosophers endeavored to consider the thus experienced super-sensuality systematically, and in the light of something more comprehensive than the experience itself – in the light of their idea of the "nature of all things" (*physis*) – they tried to formulate meaningful interpretations of it. Often the natural philosophers have been portrayed as a kind of early scientists, and it was therefore postulated about them that their philosophy broke with the contemporary realm of religious thought.[21] However, as long ago as a century comparative studies of philosophy and religion sowed doubt about this understanding.[22] The philosophy of the natural philosophers was probably not as different from the religiosity of their day as was previously presumed. Indeed, something new happened when they began to argue systematically for their conception of the nature of reality, but the religious understanding of this reality as something divine was inherited in the theories they formulated.

Aristotle is the supplier of our knowledge concerning Thales. According to Aristotle, Thales raised the question about the nature of the one source from which everything else comes, and in asking this question he tried to determine the nature of all things, which he identified as "water" (*hydor*).[23] Because of this interest in nature, philosophers such as Thales have been regarded as exponents of a new and more secular mindset in antiquity. But in their mental environment the water just mentioned was not an empirical natural phenomenon; on the contrary, this water was a materialization of "super-sensual nature." They saw nature as a living and holy-sacred organism, and in their view *physis* was a divine "soul-substance" pervading all things. This is also the reason why Thales could say that "all things are full of gods," thereby aiming at the nature of all things understood as something divine and subject to admiration.[24] In accordance with this, the natural philosophers' expectation of finding a "higher" nature in empirical nature rested, as mentioned, on an assumption of a religious origin, namely the idea that there is one source only of everything. This source from which everything stems is the power that is present in everything and thanks to which it exists, or the super-sensuality

that has inspired everything with divine nature. On the whole, the thinking of the natural philosophers was probably not as different from the religiosity of their time as was often assumed. On the contrary, it originated from an experience of a divinity inherent in nature, and it was shaped as a homage to this sacred nature.

Nevertheless, although religion and philosophy had a common experiential ground early in antiquity, they were media for different interpretations of what was experienced. The understanding of reality remained the same because the conception formulated by the philosophers was expressed in their understanding of nature, the content of which was of a religious origin; but the way of dealing with the super-sensual reality changed with the emergence of philosophy. Magic, mythology, and religion had an intuitive and action-oriented approach to reality: they cultivated the super-sensual in its symbolic manifestations and expressed themselves in a poetic language. Philosophy, on the other hand, had an intellectual and speculative approach to the super-sensual: the philosophers tried to define the nature of the one source and dealt with it in an abstract conceptual language. However, the values of religious thought affected the thinking of the philosophers, and philosophy was thus cut in two directions: a "scientific" direction represented by Anaximander, and a "mysterious" direction represented by Pythagoras. The first direction was an expression of man's need for "explanation" acquired through his mastery of nature, while the latter testified to the human need for "understanding" gained through a union with nature. But both of these directions were rooted in the realm of religious thought. Anaximander's scientific philosophy was associated with Homer and the Apollonian religiosity, while Pythagoras' mystical philosophy was linked to the Orphic and Dionysian religiosity.

New metaphysics

According to Heidegger, philosophers such as Thales did not reduce Being to a being, and this is the reason for his interest in them. They did not yet think in a theoretical-scientific way. If the philosophy of our time is to approach the question concerning the meaning of Being, it must, according to Heidegger, learn from these thinkers. Modern philosophy must drop its tendency to metaphysics, i.e. the tendency to reflect in a theoretical-scientific way. However, if we do *not* follow Heidegger's pejorative use of the word metaphysics, but refer to the third definition of that word's meaning as formulated above, metaphysics is something *other* than scientific theorizing. According to this other understanding of

metaphysics, metaphysics is thinking that is sensitively open to different dimensions of the world, including a super-sensual one, and to the interrelationships and connections between these dimensions. In this perspective, Heidegger's own thinking was metaphysical – meant as a mark of distinction. It was experiential-philosophical by its very nature, and being a philosophy of experience it operated with an expanded concept of experience. Furthermore, the experiential-philosophical rather than idealistic character of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology means that it actually represents a *new* and *different* kind of metaphysics. This is consistent with the fact that it was not metaphysics as such, but traditional metaphysics only, i.e. scientific theorizing, that Heidegger addressed in his criticism of metaphysics.

We find metaphysics of a new and different kind in an even stronger form in Benjamin, whose thinking was especially concerned with experience. It was about experience in the expanded sense of the word, and this was the case all the way from his text "Experience" written in 1913 to "On the Concept of History" from 1940.[25] Benjamin's expanded concept of experience is manifest, for instance, in "On the Program of the Coming Philosophy," in which he introduced his concept of *higher experience* and also expressed a desire to develop a *new metaphysics* understood as a philosophy about this experience. According to Benjamin's program, all epistemology is confronted with two realities: an empirical and a metaphysical reality respectively. This is because man does not only have empirical experiences, but also witnesses a kind of metaphysical experience, i.e. higher experience. Empirical experiences are about the spatio-temporal world, whereas higher experience is about what transcends this world. Moreover, these empirical and metaphysical realities constitute two analytical fields, each of which contains its own critical question about the truth of empirical experience and the eternal validity of higher experiences. The natural sciences are based on empirical experience, which is precisely what they should be, but according to Benjamin philosophy is mistaken when it rejects any possibility of higher experience, as has usually been the case since Kant. To remedy this deficiency, Benjamin wanted to develop an epistemology shaped as a philosophy about the epistemic value of higher experience.

According to Benjamin, Kant recognized that what matters in philosophy are the questions asked and how they are asked. However, Benjamin turned this insight against Kant himself. He thought that Kant's critique of knowledge was weakened by the question Kant formulated in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, or rather by his way of asking.[26] Instead of asking *how* true cognition is possible in metaphysics, Kant raised the

question of *whether* it is possible at all. Just as mathematics and the natural sciences tell us, according to Kant, that true cognition is possible within these fields of knowledge, our higher experiences tell us, according to Benjamin, that true cognition is possible in metaphysics. Therefore, in philosophy the most relevant and fruitful question is not *whether* such cognition is possible, but *how* this can be the case, i.e. how do we formulate a philosophical understanding of this cognition. For Kant, however, it was not possible to practice metaphysics with such a starting point, because he ruled out the possibility of metaphysical *experience* in advance. According to Benjamin, the reason for this was an inadequate concept of experience by Kant, which limited experience to empirical experience. Furthermore, Benjamin criticized Kant for giving this kind of experience a metaphysical status in mathematics and the natural sciences which it does not deserve.

Since the question of how true cognition is possible in metaphysics is also a matter of formulating the philosophy of this cognition, Benjamin did not only want to *ask* the question. As mentioned above, he also wished to develop a form of metaphysics – though not in the sense of a philosophy about transcendent objects, but about metaphysical experiences. Despite his criticism of Kant, Benjamin supposed that Kant's critical method could serve this purpose. Kant investigated the conditions of the possibility of knowledge before he commented on its scope and depth. A similar study of the conditions of the possibility of higher experience should, according to Benjamin, enable a systematic determination of this experience, whereas attempts to define the higher experience without considering its fundamental conditions would result in empty speculation only. However, although Kant's critical method was applicable, Benjamin criticized his philosophy as such for containing remnants of the dualist philosophy of mind; elements revealed by the fact that Kant did not always escape presenting reality as an object for a subject of cognition, even though he himself rejected such a notion of reality. These remnants were also the reason why Kant tied experience and cognition to man's empirical consciousness, which according to Benjamin resulted in a psychological mythology of cognition causing subjectivism and relativism in Kant's criticism, and which Benjamin therefore also problematized.

As a result, Benjamin wished to purify Kant's system of rudimentary metaphysics, i.e. to remove the remnants of the dualist philosophy of mind and the psychological mythology of cognition. However, behind Kant's rudimentary metaphysics Benjamin also noticed a tendency toward genuine metaphysics, and he wanted to save this impulse and unfold it in