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The wide open mouth reveals the shock of the heart.
- Charles Le Brun, *The Expression of the Passions* (1667)

*And all of a sudden the memory came back to me. The taste was that of the
small piece of madeleine ...*
- Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way* (1913) vol. I, 48.

Introduction

"I needed a bit of time to find something to say, just to explain my reaction to this tableau. At first, I was so confused, surprised, that I did not know what to say. Then I regathered myself; it **takes away** the words from one's mouth, *I do not know how to speak about; I do not know what it is*, I did not know what happened especially. It seems to belong to the domain of the inexpressible, the indescribable, and that has been pretty hard, not only to identify and think about it, but first of all to confront, to observe and to cope with it..." (T: n ° 6, l. 71-79).¹

"Me, I told myself that it is very beautiful, is a very b'... in the end, it is beautiful in its style, the colors are pretty, it is really, it is arranged, there is an idea behind it... Then after I looked at it in relation to the rest of the body, I said to myself, this is not possible, **I did not say it**, but I told myself, that's not possible..." (A: n ° 11, l. 35-36 and l. 156-157)

"I asked myself "oh my, what is it?" floating... frustration, also... not knowing what it could represent... umm... I only know that I said to myself: 'oh my, it is really frustrating, its really unbelievable that one does not know what the painting represents'" (T: n ° 6, l. 134-149)

"Just for a second, it was just 'wow!'" (S: n ° 8, l. 65-66)

"It is... well, the eyes, the eyes widened, physically" (A: No. 11, l. 71-72)

As opening remarks, these examples of students' expression of surprise during a visual task that I will detail later provide a good indication of the very broad and heterogeneous scope of the manifestations of surprise, whether they are verbal or not: silence, internal speech, the language of the body, organic language (like interjections and exclamations), rationalizations after the fact that explicitly use the noun or verb forms of "surprise", along with many other emotional nouns or adjectives ("horrible!"), and even cognitive processes ("confused"), after the moment of surprise has already happened and is identified afterwards.

One of the questions that may be asked, based on these different occurrences, is whether there is truly a "language" of surprise, that is to say, an expression to manifest it adequately at the very time when it happens, or if it has the characteristic precisely of escaping from language. Whether I am so surprised that I have my mouth wide open or am overcome by trembling, jumping, shaking, my heart racing, but unable to verbalize anything whatsoever, or whether I bear witness afterwards to my surprise by expressing that, actually, "I was surprised", that "it surprised me", or "imagine my surprise!"² In short, at the moment of surprise, it is as if there were a linguistic blank, a silence or a bodily presence, and that language then comes along to articulate after something has already taken place. In what follows, I want to re-examine this hypothesis that is based on the dichotomy between the non-verbal (silence, body) and the verbal (articulated speech), and to propose an integrative alternative that holds language and experience together within one and the same dynamic.

I have chosen to speak about the "languages of surprise", with the aim of proposing a perspective located at a distance from the distinction, a little too simplistic in my opinion, between, on the one side, the *a priori* idea that there is a single or a unified language of surprise, whose *eidos* can be extracted, namely, its language or linguistic essence, and on the other side, the empirical, comparative investigation of a socio-linguistic kind that would be dedicated to the various expressions of surprise in different languages. These two types of investigations, theoretical and empirical, are of course rich in lessons for us. But, as for myself, I would like to contribute something less analytical or local than *integrative* (that is to say including equally the *experiential* and *conceptual* dimensions in a co-generative mode), and to bring out what I will call *in fine* the "dynamics of the multi-directional verbalization" of surprise.

To do this, I will need a different conceptual division from the usual dichotomy between what is linguistic, that which derives from language, and what would be "extralinguistic", that which would derive from internal states, lived experience, social phenomena or social constructs. I would like to consider the entire palette of the expressiveness of surprise, which in my opinion is what *makes* surprise. In fact, surprise is first of all bodily, based on

a distinction that I have established elsewhere between the language of the body and the corporeality of language.³ The language of the body, as is known, is made up of facial expressions, gestures, a sudden burst of physiological responses, the speed of the heartbeat, the rate of respiration, the sweating of the skin. In contrast, the corporeality of language is expressed by interjections, exclamations, questions, a slowing down of the speed, a suspenseful tone, and even stammering or gibberish. But, surprise also plays a role in latency, a silence tied to internal discourse. And thirdly, it will be discursive and thereby constructed by multiple discursive forms (descriptive, narrative, argumentative); it will be drawn from a rhetoric or a stylistics. It is in order to be able to render the full range of this expressive palette that I have chosen here to speak of the languages of surprise without any restrictions. After further consideration, in order to realize the multiple modalities of surprise, I have opted to use two terms: expressiveness and verbalization. The term "expressiveness" is used here rather than simply expression, to avoid going back to what I consider to be the unilateral idea of "markers" [external] of a surprise that would be understood as a lived experience or a state [internal] expressing itself afterwards in these markers and in its external organs, which are usually modal forms (here: anticipatory, "I cannot tell you"), interjections or exclamatory intensifiers (here it is relational: "Oh really? Truly?"). As the playwright Racine once noted in the preface to his play "Bérénice": "my piece is ready, all I have to do is to write it!" Or like the grammarian Dumarsais who in his eighteenth-century entry on "Wonder" in the *Encyclopedie*, saw in the qualification of a tone, a gesture or a point wonder (which is a synonym of exclamation) as the "mark" of surprise, as if it were an internal state experienced autonomously, that afterwards receives, in an extrinsic way, external marks. And the term "verbalization" is used here rather than language in order to account for the procedural dimension involved in surprise, which obliterates the very abstract idea of a dichotomous "passage" from the internal to the external. The notions of expressiveness and verbalization thus allow me to justify *a contrario* a "linguistic phenomenology" to which the linguist Emile Benvéniste and the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, each in their own way, laid claim in their time in terms of the mutually generative constraints that lived experience and verbalizing expressivity exert on each other. I am gladly entering into their wake here.

To give an idea of the span of the dynamics of verbalization of surprise that I will try to bring to light, I will start with *the* philosophical theoretical place that is, in my opinion, the most remarkable in terms of the descriptive phenomenology of surprise,⁴ namely, its approach by Paul Ricoeur in *Freedom and Nature* in terms of what he calls "emotion-surprise."⁵ This theoretical position will lead me to retrace, in a second step, the archeology of what Ricoeur calls the "circular phenomenon" or the "circular process" of surprise. I will follow each of these two paths successively, that of body language in a

burst of "shaking", and that of the language of cognitive as well as aesthetic "shock". There is an *a priori* antinomy here that is based on a post-Cartesian duality of the body and the mind, but it is circularized by Ricoeur. On the basis of this dual model of surprise, I will retrace its genealogy in a number of authors (Darwin, James, Izard, and Ekman on the one hand, and Peirce, Husserl, Dennett, Davidson, on the other hand) and will analyze some first-person descriptions that come from "microphenomenological interviews" [*entretiens d'explicitation*].⁶ Why do that? It is a matter, in so doing, of sketching out an experiential phenomenology of the dynamics of the verbalization of surprise, which alone, in my opinion, allows it to be shown in its procedural micro-complexity, that is, in its non-linear circularity. I will try to show *in situ* that it takes the concrete form of generative launches [*relances*] of lived experience through different linguistic components in the broadest sense and back from them through lived experience.

Bodily Shaking and Internal Stupor: The Flow of Bodily Surprise into Thought in a State of Shock

A "shock of knowledge along the pathway leading back from the shaking of the body"?⁷ A "bodily stupor" along the path leading back from a thought which is spread out by incarnation?⁸ These two complex expressions are found in the chapter on surprise in *Freedom and Nature*. In my opinion, they masterfully account for the specific rhythm of the "reflux" of surprise, where the immediacy of a shock, a crisis, and the duration of a journey which is here called its "spread" are found to be articulated in a unique manner. Surprised, the body shakes and flows back onto thought simultaneously in the moment of shock. Thought, in turn, stupefies the body, which, on its side, weighs down fleeting thought with the more spread out duration of incarnation.

Ricoeur, building in an exemplary manner on the Cartesian conception of wonder as a "sudden surprise of the soul", in §70 of the *Treatise on the Passions*, makes surprise the "most rudimentary function of emotion", the "most simple emotive attitude."⁹ In doing so, Ricoeur states that he owes "the principle of [his] description" to Descartes's six principle passions and that they serve as his "guiding thread." Why? Ricoeur builds his description of surprise by pitting Descartes against "modern psychology which [he says] derives emotion from a *shock* and describes it as a *crisis*."¹⁰ By contrast, according to Ricoeur, Descartes "derives [emotion] *from* surprise."¹¹ They both therefore grant a primary role to surprise as a source of the emotions and as irreducible to its bodily indication in a burst of shock. Prior to that, Ricoeur gives "emotion-surprise" a central role in the "fertile disordering" of human life, on the basis on which both "emotion-shock" and "emotion-passion" can be understood. They correspond, in turn, to aberrant or pathological disorders. So the conceptual construct that Ricoeur proposes is very original: it unfolds in three steps that are unified by an understanding of emotion as a "fertile disordering." Surprise plays the role of an emotional source, whereas

shock and passion refer to radicalizations of disorder, whether it is instantaneous and corporeal in the case of shock or inscribed in duration and in the mind as in the case of passion.

Surprise thus forms an undivided source of the emotions, prior to the bifurcation between the body and the mind. In this respect, one can say that Ricoeur ultimately leads the Cartesian dualistic problem in the direction of an experiential dynamic of the body-mind that belongs to the phenomenology of the lived and living body, whether it is the Husserlian *Leib* or the Merleau-Pontian "bodily consciousness". That is why he is able to say that surprise, with its status as a single source, "already contains all the richness of what has been called the *circular phenomenon* of thought and the body."¹²

Ultimately, this model of a phenomenological *circulation* is what interests me in the description offered by the author of *Freedom and Nature*. It describes a dynamic of the experience of surprise that holds together, without any explanatory or experiential priority, both the lived internal process and expressive visibility (which is bodily here, but which can also be linguistic in the broad sense of expressiveness as well as the strict linguistic sense). One can thereby understand why Ricoeur, though he himself does not speak explicitly about the "language" of surprise, requires us to do so in an exemplary manner. He offers an integrative circular model for the phenomenon of surprise in which these two sides, the lived and the expressive, are joined together like the south-facing and the north-facing slopes of the same mountain, like the front and back of the same coin, or like the front and the back side of a single sheet of paper, with, moreover, the explanation of their dynamic passage from the one to the other like the Möbius image of a co-emergence or a folding together. Indeed, the phenomenality of surprise holds together this reciprocal reversal between the lived and expressive sides, and this occurs in a rhythm that connects the sudden and the enduring. Ricoeur states: "in surprise, a living being is overcome by a new event which it undergoes, *by the other* ; [...] through it, time gets its coloration, [...] something happens [...]. The sudden and the new might not be real: absence or fiction can meet us, touch us, astonish us in the same way."¹³ Thus surprise finds its phenomenal acuity at the junction with what gives rise to it, whether it is an external perceptual event or an internal reverberation of my thoughts, images or memories. This manifests, in turn, the junction between the instant and duration, according to a chiasm whose own temporal rhythm borrows its phases of immediacy and of unfolding from lived experience or expressiveness and then launches them through one another. Whence this formulation that is dense but so elegant, with which I began and which I will repeat again: "[surprise] is at the same time and all at once a shock of knowledge and a shaking of the body, or better, a shock of knowledge in a shaking of the body." This circular coinciding of lived experience and expression corresponds to the movement of the unfolding of

surprise, according to the two simultaneous processes of - in Ricoeur's terms – shock (lived experience) and shaking (bodily expression).

It is striking, in this regard, that Ricoeur repeatedly employs the adjective "circular" three times on a single page: surprise is a "circular phenomenon", has a "circular character", and is a "circular process". And he describes more dynamically what was initially noted in the static mode of co-inciding: "[the emotion of surprise] is nourished by bodily repercussions; the shock of knowledge is on the return path leading from shaking and bodily stupor to thought."¹⁴ Note here that the attribute of shock, with the instantaneousness that Ricoeur initially imputes in a critical manner to the bodily reflexes, is now the *past* for thought, for knowledge, and that the body is *a contrario* assigned the procedural attributes that are inscribed in duration: repercussions, shaking, stupor, path, flow. It is as if only the body, which is no longer reducible to a reflex and which has become a basic feeling, could provide a durable and tangible gauge for a thought that is unable to weigh itself down in incarnation, always linked to an incoherence, to the flight of ideas, always evanescent. At bottom, it is lived experience that turns a reflex into a feeling, and the body that weighs thought down into tangibility. That is why I cannot resist reading Ricoeur's description a little bit further, which reveals, like his mode of writing, a finesse that utilizes both lived experience and expression to account for surprise:

How can a quick judgment about novelty mean for the body a quickened pulse, a diffuse inhibition, a certain stupor which stiffens the face and allows the mobile parts of the senses to be received? And in return, why is this disposition of the body also a disposition of the mind to consider the object and to linger on it [...] ? Thus incarnate thought is no longer point-like nor reduced to gliding endlessly over things without stopping on any of them. The body prevents the encounter with the new from remaining only a furtive touch. It makes consciousness spread out and in some sense crash into a representation [...]. The body amplifies and magnifies the instant of thought by giving the time of bodily shock the thickness of duration. Through surprise, a thought becomes imposed, in a sense, physically.¹⁵

Even though Ricoeur distances himself from the psychology of reflexes due to its inability to account for surprise in its full complexity, the Cartesian basis of his psychology, which he called a principle of his description, eventually leads him to grant the body an irreplaceable ability to embody cognitive shock in the form of a tangible shaking. From that point, it is not much further to turn shock [*saisissement*] itself, which was initially reserved to the active cognition of a "grasping" [*saisi*] (of the conceptual), into a bodily movement.

So if thought becomes imposed physically with surprise, it will be based – as I will do in what follows – on exploring its multimodal expressiveness as a mode of verbal physical imposition on to a thought that is deeply rooted in the body.

The Dynamic Antinomy of the Expression of Surprise: The Co-emergence of “Shaking” and “Shock”

It is clear that the various forms of expressiveness – which are indicated by the declension of surprise on a sliding scale that ranges from the corporeal to the cognitive-aesthetic – do not boil down to the same thing. While Ricoeur initially assigns shaking to the bodily expression of surprise and shock to its cognitive mode of expression, we have also seen that the body can be shocked or stunned and that thought can be shaken, vacillate, and vibrate. Each mode passes into the other. Therefore, in this second stage, it will be a matter of finding expressive forms of surprise that come more from organic corporeality and those that derive more from cognitive or even aesthetic processes, showing in each case their multiple differentiated qualities.

The “Body Language” of Surprise

It is banal to note that not every expression is necessarily verbal, but in the case of surprise, this observation is especially fecund. It allows us to access bodily expressiveness which, whether it is facial or gestural, can respond in silence but can also be associated with more or less articulated verbal manifestations. Accordingly, I have distinguished between three forms of bodily expression of surprise, which refer to: a language of the body, a corporeality of language in the form of a barely articulated verbalization, and a silence whose own eloquence refers to a latent space of internal discourse.

The psychobiological tradition has frequently identified the first form of bodily expressiveness. With an emphasis on facial expressions and on linking surprise to a number of physiognomic features, its aim is to reveal an invariant, physiognomic *eidōs* (universal) of the primary emotions. Charles Darwin, in chapter XII of *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), provides access specifically to surprise. On the basis of a comparative empirical investigation of photos and direct observations, he identifies surprise with several facial features, including the raising of the eyebrows, the opening of the mouth and eyes. He goes on to develop an exciting micro-phenomenology of the interaction between the expressive organs and internal emotions.

In the direct lineage of Darwin’s initial hypotheses, the psychologist Paul Ekman conducted a comparative anthropological study of the people of New Guinea in an effort to support the thesis that there are seven universal basic emotions (anger, fear, joy, sorrow, disgust, surprise, and hate), and in so doing, he created the famous *Facial Action Coding System*. Surprise, in this

framework, is identified as a constant that is based on a combination of several facial muscles. Ekman, however, was led to relativize the supposed physiognomic universality of facial micro-expressions, since in some cultural contexts he found that the facial expressions corresponding to fear and surprise were confused by indigenous observers, as if an expressive criteria of a physiognomic kind alone would not allow surprise to be identified unequivocally.¹⁶ The Darwinian approach to the expression of emotions still remains too classical, since the traits of the surprised face are presented as the manifestation of an internal state awakened by an object. These facial features are vehicles for surprise, just as linguistic markers are the external manifestation of surprise as a lived experience.

The psychologist William James, writing after Darwin but before Ekman, will already strongly challenge this standard view. For him, in a somewhat provocative way, the physiognomic expression *is* surprise itself, surprise being directly the corporeal change in question. Even if James does not talk about surprise as such but about the emotions in general and fear in particular, we can repeat his radical thesis. He rejects “the supposed ‘expression of emotion’”¹⁷ about which Darwin speaks in an interactive but still dualistic way and believes that the corporeal expression of emotion is the emotion itself.¹⁸ That is how James is able to claim with regard to emotion: “Without the bodily states following on the perception, the latter would be purely cognitive in form, pale, colorless, destitute of emotional warmth.”¹⁹ Or even more specifically with respect to fear: “what kind of an emotion of fear would be life, if the feelings neither of quickened heartbeats nor shallow breathing, neither of trembling lips nor of weakened limbs, neither of goose-flesh nor of visceral stirrings, were present?”²⁰ Now the unqualified identification of surprise with an emotion presents a problem, and a number of philosophers, phenomenologists as well as philosophers of the mind, define surprise as irreducible to an emotional valence, as a rupture, a gap, a more or less radical opening at the heart of a cognitive process.²¹ This leads me to restrict James’s thesis and refuse to turn the language of the body into the exclusive language of surprise, or even to make corporeal expression an *a priori* of surprise. Even if this physiognomic language is very common and helps to characterize surprise, I will propose the hypothesis that surprise can exist without the language of the body.

For example, in a quite original way, the psychologist Carroll Izard finds that the expression of surprise is not only corporeal (physiognomic) but can also be non-bodily.²² It can pass as well or exclusively through a language that has its own corporeality, but meets a level of expressiveness that is not, however, articulated verbally. What is that? For Izard, the major expression of surprise is the cry, and more broadly, the forms of vocalization that have no meaning as such but have a relational communicative purpose, in short, those that provide intersubjective sharing. Linguists who are interested in the corporeality of the language of surprise in its various forms have recently

acknowledged the central role of interjections, exclamations, and even questions.²³ Later I will examine a few interviews in order to point out the importance of periods of silence, the slowing of the flow, of stammering and babbling.

In seeking to capture the two sides of the "bodily language" of surprise, one strives to identify the instantaneous segment of surprise, its mode of appearing in action, at the time, as if its sudden and spontaneous character were crystallized flawlessly and transparently in these instantaneous physiognomic and vocalizing expressions. But I will now raise the question: Is there not a persistent illusion here, which leads us to seek to capture the moment, the immediacy of experience, while it is known that one can only ever gather its effect, its afterthought, its echo, no matter how fast it is? This is a myth of spontaneity and immediacy that phenomenology has also sometimes maintained, and it would be detrimental to an investigation of surprise to reduce it in an illusory – abstract - way only to the search for its most instantaneous expressions. These expressions, moreover, are already effects, no matter how fast and spontaneous they are, and this is why I will defend the idea here that surprise is expressed as much in its most condensed and instantaneous expressive forms as in its most spread out discursive modes.

The Linguistic-Awareness of Surprise

My hypothesis is that even an instant takes time, whether it is bodily or internal. Surprise is a process, even if it is only a micro-process, and that is why it is instructive to examine the more articulated discursive forms – which are more unfolded – that express the dynamics of its unfolding. In fact, does not body language possess the privilege of the illusion of the instantaneous? Does not Ricoeur himself speak about the "shock" of knowing? Does not the phrase "becoming aware", in turn, tend to indicate something sudden, a snap action? Even the stylistics and rhetoric of surprise assigns it a verbal segment of the "stroke" [*coup*], something that happens so quickly that we do not see it at the time, and that we cannot account for "afterwards." In the *Poetics*, Aristotle identifies surprise with the *eplektikon*, with the "*plêge*", the stroke. Proust, in the *Search*, freely repeats the expression "all of a sudden" more than 300 times, which could be seen as a "marker" of shock, the quintessential marker of surprise.²⁴

The illusion is tenacious: the *a priori* of surprise is not the instantaneous, the spontaneous.²⁵ My hypothesis goes in the opposite direction from this type of evidence and takes the counter-intuitive form of duration. In this respect, Ricoeur's position is extremely valuable because he also rejects the "*punctum*" of surprise. Our allies here, to begin, are those who believe in so-called cognitive or epistemic surprise. This view is held by authors who are

as different in their philosophical positions as the founder of pragmatism C. S. Peirce, the founder of phenomenology Edmund Husserl, and philosophers of the mind like Daniel Dennett or Donald Davidson. They all agree in seeing surprise as a process that is articulated in phases. The impression of shock is always missed, never lived through, and is unidentifiable on its own. It is only given after a state of expectation, a belief that makes it experientially possible. Correlatively, following its reverberation as an echo, there is persistence in what I receive from it.

Whence the interest, too, of studying the dynamics of reversal in play in dramaturgical and narrative forms that place surprise and its inscription in situations and interpersonal contexts, connecting it, for example, with the logic of learning in coming of age novels [*romans de formation*] in which there is a full heuristics of knowledge or even of recognition. I would like to mention, as one indication, the motto "Oh, what a surprise" that runs throughout Goethe's coming of age novel *Elective Affinities*. This novel is based on the dramatization of romantic encounters, each time developing the intrigue of a prospective affinity and its explicit un-known. This gives rise to repeated exclamatory interrogations by the characters in which the noun or the verb of surprise is used excessively and associated with different emotions (joy, pleasure, embarrassment, tearing apart, etc.). This is a fine example of the narrative-theatrical dynamics of surprise that are articulated in language and bear witness to the unprecedented opening of a meaning that is already implicitly anticipated by the characters. I will cite here just one example of this recurrence, among many others:

Edward did not know what to answer. He looked at her, he looked at the transcript. The first few sheets were written with the greatest carefulness in a delicate woman's hand - then the strokes appeared to alter, to become more light and free - but who can describe his surprise, as he ran his eyes over the concluding page? "For heaven's sake," he cried, "what is this? this is my hand!"²⁶

Through the narrative setting that creates the reader's expectation and then the exclamations and questions which reveal the new situation, Edward shows that his becoming conscious is durable with a lasting deep affinity that was in fact already implicitly anticipated, which connects him to Otilie, and also to the disturbing resemblance of the handwriting.

Allow me also, in a complementary fashion, to cite the conclusion of an article by Nathalie Mauriac-Dyer which is devoted to the poetics of surprise in Aristotle and Proust, in which the author insists on the fact that "Proustian surprise is not only an epistemic figure but also an aesthetic figure." This point also helps to support my (and Ricoeur's) intuition: "the greatest works are [...] the ones which know how to maintain a character of 'durable novelty,'" writes Proust. In other words, they are the ones in which the brief and sharp time of surprise, a time of the unfamiliar, of the loss of landmarks, of the

reformulation of the terms of the world, is extended, distended, and *held on to*. This is about precisely no longer recognizing oneself there, making surprise *endure*. This surprise that does not end is certainly the type of surprise that is the object of the highest poetry."²⁷

The Multi-Directional Circular Dynamics of the Verbalization of Surprise

It is this specific quality of the duration of surprise that exists in multiple expressive phases here which I would now like to account for the basis of some experiential descriptions in the first person, taken from interviews. What does this experiential component add to my hypothesis? Two elements: first, it will allow me to confirm the intuition already theoretically recognized by Aristotle, Ricoeur, phenomenologists and philosophers of mind, as well as novelists like Goethe or Proust, concerning the cognitive-aesthetic duration of the verbal or non-verbal expressiveness of surprise. Second, beyond the confirmation of this point, I will show *in situ* that this micro-duration has its own quality that cannot be reduced to the succession of articulated phases, instead it gives rise to a non-linear process of verbalization, where sometimes an initial silence is actually laden with internal speech, where the initial exclamation or interjection is replayed a few seconds later in light of an internal awareness that produces a cascading surprise, where an association of memories or a moral judgment produces a new, highly emotional facet of the initial surprise. In short, the non-linearity of the verbalization of surprise is multi-modal and unfolds according to the encroachments, overlappings, and powerful comebacks that require an entrance into the heterogeneous and aleatory matter of this duration.

This is something that I want you to anticipate in my presentation of a few elements of this dynamic of verbalization, without claiming at this time to be exhaustive, to the extent that the interviews are still in process, have not all been transcribed, nor analyzed *a fortiori*.

This first-person experiential work is displayed in connection with a linguistic task for which Pascale Goutéraux is responsible as a partner on Team 2 of the ANR *Emphiline*.²⁸ The assignment given to students is to revisit one of the painted-images presented among a series of twelve, according to the following criterion: "choose an image that especially marked or struck you." The interview consists of placing the student in a stance of embodied evocation by placing the student back at the moment in which the image appeared, leading the student to express his or her feelings at the very moment and to relaunch his or her expressions by open questions of the type "How?" rather than "What?" or "Why?" This helps to avoid any induction of the content or explanatory causality and to keep it as close as possible to expressive lived experiences. The lived expressive micro-sequences are

centered on the time of the image's emergence and unfold spontaneously on its immediate persistence and the expectations that preceded the image's appearance. We thus have for each student a micro-description in mini-phases of a few seconds each, which is not, of course, a prejudice against the quality of duration but a way to register this micro-temporality.

I chose three of the interviews that I transcribed and analyzed.²⁹ Each of them involves the same image, a contemporary painting by Reyberolles *Implosion* (1994), which was frequently chosen by the students. This provides an objective unity to begin with and allows us to observe some constants as well as some variables between them. For each of these interviews, I have adopted a multi-vector analysis methodology that identifies nine structural criteria (time, language, body, emotion, cognition, mixed dimensions, morality, the objective properties of the image, and the overall feeling), placing each of them on a horizontal dynamic line in order to be able to observe their transversal-vertical dimensions.³⁰

By way of analysis, the three interviews yield a dynamics of language that includes the following four components: 1) a period of silence pointing to a rich internal discourse that is very effervescent; 2) a body language that can be expressed on the two sides identified previously: the language of the body and the corporeality of language; 3) an expression-description that weds the spatial duration of the visual course to different maps and aspects of the painting, whether local or global; 4) an expression-rationalization that has the form of argued judgments or moral prescriptions. These four components are not necessarily all present in all the interviews, nor in the same way; sometimes they are only minor, and anyway, do not necessarily appear according to the same schema of successive temporal phases. Yet, they do seem to correspond to possible structural components of the dynamics of the verbalization of surprise.

Two students attest to a period of initial silence (*T* and *S*). Specifically, they did not speak immediately upon seeing the image. They bear witness to it in their own respective ways, in a pithy way ("I said nothing... at the moment", *S* - n ° 8, l. 26), or a more elaborate way ("I needed a bit of time to find something to say, just to explain my reaction to this tableau. At first, one is so confused, surprised, that one does not know what to say. We recover ourselves, it **takes** the words from our mouth. *One does not know how to talk about it is not known what it is*, one does not know what happened, pi especially, it seems to participate in the domain of the inexpressible, in the indescribable, and it has been pretty hard, not only to identify it and think about it, but first of all to confront it and respond to it ...", (*T* n ° 6, l. 71-79). In this second case, the silence is in response to an important cognitive effervescence, linked to the difficulty of identification, which refers to an internal speech of an apophatic nature.

This first observation allows us to differentiate several scenarios concerning the first temporal phase of emergence: either the expressive reaction occurs immediately (that is what some other students say) and, in this case, it can be verbal or physio-logical (I'll get to this point in a moment), or it occurs after a period of silence, and this silence can either be experienced without internal discourse or can refer to a discursive internal lived experience. What, then, does one mean by "spontaneous reactions"? In view of the different existing cases, one is led to sort through the so-called "spontaneous" lived experience according to various figures: bodily, verbal or internal discourse. As a result, the verbal/non-verbal distinction turns out to be too abstract with regard to the different modes of givenness of spontaneous lived experiences: Is internal discursive spontaneity non-verbal? It is *at minimum* "pregnant" with explicit verbalizations, and *at maximum*, it can be said to be full with meaning after this internal moment. And in any case, we should renounce the overly simplistic linear schema that would see in the process of verbalization a schema in which there would be a succession from non-verbal or pre-verbal silence to the verbal reaction.

And this is all the more the case since the silence tied to an internal discourse is not only initial, in connection with the shock of the appearance of the image. The period of silence also comes back later and can be interwoven with subsequent types of verbalization. Two of the students (*A* and *T*) bear witness to this: "Me, I told myself that it is very beautiful, is a very b'... in the end, it is beautiful in its style, the colors are pretty, it is really, it is arranged, there is an idea behind it...". Then after I looked at it in relation to the rest of the body, I said to myself, this is not possible, **I did not say it**, but I told myself, that's not possible... "(A: n ° 11, l. 35-36 and l. 156-157). And, "I asked myself 'oh my, what is it?' floating... frustration, also... not knowing what it could represent... umm... I only know that I said to myself: "oh my, it is really frustrating, it's really unbelievable that one does not know what the painting represents" (T: n ° 6, l. 134-149). In both cases, these fragments of internal discourse are carried by the verbal expression "I told myself," which also implies a period of silence that, at least in the second case, is not initial: "after I looked in relation to the rest of the body." In the interval, there were segments of verbal reactions. To confirm that the verbal expression "I told myself" is not an improper or colloquial way of expressing what they really said at that moment and that it corresponded to an actual verbal reaction,³¹ I then asked the students, in order to remove any ambiguity, to clarify for me whether they expressed this reaction verbally or said it to themselves internally. Whence the following clarification by *T*: "I said to myself, it is not possible, **I did not say it**, but I said it to myself, it is not possible . . ." Here it is clearly an entire segment of internal discourse, which is swarming with recurrent exclamations "it is not possible!" / "it is *really* unbelievable!" that attest to the student's resistance to integrate the meaning, the understanding of what she sees. And there are also swarms of questions, dramatizations, and

lively direct questions in parenthesis: "I told myself: 'oh my, what is it?', 'oh my, it is *truly* frustrating!'"

Body language, which is the second structural component of the dynamics of verbalization, thus occurs on the side of the corporeality of language (exclamatory, internal questioning as well as intensive ("truly"), concessive ("really"), direct ("oh my!") exclamations) in a time which is not initial. Contrary to the established idea of a successive schema of verbalization which would begin with bodily expressions of this kind, and would then be articulated in a discourse that makes explicit this inarticulate bodily expression. This is how the body-language *leitmotif* which is expressed in the exclamatory interjection "Whoa!" ("I said "whoa!"; T: n° 6, l. 59-60) occurs for T after a period of silence. It is not initial, whereas for S, it seems to happen almost immediately: "just for a second, it was just 'Whoa!'" (S: n° 8, l. 65-66). A has an initially dual mode, which seems to be a synchrony between a facial expression: "it is... well, the eyes, the eyes widen, physically" (l. 71-72) and the expression of a strong emotional question: "what is that?" Then, I quote: "but what is that?" (And he uses the tone, as if it were there again) (ls. 18-23). Here, the present indicative and the familiarity of the question ("that") attest to a strong emotional evocation in the first person. In short, the cognitive process tied to internal discourse begins right away, and without an organic or verbal bodily reaction. It interweaves interrogative and exclamatory cognitive modes, which are tied to hesitation, indecision, resistance to meaning, and the inability to understand. *This entanglement of the cognitive, bodily expression, and internal discourse in its initial appearing* seems to me to be the most intriguing point in these interviews, at this stage. For it runs counter to the most expected *doxa* which would hold that the body manifests itself first with physiological or expressive bodily reactions. With these periods of silence laden with intense internal discursivity, we are dealing with a *fascinating and effervescent subjective duration* of the expression of *the lived experience* of surprise. On that basis, we can conclude that the two other components of verbalization - expression-description which joins the spatial duration of the visual journey with different maps and aspects, local or global, of the painting, and the expression-rationalization expression that takes the form of argumentative judgments or moral prescriptions - might necessarily be involved in the subsequent micro-time of viewing the image. Yet, they themselves have a *generative* character that is linked to the discovery of initially un-seen aspects of the painting, or to the memory associations that awaken in the mind and can, in turn, generate the return of blazing emotions: "it is twisted!" (A: No. 11, l.126), or even reactivate organic shocks, for example, by coming to see the red spot that was not immediately seen: "there is this this iiiii yuck... this little noise which..." (A: n° 11, l. 127).

Conclusion

These initial elements of the analysis allow me to put forward the idea that surprise responds to a circular dynamics of multi-directional verbalization, where there is an interweaving, at the very least, of cognition, emotion and corporeality, in a non-linear generative schema. Ricoeur's intuitions concerning a circular process and a duration of shock are confirmed by these first-person descriptions. Moreover, one can see in them, in a much more precise way, the passage through different layers of expressive verbalization, as well as their overlapping and distributed co-emergence in silent internal discourse as well as in organic and verbal reactions.

Translated by Scott Davidson

¹ Bold is used in this article to correspond to an emphasis by the interviewed person, whereas italics are used to underscore emphasis on my part.

² In this regard, notice the numerous exclamations "imagine my surprise" in discussion of J.W. von Goethe's *Elective Affinities* (New York: Penguin, 1978), a point to which I will return later.

³ Natalie Depraz, "L'éclair me dure: Une phénoménologie expérientelle de la surprise," *Colloque pluridisciplinaire à L'université de Rouen* (21-22 mars, 2013) entitled "La surprise: a la crosee de la phenomenologie, de la psychiatrie et pragmatique, available here: <http://eriac.univ-rouen.fr/la-surprise-a-la-crosee-de-la-phenomenologie-de-la-psychiatrie-et-de-la-pragmatique-colloque-pluridisciplinaire>. To be published as *Surprise at the Intersection between Phenomenology and Linguistics*, eds N. Depraz and A. Celle (Amsterdam: Benjamins Press, 2018).

⁴ Ricoeur is alone in the phenomenological tradition, which could seem "surprising" given the important accent placed on experience in this approach. He is, however, not the only one in philosophical territory, preceded in this by Adam Smith's *Lectures on Astronomy* (1795), which provide dozens of pages of descriptions of situations of surprise, in contrast with wonder and astonishment. The pragmatists Peirce and Dewey prove to be true philosophers of surprise, followed closely by Henry Maldiney. In his aesthetic texts and existential psychiatry, it is reality itself which is never what one expects and thus is always a surprise.

⁵ Translator's note: The author's reference is to the section of Kohak's English translation of *Freedom and Nature* titled "Wonder as Emotion: Basic Emotional

Attitudes.” But the French original reads “L’émotion-Surprise: Les Attitudes Émotionnelles Fondamentales.” By rendering the French “surprise” as “wonder”, Kohak’s English translation conflates Cartesian wonder (*admiration*) with surprise and thus obscures the role of the emotion of surprise in Ricoeur’s text.

⁶ See Pierre Vermersch, *L’entretien d’explicitation* (Paris: ESF, 1994). As well as his *Explicitation et phénoménologie* (Paris: PUF, 2012).

⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, trans. Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 254, tr. mod.

⁸ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 254.

⁹ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 253.

¹⁰ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 262.

¹¹ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 262.

¹² Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 253.

¹³ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 253-254, tr. mod.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 254, tr. mod.

¹⁵ Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature*, 254-255, tr. mod.

¹⁶ See P. Ekman and W. Friesen, « Constants across cultures in the face and emotion, » *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 17 (2) : 124-9 ; Paul Ekman, « Facial expression and emotion, *American Psychologist* 48 (4) : 384-92.

¹⁷ William James, “The Physical Basis of Emotion,” *Psychological Review* 1 (5) (1894) : 516-529.

¹⁸ William James, *The Emotions* (Baltimore, William & Wilkins, 1922), 13.

¹⁹ James, *The Emotions*, 101.

²⁰ James, *The Emotions*, 17.

²¹ See Natalie Depraz, “The Surprise of Non-sense” in *Enactive Cognition at the Edge of Sense Making*, eds. M. Cappuccio and T. Froese (London: Palgrave, 2014); “Surprise and valence: On cardio-phenomenology,” *Surprise: an emotion?: A Colloquium organized by Natalie Depraz and Anthony Steinbock* (Sept 2013).

²² Carrol E. Izard, *Human Emotions* (New York: Plenum, 1977).

²³ Laura Michaelis, “Exclamative constructions,” in *Language Universals and Language Typology: An International Handbook*, eds. M. Haspelmath, E. König, W. Oesterreicher and W. Raible (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001): 1038-1050. Also Cliff Goddard, “Interjections and emotions with special reference to Surprise and Disgust,” *Emotion Review* 6:1 (2014).

²⁴ On this topic, see the wonderful study by Nathalie Mauriac-Dyer, “Poétique de la surprise: Aristote et Proust,” *Item* (March 2007), <http://www.item.ens.fr/articles-en-ligne/poetique-de-la-surprise-aristote-et-proust>. See especially note 11: “Thanks

to Francis Marmande for having noted, during a presentation of this work in Kyoto, the semantic distinction between the “*tout à coup*” (which is temporal, placing an accent on the stop, a sudden immobilization) and the “*tout d’un coup*” (which is spatial and implies the emergence in consciousness of a network of elements that are still sparse and latent) and page 5: “Proust notes in a 1914 notebook, Notebook 54, right after having begun a sentence with the words: “*tout d’un coup*”: “*ne pas abuser de ces expressions tout d’un coup*”.”

²⁵ That is where linguistic indications should be taken for what they are: indicators of meaning and not explanations or proofs. In German, the word for “surprise” is “*Überraschung*”, which includes the root adjective “*rasch*” which means “rapid” and gives an idea of the semantic inflection of the term, but cannot lead us to determine it exclusively in this sense. In this regard, Descartes, whose article 70 of his *Treatise on the Passions* defines wonder as a “sudden surprise of the soul” but leaves the possibility open, with this definition, for a surprise that would not be “sudden” and that would not be called “wonder.” One will also think about astonishment (*étonnement*) whose etymology is also borrowed from the instant (*le tonnerre*) and whose current meaning refers to an internal state that seems more lasting. Indeed, Descartes would not exclude this meaning since he presents astonishment in Article 73 as an “excess of wonder” which immobilizes the body like a statue. It thus gets in the way of our reflection and is equivalent to a quasi-pathological shock or paralysis that blocks the instant. Moreover, Plato (*Theatetus* 155d) and Aristotle (*Metaphysics* b10-20) see wonder (*thaumas/thaumadzein*), as is well known, as the source of our interrogative knowledge, which takes time after the shock. Adam Smith, finally, in his *Lectures on Astronomy* (1795) notes that my surprise continues in spite of my advanced knowledge of what will happen: “we still wonder, though forewarned of what we are to see.” In short, the meaning of an experience like surprise stands between the worlds of language and philosophical concepts and cannot be determined exclusively on the basis of etymology or a philosopheme.

²⁶ Goethe, *Elective Affinities*, 105.

²⁷ Mauriac-Dyer, “Poétique de la surprise,” 13-14.

²⁸ About 100 interviews were conducted between 2012-2014, still in the course of analysis.

²⁹ Interviews 6, 8, and 11.

³⁰ I am focusing here on the role of language in these three interviews (criterion 2).

³¹ This precise point will be verified “in the third person” when I will use the so-called “spontaneous” verbal reaction, which were recorded at the very moment during a second set of directive interview questions.