Non-Phenomenological Thought
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QUENTIN MEILASSOUX, who invented the term correlationism, initially defines it as “the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other”: This would seem at first to be an entirely symmetrical formulation. Subject and object, or more generally thought and being, are regarded by the correlationist as mutually co-constituting and co-dependent: “not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always-already be related to an object.” Described in this manner, the correlation would seem to move indifferently in either direction, from thinking to being or from being to thinking.

However, this turns out not to be the case. Meillassoux’s formulation is not symmetrical or reversible, but rather unidirectional. When thought and being are correlated, thought is always the active and relational term, the one that actually performs the correlation. Being, on the other hand, just is; this makes it the dumb and passive term, the one that merely suffers being apprehended by, and thereby correlated to, some sort of consciousness or subjectivity outside of itself.

In other words, subjectivity implies intentionality: which is to say, a primordial orientation towards an object beyond itself. Objectivity, in contrast, is supposed to be able to stand alone. In Meillassoux’s account, thought always refers to being, while being in itself remains indifferent to thought. Thinking per se is correlational, insofar as it necessarily implies a “relation-to-the-world.” Anti-correlationism therefore comes to be equated with positing “an absolute that is at once external to thought and in itself devoid of all subjectivity.” We can only escape correlationism by affirming “the pure and simple death, with neither consciousness nor life, without any subjectivity whatsoever, that is represented by the state of inorganic matter.”

In his critique of correlationism, therefore, Meillassoux seems very nearly obsessed with purging thought and subjectivity altogether from the universe of things. In order to step outside of the self-confirming “correlationist circle,” Meillassoux says, we need to step outside of thought altogether. We must reach a position “which takes seriously the possibility that there is nothing living or willing in the inorganic realm,” and for which “absolute reality is an entity without thought.” Beyond the correlation, existence is “totally a-subjective.” If “ancestral” reality does not exist for us, this is because it does not exist in thought at all: it is “anterior to givenness” and refuses any sort of “manifestation” whatsoever.

For Meillassoux, correlationism, no less than naive common sense, begins with a radical “decision”: the assertion “of the essential inseparability of the act of thinking from its content.” Once this decision has been made, it is already
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too late: “all we ever engage with is what is given-to-thought, never an entity subsisting by itself.”

Meillassoux, as Graham Harman has noted, takes seriously the sophism according to which thinking of something means transforming that something into an object of thought. The paradoxical task of speculative philosophy, for Meillassoux, is therefore to think against the very “decision” that inaugurates thought. The aim is to attain a thought that turns back upon and erases itself. Meillassoux seeks to operate the dialectical reversal by means of which “thought has become able to think a world that can dispense with thought, a world that is essentially unaffected by whether or not anyone thinks it.”

Such a position can easily be aligned with scientific reduc tionism or eliminativism. Meillassoux argues that “empirical science is today capable of producing statements about events anterior to the advent of life as well as consciousness.” That is to say, science literally and objectively presents us with a reality that cannot be in any way correlated with thought: a world that is “anterior to givenness itself” and “prior to givenness in its entirety.” Empirical science and mathematics intitate to us “a world crammed with things and events that are not the correlates of any manifestation, a world that is not the correlate of a relation to the world.” The “primary qualities” disclosed by science are entirely nonrelational, and not for us. Meillassoux therefore claims that “the mathematization of nature” performed by the physical sciences allows us, as other modes of understanding do not, “to know what may be while we are not ... What is mathematizable cannot be reduced to a correlate of thought.” Indeed, “all those aspects of the object that can be formulated in mathematical terms can be meaningfully conceived as properties of the object in itself”

9 Meillassoux, After Finitude, 36.
10 Ibid., 116.
11 Ibid., 9.
12 Ibid., 20-21.
13 Ibid., 26, 1.
14 Ibid., 115, 117.
rather than being “secondary qualities” that are added to the object by our own mental activity in perceiving it.\textsuperscript{15}

I would like to compare this, for a moment, with Ray Brassier’s position. Brassier, much like Meillassoux, rejects the privilege that traditional philosophy has accorded to subjectivity, experience, and thought. And Brassier, again like Meillassoux, turns to the physical sciences as a way to escape from correlationism. But where Meillassoux takes correlationist logic seriously, and thinks that he can only defeat it by emptying it out from within, Brassier is altogether dismissive of this logic. Brassier scornfully denounces what he describes as the “fatal non-sequitur at the root of every variant of correlationism”: its slippage from the “trivially true” claim “that my thoughts cannot exist independently of my mind” to the entirely unsupported claim “that what my thoughts are about cannot exist independently of my mind.”\textsuperscript{16}

To the contrary, Brassier argues, thought never coincides with its intentional content; it never corresponds with the thing that it is about. Correlationism is therefore ludicrous a priori. Indeed, Brassier insists that “thought is not guaranteed access to being; being is not inherently thinkable”; we live in “a world that is not designed to be intelligible and is not originally infused with meaning.”\textsuperscript{17} Consequently, there is always a “gap,” or a “discrepancy,” between “what our concept of the object is and what the object is in itself.”\textsuperscript{18}

This very gap or discrepancy grounds Brassier’s robust and thoroughgoing scientism. Neither science nor metaphysics can overcome the non-coincidence between things themselves, and the ways that these things are represented in our thought. But for Brassier, even philosophies that affirm this fundamental non-coincidence—like that, most notably, of Gilles

\textsuperscript{15} Meillassoux, After Finitude, 3.


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 47.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 55.
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Deleuze—remain idealist and correlationist, to the extent that they posit this originary difference as a difference for thought itself. Against this, Brassier’s “transcendental realism” makes the case that this inevitable difference—the one between a concept and that to which it refers—can never be conceptualised itself, but itself always remains nonconceptual. For science, Brassier says, “the reality of the object determines the meaning of its conception”; whereas metaphysics argues the reverse. The difference of reality from how it is thought “is at once determining for thought and irreducible to thinking.” Science, therefore—unlike metaphysics—actually “allows the discrepancy between that reality and the way in which it is conceptually circumscribed to be measured.” The world is meaningless; but through science “it is possible to understand the meaninglessness of existence.” That is to say, science is able to understand this meaninglessness without turning it into yet another source of meaning. For Brassier, “this capacity to understand meaning as a regional or bounded phenomenon marks a fundamental progress in cognition.”

Through the progress of scientific knowledge, therefore, thought is increasingly compelled to recognise its own irrelevance and impotence. Once it is no longer correlated to being, “thought becomes the locus for the identity of absolute objectivity and impersonal death.” This means that scientific knowledge, achieved through thought, leads ultimately to the extinction of thought—or, more precisely,
to thought’s recognition of its own extinction. Not only is the philosopher mortal; “the subject of philosophy must also recognize that he or she is already dead.” When “the absence of correlation” itself becomes “an object of thought,” it thereby “transforms thought itself into an object,” so that “extinction indexes the thought of the absence of thought.”

For Brassier, the consequence of rejecting correlationism is to confront a universe that is not only irreducible to thought, but fatally inimical to thought.

The contrast between Brassier and Meillassoux is telling. Brassier sees critical and rational thought—embodied in mathematics and science—as inevitably precipitating its own demise. Meillassoux, in contrast, recruits positivistic science and mathematical formalisation in order to turn them opportunistically against thought. That is to say, mathematical formalisation is not really the last word for him. Indeed, science and mathematics are arguably not important to Meillassoux at all. The physical sciences give Meillassoux the argument that ancestral objects exist, prior to any sort of manifestation for a subject. And Cantor’s theory of transfinites provides the basis for his demonstration (following Badiou) that the set of possible future events does not constitute a totality and therefore cannot be understood probabilistically. But once these arguments have been established, science and mathematics no longer play a crucial role. Meillassoux himself concedes (or more accurately, boasts) that his own speculative materialism “says nothing as to the factual being of our world.” When Meillassoux praises Badiou for “us[ing] mathematics itself to effect a liberation from the limits of calculatory reason,” he is saying something that applies even more fully to his own philosophy.

Indeed, Meillassoux’s major claim—that the “laws of nature” are entirely contingent, and that at any time they “could

27 Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 239, my emphasis.
28 Ibid., 229-30.
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actually change for no reason”—would seem to undermine scientific rationality altogether.³¹ Science cannot work without assuming the validity of relations of cause and effect—which is to say, without some degree of confidence or faith (however attenuated) in the “principle of sufficient reason” that Meillassoux rejects.³² We can therefore conclude that Meillassoux does not embrace mathematisation because it helps to give us scientifically valid and objective (non-correlational) results. Rather, the point of mathematisation for Meillassoux is to get rid of subjective experience altogether, by giving us an account of nature “stripped of its sensible qualities.”³³ The point is to abstract the world away from everything that our minds might add to it. This is why Meillassoux is so concerned with reinstating Descartes’ doctrine of primary and secondary qualities, in order to separate the former from the latter. Meillassoux admits “those aspects of the object that can give rise to a mathematical thought (to a formula or to digitization),” while rejecting those that give rise, instead, “to a perception or sensation.”³⁴

Today, scientistic eliminativism no longer uses the terminology of “primary” and “secondary” qualities. But it still seeks to dismiss subjective impressions as illusory, and to explain them as mere effects of underlying physical processes. Daniel Dennett tells us, for instance, that “qualia,” or the intrinsic phenomenal characteristics of subjective experience, do not really exist.³⁵ The only real difference between Dennett and Brassier is that Dennett refuses to follow through and acknowledge the radically nihilistic vision of extinction that Brassier rightly deduces as the inevitable consequence of scientistic reductionism and the bifurcation of nature.

But Meillassoux—unlike Brassier, and unlike most analytic

³¹ Meillassoux, After Finitude, 84.
³² Ibid., 60 et passim.
³³ Ibid., 124.
³⁴ Ibid., 3.
philosophers of science—is not interested in demystifying and naturalising our theories of mind, nor in reducing subjectivity to its ostensible microphysical causes. He rejects what he calls “naturalism,” or the grounding of philosophy upon a “state of science that has no more reason to be thought definitive today than it did yesterday.” 36 Far more radically, Meillassoux seeks to achieve a total purgation of thought from being. In other words, Meillassoux does not value the physical sciences and mathematics for their own sakes, but only because—and to the extent that—they allow us to reject the categories of subjectivity and experience. Science and mathematics, in other words, are tools that Meillassoux uses in order to get rid of phenomenology. Where Nietzsche fears that we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar, Meillassoux fears that we are not getting rid of correlationism because we still believe in phenomenal experience.

But do we really need to eliminate experience, and sentience, in order to get away from correlationism? The problem, I think, is with the asymmetry that I have been discussing. Consider another one of Meillassoux’s formulations. The problem with correlationism, he says, is that “we never, according to this type of philosophy, have access to any intended thing (understood in the most general sense) that is not always-already correlated to an act of thinking (understood, again, in the most general sense).” 37 What I would like to do is to try a small experiment. I will invert Meillassoux’s statement, in order to create a complementary proposition, as follows: the problem with correlationism is that we never, according to this type of philosophy, have any act of thinking (understood in the most general sense) that is not always-already correlated with access to an intended thing (understood, again, in the most general sense). But we cannot imagine Meillassoux saying any such thing. This is because he has already defined “access” and “correlation” as operations of thought, and of thought alone.

37 Ibid., 2.
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This is why the particular pretensions of human thought have (justifiably) been the target of speculative realist critique. And yet, in the very act of rejecting one side of the Cartesian duality, we have tended to reaffirm the other side. Nobody believes in *res cogitans* any longer, but we largely continue to accept Descartes’ characterisation of *res extensa*. Despite the admonitions of Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead, Deleuze, and (today) Jane Bennett, our default ontology still insists that, in the absence of transcendent mind, the world is composed of nothing but passive, inert, and indifferent matter. Whitehead calls this the “misconception” of “vacuous actuality, devoid of subjective experience.” 38 Such a doctrine of “vacuous actuality” lies behind much analytic philosophy, as well as behind Meillassoux’s and Brassier’s assumption that the “great outdoors” must be entirely devoid of life and thought. And, despite Harman’s rejection of “undermining” reductionism and of “smallism,” he still echoes this logic when he declares that objects only “have psyches accidentally, not in their own right.” 39

Meillassoux’s purgation of subjectivity and experience allows him to posit an altogether different notion of thought. For Meillassoux, true philosophical thought has no empirical basis whatsoever, and no relation to the body. It has no ties to sensibility or to affect. Rather, this thought is purely rational and theoretical; it provides us with a “veritable intellectual intuition of the absolute.” 40 In order to be extricated from correlationism, thought must achieve an entirely exceptional status. It must be absolutely disconnected from the physical world. In accordance with this, Meillassoux claims that thought cannot be grounded in physical matter, nor even in life. Not only must we reject the panpsychist claim that thought is an

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40 Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 82, original emphasis.
inherent quality of matter, we also cannot explain the origin of thought, or its seeming greater complexity as we move from single-celled organisms to human beings, in continuist or evolutionary terms. Rather, Meillassoux separates thought from life as radically as he separates life from nonliving matter. He claims that human beings acquired thought ex nihilo, for no reason, without any prior basis, and out of sheer contingency. Meillassoux celebrates the sheer gratuitousness of a mode of thought that is non-experiential, and beyond any correlation with being. This thought becomes the basis for a new sort of hyper-Platonism: “humans acquire value because they know the eternal ... Value belongs to the act of knowing itself; humans have value not because of what they know but because they know.”

More recently, Meillassoux has refined his analysis; he now modifies his formulations from After Finitude by more clearly distinguishing what he calls subjectalism, which includes vitalism, from correlationism strictu sensu. Where correlationism disallows the absolute, subjectalism is the philosophy that Meillassoux characterised in After Finitude as “absolutizing the correlation.” Life, thought, or some other subjective term becomes the new absolute. Meillassoux claims that, in subjectalism, “thought thinks thought as the absolute.” According to Meillassoux, the claim of subjectalism is that “we always experience subjectivity as a necessary, and hence eternal, principle from which no one can escape.” But is not Meillassoux still wrongly assuming that any such subjective term is necessarily both intentional/(cor)relational, and unified rather than plural or multiple?

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42 Ibid., 211.


44 Meillassoux, After Finitude, 60.


46 Ibid., 8.
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Meillassoux is wrong to maintain that, in so-called subjectalism, “everything is uniformly subject, will, creative becoming, image-movement, etc.” Meillassoux does not even dismiss, but altogether ignores, the prospect of uncorrelated thought. For Meillassoux, thought in its essence is relational or correlational, while mere being need not be. To do away with correlationism then means to eliminate all thinking about the object, in order to allow the object just to be, in and of itself. Heidegger’s sense of being as unveiling is maintained, even as his ruminations on the co-appurtenance of thought and being are rejected. A non-correlated entity is not manifested to any consciousness whatsoever. It “withdraws” from contact, and escapes any possibility of being captured by thought. For Harman and Meillassoux alike, the “great outdoors,” the world beyond correlation, can therefore only consist in a-subjective objects. Meillassoux simply takes for granted the phenomenological doctrine of intentionality: thinking is always about something.

We might say, therefore, that Meillassoux’s entire program is to enforce, as radically and stringently as possible, the very “bifurcation of nature” that Whitehead denounced as the most serious error of modern Western thought. For Whitehead, the bifurcation of nature arises precisely out of the very distinction that Meillassoux seeks to rehabilitate in the opening pages of After Finitude: the Cartesian and Lockean distinction between “primary” and “secondary” qualities.

The bifurcation of nature consists in radically separating sensory experience from the physical causes that generate that experience. Thus, Whitehead says, we divide “the perceived redness and warmth of the fire” on the one hand, from “the agitated molecules of carbon and oxygen” and “the radiant

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49 Ibid., 27; Meillassoux, After Finitude, 1-3.
energy from them” on the other.\textsuperscript{50} The first is said to be a subjective illusion, while only the second is objectively real. But at this point in Meillassoux’s analysis, there is a slight, yet crucial, slippage. Meillassoux claims that a non-correlationist philosophy—or what he also calls “speculative materialism”—rejects “the closure of thought upon itself” and instead “acced[es] to an absolute that is at once external to thought and in itself devoid of all subjectivity.”\textsuperscript{51} The slippage comes in the way that Meillassoux implicitly moves from an object, or a world, that is independent of anything that our subjectivity imposes upon it, to one that is also devoid of thought in itself, devoid of any subjectivity of its own. The objects that are not correlated with our thought must also, in and of themselves, “have no subjective-psychological, egoic, sensible or vital traits whatsoever.”\textsuperscript{52} Meillassoux “absolutizes the pure non-subjective—the pure and simple death, with neither consciousness nor life, without any subjectivity whatsoever, that is represented by the state of inorganic matter.”\textsuperscript{53} This slippage in Meillassoux’s account would seem to result from the assumption that thought and subjectivity are exclusively human attributes.

I want to suggest that this one-sidedness is not really justified. The derogation of thought in Meillassoux and Brassier is itself a reaction against older ideas. Correlationism itself has generally assumed, not just the co-dependency of thought and world, or of subject and object, but also the priority of the former element of each pair over the latter. It has always taken for granted the supremacy of the mental, or the priority of the act of perception over the things perceived. We can trace this tendency back, beyond Kant’s transcendental logic, to our very habit of (in the words of Whitehead) “decisively separating ‘mind’ from ‘nature,’ a modern separation which

\textsuperscript{50} Whitehead, \textit{The Concept of Nature}, 32.
\textsuperscript{51} Meillassoux, “Iteration,” 2.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 6.
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found its first exemplification in Cartesian dualism.”54 Ever since Descartes, we “moderns” (to use this term in the manner suggested by Bruno Latour) have divided the world between mentalities, which actively think and perceive (res cogitans), and bits of matter in homogeneous space, which make up the passive objects of all their acts of perception (res extensa).55 The speculative realist rejection of the privileges of thought is therefore a necessary, and unsurprising, reaction against the traditional modernist and humanist exaltation of thought. There are few philosophers today who would actually accept Cartesian substance dualism; yet the legacy of this dualism still persists in our everyday “common sense” approach to the world.

In order to get away from this deadlock, we need to recognise that thought is not, after all, an especially human privilege. This is one of the driving insights behind panpsychism. Also, recent biological research indicates that something much like thinking—an experiential sensitivity, at the very least—goes on in such entities as trees, slime mould, and bacteria, even though none of these organisms have brains. I have also mentioned George Molnar’s claim that even inanimate things display a sort of “intentionality.” If things have powers (or dispositional properties) at all, as Molnar argues that they do, then by this very fact they exhibit a certain aboutness.56 Salt has the power to be dissolved in water; and this is a real property of the salt, even if it never encounters water, and therefore never actually gets dissolved. A kind of intentional orientation, or prospect of “aboutness,” exists even in the absence of any actual correlation between subject and object. For all these reasons, we can draw the conclusion that thought is not as grandiose, or as unique, as Cartesianism and correlationism have led us to

suppose. We should reject both the inflated, idealist notion of thought, and the “misconception” of “vacuous actuality” which is all that remains behind, once thought has been evacuated. We need to affirm values, meanings, and thought, but see these in a deflationary way.

What is the alternative to the “misconception” denounced by Whitehead? I do not wish to embrace outright idealism any more than I wish to return to correlationism. Nor can I imagine simply inverting Meillassoux’s formula of being without thought into some notion of thought without being—since I have little idea of what this latter phrase could possibly mean. But I still maintain that if, in spite of the paradoxes of reference, we can posit “an object in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject,” standing apart from whatever we might think about it, then we should also be able to posit a non-correlational subject, one that “would not always-already be related to an object,” but would instead exist independently of any object whatsoever. In order to do this, we need to grasp thinking in a different way; we need, as Deleuze might put it, a new “image of thought.”

This new image of thought would maintain that aisthesis, or precognitive feeling, precedes noesis, or cognitive apprehension. In Whitehead’s language, “sense-reception” is more basic than “sense-perception.” In sense-reception, Whitehead says, “the sensa are the definiteness of emotion: they are emotional forms transmitted from occasion to occasion.” This means that “sensa”—Whitehead’s term for what today are more commonly called “qualia”—are felt noncognitively, as singular aesthetic impressions. They are not referred beyond themselves, and do not have the status of representations. Particular things are not understood and identified as such.

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61 Ibid., 114.
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Rather, under these conditions, “the feeling is blind and the relevance is vague.” It is only in some rare and subsequent instances of what Whitehead calls “adequate complexity” that these bursts of feeling are transmuted into cognitions, so that sense-reception is supplemented by sense-perception as it is commonly understood.

In his first of his two Cinema volumes, Deleuze proposes a contrast, arising in the very heart of modernity, between two crucial images of thought. He writes of the “historical crisis of psychology” that arose at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, at the very moment of the invention of cinema. The crisis concerned the relation between mind and body, or between thought and matter; it had to do with the “duality of image and movement, of consciousness and thing.” Everyone recognised that this dualism had come to a “dead end.” Everyone realised that, as William James put it at the time, “there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed.” This meant, James went on, that “consciousness ... does not denote a special stuff or way of being.” Indeed, James concludes that “thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are.” But how can we render this identity? Deleuze does not cite James directly in his account of philosophical psychology. But he notes that efforts were made by “two very different authors,” Husserl and Bergson, “to overcome” the “duality” of thought and matter. “Each had his own war cry:

62 Whitehead, Process, 163.
63 Ibid., 113-14.
64 Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1: The Movement-Image (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 56.
65 Ibid., 56.
66 Ibid., 56.
67 William James, Essays in Radical Empiricism (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 4.
68 Ibid., 25, 37.
69 Deleuze, Cinema 1, 56.
all consciousness is consciousness of something (Husserl), or more strongly, all consciousness is something (Bergson).”

The first of these solutions leads to a phenomenological aesthetics: one that is concerned with sensible experience “as an embodied and meaningful existential activity.” Phenomenological criticism not only works to overcome the duality of Kant’s two senses of aesthetics; it also effectively counters the excessively formalist and cognitivist tendencies both of much twentieth century modernism and avant-gardism, and of late-twentieth century structuralist approaches to aesthetics. It returns aesthetics from conceptual and epistemological concerns back to the lived reality of the flesh. However, the price that phenomenological aesthetics pays for these achievements is to remain embedded within correlationism.

But Deleuze, following Bergson’s alternative, offers an anti-phenomenological account of consciousness. As Deleuze puts it elsewhere, “it is not enough to say that consciousness is consciousness of something”; rather, we must reach the point where “consciousness ceases to be a light cast upon objects in order to become a pure phosphorescence of things in themselves.” Deleuze’s suggestion that “all consciousness is something” offers a powerful response, not just to turn-of-the-twentieth-century anxieties about the relation of mind and matter, but also to turn-of-the-twenty-first-century anxieties about the nature of the real. Just as the invention of the phonograph and the cinema coincided with worries about the material and the immaterial, so our contemporary elaborations of digital technologies coincide with worries about whether the real even exists, and whether we have access to it.

70 Deleuze, Cinema 1, 56.
72 Deleuze, Difference, 220.
74 Deleuze, Cinema 1, 56.
To follow these clues from Whitehead and Deleuze (and through them, James and Bergson) would mean to posit a sort of thought that is nonrelational—or even “autistic.” This means developing a notion of thought that is pre-cognitive (involving “feeling” rather than articulated judgments) and non-intentional (not directed towards an object with which it would be correlated). Such a non-phenomenological (but also non-intellectual) image of thought can be composed on the basis of Whitehead’s notion of *prehension* as an alternative to Husserlian intentionality. Such a thought is nonreflexive, probably nonconscious, and even “autistic”; it is not correlative to being, but immanently intrinsic within it. At this primordial (or better, humble) level, thought just is, without having a correlate.

In this way, noncorrelational thought is an immanent attribute or power of being. It involves what Whitehead calls “feelings,” rather than articulated judgments or Heideggerian implicit preunderstandings. It is non-intentional in that it is not directed towards, or correlated with, particular objects—though it may well be entwined or implicated with such objects. It experiences singularities that are, as Kant says of aesthetic sensations, “intrinsically indeterminable and inadequate for cognition.” And it apprehends a “beauty” that, in the words of Thomas Metzinger, “is so subtle, so volatile as it were, that it evades cognitive access in principle.” In all these ways, noncorrelational thought is aesthetic. And under such circumstances—to agree at least in this point with Graham Harman—“aesthetics becomes first philosophy.”

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