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### Aesthetics as Cosmology

Graham Harman

*The American University in Cairo AUC*, [cairoharman2@gmail.com](mailto:cairoharman2@gmail.com)

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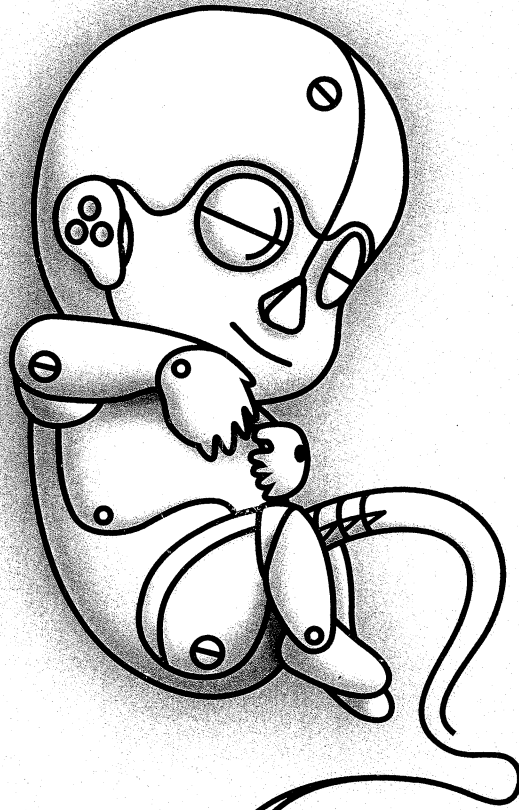
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## Graham Harman

### AESTHETICS AS COSMOLOGY (1)

One of the best ways to approach any difficult problem is to broaden the scope of the problem, making it bigger, to expand it into a systematic form outstripping its initial bounds. It strikes me as a useful principle, one easily transferable into the field of aesthetics. The structure of artworks and the nature of beauty: these remain enduring problems for contemporary philosophy, at least for those who refuse to accept at face value the pronouncements of Martin Heidegger. Perplexing difficulties trouble our attempts to clarify the nature of metaphor, the exact role of style in artworks, and even the attempt to draw convincing boundaries between the aesthetic and non-aesthetic realms. In this spirit, perhaps the only way to clarify art is to let it balloon so far beyond its initial place in the world that it comes to coincide with the universe as a whole. Maybe the best way to treat aesthetics is to approach it through the back door of general cosmology, as if the world itself had an aesthetic structure. I am referring not to some creative human project that tries to lend meaning to an arbitrary, irrational universe; it is not a question of "life as literature." My hypothesis is one of an aesthetic structure to the inner life of the things themselves, which are also not a popular subject matter in the recent history of philosophy.

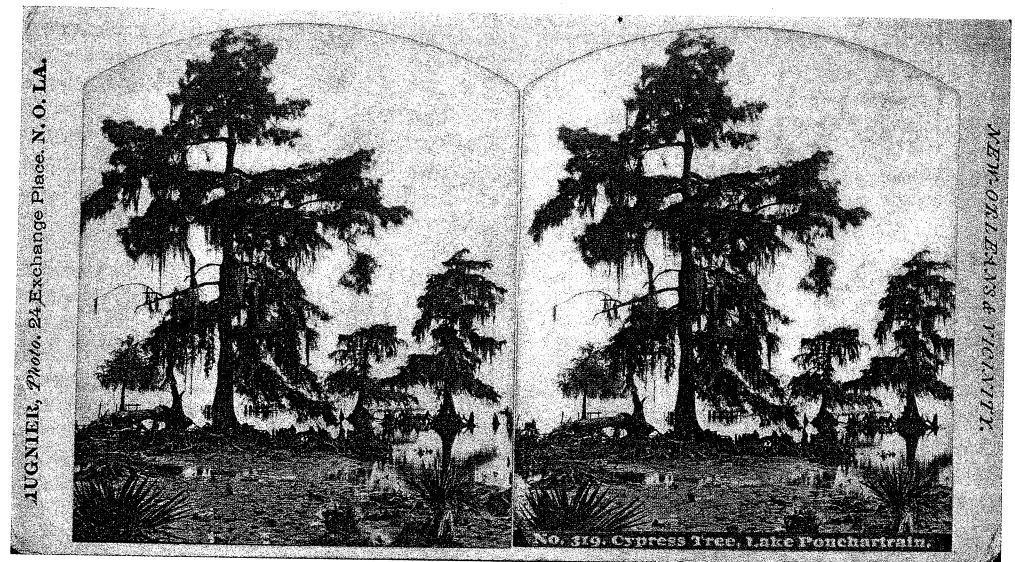
I will propose that art becomes clearer than before if we regard it as somehow lying silently at the basis of all physical causation, responsible for the collision of sand grains and the emission of steam by crippled nuclear plants no less than for our mournful encounter with paintings of peasant shoes. My starting point will be a neglected 1914 essay by José Ortega y Gasset, originally a preface to a book of poems by one Moreno Villa. (2) In my estimation this essay is one of the buried treasures of twentieth century philosophy, and operates from a far more advanced philosophical standpoint than Jacques Derrida's "White Mythology," generally regarded as the high-water mark of radical philosophy of metaphor. (3) Here I will mostly confine myself to describing the virtues of Ortega's theory, but will end by suggesting that it also entails a total cosmological theory, one that surpasses the still-contemporary

horizon of Heideggerian philosophy. Ortega's is a theory not too shy to pass beyond questions of human access to reality and enter that reality itself, to depict a breathtaking universe of active concealed objects, sparkling and smoking in their mutual collisions.

#### 1. Executancy vs. Image

Rather than attempting a full aesthetic theory in his essay, Ortega limits himself to a treatment of metaphor, which he terms "the beautiful cell," (4) the root material or alpha factor from which beauty emerges. Everything hinges on a fundamental contrast between two modes of being that he calls execution and image. Departing somewhat from Ortega's own examples, consider the case of a headache. When a migraine rises within me once every few years, as happened on the eve of a 2002 conference in Rotterdam, my life is delivered over to its power. My very existence is deployed in the act of enduring the nearly crippling pain. Sleep eludes me; powerful pharmaceuticals are the only escape hatch, and even these can take time to locate and then to take effect. Contrast this experience with that of observing a friend in the midst of a headache. We see facial grimaces and watch him rub his own head gently, as his movements and his enthusiasms gradually slow to a crawl. Even if we try to put ourselves in his shoes, even if we are true saints of empathy, our own being is not delivered over to the headache in the same way that his life is. Between my life as it executes itself and the life of another as seen from outside, there is an absolute gulf, a kind of ontological difference.

But notice that this unbridgeable rift is not confined to our perceptions of *other* people, since the same dualism occurs even in cases of introspection. An expert phenomenologist or a Proustian diary-writer might see fit to draw up a 1,200-page catalog of the inner fluctuations of a headache. Even the minutest contours of a migraine might be recorded, so that seemingly nothing remained to be said. As a limit-case, we might imagine the introspection of God himself truly being able truly exhaust the describable qualities of any act of his awareness. Yet even



in this situation there remains an inefaceable gap between the image and the execution. To observe something, no matter how closely, is not actually to be it— not the same thing as to stand in its place and undergo its fate. This already coincides with Ortega's surprisingly early critique of Husserl, which dates from the same year as his essay on metaphor: in 1914, five years before Heidegger's philosophical muse first became visible. Consciousness is not primarily an observer, but an executant actor. Introspection has no closer relationship with the intimate reality of a life than does the outward observation of another human or animal. Introspection is not true inwardness, but only a special case of that espionage or visual eavesdropping with which we survey the being of others.

But Ortega takes a second and more radical step, which both paves the way for his theory of metaphor and tacitly pushes him beyond the normal bounds of post-Kantian philosophy. It turns out that the distance between execution and image applies not just to our perception of ourselves and other animate beings, but holds good for our dealings with objects in general. The pronoun "I," says Ortega, belongs not just to living beings, "but rather all things —men, things, situations— inasmuch as they are occurring, being, executing themselves." (5) Few people will need to be convinced that a human entity might be irreducible to any of its external contours, that it might have an active inner reality of its own unapproachable by means of the usual descriptive categories. Ortega's breakthrough, already a few steps further along than Heidegger's,

consists in sensing that there is also an inner reality stirring behind the facades of buckets, supermarkets, clay-pits, and trees. He cites the example of a red leather box lying before him, and notes that the redness and smoothness of the box are mere perceptions in his mind, while the box itself is actually embedded in the fate of being red and smooth, unlike Ortega himself. "Just as there is an I-John Doe, there is also an I-red, an I-water, and an I-star ... Everything, from a point of view within itself, is an 'I.'" (6) Elsewhere, Ortega speaks of true inwardness as "anything in the act of executing itself," as "the true being of all things, the only sufficient thing and the only thing whose contemplation would completely satisfy us." (7)

Note that Ortega's "executancy" has nothing in common with what is now called "performativity," despite their apparent intersection in the German word *Vollzug*. Performativity is a word born to fight all notions of hidden essence, which it replaces with a nominalist essence fabricated on the outside by a series of public actions. Execution, by contrast, is essentialist through and through— though not in the traditional sense of an essence that could be made present in an adequate *logos*. Rather than a true nature made up of properties that a philosopher could gradually make visible, the executancy of a thing is a dark and stormy essence that exceeds any such list of properties. No catalog of qualities, no matter how important and exhaustive, will ever use up the reality of Ortega's red leather box, just as Husserl's or even God's surveillance of my soul does not step in and *replace* my soul



or live my life for me. To repeat, Ortega is already a long way beyond the Heideggerian position. The weakness of phenomenology is not just that it privileges visible profiles over the horizons into which human Dasein is thrown. The weakness is that it fails to capture the objecthood of objects by failing to grant them an intimate interior of their own. Changing objects from visible targets of consciousness into concealed potential background targets for consciousness is not enough to liberate them for the full autonomy they deserve.

Ortega holds that the inwardness of things is a depth that can absolutely never be fathomed, insofar as it is not interchangeable with any sum of its qualities (compare Kripke's objections to Russell's theory of names).<sup>(8)</sup> Knowledge is the process of digging away at this inwardness of things and bringing it to light. "This," says Ortega, "is the task of language, but language merely alludes to inwardness— it never shows it."<sup>(9)</sup> In more melancholic terms, "a narrative makes everything a ghost of itself, placing it a distance, pushing it beyond the horizon of the here and now."<sup>(10)</sup> The fate of language, as of all perception and indeed (we will see) of all relation, is forever to translate the dark and inward into the tangible and outward, a task at which it always comes up short when faced with the infinite depth of things. And precisely this is the importance of aesthetics for Ortega: "Imagine," he announces, "the importance of a language or system of expressive signs whose function was not to tell us about things but to present them to us in the act of executing themselves. Art is just such a language; this is what art does. The esthetic object is inwardness as such— it is each thing as 'I.'"<sup>(11)</sup> For now we can restrict ourselves to asking how this process works, though we will also need to ask why aesthetic productions seem able to do this while non-aesthetic experiences do not.

As noted already, Ortega confines his discussion to the theory of metaphor. The metaphor of choice in his essay comes from the poet López Picó of Valencia, who sings that the cypress tree "is like the ghost of a dead flame."<sup>(12)</sup> To simplify his analysis, Ortega strips away the "like" that turns the metaphor into a simile, and drops both the ghost and the deadness of the dead flame. For the purposes of his analysis, the kernel of the metaphor is this: "the cypress is a flame." He first notes that this attempted marriage of cypress and flame is based on a deep coincidence, not a mere resemblance. "Metaphor," he insists, "is not... the mutual assimilation of real qualities."<sup>(13)</sup> For some important reason, metaphor seems to work only when based

on *inessential* qualities. We can think of new examples of our own. It is clearly no metaphor to say "a Dollar is like 87.153 Euro Cents," or "a Dollar is like a Euro because both are hard currencies on the world market." But imagine that we begin to feel poetic sentiments about money, and begin to generate metaphors based on the Aristotelian ratio that Dollars are to Euros as America is to Europe. Haunting refrains can easily be invented on this basis. A Leftist poet could call the Euro "a Dollar that funds no wars." A right-wing bard might counter by berating the 5-Euro Cent coin: "Europe, whose nickels Jefferson fled in shame." Presumably both political camps could agree on a neutral melody such as this one: "a dollar is like a Euro etched in green— the green of distant Neptune and the cold and deathless sea." Obviously, no real poet would tell us that "a spoon is like a fork but better for eating soup." But he or she might easily refer to a fork as "a spoon with rabid teeth." The question before us is why only the inessential qualities seem to provide an effective basis for metaphor. The answer, it turns out, has mesmerizing repercussions for our conception of the thinghood of things.

## 2. The Cypress-Flame-Feeling

Let's return to Ortega's own pared-down example, "the cypress is a flame", and follow his account of the process by which one object merges with the other. As stated already, the metaphor tends to fail if it too closely approaches a genuine similarity. We would not expect a poetic effect from saying "a cypress is like a flame, because both contain oxygen molecules," and just as little would any poet say "a cypress is like a juniper," which strikes too close to the truth to be effective. Any literal similarity between cypress and flame in the practical world borders on the trivial. Most likely the poet has their similar physical shapes in mind, and these shapes are far removed from what strikes us as most essential about these objects. But on the basis of this pretext, this mere shell of a similarity between cypress and flame, the poet becomes an audacious liar who claims *absolute* identity between them. The mind of the reader resists this identity, as it must. "The cypress is a conifer" fails as metaphor precisely because the names *can* be easily fused; "the cypress is a flame" succeeds only because they cannot. What we have is an apparent likeness that is actually used an excuse to bring into play an *unlikeness*, as in Max Müller's point about metaphor in the Hindu Vedas, which display in naked form their road of negation: "he is firm, but he is not a rock", or "the sea roars, but it is not a bull."<sup>(14)</sup> Whatever we normally associate with the name "cypress," whatever

we customarily attach to the word "flame," these associations are broken into pieces as soon as we hear that the cypress is a flame. In Ortega's own colorful words: "The result ... is the annihilation of what both objects are as practical images. When they collide with one another their hard carapaces crack and the internal matter, in a molten state, acquires the softness of plasm, ready to receive a new form and structure." (15) A new object is created, neither quite tree nor quite fire, but a vaporous hybrid of both— one that cannot even be described in terms of definite tangible properties.

His description of this process makes sense only in light of his previously described ontological theory, in which the world is forever torn apart between the inwardness of things and their effects on us— his intriguing dualism between the thing as image and as execution. If we speak of the cypress or the flame, we can only *allude* to their innermost reality, the "I" or self that each of them enacts. Any cataloguing of the properties of these entities, in no matter how many different moods and lighting conditions we undertake them, will never fully exhaust the cryptic essence deployed in each of these things. My relations with the tree will never suck it dry to the marrow. Language and all forms of perception seem doomed merely to point loosely at the inner execution of things, at their subterranean being, without ever reaching full intimate union with this being. Ortega's claim for metaphor, of course, is that it gives the executancy of the things in simulated form. Poets cannot *really* crossbreed trees with flames: perhaps only wizards could once do this, and their race has vanished from the earth.

The question is how the poet makes this seem to happen. In beginning to answer this question, Ortega develops an interesting and quite new concept of a "feeling." Against any psychologistic notion of feelings as internal mental states or physiological excitements, he insists on the intimate relation that feelings have with *objects*. "Every objective image," he says, "on entering or leaving our consciousness, produces a subjective reaction— just as a bird that lights on or leaves a branch starts it trembling, or turning on and off an electric current instantly produces a new current." (16) This beautiful description entails a second fundamental split within reality, one that resembles the distinction between image and execution but does not entirely coincide with it. If I say the phrase "snow leopard," for example, there is no presence of the real leopard in this word. Snow leopard *the thing* is a warm and dangerous creature stalking its prey in the Himalayas, whereas snow leopard *the phrase*

is without bodily temperature, strikes no fear into any non-human animal, and is no more at home in Nepal than on the moon. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of snow leopard *the visual image*, if I am unlucky enough to be ambushed by one while trekking. This second rift in reality lies entirely on the level of thing-as-image, not that of thing-as-execution. On the one hand, there is the cypress as a set of distinct qualities: its shrublike texture, its twisted and stunted upward motion, its dull dark green hue. On the other hand, there is the cypress as a unified *thing that I encounter*, that fills up some part of my life as I adopt a definite emotional stance toward it, however faint. Insofar as the cypress enters the sphere of my life, it is not just a sensory image, but also a single executant reality *in* my life, an actual experience that I undergo. As an apparition entering my life and setting up shop, the cypress is not the same as the real cypress that grows and dies. Nonetheless, even within the limits of my life, it still exceeds all of the hundreds of millions of things that might be said about it; none of these would exhaust the total cypress-effect that plays itself out in my personal world. I recognize the cypress as a unit, as a kind of inscrutable monad of my world that emits its multitude of describable features.

The point is important, and bears repeating. The cypress is not only an image sparkling with diverse features, but also a murky underground unity *for me*, and not just for itself. It is from this strange concealed integrity of each individual image that metaphor draws its power. On one side we have the cypress-feeling, which as a single executant experience of mine can never fully be described. It can only be hinted at, for purposes of illustration: it is perhaps a vague total intuition of brooding vegetative power combined with funerary gloom and the fear of lurking criminals. On the other side there is the flame-feeling, with its festive joy, its delight in destructive power, its jubilation at infernal color and beauty, its hypnotic void of information. Naturally, it can only be split into parts in this way after the fact, since it begins as a unitary experience of the flame as a total reality, a kind of body without organs. What happens in normal language and perception is that our attention is seized by images, and by images alone, as the nature of things requires. I grasp things by their shape and color or by the musical sounds they generate, not in their nethermost reality. The same thing happens even if I follow a Kripkean theory of reference, using proper names to point to some unknown X called "gold" or "Richard Nixon" that remain distinct from any known properties of these objects. What I have in these cases are the units "gold" or "Nixon," not



gold and Nixon *in themselves*, since these consist only in executing their own reality and can never be reduced to descriptions. A proper name is not yet a metaphor, even if it strikes some theorists as being closer to the essence of an object than all its numerous properties are. But if some poet were to write "gold has forged the keys to Nixon's tomb," we have left both names and descriptions far behind. Gold and Nixon are no longer nicknames for tables of known facts about these entities, but neither are they just pointer-fingers stretched towards inaccessible things in themselves. What probably occupies the reader's mind instead is some sort of tragic network-thing that links the thirty-seventh President with scandals, greed, fate, death, and the sparkling beauty of gold.

And here is the marvelous point: according to Ortega, it does this not by painting an image from the outside, but by compelling us *to live executantly* a new object born in our midst in the very moment of its being named. To return to the case of the cypress and the flame, their images are destroyed, and even their independent existence as proper names is swept away. If someone tells me that a cypress is like a juniper, what happens is that my attention is absorbed by a set of remarkably similar qualities; I am adrift in the world of images of things. But if someone tells me that a cypress is like a flame, then I have entered the magic world of a cypress-flame-thing. Since the two images are unable to melt together directly by means of their trivial common qualities, their cryptic essences remain before me in a kind of permanent collision. My executant feeling of the cypress and my executant feeling of the flame attempt to fuse with one another, but without final resolution, their hard carapaces cracking as they fill each other with molten plasm. And as Ortega admits, "even when a metaphor is created we still do not know the reason for it. We simply sense an identity, we live executantly this being, the cypress-flame." (17) This new being may be constructed out of feelings, but it is actually a new *object* that has entered the world, not just a mental state of mine. To create such an object is to de-create the external images that normally identify it, reshaping the plasma of their qualities into a hybrid structure. What we call a style, says Ortega, is nothing more than a specific mode of de-creating images and re-creating them as feeling-things.

Before moving to the conclusion, let's note that Ortega's concept of the executant thing, deployed in its private reality, has nothing in common with any supposedly naive theory of "the proper." The candle-in-itself and the horse-in-itself do not claim any

univocal, literal meaning for Ortega, because they do not have a "meaning" at all. What they have is an intimate reality, a foot jammed in the door of the world. To try to approach their meaning in any way is necessarily to do so from the outside, by means of a relation— that is, by means of *translation*. In this respect, there is certainly an unmasterable polysemia to the meaning of things, one permanently dependent on context, perspective, system. But this vaunted unmasterable polysemia is much less interesting than the unmasterable *polyousia* that actually makes up each thing: its irreducible execution amidst the cosmos, utterly distinct from the execution of anything else. In this latter sense, it is completely *univocal*: this candle is this candle, this candle is what is proper to itself. And to say so is not to lapse into some sort of gullible, fateful, traditional white man's power-hungry world, but only to recognize that things exist in a unitary form that no list of qualities can fully explain. The fact that the "proper" of the candle can never be univocally *spoken* does not mean that there is no such thing as the proper of the candle. The infinite inward depth of candles, stars, and moons is far more interesting than the supposed infinite complexities of multiple meanings. Ortega's theory of metaphor is primarily a theory of being, not of meaning— in this sense it breathes a more rarefied air than most of today's meditations on the same topic.

### 3. The Cosmological Problem

We now reach the point at which Ortega's theory of metaphor approaches a full-blown cosmological model, in a manner that contemporary philosophy is little equipped to handle. The core of what he said about metaphor was, of course, the distinction between thing as executant realities and things as images. For Heidegger it is human *Dasein* that cannot be reduced to present-at-hand categories and must be grasped, via some sort of "formal indication" (*formales Anzeigen*), in its very act of being. For Ortega, who is one step more radical in this respect if not in others, no executant reality can be adequately portrayed by any description or perception of it: fish and hailstones have an inner existential fiber no less than a Black Forest peasant does. Nonetheless, Ortega failed to mention a further, more disturbing implication of his theory. If a thing exists in enacting or executing itself, then it cannot just be human perception that petrifies this reality in a mere image, reducing it to a ghost of itself. The same thing will happen in the merest causal interaction between two inanimate cinder blocks. If a cinder block is an "I" or a self, it is not just cruel humans who overlook this block-self and caricature it as a pale external image. One block also does to

this other, just as both blocks do the same thing to the windows they smash in riots or the cars they crush during earthquakes. In short, the permanent gap between thing as execution and thing as image is not first produced by the miraculous appearance of animal minds in our galaxy; Ortega's dualism does not amount to a phenomenology of perception or poetic language. The difference between execution and image is none other than the difference between existence and relation.

Given this broadening of Ortega's model, which I regard as inevitable, it will have to be asked whether his theory of metaphor also takes on unexpected scope. It is important to avoid jumping to two possible quick conclusions. The first would be to take some sort of commonsense notion as to the difference between humans and inanimate matter and project it retroactively back into one's ontology. Heidegger is often guilty of this maneuver. The clearest example is when he proceeds from the apparent truth that humans are conscious of the world and rocks are not, then concludes that only human existence is fully characterized by the *as*-structure, taking something "*as*" something— an illegitimate conclusion, since his account of the *as*-structure is so austere that it actually holds good for inanimate causation no less than for human poetry slams and motorcycle rallies. But the other extreme is just as bad. I am referring to the sort of wild vitalism that begins with the persuasive philosophical argument that all animate and inanimate relations are both kinds of relations, and then rapidly deduces that what we call *human* consciousness must already be present in rudimentary form in all physical matter— so that palm trees and the moon can also have dreams and foretell the future, even if in slightly fainter form than the Prophets can. This viewpoint is defended not only in Leibniz and Islamic Neo-Platonism, but also in much of the critical reader mail that I received after publishing *Tool-Being*. (18) We need to avoid the dogmatic edict that monkeys and trained sea mammals know nothing like metaphor, while also retaining a healthy skepticism towards any feverish claim that dust-grains and electrical fields are also poets— for perhaps they are not.

Although Ortega's theory seemed to begin with the split between the execution of things and their appearance, it ultimately hinged on a gulf within appearance itself. The real being of the cypress, the executancy of the flame, can never become present by any magic of words; a simulation is the best we can hope for. According to his argument, our executant *feeling* for a unified cypress and *feeling* for a unified flame are what get hitched together.

Naturally, once they unite before us, they are no longer executant things themselves, but already images, though images of an especially vivid kind. The thing as a unified persona in my life and the thing as a nexus of manifold properties is the strife in question. Now, note that the same strife is already built into the executant thing-in-itself. It is not just in our poignant human hearts that the sun is a unified entity separable from all the notes of its essence: the same is true of the sun in its own right. Leibniz, like Aristotle long before him, had already noted this tension in the things between their unity and their myriad qualities. For Leibniz the problem is particularly acute, since the monad is meant to be so powerfully *one* that he only reluctantly concedes any manifold within it. Only because he is faced with the paradox that "if all monads were merely one then all would be alike" does he grant that they must have multiple properties. But even these, he believes, are only caused by relations, and do not belong *directly* to the unity of substance itself. This strikes me as a mistake, the same mistake adopted later by Whitehead: there is no way to generate differences between entities based on their relations alone, since billions of featureless monads could hardly relate to each of the other equally featureless monads in distinctly different ways. But the problem is too dry for a catalog essay, so let's argue it elsewhere (perhaps in a factory or a casino, just to liven up the discussion a bit). The point is as follows. Just as my image of the cypress is split between the cypress as a ghostly image and the cypress as a unified *feeling*, so is the executant cypress-in-itself carved up between its reality as a single self-asserting entity, and its possession of a myriad of qualities— qualities which can be dropped or added within certain limits without catastrophe to the executant thing, and which can be transferred to other things by means of breaking or burning or even metaphoric relations. The structure of an object is, therefore, a quadruple structure. There is, first of all, a tension between any single entity and its manifold properties: we might say between its existence and its essence, obviously one of the most classical problems. Second, there is the tension between any particular cypress or flame and all of the causal and perceptual relations taken up toward it by other entities, none of them ever *quite* getting it right— including our own relations to those things. Finally, there is the properly metaphoric tension between the leopard and its spots, in which the word "leopard" runs far deeper than any list of its observable properties, and the metaphor asks me to combine this leopard-feeling with a pegasus-feeling ("Oh leopard, thou Pegasus stripped of wings and cursed with pox") or even

a woman-feeling ("Cruel huntress cat, my heart is your savannah").

The game could be continued for hours, and might even result in a few interesting literary works. But I will move to the conclusion with several general points. Most importantly, metaphor appears to function as a bridge across a rift between two poles of being: my unified feeling for an object, and the explicit image of that object. And it does this only in simulated fashion, since we are speaking of two utterly incommensurable poles of reality. Furthermore, it does this across just one of at least *three* abysses in the heart of being, since there are also the chasms separating the *real* unity of a thing itself from the plurality of its qualitative notes, and even more stirringly the deep difference between the exultant moon and the moon as it inflicts its powers in relation to human and moths and the tides of the sea. Further complicating matters is that none of these bridges is actually possible. No communication can occur between any of these utterly distinct ontological poles, but again only a sort of "simulation." It is the same simulation known to earlier centuries as "occasional cause," a transmission between two entities that occurred only by means of a third. Metaphor is one such occasional cause, and it would have to be determined how it differs from the others, however many others there are.

More immediately relevant for the theme, however, is whether the rift between cypress-feeling and cypress-as-image is a merely human phenomenon. When a cinder block smashes a window, it might be asked whether it encounters that window as a unified thing, or whether it only encounters a set of disembodied qualities without reference to an enduring form lying beneath it. In the former case, cinder blocks have access to something like metaphor, and the causal interaction of things, their mutual alteration or destruction, would turn out to be the most primitive (and most powerful) form of metaphor, and words really could kill. In the latter case, the rift between my sense of a whole thing and my interaction with its numerous qualities would be a special human gift, a sort of poets' game preserve into which inanimate objects might never enter.

I am not prepared to decide the latter question today. What I *am* prepared to say is that metaphor is not a theme best viewed in terms of the philosophy of language. It belongs to a broader ontological-cosmological theme. Instead of approaching it by invoking some contextual polysemia that critically

outstrips any colonializing notion of real things in themselves, we should see that these things themselves *really are* one ingredient of a wider problem. Therefore, we must return to metaphysics: not some sort of supposed naive nostalgia for the full presence of literal meanings, but a metaphysics that releases leopards and cypresses, dollars and flames back into their homelands— a land where language is not master.

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1) This essay was originally a lecture delivered at the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL) in Leeds, United Kingdom, on May 27, 2003. It was the original version of the aesthetic theory found in my book *Guerrilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*. (Chicago: Open Court, 2005.) Other than minor stylistic modifications, the original text remains as it was.

2) José Ortega y Gasset, "An Essay in Esthetics by Way of a Preface," in *Phenomenology and Art*, trans. P. Silver. (New York: Norton, 1975.)

3) Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.)

4) Ortega, p. 140.

5) Ortega, p. 133.

6) Ortega, p. 134.

7) Ortega, p. 136.

8) Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980.)

9) Ortega, p. 138.

10) Ortega, p. 138.

11) Ortega, pp. 138-139.

12) Cited in Ortega, p. 140.

13) Ortega, p. 141.

14) Cited in Ortega, p. 142.

15) Ortega, p. 143.

16) Ortega, p. 144.

17) Ortega, p. 145.

18) Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*. (Chicago: Open Court, 2002.)