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# Bergson before Bergsonism

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## Traversing “Bergson’s Failing” in Susanne K. Langer’s Philosophy of Art

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In spite of the critical and creative importance of Gilles Deleuze’s *Bergsonism*<sup>1</sup> for the reception of the philosophy of Henri Bergson from the second half of the 1960s up until today, this essay is positioned *before* 1966 and in a zone spatially and disciplinarily *separated* both from France and from continental philosophy. (Of course, following the physics of waves, such separations will soon prove to be exaggerations.) In this essay, I discuss the work of North-American philosopher Susanne K. Langer (1895-1985) and I provide a close reading of her 1953 argument about Bergson’s failing, the positing which will also prove to be exaggerated. Langer argues that Bergson was most artists’ favorite philosopher in the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> In want of a true philosophy of art, Langer was not keen on following what artists said about philosophy. Nor did she follow the philosophical discipline of aesthetics. In this essay, I am not interested in Langer’s seeming gendered eccentricity or in proving these negations right or wrong. I am interested in Langer’s unique relating to Bergson, because, in spite of the strong affirmation of Bergson’s failing, she exemplifies a sense of non-linear and non-oppositional relating of theoretical texts and traditions. These texts include the work of Bergson and the philosophical traditions with which he grappled. How does the philosophy of Bergson emerge from such a relating, that is, how did Bergson look before Bergsonism? How does a Bergsonian philosophy look and how can such a theory be reached by a scholar and in a scholarly context heavily influenced by Deleuze’s *Bergsonism*?

### Toward Reading Langer Diffractively

The scholars to whom Susanne K. Langer dedicates two of her books provide a first indication of the nature of Langer’s life and work. *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art* is dedicated to

Alfred North Whitehead.<sup>3</sup> Between 1924 and 1926 Langer wrote her Ph.D. dissertation with Whitehead (1861-1947) as her advisor at Radcliffe College in Cambridge, MA, then the women's college running parallel to Harvard University. Langer calls Whitehead "my great Teacher and Friend" on the opening page of her stellar bestseller. The book's sequel, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key*, was published in 1953 with the dedication: "To the happy memory of ERNST CASSIRER."<sup>4</sup> Langer, born in New York City to German immigrants, had started reading Cassirer (1874-1945) in the 1920s, but only met him in 1941 after the latter had also migrated to the United States. They stayed closely in touch until Cassirer's death in 1945, a year before Langer's translation of his *Sprache und Mythos* from 1925 was released.<sup>5</sup>

A first way in which the dedications are made complex in the books themselves can be found on what I would call the "cartographies" of scholars influential to Langer's work that appear in the mentioned books as well. In the preface to the third edition of *Philosophy in a New Key* Langer argues that her book, although imperfect and representing the embryonic stages of her thought, "still proclaims the work of a brilliant, though strangely assorted, intellectual generation—Whitehead, Russell, Wittgenstein, Freud, Cassirer, to name but a few—who launched the attack on the formidable problem of symbol and meaning, and established the keynote of philosophical thought in our day."<sup>6</sup> *Feeling and Form*, in turn, closes cartographically:

Despite all shortcomings, blind leads, or mistakes that they may see in each other's doctrines, I believe that Bell, Fry, Bergson, Croce, Baensch, Collingwood, Cassirer, and I (not to forget such literary critics as Barfield and Day Lewis and others too, whom I have not named and perhaps not even read) have been and are, really, engaged on one philosophical project. It was Cassirer—though he never regarded himself as an aesthetician—who hewed the keystone of the structure, in his broad and disinterested study of symbolic forms; and I, for my part, would put that stone in place, to join and sustain what so far we have built.<sup>7</sup>

What is remarkable is that Langer finds herself in the sole company of men. Donald Dryden opens his literary biography of Langer with the words that she "was one of the first women to pursue an academic career in philosophy in the United States and the first to receive both professional and popular recognition as an American philosopher."<sup>8</sup> However, as the research of Arabella Lyon shows, scholarship often subsumes Langer under the heading of the male scholars she lists.<sup>9</sup> Lyon also mentions Langer's own denial of any impact of the fact that she was a woman, contrary to proof such as Langer's lowly ranked post-Ph.D. position at Harvard, the fact that tenure came only at the very end of her career,<sup>10</sup> and the necessity of Whitehead

putting in a good word for Langer so that she could get her early work published in the journal *Mind*.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from gender, also remarkable is Langer's phrasing: the "brilliant, though strangely assorted, intellectual generation" of the first cartography is "really, engaged on one philosophical project" according to the second. The appearance of Bergson at the heart of an affirmation of a philosophical project which is *really one* comes as a surprise by the time the reader of *Feeling and Form* has reached the monograph's conclusion (although the appendix immediately following the concluding statement discusses the filmic mode of expression, a new art form that had highly fascinated Bergson, too). The table of contents even announces a lengthy discussion of Bergson's work as "Bergson's failing"! Whereas Langer says Bergson's "dream (one dares not say 'concept' in connection with his thought) of *la durée réelle* brings his metaphysics [...] to the very brink of a philosophy of art,"<sup>12</sup> he is also said to suffer from "a lack of logical daring; in his horror of a pernicious abstraction, he fled to a realm of no abstraction at all, and having wounded his spirit on the tools of physical science he threw away tools altogether."<sup>13</sup> For Langer, Bergson does not carefully, that is, logically conceptualize his abstract philosophical thoughts as a result of his engagement with, and evaluation of the scientific toolbox (science's abstractions are illogical).

Langer seems to have one clear (negative) opinion about the Bergson's work, although she opens *Feeling and Form* with a statement about polemics and their distortive role in philosophizing that I deem Bergsonian. Langer writes: "Were I to follow out every refutation of other doctrines which my line of argument implies, that line would be lost in a tangle of controversy. Consequently, I have avoided polemics as much as possible (though, of course, not altogether)."<sup>14</sup> This affirmative stance goes against the grain of scholarly habit, a habit owing to which a scholar is generally in "danger of losing one's way in the pigeon-holes of purely academic description."<sup>15</sup> This is Bergson's take on polemics as expressed in the essay "Introduction to Metaphysics":

Divergences are striking between the schools, that is to say, in short, between the groups of disciples formed around certain of the great masters. But would one find them as clear-cut between the masters themselves? Something here dominates the diversity of systems, something, I repeat, simple and definite like a sounding of which one feels that it has more or less reached the bottom of a same ocean, even though it brings each time to the surface very different materials. It is on these materials that disciples normally work: in that is the role of analysis. And the master, in so far as he formulates, develops, translates into abstract ideas what he brings, is already, as it were, his own disciple. But the simple act which has set analysis in motion and which hides behind analysis, emanates

from a faculty quite different from that of analysing. This is by very definition intuition.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the fact that this quote is *also* analogous to Langer's take on scholars' obsession with classifying artistic styles or traditions and on their consequential failure to notice (the problem of) artistic creation *per se*,<sup>17</sup> the task that I have set myself for this essay is to make clear how Bergson's take on polemics, or, let's say, on the entanglement of epistemology and ontology forms the core of my interpretation of and approach to Langer's philosophy of art. Thus, Bergson's failing will soon dissolve.

The fact that this is contrary to Langer's own words will be circumvented in a threefold manner. First, on a descriptive register, I will verify that even Langer herself ultimately *reworks* the assertion of "Bergson's failing." Second, it is sound to draw Bergson back in, in spite of claims to the contrary, because it is in the nature of the cartographical method to affirm that one's own historical relations to and the systematic relations between philosophers are fundamentally *open*.<sup>18</sup> Langer endorses this openness by including the work of those '*whom I have not named and perhaps not even read*' to her bibliography. In *Philosophy in a New Key* Langer says "[q]uotations could be multiplied almost indefinitely."<sup>19</sup> The question I must address in this essay, then, is how Langer's 'strangely assorted, intellectual generation' is best viewed if it should not be treated historically or systematically. I will demonstrate that the two aforementioned arguments ultimately rest on "diffraction" as a methodology for establishing a philosophy of the humanities that is not based on polemics, especially because polemics distort insight into the nature of art. The diffractive reading methodology was brought to the fore by Donna Haraway in the 1990s and the methodology got picked up by her colleague Karen Barad in the 2000s.<sup>20</sup> The current Haraway-Baradian wave in women's, gender, and sexuality studies, or feminist, queer, and trans theory, comes long after Langer's career has come to an end. But the notion of the wave, again, disqualifies such linear notations. How does Langer exemplify a sense of non-linear relating of theoretical texts? And how does such a relating uncover how Bergsonian philosophy looked, or was received prior to 1966? In what ways do diffraction patterns materialize in the oeuvre of Susanne K. Langer, the scholar who "cannot be catalogued"?<sup>21</sup>

I zoom in on *Feeling and Form* and I focus on the ways in which Whitehead, Cassirer, and Bergson feature in the development of Langer's philosophy of art, as well as in the resulting philosophy itself. This dual perspective on what went into the philosophy and on the final philosophical outcome typifies what a diffractive reading enables the epistemologist to do: she is—in Baradian terms—an *onto-epistemologist* generating insight in the nature of knowledge and knowledge production, but also in how knowledges and knowledge theories come about and remain in motion. *Onto-epistemology* signifies "the study of practices of knowing in being,"<sup>22</sup>

which implies, for starters, that any inclination toward assumed “thingification”<sup>23</sup> must be left behind, because the assumption of the independent existence of a “thing” – whether a fact or an artifact about which facts can be produced – may be altogether unfounded. The way in which Langer works with Whitehead, Cassirer, and Bergson is equally onto-epistemological as it signals an intricate take on the production of philosophical knowledge about art. This knowledge unfolds along the dynamic lines of a diffraction patterning as I will soon demonstrate. This patterning is the first step toward qualifying Langer’s assertion about Bergson’s failure. After all, such a strong statement thingifies Bergson’s philosophical oeuvre, whereas it is in the nature of a philosophical oeuvre to remain in motion. This implies that my essay does not provide the last word about Langer’s philosophy, its relation with Bergsonian philosophy, or the ways in which Bergson features in past, present, and future philosophizing.

### Diffraction Patterns in *Feeling and Form*

Let me start with Whitehead. Importantly, Whitehead features in the opening sequence of *Feeling and Form* as the quintessential philosopher for whom philosophy is “a living venture.”<sup>24</sup> Langer explains that whereas philosophy is not (a) science owing to the fact that it does not start from a concrete problem for which the best approach is selected in order to produce a solution or come to a final conclusion, philosophers do often get seduced by one particular approach which is then applied to an age-old philosophical Problem. This seduction goes against the grain of the nature of philosophy, which, when respected, differs from science in that scientific questions ask after order in the physical realm whilst philosophical questions deal with “the implications and other interrelations of ideas.”<sup>25</sup> About the philosophical method of those thinkers who are not approach-driven Langer says: “Such philosophy is built up by the principle of generalization. It is all of a piece, yet it cannot be summarized in the statement of one *belief*, and elected or spurned as ‘such-and-such-ism;’ neither can it be simply ‘applied’ to interpret experience as a whole.”<sup>26</sup> Langer calls the mode of expansion generated by this particular generalizability “fecundity.”<sup>27</sup> Neither scientists nor art critics nor aestheticians have so far approached the problem of art in a way that respects the philosophical principles of generalizability and fecundity, says Langer.<sup>28</sup> Once these principles are respected, the problem of artistic creation and the question “what does art create?” will present themselves as central to the philosophy of art, with the following extraordinary effect:

As the subject becomes organized, the ideas that have been advanced in the past take on a new significance; and one finds that an amazing amount of good work in this field has already been done. The literature of art theory, which looks so incoherent and so

cluttered with hapless “approaches,” is really rich in vital thoughts and valuable, scholarly findings. [...] The literature behind us (known or unknown to any particular thinker) and the issues still before us should take their proper forms and places in that perspective, wherever we encounter them in the progress of philosophical thought.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, what philosophy as a “living venture” does is create its own past in one stroke with its future. The minute we leave behind the habit to apply concepts or to follow an -ism, and engage philosophically with works of art (or, principally, anything whatsoever), a rich philosophy of art emerges. This philosophy-in-movement cuts through thingified thoughts about how concepts and -isms relate, and linear mapping of philosophizing is dissolved.

With Langer’s affirmation of a vital thought or a living philosophy comes a remark about the past, and this past is seen as virtual (it is “known or unknown to any particular thinker” so it is *impersonal but generative*). Later in *Feeling and Form*, that is, at the point when Langer discusses narrative poetry or prose as being characterized by the semblance of memory, Whitehead and the impersonal interlocking of past-present-future make their comeback. Langer discusses this theme (memory, in short) through the work of Whitehead. But as the reader, I leap into Bergson’s work when Langer discusses fiction writers’ creations as virtual memories (part of the larger category of writing as such which expresses virtual life). I want to call this complication of the discussion held in *Feeling and Form* “diffractive.” When Whitehead is presented and I leap into Bergson, a pattern presents itself that does not respect disciplinary existencies (Whitehead and Bergson are not from the same philosophical tradition). Respecting the non-habitual pattern as it emerges allows the thinker to affirm and strengthen dynamic links between schools of thought or scholars that are usually treated in isolation or as separate. Such dynamism in the philosophical canon is what I call—with Haraway and Barad—diffraction. Isolating a philosopher implies his work<sup>30</sup> is seen as either an endless source of inspiration or as *passé*. Treating a philosopher as an exponent of a philosophical tradition implies the tradition exhausts the thought. Reading philosophy diffractively has none of these three effects.

Continuing Langer’s discussion of the semblance of memory, the open cartographical movement swells when Marcel Proust (1871-1922) is staged.<sup>31</sup> After all, the latter distinguished between “voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect” and the fact that “the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself,”<sup>32</sup> on the one hand, and, on the other, involuntary memory introduced around the world-famous episode with the *petites madeleines* (French small shell-shaped cakes). Proust presented involuntary memory as a form of creation—“It is face to face with something which does not yet exist, which it [mind] alone can make actual,

which it alone can bring into the light of day"<sup>33</sup>—and this has been much commented on, especially by Deleuze in *Bergsonism*.<sup>34</sup> It is well known that Whitehead in *Process and Reality* hints at Proust's *madeleine*-fragment, albeit in order to discuss the future: "The future is merely real, without being actual; whereas the past is a nexus of actualities."<sup>35</sup> Reality, in Whitehead, is ontologically prior to actualities. Smelling a *madeleine* here becomes tied to reaching there merely real of the future. One gets catapulted into the real (ontology) where there is not yet an actual (epistemology). Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition*,<sup>36</sup> and in *Bergsonism*<sup>37</sup> cites Proust directly and discusses the (virtual) past.<sup>38</sup> Here, the "leap into ontology"<sup>39</sup> involves the leap into a general past, which is not the past of an actualized instance or affair. This is the original fragment in which Proust treats overcoming voluntary memory:

But let a noise or a scent, once heard or once smelt, be heard or smelt again in the present and at the same time in the past, *real without being actual, ideal without being abstract*, and immediately the permanent and habitually concealed essence of things is liberated and our true self, which seemed—had perhaps for long years seemed—to be dead but was not altogether dead, is awakened and reanimated as it receives the celestial nourishment that is brought to it. A minute freed from the order of time has re-created in us, to feel it, the man freed from the order of time. And one can understand that this man should have confidence in his joy, even if the simple taste of a *madeleine* does not seem logically to contain within it the reasons for this joy, one can understand that the word "death" should have no meaning for him; situated outside time, why should he fear the future?<sup>40</sup>

Steven Shaviro explains that Deleuze's and Whitehead's uses of Proust can be brought together, since "[t]he process of actualization is the hinge, or the interstice, not only between past and future, but also between the two forms of causality" whereby "two forms of causality" refers to the interplay of determination and indetermination, or the fact that in the event of an actualization, a new past and future get created.<sup>41</sup>

Drawing this technical discussion to a close in order to return to Langer's philosophy of art, let me bring in Gregg Lambert who references Deleuze's "involuntary machine of interpretation" as just another name for the literary machine:

Involuntary because writers do not know beforehand what kinds of signs the machines they invent will produce, in fact, they don't even know how the machine they have created will actually work—if it will work at all! The art of writing is also a process of interpreting the machine in determining the conditions of its

production, in addition to interpreting the signs and effects that these created machines produce.<sup>42</sup>

Langer would have been in agreement with Lambert that the writer Proust in particular is worthy of the latter interpretative exercise:

It was a peculiarity of Proust's genius to work always with a poetic core that was a spontaneous and perfect formulation of something in actual memory. This intense, emotionally charged recollection, completely articulate in every detail, yet as sudden and immediate as a present experience, not only was the catalyst that activated his imagination, but also constituted his ideal of poetic illusion, to be achieved by the most conscious and subtle kind of story-telling.<sup>43</sup>

Although Langer phrases the end result in terms of Plato's "eternity" as "[i]deas are timeless; in a lyric they are not said to have occurred, but are virtually occurring; the relations that hold them together are timeless, too. The whole creation in a lyric is an awareness of a subjective experience, and *the tense of subjectivity is the 'timeless' present*,"<sup>44</sup> Lambert argues in his characteristic vein that

In Proust's work of art, "philosophy vies with nonphilosophy" (i.e., the Proustian image of memory vies with the Platonic theory of ideas), because it is only through the writing machine invented by Proust that philosophy obtains a better understanding of the function of the idea in reminiscence, that is, a better concept of how past is produced in relation to the sensible present in a manner that is essentially productive or creative.<sup>45</sup>

We saw this battling take place in Langer, who intellectually stuck to Plato but also created a tangle of contemporary thinkers in order to spell out Proust's image philosophically.

The second example of a diffractive pattern in *Feeling and Form* that I want to highlight in an attempt to build up to a re-evaluation of Bergson's failing (as it is not in the nature of open cartographical philosophizing to argue that a certain thinker has forever failed) concerns Langer's chapters about the art form of dance and the fact that she discusses the virtual-actual coupling by referring to the work of Cassirer, whereas this is a conceptual pair in the realm of philosophies of time and temporality that I deem deeply Bergsonian. Let me start here: Langer argues that "[t]he art of dancing is a wider category than any particular conception that may govern a tradition, a style, a sacred or secular use; wider than the cult dance, the folk dance, the ballroom dance, the ballet, the modern 'expressive dance.'"<sup>46</sup> She alludes to the fact that all these distinctions—and it is possible to extend the list with binary oppositions such as the contemporary examples of dramatic and postdramatic theatre<sup>47</sup>—are

Really much less useful than the consideration of *what is created* in the various kinds of dance, and what purposes, therefore, the various rhythmic, mimetic, musical, acrobatic, or other elements serve. What is created is the image of a world of vital forces, embodied or disembodied [...] the several dance elements have essentially constructive functions. They have to establish, maintain, and articulate the play of "Powers."<sup>48</sup>

Here Langer makes an onto-epistemological claim because she secures a link between the classificatory approach which does *not* allow the scholar to reach a discussion about the ontology of art (here: dance; the rhythmic expression of impersonal agencies through gesture) and its alternative which does (Bergson calls this alternative "intuitive," but we will shortly see that precisely intuition is not to Langer's liking).<sup>49</sup> Although certain time periods invite the blossoming of particular categories of dance owing to the powers that be (the status quo)<sup>50</sup> and although dance might regress under the influence of secularization or degenerate as a result of gendered instrumentalization,<sup>51</sup> *Feeling and Form* does not import what Hélène Metzger has so powerfully named "chronological empiricism" into the philosophy of art.<sup>52</sup> Langer argues that dance(r)s express a "relation of forces"<sup>53</sup> that is neither physical nor psychological but—to borrow from the Proustian discussion—"real without being actual": "Dance gesture is not real gesture, but virtual. The bodily movement, of course, is real enough; but what makes it *emotive gesture* [...] is illusory, so the movement is "gesture" only within the dance. It is *actual movement*, but *virtual self-expression*."<sup>54</sup> The question is: for what does she need Cassirer?

Cassirer appears in *Feeling and Form* in an attempt to explain how dancers (artists) talk about dance (art). In contradistinction to Langer's contention that "[j]ust as the most interesting philosophy of science has been developed to meet the logical problems of the laboratory, so the most vital issues in philosophy of art stem from the studio,"<sup>55</sup> artists themselves make confusing statements about their practice (conflations) that make Langer, in turn, argue that artistic consciousness is one with Cassirer's "mythical consciousness."<sup>56</sup> The core conflation artists are susceptible to making pertains to the virtual-actual coupling. What do (contemporary) artists do wrong? Well, their mistake must be sought in "the failure to distinguish between what is actual and what is virtual in the making of the symbol, and furthermore, between the 'virtual' symbol itself and its import, which refers us back to actuality."<sup>57</sup> For example, it has proven impossible for most dancers to leap out of the opposition between thinking in terms of either a whole (a chorus) built up out of individual performers or a chorus as wholly undividable, whereas "[a]ll these entities are *dance elements* that emerge from the interplay of virtual forces of 'space tensions' and 'body tensions' and even less specific 'dance tensions' created by music, lights, décor, poetic suggestion, and what not."<sup>58</sup> Owing to the fact that art fundamentally

involves a leap out of actuality, a conflation of the virtual and the actual is a real problem for Langer. Cassirer helps her typify the way artists talk about their art, and characterize the symbol.

In *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences* Cassirer argues explicitly against linear historicizing, and therefore we must not think of mythical consciousness as a pre-scientific consciousness but rather as a specific one that that is indeed not scientific. (The above-mentioned fact that Langer lists both 'sacred' and 'secular' uses of dance as "particular conceptions" indicates this, too.) Cassirer argues that "[h]istory is not simply chronology, and historical time is not objective physical time. The past is not gone for the historian in the same sense as for the natural scientist; it possesses and retains a peculiar presence."<sup>59</sup> For him, history is an "eternal present" in a flow of constant unfolding and transformation that makes signifiers such as earlier/later or first/second/third nonsensical. He argues that the "meaning" of this eternal present "is in none of the individual moments *alone*—and yet, on the other hand, it is complete and unbroken in each of them."<sup>60</sup> It is precisely a logic of separate things (entities) that Langer wants to shift by referencing Cassirer in the light of artists' talk. Cassirer's philosophy of art (or, as he himself says, of culture) affirms that a work of art belongs to the realms of nature and culture<sup>61</sup> and must be approached in a manner that traverses matter and spirit:

If we proceed from particular works and particular individuals to the *forms* of culture and immerse ourselves in their contemplation, then we stand on the threshold of a new problem. [...] It is in these forms, and by virtue of them that the two spheres, the world of the 'I' and that of the "you" first *constitute* [*konstituieren*] themselves. [...] As soon as we no longer begin with the I and the you as two substantially separate *entities* but instead place ourselves in the center of that mutual *communication* that realizes itself in language or in any other cultural form, this doubt disappears. In the beginning is the act: always, in the use of language, in artistic formation, in the process of thinking and research a specific *activity* expresses itself, and it is only in this activity that the I and the you at once find each other, and separate themselves from each other. They are in and with each other, as they preserve in this way their unity through speaking, thinking, and all kinds of artistic expression.<sup>62</sup>

Importantly, as formulated in his essay "Form and Technology" (1930), this performative process of *konstituieren* goes as well for the relation between a non-human "I" and "you":

Notwithstanding this obedience towards the laws of nature, nature is never for technology something finished, wherein laws are merely posited. Nature is something that is perpetually posited

anew, something that is to be formed repeatedly. Mind always measures anew objects in relation to itself, and itself in relation to objects, in order to find and guarantee in this twofold act the genuine *adaequatio*, the actual “appropriateness,” of both. The more this movement takes hold, the more its force grows, the more the mind feels and knows its reality to have “grown.” This inner growth does not simply take place under a continuous leadership, under the rule and guardianship of the actual; rather, it demands that we constantly return from the “actual” to a realm of the “possible,” and see the actual itself according to this image of the possible.<sup>63</sup>

Whereas this quotation further unpacks *konstituieren* by adding the process of *adaequatio*, it helps me to understand Cassirer’s use of “possible” when reading it through Bergson’s “virtual.” After all, the Bergsonian possible is “a reverse projection of the real,”<sup>64</sup> which is *not* what Cassirer stands for as he precisely, yet in spite of his word choice does not posit fixed parameters! I guess that this is what the artist does, too, when he picks up the chisel approaching the stone, or the brush and the paint facing the canvas, et cetera.

## Historical, Systematic, and Diffractive Philosophy

Now that I have demonstrated how diffractive patterns manifest themselves in *Feeling and Form*, I ask, moving ahead with the unfolding of the methodology of diffractive reading, to what extent we can speak of a failing of Bergson? After all, first, the way in which *Feeling and Form* theorizes memory with Whitehead is compatible with Bergson, and gains from a precise discussion of this compatibility that I have, in the previous section, described in terms of a reading experience of leaping in and out of oeuvres. Customizing the words of Shaviro, one could say that a theorizing that acts in compliance with this reading experience is “less concerned with reconstructing thought precisely than in delineating the outlines of the philosophical encounter, an encounter that changes our apprehension of the thinkers involved.”<sup>65</sup> With Pierre Macherey, whose *Hegel or Spinoza* is another brilliant exemplification of reading diffractively, we may affirm that the question is “at what point this encounter occurs.”<sup>66</sup> Second, Cassirer’s dynamic ontology unfolds in an argument against thingification that I deem Bergsonian,<sup>67</sup> because treating theorists in isolation is irreconcilable with the open and dynamic parameters of cartography. What I hope to have shown as well is how Cassirer’s work gains from an encounter with Bergson’s differentiation between the possible and the real, and the virtual and the actual, simply because the encounter makes Cassirer’s *konstituieren* and *adaequatio* precise.

Before I proceed to a close reading of Langer's treatment of Bergson (labeled a demonstration of "Bergson's failing" by the former) I want to ask to what extent it matters that the name and the work of Bergson appear more often scribbled in the margins of my copy of *Feeling and Form* than in the neatly typeset sentences of the book itself? In fact, what is the difference between "the book itself" and "scribbles in the margins"? Does not this distinction mimic the realist logic of a world of sentences between the two covers of a book and a world "out there" that the book re-presents, a logic that my plea for diffractive reading tries to do away with by demonstrating how a relativist *dis*connection between word and world is not changing the realist logic of one-on-one resemblance but is in fact nothing but a humanities artifact given that the disconnection has never been tenable? Barad has argued that a diffractive reading methodology is performative in that it "mov[es] away from the familiar habits and seductions of representationalism (reflecting on the world from outside) to a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it."<sup>68</sup> The way in which I annotate my books, that is, the way in which I perform my reading of those books can be said to follow the logic of the hypertext, allowing me to go back and forth upon a second, third, or fourth reading and add more and more linkages. More precisely formulated, the tentacles that animate the typescript are "rhizomes," to speak with Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>69</sup> Rhizomes rush beneath and through, and sprouting up from, the text.

So, of course, Langer has studied with Whitehead and had a short but productive working relation with Cassirer. But does this fact imply that observations about those two thinkers—whether in the margins or typeset—are more worthy for historical or systematic philosophy? Or are they more true, deserving importation to contemporary humanities debates and classrooms? If these questions are answered in the affirmative, "truthfulness" is, albeit oxymoronically quantified in the latter question, synonymous with correspondence: a true statement corresponds with a reality "out there." This realism stands in unreal opposition to relativism, as argued above, whereas diffractive reading requires a move to "accounting for how practices matter."<sup>70</sup> And one of these practices is classification, the naturalistic tendency to classify what is to be found "out there" (including languages and schools of thought). What happens to *Feeling and Form* when the known, static yardsticks for truth and for methodological value are left behind, and when reading philosophical texts unfolds along the open and dynamic lines of cartographizing? What is a *diffractive* philosophy as demarcated from historical and systematic philosophical methodologies?

Let me first perform a response to these questions by referring to *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences* once more. Given that—as we will see—Langer's supposedly negative evaluation of Bergson hinges on intuition, it is interesting to look at the way in which Cassirer—to whom Langer dedicated

*Feeling and Form*—has reworked this concept. S.G. Lofts' introduction to *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences* situates the work both historically and systematically, and points to Cassirer classifying Bergson as a dedicated adherent to turn-of-the-century "*Lebensphilosophie*" whose work on intuition stands for a *negation* of symbolic mediation.<sup>71</sup> This hermeneutic reading (a well-known humanities methodology that serves both historical and systematic philosophy) does indeed appear to be the unreal opposite of natural-science realism, because Lofts' footnotes, typically, provide the data that must make sure readers deem his interpretation correct (the interpretation as a fact). The argument is that the closing remarks of the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*<sup>72</sup> structurally resemble *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, which leads to Lofts concluding that *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences* is (also) critical of Bergson.<sup>73</sup> What happens when a productive encounter is created between Cassirer and Bergson?

When discussing the nature of the concepts of the cultural sciences, Cassirer's starting point is that the object of humanities study is such that nothing but a reductive analysis is made when elements are taken in isolation:

For with the progress to a certain conceptual stage, everything depends not on the components that it contains but on the characteristic manner in which they are unified and joined together. Thus although it is indisputable that every cultural object manifests a physical, a psychological, and a historical side, the specific signification of this object remains, nevertheless, obscure as long as we isolate these elements from each other, instead of grasping them in their correlation, their mutual "penetration."<sup>74</sup>

The "mutual 'penetration'" is the first indication of a subterranean link with Bergson: his famous concept of duration (*la durée*) is formulated precisely as "succession without distinction, [...] a mutual penetration, an interconnexion [sic] and organization of elements, each one of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought."<sup>75</sup> The common measurement of time—seconds, minutes, hours, days, etc.—is nothing but a reduction for Bergson. Time, in his philosophy, is internal to any-body and their relatings. Cassirer is not looking for the abstract thought of measurement either, but he wishes to cut across both a natural-science take on culture (a take which withdraws from the mutual penetration and seeks refuge in universal laws) and a take which he calls, trickily, "natural":

We live in the words of language, the figurations of poetry and the plastic arts, the forms of music, the formations of religious ideas and beliefs. And it is only in them that we "know" each other. This intuitive knowledge does not yet have the character of "science."  
[...] But this 'natural' understanding soon reaches its limits. We can

no more reach the depths of culture with the elements of intuition than simple sense perception can penetrate the depths of space.<sup>76</sup>

Arguing against this natural (read: intuitive) take, his “logic of the cultural sciences” does (or advises [us] to do) precisely what I think *is* intuitive, owing to the fact that Bergsonian intuition does *not* come naturally (following common sense, of which intellectualism is the unreal opposite).<sup>77</sup> Also, intuition does *not* work with elements; intuition happens at once, like Proust’s Marcel being suddenly catapulted into aunt Léonie’s bedroom. Cassirer’s cultural sciences ultimately boil down to the following intricate movement (at one stroke traversing natural science and psychology and history as classes of scholarship):

Its goal is not the universality of laws; but neither is it the individuality of facts and phenomena. In contrast to both it sets up an ideal of knowledge of its own. What it wants to know is the *totality of the forms* in which human life takes place. These forms are infinitely differentiated and yet they are not deprived of a unified structure. [...] We do not become aware of this identity through watching, weighing, and measuring; nor do we come upon it through psychological inductions. It can manifest itself only through the act. A culture becomes accessible to us only if we actively enter into it; and this entering is not bound to the immediate present. Here the distinctions of time, the distinction of earlier and later, are relativized in the same way as spatial distinctions, the distinction of here and there, are relativized in physics and astronomy.<sup>78</sup>

Of course, Bergson has argued in his famous 1903 “Introduction to Metaphysics” that “[m]etaphysics is [...] the science which claims to dispense with symbols.”<sup>79</sup> He has said that scientific analysis works with symbols and reductively cuts up what it observes for comparative purposes and in order to measure along temporality as a spatial parameter of successive moments. However, intuition, for Bergson, is “the *sympathy* by which one is transported into the interior of an object in order to coincide with what there is unique and consequently inexpressible in it. [...] Intuition, if it is possible, is a simple act.”<sup>80</sup> Actively entering an object through a simple act in a manner that transports us out of the immediate present. This is the steppingstone to Cassirer’s cultural science as much as to Bergson’s intuitive metaphysics and it neatly sums up the event of encountering an art work on the basis of which Whitehead’s and Langer’s respective philosophies of art are constructed.

Eugene T. Gadol, Langer’s research assistant for *Feeling and Form*, has beautifully formulated the aforementioned sensitivity as the ultimate quality of the humanities scholar in what can be called an elegy for Cassirer:

Ernst Cassirer and Giambattista Vico are separated by about one hundred and seventy-five years, but in the history of ideas, time spans never preclude intellectual affinities. This is especially true of Cassirer, who was particularly adept in the art of revitalizing the past. [...] The clash of motifs never interested him per se. It is rather their complex intertwining, leading towards further tensions and resolutions which caught his eye, and these ramifications he masterfully traced in a dialectic as complicated as his subject-matter, always focusing on the originating, on the creative currents of thought that opened up new directions as they revealed original turns of mind.<sup>81</sup>

Yes, this elegy has diffractive qualities, as Cassirer and Vico are brought together cartographically in a shifting of calendar time. Polemics are exchanged for a more complex patterning of thoughts and arguments, and what we feel is admiration for a rhizomatic thought (Cassirer's, Gadol's).

## Traversing “Bergson’s Failing”

Let me now finally move to Langer’s evaluation of Bergson’s intuition as a failure (it will become clear in due course that she does not so much evaluate Bergson’s intuition as a failure, but rather that her own initial reading of this methodological tool comes out as much more complex). The discussion takes place in the context of music as the art form expressing virtual time. The discussion appears to be Bergsonian right from the start: from the affirmation of the indivisibility of the artwork to the fact that music must neither be approached scientifically nor psychologically, and that musical elements are not there for analytic recognition but rather they are “virtual, created only for perception.”<sup>82</sup> Langer then moves to her definition of music: “Musical motion, in short, is something entirely different from physical displacement. It is a semblance, and nothing more. [...] The realm in which tonal entities move is a realm of pure *duration*. Like its elements, however, this duration is not an actual phenomenon. [...] The semblance of this vital, experiential time is the primary illusion of music.”<sup>83</sup> In light of all this, and in light of the motionless motion that Bergson-readers also find in the famous example of the melting sugar — “If I want to mix a glass of sugar and water, I must, willy nilly, wait until the sugar melts. This little fact is big with meaning”<sup>84</sup> — how can it possibly be that Langer is dismissively critical of Bergson in the argumentative line that runs explicitly through the chapter on music? For her, at this point in her writing, Bergson is the philosopher of artists because despite his important insight in duration, and by way of his philosophical mirroring of the inner workings of musical art in particular, he has thrown out the baby with the bath water given that he proclaims, according to Langer, a non-discursivity that is detrimental to the philosophical profession. Hinting at Bergson’s claim to dispense with

symbols, Langer says that whereas Bergson's philosophy of duration challenges the philosopher to "find us a symbolism whereby we can conceive and express our firsthand knowledge of time!" he "retires" prematurely and suggests that "[p]hilosophy must give up discursive thought, give up logical conception, and try to grasp intuitively the inward sense of duration. But it is not the intervention of symbolism as such that balks our understanding of 'lived' time; it is the unsuitable and consequently barren structure of the literal symbol."<sup>85</sup> Langer even states that Bergson falls into the trap of failing to notice that music is in fact *organized* and *not* a formless flow;<sup>86</sup> the latter is a philosophical insight that is completely mistaken yet ascribed to Bergson and "which looks suspiciously like the abstract structure of Newton's one-dimensional time-stream."<sup>87</sup> This evaluation makes Bergson's philosophical work—in spite of its usefulness for musicians' discussion about music—stand in unreal opposition to authoritative Science and to psychology in its common-sensical format. Both of which are, as we know, Bergson's own main enemies.

Langer wants to be able to think music's necessary structure, and she asserts that virtual space is music's secondary illusion<sup>88</sup> which "simply arises from the way virtual time unfolds in this or that individual work—arises, and is eclipsed again."<sup>89</sup> So spatiality is *the actualization of the virtual* and the movement in which *what is actualized feeds back into the virtual* is the structure that makes music so suitable for philosophizing about art. After all, *Philosophy in a New Key* was the first Langer-book to zoom in on music as an exemplary art form and this book explained how music is neither right or wrong, nor completely tied up with "*Affektenlehre*" (doctrine of affects)<sup>90</sup> The former take on music is evoked by a scientific inclination and the latter comes from scholars who have fallen into the trap of the non-discursive, a trap that Langer also ascribes to Bergson as we saw above. Both positions do not allow for reaching music's necessary structure and thus for constructing a philosophy of (musical) art. The relation between music and meaning is so complex because both sides of the coin of this relation (when seen along the lines of linear causality) have it wrong: "[Music]'s 'meaning' is evidently not that of a stimulus to evoke emotions, nor that of a signal to announce them; [...] it is not usually derived *from* affects nor intended *for* them; but we may say, with certain reservations, that it is *about* them."<sup>91</sup> This impersonal take on affect wishes to undo every possibility of reverting to an epistemological individualism—in terms of either the disembodied Subject or the embodied subject *or* the musical unit of information—and has far-reaching consequences for how we understand the one who listens to music (and below it will become clear that this listener is *also* the composer and the performer, not only the one in the audience or engaging with LP records or [nowadays] iPods and ending up attempting to write a philosophy of music or not).

Let us unpack in more detail what this “impersonal” entails, because even Langer herself re-introduces a personal dimension in her writing about music. Just like the reader of narrative poetry or prose is confronted with impersonal life (the interlocking of past-present-future, the ability to experience the whole story), the one engaging with music experiences time (and space) impersonally:

The real power of music lies in the fact that it can be “true” to the life of feeling in a way that language cannot; for its significant forms have that *ambivalence* of content which words cannot have. [...] Music is revealing, where words are obscuring, because it can have not only a content, but a transient play of contents. It can articulate feelings without becoming wedded to them. [...] The assignment of meanings is a shifting, kaleidoscopic play, probably below the threshold of consciousness, certainly outside the pale of discursive thinking. The imagination that responds to music is personal and associative and logical, tinged with affect, tinged with bodily rhythm, tinged with dream, but *concerned* with a wealth of formulations for its wealth of wordless knowledge, its whole knowledge of emotional and organic experience, of vital impulse, balance, conflict, the ways of living and dying and feeling. Because no assignment of meaning is conventional, none is permanent beyond the sound that passes; yet the brief association was a flash of understanding. The lasting effect is, like the first effect of speech on the development of the mind, to *make things conceivable* rather than to store up propositions.<sup>92</sup>

Here it is useful to turn to Keith Ansell-Pearson’s introduction to Bergson’s 1919 *Mind-Energy* in which he states: “The body is a centre of action and not a house of representation.”<sup>93</sup> Pearson continues by attending to Bergson’s notion of “impersonal perception” as developed in the opening chapter of *Matter and Memory* (I alluded to this “impersonal interlocking of past-present-future” in an earlier section of this essay with reference to Whitehead). The argument in *Matter and Memory* is an attempt to do away with the “brain in a vat,” so to speak, which is an assumption giving rise to the (false) idea of an ideal (i.e., undisturbed) perception and at the same time, of course, it wants to avoid the idea (equally false, because predicated on the same assumption) of a full subjectivism.<sup>94</sup> Here is what Bergson argues:

There is no perception which is not full of memories. With the immediate and present data of our senses we mingle a thousand details out of our past experience. In most cases these memories supplant our actual perceptions, of which we then retain only a few hints, thus using them merely as “signs” that recall to us former images. [...] The individual accidents are merely grafted on to this

impersonal perception, which is at the very root of our knowledge of things.<sup>95</sup>

The material universe, for Bergson, is the totality of images. This totality of images is a so-called archive from which the subject emerges. Claire Colebrook writes, "There are not subjects who then perceive; there is an impersonal plane of perceptions from which subjects are folded."<sup>96</sup> Music, in Langer's definition, gives us the *semblance* of how time and space perception oscillates between the personal (i.e., the *accidental*) and the impersonal, just like there is the intersecting pendular movement between the virtual and the actual, which allows us to understand how the individual accidents feed back into the impersonal archive. This is a situation of immanence, because signs, and therefore signification *per se*, occur *from within* the totality of images and add to this totality *at the same time*. Bergson's impersonal perception properly places the elements of Langer's previously quoted "personal and associative and logical imagination in response to music, concerned with a wealth of formulations for its wealth of wordless knowledge." Thus, in conclusion, Bergson does not work with a formless flow; his "perception, enlarged by memory,"<sup>97</sup> is precisely how Langer *fills* musical volume or, simply, time (and secondarily space, which occurs from temporality): "The phenomena that fill time are *tensions*—physical, emotional, or intellectual. [...] Some tensions [...] always sink into the background; some drive and some drag, but for perception they give *quality* rather than form to the passage of time, which unfolds in the pattern of the dominant and distinct strains whereby we are measuring it."<sup>98</sup> Giving her requirement of form (Langer requires discursivity) its proper place by focusing on the qualification of time's passing, I want to read the former quotation as a confirmation of the work of Bergson, from whose *Matter and Memory* Langer quotes in a footnote on exactly those pages discussing the filling of musical volume. It is indeed in this book (*Matter and Memory*) that Bergson comes up with the famous circles of memory and the equally well known inverted memory cone which are the quintessentially Bergsonian ways of saying that past, present, and future; and action, perception, and memory are in a constant process of intermingling. Is this not precisely affirming that art is indeed "an epistemological datum about which we can philosophize"?<sup>99</sup> The Bergsonian "non-discursive" complies with Langer's definition of art. That is to say, "Bergson's failing" is too polemical, indeed.

## Conclusion: Meeting the Artist Halfway

*Feeling and Form* is the book in which Langer, who considers "aesthetics" an unfortunate word,<sup>100</sup> develops a philosophy of art true to art's nature and import. She wants to do justice to the *differing* art forms—most of which I have mentioned in this essay either exhaustively or in passing—while at the same time coming up with an ontology of art *per se*. Interestingly and as

announced above, this ontology is in fact an *onto-epistemology* given the prominence Langer gives to *how to reach* this layer of theorizing about artistic creation. I have only been able to familiarize myself with Langer's answer to the question "what does art create?" by bringing in Bergson and relying on the new materialist impetus in gender research, part and parcel of which is the Harawayian-Baradian diffractive wave I mentioned earlier.

Langer suggests that what we do as art lovers or art theorists is "trying to meet the artist halfway."<sup>101</sup> It is not a philosophical Problem that we are after in order to solve it once and for all. We are not after the artists' biographies either.<sup>102</sup> Art lovers or art theorists enter "into a direct relation not with the artist, but with the work," and the artist "is *showing*. He is showing us the appearance of feeling, in a perceptible symbolic projection; but he does not refer to a public object, such as a generally known 'sort' of feeling, outside his work."<sup>103</sup> This meeting of the artist "halfway" is structurally related to Bergson's "leaving matter halfway."<sup>104</sup> I want to bring this essay to a close by meditating on this position. This meditation brings Bergson's philosophical appeal (for Langer) a step further.

Just like philosophy as a "living venture" creates its past in one stroke with its future, the moment an artwork "detaches itself from its actual setting" it "acquires a different context," and this context includes past, present, and future.<sup>105</sup> In other words, "when the first semblance of organic form is achieved" by the artist, "a work of art exhibits its general symbolic possibilities, like a statement imperfectly made or even merely indicated, but understandable in its general intent."<sup>106</sup> This "first semblance" contains *everything*; it is "the expression of an impersonal Idea," "not essentially restrictive, but fecund."<sup>107</sup> It clicks into place, says Langer echoing Étienne Souriau<sup>108</sup> and Gilbert Simondon,<sup>109</sup> and she calls this phase of the original conception of the work that is *not* a point of origin somewhere in the past "the *commanding form* of the work," or the "matrix idea," or "the recognition of the matrix."<sup>110</sup> Importantly, this somewhere is where the artist dwells. Langer's science and technology studies of the studio (not of the laboratory, although her book must also be seen as a study of the somewhere of the philosopher of art) has led to the following insight: "Most composers [and these artists are taken to be exemplary here] carry the act of creative imagination from its inception as a "commanding form," or matrix idea [...], to a point somewhere *before* the full realization of the musical work, which is the performed piece."<sup>111</sup> Earlier I alluded to the fact that the maker (both composer and performer) is in its own audience, but here I wish to highlight something less empirical and more speculative.<sup>112</sup> Every artwork is motivated or excited by a commanding form or matrix idea that is virtual and demanding, which the artist carries or pushes to a place before full realization. This place is where philosophical research on art should commence. Philosophers of art are not to start their work from the fully realized piece or performance. In the Bergsonian terms I referenced in the

opening section of this essay: there is “a sounding of which one feels that it has more or less reached the bottom of a same ocean, even though it brings each time to the surface very different materials,” and this sounding is the commanding form or matrix, whereby the driving up of materials to the surface is what happens in this time slot before full realization.<sup>113</sup> Intuition is the faculty that one employs in this time slot, which is a present slot that spills over into past and future. Analysis works “on these materials,” and by way of a “retrograde movement,”<sup>114</sup> analysts can only capture what is no longer spilling, what has come to a practical and/or theoretical standstill.<sup>115</sup>

The artist “does not refer to a public object, such as a generally known ‘sort’ of feeling, outside his work,” Langer said. We may add to this and say that the material artwork itself, just like its representation, is not a public object either. Contradictory as it may seem given the importance given to art in the public sphere in most countries and by most institutions (including political parties and advocacy groups) and given the objects of research in Art History programs world-wide, Langer is indifferent to this material aspect of the work of art (which includes the representational). She is interested in “its form no matter what materials it uses”<sup>116</sup> and says that “materials from any source whatever must be put to completely artistic use, entirely transformed, so that they do not lead away from the work, but give it, instead, the air of being ‘reality.’”<sup>117</sup> These materials are words and clay and paint and bodies and sounds *and morals*.<sup>118</sup> The artist works on what he “cannot know before he expresses it.”<sup>119</sup> His (or her) practice is material-semiotic, and technical-conceptual, and all of these envelopments lead to artworks that express an otherness without an Other.<sup>120</sup>

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1. Gilles Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York: Zone Books, [1966] 1991).
  2. Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from Philosophy in a New Key* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 114.
  3. Susanne K. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, [1942] 1957).
  4. Langer, *Feeling and Form*.
  5. Donald Dryden, “Susanne K. Langer (20 December 1895–17 July 1985),” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 270 (“American Philosophers Before 1950”), ed. Philip Breed Dematteis and Leemon B. McHenry (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2003), 189-99.
  6. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, xiii.
  7. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 410.

- <sup>8</sup>. Dryden, “Susanne K. Langer,” 190.
- <sup>9</sup>. Arabella Lyon, “Susanne K. Langer: Mother and Midwife at the Rebirth of Rhetoric,” in *Reclaiming Rhetorica: Women in the Rhetorical Tradition*, ed. Andrea A. Lunsford (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburg Press, 1995), 268, 277. Cf. Howard Gardner, *Art, Mind, and Brain: A Cognitive Approach to Creativity* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 50.
- <sup>10</sup>. Lyon, “Susanne K. Langer,” 266.
- <sup>11</sup>. Dryden, “Susanne K. Langer,” 192.
- <sup>12</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 113.
- <sup>13</sup>. *Ibid.*, 114.
- <sup>14</sup>. *Ibid.*, viii.
- <sup>15</sup>. *Ibid.*, 85.
- <sup>16</sup>. Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, [1934] 2007), 168.
- <sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 9-10, 195, 228, 281, 309.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Iris Van der Tuin, *Generational Feminism: New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield [Lexington Books], 2015).
- <sup>19</sup>. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 27
- <sup>20</sup>. See Donna Haraway, “The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others,” in *The Haraway Reader* (New York and London: Routledge, [1992] 2004); Donna J. Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@ Second\_Millennium. FemaleMan<sup>®</sup>\_Meets\_OncoMouse<sup>™</sup>: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28 (2003); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007).
- <sup>21</sup>. Gardner, *Art, Mind, and Brain*, 54.
- <sup>22</sup>. Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 829.
- <sup>23</sup>. *Ibid.*, 815.
- <sup>24</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 6.
- <sup>25</sup>. *Ibid.*, 6.
- <sup>26</sup>. *Ibid.*, 7; emphasis in original.
- <sup>27</sup>. *Ibid.*, 8.
- <sup>28</sup>. *Ibid.*, 9-10.
- <sup>29</sup>. *Ibid.*, 10-11.
- <sup>30</sup>. Male thinkers are put on a pedestal more often than female thinkers or thinkers whose gender identity doesn’t comply with binary logic.
- <sup>31</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 266.

32. Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Vol. I: Swann's Way*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. by D.J. Enright (London: Vintage, [1913] 2005), 50.
33. Proust, *Swann's Way*, 52.
34. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 85, 96.
35. Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, corrected ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, [1929/1978] 1985), 214.
36. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, [1968] 1994), 208.
37. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 96.
38. It must be noted—and studied—that Deleuze also summarizes that this quote pertains to “what Proust said of states of resonance.” Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 208. Arkady Plotnitsky has argued that Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition* differs from Deleuze and Guattari's *What is Philosophy?* precisely in that the latter book speaks in terms of diffraction (interference) rather than resonance. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, [1991] 1994); Arkady Plotnitsky, “From Resonance to Interference: The Architecture of Concepts and the Relationships among Philosophy, Art and Science in Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari,” *Parallax* 18 (2012).
39. Deleuze, *Bergsonism*, 57.
40. Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time Vol. VI: Time Regained*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. by D.J. Enright (London: Vintage, [1927] 2000), 224-5; emphasis added.
41. Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2009), 98). Cf. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 209 where it is summarized that “far from being undetermined, the virtual is completely determined.”
42. Gregg Lambert, *In Search of A New Image of Thought: Gilles Deleuze and Philosophical Expressionism* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 215 n.11.
43. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 266.
44. *Ibid.*, 268; emphasis in original.
45. Lambert, *In Search of A New Image of Thought*, 33. Cf. Gregg Lambert, *The Non-philosophy of Gilles Deleuze* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002).
46. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 195. She says essentially the same about the necessity to zoom in on poetry's and theatre's primary illusions (not on classifications of poets or dramatic forms); see Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 228, 281, 309.
47. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999).
48. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 193; emphasis in original.
49. See also Cassirer on genera of art and the question: “In what sense can such ‘genera’ be spoken about at all?” [1942] 2000, 118ff. Ernst Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, trans. S.G. Lofts (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, [1942] 2000). Aud Sissel Hoel, who was the first to inspire me to engage with Cassirer (just like Emily Hertz helped me find Langer), makes

the same point in relation to classificatory epistemology: “As Cassirer sees it, going from one extreme to the other, say, from realism to relativism or scepticism [sic], never solves the underlying problem.” Aud Sissel Hoel, “Technics of Thinking,” in *Ernst Cassirer on Form and Technology: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Aud Sissel Hoel and Ingvild Folkvord (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan 2012), 75.

- <sup>50</sup>. This does not imply that the relation between the social context and the art world is a relation of correspondence or one-on-one commentary. Throughout *Feeling and Form* Langer discusses correspondence theories of truth and interpretation rather critically by starting her thought afresh: “The artistic symbol, *qua* artistic, negotiates insight, not reference; it does not rest upon convention, but motivates and dictates conventions. It is deeper than any semantic of accepted signs and their referents, more essential than any schema that may be heuristically read.” Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 22. Further explicit remarks about correspondence are made in the book, the key point of which remarks is always that *semblance* does not translate as *resemblance of*, but as a *giving to the sense of* sight (painting), touch (sculpture), movement (architecture), hearing (music), et cetera. See, e.g., Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 49. This relates closely to Langer’s definition of art as otherness without an Other (I will come back to this definition at the very end of this essay).
- <sup>51</sup>. See, e.g., Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 201-2.
- <sup>52</sup>. Hélène Metzger, “La méthode philosophique dans l’histoire des sciences,” in *La méthode philosophique en histoire des sciences: Textes 1914-1939*, ed. Gad Freudenthal, Corpus des Oeuvres de Philosophie en Langue Française (Paris: Fayard, [1937] 1987), 58. The fact that Langer does not buy into chronological empiricism is in spite of Léon Brunschvicg’s—who was amongst the historians of mentalities that Metzger disagreed with for his assertion of the fully rational present was dependent on his belief in a primitive mentality—positive featuring in *Philosophy in a New Key*. Also, “primitivism” features prominently in Langer’s discussion of dance when taken at face value.
- <sup>53</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 176.
- <sup>54</sup>. *Ibid.*, 178; emphasis in original.
- <sup>55</sup>. *Ibid.*, 14.
- <sup>56</sup>. *Ibid.*, 186.
- <sup>57</sup>. *Ibid.*, 186.
- <sup>58</sup>. *Ibid.*, 186; emphasis in original.
- <sup>59</sup>. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, 76.
- <sup>60</sup>. *Ibid.*, 12; emphasis in original.
- <sup>61</sup>. *Ibid.*, 49. Note that his philosophy of culture is ultimately a philosophy of “naturecultures,” as one might say with Haraway. Donna J. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, IL: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).
- <sup>62</sup>. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, 50; emphasis in original.
- <sup>63</sup>. Ernst Cassirer, “Form and Technology,” in *Ernst Cassirer on Form and Technology: Contemporary Readings*, ed. Aud Sissel Hoel and Ingvild Folkvord, trans. Wilson McClelland Dunlavey and John Michael Krois (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, [1930] 2012), 44.

64. Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 107.
65. This is the original: "In this book, I have tried to establish a sort of relay between [Whitehead and Deleuze], so that each of them helps to resolve difficulties in the work of the other. [...] I am less concerned with reconstructing Whitehead's thought precisely than in delineating the outlines of the encounter between Whitehead and Deleuze, an encounter that changes our apprehension of both of them." Shaviro, *Without Criteria*, xiv, 27 n.9.
66. Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*, trans. Susan M. Ruddick (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, [1979] 2011), 42.
67. See also Iris van der Tuin, "'A Different Starting Point, A Different Metaphysics': Reading Bergson and Barad Diffractively," *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 26 (2011). I deem the argument against thingification Baradian, too.
68. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 88.
69. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, [1980] 1987), 6; emphasis in original.
70. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 90.
71. S.G. Lofts, "Translator's Introduction: The Historical and Systematic Context of *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*," in *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences* of Ernst Cassirer, trans. S.G. Lofts (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), xxx-xxi.
72. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms Vol. III: The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, trans. R. Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, [1929] 1957).
73. Bergson does not appear on the pages of the latter book, although the translator's introduction is of course part of the book itself.
74. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, 57.
75. Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson, 3rd ed. (London: George Allen, [1889] 1913), 101.
76. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, 75.
77. This intricate relating of the concepts common sense (or habit), intellect, and intuition reminds me of Félix Ravaisson's *Of Habit*, a text much loved by Bergson. Félix Ravaisson, *Of Habit*, trans. Clare Carlisle and Mark Sinclair (New York and London: Continuum, [1838] 2008).
78. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, 76; emphasis in original.
79. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 136; emphasis in original.
80. *Ibid.*, 136-7; emphasis in original.
81. Eugene T. Gadol, "The Idealistic Foundations of Cultural Anthropology: Vico, Kant and Cassirer," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* vol.12(1974): 207.
82. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 107.
83. *Ibid.*, 108-9; emphasis in original.

- <sup>84</sup>. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, [1907] 1998), 9.
- <sup>85</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 114. Here Langer alludes to the use of language conventional in the natural sciences. See Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 201-2.
- <sup>86</sup>. Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 313-4 on “the refrain.”
- <sup>87</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 116. Bergson affirms in *Matter and Memory* that physicists like “Newton, in particular” who strive for a differentiation between spatialized time and absolute duration always end up hypothesizing and implementing spatialized time only. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer, 5th ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, [1896] 2004), 256, 257 n. 1. Newton attempted to start off his thought from this differentiation in the opening sections of his *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* from 1689: “Absolute, true, and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equally without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration: relative, apparent, and common time, is some sensible and external (whether accurate or unequal) measure of duration by the means of motion, which is commonly used instead of true time; such as an hour, a day, a month, a year.” Quoted in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; see <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/newton-stm/scholium.html>> Accessed 9 August 2014.
- <sup>88</sup>. “Virtual space” is the primary illusion of the plastic arts, namely of picture/painting through scene, of sculpture via its kinetic volume, and of architecture by expressing an ethnic domain. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 86ff.. In line with Langer, Cassirer remarks: “Sculpture, painting, and architecture seem to have a common object. What comes to be represented in them appears to be the comprehensive ‘pure intuition’ of space. And still the spaces of painting, sculpture, and architecture are not ‘the same;’ but rather in each of them a specific and unique manner of apprehension, of spatial ‘vision’ is expressed.” Cassirer, *The Logic of the Cultural Sciences*, 18.
- <sup>89</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 118.
- <sup>90</sup>. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 241ff.. Note that in relation to this unreal opposition between scientism and “pure feeling” which has been so eloquently worked out by Ruth Leys with Brian Massumi as her exemplar, it is surprising to see that Massumi’s 2011 *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* works with Langer’s philosophy of art. See Ruth Leys, “The Turn to Affect: A Critique,” *Critical Inquiry* vol.37 (2011); Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011). Langer argues against the selection and exploitation of the somatic which she equates with “self-indulgence, a very different thing from art” and hence she reserves a place for the rational. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 28, 33.
- <sup>91</sup>. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 218; emphasis in original. Bergson formulates this point as follows: “If musical sounds affect us more powerfully than the sounds of nature, the reason is that nature confines itself to *expressing* feelings, whereas music *suggests* them to us.” Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 15; emphasis in original.
- <sup>92</sup>. Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 243-4; emphasis in original.
- <sup>93</sup>. Keith Ansell Pearson, “Introduction to Henri Bergson,” in *Mind-energy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), xx.
- <sup>94</sup>. Cf. “The brain is not opposed to the world, but rather the world is composed of a special type of brain-matter.” Lambert, *Ins Search of a New Image of Thought*, 205.
- <sup>95</sup>. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 24-5.

- <sup>96</sup>. Claire Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 69. Langer says that lyrical expression creates an “impersonal subjectivity.” Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 260.
- <sup>97</sup>. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 276-9.
- <sup>98</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 112-3; emphasis in original.
- <sup>99</sup>. *Ibid.*, 118.
- <sup>100</sup>. Langer argues that the aesthetic discipline has the tendency to predetermine philosophical problems around art along parameters such as beauty, taste, et cetera. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 12.
- <sup>101</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 393.
- <sup>102</sup>. *Ibid.*, 83, 234, 264, 267, 292.
- <sup>103</sup>. *Ibid.*, 394; emphasis in original.
- <sup>104</sup>. “We consider matter before the dissociation which idealism and realism [as well as materialism and dogmatism] have brought about between its existence and its appearance.” Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, viii-ix.
- <sup>105</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 45.
- <sup>106</sup>. *Ibid.*, 122.
- <sup>107</sup>. *Ibid.*, 123.
- <sup>108</sup>. See Bruno Latour, “Reflections on Etienne Souriau’s *Les Différents Modes d’Existence*” in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: re.press, 2011), 310.
- <sup>109</sup>. See Arne De Boever, Alex Murray, and Jon Roffe, “‘Technical Mentality’ Revisited: Brian Massumi on Gilbert Simondon,” *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* 7 (2009), 39.
- <sup>110</sup>. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 138; emphasis in original.
- <sup>111</sup>. *Ibid.*, 138; emphasis in original.
- <sup>112</sup>. Langer critiques North-American academia for their empiricism, which leads to a linear take on how scholarship must be operated/operationalized; it is a sequencing that comes from the natural sciences, infiltrates the human sciences, and completely overshadows speculation. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 35. Cf. Bergson on a speculative reworking of perception leading to pure knowledge, free from polemics. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 17.
- <sup>113</sup>. Note how strongly this surfacing relates to the impetus of Langer’s *Philosophy in a New Key*: “Sign and symbol are knotted together in the production of those fixed realities that we call ‘facts,’ as I think this whole study of semantic has shown. But *between the facts* run the threads of unrecorded reality, momentarily recognized, wherever they come to the surface, in our tacit adaptation to signs; and the bright, twisted threads of symbolic envisagement, imagination, thought-memory and reconstructed memory, belief beyond experience, dream, make-believe, hypothesis, philosophy—the whole creative process of ideation, metaphor, and abstraction that makes human life an adventure in understanding.” Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, 281; emphasis in original.
- <sup>114</sup>. Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 11. Cf. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 310, 326.

<sup>115</sup>. Cf. Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 274.

<sup>116</sup>. *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>117</sup>. *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>118</sup>. *Ibid.*, 326.

<sup>119</sup>. *Ibid.*, 389.

<sup>120</sup>. *Ibid.*, 48, 52.