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LIVING ON (BORDERLINES)

**The Ethics of the Event of Lived Human Relations
(Merleau-Ponty / Derrida)**

I am no more aware of being the true subject of my sensation than of my birth or my death. Neither my birth nor my death can appear to me as experiences of my own, since, if I thought of them thus, I should be assuming myself to be pre-existent to, or outliving, myself, in order to be able to experience them, and I should therefore not be genuinely thinking of my birth or my death. I can, then, apprehend myself only as 'already born' and 'still alive' – I can apprehend my birth and my death only as prepersonal horizons: I know that people are born and die, but I cannot know my own birth and death. ("Sense Experience," PoP, 215-16)

In my present, if I grasp it while it is still living and with all that it implies, there is an ek-stase towards the future and towards the past which reveals the dimensions of time not as conflicting, but as inseparable: to be now is to be from always and for ever. Subjectivity is not in time, because it takes up or lives time, and merges with the cohesion of a life. ("Temporality," PoP, 422)

My life must have a significance which I do not constitute; there must strictly speaking be an intersubjectivity; each one of us must be both anonymous in the sense of absolutely individual, and anonymous in the sense of absolutely general. Our being in the world is the concrete bearer of this double anonymity. ("Freedom," PoP, 448)

Forever unable to saturate a context, what reading will ever master the "on" of living on? For we have not exhausted its ambiguity: each of the meanings we have listed above can be divided further (e.g. living on can mean a reprieve or an afterlife, "life after life," or life after death, more life or more than life, and better; the state of suspension in which it's over – and over again, and you'll never have done with that suspension itself) and the triumph *of* life can also triumph *over* life and reverse the procession of the genitive. I shall demonstrate shortly that this is not wordplay, not on your life. What tack shall we take [depuis quel bord; lit.m "from what side," "edge," "border" "shore ...] to translate the ambiguity of an other-words? (Derrida, "LIVING ON: Border Lines," 76)

'Then, what is Life? I said...the cripple cast
His eye upon the car which now had rolled
Onward, as if that look must be the last,

And answered ... 'Happy those for whom the fold
Of. (Shelley, "The Triumph of Life," lines 544-48)

Preamble

The last poem that Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote – before drowning off the coast of Italy – was “The Triumph of Life.” He did not finish it. The achievements of life, life triumphant, and death – the triumph over life – arrive at a curious confluence – the place where life is no longer life, but rather death, and the place where life carries on, survives its own limits through a poem about life.

“Then, what is Life?” the poem asks. The cripple sees what goes by, looking, casting his eye upon the vehicle as it goes by. “As if that look must be the last” – the last look, the last seeing, the last vision, the last time that there will be a sighting of others. The poem does not say that it is the last. It only says “as if” that look must be the last... The *als ob*, the “as if” the seeing were the last. It may not in fact be the last, but it is experienced “as if it were...” The last is always a border, a limit, an extreme. On the other side, there will be something else. “Then, what is Life?” is the question. And the question is posed at the moment which could be the last moment in which there will have been vision, seeing, perception.

But then an “answer” comes as well. “Happy those for whom the fold/Of” ... The poem breaks off. Shelley never finished it. The limit is marked. It was 1822 and the poet was sailing on July 8th with his friend Edward Williams on a new boat, the *Don Juan*, back from Livorno (on the Western coast of Italy). They were drowned in the bay of La Spezia. In effect, the poet Shelley meets the limit of life, the end of living. And the last words of the poem are “Happy those for whom the fold/Of”... The contrast between the last sighting and those who are happy is quite special. Between the lived perception and the experience of those “happy few,” those others “for whom the fold of...” What could be at the fold? What could mark the difference between the cripple who sees for the last time and those happy ones “for whom the fold of...” something will have been something. But perhaps it does not really matter what it is that is beyond the fold, perhaps it is the “fold” itself that matters. It may be that the fold is the collection of those who are of a certain sort – those others... But it may also be that the fold is the very place where the asking of the question “Then, what is Life?” takes place – at the fold between the cripple and the happy ones on the other side. Beyond the borders of the cripple’s ken are those happy ones for whom the fold which both separates and brings together their own world with that of the cripple. “Then, what is Life?” will then be a question that happens between people, between the one who looks possibly for the last time and those happy others on the other side.

Life, then, or at best the asking about the happening of life at the fold between the one and the many, between the perceiving one and the happy others.

1. Merleau-Ponty and the experience of personal horizons

I am no more aware of being the true subject of my sensation than of my birth or my death. Neither my birth nor my death can appear to me as experiences of my own, since, if I thought of them thus, I should be assuming myself to be pre-existent to, or outliving, myself, in order to be able to experience them, and I should therefore not be genuinely thinking of my birth or my death. I can, then, apprehend myself only as ‘already born’ and ‘still alive’ – I can apprehend my birth and my death only as prepersonal horizons: I know that people are born and die, but I cannot know my own birth and death. (“Sense Experience,” PoP, 215-16)

For Merleau-Ponty, the Merleau-Ponty of *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945), my experience of my own birth or my own death are not my own experiences. My birth and my death would be beyond the frame of my own experience. Should they in fact be within the frame of my experience, then I would have to presume that I were in some sense “outliving myself” – a kind of “survivre,” “living beyond” myself. To experience one’s own life or death, then, is to go outside oneself, to be in a place other than where one is, to be at the outskirts of one’s own being. And since, according to Merleau-Ponty, this is not possible, then if this “I” were presuming to be thinking of its birth or death, it would in fact be thinking of something else and not at all its birth or death. My birth and my death are outside the frame set by my “personal” experience.

So from the position of a subject, there is no option that the subject could have access to its birth or its death as a “personal” experience. Yet there is a horizon to the subject’s experience. The subject can know about its life and death, but the subject’s life and death cannot be experienced directly, personally, in the subject’s own name.

The subject can only “apprehend” itself as “already born” and “still alive.” Hence when the cripple in Shelley’s “Triumph of Life” casts his eye on the car which had now rolled onward, as if that look must be the last, it is nevertheless as someone who is “still alive,” still perceiving, still experiencing the world personally. He will not have outlived himself, will not have survived himself, but will be experiencing in a kind of lived present. And yet, in the perception, in the apprehension, in the experience of himself as “still living” and “already born,” there is also a limit, a fold, a border, a horizon to his personal life. This border, Merleau-Ponty calls a “prepersonal horizon.” “I know that people are born and die, but I cannot know my own birth and death.” In 1945, Merleau-Ponty himself could not know that he would himself die sixteen years later at the young age of 53. That piece of information would be outside the frame of his experience. He could only know “that people are born and die,” but he could not know his own birth and death. All this is a matter for a kind of phenomenological epistemology: what I know and what I can experience, what the subject knows and what the subject can experience. This is as such not a matter for an ethics. Of course,

I can speak of character, trying to achieve good character. I can attempt to be virtuous in my life. I can ask about my choices and my responsibilities, my duties and obligations. But to the extent that these are uniquely and exclusively my own, the gesture is not yet ethical, not yet a matter for what the phenomenological tradition (from Husserl to Sartre to Merleau-Ponty) has called “intersubjectivity.” And yet, for this phenomenological tradition, every experience that the subject has is already intersubjective, already in a world with others, already experienced intersubjectively.

Is this intersubjectivity a matter for a phenomenological epistemology or is it an ethics? Is it about Life or is it about being-in-the-world? Or to put it another way, can it also be a matter of ethics? The ethical would have to go beyond the frame of the subject’s experience. Though at times, one almost thinks that the Kantian categorical imperative is just a “thought experiment” for a single personal subject. I have to think about the law that might be construed from the maxim of my action. Can I do that in isolation from other people? As a thought experiment, perhaps the answer would come in the affirmative. But there is another sense in which the limits of my experience raise the question of my relation to others. The birth of a child or a grandchild enters into one’s life. The death of a dear colleague or friend enters into one’s own life. I experience this birth or this death just as I experience the life of the other person. Or is there a difference? There is a living vitality to the living other person. Another person’s birth or death is a crossing over a line from non-life to life or from life to non-life. But the living other person is already in relation to me, and I to that person. And furthermore, there is an ongoing relation between us that belongs neither to me nor to the other person. In this fold between us is the question of the ethical, the ethics of a living relation. Ethical life, then, is not mine nor yours. Ethical life happens in the event of the between us, at the horizon of my personal experience and at the horizon of yours. This is all still good phenomenology.

But what if one were also to say that “Life” happens in this between?

2. Merleau-Ponty, intersubjectivity, and the cohesion of a life

In the penultimate chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception* (on “Temporality”), Merleau-Ponty writes:

In my present, if I grasp it while it is still living and with all that it implies, there is an ek-stase towards the future and towards the past which reveals the dimensions of time not as conflicting, but as inseparable: to be now is to be from always and for ever. Subjectivity is not in time, because it takes up or lives time, and merges with the cohesion of a life. (“Temporality,” PoP, 422)

Subjectivity, for Merleau-Ponty, “lives time.” With the question of the meaning of “subjectivity” also comes the question of “Living time.” Does a

subject live time? Is there a subject which can “live time.” Or is it that lived time (*le temps vécu*, in the Bergsonian-Proustian sense) is not mine, not something that belongs to a subject, not a characteristic of a “subjectivity,” but what happens at the limits of what I can call “my own,” of what is “mine,” of what is part of my “personal experience?”

There indeed seems to be a shift in Merleau-Ponty’s sense of “life” from the 1942 *Structure of Behavior* to the 1945 *Phenomenology of Perception*. In the *Structure of Behavior*, the “vital order” is more limited than the “physical order,” which includes all forms of physical being – things, rocks, tools. The vital order is limited only to that which is alive – presumably from plants and trees to animals and humans. The human order, however, is limited only to those physical beings which are living and which are also human. As Merleau-Ponty states in the final chapter of *The Structure of Behavior*, the physical order is already consciousness of the physical, the vital order is already consciousness of life, and the human order is already consciousness of work. This means that the experiencing of the physical, the vital, and the human are all matters for consciousness – “my” consciousness. What the subject knows or experiences to be physical, vital (living), and human work is what counts as physical, vital, human.

The human, in effect, the unique theme of *Phenomenology of Perception*, then, is already the human living of the physical world and the vital world. But where is Life? Not quite the question at the end of “Triumph of Life,” but something proximate to it. Where is Life? Not “What is Life?” The Life in question here is already human life. And human life is not what I experience directly, personally, any more than I experience my birth or my death. Human life is already at the limits of my living, the everyday experience of the human subject. But how does the human subject experience it? And is there a human subject that “can” experience it?

In the final chapter of *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes:

My life must have a significance which I do not constitute; there must strictly speaking be an intersubjectivity; each one of us must be both anonymous in the sense of absolutely individual, and anonymous in the sense of absolutely general. Our being in the world is the concrete bearer of this double anonymity. (“Freedom,” PoP, 448)

Human life, “my life” is not constituted by me. I do not constitute the significance of my life. The significance of my life is already somewhere else. Where is this somewhere else? If there is to be a subject, as Merleau-Ponty has already indicated, this significance of my life may be a “prepersonal horizon” – a limit, border, horizon – but not in fact inside the frame of my personal experience. There is of course the usual problematic of the “pre-“here. What kind of “field” is this pre- (pré, in French). Early on in the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty called it a “phenomenal field,” a broad field

of experience. But now we understand that it is “intersubjectivity.” The “pre-“ is the place of “intersubjectivity.” The concept of “intersubjectivity” presumes a notion of “subjectivity,” which Merleau-Ponty held onto – for “dear life,” we might say – until perhaps *The Visible and the Invisible* (1961) – like Shelley’s *Triumph of Life*, an incomplete work at the time of his death.

Intersubjectivity, then, would have to be situated at this “pre-personal horizon,” this limit to subjectivity, this border of my experience, this fold between myself and other people, in the place of intersection (what is called “chiasmatic” in *The Visible and the Invisible*). Would it not be better just to call it “human life?”

But then Merleau-Ponty goes on to speak of an “anonymity” that characterizes both subjects, both persons, but positions that meet at this place of “intersubjectivity, this place of human life. Then he speaks of “our being in the world” as a “double anonymity.” A “double anonymity.” Individuality and generality, he suggests. But there is also a double anonymity in the very relation – the ethical relation – and the event of the ethical relation between persons, positions, identities. This place of difference inserted within the double anonymity of “intersubjectivity” is the locus of “human life.”

There is nothing anonymous about my experience of my body. My body is the site of pleasure and pain, but embodiment is already relational, already in the place of the event of the lived relation. In other words, although I live my body with its horizons and experiential limits, embodiment is not in the same place as my bodily experience. Rather embodiment is marked off in the subject’s relation to other bodies. And embodiment is the articulation of this double anonymity of “intersubjectivity” as the locus of “human life.” But in the end a multiple anonymity proliferates in the embodied interstitial spaces between us. Subjectivity will have been displaced into the locus of this differential space of relationality, sexuality, desire...

3. Derrida and living on

Forever unable to saturate a context, what reading will ever master the “on” of living on? For we have not exhausted its ambiguity: each of the meanings we have listed above can be divided further (e.g. living on can mean a reprieve or an afterlife, “life after life,” or life after death, more life or more than life, and better; the state of suspension in which it’s over – *and* over again, and you’ll never have done with that suspension itself) and the triumph of life can also triumph *over* life and reverse the procession of the genitive. I shall demonstrate shortly that this is not wordplay, not on your life. What tack shall we take [*depuis quel bord*; lit. “from what side,” “edge,” “border” “shore ...] to translate the ambiguity of an in-other-words? (Derrida, “LIVING ON: Border Lines,” 76)

Living on... succession, survival, marginality, going beyond life, reinforcing life, making life prevail, warding off death, going beyond death, salvation beyond death, and on. Living on both marks off what is at the

horizon of what Merleau-Ponty considered to be “my” phenomenal field and what is beyond that horizon. Living on highlights the “being alive” – not in the subject’s experiential space, but rather in the space of difference in which the event of the lived relation takes place. I am not responsible for my living on, but there is responsibility that happens in the event of the lived relation. The responsibility does not belong to me, nor to you. It is not that I am not responsible for my acts, for my choices, for my action, but rather that the embodied event of lived relation, the living on, the survival, does not belong to me, but rather to the event of the relation. The event happens. Responsibility happens. They happen at the outskirts of my body, at the limits of my action, at the place of intersection between, at the place where my body survives through embodiment.

Like “Triumph of Life” and *The Visible and the Invisible, Eyes Wide Shut* was the last work by Stanley Kubrick before he died. After the conclusion of the film, one wonders whether his eyes are wide Open or wide Shut. Sometimes when one dies, one’s eyes remain wide open. Sometimes they are shut. In order to see, one’s eyes need to be wide open. In a dream, one’s eyes are shut, as if “wide shut.” The film *Eyes Wide Shut* is a cinematic version of the Austrian Artur Schnitzler’s *Traumnovelle*. A dream novel about living a dream. In the film, the young doctor (Tom Cruise) lives out, enacts, a series of events that push his experiential world to the limits. This is contrasted with the young doctor’s wife (Nicole Kidman who was still at the time married to Tom Cruise) who enacts a massive sexual dream in which she sleeps with a navy officer and then is “fucked” (to use her expression) by many other navy men. In her case, it is a dream that she reports to her husband one night when he comes home from an extraordinary series of events. He then carries this dream with him throughout his coming days, obsessed by the images of his wife being taken by the navy officer and then by all the others. He cannot remove these images from his experiential world. He lives the consciousness of these images. But embodiment of their enactment, the lived relation that he has between himself and his wife is at the limit of his consciousness, at the border of his experience of his own body, at the place of the relation between himself and his wife.

The young doctor is placed in many extreme circumstances: a wealthy friend at a party is having sex (upstairs) with a young woman who overdoses on drugs and the doctor is asked to assist in reviving the naked woman; the doctor is called to the house of a female patient whose father has just died and who professes her love for him, kissing him on the lips to his amazement; the doctor tries to brush these events off as he walks through the streets of New York and he is accosted by gang of youths who mistake him for a “fag,” a “homosexual” – an attractive young man wearing a long dark overcoat; the doctor is lured into the apartment of a prostitute whom he ends up paying without having had sex with her (discovering the very next day that she tested HIV positive); the doctor takes a cue from a pianist friend who lets him know the password to one of the most unusual masked high society sex orgy rituals

anyone could have imagined; the doctor is then warned that he has intruded into a world where he does not belong and the woman (by the name of Mandy) who overdosed at the first party takes his place in a dire and fatal retaliation/ substitution. In all of these circumstances, the young doctor is pushed to extreme conditions. His life is on the line. His reputation is on the line. He is on the line.

Upon escaping from this rich north shore Long Island world of sexuality, fantasy and danger, he returns to his home in the city in the middle of the night. He awakens her from a clearly intense dream in which she is laughing and enjoying herself in her sleep. And this is the moment when she tells him her wild sexual dream rife with psychoanalytic delights.

But the next day, the wildness continues. He in effect retraces his steps only to discover upon picking up a copy of the New York Post with the big headlines:

“Lucky to be alive” that the woman who had helped him, who had substituted herself for him, was in the hospital due to a massive drug overdose. By the time he arrives however she is already dead, already sacrificed (he surely believes) because of his curiosity. The prophetic newspaper headline applies in fact to him: “Lucky to be Alive.” Borderline circumstances, extreme trials of reality, tests of endurance and self-identity. He tries to go through the New York world anonymously – masked and anonymous, embodied but invisible. But he soon discovers that his body, his sexuality, his very life are not just his own, not anonymous, not uniquely individual, not restricted only to his own phenomenal field. He is rather living on borderlines, indeed living on while Mandy dies in his place – for him. The spaces of his embodiment are not limited to his own bodily space, but rather he is linked to a relational world of embodiment in which the ethical space is not where he is but where the event of relation between himself and his rich “house call” patients, his high society acquaintances, the gangs of young men in the streets, the lower class as well as upper class hookers, the upside down world of the costume dealer, the safe and innocent world of his young daughter, and of course, his wife. They are, in fact, not anonymous any more than he is. They each have names, identities, hopes, desires, expectations, bodies, and sexualities. In the interstices between them, among them, is an ethical domain in which the events of their lived relations mark their embodiments. They each survive through these embodiments.

While Merleau-Ponty would want to keep these embodiments limited to the anonymous phenomenal field of the individual subjects experiences set in an intersubjective world, by virtue of Derrida’s account of “living on” and “living on borderlines,” it becomes evident that freedom (in the Merleau-Pontean sense) cannot be limited to my choices, my responsibilities, and my anonymity. Rather my body is always already in a relation of embodiment and ethicality in the lived interstitial spaces among us. It is not that this ethicality is in any way prior to the relations among people, among living human beings (as for instance Levinas would propose) but rather the events of the lived

relations happen at the borders – where we each live beyond ourselves, in a way that can be named an embodied relation outside of our unique individual sensing perceiving living body. Those are the spaces where we live on (unto death) in an ethics of the events of lived relations and embodiments.

At the Christmas-time bedecked department store toy section, the young doctor and his wife walk through the labyrinth of toys and children’s delights. They talk of all that had transpired in the days preceding, they reexamined their relations with one another and ask themselves what it all meant for their relationship. Nicole Kidman in a moment of truth (repeating a variant of the New York Post headline) says “we should be grateful to be alive.” Here she is marking out a space which does not just apply to herself, her dreams, and her temptations, nor is she speaking only of her husband’s exploits, adventures, and temptations – all the while seeking desperately to remain faithful to each other and to the world that they have built together. It is a world of many borders, many marginalities, many temptations, many stresses and strains. It is a world of embodiments, of relationalities, of choices and decisions, and it is a world of responsibilities that are perhaps more appropriately named anonymities than those of the individual or the general conditions of experience that Merleau-Ponty cites. Anonymous responsibilities, an ethics of the events of the lived human relations, embodied, and always on the verge of becoming “one’s own,” always on the border of “mineness,” always already marked off from my identities, my individualities, my “phenomenal field.” The final word of the film, Kubrick’s final word, his “Triumph of Life,” the tentative proposal that is to name the called for ethics of the experience of a lived human relation – not just a word, but a charged naming of that anonymous embodied relation between them – she (not he) just says “Fuck.” Is this a proposal, a suggestion, a name, a state of affairs? Most likely it is a transgression, an ecstatic going beyond the borders that separate the two of them after all the dreamed and real adventures, desires, and events.

Concluding notes

The ethics of the experience of events of lived human relations, of our links to another person, other persons, is both compelling and enchanting. Not just an epistemology, but an ethics. Not just a theory of experience, but an account of the relationships between the one and the other person – in life and at the limits of one’s own life, living, survival. At the horizon of my experience I encounter a limit, a border, an extreme that I would need to supercede, survive, go beyond in order for there to be an experience of the embodied experience of the other. This event of the experience of the lived difference between myself and that of the other is an event of responsibility, not my responsibility or that of the other, but an occurrence, a happening, an action in which there is responsibility, *Eigentlichkeit*, but not mine or yours. It is not

a matter of my virtue, my character or your virtue or your character, but the virtue and character that we make together at the juncture of our respective limits, horizons, borders.

Making sense together – as we know from Saussurian semiology, identities are only by virtue of their differences from one another – embodiment then will be differential, lived events and not an articulation of an identity. Responsibility is shared – set off against and brought together at the borders that link us and separate us, that name each of our identities by virtue of the events (*Ereignisse*) of difference that delineate our anonymous ethical embodiments. After all, Life happens...

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Survivre (aux frontières).

Éthique de l'événement et du lien humains (Merleau-Ponty / Derrida)

Il semble bien que la définition de la vie ait évolué, entre *La Structure du comportement* de 1942 et la *Phénoménologie de la perception* de 1945. Dans *La Structure du comportement*, “ l'ordre vital ” est plus limité que “ l'ordre physique ”, qui inclut toutes les formes de l'être matériel – choses, pierres, outils. L'ordre vital, lui, est limité à ce qui est vraisemblablement vivant, depuis les plantes et les arbres jusqu'aux animaux et aux hommes. “ L'ordre humain ”, cependant, est limité à ces êtres physiques qui sont vivants et par ailleurs humains. Comme Merleau-Ponty le pose dans le dernier chapitre de son ouvrage, l'ordre physique est aussi conscience de la matière, l'ordre vital est aussi conscience de la vie, l'ordre humain est conscience du travail. Cela signifie que l'expérience du physique, du vital et de l'humain est tout entière affaire de conscience, l'affaire de “ ma ” conscience. Ce que le sujet sait ou éprouve du physique, du vital (du vivant) ou du travail humain, fait partie du physique, du vital, de l'humain. L'humain, qui constitue en réalité le thème unique de la *Phénoménologie de la perception*, est alors le vivant humain du monde physique et du monde vital. Mais où est la Vie ? Ce n'est pas exactement la question posée à la fin du *Triomphe de la Vie*, mais pas loin. “ Où est la Vie ? ”, et non “ Qu'est-ce que la Vie ? ”. La Vie en question ici est la vie humaine. Et la vie humaine n'est pas ce dont j'ai une expérience directe, personnelle, pas plus que je ne peux faire l'expérience de ma naissance ou de ma mort. La vie humaine est à la limite de ma vie, et de mon expérience quotidienne de sujet humain. Mais comment le sujet humain en fait-il l'expérience ? Et y a-t-il un sujet humain qui “ puisse ” en faire l'expérience ? On essaie ici de répondre à ces questions, et d'interroger par là la possibilité d'une éthique.

Vivere (al limite).

L'etica dell'evento delle relazioni umane vissute (Merleau-Ponty/Derrida)

Sembra esserci un vero e proprio slittamento di senso tra la “vita” di cui si parla nella *Struttura del comportamento* (1942) e quella di cui è questione nella *Fenomenologia della percezione* (1945). Nella *Struttura del comportamento* l’“ordine vitale” è più ristretto rispetto all’“ordine fisico”, che include tutte le forme dell’essere fisico, dalle cose alle rocce agli strumenti. L’“ordine vitale” si limita a ciò che è vivo: dalle piante e dagli alberi, si può presumere, agli animali, agli esseri umani. L’ordine umano, d’altra parte, si restringe all’ambito di quegli esseri fisici che sono sia viventi sia umani. Come afferma Merleau-Ponty nel capitolo conclusivo della *Struttura del comportamento*, l’ordine fisico è già conscio del fisico, l’ordine vitale è già conscio della vita, l’ordine umano è già conscio del lavoro umano. Ciò significa le esperienze del fisico, del vitale, dell’umano sono tutte oggetto di coscienza – della “mia” coscienza. Ciò che il soggetto conosce o ciò di cui fa esperienza come fisico, come vitale (vivente), come lavoro (umano), è appunto ciò che vale per lui come fisico, come vitale, come umano.

L’umano, in effetti, tema unico della *Fenomenologia della percezione*, è quindi già un umano vivere il mondo fisico e il mondo vitale. Dove situare allora la Vita? Non è propriamente la domanda con cui si chiude il “Trionfo della vita”, ma si tratta di una domanda troppo lontana da quella. La Vita che qui è in questione è già vita umana. E la vita umana non è ciò di cui ho personalmente e direttamente esperienza – non più di quanto io faccia esperienza della mia nascita o della mia morte. La vita umana è sempre ai limiti del mio vivere, della mia quotidiana esperienza di soggetto umano. E tuttavia, come il soggetto umano ne fa esperienza? E si dà un soggetto umano che “possa” farne esperienza? Questo saggio prova a rispondere a tali domande, e per questa via solleva un interrogativo intorno alla natura dell’etica.