The Sphinx of the Work

Isabelle Stengers[1] and Bruno Latour[2]

What we have here is the forgotten book of a forgotten philosopher. But not the book of some wretched philosopher sequestered in his attic, working up, unknown to all, a radical theory whose fate was to end up the object of general derision (before perhaps gaining some belated recognition). On the contrary, Étienne Souriau (1892–1979) forged a good career, accrued responsibilities and honors, and was bestowed with all the rewards held in store by the Republic for its deserving progeny. Today, however, his name and his work have disappeared from

1. Despite the oblivion that has swallowed up his work, I owe my discovery of Souriau to that intellectual deep sea diver, Marcos Mateos Diaz, who unexpectedly put into my hands, during a stay in the Cévennes, the book *L'instauration philosophique*. From that moment on, the question posed by Souriau, his work and its fate has continually prompted between us further reflections, fresh points of departure and conversations—"a confidence with no possible interlocutor" as Deleuze put it [Deleuze and Parnet, (1987, 1977), p.3]. May this Foreword do nothing to interrupt the course of that conversation!

2. Dazzled by this book first brought to my attention by Isabelle Stengers, my immediate reaction was to seize upon it as a close relative to the inquiry into modes of existence that I had been pursuing separately for a quarter of a century. I quickly wrote an article that was a little too self-interested to be faithful. And so when it became a matter of writing a preface to the republication of this compelling book, I naturally called upon Isabelle for help, only retaining a few paragraphs from my earlier article.

memory, like a liner going down at sea, to be covered over by the enclosing waters. At best we might recall that he was responsible for the development in France of the branch of philosophy that is called aesthetics. It's hard to explain why, having been so well known and so well established, Souriau would have then vanished entirely from view.

We are reduced to speculations as to why such an all-encompassing silence has reigned over him since the 1980s.[3] It's true that his style is pompous, stiff, often technical; that he makes a haughty display of erudition; that he mercilessly excludes readers who might not share his encyclopedic learning. It's true as well that he seemed to embody everything the post-war generation of angry young men learned to despise, those who wanted to say "no" to the world, from the tree-root that caused the nausea of Roquentin to the staid bourgeois ideology that was masquerading as moral and rational virtue. There's no doubt about it, Souriau was one of those mandarin philosophers whom Paul Nizan hated, a member of the Sorbonne hierarchy that Péguy was already denouncing.

By contrast with the various thinkers of that time who remain known today, the approach taken by Souriau is insolently patrimonial. He heedlessly took advantage of a vast legacy of progress in the sciences and in the arts, strolling around in the midst of it indulgently in the manner of his first teacher Léon Brunschvicg, who had described the advances made by the sciences as furnishing a sort of cabinet of curiosities out of which the philosopher might freely extract, in an ever more pure form, the laws of thought. Étienne Souriau was not a *tabula rasa* thinker. And yet this indulgence is not enough to explain the oblivion that has befallen his work, an oblivion even more complete than that which has engulfed Brunschvicg or André Lalande (a fate which Gaston Bachelard managed to avoid only by subjugating his thought under a gesture of negation). It seems as though, even for those of his generation who did not participate in the frenzy of rupture, Souriau, loaded with honors, was nevertheless viewed as "uncategorizable," pursuing a journey that no one dared to engage with so as to comment on his work, to contextualize it, to take it forward or to plunder

3. The collected work: *In memoriam, L'art instaurateur*, (1980) is hardly any more enlightening than the thesis of one of Souriau's former students: de Vitry-Maubrey, (1974).

from it. It's as if in one way or another he had "scared them all off" thereby ensuring that a vacuum, albeit a respectful vacuum, grew up little by little around him.

In any case, the book being republished here must have generated wholesale incomprehension at the time, even for those few philosophers who would have claimed some prior "familiarity" with Souriau. It must have been as if in these 170 dense pages, published in 1943, written on the inferior paper necessitated by wartime restrictions, Souriau was giving a new twist to the tradition in which he strolled around with such self-assurance, without however betraying it. As if this tradition was suddenly being transformed in such a way that all its certainties were being made to falter. In republishing *The Different Modes of Existence*, as well as the lecture entitled "Of the Mode of Existence of the Work to-be-made," delivered thirteen years later to the *Société française de philosophie*, and representing a kind of epilogue to it, we are wagering that Souriau's audacity will be encountered today with as much force as it was back then.

Gilles Deleuze was not mistaken about it, as those who have some familiarity with the author of *Difference and Repetition* will discover.[4] We have to wait until nearly the last moment, in a footnote from *What is Philosophy?*, for an acknowledgment of this affinity, even though it is as plain to see as the famous purloined letter of Edgar Allen Poe.[5] It is true that, in acknowledging his indebtedness to Souriau, Deleuze was not only conceding that his inspiration came from one of the earliest of Bergson's opponents, he was also allowing himself to be championed by the old Sorbonne on which he desperately wanted to turn his back. Today that Sorbonne has foundered and the air is full of petty quarrels whose cacophony neither Souriau nor Deleuze could have anticipated. Despite the outmoded style of this 1943 book, the shock it now generates comes above all from the encounter with a philosopher who, magnificently and without reserve, "does" [*fait*] philosophy, one who constructs a problem out of what he calls a "questioning situation," a situation that

4. As one example among others, there is "problem of the work of art to-be-made" which, in *Difference and Repetition*, is referred back to Proust, but which is developed in such a way as to bring about an extraordinary union between Mallarmé and Souriau, in Deleuze, (2011, 1968), p.246. Cf. also p.264 of that book, where the virtual is defined as a task to be performed.

5. Deleuze and Guattari, (1994, 1991), p.41, fn.6.

requires an answer, that unleashes a veritable hand-to-hand combat of thought, and that refuses any form of censorship with respect to what "we know very well" we are no longer supposed to talk about—for example God, the soul or even the work of art. Without ever having been fashionable, Souriau is well and truly a philosopher who is now "out of fashion." And yet today his writing takes on the force of a burning question: what have you done with philosophy?

This question must be brought to our attention once again. Certainly *The Different Modes of Existence* is a book that is tightly-woven, concentrated, almost harrying, a book in which it is easy to get lost, so dense are its thoughts and so vertiginous are the perspectives that perpetually threaten to disorient the reader. If we are offering this long introductory essay, it is because we have frequently found ourselves lost in it too.… We reckoned that perhaps (by putting our two heads together!) we might manage to ensure the reader won't take it merely as some meteorite that has fallen in the desert. To appreciate it as something other than a strange little treatise of disconcerting complexity, we must first throw it into relief by demonstrating the trajectory within which it is situated. And as it happens, for Souriau everything comes down to a *trajectory*, or rather to a *journey*.

"WORK IT OUT, OR THOU SHALT BE DEVOURED"

Great philosophies are difficult only on account of the extreme simplicity of the experience of which they seek to take hold, for which they find in common sense only ready-made concepts. Such is the case with Souriau. His favorite example, to which he returns every time, is that of the work of art [*l'œuvre d'art*], the work in the process of being made [*l'œuvre en train de se faire*] or, to use the title of his lecture, as it was then taken up by Deleuze, the work to-be-made [*l'œuvre à faire*]. This was the crucible in which during the course of his work he continually recast his philosophy; the philosophical capstone of his great corpus. We encounter this *experimentia crucis* in the 1943 book, and then in the 1956 lecture in an even more

concise form. It first introduces itself in a surprisingly banal guise, almost as a cliché:

> A lump of clay on the sculptor's bench. A *réique* existence—undeniable, total, accomplished. But nothing yet exists of the aesthetic being, which has still to bloom.
>
> Each application of the hands and thumbs, each action of the chisel accomplishes the work. Do not look at the chisel, look at the statue. With each new action of the demiurge, the statue gradually emerges from its limbo. It moves toward existence—toward an existence, which in the end will burst forth in an intense and accomplished, actual presence. It is only insofar as this heap of earth is consecrated to being this work that it is a statue. Existing only weakly, at first, through its distant relation with the final object that gives it its soul, the statue gradually frees itself, takes shape, exists. The sculptor, who at first only senses it, accomplishes it, little by little, with each of the determinations he gives to the clay. When will it be finished? When the convergence is complete, when the physical reality of the material thing meets the spiritual reality of the work to-be-made [*l'œuvre à faire*], and the two coincide perfectly; to such an extent that in both its physical existence and its spiritual existence, the statue now communes intimately with itself, the one existence being the lucid mirror of the other. (127-128)

We might say that Souriau has provided himself with some ammunition here: the sculptor standing before his lump of clay can serve as the *topos* par excellence of free creation imposing its form upon shapeless matter. What, then, might be the use of such a classical example? Especially if it serves to recall the ancient Platonic idea of a "spiritual reality" as a model to which the work must conform? Why did Souriau flirt in this way with the possibility of what would be in effect a monumental misunderstanding? Because for him it is the construction of the problem that counts, not the guarantees required by the spirit of the age, the assurance that would have come from being in step with the rejection of the Platonic model. By means of this example he wanted thought to map out for itself an apparently straightforward route by which it would endeavor to distance itself from the various models previously utilized in the history of philosophy, one after the other, in order to render an account of them. It is the banality of the cliché that will cause the

originality of the treatment to stand out. He intends to subject his reader to a particularly difficult trial (we can testify to the truth of that!): to travel the entire length of the journey from sketch to work, without having recourse to any of the available models of realization, construction, creation, emergence or planning.

If the reader wishes to undertake the trial, it wouldn't be a bad idea first of all to read the 1956 lecture that is reproduced here. In fact, it was by means of this lecture that Souriau tried to interest the eminent members of the *Société française de philosophie* in his ideas (Gaston Berger, Gabriel Marcel, Jacques Maritain, all of whom are more or less forgotten today), those who had a very different idea of their discipline than the one that had taken hold amongst those in the avant-garde of art, thinking and politics. Souriau begins with an exaggerated generalization of the concept of an outline:

> In order to ensure that my problem is well-posed, I will begin with a rather banal observation, which you will surely have no difficulty in granting me. This observation—and it is also a great truth—concerns the existential incompletion of every thing. Nothing, not even our own selves, is given to us other than in a sort of half-light, a penumbra in which only incompleteness can be made out, where nothing possesses either full presence or evident patuity, where there is neither total accomplishment, nor plenary existence. (220)

The journey that goes from sketch to work, as we can see, is not limited to the lump of clay and to the sculptor or potter. *Everything* is a sketch; *everything* requests accomplishment: not only simple perception, but also our interior lives and society itself. The world of sketches awaits us to take hold of it, but without pledging or dictating anything to us. And here is the lump of clay again:

> The lump of clay—already molded, already shaped by the chisel—is there on the sculptor's bench, and yet it is still no more than a sketch. In its physical existence, of course, this lump will always, from the beginning all the way up through completion, be as present, as complete, and as given as such physical existence can require anything to be. The sculptor, however, leads it progressively toward that final touch of the chisel, which will make possible the complete alienation of the work in its current form.

> And for the entirety of this development, the sculptor is ceaselessly calculating, in a manner that is clearly both comprehensive and approximate, the distance that still separates the sketch from the completed work. This distance is constantly diminishing: the work's progression is the progressive coming together of its two existential aspects, the to-be-made and the made. The moment the final touch of the chisel is made, the distance is abolished. It is as if the molded clay is now the faithful mirror of the work to-be-made, which in turn has become incarnate in the lump of clay. They are nothing other than one and the same being. (236)

It would be an error of interpretation to think that Souriau is describing here a passage from form to matter, the ideal of form passing progressively into reality, like a potentiality that is straightforwardly realized by the intervention of the more or less inspired artist. The journey of which he speaks is actually the exact opposite of a *project*. If it were conceived as a project, its completion would entail nothing more than the final coincidence of a plan with reality, the two finally conforming. But completion is not the submission of the clay to the image of what in turn might be thought of as an ideal model or imagined possible. For it is completion itself that ends up creating a statue made in the image of—in the image of what? Why, of nothing: the image and its model attain to existence together. We must altogether modify our representation of a mirror, since it is the completion of the copy that causes the original to be reflected there. There is no resemblance, but only co-incidence, the eradication of the distance between the work to-be-made and the work that is made. It's all a question of learning to pass from the sketch to its completion without recourse to the various reflexes of mimetic philosophies. Nothing is given in advance. Everything plays out along the way.

Despite the old-fashioned style of writing, the reader will begin to understand that this is by no means a reversion to the Idea of the Beautiful of which the work is the expression and the artist the medium. There's no need to count on a strategist, a creator or a director, nor even an artist. There is no author at the controls. There's no pilot at any point of this particular journey. Don't reckon on a human being walking the paths of freedom. In the heyday of Existentialism, Souriau inverts the claims of Sartre: a world of contingencies in which the only thing that shines forth is the freedom of man, who has the solemn

responsibility to make something of himself. Certainly for Souriau everything is contingent, or rather everything is sketched out, but the full weight of the work to-be-made rests upon man—and yet the work gives him no original to copy. With Souriau, it's as if Roquentin's tree-root were to demand of him that he should get to work and set about the task of bringing its sketch to completion! We see how the trial that began with the banal cliché of the clay and the sculptor has already become more demanding. No fear of collusion with the notion of creation or, worse still, of creativity.

We might object that Souriau has only succeeded in identifying the most unremarkable of problems and that if, as we well know, the realization of a project runs up against the modifications of reality and the resistances of matter, we can usually hobble along from one to another, until the original and the copy end up coinciding. But this is not at all the quaint notion that Souriau is marking out. He draws our attention to something vertiginous, something that the strategists, the directors, the creators and the constructors take great care to keep in the background: everything, at every moment, can fail, the work as well as the artist. Souriau will transform the apparently ever so straightforward journey by which an idea becomes reality into a veritable assault course, for the very good reason that at every step of the way the work of art is in jeopardy, as is the artist—and the world itself. For yes, with Souriau, the world itself might fail.... Without activity, without anxiety, without error, there is no work, no being. The work isn't a plan, an ideal, a project: it's a monster that poses a question to the agent. This is what he dramatizes, in 1956, by invoking a conceptual persona that he calls *the Sphinx of the work* and to which he attributes the deadly maxim: "work it out, or thou shalt be devoured":

> I must insist upon the idea that as long as the work is under construction, it is in jeopardy. At each moment, with each of the artist's actions, or rather *as a result of* each of the artist's actions, it can live or die. The nimble choreography of the improviser, who, in the very same moment, is able to perceive and to resolve the problems posed to him in the work's hasty advance; the anxiety of the frescoist, who knows that a single mistake will be irreparable and that everything will have to be completed in the time that remains before the plaster will have dried; or the work of the composer or the author, seated at his desk, who is able to contemplate at leisure,

> to touch up, to redo—there is nothing spurring or goading these people on other than the expenditure of their own time, strength, and capacity; and yet, it remains the case that every one of them will have to respond, ceaselessly, to a more or less rapid progression of the ever-recurring questions of the sphinx: "work it out, or thou shalt be devoured." (229)

As we see, the trial faced by the artist, just as by the reader, has become much more perilous. Where the project proposed the straight and narrow, we now find a path of vertiginous hesitation, pockmarked along its entire length by what Souriau calls the fundamental "errability" [*errabilité*] of the journey.

We might argue that errability of this sort holds true only for the artist, who is a little bit crazy anyway, and that if we were to ask an engineer, an expert, a business-person or an architect, they surely would know how to plan, anticipate, create and construct, prevailing over the unforeseen resistances of matter little by little. But Souriau doesn't agree. If he speaks of the work and the artist, it is because he needs the most topical and expressive example: the one that furnishes everywhere else with metaphors, contrasts and oppositions. But for him it really is a matter of journeying to that "everywhere else," for everywhere the "to-be-made" responds to the great truth of existential incompleteness.

We can appreciate the irony of the label "aesthetician," which is attributed to him by those who have some familiarity with the name Souriau. It is true, of course, that he is the principal author (along with his daughter) of the *Vocabulaire d'esthétique* and that he did teach this branch of philosophy for a long time.[6] And yet, somewhat surprisingly for the founding father of aesthetics, he treats contemporary art with the same studied indifference that he does existentialism! Marcel Duchamp doesn't get him thinking any more than Jean-Paul Sartre does. With mandarin tranquility he speaks about the work to-be-made at the very moment when artists were struggling to secure the supreme freedom of the artist, proclaiming "down with the work of art!" This wholly untimely thinker, ensconced at the Sorbonne, pursuing a work far removed from the passions of the contemporary artist, battling with the avatars of iconoclasm, furnishes an exemplary case of the Deleuzean idiot, the one

6. Souriau and Souriau, (1999). This is the only one of his works that is still in print.

for whom "there is something of greater importance" which prevents him from adhering to what mobilizes everybody else. In this most caricatured example of an unfashionable artist in front of his unfashionable lump of clay Souriau seeks the secret of a journey that is never far from the riddle of the Sphinx capable of devouring us.

Moreover, let's not allow ourselves to see this as a celebration of the freedom of the artist. There's no freedom here, for the artist must devote himself to the work, and yet this work neither announces anything to him, nor prepares him at all. It worries him, it bothers him, it keeps him up at night, it is full of demands. But it is mute. Not mute like the tree-root encountered by Roquentin, whose very inertia is an insult to the freedom of man. But mute like the Sphinx of the work. So we have a Roquentin who no longer vomits, but who finds himself trembling at the thought of not being commensurate to this mute tree-root, which is like a sketch that demands to be completed.

The reader now understands that he's going to be confronted with at least two riddles: the one proposed by the Sphinx, and the one proposed by Souriau to grasp the work as a journey and not immediately transformed into a project. To describe this trajectory and avoid conflating it with any other idea—whether it be creation, emergence, fabrication, planning, or construction—Souriau initially gives it the wonderful name of *instauration*, before later, even more mysteriously, describing it as *progression* or *anaphoric experience*:[7]

> In a general way we can say that to know what a being is you have to instaure it, construct it even, either directly (happy are those, in this respect, who *make things*), or indirectly, through representation, up to the moment when, lifted to the highest point of its real presence and entirely determined for what it thus becomes, it is manifested in its entire accomplishment, in its own truth.[8]

7. The efficacity of anaphora, a stylistic device which makes use of reprise and repetition, in particular to create a sense of heightened intensity that seizes the reader or the listener, but also the speaker himself, is understood by readers of Charles Péguy. And yet this was the same Péguy who speaks in *Clio* of the "awesome responsibility" of the reader on whom the fate of the work depends: "by our hands, by our attention, by our hands alone can it receive an accomplishment not presently secured," in Péguy, (1992), p.118. Péguy is the thinker *par excellence* of anaphora, that is, of creative repetition, and a proud Bergsonian in the face of the eternal.

8. Souriau, (1938), p.25.

To speak of "instauration" is to prepare the mind to engage with the question of the work in an entirely opposite way to constructivism, if the latter is understood as being indelibly characterized by a dispute over responsibility. Instauration and constructivism are perhaps related terms, but instauration has the distinct advantage of not being weighed down by all the metaphorical baggage of constructivism—baggage that could be called "nihilist" insofar as it is always eschewing anything that might be able to prevent a term from being attributed with one exclusive responsibility, whatever that term might be. If an appeal to the notion of "construction" always renders a critical note, it's because it is usually applied not to those who see themselves as creators, claiming this exclusive responsibility, but against those who seek to attribute responsibility for what they make to something other than themselves. But perhaps all this goes back to the image of the potter—or the image of God the potter—imposing a will unilaterally upon a lump of clay that has to be taken as indifferent—or even non-existent, with God as the creator *ex nihilo*. The world becomes so much mud permeated by the divine breath. A *fiat*! It is this image of a potter that Souriau is revisiting when he takes up his example of the sculptor and his lump of clay. To say of a work of art that it is "instaured" is to prepare oneself to see the potter as one who welcomes, gathers, prepares, explores and invents—just as one "invents" a treasure—the form of the work.[9] If they originate from a sketch, then works endure, resist and exert themselves—and humans, their authors, must *dedicate* themselves to them, which is not to say, however, that they serve as a mere conduit for them.[10] The time of the Muses has passed and the question of responsibility has shifted. If the sculptor is responsible, it is in the sense of "having to respond to," and it is the confrontation with this lump of clay that he has no idea know how to help reach its completion that he must respond to.

For Souriau, every being must be instaured, the soul as well as the body, the work of art as well as the scientific existent, an electron or a virus. No being has substance; but if it subsists, this means it has been instaured. Apply instauration to the

9. In French, the legal term for one who locates a hidden or lost treasure is *inventeur*; this would be the equivalent of the English "discoverer" or "uncoverer." [TN]

10. This is the same relationship that one of us has previously attempted to describe by means of the neologism "factish," cf. Latour, (2011).

sciences, then, and you will transform all of epistemology; apply instauration to the question of God, and you will transform all of theology; apply instauration to art, and you will transform all of aesthetics; apply instauration to the question of the soul, and you will transform all of psychology. What falls by the wayside in all these cases is the idea, at bottom fairly absurd, of a mind that would be at the origin of the action, whose consistency would be transferred, by way of ricochet, to a matter that would have no other stability, no other ontological dignity, than whatever we would condescend to give it. The alternative to this, which some incorrectly label as a "realist" position, is in fact only the ricochet of that ricochet, or its return via a boomerang effect: this would be when a work, a fact, a divinity or a psyche established itself in this way and then offers in return its consistency to a human now stripped of the means to discover them. Instauration allows exchanges of gifts that are interesting in other ways, transactions with many other types of beings, in science, in religion, in psychology, as well as in art.

As he never tires of repeating, the concepts Souriau is putting in place here have no meaning independently of the experience that calls for them, nor do they have any value apart from what one might call the possibility of their being dramatized. We might say that Souriau is attempting to renew empiricism, but his empiricism is not at all the one bequeathed to us by Hume and his various successors. That there is before me a white patch, and that I infer from it that here is a stone is the sort of thing that holds no interest for him. What gets him thinking is what is called for by the experience of "making a work" [*faire œuvre*], one which is grasped without reduction to any kind of social, psychological or aesthetic conditioning. In this regard Souriau is a follower of William James: he wants nothing but experience, certainly, but at the same time he wants *all* of experience. Without a doubt, what is usually called reality is still desperately short of realism.

A MONUMENTAL PROJECT

We are beginning to sense where Souriau is going, what preoccupies him: the Sphinx, or what he calls elsewhere "the Angel of the work" (206). But where is he coming from? As we'd expect, Souriau's intellectual biography was bound to follow the same journey as his thought about the work to-be-made: it follows a route, of course, but not one that could ever be conceived as the realization of a project. In fact, although he never stopped considering the relationship between the question of reality and that of the work, he was continually reworking the formula. In his thesis, published in 1925, entitled *Pensée vivante et perfection formelle*, the word "instauration" makes an appearance, without being thematized as such.[11] It is picked up again in 1943, and then again in a more minor key in 1956. Instauration, up to that point understood merely as the conquest of reality, now adduces the question of modes of existence.[12]

To begin with, let's consider the notion of reality as conquest. It's in relation to science that Souriau first outlines this position, which makes him the most explicitly, and the most positively, anti-Bergsonian of philosophers. Here's how he set out his inquiry at that time:

> Whoever speaks of science speaks of a work that is abstract and collective, of the higher, social life of the human mind, of the expansive utilization of the victory that was secured earlier in more humble contests, which has enabled individual ideation—that phenomenon among phenomena, that singular event, driven hither and thither on the tide of places and times—to sink its teeth simultaneously into distinct points or moments, to shatter the frameworks of the *hic* and the *nunc*, without however ceasing to take its being and its lifeblood from the breast of reality.[13]

Thought must not lament its abstraction, the way in which it conquers a knowledge of things; this is the work of reason, a sign of the stability, the consistency and the inflexibility of the reasoning process. It works in this way to achieve its own

11. Souriau, (1925).

12. The expression "mode of existence" becomes fashionable later on; cf. Simondon, (1958) and Haumont, (2003).

13. Souriau, (1925).

accomplishment. "The conquest of our thought goes hand in hand with that of the external world; they are both one and the same operation."[14] It is not enough merely to think, or simply to have an idea, which may escape us the very next moment. If to have consciousness is to be able to live one's life in (relative) continuity, to be able to remember in the "here and now" what we were thinking elsewhere or at some previous time, then even consciousness itself is a conquest.

> That which we call bearing a thought in mind is in truth to remake it each time we may have need of it; and that which we call remaking it is to remake it into some other thing that has the same form.[15]

The first formula that Souriau uses to describe the journey to completion, then, is that of the *form* just mentioned, which presents itself as the key to attaining a continuity that is not given in advance, but which must be conquered.

And yet these forms will not prove to be the exclusive preserve of epistemology. We must recall that Souriau was an aesthetician, this time remembering that if he worked somewhat against the current this was also because he had a grand ambition, a monumental project, in mind for his field, one that began to take shape after 1925. Aesthetics must become a type of scientific discipline directed toward the multitude of beings that constitute works, beings that are now understood in terms of the forms they realize. These works therefore constitute what Souriau calls a pleroma,[16] a world of beings instaured in "patuity": each one in its total radiance, its own singular and fundamental presence. Aesthetics must learn how to decipher architectonic laws just as the natural sciences do for the world of things. Or, to be more precise, in the same way that physiologists or anatomists came to understand the constitution of the human body by comparing a great many living specimens, so aesthetics must learn to examine the pleroma of works, each

14. Souriau, (1925), p.232. We will encounter this important theme again in the definition of "*réiques.*"

15. Souriau, (1925), p.234.

16. This is a term inherited from Classical philosophy denoting "plenitude." For Souriau, there are many pleromas, one example being the "philosophemes" brought into existence by the work of philosophers, cf. Souriau, (1939).

one also being endowed with an order, with a hierarchy and with constituent norms. Souriau wanted to be something like the Georges Cuvier or the Claude Bernard of the strange, living things that works are. This ambition, which preoccupies him throughout his *Vocabulaire d'esthétique*, left incomplete upon his death in 1979, committed him to an idea of the work that was being explicitly deconstructed by his contemporaries: Souriau is without a doubt the philosopher of monumentality,[17] a monumentality that is organic and coherent, conquering ground by means of successive, methodical determinations. For it is to the extent that reality is monumental that it can be read, that is, that its laws can be deciphered. Such a statement is what will be put to the test in the reading of this text.

Nevertheless, the book we're about to read is no more about aesthetics than it is about epistemology. To appreciate it rather as a work of philosophy, or of metaphysics, we will have to avoid the trap of connecting Souriau's forms in a privileged way with the knowable, which risks reducing the journey of knowledge into a simple act of co-operation between a knowing subject and a known object—assigning responsibilities sometimes to one and sometimes to the other. If these forms do not belong either to perception or thought, as conditions for their possibility, then neither do they belong to the thing itself, as if residing there calmly, waiting to be discovered. Instead, these forms are concerned with the problematic way in which realization is conceived of as a conquest. They reveal themselves in the very movement by which both thinking and that which is thought about become concrete together. Forms, as Souriau wrote in *L'instauration philosophique*, possess "the keys to reality."[18] But they're not keys that open the door, because reality must be instaured. Instead, these keys refer to the riddle to which realization provides the solution. Before any discipline takes shape, whether it be scientific, psychological, aesthetic or philosophical, the forms are what in Souriau's opinion link the notion of reality with that of *success*. This is precisely what classical

17. We might thus read Deleuze and Guattari's chapter on the "plane of immanence" in *What is Philosophy?* as an audacious attempt to rescue the instauration of the "philosopheme" from Souriau's monumental conception, cf. Deleuze and Guattari, (1991). The plane of immanence itself also needs to be instaurated, but by means of the creation of concepts, provisionally, in a kind of zig-zag way, and, being hewed out of chaos, it will never be identifiable by the concepts that populate it.

18. Souriau, (1939), p.18.

empiricism has always lacked: this handhold is lacking. No assurance is given. If realization must conform to the demand of the forms, the satisfaction of this demand cannot be conceived as a straightforward submission to some general conditions, whatever they may be. It insists upon choices, renunciations and decisions. It is what sets the instaurative agent on the adventure of his work. This is certainly true of the scientist who neither projects forward, nor discovers, but instaures, deploying as he does so "efficacity in the art of asking questions."[19] Instauration, in this case, designates experimental apparatuses, a careful readiness to observe, and the production of facts endowed with the power of demonstrating whether the form realized by a given apparatus is suitable for grasping it or not. But it is also true of the artist. For each kind of instauration there is a corresponding kind of efficacity which determines the realization of a being. The single characteristic in common is what instauration requires of the agent, the one for whom realization is the reward: fervor and lucidity. These are the "spiritual arms" that Souriau claims for himself.

Souriau wants these arms to be anti-Bergsonian. Picking up again the notion of the antitype, traditionally associated with the impenetrability of extended beings, occupying a place within a mode that excludes all the others, he maintains the incompatibility of forms with one another. A realization entails sacrifices and denials. Getting started is a matter of fervor, but lucidity is required in order to differentiate. Souriau therefore addresses himself to the philosopher of compenetrability and osmosis, and to the critic of that which separates and sifts, by writing:

> One must be a philosopher, a cerebral type, a seeker of beautiful, abstract constructions to arrive at a conception of time as an enrichment, which, in conserving the past integrally, continuously completes it through the integration of an ever-novel present. But for all those who are living, for those who butt up against life's rough edges and are injured by its hard knocks, time is composed of annihilation.[20]

19. Souriau, (1925), p.248.

20. Souriau, (1925), p.153.

Souriau, that voracious reader of Bergson, refuses to follow him insofar as he discerns in the notions of creative evolution and time as *durée* the danger of a certain laxity. For Souriau, it's all about conquest, not coincidence. What motivates his thought is not a Bergsonian sympathy but Bergson himself, as he grapples with his words, the rhythm of his phrasing and his arabesque development.[21] For Souriau's world is one in which projects are broken in pieces, a world in which dreams evaporate, in which souls experience injury and diminishment, and even obliteration.

But suddenly, in the closing pages of his thesis, the young philosopher unexpectedly reveals an ambition that overbears in a vertiginous manner the calm domain in which the forms have hitherto circulated, whether they've been of the Aristotelian or of the Kantian type. Here, in a single movement, Souriau extends the concept of instauration to lived existence itself. For a life must also be instaured, that is, it must be supported by a form:

> To come to self-awareness in one of these forms that harmony and perfection preserve from all failure and from all deviation, this is the initial condition of the full life, of the sublime life, of a life that is truly worthy of the name. To maintain this form through thick and thin, through whatever may happen, is henceforth the foundational act of this life: it is also known by the name Fidelity.[22]

This is no longer only about scientific knowledge or artistic creation, but about fidelity to oneself. The example is no longer drawn from science or from art, but, strangely enough, from the drama that plays out as adolescence draws to a close and "the impalpable *élan* of youth in its quest for life gives way to life itself," when:

> […] the power of dreaming begins to diminish; the vivacity of fancy, the wealth of invention, the soft-focus that conceals shortcomings, the purple haze that hides the objective, when all that withers

21. Thus in *L'instauration philosophique* he writes: "Bergson! We hardly need to remind ourselves to what extent his philosophy was accomplished and finished *ad unguem*; but also the enormous damage it did to philosophy, its refusal to account for a great number of aspects of the world and of existence, and how this is linked to the complete closure of the determination of what he is prepared to accept" in Souriau, (1939), p.358.

22. Souriau, (1925), p.273.

> away and is impoverished [...] It is at this point that many neuter the dream, abandon themselves to fate, deny themselves and thus renounce life, for, as we have seen, to deny oneself is to commit the one transgression that may be fatal. In one way or another, they substitute a different form for the first one and try with the time that is left to them to forge a new life, and spend the rest of their days without ever managing to live.[23]

Taking up certain Stoic themes, Souriau calls on us to become "sons of our works," right at the point where the Bergsonian conjuring-trick, Circe-like, might suggest we abandon ourselves to the delights of a becoming that will enrich itself. The soul must "make an appearance" and aim for that which it alone can confer:

> […] on action, on the effectual work of realization, a structure that is so solid and so generative of sincere vows that it consists of nothing less than the power of a sworn oath, of a pledge made to oneself.[24]

He provides a more lapidary formula for this pledge in the final lines of *Avoir une âme*, published in 1938, when it is called into action for the second time[25]:

> It is not in its own power for a soul to make itself immortal. It is only within its power to be worthy of immortality. If we are to perish at the usual age, it is at least in our power to *render this an injustice.* To have a soul is to act in such a way that, if it must perish,

23. Souriau, (1925), p.274.

24. Souriau, (1925), p.273.

25. During the First World War Souriau spent some years in captivity. In his book *Abstraction sentimentale* (1925), in which he intended to pursue an objective study of affective life, he chose as source material a text, which took the form of a document, that met the requirements for objectivity because, as he explained, it had not been written as a response to this question. This text was none other than his own prison notebooks. And what the long excerpts taken from those notebooks recount is in fact a good deal more readable than the theses they are mobilized to support: they report the daily struggle of one trying to accept an interrupted life, in all its harshness, but without succumbing to the false hopes or melancholies that preoccupy the dreams of the one experiencing captive life, that is, the one who is "idle" [*désœuvré*]. It does not stretch the imagination to suppose that the philosopher who *contra* Bergson committed himself to a hard life and to his sworn oath came into being within the walls of Ingolstadt.

> its final cry […] will with good reason be the sigh of Desdemona from beyond the grave: *O, falsely, falsely murder'd!*[26]

AT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE WORK

We are now at the threshold of *The Different Modes of Existence*. The trial is well defined: whether it has to do with science, with art, or with the soul it will be necessary to pass from sketch to reality without relying on an outline that would realize itself secretly and on the quiet: a substance, a plan, a project, an evolution, a providence, a creation. Neither must we hand over the treasure of the discovery of beings to human freedom alone, lost in a clearly contingent world. Such is the trajectory into which this book inserts itself. It is up to us to march in step and to undergo the trial by passing over the same burning coals.

On the one hand, we have the sense that Souriau is continually thinking the same movement of reality, on the other hand, that he suddenly rearranges his entire equipment. It's as if he casts the dice anew, convinced that the trial will be flunked every time if we don't replay the game in its entirety.

Let's get our bearings. Souriau positioned the problem as early as 1938, in his *Avoir une âme*, when he defined what would be the principle of his investigation, an investigation that seems however to belong to the domain of psychology (the author presents himself in that text in the guise of one listening to students and friends who have come seeking counsel or to confide their troubles):

> We do not have the right to speak philosophically of a being as real, unless at the same time as we state the type of direct or intrinsic truth we have found in it (I mean its way of being in its maximum state of present lucidity), we do not also say on what plane of existence we have, in a manner of speaking, sounded the kill; in which domain we targeted it and overwhelmed it.[27]

26. Souriau, (1938), p.141. [The words of Desdemona are cited in English in the original. {TN}]

27. Souriau, (1938), p.23.

The contrast is striking between this requirement and the way in which he referred to existence in *L'instauration philosophique*, which did appear in the same year, although it had been prepared at a much earlier date.[28] In that work, "to exist" was plainly a synonym of what in 1925 he was calling "to live":

> You suppose, children, that you exist and that the world exists, and you deduce from it your knowledge of that which is, as a simple combination, as a simple mutual adaptation of these two things. Now I am not saying that you do not exist at all, but that you only exist weakly, in a muddled way, half-way between real existence and this lack of reality, which may even entail an absence of existence. For existence itself needs reality in order to be real existence, in order to be the existence of something or someone. Or at least there are many sorts of existences. But our real, concrete and individual existence is almost always proposed as a to-be-accomplished [*comme à accomplir*]. You would accomplish your reality if you could be, manifestly and for yourselves, in your "aseity,"[29] as Prémontval said, or in the "patuity" of your being, as Strada said, in its total radiance, in a presence that is at once singular and essential—and this poses a problem of truth. And so you yourselves, you who believe yourselves to exist, you only exist to the extent that you participate more or less in that which your real existence would be, and it is only in relation to what that would be that you exist, you, presently.[30]

An additional contrast, which we will see is correlative to the first: in *The Different Modes of Existence*, Souriau no longer refers in the first instance to instauration, but, as we have already pointed out, to "anaphoric variation." While instauration nods toward a realizer and realization, anaphoric variation dramatizes the progression of what was in the beginning a lump of clay and ends up as a work. Here, man is the one who must dedicate himself. And it is what is required by this dedication, this

28. It's not inconceivable that Souriau, predicting that he would be enlisted (for the second time), wrote up *Avoir une âme* in haste, a strange composition between philosophy and psychological studies, ending the work with a flurry of propositions that are barely elaborated. Does it testify to a "what could have been?"

29. "Aseity," existence through oneself—a Scholastic term—is the antonym of abaliety (*ab alio*), which is existence with reference to or in dependence to an other (a note from the presenters).

30. Souriau, (1939), p.6.

efficient help provided to the anaphor, and what it testifies to, that is the primary theme of the 1956 lecture.

The Different Modes of Existence engages the investigation in an indisputably metaphysical direction. We shouldn't think in terms of a conversion for, as we've seen, Souriau will continue his monumental project by means of a science of aesthetics. Indeed, Souriau himself made the case for continuity, maintaining in 1952 that his various writings follow "the succession of grand problems he sought to address, throughout his entire philosophical career, *in a certain order.*"[31] Was his memory smoothing over events here? Or was Souriau in the process of producing a "monumental" version of himself? In fact, it's pointless to ask ourselves whether this venture in metaphysics does indeed belong to this journey into the "grand problems" that Souriau had anticipated addressing right from the start, or whether he was reacting to external circumstances (the recurrence of war, and then the advent of a new generation of philosophers who were contemptuously turning away from the ambitions of their predecessors—down with Brunschvicg and Bergson!—in order to think according to the Hegel of Alexandre Kojève, with Husserl and with Heidegger). For even if Souriau did define the list of problems he would have to address, it wasn't the conception of a program that simply had to be executed, which would have been wholly contradictory to the notion of instauration itself. There's no dotted line waiting to be traced over in pencil. Souriau is a man of the journey and not of the project, and his reference to a "certain order" could equally imply "at the moment that's too much for me to carry out." All that we can say is that this small, dense, apparently labyrinthine book, strangely brief, written during a period of massive uncertainty, must have arisen from a keen sense of "it's now or never!"; now is the time for doing metaphysics, that is:

> […] for inventing (as one "invents" a treasure);[32] for discovering positive modes of existence, coming to meet us with their palm branches, ready to receive our hopes, our intentions, or our problematic speculations, in order to take them in and comfort them. All other research is metaphysical famine. (162-163)

31. Souriau, (1925), p.xiii. The quotation occurs in a text titled "Thirty Years Afterwards," written by Souriau in 1952, on the occasion of the re-edition of the book.

32. See fn.9. [TN]

THE FIRST CHAPTER, IN WHICH WE FIND A PLAN THAT WE MUST BY NO MEANS FOLLOW….

To begin with everything seems easy. It rises on a gentle incline. So why have all these preliminaries been imposed upon us? The first chapter is the first chapter. There's a plan. And summaries. And transitions. We might think we've found ourselves in an *agrégation* in philosophy; we're going to be reading a thesis. It is truncated, technical and allusive, but the essential argument is clear: we're going to get on with *counting* the modes of existence. There is no Sphinx at the gates of this book.

And yet, as it so happens, Souriau isn't going to follow his plan. The first chapter announces a project that he's going to transform into a journey … and things are quickly going to get complicated. Everything proceeds as though his approach is torn between two logics. On the one hand, there's the project of a view of the whole, a synoptic view of existence in its totality (87, §16), and, on the other hand, there's an entirely different problem that powers up the whole argument. Hence the terribly jerky character of a book which, initially presenting itself under the guise of rigorous organization, then returns by stealth to the original question of instauration. Chapters I and III, and the first part of chapter IV, correspond with the first logic; chapter II and the remainder of chapter IV are examples of the second. The two logics are original, but not in the same way. A compounding difficulty: Souriau acts as if nothing was up, multiplying titles, sub-titles and transitions[33] as if he were advancing at the same pace on the same path—while simultaneously being engaged in modifying the path itself.…

Rather like mountain-guides who will lead their clients right up to the summit so as not to be accused later of deceiving them, let us show the reader the culminating point. Here are the final three sentences of the book:

> It is by Amphion's song that the City's walls are raised. It is by Orpheus" lyre that the Symplegades are stopped and transfixed, allowing the Argo to pass. Each inflection of our voice, which here is the very accent of existence, is a support for these higher realities.

33. Multiplying *anaphors*, this time taking the word as understood within literary criticism: everything that ensures the continuity of parts of a text by means of cross-reference, emphasis and repetition.

> With just a few moments of existing, lodged between abysses of nothingness, we can tell of a song, which sounds beyond existence with the power of supernatural speech, and which may be able to cause even the Gods in their interworlds to feel a yearning for the "to exist"—as well as the longing to come down here by our sides, as our companions and our guides. (193)

That is what we must get to. Heavens, what a sheer climb seems to be before us. How has counting the modes of existence passed over to this formidable and by all appearances very obscure decentering that allows existence to be shared with many other beings, to such an extent that the gods begin to long for us? At the beginning of the book the philosopher at the wheel decides upon and arranges the modes of existence; at the end, he is not the one deciding upon anything at all. Clearly it's no longer a Sphinx but a whole alleyway of Sphinxes that will have to be confronted.

Let's begin, in the first chapter, with what seems to present itself as a treatise classifying in systematic fashion the impressive array of conflicting answers proposed by more recent philosophers, as well as by the *philosophia perennis* to the same problem: how many ways are there of grasping existence?

First of all, let's clarify the word "mode" in this apparently banal expression "mode of existence." The notion is as old as philosophy, but, until this point, in speech, the *modus* has been considered as a modification of the *dictum*, which has precisely the advantage of remaining identical to itself. In the series of phrases: "he dances," "he wants to dance," "he would really like to be able to dance," "he would so like to know how to dance," the "to dance" [*le dancer*] doesn't change despite the sometimes vertiginous encasing of this series of modalizations.[34] It is according to this very model of speech that the modalization of being was first conceived, for example by causing the degree of existence to vary on a scale from potency to act, but without even going as far as modalizing "what it was" that became actual. However numerous and dispersed they might have been, predicates always came back to nestle like doves in the same old dovecote of substance.…

34. "Thus, we have to assume that modality procures for the predicate it modifies another mode of existence" in Fontanille, (1998), p.168.

And so at the beginning of the book, Souriau sets up his project in contrast to the venerable act of collecting categories, a schema that dates back at least to Aristotle: if there are indeed several ways of saying something about something, the fact remains that this is always a *saying*. In this way, we remain in the same key, precisely that of the categories, which consists in "speaking publicly about or against something," as the etymology of the Greek word *cata-agoureuo* suggests. To say it another way, the old Thomist phrase "*quot modis praedicatio fit, tot modis ens dicitur*" doesn't manage to escape the narrow strictures of the *to mean to say* [*vouloir dire*]. Now multi-realism, to speak like William James, would like to explore many other modes of existence than simply this single action of saying many things about the same being. In fact, it would like for there to be many ways of being.[35]

Perhaps this is what it would like, but as soon as philosophy admits the plurality of modes of existence it risks being swamped by a mob of candidates:

> After all, the world as a whole becomes quite vast if there is more than one kind of existence; if it is true that we have not exhausted it once we have covered all that exists according to one of its modes (for example, that of physical or psychical existence); if it is true that to understand it we need to include it in all that bestows upon it its meanings or its values; if it is true that, at each of its points, intersections of a network determined by constitutive relations (for example, spatio-temporal relations), it is necessary to enter into relation, like a basement window opening out onto another world, with an entirely novel ensemble of determinations of being—non-temporal, non-spatial, perhaps subjective, or qualitative, or virtual, or transcendent (101).

This is why Souriau can claim at the same time that philosophy has never ceased interrogating itself on the question of the plurality of modes of existence—with Plotinus, for example—but that it has never truly counted beyond a single mode. It has never been able to let go of Ariadne's thread that prevents it

35. According to Souriau the same problem arises in Spinoza: "than that of substance, but of the fact of being in the existence of the latter. The meaning of the little word *in* as it is found in this proposition is the key to all of Spinozism, that effort not to go beyond, but to annul the existential specificities with an apparatus borrowed entirely from, and only effective in, the ontic order." (169).

from getting lost in the labyrinth of worlds opening out, one onto another: the identity of substance to itself that obsesses the tradition ever since the challenge of Parmenides. Of course, non-being had to be added to being—this begins with Plato and every philosophy since has been characterized by the addition of non-being in one form or another—but all these additions are more like epicycles of sorts which do not contest the central privilege afforded to substance. If nobody before Souriau was interested in instauration, this was because the pathway from outline to completion was in the end only ever the filling-in of a dotted line in full. What would happen if there was no dotted line at all and if we were suddenly deprived of substance?

A key question, as we said a moment ago; a crucial point at which the most significant problems converge. Which beings will we take charge of in our minds? Will knowledge have to sacrifice entire populations of beings to Truth, stripping them of all their existential positivity; or, in order to admit them, will it have to divide the world into two, into three?

A practical question, as well. It is certainly of great consequence for every one of us that we should know whether the beings we posit or suppose, that we dream up or desire, exist with the existence of dream or of reality, and of which reality; which kind of existence is prepared to receive them, such that if present, it will maintain them, or if absent, annihilate them; or if, in wrongly considering only a single kind, vast riches of existential possibilities are left uncultivated by our thought and unclaimed by our lives.

On the other hand, a remarkably restricted question. As we can see, it is delimited by the question of knowing whether or not the verb "to exist" has the same sense in all of its uses; whether the different modes of existence that philosophers have been able to highlight and distinguish all deserve the title of "existence" in full and equal measure.

Finally, a positive question. One of the most important, by virtue of its consequences, that philosophy can propose, it presents itself in the form of precise propositions, each susceptible to methodical critique. Making an inventory of the most important of these propositions in the history of human thought; putting the chart in order; seeking the kind of critique to which they are accountable—all this is a substantial task, indeed (103).

The crucial point, perhaps, but how are we to articulate the problems which, according to Souriau, converge at this point? Can the task, substantial perhaps, but on the whole a rather classical one, of making an inventory of the propositions produced in the history of human thought, of drawing up the chart, of critiquing or arbitrating, fit with the terrible responsibility of determining which beings to take responsibility for and which beings to strip of all existential positivity? Of course, one possibility exists for making these two distinct tasks converge, tasks which in both cases are those of a justice of the peace, albeit one arbitrating between different claims, those of beings and those of philosophers. The trick would be to line up these discordant propositions in the form of a royal highway, taking us up to a vantage-point, one that would allow us to deduce which beings have the citizenship rights in the midst of the empirical pell-mell. And yet this is a temptation that Souriau, at the end of the third chapter, fiercely repudiates. "A deceptive attempt, a false clarity" (182), he argues:

> […] we must vigorously resist the temptation to explain or deduce the modes of existence that have already been discovered. Let us be wary of dialectical infatuation. It would certainly be easy, with a little ingenuity, to improvise and, in broad strokes, to outline a dialectic of existence, in order to demonstrate that there can be no modes of existence but those, and that they engender one another in a certain order. But in doing so, we would subvert all that could be of any importance in the observations made here. (161)

In fact, the necessity of resistance is announced even in the first chapter. To order discord into a royal highway is to suppose that this highway exists as a dotted line; that is to say, the one doing the ordering would be doing nothing more than taking cognizance of a convergence that no-one before him had seen. Now, as Souriau stresses, there is no such pacification: the question of existence has always been open and it remains so (we will even add that today it has become a veritable battle-field). But it gets worse. Regarding existence "the philosophers" responses are tendentious. "For while they affirm, they also desire" (97), and desire here has the power of "doors of bronze swinging with a fateful pulse—now open, now shut—within the philosophy of great hopes, in the universe of vast domains" (101-102).

In this way, the meaning of synoptic vision shifts. Now, it's no longer a matter of classifying theories bearing upon what "might really exist" in opposition to what "might only be a construction," a mere illusion that the philosopher revels in dismantling. That would entail classifying desires and tendentious answers—deconstruction, not at all instauration. It would be to assume the role of "justice of the peace," seated well above the fray, but for the weakest of justifications. For the one who classifies the desires of others can only escape being classified himself by claiming to be without desire, perfectly indifferent to the question at hand. This is not, of course, what Souriau claims.

As we read in his 1956 lecture, we are "implicated" (213) in the problem, and by this Souriau didn't mean merely that the question is addressed to us, but rather that we are enlisted by it, whether we want to be or not. The question of modes of existence is well and truly a practical one, even a pragmatic one, in the sense given to this word by William James when he asked what is required for a life worthy of being lived. This, in any case, is the reading we propose: synoptic vision renders the diverse modes of existence in their full force as a questioning situation, where it's not simply a matter of responding, but of instauring, of succeeding in the journey required by way of response. The outcome of this journey is none other than the determination of "how" we are implicated by the modes of existence—for which we might once again refer to the closing sentences of the book as summation of the whole "enquiry."

This reading meets with an objection, a somewhat knee-jerk one, as is the case whenever critique becomes a conditioned reflex. Since Souriau is not neutral, since he is in fact engaged in the audacious construction of a problem that has been imposed by his own "desire," that of securing metaphysical acclaim for the concept of instauration—thus, he is "like everyone else." Synoptic vision is nothing but a trick, but we won't be fooled. Which also means: not only will we refuse to be implicated by Souriau's question, but we will be determined to remain so. But it's at this point that the singular power of this little book becomes apparent. For the one who chooses the path of critique it will remain unreadable. Far from functioning as a trick, every stage of the enquiry into the different modes of existence is liable to plunge us into confusion if we take it as concealing tendentiousness under an appearance of impartiality.

The reading we propose takes sides with Souriau; for us, this is the only way to read him. To be more precise, our reading forges a coherence between how Souriau thought the problem had to be constructed and the way in which he actually constructed it. His chart of the modes, the question of "how many" there are, is certainly an artifice, but it shouldn't be taken as a pitiful exposé of Souriau, as if he were portioning out existence in a sovereign manner, conferring honors on beings who pander to the desire of the sovereign. The chart operates like a journey prompted by the question of anaphoric progression (which is a metaphysical question enjoined by the fact of instauration), a journey whose every step necessitates and calls for an experience that is itself anaphoric. Here is an alleyway of Sphinxes, in fact, each one demanding that we should "work it out"—that is, that we should perform the necessary anaphoric transformation.

A journey, in Souriau's terms, is not cumulative: the resolution of one riddle does not necessarily put us in a position to answer those that follow. But there is something common to them all. If we are to succeed each time, it will come via the experience of the philosopher losing his place as judge, such that beings instead gain the ability to define their truth, their own mode of existence. *We* have to situate ourselves in relation to these modes of existence, what they require, their own, unique perfection, their "own success in the art of existing." Then adding what they might need in order to be supported in existence (abaliety) if they're not able to exist in themselves or by themselves (aseity). It's therefore in relation to them that *we,* we who pose the question of existence, find ourselves situated and implicated.

CHAPTER TWO: IN WHICH WE ENCOUNTER A STRANGE GHOST STORY

The reader will thus find herself faced with two routes in quincunx: one bearing on *how many* modes there are; the other on *how* to render oneself worthy of responding to a mode, whichever it may be. To complicate things, Souriau will describe the second question (which, as we know, is primary, although it comes after) by the misleading term *surexistence*, which should not at all be taken as a kind of appeal to transcendence. Let's be patient, we're not out of the woods yet!

It's with the "intensive modes" that Souriau begins what he himself calls the "inquiry." Recall the reprimand he made to those "children" who thought they existed: "you only exist weakly!" Is existence susceptible to a more or a less? This would be an initial question well worth entering into the chart of philosophical propositions. But its direction leads instead to a trial: what happens when, instead of the world responding *for us*, we are put in a situation of having to respond *for the world*? Roquentin reckoned on the tree-root without his perceiving it: it proceeded "of itself." Now, suddenly, it fails or ceases to exist unless he himself has the strength to maintain it in existence—this would truly induce nausea. Faced with the same tree-root, Souriau's Roquentin, vacillates. What's at stake is his existence in relation to the tree-root and the tree-root's own existence as reprised or continuous—continuous *because* reprised. Paradoxically, it's by not following existentialism that Souriau is going to define existence.

How does Souriau carry this out? The reprimand ("you only exist weakly!") addressed to those "children" immediately orientates us toward a distinction between what they are and what they might become, from the point of view of the possible, of what is in them as potential, ready to emerge. Who would not desire for such children a developing intensity of life, and an ever-richer experience? And yet that is a point of view that Souriau dismisses as "obliging" (112) and the first trial is to refuse it. For to accept it would be to kill the question, to pose the problem in terms which provide its solution. Emergence, isn't this the notion that discerns in the present a future that is already half determined, a dotted line indicating where it is to be filled-in? Souriau will just as much reject the alternative, rival

explanation, according to which existence would be that which we possess entirely or not at all. In both cases, he writes, we are in the realm of *doxa*, that is, of answers that seem satisfactory only because the problem to which they appear to correspond was never constructed. Such answers are free to fight endlessly with each other.

And here we have the beginning of the construction of the problem: the question of existence, framed in terms of strength or weakness, must, to avoid lapsing into *doxa*, go through an "existential affirmation" (113). Let us recall that for every being we must be able to specify "on what plane of existence we have, in a manner of speaking, sounded the kill."[36] And yet, it's only from an actual experience of dissolution in nothingness that the question of strength or weakness finds a way of becoming that actual, terrible interrogation:

> Let us insist. We must not reduce the question "am I?" to the question "what am I?" We must not allow the response "I am not," or "I hardly am," to mean "I am not myself," or even "it is not I who am, but something is, and I am merely participating in it." For example, it is God who is, or (transposing *Ich denke* to *Es denkt in mir*) it is thinking [*Denken*] that is. The response "no" or "hardly" must mean: there, where I am looking, there, where I am testing existence, there is only a little bit of existence or none at all. In other places and for other things, it is of no concern. (121)

This is precisely why Descartes, for example, failed the trial that Souriau has set up. The *Cogito* "has not been jeopardized, not even by the hypothesis of the evil genius" (114). Descartes, a thinking being, never conceded that the response to the question "am I?" might be "no!" For him, strength and weakness are not immanent to the one who says "I" and to his thought. He has not vacillated. All he wanted to do was situate the thinking being along the length of a scale rising from the least to the greatest perfection. It's a bit like confusing the measurement of the height of a child who is in the process of growing with the question of whether that child will continue to exist forever. The same objection can be made to Heidegger. He gives the impression of being a little too sure about "Being as being" for us to believe he has passed the trial. He relies on Being. But what if

36. Souriau, (1938), p.23.

he turned out to have longed for Being? What if Heidegger set out to answer for it and defaulted? He never did think it. He has not passed the trial.

It's at this point that Souriau takes leave of the history of philosophy (§27), for this chapter at least, and sets about creating a series of conceptual personae which, unlike Descartes and Heidegger, will submit themselves to the trial of transition [*basculement*]: "I take it upon myself to answer for what makes me exist, but I may find myself without support." Each one of these personae undergoes an experience of vacillation, indeed of annihilation: the ghost vanishes; the shipwrecked sailor allows himself to flounder; the man with a religious vocation confronts the question: "am I able to bear my mission?" In each of the three cases, the persona is not convicted of weakness by dint of the example of another, one more strong, more lucid, more sincere than him. There is no point of comparison, no psychology, no past, no future. The ghost exists as emissary, summoned to avenge; the shipwrecked sailor swims because he knows how to swim and because, his vessel having overturned in the middle of the ocean, he has to swim; and the man with the missionary vocation is existentially constituted by the call of God to which he responds. In each of the three cases, there is first of all a support. A world—whether it be the summons, the habitual practice, or the religious institution— is to be found there that confers reason and meaning. But in each of the three cases this support might begin to go missing—"why, am I doing this?" Suddenly each persona finds himself deprived of the reasons that had carried and reassured him. This is what happens, Souriau insists, to anyone who *seriously* interrogates himself concerning his being. To respond to the trial Souriau puts before us, to follow the journey, we must have hesitated, we must have trembled, at the thought that anaphoric experience could very well, as we have said, have no *respondent*.[37] How are we to trust one who speaks of being if he has not risked being devoured by the Sphinx?

Be careful: when Souriau speaks of God here, that is to say, when he treats the example of the believer, he's not dealing with

37. The phrase *avoir du répondant* ("to have money to pay") implies the idea of "guarantor, warrantor, underwriter, etc." The same nuance would apply to all expressions derived from *répondre pour* which are here translated with variations on "answer for" or "respond for." [TN]

transcendence—and this is confirmed in what is without doubt his most accomplished book, *L'ombre de Dieu*.[38] The man with the religious vocation does not "lose his faith," as if suddenly concluding that "God does not exist"—a little like a child who one day realizes that his presents come from his parents, not from Santa Claus. It is not an "other" world, without God, that offers itself to him; nor is it the discovery of an existential freedom that the self-evident facts of the world [*les évidences du monde*] had obscured. The interrogation is serious, it is even terrible, and yet for Souriau it doesn't consist in a pathway toward freedom, but in an approach to what a "pure" mode of experience signifies, to which the conceptual persona must bear witness. The man of faith hasn't lost faith, he is having an experience of this faith as "pure," stripped of the self-evident facts of religious reality. No longer lodged in a world that answers for him and supports him, he is supported only by the call of God, to which he is the response, an instrument of the God who gave him his mission. God, in this sense, answers for him, gives him his *raison d'être*, supports him, to the extent of judging him and casting him into the abyss if he responds badly or weakly. But who assures him of this? For it is also accurate to say—and this is the true transition [*la vraie bascule*] of existential responsibility—that God needs him for this mission, that is to say that He depends on him. "The terrible power of reversing the question!" (124). God, who was his *raison d'être*, who was answering for him, is now *that for which he himself must answer.* The question is no longer to know whether he will be able to complete his mission, but whether he has the strength to support that mission, given that he has only himself to support himself. It's up to him to answer. Is he strong or weak?

38. Souriau, (1955). "Shadow": because this must be clarified for the benefit of those who might laugh precipitously, Souriau's question is not at all that of the existence of God, nor that of the experience of guidance received in the anaphoric variations of a life. Fervor and lucidity are not the privilege of the believer, nor are they specifically nourished by faith. The difference is that the believer requests and seeks a relationship of reciprocity that is active and perceptible. The spiritual vow of the believer is that "everything that takes place in him and that engages his spiritual life […] corresponds immediately to something, no doubt entirely different, perhaps love, perhaps mercy, perhaps anger, that is at least immediate, correlative and certainly of the same order; that, if one may use such inadequate words, everything that takes place in him that is spiritual immediately 'interests' the one who is at the other extreme of this infinite diameter, and vice versa" (p.308).

> […] Both at the same time. I have this strength. Is it really strength or is it weakness? Who is to say? Does it even make sense to speak this way? I am this strength such as it is, this strength itself in itself. (124)

Whenever it's a question of pure existence, existence will not be measured by what is more intense, more strong or more weak—these terms only apply to reality. When the missionary was assured that he was answering to God, when the world and his own religious customs supported him and corroborated the well-foundedness of his mission, all that had to be done to define it was to point a finger at this solid and consistent assemblage. We might even have been tempted to explain the vocation by means of the world that stabilizes and sustains it, in the same way as the sight of the shoreline in the distance was able to stir the effort of the swimmer. But the moment of the terrible interrogation belongs to a pure type of faith: answering to God or answering for God, that is, being strong enough, by himself, to support this mission.

Once again let's not be mistaken here: it's anaphoric experience that leads Souriau to the trial that shakes a man's faith or to the sense of futility that besets the swimmer, and not at all some sort of Romantic fascination or tendentious privilege conferred upon existential vacillation. These experiences are the signature of pure existence, of the tenuity to which it reduces us when we reduce ourselves to it. Therefore anaphoric experience does not translate a lapse into existentialism; nor does it convey disdain for reality and the support it provides. It merely asks that we do not confuse "factors of reality (which must be analyzed for each mode of existence) with so-called factors of existence" (127). A pure type of existence has no factors and, such as it is, delivers no message.

What is crucial, then, is the distinction between reality and the pure type of existence. This is what causes the distinction between the Souriau who thinks of instauration as a "fact" because it links reality and success, and the Souriau who problematizes instauration on account of the question of the modes of existence. And it's precisely at this point that the original illustration of the lump of clay and *its* sculptor intervenes, the one that was considered above.[39] Souriau warns us: the problem

39. See p.15.

has shifted. "Do not look at the chisel, look at the statue" (128): the statue that moves toward existence provided that the sculptor answers for it and that it answers, or not, for him.

We are reaching the end of the transformation of the problem presented by the intensive modes: anaphoric experience is redistributing its terms. The *doxa* pitched those who affirm that one exists either entirely or not at all against those wanting to think in terms of an existence becoming more rich, more perfect, more true. No, the intensive variations do not affect pure existence, which "is sufficient unto itself, despite the appearance of vacillation and tenuity to which it reduces us when we reduce ourselves to it" (131). By contrast, the intensive variations become distinct in the anaphoric movement, for it's in relation to their completion that the stages of the journey, each one full and whole, are shown as being nothing more than an outline and a preparation. Yes, we can say that we exist more or less, but only in light of this anaphoric progression which renders a life into a veritable work. Let he who doesn't submit himself to the work to-be-made not ask whether his life does or doesn't have reality.

With that we return to the plan in quincunx because the work, by definition, requires the putting-together of many modes of existence: there's the clay, of course, but also the soul of the artist, without forgetting the statue in search of its form—all three in great danger of failing. As that already makes three modes, we must pass from the question "how?" to the question "how many?"

THE START OF CHAPTER THREE AND THE FIVE PRIMARY MODES OF PURE EXISTENCE

"Each mode is an art of existing unto itself" (131). "Unto itself": such is the challenge that energizes the third chapter. It's not a matter of opposing pure existence to reality, but of enquiring of each mode what is its own way of "making reality." From mode to mode, therefore, the comparison should not be made by passing through the intermediary of a substance common to them all and of which each would be a mere variation, but by granting to each the capacity to produce, in its own way, the

assemblage of ontological categories that are specific to it. It's a as though each mode possessed a specific *pattern* (in the sense of this word as it is used in needlework), an ontological pattern that cannot be superimposed onto other modes or that, if we insisted all the same in doing so, would result in distortions, folds, discomforts and, in short, innumerable category mistakes.

The third chapter is the longest in the book and the one that seems to be the most logically organized, even if that organization is quite misleading. Since the work to-be-made requires, in one way or another, the crossing of a number of modes, it is paramount that we now consider the differences that exist between them (after all, such is the title of the book!). On this depends the quality of existence, a key point that will be revisited in the fourth chapter. The organization of this chapter is in fact double (not to say duplicitous): we will encounter an array of modes (be alert for the strange terms): first, the "phenomenon"; next, the "*réiques*" (which will include both concepts and souls!); then, the "solicitudinaries" (in fact the beings of fiction); then the "virtuals"; before finally getting to the "synaptics." But all the while, the scales on which these modes are successively measured is their relationship with instauration: each one represents a particular degree of risk, a risk in which the success or failure of anaphoric experience is demonstrated with more and more clarity. We don't feel the risk run by the existence of the phenomenon; with the virtual, we feel it absolutely; whereas for the intermediary elements, we begin to distinguish something. In passing from one mode to another the risk of failing the sketch increases because we are passing little by little from aseity (existence in itself) to abaleity (existence in dependence on another).

Phenomena in Patuity

The first mode taken up by Souriau, that of the phenomenon, never stood a chance with philosophers. Either they over-promoted it by giving it the dubious status of being the only legitimate source of all possible knowledge; or they reduced it too much, rendering the phenomenon into merely a deceptive façade obscuring what was truly real—secondary qualities from which we must turn away if we are to attain to primary

ones, which alone are real. But Souriau, just like Whitehead, isn't maneuvering in a nature that is supposed to have bifurcated into primary and secondary qualities.[40] And so in his eyes the phenomenon warrants neither this excess of honor, nor this indignity. No, Souriau wants to capture the phenomenon *independently* of the poorly formulated notion of matter, without immediately enlisting it in the interminable debate over what belongs to the object and what belongs to the subject. He's not going to exploit it as if it were something that was belched out from the chimney of subjectivity. In other words, there is no beyond or below the phenomenon. It possesses its own mode:

> […] in order to grasp phenomenal existence, we must above all avoid conceiving of the phenomenon as a phenomenon of something or *for* someone. That is the aspect the phenomenon assumes when, having begun to consider existence by way of some other modality, we encounter it after the fact, for example, in its role as manifestation. […] We only truly conceive of the phenomenon in its own existential tenor when we feel it to be maintaining and positing all that can be supported and consolidated in it, with it, and through it to itself alone. And it is in this capacity that it appears as a model and a standard of existence. It is under this aspect that we have attempted to show it. (139)

In fact, the experience offered by the pure phenomenon is entirely different from what the first empiricists called sensation: "in sensation, the phenomenal characteristic is very intense, but also very mixed. Sensations are the din of the phenomenon, as it were" (137). For the first time since the earlier sort of empiricism, we find ourselves in the presence of a vector, or a "vection" as Souriau calls it, finally delivered from the question of knowledge or even from the obligation of being nothing but the respondent to intentionality. The phenomenon as Souriau defines it no longer finds itself caught in a pincer grip between what is supposedly *behind* it—the primary qualities—and what is supposedly *in front of* it—the secondary qualities. What will characterize this mode, a completely original one and rarely understood as such by philosophy, is its patuity:

40. Whitehead, (1998, 1920); Stengers, (2002).

> It is presence, a radiance, a given that cannot be repelled. It is and it claims to be just what it is.
>
> We can, without a doubt, work to exorcize it of that irritating quality of presence through itself. We can denounce it as tenuous, labile, and fleeting. Is that not simply to admit that we are unsettled when faced with a pure existence, of one sole mode? (133)

The pure phenomenon, constituting just one mode, "unsettles" us! Why? Because we are rarely arrested by it; we rarely conceive of it as anything other than a phenomenon *of* something or *for* somebody, a means of access to a support or a respondent to intentionality. But we shouldn't set about beating our breasts, rather, we should acknowledge what we owe to it. For "such is the generosity of the phenomenon" (134): it gives itself to all the other modes and receives nothing from them. In what circumstances, then, might we be able to capture it in all its purity? The phrase "let ourselves be captured" might say it better, encapsulating the phenomenon, its "vectors of appetition, its tendencies toward the other," that can be followed, Souriau clarifies, "in their fanning out, for as long as they remain of the same stuff as the phenomenon itself" (136). Of course, for Souriau, it is the privilege of the work, and even of the object of art, to confer upon the phenomenal this power to arrest the existential slippage from what is manifest toward what it is a manifestation *of*, and to impose itself in its true existential tenor.

If the phenomenon appears "as a standard of existence" for all the others, it is on account of its generosity, not because it arraigns the other modes of existence for being weak. Souriau is not a romantic, nor a mystic, extolling an ineffable truth adulterated by human affairs. Or if he is a mystic, it is a mysticism of the monumental. A perceptible scene [*spectacle sensible*] possesses a quality that is entirely different from that of ineffability: it claims to be just what it is. Hence its aseity: it takes its mode of being only from itself; it is the viewer who is presented in it, with it and through it. If a walker finds himself savoring a vernal scene, it is the composition of the scene to which he becomes sensitive [*sensible*]: this scene captivates in the manner of a work of art, even though it is not the product of the labor of any compositor.

We might object by saying that a scene must have a spectator and that without a spectator there would be no scene. But this

would be to misunderstand Souriau: it's not the spectator who projects the meaning of the scene onto a blank screen, available for any such meaning, it is the scene that *supports* its spectator. We recall that in his thesis Souriau insisted that if the spectator wishes to retain a memory of what he experienced (were he a phenomenologist, via the phenomenological reduction), he will have to remake it, to conquer the form—or the soul, as he puts it here. And in doing so, it becomes just as much a matter of conquering his own soul. We can see that Souriau is not going to concede any more to phenomenology than he did to existentialism. What is important here is to proceed with an existential reduction, not a phenomenological one. The phenomenon is here located at the maximum distance away from phenomenology, of which Souriau writes with wicked humor, citing Kipling: "so much so that, in this sense, phenomenology is the place where we are least likely to find the phenomenon. As Kim says, *the darkest place is under the lamp*" (136).[41]

The Réique Modes: What is a Thing?

It's when Souriau moves on to the second pure mode, the one he calls *réique* (from the Latin *res*), that the reader begins to appreciate the vertiginous character of this inquiry. To exist is to practice the art of existing. The phenomenon was able to support the existence of a soul responding to it—do we not say of the countryside that it "has a soul" or of a scene that it is "captivating?" If there was an art of existing that pertains to a soul, understood in the sense of the "phenomenal I," we are now going to discover that there is also an art of existing for the *réique*, supplied by a different mode of being, that is going to produce both reason and things [*la chose*], both of which can now be defined as that which is in search of permanence and identity. Indeed, since each mode of existence has a way of developing on a particular plane, each one has a different way of undergoing the trial of anaphor. Thus, there will be as many types of forms—it would be better to say formation of forms—as there will be modes.

From his thesis, as we know, it's in science that Souriau found the first example of the work of the forms: the

41. English in the original. [TN]

knowing mind will find itself instituted, instaured, by the effort of *réique* beings to earn their right to exist. He's not enquiring into a theory of knowledge. He's not bringing onto stage a knowing subject: this subject never finds himself face-to-face with pure existence anyway, since he is always encountering a plurimodal reality ("this flower, with its smell and coloration; but also this thing, that I can pluck, squash or tear into pieces, and know it by so doing"). It's as though every form leaves in its wake a different way of "having a soul" [*avoir une âme*]. The phenomenon leaves one in its wake, the *thing* leaves another.

But what is a thing, if reduced to its pure existential tenor? It is what *maintains itself* throughout its manifestations—by contrast with the phenomenon, which was *nothing but* its manifestations (all of them). When reason learns to respond to this we leave behind the mode of the phenomenon. If the perceptible scene, the phenomenal, imposed itself upon the spectator, the pure mode of *réique* existence is that which imposes itself as:

> […] presence that is indifferent to its specific situation in a universe that is unfolded and organized according to space and time. That is the basis of its existence. As an art of existing, it is the conquest and realization, the effective possession of this presence that is indifferent to its situation. (143)

This time, the work required to assure the continued existence of things is vividly felt: instauration becomes much more present and with it the risk that everything might fail. In fact, the thing, in contrast with phenomena, does not exist in patuity, it does not captivate, and it takes a great effort to conquer the distinction between that which maintains itself and that which manifests itself:

> […] the thing is defined and constituted by its identity across its diverse appearances. There is agreement concerning the systematic character of the thing, as well as the fact that what specifically characterizes it is its way of remaining numerically one across its noetic appearances or utilizations. (140)

"Numerically one," it's all there. Phenomena formed a composition, one that the work of art had the privilege of making clearly seen. As for things, they form a system, but only when

this system is made to exist in the mode of "noetic utilization." Does this mean we have finally arrived at "true reality," the one studied by scientists in their laboratories, the one that belongs to the stone that falls wherever it falls, even if it cracks the skull of a passer-by? Are we finally going to encounter what the scientists describe in terms of movement and energy, the sequence of cause and effect? Certainly not! The sciences are institutions that are too complex and practices that are too plurimodal to yield a pure mode of existence. Galileo needs much more than his inclined plane for his achievement, the noetic association of a physico-mathematical relation that is numerically one with the balls that he caused to roll down it, to become synonymous with "the foundation of modern science."[42]

What Souriau is looking for is not a reality that is "independent" of the human mind, but the thing that manages to stay identical across space and time and which produces *because of this*, and as if by extension, the *res cogitans*. All by itself? No, thanks to another work by which instauration is becoming more visible each time. What an effort it takes to become indifferent to the situation! The point is crucial, especially when we remember that, since his thesis, Souriau has insisted that one of the aspects of this identity—being able to retain for example the thought of an equilateral triangle—is the ability to *re-make* it. What is in play with the *réique* mode of existence is not a non-human reality, foreign to thought. On the contrary, *réique* status *comprises* thought, and in a three-fold way no less: as relation, as consciousness and as agent.[43] Which explains why Souriau doesn't waste a second trying to understand by what miracle thought and the external world might agree: these are two aspects of the same thing, in other words, it is the world taken up again according to the mode of existence of the thing.[44]

Instead of beginning with space and time to define things—primary qualities—of which phenomena would be merely appearances—secondary qualities—Souriau will make the pure

42. Stengers, (2006).

43. We can see here how Souriau's wild metaphysics might connect with the much more down-to-earth studies offered by *Science Studies* and how the link might be made between the thing defined here and the "immutable mobiles" tracked by the history of the sciences. For example, see Netz, (2003).

44. He will use the notion of "correspondence," but in the last pages of the book and as an alternative name for the agreement between the sketch and the work, shattering definitively the metaphor of the mirror and all *mimesis*.

mode of existence of things into that which produces a particular form of space and time. But without forgetting here the generosity of the phenomenon. The signature of the pure mode of existence of *réiques* is to produce a time and a space with reticence and difficulty.

In order to define the specific achievement of the *réique* mode, Souriau proposes a thought-experiment: he asks us to imagine crumpling a large piece of paper, or folding a long ribbon back on itself; and then piercing them with a needle; when this is done, and when the paper or ribbon are unfolded, they will show themselves (their phenomenal appearance) to be riddled with holes—randomly in the case of the paper, along a whole length in the case of the ribbon; each hole representing phenomenal evidence of a "here and now." Souriau then goes on to apply this whimsical illustration to two apparently unrelated examples: a theorem and a certain M. Durand,[45] that is, on the one hand a Platonic object, and on the other hand a particular individual! But to both he poses the same question: how can we understand them as "numerically one" if there is no substance and no spatio-temporal framework to support them in existence?

In both cases, we have to be able to think that there is only a single hole, just as we know there was only a single needle. "*Réique* existence is like the unity of the hole or the needle. As a pure mode of existing, the *réique* mode is possessive self-presence in this undivided state," (143). If we have to concede that the theorem is indifferent to its situation, just like the piece of paper that was pierced, then the same thing must be conceded not for M. Durand, but for the pure mode of existence whose conquest ensures that there is "a Durand-ity" (144). However we can only say that the theorem and M. Durand are "numerically one" with respect to the distinct conditions that correspond to the specific cases of the crumpled paper and the ribbon.

The case of the ribbon corresponds to the ubiquity of singular things whose phenomenal manifestations must connect with each other in a way that conforms with certain laws. And this is the case whether it concerns M. Durand or his pipe. Their ubiquity is circumscribed by time, and then again by the requirement that their appearances respect a certain order—which we might

45. This is indicating a generic name, the equivalent of the English "Mr. Smith" or "Mrs. Jones." [TN]

describe in terms of aging or depreciation. There is a history of things. But they do not benefit from spatial ubiquity: if M. Durand or his pipe have their phenomenal appearance "here," neither of them could at the very same moment be elsewhere. They have "an alibi" (144), as Souriau puts it. Additionally, if a singular thing exists, it is never nowhere. That which we tend to specify as the very definition of the state of "real existence" is in fact the sole lot of things, of which the human condition bespeaks its exacting character: "It is a shame that we can never be in two places at once. But to always be in just one place, how much more stringent a demand is that!" (144)

But what corresponds to the case of the crumpled paper, what corresponds to the case of "singular" entities that are not subject to such conditions?

> The equilateral triangle in itself is the singular essence of diverse phenomenal appearances, of concrete triangles that can be distributed randomly throughout the world and separated, each from the others, just as people are distributed randomly while nevertheless participating communally in a humanity that is identical in them all. (144)

It's not at all as if, with the *réique* mode, we have finally discovered the real world. "Equilaterality" had to be instaured, and the instauration of humanity (a *leitmotif* of Souriau's), we might say, has hardly begun. As for singular things, the strictly anaphoric experience of the needle-hole prevents us from mistaking this pure mode of existence for some kind of "a temporal subsistence that would be guaranteed in a lazy and ponderous manner" (148). If indifference can be transversal to orders we prefer to keep separate, it is because this indifference has to be obtained without the guarantee of space-time that would serve as a frame for known things as well as the knowing mind. Neither must we ever confer upon things the power to act, that is, to explain what is produced over the course of time. Time, here, has an order, that's all. Farewell to those tiny bodies whose collisions are required to explain transformations and events. Farewell to the ever so comfortable opposition between objective reality and knowing subject.

The turn that Souriau gives to epistemology is quite extraordinary: since we have to enquire into the unique factors of reality pertaining to each mode of existence, it's as if every new scene enlists a new type of spectator. Previously the soul of a walker, captivated by a vernal scene, testified to the "vectors of appetition" of a phenomenal reality understood as a harmonious assemblage, which delivers the reality of this world. But when it's a matter of thought as the liaison of the system and of consciousness of singular existence in identity, the two vectors, things and thoughts, are co-produced. Thus we must take care not to make thought into that which is caused or authored by a psychic being. Cohesion and liaison are *implied by réique* beings, as a function of their very constitution:

> Indeed, let us be careful to note that thought cannot be conceived of as the product or result of the activity of a psychical being, which is itself conceived in a *réique* manner, distinct from the assembled thing, and which might be thought's subject or its separate support. Thought has no other support than the very thing that it assembles and feels. In certain respects it is purely impersonal, and we must keep ourselves from conceiving of it as it effectively is in the *réique* status by introducing into it everything we otherwise understand and know about thought. As it is implied by this status, thought is purely and simply liaison and communication. It is also consciousness, though only if that word is understood in the sense of a phenomenal glow. [...] In the final analysis, it is above all the systematic cohesion, the liaison, which is essential and constitutive here for the role of thought. We should even ask ourselves whether it is not a matter of a *factor*, rather than an *effect*, of thought. (147)

This is a decisive innovation: the known object and the knowing subject *do not pre-exist* this mode of existence. It's not that there is first a thought which then turns toward an object in order to extract from it the form. There is first of all "liaison and communication" and "systematic cohesion," what Souriau in a previous passage called the capacity to "remain numerically one," and *only then*, as a consequence, a particular capacity for thought, which he has the audacity to call "a phenomenal glow" … objective thought only glows when things pass by! In other words, it is not objective thought that is first: there are objects, or rather things whose circulation in the world

supplies souls with their rational tonality, which will find itself amplified and deepened by this offer. Thought "has no other support than the very thing that it assembles and feels" (147). This is why Souriau inverts the normal order by making cohesion and liaison "factors" of thought, not that which is referred back to thought as its "cause." The soul of the *réiques* leaves behind it a consciousness *more geometrico*.

The Réique Modes: What to do to Acquire a Soul?

We might object that what is thinkable for reason cannot be for souls. If we must accept that *res cogitans* and *res extensa* come into being together and through the same movement that brings into being a somewhat continuous spatio-temporal framework, then in what way might this apply to our consciousness? It doesn't stand up to scrutiny. We can do all the metaphysics we wish, but we won't be able to conceive the universality of mathematical theorems and the continuity of M. Durand in one and the same breath! But this is to forget that the indifference of *réiques* to their situation has been conquered. Or rather, what has been conquered is a form of *monumentality*. Souls, souls to be obtained, to be formed, to be tried out, these too, in this sense, are things. Precisely because they are wanting to *stand upright*.…

> If the word réique status seems shocking, and if "chosalité" seems inapplicable to the soul, let us reserve the word réité for the specific cosmoses of physical or practical experience; let us speak more generally of an ontic mode of existence that will be suited to psyches and also to réismes. All that we affirm of psyches, in noting them as a part of this same mode of existing, is that they have a sort of monumentality that makes of their organization and form the law of a permanence, of an identity. Far from compromising its life by conceiving of it in this way, we fail life to a much greater extent if we do not conceive of the soul as architectonic, as a harmonic system susceptible of modifications, enlargements, occasional corruptions, and even wounds.… In a word, as a being. (147-148)

What of these psychic beings in themselves, then? What of M. Durand is identical to himself throughout his various phenomenal appearances? Not at all a Durandian "phenomenal I" captivated by the countryside; nor a M. Durant radiating

happiness on the occasion of a new romance, stirred up with the pain of a love lost or the fear of love betrayed. We are dealing here with a "Durand-ity" that gives out these various appearances, that translates the "monumentality" proper to M. Durand and makes of his organization and form "the law of a permanence, of an identity." This Durand-ity is what Souriau calls a soul, or a "psychism."

It is possible that Étienne Souriau had an experience of what he would call his own "Souriau-ity," an experience of "self-possession in the indivisibility of personal identity" (148). We will recall the way in which, at the end of his thesis, the question of form was linked with the necessity of "taking cognizance of oneself." But it would fall to the philosopher of the work to show how this noble aspiration could be brought about in association with the basic ubiquity of the "ontic mode of existence," incorporating *réismes* and *psychisms*, and with the possibility of a positive psychology:

> What is absurd and crude in our thing-centrism [*le chosalisme*] is the way we consider the soul as being analogous to a physical and material thing—particularly with regard to the conditions according to which it persists. It is certainly more admissible, though still inadequate, to conceive of it on the ontic model of living beings and according to the ways in which they are conditioned. But it is up to psychology—to a psychology unafraid of all that is ontic in the soul (let it say psyche if it is wary of that word)—to say how they are specifically conditioned—which would include the plurality, the assemblage, and the counterpoint of souls; that entire interpsychics [*interpsychique*] that makes their ways of coming together into a cosmos. (148)

Étienne Souriau was the sort of psychologist who had no fear of the ontic, he was one for whom "having a soul" [*avoir une âme*] meant first of all being exposed to it "failing," to seeing it wither, to being mistaken about what might enlarge or diminish it, as well as being ready to respond to a wound inflicted on that soul by another. Whereas the art of existing proper to the phenomenon required a lucid radiance, without reference to what was other than itself, the soul of M. Durand does not boil down to a pleroma of moments of lucidity: it requires a cosmos. If the experience of love can have "the discrete and self-enclosed, stellar and microcosmically limited character

of the phenomenon" (138), the situation of M. Durand being in love, for that it is necessary that the object of love has not arisen suddenly and unexpectedly as if out of nowhere. And as Souriau drolly remarks, the same is true for the pipe he smokes, which he confidently reckons upon finding exactly where he left it. The psychologist who would set out to understand what remains the same throughout the phenomenal manifestations of M. Durand cannot abstract from a parallel and coherent grouping of other histories, from "a pleroma of specified *réique* existences, their histories harmonized in a common canon" (146). We're dealing here with an agentive thought [*la pensée agent*] (and not with a thinker who acts!) that implies and fashions cosmoses according to the different modes. According to the ontic mode there is a contrast, because things do not act.…

We can see how Souriau is extricating himself wholesale from the subject-object pincer grip. It's impossible to continue all the tug-of-war games played out by Kantian philosophy. Object and subject come into being together. Before him, if something had to be added to matter, it was in the direction of mind that one would have to turn, there was no other outlet. And if this mind was able to furnish all sorts of values, dimensions and magnitudes, these were absolutely cut off from any access to being itself—just as we might say of a country that it has, that it is looking for, or that it lacks "access to the sea." Kant illustrates this deficiency perfectly: he lines up the *Critiques* one after another, adding morality to religion to aesthetics to politics, but without being able for all that to bestow upon them being, which finds itself entirely monopolized by knowledge, which in turn is totally at a loss to understand how it is supposed to have objective knowledge of a world from which it is obliged, ultimately, to withdraw. In this book, however, things and psyches are two aspects of the same thing, at least insofar as they obtain to a spatio-temporal continuity—and "thing" must be taken literally here.

With this extraordinary definition of *réiques* we can begin to understand why classical philosophy was never able to cash in on multiplicity except by predicating it as one and the same substance: it never realized that it could grasp "objective" knowledge according to a highly specific mode of existence, to which it is advisable to settle all that is owed to it—and Souriau settles a great deal, as we have just seen—but *no more* than what

is owed to it. It's because he failed to respect this discipline that Aristotle, for example, believes he's speaking of different categories of being, while never extracting himself from a single mode of interrogation, that is, of knowledge. This is also why Kant, some centuries later, when setting up his own table of categories, does not envisage for a moment that they might all be in the same "key," such that his various approaches actually coalesce into a single *libido sciendi*. We have always exaggerated the mode of existence of things (moreover distinguishing it from the mode of psyches), acting as if it defined *all* the modes of being, when it actually provides one mode of being that subsists side-by-side with the others. This does not challenge the dignity, the originality or the truthfulness of knowledge, but it does assuredly challenge its right to wrest away the originality, the dignity or the truthfulness of other modes of existence.

With Souriau, the Kantian amalgam is well and truly unraveled. We have phenomena (in the sense defined above) circulating at last with their own "patuity," without having to respond to a support (behind them) or to an intentional subject (in front of them). On the other hand, above them we also have things whose circulations (if we can put it this way), leave as a trail or as a trace objective thoughts in the heads of those who allow themselves to be informed by them. In addition to this we have psychic beings, posing the question of their architectonic and of who might bring it about or ruin it. We are still in empiricism, but there is more than one dwelling-place in the kingdom of experience.

Souriau is not going to stop there, of that we have no doubt. Other modes of existence are still to come, all of equal ontological dignity. Thanks to him, we're finally in a position to count to three, and even higher than that: ontology can finally celebrate after centuries of forced abstinence! We have an end to the "metaphysical famine" (163)!

The Beings of Fiction are in need of our Solicitude

Do we finally have the right to grant existence to beings hitherto dismissed as belonging to the "purely subjective," for example, to the beings of fiction? To those phantoms, chimeras and imaginaries that are sometimes so inconsistent that we have great difficulty recalling or reconstructing the experience,

and yet which sometimes seem endowed with such an insistence that they seem more "real" than the M. Durands, Duponds or Dufours with whom we are summoned to coexist?

> Conversely, there are fragile and inconsistent entities, which, by virtue of that inconsistency, are so different from bodies that we may hesitate to grant them any manner of existing whatsoever. We are not thinking here of souls [...] but of all those phantoms, chimeras, and fairies that are the representations of the imagination, the beings of fiction. Is there an existential status for them? (150)

If they do exist, such beings must have a "positive *to exist*" (152), their own existential tenor. We must then resist the temptation of characterizing them according to what they all have in common, which would constitute a negation, for all of them:

> […] are fundamentally beings that have been chased, one after the other, from every controlled and conditioned ontic cosmos. This single, shared misfortune brings them together, and yet this does not constitute their gathering as a pleroma, a cosmos. (151)

Souriau is not referring here to "possibles" (not to be confused, as we will see, with "virtuals"), but to the beings of fiction. There is a consistency specific to the beings of fiction, a specific type of objectivity that Souriau describes by the pretty word *syndoxic*. In a certain way, we all share Don Juan, Lucien de Rubempré, Papageno, the Venus de Milo, Madonna or *Friends*. Certainly this is about *doxa*, but a *doxa* that is sufficiently held in common that we can recognize these beings as having a specific form of monumentality. Our tastes can vary, but they focus on elements that are sufficiently apportioned to enable a shared analysis. Has Don Juanism not moved out of the domain of fiction and into that of psychology? But Don Juan himself continues to exist. Paradoxically, while psychisms are able to appear and disappear, the beings of fiction persist:

> When Napoleon reread Richardson on Saint Helena, he carefully established Lovelace's annual budget; and Hugo, when he was preparing *Les Misérables*, tracked Jean Valjean's accounts for the ten years during which he did not appear in the novel. (Think about it: the *remote presence* of a character in a novel in relation to the novel itself; now *that* is a strong dose of the imaginary!) (152)

Incidentally it was in order to better grasp this form of syndoxic continuity specific to fictional narratives that Algirdas J. Greimas, a close friend of Souriau's, borrowed from physics the expression *isotopy*.[46] A narrative can only obtain continuity for its characters by means of repetition, since each page, each moment, each situation is different from another. This is what literary theory correctly calls *anaphor*, that which enables a form to follow the same journey throughout its continual transformations.[47] The same is true for a fictional narrative but in a different way, if anything is to persist it must be remade, and remade continually by way of the forms and their mode of reprise as it was defined early on in his writing by Souriau.

And yet, the beings of fiction lack something crucial, which differentiates them radically from phenomena just as much as from *réiques*:

> Their essential characteristic is always that the magnitude or the intensity of our attention or concern is the basis, the polygon of sustentation of their monument, the bulwark upon which we erect them; without there being any other conditions of reality than that. Completely conditional and subordinate in this respect, many things that we would normally think of as being positive and substantial are revealed, when we examine them closely, as only having a solicitudinary existence! By definition these are precarious existences; they vanish along with the base phenomenon. What are they missing? Ubiquity, consistency, *réique* and ontic poise. These *mock-existences*[48] or pseudo-realities are real; but also counterfeit in that they formally imitate the *réique* status, without having its consistency or, if we want to speak in this way, its matter. (154)

On the one hand the beings of fiction have a syndoxic objectivity, and yet on the other hand they depend on our *solicitude*. Humans do not necessarily produce these beings in the same way they receive them; but they must ensure their welcome and

46. Greimas, (1968). In that work, Greimas cites one of Souriau's curious books: *Les deux cent milles situation dramatiques* (1959). "Isotopy" is defined in the *Le Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé* as follows: "a group of repeated semantic categories that allows for a uniform reading of a narrative, such that it results in partial readings of texts, their ambiguities being resolved by means of the pursuit of a single reading."

47. Cf. Eco, (1979).

48. English in the original. [TN]

serve as their support—yes, as their reception!—by providing their "polygon of sustentation." It's as if works of fiction lean on us; as if, without us, they would fall down—rather like a Gallic chieftain standing on a shield that everyone had stopped carrying.… A strange metaphor that aims to describe an envelope so distinctive that it must enfold within its definition just as much its solidity (it's always the same Don Juan) as its lack of being (without an interpreter, Don Juan disappears).

> But we can also exist through the strength of others. There are certain things—poems, symphonies, or nations—which do not have access to existence through themselves. In order that they should be, man must dedicate himself to them. And perhaps, on the other hand, he might find in this dedication a real existence. (130)

This is a surprising modification of what sociology calls "aesthetic reception theory": the reader supports the work, but for all that he is not at liberty. He is no more at liberty than the artist, or the expert, or the one in search of a soul; he, like them, must dedicate himself. And this dedication has nothing to do with auto-mystification. The one who supports, in giving this support, can discover not a "mock existence," but a real existence. "Mme Bovary is me." And this is the case even if the being of fiction is only imitating "a *réique* status," even if there remains a frontier where this fictive world, this pseudo-cosmos, "dissipates and frays" (152). Indeed, in certain cases, even if the isotopy of the character is in question. What is this character doing here? How has he managed to get himself out of that impossible situation in which we left him?

To give an example, recall the way that Captain Haddock, in *The Land of Black Gold*, will never yield an answer to a question of this sort—a question concerning his crucial and unexpected intervention: we're only told that "it's quite simple really, and at the same time rather complicated."[49] We can imagine the shock felt by a young reader of the Tintin comics upon realizing that, because of that little swine Abdullah, he would never get to the bottom of a mystery over which he had been agonizing for many weeks. But we might also say that Tintin and Captain

49. This refers to an episode in the plot of the Hergé comic strip *Tintin au pays de l'or noir*, which first appeared in serial form in the Belgian newspaper *Le Vingtième Siècle* from September 1939. [TN]

Haddock risk their existence as beings of fiction at this point; they run the risk of being spurned by their readers. Hence, the characters of fiction find themselves in a situation of radical abaliety. They depend on us, but we don't know how to alter the balance [*en modifier l'assiette*].

Is this a strange mode of existence? Certainly, but how can we claim to speak of reality, to be faithful to experience, to be empirical, if we are not prepared to define very precisely how these beings exist and how they cause us to exist? What would we be without them? Readers, have you not come to understand who you are by reading about the adventures of Tintin and Snowy? Moreover, up to now, we haven't even alluded to the author, Hergé, for example insofar as he chooses to have Captain Haddock intervene in a way that he knows is inexplicable and will remain unexplained. Hergé, through whom Haddock is granted access to an existence he couldn't have without him; Hergé, who must ask himself whether the trick he's going to play on the reader might put this access at risk. Hergé has to ask himself the question: "is this feasible [*faisable*]?" It is to a question like this that a new mode of pure existence, one of the first degree, responds: the virtual.

Virtual Beings

If Tintin, Haddock, Snowy and Abdullah have their existence only in a precarious way, if they are "made of such stuff as dreams are made on" (156), then the virtual consists of no stuff at all, *and yet it exists.* It exists with an existence conditioned by a reality, but without that reality grasping or establishing it. We could say, for example, that Hergé discerned a virtual, dependent on the reality of a readership that was eager to understand what had happened; a virtual that this readership was conditioning, but not bringing to completion. It's not that Hergé devised an imaginary readership, authorizing an imagined possible. He discerned a virtual readership for which the actual readership was the "evocatory formula."

> Virtual existence is thus of an extreme purity, of an extreme spirituality. In certain respects, we might think of it as a purification of the imaginary, though the virtual always retains the

> characteristic of *abaliety*, which may depreciate it to some degree; it needs a point of reference. This is even what constitutes and defines it. The virtual is a conditioned conditioning, dependent upon a fragment of reality, which is foreign to its own being, and which is like its evocatory formula. (158)

Because the importance of the virtual, characterized here in just three pages, could easily be missed by the reader, we must make a brief detour to that previous work we have already mentioned and which Souriau references in a footnote: *Avoir une âme: essai sur les existences virtuelles*.[50] To continue with reference to our previous example, what was really at stake there was Hergé's soul, right from the very moment in which he "knew" such a thing was realizable, that sharp and lucid moment, in which the virtual plays out according to its proper patuity:

> It would be a grave error to suppose that these sharp peaks, these lucid points, emerge out of being "like the point of a sword emerges out of the sword." On the contrary, we must know the point of the sword as being more real in its acuity (however immaterial it is) than the sword itself, which it draws in some way by means of a reverberating effect.[51]

Hergé's readership, surprised, perhaps disappointed, and yet remaining faithful and attentive to these characters, materializes as if by "a reverberating effect." And the sharp moment in which it materializes is not conditioned by the soul of Hergé. On the contrary, the readership conditions his soul. Be careful: this isn't about the ontic soul, the monumentality specific to the equilateral triangle, the "*more geometrico.*" This is another type of soul, the soul that "fixes us," the singular thoughts that sometimes we have "a great deal of difficulty recalling and reconstructing," but which, when they manifest themselves:

> […] have in them something that makes them ours; a certain individual quality of the "I think," by which my own "I think" can be distinguished from that of my nearest neighbor. But let us be careful not to suppose that in the first place I am; and that this thought is therefore mine because it has received my stamp. The

50. Souriau, (1938), p.25.

51. Souriau, (1938), p.114.

> fact that it has a certain stamp, a certain *nota personalis*, is what outlines the me into which it can be incorporated. If this thought didn't or couldn't have it, it would never be able to belong to me. It is not the me that existentially and ontologically engenders these singular thoughts; it is all those singular thoughts that integrate this me. […] It depends on them for its reality. And in fact where there is no such thought, this me is absent.[52]

This is why in *The Different Modes of Existence* Souriau can claim that the most precious treasures of the inner life belong to the world of these presences that are an absence, that are always dependent on a fragment of reality that, foreign to its own being, constitutes its "evocatory formula." Once again, we see the extent to which Souriau is no Bergsonian. The flow of time does not save or retain very much. It fails, it loses, it omits. For the emphasis is not put on the treasure, on those singular thoughts that come to us without our having engendered them. What is dramatized is not the mode of existence specific to the virtual "for us," but rather the flurry of evocations to which we remain deaf:

> […] We live in the midst of a forest of virtuals that are unknown to us, of which some may be admirable, perfectly suited to our fulfillment, and yet we do not even think to glance at them, nor to realize them, except by way of dreams, in the sketchbooks of the imaginary. And so we direct our intentions elsewhere, toward absurd and unattainable ends, toward monsters. (157-158)

We must register the cry contained in that final phrase, the cry of the one who realizes, which sounds again in the 1956 text with the grand theme of existential incompletion:

> The bridge that no one thinks to build, of which we have not even conceived the possibility—but for which all the materials are available, and whose nature, span, and form are perfectly determined so as to provide the sole solution to a problem, for which all the data is complete though unrecognized—this bridge exists with a virtual existence that is more positive than the one that was begun, but whose completion was rendered impossible by a flaw or a faulty design. (157)

52. Souriau, (1938), pp.116-117.

As we'd expect, Souriau is not referring to the demiurge, to the creator God; the philosopher of the work to-be-made is not preoccupied by some Promethean fantasy. The question is not realization at any cost. Rather, the virtual carries out a dramatization of the "realizable." Souriau is the thinker of instauration, not of an impossible work, a creator seduced by fanciful imagination. The "realizable" is what the agent of instauration must discern at every point in the journey. With Souriau, the arrow and the target of intentionality are continually being reversed. There is no temptation toward phenomenology. There is no anthropocentrism. The question of the "realizable" means that instauration is divorced from the manifestation of the will or intentionality of a creator. There's never an *ex nihilo*, never a "*Fiat*" deciding in a sovereign manner what will come to pass, and neither can we ever say: "it is only a construction."

And yet, we are far from the end of the enquiry. For if it is the case that "the curve of the ogives, broken off above the columns, outlines the absent keystone in the nothingness" (156), the evocatory formula for the keystone constituted by these ogives bending toward each other does not have the efficacy of an appeal in itself (that of the vault that needs restoring). The virtual, as a pure mode of existence, does not have the imperative character that would differentiate the kaleidoscopic play of singular thoughts from the journey of one who is making a work. Virtuality must be endowed with a vector, the broken curve must welcome what will transform the evocation into a "to-be-made." And of course, Souriau will not appeal here to the will of a creator appearing, in the manner of a *deus ex machina*, so as to compensate for the weakness of the scheme. What this is pointing to is what he calls a second-degree problem in relation to pure existence, a problem that all this brings forward, but does not resolve: the problem of anaphoric progression. That's why we're not out of the woods just yet.

And it is here that we discover this strange plan in quincunx. Beginning with phenomena and ending with the virtuals, Souriau has unfolded modes of existence like a hand-held fan that moves from the most complete aseity to the most risky abaliety. It looks as though all that's left is to present the problem of anaphoric progression, for which the virtual provides the evocatory formula. But, as we'll soon see, all the

elements of the problem are not yet gathered together. The ontic modes of existence are not sufficient for it to be formulated.

THE END OF CHAPTER THREE AND THE QUESTION OF SYNAPTICS

As if the trials undertaken weren't already enough, Souriau is now going to attempt another that is even more difficult. It's as if respecting the patuity of phenomena, abandoning an entire epistemology of subject and object, grasping souls in their monumentality, having solicitude for the beings of fiction, and filling up the world with undetectable virtualities wasn't sufficient to define the journey of anaphor. And no, all those things aren't sufficient, for these modes remain unto themselves, whereas experience insists that they must be continually brought together—just as the statue in the sculptor's studio required the conjoining of phenomena, souls and virtuals. If it's therefore true that the work to-be-made requires multimodality, then it must be the case that the journey of anaphor should be defined in terms of its *passage*, the very passage through which the meeting of various modes becomes possible. Count all the ontic modes you like, suggests Souriau, pile them up in pyramids, you still won't have explained how to move from one to another. For moving, passing, tacking, sliding from one mode to another—this constitutes experience itself, and Souriau is first and foremost an empiricist in the manner of William James: he wants nothing but experience, indeed, but he also wants all of experience.

To help us understand transition as a pure mode, Souriau makes use of a comparison that even he agrees is a little dubious: a comparison between words (semantemes) and verbs (morphemes). The first communicate via the formula "it is, and it claims to be just what it is" (133); the second enact a transition. In this form, semantemes, that is the ontic modes, are necessary for instauration, for bringing a work into existence, insofar as success in the art of existing is always played out on a plane of existence determined by one of the pure modes. And yet they are found wanting insofar as they have nothing to say about the transition, the real, active alteration, the modal

innovation—about morphemes. Achieving clarity about what this transition requires: this is the trial Souriau submits himself to, leading his reader down an alleyway of Sphinxes whispering: "you shall never pass!"—and all the while we don't know if this intimidation is addressed to him, to the readers, to philosophy, or to this rather truncated book itself (let us hope it is not addressed to its commentators!).

The Shadow of God

How will Souriau help us appreciate the necessity of the passage (which he will soon be calling "synaptic")? Let's not count on him to make the job easier for us by taking a straightforward example. No, the example he chooses is: God! He's going to take on, or rather ask us to take on, God himself.… With this he will commence a new cycle of exploration that begins where the semantemes all failed in thinking the passage. If we undertake this trial, perhaps we'll be able to grasp what later on will constitute the journey of instauration.

We might suppose that Souriau is going to approach the question of God just as he did those of the pure modes. The door seems wide open to do so. After all, if the equilateral triangle exists just as much as Don Juan does, then how can God be deprived of existence? And yet, can we specify a type of existence appropriate for that which stands outside all phenomenal presence and benefits from no existential support, not even the "evocatory formula" that hitches the virtual to a fragment of reality? The noumenal God, the God of the philosophers and the learned, the God appended in one way or another to the ontic, can certainly constitute nothing but a pure and simple privation of existence.

However, to suggest that Souriau might conclude that "God does not exist" from this line of reasoning would show that we don't not know him very well. Indeed he draws an entirely different conclusion: that the range of modes of existence detected hitherto by the enquiry, the range of ontics, each defining one way of being, has found its limit. Is this limit involved with how the modes of existence are constrained by the phenomenon, or more precisely, by "the generosity of the phenomenon?" Could we not respond by saying that God presents

himself in the order of the transcendent? After all, why might it be the case that the problematic one [*le problématique*][53] should not also be defined by a type of existence—after all, the virtual certainly is?

> God does not manifest himself in his essence; otherwise he would be incarnated in the phenomenon and in the world; he would be of the world. Rather, he surpasses the world, he distinguishes himself from it; his "to exist" develops alongside and outside of it. His "to exist" therefore defines itself as transcendent existence. Whether you want to or not, you define this mode of existence. Even in imagining it, you are positing it (if only problematically) as a definite mode. Therein lies the force, the ineluctability at the heart of the ontological argument. (163-164)

By associating the problematic one with the renowned ontological argument, Souriau, as he so often does, ends up rearranging it. In fact, he's going to merge the question of the existence of God with the idea that was found in chapter II, the vacillation that causes us to pass from what responds for us to that which we must become capable of responding to:

> We can say: by taking responsibility for the ontic universe of representation […] you have taken responsibility for God. For he appears in it. In it, he represents the particular mode of existence that is appropriate to him and that his ontic defines. It is a transcendent, even an absolute mode. Now the onus is on you to prove that this mode must be eliminated, that this existence is really not an existence, that it corresponds to nothing. The burden of proof falls on you. (164)

As Souriau points out, this is precisely the strength of the ontological argument, that which allows it—if not to prove the existence of God—then at least to shift the burden of proof back onto those who deny it. But this strength, which is the strength of a claim of existence, implies that whatever makes this claim, whatever presents itself as an essence, should be capable of making a claim. Hence, its essence cannot be

53. The French noun *le problématique* is Souriau's idiosyncratic description of the God that is encountered via this mode of existence and will be rendered as "the problematic one" throughout. [TN]

conceived merely as a verbal construction. We might retort that there are other beings, for example mathematical entities, that seem to be conceived as verbal constructions, but which nevertheless tend to declare their existence, asking to have back that of which we have dispossessed them.

> The same goes for the majority of real essences. Even though we can follow them beyond the world by means of a provisional transcendence that (as we have seen) simultaneously deprives them of their "to exist," it is enough, in order to restore to them that "to exist," to draw them back into the heart of the world, where they are *essentially*. (164)

And yet if the ontological argument is to carry weight effectively, it will not have to do with a passage of this sort, one that passes from essence to existence or from existence to essence, because a passage of that sort only relates to real essences that are *of the world*. This could pertain to a fictional character, even though such a character exists only with a solicitudinary existence. But not to God as transcendent existence. Transcendence does not bespeak another world, but an entirely different way of being in the world, and thus outside it.[54] What *constitutes* the argument, what constitutes its strength, must come down to the insistence that the problem is posed "whether we like it or not." The existence of the problematic one "is in no way a kind of existence, but only the opening up of a problem pertaining to existence" (160). A problem that requires a response. If the ontological argument is to carry weight, then the question "what is the divinity?" must truly, indubitably have "made passage":

> The ontological argument will not, then, be a passage from essence to existence or from existence to essence, but from one mode of existence to another; [...] to whichever mode of existence we wish to affirm in the conclusion: God exists. It is the passage from one mode to the other that *constitutes* the argument. In any case, it implies that a positive response, in the form of a real, concrete proposition, has been given to the question: What is in question

54. Let's not forget that, since it is multimodal, there is nothing immanent about this world either, by definition, and that the patuity of phenomena has nothing to do with, for example, the quasi-transcendence of *réiques* which manage to remain identical to themselves like the needle that pierced the ribbon or the folded paper. At the very least we would have to say the "immanences" of the world.

> when we ask what the divine is? And that some kind of model, glimpse, conception, or example has at least been articulated for him; that he has been in some manner put in play, in movement, in action, in presence; that he has appeared before the court; that he "stood" [*esté*] in his own defense, just as Job had summoned him to do. (165)

No irony, here, only a "terrible demand" for any philosopher who wields the ontological argument without sufficient care, as if speaking of theories or things.

> A terrible demand. The only ones to respond to it—the only ones, among the philosophers, *to invoke the divine* [*s'object-ent le divin*]—are those who dare to make the Word speak (Saint Augustine, Malebranche, Pascal). In general, we could say that there is no divine taking of the stand [*d'ester du divin*] in the universe of human discourse, except for the twenty-some-odd pages of all the Scriptures of all religions, in which the impression of hearing a God speak in the language of God can be had. And twenty is a lot. Perhaps there are really only five altogether. (165-166)

A hundred million pages of theology, but just five pages where God himself appears after having been addressed *in his language*! Perhaps not even Saint Anselm fully realized what his argument literarily *implied*. So why worry about the paltry link between predicates and substance? What we have is the creation of a battleground, a judicial arena, more brutal than the ring in which Jacob wrestled with the angel, in which the addresser and the one being addressed find themselves convoked by the same mode of existence, absolutely specific to them. We must not by any means arraign Souriau for reviving a form of "Christian philosophy" here, since he claims that almost no-one has been able to meet this "burden of proof" and that the majority of words spoken "about God" or "of God" are nothing but deplorable category mistakes, which apply to a specific mode of existence a pattern cut from the cloth of others. Yes, of course, we might *miss* God, but this is not because pathetic humans, engulfed in the mire of immanence, should have believed the religious and finally turn their eyes up to the heavens: we miss God in the same way that we *miss* the phenomenon, that we *miss* knowledge, that we *miss* the soul, or even that we *miss*

fiction: because we are incapable of recognizing that each mode of existence possesses its own tonality and produces, by means of a reverberating effect, different each time, a way of having a different type of soul.

But we're not yet done, for might it be the case that wherever the passage is effective a transcendence is being corroborated, in the sense of a veritable existential exteriority? Yes, perhaps so, if the implication is that the divinity that ensues, the one that is given when man invokes the divine, is an agent. It is up for discussion, but this justifies, in any case, the conclusion toward which Souriau now leads us: it is in the passage that "the existence constituting the reality of this transcendence will be invested" (166), and this is the case even if the experience of this passage entails a "for-himself of God" [*un "pour soi de Dieu"*]:

> As individuals, we exist for ourselves. And if we are able to constitute ourselves in this mode of existence, we are cured of all dependence on the other and the elsewhere, of all abaliety. But in a universal view of this mode of existence, we are led to recognize it for other individuals, as well, insofar as we do not think of them as being for-us, but as being for-them. Is that not the way in which love thinks of them? We realize transcendence in our tête-à-tête with God, without ever departing from our own experience, if, in this dialogue, we are able to feel the for-himself of God; or else a for-him of ourselves, which changes the center of gravity of our tête-à-tête, so to speak, from an architectonic point of view. (167)

The originality of Souriau's approach is that he manages to insist that this experience does not entail a transcendent existence, but neither is it reduced to the status of mere illusion, whatever that might be. The fact of existence is situated in an inter-ontic relation—think of the individual who is loved not for us, but for her own sake. He warns us of the peril of this approach in a footnote:

> [The operation] succeeds in positing *its* God, in its reality in relation to itself. It [the soul of the man invoking the divine] takes the personality of *this* God upon itself by sacrificing itself as an individual. Thus, it receives its reward—or its punishment. It gets what it wanted. It gets the God that it deserved. (168)

But, whether reward or punishment, we must preside over the architectonic transformation of a mode of existence:

> There is no transcendent existence, in the sense that transcendence is not itself a mode of existing. The problematic transcendence must be coupled with a real existence, summoned to stand before the problematic entity, and that *alone* is what gives it its existence; the fact of transcendence is therefore in no way constitutive and modal. (168)

The fact that transcendence shows itself where existence invests in the modulation itself, that is to say, in a "transcendentalizing architectonic transformation of the mode of existence" (168), is a signpost of the journey we'll need to be following in order to describe anaphoric experience as precisely as possible, a journey that is becoming ever more perilous. We'll have to be able to consider modulations of existence. As for the investment in the modulation itself, this will resurface in chapter IV in an even more demanding guise. For Souriau, God is not added as a layer of being to other layers of beings, according to the ways of thinking of rationalistic theology. This adds an altogether more risky dimension to what it means to live and, indeed, to what it means to succeed or to fail.

> To live in accordance with a God—as has been said—is to bear witness for that God. But mind also which God you bear witness for: he is judging you. You believe yourself to be answering for God; but which God, in answering for you, situates you within the scope of your action? (212)

Synaptics and Prepositions

But, for the moment, the enquiry must continue. The necessity of the morpheme, the transition or the passage has just been affirmed insofar as they are elements of the problem of anaphoric experience *par excellence*, that is, of "invoking God." Considering philosophy since Kant has not even managed to count up to three, everything will have to be restarted. It's not for nothing that Souriau is the thinker of anaphor, that is, of reprise:

> Naturally, the cycle traveled thus far is only that of human knowledge. In any case, whether absolute or relative, this poverty is reason enough for the necessity to conceive of and to try out the Other as a mode of existence. (170)

Now we have to "try out the Other." Here the examination must proceed with the same discipline that was appropriate for the pure modes of existence: henceforth it will be a question of morphemes, no longer of semantemes. Thus, we will have to take great care not to confuse our account of passages with our account of the modes between which there is passage. We will have to take acts of passage as the only reality, as tenuous as every pure mode.

> The only reality would be the immense drama or the ceremony of such acts.… The beings therein would implicitly serve as props, like those in the imagination of a child at play. […] The man who is dying would be mistaken to think of his death as the temporal conclusion to the cosmic dimension of a being; he would fail to comprehend that the true reality of that moment would be the mystical drama of a death […] (171)

But how can the passage be grasped without reducing it into a mere combination of modes? Here, just as in the first part of the chapter, what we need is some self-evident fact on which we can lean. Faced with such a prodigious expansion of empiricism, some kind of handhold is needed. While it was the indubitable, sufficient presence specific to the phenomenon and its generosity that directed the initial enquiry concerning the ontic modes, it is the *event* that will fulfill that role for the enquiry concerning modes that Souriau calls "synaptic"—inasmuch as the very nature of a synapse is to "bring together," to make transition. The event is that which has taken place; an absolute of experience, "indubitable and *sui generis*" (172).

> In the having, in the doing, even in the being; in the being born or in the perishing, in the coming or the going, there is something that differs profoundly and fundamentally from the simple idea or meaning of these actions: there is the "what-is-done" [*le fait*]; there is the "this is," the "this is happening." I was holding this glass, I released it, and it shatters. (172-173)

This is precisely what the synaptic modes draw together, as if it were a new patuity, a new indubitability, something irreducible to any attempt to refer it back to the object of a reference. The patuity in view here is not that of a presence, which is specific to the phenomenon. "The connection to the *what-is-done*, to the event, is what is efficacious" (174). As an illustration, take what Robert Musil wrote about the stick which, when in the hands of the bearded man of science, the interlocutor of Ulrich, triggered the malicious temptation to use it to smash into smithereens a large, beautifully-glazed crystal vase.[55] This would have been an "irreparable, insuppressible, unretractable" (173) blow of the stick, a gesture that would have had efficacy only for him as the smashing of an admired vase—"*falsely murder'd!*," as Desdemona would say. But her complaint has no echo in the synaptic world. The patuity of the event deploys an entirely new cosmos separate from those that came before, while nevertheless overlapping with them, insofar as it is a stranger to the work and to the monumentality of the soul, and insofar as their destruction constitutes its occurrence, its only occurrence.

> […] we know what importance William James attached to what he called "a feeling of *or*, a feeling of *because*," in his description of the stream of consciousness. Here we would be in a world where the *or rather* or the *because of*, the *for* and, above all, the *and so*, *and then*, would be the true existences. […] This would be a sort of grammar of existence, which we would thus decipher, element by element. (174)

It is significant that Souriau refers us to the attention that radical empiricism pays to prepositions, and that he refers in particular to the stream of consciousness of William James. For James' stream of consciousness bears and handles that which is existent in the ontic mode, never ceasing to carve it up, to complicate it, to cause it to bifurcate, indifferent to all claims of existence. It's no longer a matter of engendering beings in continuity with one another, but of following "The modulations of existence *for*, existence *in front of*, existence *with*," (176) that make up the synaptic world. Hence he posits "divided selves," not captivated ones. The patuity of phenomena and the

55. Musil, (2011, 1978), p.327. Also cf. p.325 for a description of the "beard of the scholars." [TN]

patuity of events are woven together like a plait. The complexity of experience is restored, but without abandoning the fine differentiation of the modes.

However, readers believing themselves to be on familiar ground here, perhaps thinking they are re-encountering the grand tradition of pragmatism—having recently been taken up again in France—will find themselves short-changed. As soon as he's shown us the richness of this world, this alternative cosmos given by the synaptics, Souriau once again changes course. He skirts around two dozen enormous philosophical problems, notably problems to do with the passage of time, the status of the future, and the causality that was foreign to the *réiques*, as if he was ever so urgent to get to the real problem, the one he's been at work constructing from the very beginning. We will be less taken aback at the rather hurried nature of these considerations if we realize that above all else Souriau wants to avoid the project of a systematic metaphysics that would cause him to forget that it's the passage, the journey from sketch to work, that he wants to be able to qualify. In unfolding the pure ontic modes, and in throwing himself into the synaptics, his aim was not to say what they are, but rather to lay down an option for existence. We have to choose: being or action, to present (or dream up) a world of beings or to sacrifice this entirely stable ontic situation for a way of life in which connections with all beings will become "exclusively transitive and situated or constituted in the action itself, and according to its mode" (178).[56]

> We do not get to side-step this deity, existence; it does not get taken in by our specious words, which cover up a choice unmade. To be, and not to be in some specific manner, is of no value. Cut

56. The treatment of causality is typical of this option, for Souriau defines it as "having greater existence insofar as it operates synthetically—in its capacity as a dash—than the measurable elements of phenomena, which depend on it for their reality" (155). When he mocks what he calls the "miserable" Kantian antinomies, Souriau reveals the superiority of his method: the antinomies are not actually contradictory because one bears upon the ontic and the other on the synaptic (§ 103). We should add that Souriau's thesis, according to which the question of causality and of ontic substantiality cannot be associated, as if the fact of being the cause of something other than oneself constituted nothing more than an attribute brought in to complete substantial reality, finds dramatic confirmation in the history of rational mechanics. The dash is here replaced by the "equals sign": this is what sanctions the learned indifference with which the physicist will continually redefine the terms of this equals, depriving them of any possibility of claiming themselves to be real existents (cf. Stengers, (2003), pp.101-158).

> yourself from whatever existential cloth you like, but cut you must—and, as a consequence, to have chosen whether to be of silk or of wool. (179)

All we've done, then, is to prepare ourselves for Souriau's real problem, a problem he never stopped referring to throughout his text—the problem of the second-degree, as he puts it, concerning anaphoric progressions, such as when, for example, a perceptible thing progressively comes into existence where previously there lay nothing but a mere lump of clay. With this we come again to the question of risk and failure. Of course the sculptor acts, and the thing that comes into existence belongs to the ontic. But we would be missing the point if we were to suppose that the synaptic and the ontic join forces here in order to form a richer type of existence, such as to transcend the choice. That's not playing by the rules!

But Souriau does not just give up on exploring the synaptic world. So like Penelope he systematically undoes the web he had systematically woven together—or, more accurately, he undoes the temptation of systematizing modes he previously untied. Perhaps Souriau is the philosopher of the architectonic, but he is certainly not the philosopher of the system. For him, completeness does not come from counting the modes and seeking some reason to be sure that the count is complete. This is achieved by way of completely letting emerge what is required for the journey of anaphoric experience, and then being completely faithful to it.

> A deceptive attempt, a false clarity. What do you want from me, a metaphysical machine? Such a thing would deceive us all the more in giving us the impression of being in the presence of the elements necessary for a complete discourse. Which would be the most mistaken idea one could have of these modes. (182)

And the enquiry closes in an even more abrupt fashion as all of a sudden we are told that the modes are arbitrary. Clearly chapter I, which claimed to post a plan for the enquiry, did indeed lead us astray! The modes are certainly elements, but their selection has come down to convenience in one way or another:

> They must be taken as they are: *arbitrary*. Think about it in this way: a primitive painter can find on his palette the

> colored soils that furnish him with his base and his technical range: yellow ocher, red ocher, green clay, black soot. (182)
>
> Let us therefore resist any temptation to structure and to hierarchize the modes by explaining them dialectically. If you strip it of the arbitrariness that is one of its absolute characteristics, you will always lack knowledge of existence on its own terms. (183)

The modes are all of equal dignity; equal from the moment they are taken in their own terms. It's the "you must cut" that allows for the problem of the second-degree to appear, which is the problem of their unification. From his first chapter, Souriau has been making use of the analogy of colors, calling for a:

> […] thought [that is equipped] not only for all the multicolored rays of existence, but even for a new light, for a white light, unifying those rays in the luminosity of a *surexistence* which surpasses all those modes without subverting their reality. (101)

The reader emerges from chapter III somewhat shaken, dazzled by the vertiginous perspectives that have been afforded onto these interwoven cosmoses, but alarmed to see that he's going to have to start all over again in chapter IV. In all this time has he only been taught erroneous responses to the questions of the Sphinx? How many false answers will he be allowed before being devoured? The objective is to decipher the riddle and that, as we've known from the very start, can only come via instauration, which Souriau, employing a neologism, describes as being "at once the action of an ontic and its positing. It is ontagogic" (164). And he adds: "a philosophy of instauration will bring together both the modes of acting and the modes of being in examining how and by what means they might be combined" (164).

CHAPTER FOUR
AND QUESTIONS OF SUREXISTENCE

And here we encounter once again the plan in quincunx. The true anaphoric journey has still only been defined in terms of the pure modes, whether they be ontic or synaptic. The word that designates what we're looking for, as we know, is the word

surexistence. But only as long as we don't get thrown off course by the prefix *sur*, by referring back to how it is employed in philosophy or in theology. The meaning we should give to *surexistence* is precisely what we're going to have to work out.

We are gradually coming to know Souriau well enough to somewhat anticipate the route he will take. He will require two entirely different ways of thinking about *surexistence*: one in the mode of the "how many?"; the other in the mode of the "how?" The temptation will be that we interpret the general architecture in terms of the coming-together of all the modes in a harmonious whole. A whole which would, by nature, be plurimodal. But to do so would be to betray the injunction: "you must cut," and, even more so, it would be to betray the affirmation of the antitype with its anti-Bergsonian emphasis. Necessarily, then, Souriau will approach the question of *surexistence* according to another mode. As usual, he will pretend to have fallen into the trap of systematization, before demonstrating, with a sudden reversal, how to escape from it.

Surexistence against all Conceptions of Totality

The pure modes of existence must be understood, as Souriau has shown, as "elements," rather like the arbitrary range of colored soils with which the primitive painter created his work—except that here, of course, there is no painter. Or more accurately, we should say that here it is a matter either of the painter's life or of our own—a life that won't have the tenuity that is specific to the pure modes, a life that is requesting to be realized, not to be analyzed. The position of the problem can be defined, then, in terms of a request for realization that is confronted by the plurality of pure modes. Souriau will first of all consider the possibility that *values* might be that which is able to confer a status upon a life that is more than the sum of the elements with which it must work.

Just as we saw in chapter II in relation to the question of the intensity of the modes, Souriau's response calls upon certain conceptual personae, each of whom are attempting to attribute this power to values.

> [There is the type of existence that] seeks to realize itself according to its highest value, to situate itself with precision on a single plane, in the type of pure existence that will allow it to determine itself best. (195)

And then there is the type of person who seeks:

> […] a manner of being that is so complete, so rich, and so evident on the plane of both the sensible and the intelligible, the present and the atemporal, the abiding and the acting, that it resides—as if of a thousand facets—in all of these domains at once, and yet, surpassing each in assembling them all, does not entirely fit within any one of them. (195)

Here are two resolutions and a double movement: one heading toward existence, the other heading toward reality, toward accumulation, toward the plenitude of an assemblage. The big question, then, is to know whether we can avoid being torn in two [*l'écartèlement*]. Can we take the side of one mode of existence without cutting ourselves off from something more valuable? Can we look in the direction of a superior reality as a remedy for plurimodality without straying from existence? Souriau, however, breaks up the symmetry. Later on he will "cross the t's and dot the i's in a rather rough-handed way" (203). Our feeling that we have to actualize all our virtualities and unify them in one life is an abstraction, lacking the virtual that alone can mark out its feasibility. Who would advise a young man to be both a Don Juan and a saint *at the same time*, on the pretext that this embodies two possibilities instead of just one? (203) Father Charles de Foucault was a pleasure-seeker *and then* an ascetic, but he could never have been both at the same time.... *Surexistence* isn't at all a matter of mere accumulation. Here again it is a question of the difference between good and bad ways of protecting multiplicity from the danger of unification, as much as from the danger of dispersal. And for this to take place we must first of all stop thinking of the plurality of modes as something that needs a remedy!

In fact, values have nothing to do with the question of *surexistence*, because the former constitutes the diversity of types of existence as a problem, whereas, far from being a problem, this diversity is what "poses the problem of *surexistence*, if nothing more: if it does not posit *surexistence* itself" (197). Provisional

conclusion: the originality of *surexistence* cannot be assimilated to an axiology.

> It is not at all because it assembles or unites that a totalization entails an increase in reality. What interests us is a totalization, which, beyond the plurality of the kinds of existence, brings about something that not only embraces them, but distinguishes itself from them and surpasses them. If *surexistence* is to be defined, then, this must not be done through any axiological consideration, nor as a higher, more sublime degree of existence (though it can have such sublimity), but through the strict and severe idea of a passage to problems of the second degree, which concern existence, and yet protrude beyond its plane. (197)

But we're not there yet. We still have to address the idea that what is in view here is the realization of that which is possible [*l'idée de possible*], for out of this arose the powerful notion (in Souriau's time) of the most Real Man, next to whom we, by comparison, look like adolescents needing to be exhorted to develop all our "potential" [*potentalités*]. And yet surely a Man like that, who would be Master of all kinds of existence, represents no more than a fantasy? It takes more than merely positing, in a problematic way, the possibility of a complete existence, one that would assemble and surpass all the modes of existence, which renders us into sketches in need of completion; it must also be the case that the problem posed by such an existence should have a positive means of coming about, one that is efficacious in the sense that it should engage us in a journey toward completion.

> We can say [that this man] does not exist, not even with a virtual existence, if those various incipient modes do not, in their harmony, outline a completion, which would be like the mysterious contours of a unique being; and that he does not even exist with an ideal existence, if these mysterious contours remain indeterminate and vacant as regards the essential, which is to say, as regards a definite mode of existential accomplishment. (200)

Then to hell with that fantastical ideal, but just as much as to the notion of a solution proposed in this problematic way, as if from an unknown source. It's precisely this sort of "beyond

themselves" (203) that the concept of a mode of existence has allowed us to contest.

Understandably, the reader might wonder about all this. Why this long critical excursus (taking up 16 paragraphs out of the 22 that comprise the chapter) only to arrive at the very question that had already been formulated at the end of the previous chapter? Does this constitute a pedagogical procedure or an efficacious anaphoric progression? Souriau had to determine for himself what *surexistence* could do, without however repudiating the attempt toward full unity from which he dissociates it. In any case, he brings the journey to a close by evoking a question of the third-degree, the question of "the unification of all the possible modes of unification" (205). This question, which he doesn't take up here,[57] is not allowed to intrude because it presupposes that the way in which *surexistence* relates to existence has been resolved, as well as the links that are maintained between one and the other. Be alert: he has just five paragraphs left in which to solve the problem of the entire book.

A New Definition of Correspondence

This is where instauration will begin to play a positive role (finally!), and not only the role of a Sphinx repeating over and over again "work it out!" For instauration in and of itself attests to *surexistence* as a hierarchical and ordered pleroma. It does so because, as Souriau had already made clear when speaking of the anaphoric progression of the work, to produce a work "is also to choose, to select, to discard. And each of these actions *entails a judgment*, which is at once the cause, the reason, and the experience of this anaphor" (129). The book as a whole has sought to expose us to this very experience. And, as we've seen, it's what is conveyed in a dramatic way in the 1956 text where, at every moment in the journey of instauration, the agent is required to "work it out" at the risk of being mistaken, where he is required to make a judgment, but without having any point of comparison or reference. To instaure is not to represent to ourselves where we wish to arrive, and then mobilize the means by which this end might be realized. It is not to follow a plan. If reality is to be conquered, this will not be done in the manner

57. Although this is the question that he will consider in *L'ombre de Dieu*.

of a military operation, but in the manner in which perhaps the trust of a timid animal is won over [*se conquiert*]. One abrupt movement is all it takes for what was being achieved to be entirely squandered. If instauration is ontagogic, realizing the convergence of action and dream, it attests to this convergence as a journey of progressive determinations. It ascends "the Tree of Jesse or Jacob's ladder: the order of *surexistences*" (204). This is also why the work in the course of its accomplishment, despite being perfectly determined as existing at each moment of its journey, is equally a sketch, an evocatory formula for a virtual that is now not only feasible, but felt in the mode of the "to-be-made." Everything that is "to-be-made" "expresses and implies a *surexistence*" (209).

We can see that unification is not the business of a unifying agent. Souriau wants to have a unification that has no other principle or regulator than the demanding insistence that we declare [*qu'on prenne parti*]—for this thing, rather than for a thousand others. Just as the preposition "to" in "to-be-made" indicates, unification implies a synapse, a connection [*un branchement*], a bringing-together [*un abouchement*], what Deleuze would call a "double-capture" [*entre-capture*]:[58] "as they variously come together, the modes of existence bend their branches so as to form places for occupants among the many vaulted arches" (207). And it is vital that Souriau is precise on this point when we consider how tempting the notion of the ideal has been in philosophy just as much as it has been in ethics: these "occupants" are not ideal existences. "There is no ideal existence" (208). Nor does the opening out of existence onto *surexistence* have anything to do with some kind of problematic ideal, one that is eternally insistent, and eternally without reply. If Souriau is a mystic, he is a mystic *of realization*. "What is really at issue is the problem resolved, in the reality of its solution. It is not the ideal, but the reality of this ideal that is in question" (208).

But how does a solution that brings about realization imply *surexistence* if, as with everything that exists, this solution has itself declared for a particular mode of existence? For that which is *surexistant* never declares itself. "At most it might be

58. For more on this term cf. the entry by Alberto Toscano, "Capture" in Parr, Adrian, (ed.), *The Deleuze Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, revised 2010), p.45.[TN]

reflected in one of these modes—*per speculum in ænigmate*; and even then it is restricted to an existence that is modal and specular. Yet it is too rich in reality to be able to fit on that plane, or even on the various planes of existence that it assembles" (209).

Let's not be mistaken: what's at issue here is nothing less than the keystone for the whole demonstration or indeed the anaphoric progression proposed by Souriau. If it fails, if no sensible experience, no "fact of existence," can be adduced that attests to this reflection, making itself felt in the mode of the virtual, then Souriau would have been pursuing a fantasy and nothing would remain of his astonishing construction than its ruined columns.

It's toward the venerable idea of true knowledge [*connaissance vraie*] that Souriau will now turn, in asking that we do not rule out too precipitously the characterization of knowledge as the resemblance of thought and its object. For this characterization evokes "the *surexistential* reality, which would unite and coordinate what exists both in the mode of my thought and in the mode of the object (which is hypothetically different)" (211).

Let's recall that, thanks to the discovery of the *réiques*, and the simultaneous production of things and the faculty of reason, Souriau has won the right to make use of that old chestnut: the *adequatio res et intellectus*. He has purged it of what had been contaminating it, that which had rendered it an instrument of epistemological propaganda in the service of a science that was pitted against all human illusions. Correspondence no longer needs to be led astray by the ludicrous idea of a knowing subject that is counterpart to the known thing. It is now available in a fresh way, just as its noble etymology suggests: it responds to that which responds; it is commensurate with what it has instaured. With correspondence, the beginning and the end of the journey coincide; the sketch and the work. And yet it is not a solid line tracing over a dotted line in bold. This is what makes it different from a journey which, as Souriau wrote in 1956, prompts the agent at every moment to "work it out," foisting the question upon him: "what are you going to make of me?," and [what sets it apart from] the coterie of nihilist constructivists who sneer: "this question, it's you who have asked it; and the response is yours, and yours alone."

Here we re-encounter the very definition of instauration and the existential transition [it enacts]: that which answers for us, that "respondent" that is required for true knowledge, can we answer for it? Correspondence is restored to what it always should have been: an anaphor that has succeeded and that defines the successive conditions of its success as it goes along. And this holds true for science, for art and for religion, just as it does for ethics. At last the metaphor of the mirror, the one that has haunted philosophy, is smashed to pieces. Or rather, if instead [we can speak of] the metaphor as having been smashed to pieces, then the mirror can now be used as a synonym for the success of instauration, insofar as model and image are realized together by means of anaphor. Correspondence becomes possible again: "a *response* from the one to the other, forming a couple. The fact of this response (it does not matter if it is right or wrong) is the only existential fact here. There is an echo" (210).

There is an echo. Does this imply that something might be held in common, "a common reality having dominion over both of the two modes which respond to one another, at once" (189)? Could we not object that the involvement of a reality that does not exist, of a dominion to which only the attempt to attain true knowledge testifies, is only a version of the transcendental ideal, in Kant's sense of the term? Does this reality not depend upon the echo as a psychical reality? In other words, is this echo actually a fact of existence, like patuity or efficacy? Or to put it in a different way: is there a synapsis, an effective transformation of the one who attests to [*surexistence*]? At this point Souriau appeals to the nature of the experience alluded to at the end of his thesis, to that coming to awareness of oneself by means of a form that must be kept open to every kind of adventure, every kind of occurrence. The efficacy of a synapsis like that:

> […] is to feel, as a real passion, as a submission that modifies me without changing me, the fact of being under a gaze, of being illuminated by this vision of myself—and of being truly presented in a new kind of existence, for this being would not be of the same kind as I myself am. The person alluded to here is indeed the one who would participate in both of these modes simultaneously, while also overcoming their constitutive diversity. This *surexistential* being does not exist, but I myself can respond to him through an

> undergoing of the same kind as that by which he was defined. Undergoing the *surexistential*, in experiencing a modification that responds to it, and of which it is the reason (in the sense that the reason is the relation), is without a doubt the only way in which we are able to bear witness for it and be in a relation of action-passion with it. (210-211)

Of course, not every response is the response of existence to *surexistence*, just as for Souriau not every life is truly worthy of being lived. But there is no external standard, no reference at work here, as there was for the intensive modes of existence. It is necessary and it is sufficient that the mode of response from one existent to another should be a function of the *surexistential*, that is to say, that it brings it into play or implies it "as reason or as law of response" (211). And evidently this is what the act of instauration attests to:

> What made Michelangelo or Beethoven great, what made them geniuses, was not their own genius, but their attention to the qualities of genius residing not in themselves, but in the work. (211)

A formidable coherence. The keystone holds indeed. The trial has been passed. Perhaps, after all, we won't be devoured. Transcendence has been understood as a passage, as a real, active alteration, showing itself in the modal innovation that constitutes "the investment of existence in the modulation itself" (169).

But evidently all this holds only for those who ratify what Souriau has, since his first work, called a true life [*une vie veritable*]. This doesn't bother him in the slightest, we have no doubt. Success only has meaning if failure is possible. Souriau's aim is not to affirm that transcendence implicates, even if they don't know it, those who are content with the affairs of the body or the virtual riches of their souls. He's addressing those who have had an experience of this action-passion, of this involvement with the work, whatever it might be. Let them not moderate this experience according to what pertains to the modes of existence of the body or the soul. Let them know how to honor what makes them "spiritual" beings, whose mode of existence is nothing less than the investment of existence in the modulation of two others, the action-passion that attests to another form of reason, that is, to a relation with a something else. Let them

know that in this way they bear witness to a being that doesn't yet exist, but whose reality is "higher and richer than that of any of those polyphonic voices" (212).

The *surexistence* described by Souriau is completely opposed to any wager on transcendence. Perhaps there is a higher and richer reality, but there cannot be another world, and certainly not a world above this one [*pas de sur-monde*] offering a guarantee. And it's here, for the third time, that the theme of God resurfaces: "you believe yourself to be answering for God; but which God, in answering for you, situates you within the scope of your action?" (212).

We've already emphasized that Souriau's standard is composed of fervor and lucidity. The *surexistants* need us, our fervor, in order to exist, because fervor is a name for the modulation that bears witness to their reality. It's not a "generalized" fervor, a fanatical but confused spirituality. It bears witness to *surexistence* only if it engages in a work, which is always *this* work, the only work bearing witness to this *surexistant*—in a modal, specular way, certainly, and as a riddle. This is where lucidity is important, for assurance is out of place here. *Surexistants* are well and truly without idealistic excess, as if reintroducing in an underhand way a standard of value, a perfection, the fixed-point of a duty. We must dare to interrogate the mirror, to ask the question concerning reality to which we offer a hand-hold in existence.

> One love is annihilation in a communion with a false reality, forged in its depths of nothingness; another is a veritable work, creative and fertile. We can be tricked. We can suffer tragic confusion. To know—through the very nature of the work to which we bear witness when actually working to instaure it, and through the direct experience of the instauration—how to isolate that which *really* is plenitude and richness, is to know that which is most capable, in existence itself, of approaching *surexistence*. (214)

CONCLUSION: IT IS UP TO THE READERS TO UNDERTAKE THIER OWN JOURNEY

And so, do we not find ourselves back again at the closing words of the book, the ones that in the capacity of attentive and sympathetic guides we had offered to the reader as the summit to be attained? Do the readers now finally understand for themselves how it is that the world deployed by Souriau has become capable of "causing even the Gods in their interworlds to feel a yearning for the 'to exist'—as well as the longing to come down here by our sides, as our companions and our guides" (193)? Were the world to be reduced to two modes—object and subject—what god would be so mad, so masochistic or so ascetic as to yearn for that? But the world given by Souriau, with its pure modes, with its patuity and its efficacity, and with its *surexistence*, is this world not more worthy of being inhabited?

Hence the question we can't resist asking: does Souriau deserve the oblivion into which he has fallen? Is he a failed philosopher? It is legitimate to ask such a question, for Souriau himself never stopped thinking about the very conditions of failure. Did he ever have doubts, he who was in his day a teacher at the Sorbonne, a case-study of institutional success, and representing the self-assurance of a bygone world, with his patrimonial approach, his outdated style and his absorption in the monumental as much as in the idea of the artist at work? Did he feel himself vacillating as the successive blows of existentialism, phenomenology and, later, structuralism set out to eradicate the very idea of a work of art, architectonic projects of any sort, and even, in the end, the institution itself? For all that, sixty years on, it feels like the lay of the land in relation to risk and academicism has shifted in a profound way. It is the iconoclasts who seem passé and this mandarin who seems to have taken all the risks. Precisely because he recognized that an institution was as fragile as a work of art and because, from his first writings, he knew the feeling of how easy it can be to lose one's soul.

We might be tempted to pass before the astonishing conceptual architecture deployed by Étienne Souriau in the same way as Diderot predicted that future generations would pass before the massive edifice of rational mechanics, as provided by the work of Bernoulli, d'Alembert and Euler: contemplating it with fear and admiration in same way as those who, standing at the

foot of the pyramids, wondered at the strength and resources of the men who had raised them up.[59] But Diderot's prediction was optimistic, in accordance with his hope for a future in which an alliance would be forged between "those who are intellectually inclined" and "their more active colleagues,"[60] and in accordance with his disdain for those who in terrible solitude took up a body of work made to persist for centuries to follow.[61] We (unfortunately) can't inherit Souriau in this way. His voice really does seem to come to us as if from another world, a world whose inheritance remains to be inventoried.

And yet, for Souriau, to inherit is to re-make. If our reading has indeed tried to "re-make" Souriau, it was not to conserve, to allow what has been "re-made" to secure for itself [*conquérir*] continuity. There's no doubt about it, continuity has been smashed to pieces. As far as we are concerned, it's been about opening an approach to the question that is perhaps the question of our times, the question that is now pressing down on the majority of people of the Earth. It is the question of an alternative way of inheriting, with special attention placed on the "how?," since a continuity that has been smashed to pieces does not simply put itself back together again. "How are we to inherit?" is the question with which we are confronted when reading Souriau. It is a "questioning situation" to which he himself did not provide a response, but in the face of which he had the strength to show "that it implicates us."

59. Cf. Diderot (1999), IV, p.37. [TN]

60. Citing Diderot (1999), I, p.35, "L'intérêt de la vérité demanderait que ceux qui réfléchissent daignassent enfin s'associer à ceux qui se remuent." [TN]

61. Cf. Diderot (1999), XXI, p.43. [TN]

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