

“ORIGINAL WHOLENESS.” (Living) Nature Between God and *Technê*.*

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I. THE WONDER OF (LIVING) BEING

Philosophy, Aristotle teaches us, begins in wonderment.¹ The chief object of this wonderment is being itself; there is nothing more original and—for that very reason—more worthy of wonderment than being.² Since life is an original intensification of being *tout court*, living beings are correspondingly worthy of an original wonderment in their own right. They are original wholes—original wholes that *technê*, art in the broadest acceptation, cannot replace, but can only “imitate,” albeit in an original manner. I will return to this point at the end of the essay.

By the term “living being(s),” and its various equivalents (which I will be interchanging quite promiscuously), I mean living *bodies* (rather than, say, angels, whom I won’t be discussing here, though they are also living beings). To call

* For J. M. S., A. N. S. and C. C., in gratitude.

¹ The following reflection is primarily an effort of speculative retrieval of some aspects of Aristotle’s thought. It is not a scholarly study in the conventional sense, though I hope it may also be of interest to scholars.

² In being, the question-able and the source of the answer coincide, and each aspect undergirds the other (albeit in different respects). This is why wonderment over being can be the *telos* of a conversion to philosophy in Aristotle, as Mark Shiffman magisterially argues in Shiffman, “The Language of Inquiry.”

living bodies “original,” then, is to say that they are not inanimate bodies on which an extra property called “life” supervenes; rather, they are bodies whose life, whose *being alive*, constitutes them as the bodies they are in the first place.³ Aristotle puts it like this: “[F]or living things, to be is to be alive.”⁴ Life (in the sense of “to live” [*zên*]) is the being (in the sense of “to be” [*einai*]) of living things.

In a certain sense, the original wholeness of living things can be known only through itself, though this of course does not mean that animate bodies are purely *a se*.⁵ Life, the *actus vivendi*, constitutes the living being as what Goethe calls an “*Urfhänomen*,” or “original phenomenon,” which makes itself available for understanding—precisely as a unity of intelligibility and mystery. In reading the following Goethean remarks about the original phenomenon, then, we should keep in mind their eminent applicability to living things and the wonderment they evoke: “The highest that man can attain . . . is amazement [*das Erstaunen*], and when the original phenomenon causes him to be amazed, then let him be content; it can grant him nothing higher, and he should not seek anything further behind it, the limit is here. But men are usually not content with the sight of an original phenomenon; they think there must be something further, and they are like children, who, when they have looked into a mirror,

³ This constitution of course involves a certain dependence on the inanimate, but we must not forget that at least some inanimate things are themselves original substantial wholes. Physics and chemistry reveal something of the nature of inanimate substance, but an adequate understanding of the precise scope and significance of this revelation would require re-reading it in light of a sound natural philosophy (and, of course, of a proper metaphysics: metaphysics without physics is empty, physics without metaphysics is blind). Failure to do so leads inevitably to an identification of claims about material structures or processes (themselves highly selective, stylized representations of physical matter) with claims about the nature of material entities *tout court*. While these structures and processes certainly belong to, or at least display an aspect of, the nature of physical entities, they do not exhaust this nature, since they ultimately owe their determinate pattern or order to substantial form—whose originality is obscured by the kind of identification I am warning against here.

⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 4: 415b 13.

⁵ Living things always exercise their *actus vivendi* in a given place, even though that *actus*, as such, is not reducible to the “spatio-temporal.” The life of living things is both immanent in, and transcendent of, their place; it is both objectively localizable and subjectively co-constitutive of their *locus*. For the same reason, a phenomenological account of life in its original subjectivity has to be complemented by, and integrated with, an account of life in its equally original objectivity. To be alive is also—in different ways—to receive oneself as a being in the third person: one of many for others.

immediately turn it over to see what is on the other side."⁶ In the remainder of the essay, I hope at least to suggest the sense in which such "amazement" over (living) nature's wondrous originality is the source and end of all genuine knowledge of animate being—and also gives all genuine art the ideal that it strives to "imitate."

II. *PHYSIS*: ORIGINAL WHOLENESS

In order to understand better what the originality of life consists in, I propose that we take a step back to reflect for a moment on being as it appears within the framework of the world of "natural and corruptible forms."⁷ Within this context, being is a radical beginning (*archê*), whose original, ontologically saturated self-opening is the world's "worlding" in the first place (if I may appropriate an expression of Heidegger's for my own ends). This beginning or principle is what Aristotle calls *physis*, that is, "nature." Nature is centrally, though not exclusively, living nature. In the present section, I will be talking about nature in general. The next section will focus on animate *physis*.⁸

When Aristotle writes that "of the beings, some exist by nature [*physei*],"⁹ we should not hear these words as the observation of a bored classifier, but as an exclamation of philosophical wonderment over the existence of an *Urphänomen*. We catch this tonality of wonderment when Aristotle goes on to say that the entities that have *physis* "radiantly manifest themselves [*phainetai*] as surpassingly different [*diapheronta*] with respect to the things that do not stand together by

⁶ Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, 275.

⁷ Aristotle, *Physica*, I, 9: 192b 1.

⁸ Animate nature cannot be reduced downwards to inanimate nature, and inanimate nature cannot be reduced upwards to animate nature. Living being is original with respect to non-living being, and non-living being is original with respect to living being. A corollary: The error of mechanistic biology does not lie only in its attempt to reduce the animate to the inanimate, but also in its assumption that we can give a satisfactory explanation even *of the latter* without referring thematically to its original wholeness—an assumption that then leads willy nilly to under-appreciation, or even outright denial, of the originality of *animate* substance as well. For an illuminating discussion of this point, see D.C. Schindler, "*Analogia Naturae*."

⁹ Aristotle, *Physica*, II, 1: 192b 8.

nature, in that each one of these has in itself a principle of motion and stopping.”¹⁰ Aristotle underscores the impossibility of (totally) ignoring this manifestation in the middle of *Physics*, II, 1, where he presents the thought experiment of the man who is, *per impossibile*, unacquainted with *physis*; such a man might well run through syllogisms about natural entities, but, like someone born blind reasoning about colors, he would argue in a (for him, at least) purely formal way. That is, he would *understand* nothing.¹¹

“[A]ll [things having a nature],” Aristotle writes, “are a substance [*ousia*].”¹² A natural substance (in the sense of “natural” that is relevant here) is, of course, a body; and, as a body, it is a whole composed of parts. One way to conceive *physis*, then, is to think of it as the innate principle by having which a body is the primary, original source of its parts’ “standing together.”¹³ *Physis*, in other words, is the first principle of the natural body’s original wholeness, the source and quintessence of the four-fold causality by which it holds together from within as the body that it is. Note that the possession of such wholeness is also the criterion that distinguishes natural (that is: *physis*-endowed) bodies from artificial ones,¹⁴ as well as the ideal standard that the production of such artifacts “imitates.”

¹⁰ Ibid., II, 1: 192b 12-13.

¹¹ “(But that it is possible to suffer this is not unclear. For someone being blind from birth might syllogize about colors.) So that necessarily the reasoning [*logos*] of such people is about names, but they understand nothing”: *ibid.*, II, 1: 193a 6-9.

¹² *Ibid.*, II, 2: 192b 33.

¹³ As the primary source of its parts’ standing together, the natural body also *gives itself* to them as their common *telos*. This self-gift is so original that the parts exist primarily for the sake of this *telos*; they are primarily parts and only secondarily things in their own right—whereas just the opposite is true in the case of artifacts such as lawnmowers. Let me stress that this implies no degradation of the self-being of the parts within a natural whole. In fact, if the natural body gives itself to the parts as their common *telos*, this gift is generous enough to include dependence on them as well. Such dependence, however, would be impossible if the parts were not sufficiently differentiated to count as relatively autonomous things in their own right. Corollary: The parts are governed from above monarchically and, at the same time, “willingly” collaborate democratically from below—and both dimensions are intrinsic to the “telic” character of the natural body in its original wholeness.

¹⁴ This becomes clear when Aristotle refers to artificial entities as ones that “do *not* stand together by nature” (Aristotle, *Physica*, II, 1: 192b 12; emphasis added).

Now, part of the original wholeness of the natural body consists in its maintaining itself as such through some kind of internally generated motion.¹⁵ Underlying this affirmation is the Aristotelian quasi-definition of nature as a principle of motion and rest, which I will discuss at the end of the essay. In the meantime, however, I want to underscore another point, namely, that natural motion unites (*analogice loquendo*) necessity and freedom. Think of water flowing or a rose blooming or an eagle flying: If the water did not (sometimes) flow or the rose (sometimes) bloom or the eagle (sometimes) fly, it could not *be* water or a rose or an eagle (and this makes flowing and blooming and flying a necessity); nevertheless, when the rose water does flow or the rose does bloom or the eagle does fly, it displays something analogous to a majestic freedom precisely in the midst of this necessity (whose essential character is therefore not alienating, but constitutive¹⁶).

¹⁵ This is also true of at least some inanimate bodies, that is, of the ones that are genuine substances. Of course, the principle of motion in inanimate substances is only analogous to the principle of motion in living ones. Whereas the latter are capable of self-motion, "it is clear," Aristotle writes, "that none of [the former: inanimate substances] moves itself. But it has a principle of motion, not of moving or doing, but of suffering" (*Physics*, VIII, 4: 255b 29-31). The substantiality proper to the inanimate thus occupies a hard-to-define terrain below the threshold of living being: On the one hand, non-living substances are unlike living substances in that they are incapable of *self*-motion; on the other hand, they are like living substances in that they instantiate natures having certain characteristic motions. True, inanimate substances are moved rather than self-moving; they make no active individual contribution to their own motion beyond just being what they are (indeed, there are no proper individuals among inanimate substances, almost any quantity of which counts as a numerically one instance of their kind). Nevertheless, if inanimate substances are moved passively, this motion still expresses *what* they are. They are substances, possessed of a natural, original whatness, even if they are helplessly delivered over to it more than they are actively in charge of it. Yet this helplessness, too, is itself part of their very whatness. Indeed, this helplessness represents a perfection that, while making its original debut (with all the attendant *éclat*) in the inanimate realm, is analogically present all the way up the *scala naturae* (even living things, for example, exercise self-motion on the basis of movements belonging to them simply in virtue of what they are, rather than of anything they themselves do individually). It would be interesting to reflect on how this good helplessness makes living nature vulnerable to mechanistic biology, while at the same time setting an immovable *a priori* limit to the latter's explanatory power. For further discussion of all this, see D.C. Schindler, "*Analogia Naturae*."

¹⁶ And this is true not just in spite of, but also because of, the concomitant necessity of participating in, and receiving from, the surrounding world. The necessity of occupying a place in the world is in the first instance a good that is bound up with the very gift of being oneself in the first place.

I bring this point up now because it has a crucially important theological implication, recognition of which sets the stage for the next section of the essay. The implication is this: Even the humblest natural body is a window into the heart of God, who causes it in its original wholeness by a self-communication that is free of both randomness and constraint. Nature is God's world-causing self-communication as it is received in matter; when we see a natural body maintaining itself through motion, we get a glimpse in space and time of what that ontological reception looks like. Let us now ponder how this recognition illuminates the distinctive character of living beings within the great economy of the natural world.

III. SELF-MOTION AS ORIGINAL IMITATION OF GOD

In the foregoing section of the essay, we caught sight of the original wholeness of natural bodies, manifested in the motion by which they express themselves as the wholes that they are. It is now time to turn our attention to the original wholeness of *living* bodies, which I propose to approach in light of the feature that Aristotle considers to be the central *signum* of animate nature: *self-motion* (which is itself an analogical reality). Although I will say something about the nature of self-motion, my main concern here is to highlight its *theological* significance; self-motion, I will be suggesting, is what fully reveals the beautiful wholeness of living nature as an "original imitation" of the divine—which as such both limits and founds art in the broadest sense, the topic of the final section of the essay. Put another way, self-motion is a way that living nature "theologizes," and the capacity for self-motion is *therefore* constitutive of animate being even (precisely!) as a resolutely intra-worldly reality.

In *De Anima*, II, 4, Aristotle tells us that "all things stretch out appetitively for that [the eternal and divine], and they do all that they do by nature for its sake."¹⁷ This sentence recalls Aristotle's suggestion in *Metaphysics*, XII that the divine is like a *telos* for all other things, which "moves [them] as loved

¹⁷ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 4: 414b 1-2.

[*erômenon*]."¹⁸ This teaching implies no denial that God is the radically originative "*principle*" [*archê*] on which "the universe and nature depends."¹⁹ Rather, it is a way of underscoring the extreme generosity of the divine principle itself: By making himself the *telos* of their desire, God gives all natural beings the chance to appropriate him as their *archê* without becoming him—and so completes the *originative* act by which he communicates to them a share, not only in his being, but even in his very originality as the source of being.

God is more interior to natural beings than they are to themselves, and, just so far, he is transcendent of them as well. This simultaneous divine immanence and transcendence gives a real unity to all *physis*. At the same time, it ensures that this unity always comes realized in an ordered multiplicity of analogically related unities. "To on [*physikon*] *legetai pollachôs*," (natural) being is said in many senses. But this "saying" itself reflects and completes (from within *and* from without) the analogical unity of nature, whose primary embodiment is the cosmos itself as an original whole subsisting in the unceasing mutual exchange of its members, living and non-living—an exchange by which all cosmic entities jointly reveal, and share in, God's world-grounding self-communication.

By reason of its constitutive dependence on the divine *archê*, everything that participates in the analogical community of natural entity is inherently dual in its undivided wholeness.²⁰ Living beings bring this (analogically) common dual unity to a new, particularly intense level of self-expression. Their dual unity now includes self-motion, which accordingly becomes the characteristic that distinguishes them from inanimate entities.²¹

Self-motion embodies dual unity in part through a unique interweaving of independence and dependence: On the one hand, the living body initiates its

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, XII, 7: 1072b 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7: 1072b 13-14.

²⁰ The unity of natural being lies no more all on the side of form than it lies all on the side of matter. Rather, natural being is an inherently dual unity, enmattered form and informed matter, and the two co-principles are undivided without collapsing into simple identity. This dual unity—and here I return to the point being made in the body of the essay—expresses the received character of the unity proper to natural entity, which is one in itself through dependence on Another who is more intimate to it than it is to itself.

²¹ Though it also involves dependence on inanimate being in many ways: think of self-*locomotion*, which would be impossible without a place to move in.

own motion from within; on the other hand, this initiation, as the transforming assumption of motions originating from without,²² continues to depend on these motions in its very assumption of them; indeed, it continues to depend on them *for* that very assumption. Self-motion, then, is a concrete unity of action and passion, indeed, of self and world, inside and outside, substance and appearance. This interplay is the living being's constitutive desire for God—translated into the language of its material embodiment in space and time, which is to say, the language of an unchosen, yet connatural (and so good) participation in the world as a pattern of exchange characterized by a beautiful wholeness (cosmos).²³

Self-motion is at once the *grandeur* and the *misère* of animate beings within the economy of the natural world. It is their *grandeur* because they *can* move themselves; it is their *misère* because they *must* move themselves. This is because, unlike God, living bodies must rest upon the sustaining embrace of a non-identical material “without which the[ir] good cannot be.”²⁴ It is important to stress, however, that the necessity of relying on matter is not arbitrarily imposed on the living being from without,²⁵ just as matter itself is not an evil (though it makes evil[s] possible). Neither matter, nor existence in matter, is a privation, but rather a potency—a potency to achieve one's own wholeness in the very act of

²² The life of living things involves their continuous *transformation* of something that is “outside” into something that is relevant for their own life. The living thing's *Umwelt* consists of items that are potentially relevant for its life; its self-motion consists in transforming them into items that are actually so relevant. Self-motion involves, of course, physical change within the living thing itself (that is partly dependent on the *Umwelt*), but *what* self-motion (and so the physical change it involves) most essentially and properly *is* is precisely the living thing's receiving and making the *Umwelt* as actually relevant to its life.

²³ On the one hand, the living being subsists in a desire for God that is constitutive of its very substance *tout court*. On the other hand, this Godward desire has an intra-worldly manifestation (and enactment) in the self-motion characteristic of living things, which implies at once independence from, and (good) dependence on, the rest of the cosmos.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, XII, 7: 1072b 12.

²⁵ Aristotle devotes *Physica* II, 9 to showing that matter is a necessary presupposition of a material whole, even as this presupposition itself presupposes, in the sense of being for the sake of, the wholeness that is going to be embodied in it. This is why matter never comes raw, but always as formed, as the “apt matter” fitted to the form it is supposed to incarnate. Matter is never just matter, but always exists as, or on the way to and from, some natural body. One could say that matter, *in concreto*, is the body itself considered as the *receptive* supposit of the act that makes it be—and so of the divine self-communication that constitutes it in existence.

receiving it (and that achievement) from and with others.²⁶ If "[t]he divine cannot be envious,"²⁷ then neither can matter; matter shares in divine generosity—as the “mother” that receptively “co-causes” the genesis of things through union with “god-like” form.²⁸

What I've just said suggests that, for Aristotle (at least insofar as he is true to his own principles), the duality inherent in living being's original unity not only does not undermine that unity, but is actually part of its very originality. Thanks to this duality, in fact, the living being represents a new unity that is not merely a diminished copy of God.²⁹ The living being is an imitation *of* God but is not an *imitation God*. If I may be permitted to coin a paradoxical-sounding expression, it is an “original imitation” of the divine.

The living being, then, imitates God, but one of the things it imitates is precisely his uncaused originality as the beginning, middle, and end of all

²⁶ Aristotle, *Physica*, I, 9: 192a 3-6; 13-14.

²⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, I, 2: 983a 2-3.

²⁸ For these expressions, see Aristotle, *Physica*, I, 9: 192a 13-14; 16-19.

²⁹ This statement depends on a particular reading of *De Anima*, II, 1: 412a 6-9, where Aristotle enumerates the three dimensions of the same one natural *ousia*, which are matter, form, and the composite. In my mind, it is significant that Aristotle introduces the second item on the list, form, with the word “*heteron*.” This word can of course mean “second,” but its use here also seems to imply an intentional contrast with the first item, matter, to which Aristotle expressly ascribes an inability to be a “this something” “by *itself*” [*kath'hauto*]. The interplay of self and other is thus a key element in the passage being considered here. It is as if Aristotle were saying that, lacking selfhood on its own, but being the potential for selfhood, matter becomes a self through what is other to it, namely, form. But at this point, Aristotle introduces the third item, the matter-form composite, with a turn of phrase that, in a straightforward reading, simply means “and, third, what is of these [matter and form].” Nevertheless, I would read Aristotle as (also) saying “and, *as a third*, what is of the two.” I opt for this perhaps idiosyncratic reading here because it seems to me to bring out two points. First, as a self-through-another, composite substance, whether it is aware of this fact or not, is an other at once for itself and for another. This “at once” of the two aspects constitutes a kind of “thirdness,” a unity that consists in a synthesis of identity and difference. (Note that Aristotle speaks of matter's being the potency to constitute a “this something.” The “*ti*” is what Aquinas calls the *aliquid*, which is the *unum* as at once an other for itself and for another, though perhaps only a third party will be aware of this simultaneity). Second, and connected with the first point, if the composite substance is a “third,” it is because its compound unity is neither the first—God—nor a mere “second”—a second(-rate) deity, but something new: God's original firstness as received and displayed in a material medium that is neither juxtaposed to, nor in competition with, him. In a word, the “thirdness” of the composite is its character as an original imitation of God in matter, which is to say: a natural body.

causality. The life of animate beings is a received self-constitution, a caused uncausedness, a derived originality. This originality, let me stress once more, is due not least to matter, a fact that likewise has a theological depth: God, in the very act of communicating himself, produces matter as the receiver of his gift and, at the same time, lets matter originally co-produce the gift it receives.³⁰

IV. (LIVING) NATURE BETWEEN GOD AND *TECHNÉ*

The living being is an “original imitation” of the divine. Imitation, however, is not the same as emulation; animate nature does not so much aspire to become God as it does to reveal him within the limits of space and time. Indeed, this very limitation is essential to the originality of living nature’s imitation of God. For, just as the constitutive limits of the portraitist’s materials help inspire his original rendering of the sitter, so, too, the constitutive limits of material

³⁰ It is sometimes suggested that Aristotle believed matter to be an independent principle existing everlastingly alongside God. But if Aristotle holds that God is the source of nature and the universe, then he is just so far committed to holding that God is somehow also the source of matter. True, Aristotle thinks that there can be no first motion. Nevertheless, a Christian who affirms a first motion need not repudiate the kernel of truth contained in the Aristotelian denial of it. Instructed by the doctrine of creation, the Christian can ascribe the first motion to an entity whose most original genesis is not itself a motion, but a radical being-created-out-of-nothing; the creative act originates both the creature and its (limited) duration in one and the same communication of the *actus essendi*. Let me underscore an important implication of this: God creatively brings things into being in some sense already constituted as the supposit of the very *actus essendi* by which he makes them be (and by which he also makes their reception of the *actus essendi* be). This insight clearly valorizes receptivity vis-à-vis the act of being, but it arguably also suggests something more. Aristotle himself already saw that a received act intrinsically includes reference to its receiver. But does not the hypothetical necessity of this reference build into act itself a kind of reception of the receptivity of its receiver?; does not the receptivity of the receiver therefore become an analogue of a kind of hyper-receptivity in act itself? Meditation on this hyper-receptive dimension within act—which requires consideration of the non-subsistence of created *esse* as an aspect of its perfection—thus leads naturally to a further question: Is there something like a hyper-receptivity even in Pure Act, that is, in God himself? In answering this question, we need the guidance of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr, in dialogue both with Aquinas and with certain Fathers of the Church such as Athanasius, Cyril, and Maximus the Confessor, who did their metaphysics in light of their theology of the eternal generation of the Son (and vice versa). Together, these masters would help us re-think Aristotle’s doctrine of act and potency in the direction of a metaphysics of being as gift that both transcends and deepens it.

embodiment enable nature to paint an original portrait of God in a new, non-divine medium. Only, in the case of living nature, the painter depicts the Divine Sitter by painting a self-portrait—and by *being* the very self-portrait that it paints. This self-portrait, let us add, reflects God's generosity as much as his majesty, in an indissoluble union of dependence and independence, of "*bassesse mêlée avec la grandeur*."³¹

As I noted in the introduction to this essay, the original wholeness of living *physis* is something that *technê* ("art" taken in the broadest sense) cannot replace, but can only imitate. Nevertheless, just as living nature is an original imitation of God, so, too, art is an original imitation of (living) nature.³² "Art," writes Ananda Coomaraswamy, "imitates nature in her manner of operation, that is to say God in his manner of creation, in which he does not repeat himself."³³

In *De Anima*, II, 4, Aristotle says "the artisan merely changes [the matter] into actuality [*energeia*] from inactivity [*ex argias*]."³⁴ Heidegger tries to capture the non-technological understanding of art implicit in this passage when he says that the "silversmith" is responsible for the sacrificial bowl, but not "by . . . effectuating the finished sacrificial bowl as the effect of a making."³⁵ We can

³¹ Bossuet, "Panégyrique," 26.

³² This reflection on art as an "original imitation" of nature has implications for experimental modeling in the modern natural sciences. The entities discovered by physics, chemistry, or biology are not fictions; otherwise we could not speak of their discovery, but only of their invention. Nevertheless, experiment is a form of modeling. Such modeling, moreover, is a way of actualizing potencies that are really present in the modeled thing, but are not actualized in the configuration given them by the model except in (sometimes highly) artificial circumstances. These circumstances are truly revelatory, but their revelatory power is limited by their partial artificiality. One implication of this recognition is that entities such as atoms or molecules are only analogous to what Aristotelians call substances, but are not themselves substances in the full sense (they are not even what Aristotle would call the "elements").

³³ Coomaraswamy, *Philosophy of Art*, 34. It is important to stress two points in this connection. On the one hand, art manifests, in act, potencies hidden in the originality of natural entities themselves; art, then, is blind (and so impotent) without permanent obedience to the antecedent given of natural form. On the other hand, this obedience liberates human intervention into its originality—even as this originality therefore consists as much in reception as it does in origination. The whole art, if you will, is not to oppose these two aspects, but to see them as inseparable, irreducible dimensions of the original goodness of one and the same artistic efficacy.

³⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima*, II, 4: 416 b 1-2.

³⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Technik," 9.

agree with Heidegger that the originality of artistic production must include a kind of selflessness that somehow receives the finished work in the very act of bringing it forth.³⁶ But we must also register a sharp, and, indeed, essential, disagreement with Heidegger as well: If the originality of art is going to be truly *po(i)etic*, as Heidegger himself wants, then it must also be originaive; and if it is going to be originaive, then it must also be able to “effectuate . . . the effect of a making.” Any overcoming of technology must include a restoration of instrumental efficiency to its original honor.³⁷ Of course, this restoration would also require a new awareness that obedience to natural form—which we can reveal only if we first receive—is intrinsic to the true originality of *technē*.³⁸

Aristotle offers a quasi-definition of nature as “a certain principle and cause of being moved and resting in that thing in which it primarily exists as the reason for that thing’s being itself [*kath’hauto*], instead of being only accidentally present

³⁶ See the rest of Heidegger’s discussion, *ibid.*, 9-12.

³⁷ Heidegger’s objection to technology is not that it sees *poiēsis* as essential to truth. His objection is rather that technology construes *poiēsis* as a humanly controlled application of instrumental efficiency. Indeed, technology for Heidegger just is this construal; this is why, in his view, technology systemically conceals from itself its own essence as a form of “truthing” (and this concealment is not a moral lapse, but part of the congenital concealment of being itself). Given all of this, it becomes clear that Heidegger does not seek to rescue truth from *poiēsis*; rather, he seeks to valorize *poiēsis* as essential to truth—by liberating it from its technological construal as applied instrumental efficiency. From one point of view, this liberation would look like radical passivity; from another point of view, however, it would look like radically spontaneous poetic play. We can agree with Heidegger insofar as he intends to recover something like the Aristotelian doctrine that art does not deliberate. At the same time, we need to be clear that non-deliberative art does not dispense with the appropriate technique, but generously supplies it—precisely as part of the original inspiration that guides the artist in his use of it. Put another way, even instrumental efficiency is the expression of an originaive generosity that unites productivity and receptivity in one basic attitude. By the same token, we need a metaphysics capable of affirming the original goodness of being, since otherwise we cannot identify, much less properly rearticulate, the valid kernel of Heidegger’s attempt to reconcile ancients and moderns through a more originally *po(i)etic* sense of truth.

³⁸ The maker does not arbitrarily utilize instrumental efficiency, as if it were a neutral tool entirely at the disposal of his deliberate choice. Rather, the relation between the maker and instrumental efficiency is much more intimate. Indeed, fundamentally, the maker himself is an efficient instrument of his art. The point I want to stress here is that this very anonymous obedience—which presupposes a certain priority of natural form over human making—is itself liberation into the maker’s own purest originality.

to it."³⁹ It is significant that this passage mentions both motion and rest in the same breath. We tend to think of the latter as the goal of the former, and this is of course true. Nevertheless, there is also a sense in which naturally moving things—especially self-moving ones like the blooming rose or the flying eagle—are at rest *in* their very motion, even as they move *in* their very rest.⁴⁰ When Aristotle ascribes causality to the *telos*, he is (among other things) underscoring a consequence of this unity of *stasis* and *kinēsis*: Motion is not just a means for attaining rest, but is also an expression of rest itself (the word *telos* means both goal and completion and plenitude).⁴¹ In other words, motion is both means and end; it is an instrument that is intrinsically good. This intrinsic goodness both limits instrumental efficiency and liberates it to be just the opposite of technological aggression. It frees making to be the exercise of what Wendell Berry likes to call "good work."

The theme of this essay has been original wholeness, the luminous integrity that comes to light in nature's original self-opening, which is in turn the intra-worldly analogue to God's originative self-communication. This self-opening, like Angelus Silesius's "rose [that blooms] without a why," is gratuitous. But the splendor of the blooming rose is not a mere show, however sublime; it is filled to

³⁹ Aristotle, *Physica*, II, 1: 192b 20-24. The natural body possesses its original wholeness *ab initio*, just as it comes into being all-at-once as the complete *suppositum* of its own proper act of existence. As enmattered form and informed matter, the natural body displays its original wholeness by maintaining itself as a whole, not only *ab initio*, but by virtue of an *initium* that is internal to it from its very inception. It is this internal beginning that Aristotle has in mind when he proposes the quasi-definition of nature cited here.

⁴⁰ Aristotle offers a quasi-definition of motion as the "entelechy [*entelecheia*] of what is in potency as such" (*Physica* III, 1: 201a 10-11), or, according to the rendering of Joe Sachs, "the being-at-work-staying-itself of whatever is potentially, *just as such*" (Sachs, *Aristotle's Physics*, 74). Just as potency is both lack and power, motion, which is potency's being at work staying itself, has a double dimension: It is the effort to fulfill a need (through pursuit of a goal) and it is the display of innate power as it were for its own sake. Or, in the language I have been using here, it is both a means to rest and an expression of rest always already achieved (in principle: *principium*). A crucial point we need to bear in mind is that the two dimensions, while distinct, are also inseparable, and that each lends its own coloration to the other. (An implication of this would be that we can distinguish gratuity and economy, beauty and utility, but we cannot disjoin them at the risk of distorting the nature of both.)

⁴¹ While we have no choice but to cause our own motion, the *telos* guarantees that this necessity is the original freedom to be ourselves, and so to show ourselves at our original best. *Telos* is the unity of two inseparable aspects of causality: (constitutive) necessity and (ontological) freedom. Put another way, *telos* is causality as freedom and freedom as causality—both aspects united in what I have been calling "original wholeness."

overflowing with self-communication. This self-communication is in a way the origin of the four causes.⁴² Nevertheless, their fourfold causality is not posterior to the origin. It is not a second thought tacked on after the fact; rather, it is the principle in its self-articulation, and this articulation—like the Logos in the Trinity—is both distinct from, and co-essential with, the principle. If it were not, the principle would not be truly self-communicative, hence, it would fail to be a true principle. The gratuity of the blooming rose, then, is neither a-rational facticity nor mechanical necessity, but the very pith of a logic of gift, which co-evally articulates the original wholeness of *physis* as the fontal plenitude of causality, just as (if I may be permitted a leap that is not a leap) the *filiouque* articulates the generosity of the Father as the fontal plenitude of the Trinity. If the silversmith's good work recapitulates nature's own bestowal of causality (including efficiency), and if this bestowal recapitulates the original (and originative) generosity of the Creator *ex nihilo*, this is ultimately because the Creator is none other than the Father who is himself in generating his coeternal Logos and in co-spirating with him the Holy Spirit, the bond and fruit of their consubstantial communion.

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⁴² Nature, the principle of self-motion, is also the principle of all that is responsible *per se* for self-motion: the four causes.

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