

SEMIOTEXT(E) FOREIGN AGENTS SERIES



Originally published as *Sphären I. Blasen* by Editions Suhrkamp, Frankfurt.
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Published by Semiotext(e)
2007 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 427, Los Angeles, CA 90057
www.semiotexte.com

Special thanks to Marc Lowenthal and John Ebert.

Cover art by Eva Schlegel. Draft for Installation, MAK Vienna, 2010.
Design: Hedi El Kholti

ISBN: 978-1-58435-104-7
Distributed by The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, England
Printed in the United States of America

SPHERES

VOLUME I: BUBBLES

MICROSPHEROLOGY

Peter Sloterdijk

Translated by Wieland Hoban

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Contents

Preliminary Note	9
Introduction: The Allies; or, The Breathed Commune	17
Preliminary Reflections: Thinking the Interior	83
1. Heart Operation; or, On the Eucharistic Excess	101
2. Between Faces On the Appearance of the Interfacial Intimate Sphere	139
3. Humans in the Magic Circle On the Intellectual History of the Fascination with Closeness	207
Excursus 1: Thought Transmission	263
4. The Retreat Within the Mother Groundwork for a Negative Gynecology	269
Excursus 2: Nobjects and Un-Relationships On the Revision of Psychoanalytical Stage Theory	291
Excursus 3: The Egg Principle Internalization and Encasement	323
Excursus 4: "In Dasein There Lies an Essential Tendency towards Closeness." Heidegger's Doctrine of Existential Place	333
5. The Primal Companion Requiem for a Discarded Organ	343

Excursus 5: The Black Plantation A Note on Trees of Life and Enlivenment Machines	397
6. Soul Partitions Angels—Twins—Doubles	413
Excursus 6: Spheric Mourning On Nobject Loss and the Difficulty of Saying What Is Missing	459
Excursus 7: On the Difference Between an Idiot and an Angel	471
7. The Siren Stage On the First Sonospheric Alliance	477
Excursus 8: Illiterate Truths A Note on Oral Fundamentalism	521
Excursus 9: Where Lacan Starts to Go Wrong	533
8. Closer to Me Than I Am Myself A Theological Preparation for the Theory of the Shared Inside	539
Excursus 10: Matris in gremio A Mariological Cricket	619
Transition: On Ecstatic Immanence	625
Notes	633
Photographic Credits	664

The difficulty that had to be overcome [...] was to avoid all geometrical evidence. In other words, I had to start with a sort of intimacy of roundness.

— Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*

Tradition has it that Plato put an inscription at the entrance to his academy, reading: "Let no one enter who is not a geometer." Were these arrogant words? A declaration of war on the vulgar mind? Undoubtedly; for it was not without reason that a new form of elitism was invented at the academy. For one amazing moment, the school and the avant-garde were identical. Avant-gardism is the skill of forcing all members of a society to make a decision about a suggestion that has not come from them. It was Socrates who first went about this game seriously, and Plato escalated the philosophical provocation by elevating the compulsion to choose between knowledge and nonknowledge to a higher authority. In shutting out the ageometric rabble and only admitting candidates equipped with the appropriate knowledge, he challenged all mortals to qualify themselves for access to his research community by showing the necessary credentials. Here one must bear in mind: what are humans in the academic age but forgetful mammals that have, in most cases, merely forgotten that they are geometers at heart? A geometer—what is that? An intelligence coming from the world of the dead, bringing

vague memories with it of a stay in a perfect sphere. Exoterically effective philosophy begins by splitting society into those who remember and those who do not—and, furthermore, into those who remember a particular thing and those who remember something else. That has remained its business to this day, even if the criteria for the division have become a little more complicated.

Like any author who has come a little way since his magical beginnings, I am aware that it is impossible to restrict the uses to which the literate community puts published writings to one single perspective in advance. Nonetheless, it strikes me as useful to point out that the following reflections, in their general outlines, are probably best read as a radicalization of Plato's motto. I would not only set Plato's statement above the gate to an academy, but above the gate to life itself—were it not such an inappropriate idea to adorn the doorway to the light of the world, which is already too narrow, with warning signs... We appeared in life with no prior geometric schooling, and no philosophy can subject us to an entrance examination after the fact. This does not alter the exclusive mandate of philosophy in the slightest, however, because the assumption that we are given the world only through innate geometric prejudices cannot simply be dismissed. Could one not hold the view that life is a constant *a posteriori* testing of our knowledge about the space from which everything emanates? And the splitting of society into those who know something about this and those who know nothing—does it not extend deeper in the present than ever before?

Life is a matter of form—that is the hypothesis we associate with the venerable philosophical and geometric term “sphere.”

It suggests that life, the formation of spheres and thinking are different expressions for the same thing. Referring to a vital spheric geometry is only productive, however, if one concedes the existence of a form of theory that knows more about life than life itself does—and that wherever human life is found, whether nomadic or settled, inhabited orbs appear, wandering or stationary orbs which, in a sense, are rounder than anything that can be drawn with compasses. The following books are devoted to the attempt to probe the possibilities and boundaries of geometric vitalism.

A rather extravagant configuration of theory and life, one must admit. The hubris of this angle may become more bearable, or at least understandable, if one remembers that there was a second inscription above the entrance to the academy, occult and humorous, stating that whoever was unwilling to become entangled in love affairs with other visitors in the garden of theory should keep away. One can already sense it: this motto too must be applied to life as a whole. Whoever has no interest in sphere formation must naturally avoid amorous dramas, and whoever steers clear of eros excludes themselves from the efforts to understand the vital form. And so the hubris changes camps: the exclusivity of philosophy is expressed not in its own presumptuousness, but in the self-gratification of those who are certain of being able to dispense with philosophical thought. If philosophy is exclusive, it mirrors most people's self-exclusion from the best—in exaggerating the existing division in society, however, it creates an awareness of these exclusions and puts them to the vote again. Philosophical exaggeration provides an opportunity to revise completed options and decide against exclusion. Hence philosophy, if it

is sufficiently focused on its task, is always also self-advertisement. If others see something else as the best, and achieve something convincing as a result, then so much the better.

The present attempt, as one can see, declares its concern with reference to a Platonic problem; it does not view itself as part of Platonism, however, assuming the latter means the sum of misguided readings that have made the founder of the Athenian academy an object of debate throughout the ages—including the anti-Platonism extending from Kant to Heidegger and their successors. I will only remain on the trail of Platonic references in the sense that I will develop, more obstinately than usual, the hypothesis that love stories are stories of form, and that every act of solidarity is an act of sphere formation, that is to say the creation of an interior.

The surpluses of first love, once it breaks away from its origins to make its own fresh starts elsewhere, also feed philosophical thought—which, we must above all remember, is a case of transference love for the whole. Unfortunately, many of those active in the current intellectual discourse have contented themselves with characterizing the phenomenon of transference love as a neurotic mechanism that is to blame for genuine passions being felt in the wrong places most of the time. Nothing has harmed philosophical thought more than this pitiful reduction of motives, which has sought to validate itself—rightly and wrongly—through psychoanalytical models. Rather, one must insist that transference is the formal source of the creative processes that inspire the exodus of humans into the open. We do not so much transfer incorrigible affects onto unknown persons as early spatial experiences to new places, and primary movements onto remote locations.

The limits of my capacity for transference are the limits of my world.

If I had to place a sign of my own at the entrance to this trilogy, it would be this: let no one enter who is unwilling to praise transference and to refute loneliness.

SPHERES

VOLUME 1: BUBBLES

MICROSPHEROLOGY



Bubbles, mezzotint by G. H. Every, 1887, after Sir John Everett Millais (1829–1896)

INTRODUCTION

The Allies; Or, The Breathed Commune

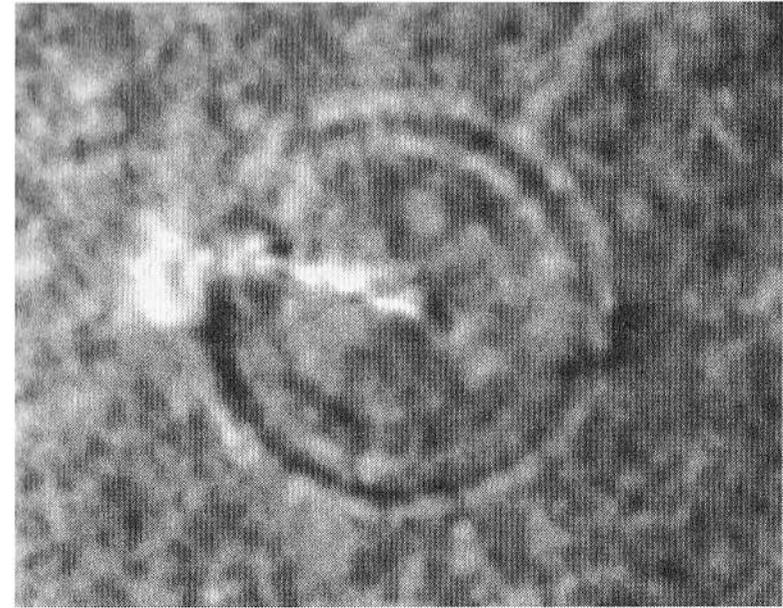
The child stands enraptured on the balcony, holding its new present and watching the soap bubbles float into the sky as it blows them out of the little loop in front of his mouth. Now a swarm of bubbles erupts upwards, as chaotically vivacious as a throw of shimmering blue marbles. Then, at a subsequent attempt, a large oval balloon, filled with timid life, quivers off the loop and floats down to the street, carried along by the breeze. It is followed by the hopes of the delighted child, floating out into the space in its own magic bubble as if, for a few seconds, its fate depended on that of the nervous entity. When the bubble finally bursts after a trembling, drawn-out flight, the soap bubble artist on the balcony emits a sound that is at once a sigh and a cheer. For the duration of the bubble's life the blower was outside himself, as if the little orb's survival depended on remaining encased in an attention that floated out with it. Any lack of accompaniment, any waning of that solidary hope and anxiety would have damned the iridescent object to premature failure. But even when, immersed in the eager supervision of its creator, it was allowed to drift through space for a wonderful while, it still had to vanish into nothingness in the end. In the

place where the orb burst, the blower's excorporated soul was left alone for a moment, as if it had embarked on a shared expedition only to lose its partner halfway. But the melancholy lasts no more than a second before the joy of playing returns with its time-honored cruel momentum. What are broken hopes but opportunities for new attempts? The game continues tirelessly, once again the orbs float from on high, and once again the blower assists his works of art with attentive joy in their flight through the delicate space. At the climax, when the blower is as infatuated with his orbs as if they were self-worked miracles, the erupting and departing soap bubbles are in no danger of perishing prematurely for lack of rapturous accompaniment. The little wizard's attention follows their trail and flies out into the open, supporting the thin walls of the breathed bodies with its eager presence. There is a solidarity between the soap bubble and its blower that excludes the rest of the world. And each time the shimmering entities drift into the distance, the little artist exits his body on the balcony to be entirely with the objects he has called into existence. In the ecstasy of attentiveness, the child's consciousness has virtually left its corporeal source. While exhaled air usually vanishes without a trace, the breath encased in these orbs is granted a momentary afterlife. While the bubbles move through space, their creator is truly outside himself—with them and in them. In the orbs, his exhaled air has separated from him and is now preserved and carried further; at the same time, the child is transported away from itself by losing itself in the breathless co-flight of its attention through the animated space. For its creator, the soap bubble thus becomes the medium of a surprising soul expansion. The bubble and its blower coexist in a field spread out through attentive involvement. The child

that follows its soap bubbles into the open is no Cartesian subject, remaining planted on its extensionless thought-point while observing an extended thing on its course through space. In enthusiastic solidarity with his iridescent globes, the experimenting player plunges into the open space and transforms the zone between the eye and the object into an animated sphere. All eyes and attention, the child's face opens itself up to the space in front of it. Now the playing child imperceptibly gains an insight in the midst of its joyful entertainment that it will later forget under the strain of school: that the spirit, in its own way, is in space. Or perhaps one should say that when people referred in former times to "spirit," what they meant was always inspired spatial communities? As soon as one begins making concessions to such suspicions, it becomes natural to investigate further in the same direction: if the child breathes its air into the soap bubbles and remains loyal by following them with its ecstatic gaze—who previously placed their breath into the child? Who remains loyal to the child upon its own exodus from the nursery? In what attentions, what spaces of animation will the children remain contained if their lives on ascending paths succeed? Who will accompany the young ones on their way to things and their epitome, the divided world? Is there someone, under all those circumstances, whose ecstasy the children will be when they float out into the space of possibility—and what will happen to those who are nobody's exhalation? Indeed, does all life that emerges and goes its own separate way remain contained in an accompanying breath? Is it legitimate to imagine that everything which exists and becomes relevant is someone's concern? The need is a familiar one, in fact—Schopenhauer called it the metaphysical one—the need for all things belonging to the world

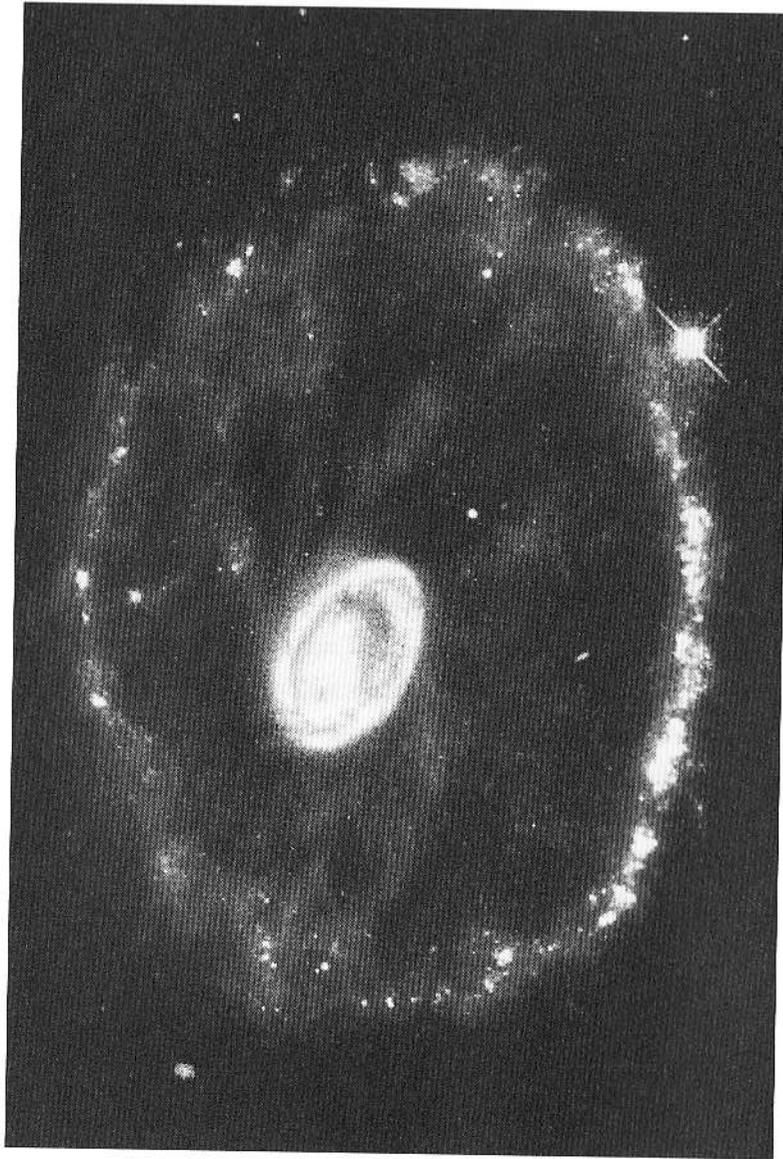
or being as a whole to be contained in a breath like an indelible purpose. Can this need be satisfied? Can it be justified? Who first had the thought that the world is nothing but the soap bubble of an all-encompassing breath? Whose being-outside-oneself would everything that is the case then be?

The thought of the Modern Age, which presented itself for so long under the naïve name of “Enlightenment” and the even more naïve programmatic word “progress,” is characterized by an innate movement: wherever it follows its typical forward motion, it achieves the breakthrough of the intellect out of the caves of human illusion into the nonhuman world outside. It is no coincidence that the cosmological turn named after Copernicus marks the start of the newer history of knowledge and disappointment. It brought the people of the First World the loss of the cosmological center, and subsequently set off an age of progressive decentralizations. From that point on, earth’s citizens, the old mortals, could bid farewell to all illusions about their position in the lap of the cosmos, even if such ideas cling to us like inborn illusions. Copernicus’ heliocentric theory initiated a series of research eruptions into the deserted outer reaches, extending to the inhumanly remote galaxies and the most ghostly components of matter. The cold new breath from outside was sensed early on, and a number of the pioneers of the revolutionarily changed knowledge about the position of the earth in space did not conceal their unease in the infinity now imposed on them; thus even Kepler objected to Bruno’s doctrine of the endless universe with the words that “this very cogitation carries with it I don’t know what secret, hidden horror; indeed one finds oneself wandering in this immensity, to which are



Circle without Constructor I, solar quake: the spreading waves reach a size corresponding to ten times the earth’s diameter, photographed by the space probe SOHO

denied limits and center and therefore all determinate places.”¹ Evasions to the outermost realms were followed by eruptions of coldness from the cosmic and technical ice worlds into the human inner sphere. Since the start of the Modern Age, the human world has constantly—every century, every decade, every year and every day—had to learn to accept and integrate new truths about an outside not related to humans. From the seventeenth century on, starting with the European educated classes and increasingly affecting the informed masses of the First World, the new psycho-cosmologically relevant sentiment spread that humans were not the concern of evolution, the indifferent goddess of becoming. Every view into the earthly



Circle without Constructor II, cartwheel galaxy in the Sculptor constellation, photographed by the Hubble Space Telescope

factory and the extraterrestrial spaces provided increasing evidence that mankind is towered above on all sides by monstrous externalities that breathe on it with stellar coldness and extra-human complexity. The old nature of *homo sapiens* is not up to these provocations by the outside. Research and the raising of consciousness have turned man into the idiot of the cosmos; he has sent himself into exile and expatriated himself from his immemorial security in self-blown bubbles of illusions into a senseless, unrelated realm that functions on its own. With the help of its relentlessly probing intelligence, the open animal tore down the roof of its old house from the inside. Taking part in modernity means putting evolved immune systems at risk. Since the English physicist and cosmographer Thomas Digges proved in the 1670s that the two-thousand-year doctrine of the celestial domes was both physically unfounded and thought-economically superfluous, the citizens of the Modern Age inevitably found themselves in a new situation that not only shattered the illusion of their home's central position in space, but also deprived them of the comforting notion that the earth is enclosed by spherical forms like warming heavenly mantles. Since then, modern people have had to learn how one goes about existing as a core without a shell; Pascal's pious and observant statement "the eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread" formulates the intimate confession of an epoch.² Since the times became new in the precise sense, being-in-the-world has meant having to cling to the earth's crust and praying to gravity—beyond any womb or shell. It cannot be mere coincidence: since the 1490s, those Europeans who sensed what had to be done have built and examined ball-shaped images of earth, globes, like possessed members of some undefined cult, as if the

sight of these fetishes was to console them for the fact that they would exist for all eternity only on a ball, but no longer inside a ball. We will show that everything referred to as “globalization” today comes from this play with the eccentric ball. Friedrich Nietzsche, the master formulator of the truths one cannot live with, but cannot ignore without intellectual dishonesty, finally articulated what the world as a whole had to accept becoming for the modern entrepreneurs: “a gate to a thousand deserts, empty and cold.”³ Living in the Modern Age means paying the price for shelllessness. The peeled human being acts out its epochal psychosis by replying to external cooling with warming technologies and climate policies—or with climate technologies and warming policies. But now that God’s shimmering bubbles, the celestial domes, have burst, who could have the power to create prosthetic husks around those who have been exposed?

To oppose the cosmic frost infiltrating the human sphere through the open windows of the Enlightenment, modern humanity makes use of a deliberate greenhouse effect: it attempts to balance out its shelllessness in space, following the shattering of the celestial domes, through an artificial civilizatory world. This is the final horizon of Euro-American technological titanism. From this perspective, the Modern Age appears as the age of an oath sworn in offensive desperation: that a comprehensive house-building operation for the species and a policy of global warming must be successful faced with the open, cold and silent sky. It is above all the entrepreneurial nations of the First World that have translated their acquired psycho-cosmological restlessness into offensive constructivism. They protect themselves from the terror of the bottomless, of the infinitely expanded space, through the utopian yet pragmatic erection of

a global greenhouse intended to offer modern living in the open. That is why the further the process of globalization proceeds, the more one ultimately finds people looking at the sky—by day or by night—indifferently and distractedly; in fact, it has almost become a sign of naïveté to continue pursuing cosmological questions with existential pathos. By contrast, the certainty that there is nothing more to look for up there is in keeping with the spirit of advanced circumstances. For it is not cosmology that tells people today where they stand, but rather the general theory of immune systems. What makes the Modern Age special is that after the turn to the Copernican world, the sky as an immune system was suddenly useless.⁴ Modernity is characterized by the technical production of its immunities and the increasing removal of its safety structures from the traditional theological and cosmological narratives. Industrial-scale civilization, the welfare state, the world market and the media sphere: all these large-scale projects aim, in a shellless time, for an imitation of the now impossible, imaginary spheric security. Now networks and insurance policies are meant to replace the celestial domes; telecommunication has to reenact the all-encompassing. The body of humanity seeks to create a new immune constitution in an electronic medial skin. Because the old all-encompassing and containing structure, the heavenly *continens* firmament, is irretrievably lost, that which is no longer encompassed and no longer contained, the former *contentum*, must now create its own satisfaction on artificial continents under artificial skies and domes.⁵ Those who help to build the global civilization greenhouse, however, become entangled in thermo-political paradoxes: to achieve its creation—and this spatial fantasy underlies the globalization

project—enormous populations, at the center as well as the margins, must be evacuated from their old casing of temperate regional illusion and exposed to the frosts of freedom. Here total constructivism unbendingly demands its price. To free up ground for the artificial surrogate sphere, the leftovers of faith in inner worlds and the fiction of security are being destroyed in all old countries in the name of a thoroughgoing market enlightenment that promises a better life, yet initially lowers the immune standards of the proletariats and marginal peoples to a devastating degree. Dumbfounded masses soon find themselves in the open, without ever receiving a proper explanation of their evacuation's purpose. Disappointed, cold and abandoned, they wrap themselves in surrogates of older conceptions of the world, as long as these still seem to hold a trace of the warmth of old human illusions of encompassedness.

Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?
What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its
sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to?
Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And
backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still
an up and a down? Aren't we straying as though through an
infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it
got colder?⁶

These questions open up the yawning abyss that current discourses on globalization ignore in their industrious hysteria. In shellless times, without spatial orientation and overwhelmed by their own progress, those living in modernity suddenly had to become splendid people by the masses. One can view techno-

logical civilization, in particular its accelerations in the twentieth century, as an attempt to drown the questions of Nietzsche's chief witness, the tragic Diogenes, in comfort. By making technical living tools of unknown perfection available to individuals, the modern world aims thus to silence their uneasy inquiries about the space in which they live, or from which they constantly fall. And yet it was precisely existentialist modernity that identified the reasons why it is less important for people to know *who* they are than *where* they are. As long as intelligence is sealed up by banality, people are not interested in their place, which seems given; they fix their imaginations on the ghost lights that appear to them in the form of names, identities and business. What recent philosophers have termed forgetfulness of being [*Seinsvergessenheit*] is most evident as an obstinate willful ignorance of the mysterious place of existence. The popular plan to forget both oneself and being is realized through a deliberate nonawareness of the ontological situation. This willfulness is currently fuelling all forms of rapid living, civil disinterestedness and anorganic eroticism. It drives its agents to limit themselves to small, malicious arithmetic units; the greedy of recent days no longer ask where they are as long as they are allowed to be someone, anyone. If, by contrast, we are here attempting to pose the question of "where?" anew in a radical fashion, that means restoring to contemporary thought its feeling for absolute localization, and with it the feeling for the basis of the difference between small and large.

It is possible to give a competent contemporary reply to the Gnostically inspired question "where are we if we are in the world?" We are in an outside that carries inner worlds. With the

hypothesis of the priorness of the outside in mind, we no longer need to undertake any naïve investigations into mankind's position in the cosmos. It is too late to dream ourselves back to a place under celestial domes whose interiors would permit domestic feelings of order. That security in the largest circle has been destroyed for those in the know, along with the old homely, immunizing cosmos itself. Whoever still wished to look outwards and upwards would find themselves in a space devoid of humans and remote from the earth, with no relevant boundaries. Even on the smallest material level, complexities have been revealed in which we are the ones who are excluded and remote. Thus an inquiry into our location is more productive than ever, as it examines the place that humans create in order to have somewhere they can appear as those who they are. Here, following a venerable tradition, this place bears the name "sphere." The sphere is the interior, disclosed, shared realm inhabited by humans—in so far as they succeed in becoming humans. Because living always means building spheres, both on a small and a large scale, humans are the beings that establish globes and look out into horizons. Living in spheres means creating the dimension in which humans can be contained. Spheres are immune-systemically effective space creations for ecstatic beings that are operated upon by the outside.

The vessels thus filled with You do not render You any support: for though they perished utterly, You would not be spilt out. And in pouring Yourself out upon us, You do not come down to us but rather elevate us to You: You are not scattered over us, but we are gathered into one by You.

— Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I, III⁷

Among the outdated and valuable expressions that metaphysics used, in its time, to build subtle bridges between heaven and earth, there is one that still comes to the aid of some contemporaries—and not only artists and their imitators—when faced with the problem of finding a respectable name for the source of their ideas and inventions: inspiration. Even if the word seems antiquated, and sooner earns its users a smile than recognition, it has not entirely lost its symbolic radiance. It is still vaguely suitable for marking the unclearly different, heterotopic origin of those ideas and works which cannot simply be attributed to the application of rules and the technical repetition of familiar searching and finding patterns. Whoever invokes inspiration

admits that creative ideas are nontrivial events whose occurrence cannot be forced. Its medium is not its master, and its recipient is not its producer. Whether it is genius that whispers the idea to its executor or chance that makes the dice fall as they do, whether it is a rupture in the usual conceptual fabric that leads to the articulation of thoughts never thought before, or whether a productive error results in the new: whatever powers are considered possible transmitters of the inspired idea, the receiver always knows that in a sense, beyond their own efforts, they have housed visitors from elsewhere in their thought. Inspiration—breathing life into something, intuition, the instantaneous appearance of the idea or a gaping open of the new: in former times, when it could still be used without irony, the concept referred to the fact that an informing power superior in nature makes a human consciousness its mouthpiece or sounding board. Heaven, metaphysicians would say, appears as the earth's informant and gives its sign; something foreign passes through the door of the own and acquires validity. And although the foreign no longer bears any lofty, concisely metaphysical name today—not Apollo, not Yahwe, not Gabriel, not Krishna and not Xango—the phenomenon of the inspired idea has not disappeared entirely from enlightened fields of view. Whoever experiences inspired ideas can, even in post-metaphysical or hetero-metaphysical times, understand themselves as a host or matrix for the non-own. It is only with reference to such passings-through by the foreign that a tenable concept of what subjectivity could mean can be articulated in our times. Certainly the entering visitors have become anonymous today. Even if, as the joke goes, one is often surprised to which people the ideas choose to occur: no one who is familiar with the process

need doubt their sudden arrival. Where they appear, one acknowledges their presence without any closer concern for their provenance. Whatever enters the imagination is not supposed to come from anywhere except somewhere over there, from without, from an open field that is not necessarily a yonder realm. People no longer want to receive their inspired ideas from some embarrassing heavens; they are supposed to come from the no man's land of ownerless, precise thoughts. Through their lack of a sender, they permit the free use of their gift. The inspired idea that delivers something for you remains a discreet visitor at the door. It makes no religion of itself, in so far as such a religion always involves fealty to its founder's name. Its antonym, which many rightly find beneficial, creates one of the preconditions for finally asking today, in general terms, about the nature of what we call media. Media theory: what is it, practiced *lege artis*,⁸ other than the conceptual work to supplement regular visits both discreet and indiscreet? Messages, senders, channels, languages—these are the basic concepts, frequently misunderstood, of a general science of visitability of something by something in something. We will show that media theory and sphere theory converge; this is a hypothesis for whose proof three books cannot be excessive. In spheres, shared inspirations become the reason for the possibility of humans existing together in communes and peoples. The first thing that develops within them is that strong relationship between humans and their motives of animation—and animations are visits that remain—which provide the reason for solidarity.

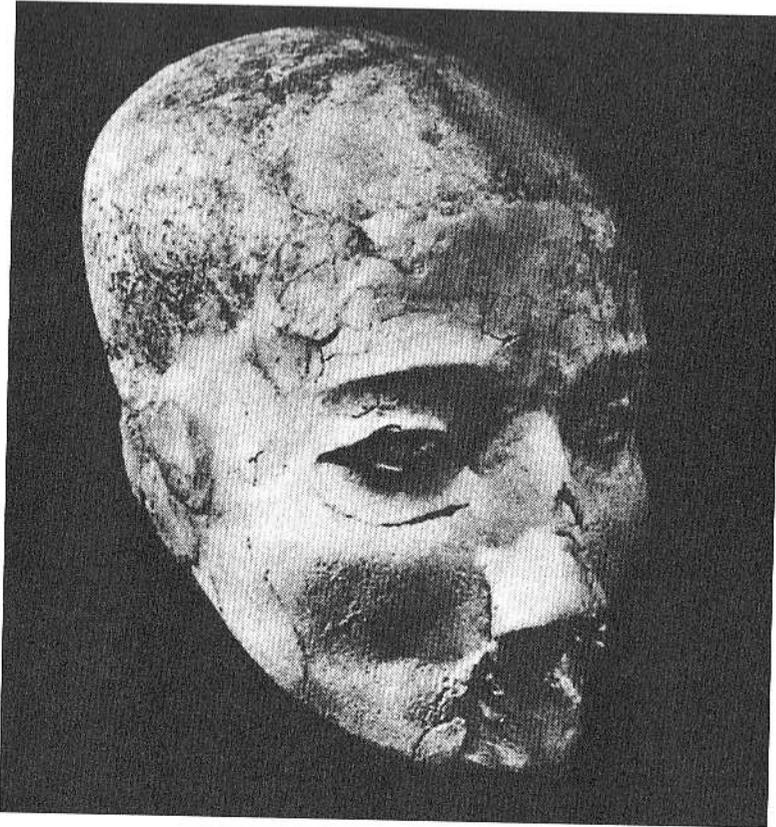
The primal scene for what, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, deserves to be called inspiration, is the creation of humans—an

event that appears in the Genesis account in two versions: once as the final act of the six-day work of creation, though it passes over the life-breathing scene in silence, and once as the initiatory act for all further creation, but now with an explicit emphasis on creation through breath and with the characteristic distinction of clay modeling in the first case and breathing in the second. Here the reader of Genesis encounters the inspirator, the Lord of Creation, as a figure with a sharp ontological profile: He is the first producer with complete authority. The creature into which He breathes life, for its part, appears on the stage of existence as the first human being, the prototype of a species that can experience inspired ideas. The biblical account of the first breath reproduces the original visit of the spirit to a host medium.

When the Lord God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:4–7)⁹

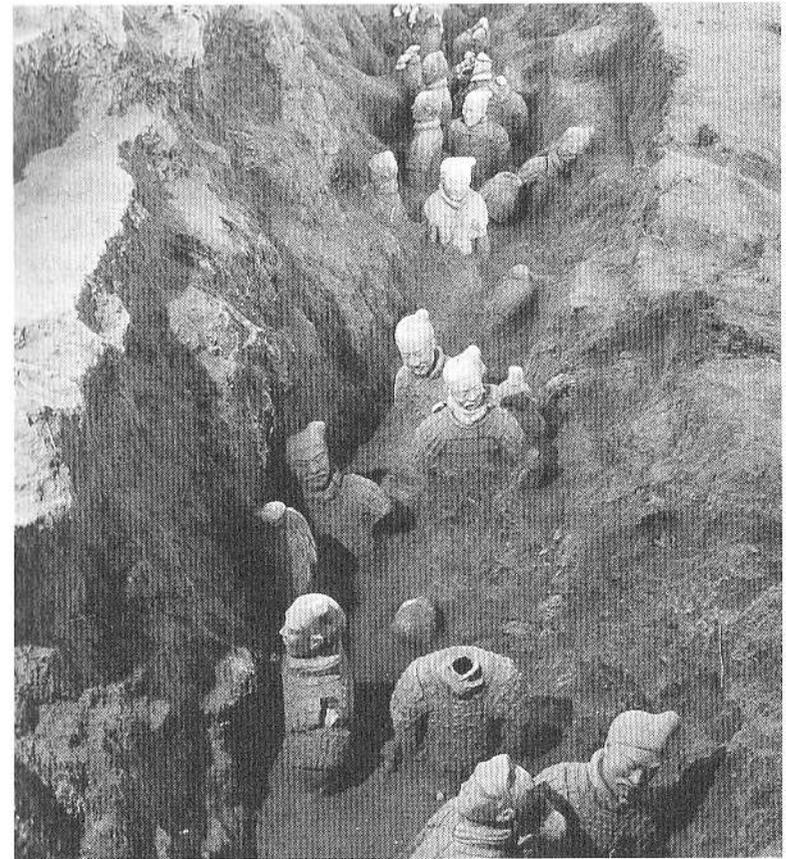
Would it be possible to speak of this breath in a language not yet molded into formulas by theologians' routines and pious subordinations to its supposed and prescribed meaning? If one takes seriously these lines that have been parroted, interpreted, translated and exploited ten thousand times as a statement about a

production process, the explicit succession they describe reveals above all a procedural insight: man is an artificial entity that could only be created in two installments. In the first stage of the work process, as we read, the creator forms Adam—the clay creature taken from the soil, *adama*—and molds him into a work of art unlike any other that, like all products of artifice, owes its existence to the combination of artistic knowledge and raw material. Craft and earth are equally necessary to erect the image of man in the form of the first statue. Hence, in His initial access, the creator is no more than a potter who enjoys using suitable starting material to form a figure that resembles Himself, the producing master. Whoever wishes to imagine humans as primitive machines finds here an early model of how to create statues, human dolls, golems, robots, android illusions and the like according to the rules of art. The God of the first phase of human creation embodies a representative of the oldest technological culture, whose main emphasis is on ceramic skills. It was the potters who first discovered that earth is more than simply farmland to be cultivated. The ceramist as an early creator of works or demiurge has the experience to know that the ground which bears fruit can also be raw material for clay vessels to which *form*, clarity in conjunction with stability, is lent in workshops and ovens. If the Lord of Genesis began the creation of humans as a potter, it was because this creation succeeds most plausibly when it begins as the production of vessels. Being able to make android creatures according to ceramic routines: at the time of the biblical Genesis, this marked the state of art. Hence there is nothing unusual about Adam's body being manufactured from clay. It is initially no more than a hollow-bodied sculpture awaiting significant further use. Only then does the



Neolithic reconstruction of a head through the application of dyed plaster, which gave the skull the form of the layers of tissue that had once existed

extraordinary element come into play, for if the clay creature is made hollow in its original modeling, it is only because it is henceforth to serve as a jug of life. It is formed as a semi-solid figure from the start, as its creator has a special sort of filling in mind. Metaphysics begins as metaceramics, for the substance to be filled into this singular vessel will be no merely physical content. Though liquids can be taken up by the vase android in



Life-size clay figures from the burial complex of Qin Shi Huang (259–210 BC), first Emperor of China

limited amounts, its hollow space is of a more sublime nature, not suitable for being lined with sensual fluids. The Adamic vessel is created with cavities that only awaken to their true purpose in a second, initially very mysterious phase of creation: “...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

With this act of inspiration, the second phase of the production of humans asserts its rights. Without the completion of the clay body through breath, Adam would forever have remained merely a bizarre work of earthen art; he would be no more than a willful installation on the untended earth. Such a statue would perhaps have been adequate as a burial gift for its producer, comparable to clay figures in the graves of ancient Chinese aristocrats; from a craftsman's perspective this Adam, at least in his upper parts, may have resembled his presumed technical models: the ancient Palestinian head sculptures produced through the application of a lifelike clay or plaster finish to skulls of the dead.¹⁰ The account in Genesis, read outside of theological conventions, suggests that the semi-finished Adamitic products were given their decisive pneumatic value in a second operation. The implicit lesson is that man is a vascular creature, and only awakens to its destiny of being an "image" through a specific supplement. The Hebrew text refers to the living being with the word *nefesh*, which means something like "that which is animated by a living breath"; according to Hebrew scholars, this is largely synonymous with *ruach*, meaning "moving air, breath, breath of life, spirit, feeling and passion, thought." A two-phase process in procedural terms, this anthropopoiesis escalates from the creation of vessels to the creation of spirit beings, with this climax intended from the start; the breathing-in of life is not simply an ornamental supplement to an autonomous bodily mass. That is why each phase of the creation act has its own individual, resolutely *technical* character: if Adam, as the Genesis account purports, is to be understood in every respect as the creature or work of a creator—as a *factum* or *ens creatum*, the Latin *patres* would say—

then the divine power of creation must expressly encompass the task of producing beings that are fully animated, ontologically complete, intelligently active, equipped with subjectivity and, by virtue of all this, *godlike*.

Thus the Genesis account breaks open the horizon of the technical question with the last possible radicality: what technology is can henceforth only be understood by measuring the distance between what God was capable of *in illo tempore* and what humans will, in time, themselves be capable of. The first part of producing the human image is, as we have seen, no mystery with regard to humanity's divine maker, and humans have successfully repeated it under suitable conditions. The belief that the production of human images can be learned and mastered forms the basis for all master classes in nature studies at traditional art academies. The artificer from the first phase of creation would be no more than an art student noted for his talent in a nude painting class; he would simply be an applier of learnable arts. The second part, on the other hand, requires a thoroughly postgraduate trick that none but the God of Genesis have performed thus far: this addition tears the divide between human technology and theotechnology wide open. For, from a demiurgic perspective—and the tale of Adam is above all the myth of a supreme royal craftsman—the inner human spirit itself now purports to be the work of a manufacturer. How to awaken statues to animated life: this is something that, until recently, had simply been unknown to the human productive capacity. Breath was the epitome of a divine technology capable of closing the ontological gap between the clay idol and the animated human with a pneumatic sleight of hand. Consequently, the title "God" denotes an expertise whose art extends

to the creation of living beings similar to oneself. As the creator of all things, the God of Genesis is lord of both the dissimilar and the similar. One can easily establish the significance of this hypothesis by looking at the simplest and highest creatures and, in the face of their givenness, reminding oneself that all of these, without exception, are meant to be understood as products of a single, continually active creative potency! Theologians tend to deny, on the other hand, that crystals, amoebas, trees or dragonflies are godlike. Nature, from a theological perspective, is the name for God's self-realization in the dissimilar. As far as realization in the similar is concerned, however, the most eminent text states with authority that Adam resembled his creator. One need therefore only take due notice of the factual existence of the animated clay creature to ask almost automatically: who was capable of that? Who was in a position to *make* man? By what method was he, the similar one, the subject, the spirited being who observes and handles the world as world, installed? In so far as we are concerned with the ceramic Adam, as stated earlier, we are sufficiently informed to lift the secret of his existence, as we know the rules of working with clay that reliably enable us to arrive at android figures. For a further treatment of the statue to yield a living human, on the other hand, we must introduce a pneumatic or noogenic bonus that, it would seem, we have so far lacked any procedural rules to imitate. The breathing in of life was a technical-hypertechnical procedure that had to be honored as God's exclusive patent throughout the entire period of religious-metaphysical thought. Nonetheless, in attributing Adam's spirit to the skilled act of a craftsman (or breathsman), the narrators of Genesis stretch out their hands for this bonus.

Since then, one part of high-cultural theology has always been the theology of the utmost skill and the interpretation of the world's totality in the light of a fabrication principle. God is an ecstasy of that idea of competence which encompasses the production of the world and its native subjectivities. With the advent of theo-technical thought, the European obsession with the ability to manufacture set in. One could yield to the suspicion that history itself, as a technological process, obeys the rule: where there was once God's secret technology, there must now be public human techniques. Perhaps what we call historicity is nothing but the time required for the attempt to repeat God's trick through human ability? This would urge us to conclude that even the breath of life must one day become a thoroughly formulated skill that can be brought down to earth from heaven. But can we dare to imagine a technology that makes the pneumatic rhythm of creation its own business? Should, with sufficiently precise formulable artistic and procedural rules, even the phenomenon once known as animation become something amenable to serial production? Should it transpire that breath sciences lie in the realm of possibility, and that the humanities have already embarked on repeating the divine breath through the higher mechanism?¹¹

With these questions, we are drawing a veiled theme of the Jewish Genesis account to belated light: the issue here is Adam's chosen hollowness. What gives us food for thought is his vascular nature, his resonant constitution, his preferred aptness as a *canal* for breathing by an inspirator. From a conventional point of view, the historically established preconception that there must be an unbridgeable hierarchical divide—an ontological

difference—between creator and creature could re-establish itself today. Is it not inevitable that the creature, even if we are dealing with man in relation to the maker of man, is so distant from its creator as to verge on meaninglessness? In this light, even the first man ever created will always appear primarily as the ceramic object shaped at will from an earthen nothing by the hands of a master craftsman, only to fall back some day—earth to earth—into the clay from which he originated.

It is only at second glance that a less hierarchical image of the connection between the creator-subject and his breathed-on piece of work suggests itself. Now we realize that there cannot possibly be such a sharp ontological asymmetry between the inspirator and the inspired as there is between an animated lord and his inanimate tool. Where the pneumatic pact between the giver and the taker of breath comes into effect—that is, where the communicative or communional alliance builds up—this results in a bipolar intimacy that cannot have anything in common with a merely dominating control of a subject over a manipulable object mass. Even if the breather and the one breathed on face each other as first and second in temporal terms, a reciprocal, synchronously interchanging relationship between the two breath poles comes into effect as soon as the infusion of the breath of life into the android form is complete. The main part of God's trick, it would seem, is to reckon with a counter-breath immediately after the initial one: one could almost say that the originator does not preexist the pneumatic work, but creates himself synchronously with it as the intimate counterpart of one like himself. Indeed, perhaps the notion of an originator is simply a misleading, conventional figure to describe the phenomenon of the resonance that originally developed. Once set

up, the canal of animation between Adam and his Lord, filled with endless double echo games, can only be understood as a two-way system. The lord of all that lives would not also be the God of answers in whose guise he appears in His early invocations if confirmations of his breath impulses did not immediately flow back to Him from the animated figure. This breath is hence conspiratory, respiratory and inspiratory from the outset; as soon as breath exists, there are two breathing. With the number two at the start, it would be misguided to force any statement about which pole began in the interior of this dual. Naturally the myth must seek to describe how everything started and what came first—in this case as in most others. In attempting to do so in earnest, however, it must now also speak of an original exchange in which there can be no first pole. That is the meaning of the biblical reference to God's image: not that the Creator was some mystical solo android who was one day seized by the whim to trace His appearance—appearing to whom?—onto earthly bodies. This would be as absurd as the notion that God could have longed for the company of non-equal, formally similar clay figures. The creation of subjectivity and mutual animation does not refer to the hollow human puppet; the image of God is simply a rigidly visualizing term from the jargon of the artist's workshop for a relationship of pneumatic reciprocity. The intimate ability to communicate in a primary dual is God's patent. It suggests not so much a visually experienceable similarity between an original image and the replica as the original augmentation of God through his Adam, and of Adam through his God. Breath science can only get underway as a theory of pairs.

With this phrase—original augmentation—we have named a basic figure of the subsequent reflections in the spher-

morphological field. It states that in the spiritual space—under the as yet unconsolidated assumption that “spirit” refers to a spatiality of its own kind—the simplest fact is automatically at least a two-part or bipolar quantity. Isolated points are only possible in the homogenized space of geometry and intercourse; true spirit, however, is by definition spirit in and in relation to spirit, and true soul is by definition soul in and in relation to soul. In the present case, the elemental, initial and simple already appears as a resonance between polar authorities; the original expresses itself as a correlative duality from the start. The addition of the second to the first occurs not in an external and *a posteriori* supplementation—in the way that, in classical logic, attributes join substances as latecomers of a sort, as suppliers of properties. Certainly, if one thinks in substances, the attributes arrive later, just as blackness is added to the horse and redness to the rose. In the intimate sharing of subjectivity by a pair inhabiting a spiritual space open for both, second and first only appear together. Where the second does not enter, the first was not given either. This means that whoever says “Creator” without emphasizing Adam’s prior coexistence with Him has already strayed into an origin-monarchical error—just as anyone who presumes to speak of humans without mentioning their inspirators and intensifiers, or their media, which amount to the same, has missed the topic through their very approach. A Platonic horse or a heavenly rose: they could, if necessary, still remain what they are without blackness or redness. As far as God and Adam are concerned, however, they form—if the bond of breath between them is indeed as the wording and sense of the Genesis convey—a dyadic union from the start, a union that can only last on the basis of a developed bipolarity. The primary

pair floats in an atmospheric biunity, mutual referentiality and intertwined freedom from which neither of the primal partners can be removed without canceling the total relationship.

If this strong relation inevitably seems asymmetrical in theological tradition—characterized by a powerful leaning towards God’s side—it is primarily because, aside from his engagement with Adam, his co-subject, God is always assigned the indivisible burden of cosmogonic responsibilities. God appears as the absolute adult, indeed the only one in the universe—Adam and his ilk, on the other hand, remain children to the end in a sense. Only against this background was Augustine able to say to his God: “But You, Lord, know all of him, for You made him.”¹² For the church father, the joy of being understood depends on the notion that only he who made you can also understand and restore you. This provides the basic impulse for all disciplines of the spirit and its healing, in so far as it marks the advent of the idea that understanding means having made, and, more importantly in religious terms, that having been made means being able to be understood and repaired—an idea on which all priesthood and all psychotherapeutic structures are based to this day. The main purpose of this demiurgic interpretation of human creatureliness was to make the pact between the producing God and the produced soul unbreakable. The damaged but prudent soul should constantly think of its originator or representative, the therapist, because only this thought can save it from ontological isolation and from losing its way amid the incomprehensible, the unmade, the fortuitous and the external. It was to Adam before the Fall of Man, and to him and his kind alone, that Saint Teresa of Ávila’s rule applied: the soul must view all things as if the world consisted only of God and

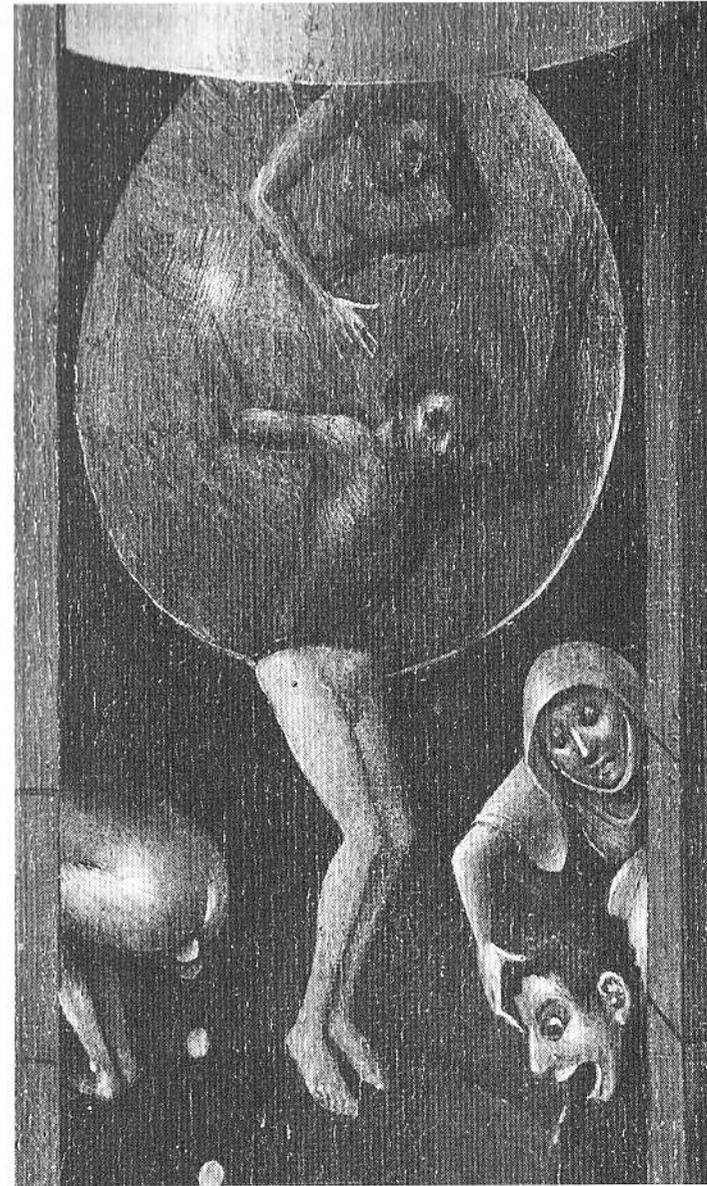
the soul—an idea still quoted approvingly by Leibniz¹³—whereas it pleases God to express Himself not only in Adam and his species, but in the entire household of the creation. In this respect the biblical God resembled a husband who has the conventional expectation that his wife should be there for him alone, while he must keep himself available not only for her, but also for a world of business. But He also resembled a mother who is good enough to give her child the secure sense that she is wholly there for it whenever necessary, even though she also has a house and hearth to look after when she is not attending to the little being. These asymmetries initially thwart the equality in the image; but this does not change the incomparable particularity of the pneumatic pact. The one breathed on is by necessity an ontological twin of the breather. The two are bonded by an intimate complicity such as can only exist between beings that originally share the placenta of subjectivity. Adam and his Lord live off the same ego-forming placenta—they nourish themselves with the same I-am-who-I-am substance that spreads between them like a subtle shared scent of intimacy and synchronous desire. The thorn bush in the desert burns not for itself alone, but always for itself and Moses, its agent and representative. That is why he is not meant to gaze at the flames in admiration when it burns, but form a chain of messengers: we, this fire and my testimony to it, belong together like the message and its immediate recipient. Flame and speech are original accomplices. The open secret of the historical world is that the power to belong together, which is experienced in exemplary fashion by select couples—and, why not, by burning bushes and prophets on fire—can be extended to communes, teams, project groups, and perhaps even entire peoples.

We refer to this connecting force, using a creaky word from the nineteenth century, as solidarity. The nature of this force, which allies people with their own kind or a superhuman other in shared vibrations, has never been examined sufficiently seriously in the history of thought. So far one has always presupposed and demanded solidarity, has attempted to raise it, politicize it and sabotage it; people have sung its praises and lamented its fragility; but never has anyone inquired far enough back into its origin. At this point we have at least realized that solidarity between people must be a transference phenomenon outside of primary couple relationships and primal hordes. But what is transferred here? The strong reason for being together is still awaiting an adequate interpretation.¹⁴

Let us translate these rhapsodic reflections on an Old European and Middle Eastern theological motif into the language of the present investigation: when the Jewish God and the prototypical human each turn their contact side towards the other, they form a shared interior sphere. What is here termed a sphere is, in a first and provisional understanding, an orb in two halves, polarized and differentiated from the start, yet nonetheless intimately joined, subjective and subject to experience—a biune shared space of present and past experience. What is known in tradition as spirit is thus originally, through sphere formation, spatially spread. In its basic form the sphere appears as a twin bubble, an ellipsoid space of spirit and experience with at least two inhabitants facing one another in polar kinship. Living in spheres thus means inhabiting a shared subtlety. The aim of this three-part book is to show that, for humans, being-in-spheres constitutes the basic relationship—admittedly,

one that is infringed upon from the start by the non-interior world, and must perpetually assert itself against the provocation of the outside, restore itself and increase. In this sense, spheres are by definition also morpho-immunological constructs. Only in immune structures that form interiors can humans continue their generational processes and advance their individuations. Humans have never lived in a direct relationship with “nature,” and their cultures have certainly never set foot in the realm of what we call the bare facts; their existence has always been exclusively in the breathed, divided, torn-open and restored space. They are the life forms designed to be floating beings—if floating means depending on divided moods and shared assumptions. Humans are thus fundamentally and exclusively the creations of their interior and the products of their work on the form of immanence that belongs inseparably to them. They flourish only in the greenhouse of their autogenous atmosphere.

What recent philosophers referred to as “being-in-the-world” first of all, and in most cases, means being-in-spheres. If humans are *there*,¹⁵ it is initially in spaces that have opened for them because, by inhabiting them, humans have given them form, content, extension and relative duration. As spheres are the original product of human coexistence, however—something of which no theory of work has ever taken notice—these atmospheric-symbolic places for humans are dependent on constant renewal. Spheres are air conditioning systems in whose construction and calibration, for those living in real coexistence, it is out of the question not to participate. The symbolic air conditioning of the shared space is the primal production of every society. Indeed—humans create their own



Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, couple in bubble, detail

climate; not according to free choice, however, but under preexisting, given and handed-down conditions.¹⁶

Spheres are constantly disquieted by their inevitable instability: like happiness and glass, they bear the risks native to everything that shatters easily. They would not be constructs of vital geometry if they could not implode; even less so, however, if they were not also capable of expanding into richer structures under the pressure of group growth. Where implosion occurs, the shared space as such is cancelled out. What Heidegger called being-toward-death means not so much the individual's long march into a final solitude anticipated with panic-stricken resolve; it is rather the circumstance that all individuals will one day leave the space in which they were allied with others in a current, strong relationship. That is why death ultimately concerns the survivors more than the deceased.¹⁷ Human death thus always has two faces: one that leaves behind a rigid body and one that shows sphere residues—those that are sublated into higher spaces and re-animated and those that, as the waste products of things, fallen out of former spaces of animation, are left lying there. In structural terms, what we call the end of the world is the death of a sphere. This small-scale emergency is the separation of the lovers, the empty apartment, the torn-up photograph; its comprehensive form manifests itself as the death of a culture, the burnt-out city, the extinct language. Human and historical experience at least shows that spheres can continue to exist even beyond mortal separation, and that things lost can remain present in memories—as a memorial, a specter, a mission or as knowledge. It is only because of this that not every separation of lovers need become the end of the world, and not every change undergone by language a culture's demise.¹⁸

The fact that the internally differentiated bubble of those in intimate coexistence can initially seem to be resolutely closed and secure in itself is due to the tendency of the communicating poles to be consumed fully in their care for the other half. This is also manifest in the Jewish creation myth: in passing on His breath to Adam, the God of Genesis in fact places His utmost stake in the pneumatic relation. Adam and his companion, for their part, remain in their exclusive partnership with God for as long as they manage to allow nothing to grow inside themselves other than what was originally breathed into them: the awareness of their original counterpart's glory and its demand for an answer. I am the one closest to you and your inspirator; you shall have no other inspirator but me—the first commandment of dyadic communication. Initially, there is nothing within them but the breathed, back-and-forth double rejoicing of the pact against externality. Adam and his God form an oscillatory circuit of generosity that celebrates and elevates itself *in dulci iubilo*. Through God's communication with Adam, this mirroring of His being radiates unanimously back to Him from Adam. Perhaps it is appropriate to image the music of angels and sirens as the sonic miracle of such an untainted bi-unanimity.

Unscathed spheres carry their destruction within themselves: this too is taught with merciless stringency by the Jewish paradise account. There is nothing to impair the perfection of the first pneumatic bubble until the disturbance of a sphere leads to the primal catastrophe. The distractable Adam falls prey to a second inspiration through the secondary voices of the serpent and the woman; as a result he discovers what theologians called his freedom. Initially, however, this consists only in



Masaccio, *The Expulsion from Paradise*, fresco, 1427,
Capella Brancacci, Florence, detail

a certain willing openness to seduction by outside elements. The phenomenon of freedom subsequently takes on its full, unnerving magnitude by installing radicalized independence of will and the desire for other things than those prescribed, indeed for many kinds of things—all declensions of a metaphysically interpreted evil will. From the very first whim of individual freedom, however, humans lost the ability to stay in their place within the purely sounding biunity of the God-self space, devoid of all secondary voices. The “expulsion from paradise” is a mythical title for the spherological primal catastrophe—in psychological terminology it would be paraphrased as a general weaning trauma. Only an event of this kind—the withdrawal of the first completer—could give rise to what would later be termed the “psyche”: the semblance of a soul that, almost like a private spark or an isolated vital principle, inhabits a single desirous body. The mythical process outlines the inevitable corruption of the original interior-forming biunity through the emergence of a third, a fourth and a fifth, which led to the advent of frolicking. The biune world had known neither number nor resistance, for even the mere awareness that there were other things, countable and third options, would have corrupted the initial homeostasis. The expulsion from paradise means the fall from the blissful inability to count. In the dyad, the united two even have the power to deny their twoness in unison; in their breathed retreat they form an alliance against numbers and interstices. *Secundum, tertium, quartum, quintum—non dantur*. We are what we are, without separations and joints: this space of happiness, this vibration, this animated echo chamber. We live, as intertwined beings, in the land of We. But this measureless, numberless happiness with closed eyes cannot ever last anywhere; in post-

paradise times—and does the count not always start “after paradise lost”?—the sublime biune bubble is damned to burst.

The modalities of bursting set the conditions for cultural histories. Transitional objects, new themes, secondary themes, multiplicities and new media step between the two partners; the symbiotic space, once intimate and filled with a single motif, opens up into a multiple neutrality, where freedom is only granted along with foreignness, indifference and plurality. It is torn open by non-symbiotic urgencies; for the new is always born as something that disturbs earlier symbioses. It intervenes in the individual interior as an alarm and a compulsion. Now the adult cosmos becomes clear as the epitome of work, struggle, diversion and coercion. What was God becomes a lonely, transcendent pole. He survives in the only way he can: as a distant delusional address for scattered quests for salvation. What was Adam’s symbiotically hollow interior now opens itself up to more and less spiritless occupants known as worries, entertainments or discourses; these fill out the space that, in the intimate state of coexistence, would have wanted to remain for free for the one, the initial breath partner. The adult has now understood that he has no right to happiness; at most, a call to remember that other state. Who would be allowed to follow it? The utmost that a consciousness filled with worry and violence can allow itself in the way of symbolic nurturances are backward-looking, yet also future-summoning phantasms of the reinstated dyad. Such dreams belong to the stuff of which the visionary religions are made; Plato’s magic trail through the course of the European spirit also follows these dream lines. In countless encodings these phantasms, partly in public and partly concealed, call up witching images from the perfect globe of sheltering, sheltered

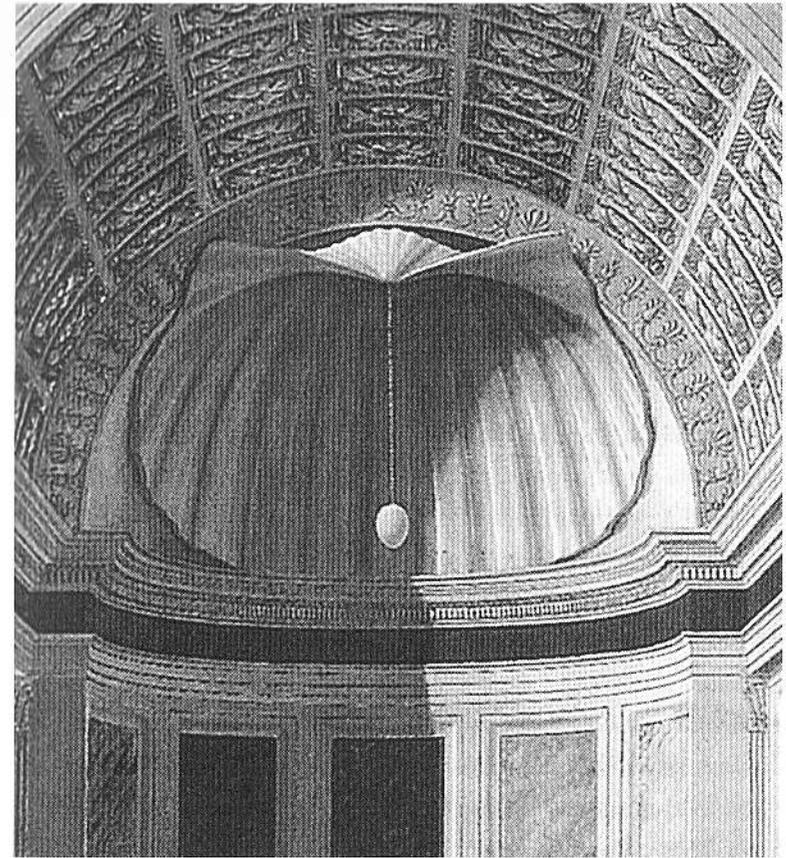
mutual inspiration. Stirred up or sucked in by mysterious memories and regressions, sunken notions of a prehistoric breath community of the double soul on the sixth day of creation.

All history is the history of animation relationships. Its nucleus, as certain anticipatory formulations hinted, is the biune bond of radical inspiration communities. It may initially be unimportant whether this bond is addressed in the terms of the creation myth as the alliance of divine image between Yahwe and Adam, or under the psychoanalytical concept of the early mother-child dyad, or the poetic-existential figures of the inseparable lovers, the twins, the Great Couple and the conspiring two. In all these models, spheric liaisons are brought up in which reciprocal animations generate themselves through radical resonance; each of them demonstrates that real subjectivity consists of two or more parties. Where two of these are exclusively opened towards each other in intimate spatial division, a livable mode of subjectness develops in each; this is initially no more or less than a participation in spheric resonances.

In earlier times, it was almost exclusively religious traditions, with special considerations, that bore witness to this enigma of subjectivity as participation in a bipolar and pluripolar field.¹⁹ Only with the incipient Modern Age did individual complexes step out of these vague constructs and move towards worldly views—especially in psychological, medical and aesthetic discourses. In premodern worlds, the only way for phenomena of biune and communitarian inspiration to articulate themselves was in religious languages—monovalent-animistic and bivalent-metaphysical ones. It will therefore be inevitable in the following reflections on the establishment of a general spherology also to

open up the religious fields of European and non-European cultures in free traversals for an open discourse of intimacy. In doing so, this anthropology beyond humans identifies itself perhaps not as the servant-girl of theology, but certainly as its pupil. It would not, admittedly, be the first to outgrow its teacher. Worldly spherology is the attempt to free the pearl from the theological oyster.

The spherological drama of development—the emergence into history—begins at the moment when individuals step out into the multipolar worlds of adults as poles of a biunity field. They inevitably suffer a form of mental resettlement shock when the first bubble bursts, an existential uprooting: they come out of their infantile state by ceasing to live completely under the shadow of the united other and thus starting to become inhabitants of an expanded psycho-sociosphere. For them, this is where the birth of the outside takes place: upon emerging into the open, humans discover what they initially think can never become part of their own, inner, co-animated realm. There are, as humans learn fascinatedly and painfully, more dead and outer things between heaven and earth than any worldling can dream of appropriating. When the youths bid farewell to their maternal kitchens-cum-living rooms, they are confronted with subjectless, external, excitingly uncontrollable phenomena. They would not be viable human individuals, however, if they did not bring a dowry of memories of the symbiotic field and its enclosing power with them into the strange new land. It is this power to transfer the integral space that ultimately also overcomes the intruder trauma, the law of the disruptive third, fourth and fifth parties, for it integrates the disrupter like a new sibling—as if, in fact, it were a necessary element in its own system.



Piero della Francesca, *Brera Madonna*, detail

Leopards break into the temple and drink to the dregs what is in the sacrificial pitchers; this is repeated over and over again; finally it can be calculated in advance, and it becomes part of the ceremony. (Franz Kafka)²⁰

Time and again, the literature of the interior deprives the fortuitous and the senseless of its destructive sting. From the outset,

there is a process of world literature competing with the rise of the external, the foreign, the fortuitous and those forces that threaten to burst the sphere; its aim is to settle every outside, no matter how cruel and unfitting, all demons of the negative and monsters of foreignness, within an expanded inside. Context turns into text—as often and as long as the external is worked away or reduced to tolerable formats. In this sense, order is above all the effect of a transference from interior to exterior. What we know as the metaphysical worldviews of Old Europe and Asia are the tensest ascetic drawings-in of the foreign, the dead and the external into the circle of soul-animated, text-woven large-scale interiors. Until yesterday, their poets were the thinkers. They taught the citizens of being how to achieve symbiosis with the stars and the stones; they interpreted the outside as an educator. Hegel's great synthesis is the last European monument to this will to draw all negativity and externality into the inside of a logically sealed dome. But philosophy could not have erected its sublime constructions without the mandate of its carrier culture, and logical syntheses presuppose the political and military situations that demand such symbolic vaulting; their exoteric mission—living on a large scale, ruling over palaces and distant borders—requires consolidation through metaphysical knowledge. The first philosophy is the last transference. Novalis would go on to lift the secret when he interpreted thought allied with writing as a general homecoming: “Where are we going? Always home.” The total parental home does not want to lose even the most foreign elements. On all paths to high culture, sphere extension and growing inclusivity dictate the law by which consciousness develops.

What we call growing up consists of these strenuous resettlings of smaller subjectivities in larger world forms; often,

it simultaneously means the reformatting of the tribal consciousness to suit imperial and text-supported circumstances. For the child we were, the expanded space of interaction may be the large family for a while; as soon as the familial horizon is exceeded, however, the more developed social forms stake their claims to form and animate the individuals. As far as prehistoric times are concerned, the decisive social form manifests itself as the horde, with a tendency towards forming clan communities and tribes; in historical times, it appears as the people, with a tendency towards founding cities, nations and kingdoms. In both regimes, the prehistoric and the historical, human existence never simply adjusts itself to fit into what, using a modern and overly smooth term, we call its “environment”; rather, this existence creates its own surrounding space through which and in which it appears. Every social form has its own world house, a bell jar of purpose, under which human beings first of all gather, understand themselves, defend themselves, grow and dissolve boundaries. The hordes, tribes and peoples, and the empires all the more, are—in their respective formats—psychosociospheric quantities that arrange themselves, climatize themselves and contain themselves. At every moment of their existence, they are forced to place above themselves, by their typical means, their own semiotic heavens from which character-forming collective inspirations can flow to them.

No people can last in its own process of generations and in competition with other peoples unless it succeeds in keeping up its process of self-inspiration. What is referred to here as autogenous inspiration is, more dispassionately expressed, the continuum of ethnospheric climate techniques. Through ethnotechniques spanning generations, tens and hundreds of

thousands, perhaps even millions of individuals are attuned to superior collective spirits and particular rhythms, melodies, projects, rituals and fragrances. By virtue of such formal games, which produce a shared and productive sensuality, the collected many keep finding the proof of their destiny to be together, even under adverse conditions; where this proof becomes powerless, discouraged people dissolve within stronger cultures or decline into rioting bands and childless leftover groups.²¹ Because of its exaggerated aim, the task of enclosing such absurdly large numbers of people in unifying systems of delusion sounds like an impossible demand. Mastering precisely such difficulties, however, was obviously part of the logic of the way in which peoples were actually formed. In the historical world, it seems, the more improbable option develops an inclination to assert itself as the realer one. How implausible and impossible the mere existence of a united mass like a people seems from the perspective of the primal hordes—the cultural synthesis of a thousand or ten thousand hordes—yet it is the peoples who made history, sucked up the hordes and demoted them to mere families or houses. To us, the concept of empire—in terms of the swarming of tribes and peoples—seems all the more of an impossibility; it is precisely the polyethnic empires, however, that called the tune of volatile history during the last four millennia and translated their expectations of order into reality. Anyone who studies the course of the past ten millennia with regard to the creation of peoples must conclude from the evidence that wherever there are peoples, divine heavens to form these peoples cannot be far away. The native gods stand, like ethnotechnic universals, for communality instead of diverse segments—they are the unbelievable that demanded belief, and

did so with the greatest historical success. Almost everywhere, brute force had a catalytic role in ethnopoietic processes. It is only the language games of the gods, however, that prove to be effective guarantees of longer-lasting ethnospheric animation effects; one could say that they ensure syntheses of peoples *a priori*.

The case of the Jewish Yahwe, the spirit God who blows over the desert, is an especially striking example of a supreme inspirator carrying out His ethnopoietic office for His chosen people. Not only does he remain the intimate God of Adam and Abraham, and offer himself to human souls in the monotheistic cultures as the eternal super-thou; He is, above all, the transcendent integrator who unites the twelve tribes to form the people of Israel. He is the one who stabilizes his people not only as bearers of the law, but also as a military stress community,²² enabling them to assert themselves at the ever-changing battlefronts of innumerable conflicts. He commits Himself to His people in the most remarkable manner by binding it to Him through the pneumatic legal form of the covenant. Friedrich Heer once observed that the sheer physical existence of the Jewish people in the present essentially amounts to a proof of God from history; in less effusive terms, one could say that the historical persistence of Judaism through the last three thousand years at least constitutes the most concrete of all spheric proofs based on survival.²³

In spherological terms, peoples appear above all as communities of cult, arousal, effort and inspiration. As autogenous vessels, they live and survive only under their own atmospheric, semiospheric bell jar. Through their gods, their stories and their arts, they supply themselves with the breath—and thus the stimuli—that make them possible. In this sense, they are

successful pneumotechnic and auto-stressory constructs. By lasting, peoples prove their ethnotechnic genius *ipso facto*. And although the individuals within peoples pursue their own concerns in relative obliviousness, overarching myths, rituals and self-stimulations still create social fabrics of sufficient ethnic coherence, even from the most resistant material. Such endogenously stressed collective bodies are spheric alliances that drift in the current of the ages. That is why the most successful sphere-forming communities, the religion-based folk traditions or cultures, have survived for centuries with impressive ethno-spiritual constancy. The prime example, alongside Judaism, is Indo-Aryan Brahmanism, which has been symbolically air-conditioning the Hindu world for millennia. The Chinese continuum likewise confirms the law that sphere politics is fate: was China not one great artistic exercise on the theme “existence in an exteriorless, self-immured space” until the turn of our decade? We shall attempt, especially in the second volume, to explain how this imperial enclosure reflected the characteristic spatial understanding of the metaphysical epoch.

Speaking of spheres, then, does not only mean developing a theory of symbiotic intimacy and couple-surrealism; though sphere theory by its nature begins as a psychology of inner spatial formation from biune correspondences, it inevitably develops further into a *general theory of autogenous vessels*. This theory provides the abstract form for all immunologies. Under the sign of the spheres, finally, the question is posed as to the *form* of political outer space creations as such.

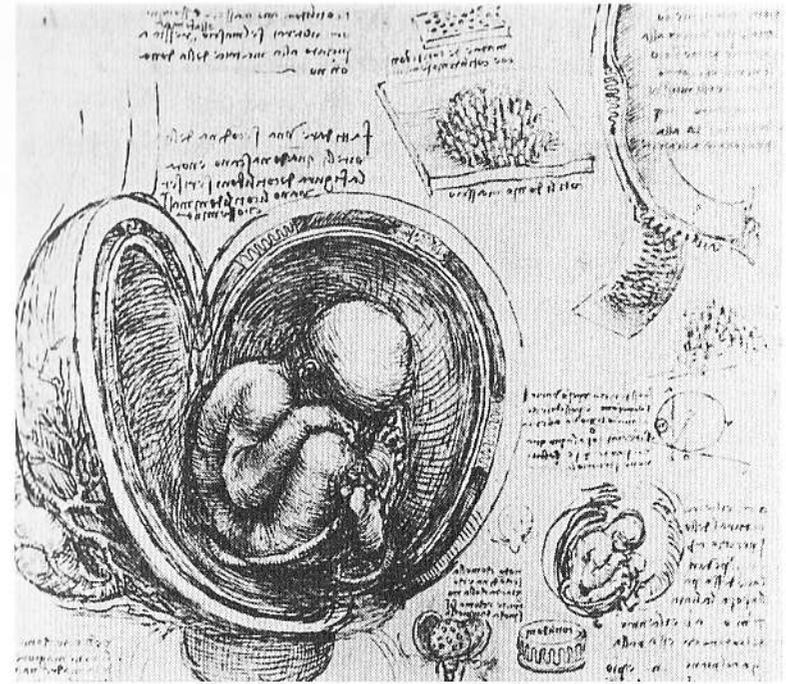
In our account, then, sphere psychology will go before sphere politics; the philosophy of intimacy must be used to

support political morphology, open it up, accompany it and circle it. This order has an obvious dramaturgical reason, but ultimately stems from the matter itself. At its beginning, every life goes through a phase in which a mild two-person illusion defines the world. Caring ecstasies enclose mothers and children in an amorous bell whose resonances remain, under all circumstances, a precondition for a successful life. Early on, however, the unified two become related to third, fourth and fifth elements; as the singular life ventures out of its initial shell, additional poles and larger spatial dimensions open up, each defining the extent of the developing and developed connections, worries and participation. In fully-grown spheres, forces are at work that draw the individual into an illusion shared by millions. It seems impossible to live in large societies without yielding in some measure to the delirium of one's own tribe. From the outset, therefore, spherology examines the risks involved in transference processes from micro- to macropsychoses. What it considers above all else, however, is the exodus of the living from the real and the virtual mother's womb into the dense cosmoses of the regional advanced civilizations, and beyond these into the non-round, non-dense foam worlds of modern global culture. In this, our account follows the Romanesque idea of describing the world as a glass bead game, even if, conditioned by its subject, it will take away the weightlessness of this motif. Spheres are forms as forces of destiny—from the fetal marble in its private, dark waters to the cosmic-imperial ball that appears before us with the supremely confident aim of containing and rolling over us.

Once spheres are elevated to a theme as effective forms of the real, the perspective of the world's *form* reveals the key to its

symbolic and pragmatic order. We can explicate why, wherever people think in large round forms, the idea of self-sacrifice inevitably gains power. From time immemorial, the massive globes that present mortals with their comforting roundness have demanded that whatever does not fit into the smooth curvature of the whole should be subordinated to them: first of all the stubborn, cumbersome, private ego, which has always resisted complete absorption into the great round self. The forces of empire and salvation find their obligatory aesthetic in the circle. Hence our phenomenology of spheres is forced by the obstinacy of its theme to overturn the morphological altar on which, in imperial times, the non-round was always sacrificed to the round. On the largest scale, the theory of spheres leads into a critique of round reason.

The first book of this sphere trilogy speaks of microspheric units that will be referred to here as *bubbles*. They constitute the intimate forms of the rounded being-in-form and the basic molecule of the strong relationship. Our analysis sets about the task, never undertaken before, of narrating the epic of those biunities that have always been lost to the adult intelligence, yet never fully eradicated. We shall dive into a lost history that tells of the blossoming and sinking of the intimate Atlantis; we will explore a breathed continent in the matriarchal sea that we inhabited in a subjectively prehistoric time, and abandoned with the start of what we believe to be our own histories. In this distinctive world, elusive quantities flash at the edge of conventional logic. Recognizing our inevitable conceptual helplessness as our only sure companion, we traverse landscapes of pre-objective existence and prior relationships. If it were appropriate to speak of penetrating,



Leonardo da Vinci, drawing with uterus, embryo and placenta, c. 1520, detail

one might say that we will penetrate into the realm of intimate absurdities.²⁴ The things themselves, however, as becomes apparent, will only tolerate non-invasive invasions; in this area one must entrust oneself, more permissively than in one's usual methodical explorations and goal-directed thought tasks, to a drift that pulls us forwards on the lymphatic currents of pre-subjectively primitive self-awareness. On the way through the evasive underworld of the inner world, the schematic image of a fluid and auratic universe unfolds like a map in sound, woven entirely from resonances and suspended matter; it is there that we must seek the prehistory of all things pertaining to the soul.

By its very nature, this search has the form of an impossible problem that can neither be solved nor left alone.

These journeys along the edges to the source regions of the soul, self-sense and entwinement bring to light just how far the prehistory of the intimate has always proceeded as a history of mental catastrophe. One cannot speak of the intimate spheres without mentioning how their bursting and expanded regeneration take place. All amniotic sacs,²⁵ organic models of autogenous vessels, live towards their bursting; with the turbulent waters of birth, every life is washed up on the coast of harder facts. Those who reach it can use those facts to explain what drives the intimate, all too intimate bubbles to failure and forces their inhabitants into transformations.

The second book of *Spheres* will open up a historico-political world whose models are the geometrically exact orb and the globe. Here we enter the Parmenidean dimension: a universe whose boundaries are drawn with a compass and whose center is occupied by a specifically philosophical, circumspect and overflowing joviality. In the era of metaphysics and classical empires, not so much overcome as simply forgotten, God and the world seemingly made a pact to present everything intrinsically being thing as an inclusive orb. Theology and ontology have, as far as we can see, always been teachings on the round container form; only from this perspective do the shapes of the empire and the cosmos become conceivable in a binding fashion. Not without reason was Nicholas of Cusa able to write: "And so, the whole of theology is said to be circular."²⁶ Theologians may continue under the illusion that their God is deeper than the God of the philosophers; but the God of the morphologists



Mosaic showing a group of philosophers from the Villa Albani, Rome, 1st century BC

is deeper than the God of the theologians.²⁷ On such expeditions into worlds now almost entirely lost, where the idea of a necessary roundness of the whole predominated, we gain insights into the function and construction of political ontologies in premodern empires. There is no traditional empire that failed to secure its borders by cosmological means, and no ruling body that did not discover the instruments of political immunology for itself. What is world history if not also the war

history of immune systems? And the early immune systems—were they not always militant geometries too?

The recollection of the venerable doctrines of orb-shaped being uncovers the philosophical origins of a process that, under the name of “globalization,” is on everyone’s lips today. Its true story needs to be told—from the geometrization of the heavens in Plato and Aristotle to the circumnavigation of the final orb, the earth, through ships, capitals and signals. It will transpire how the Uranian globalization of ancient physics had to change into terrestrial globalization upon its modern failure. Underlying this is the decision to give the *globe* back the significance that is assigned to it nominally in the usual talk of globalization, but never in a conceptually serious fashion, namely as the true icon of heaven and earth. Once one has gained an idea of terrestrial globalization as the basic process of the Modern Age, it can be made clear why a third globalization, triggered by the rapid images in the networks, is currently leading to a general space crisis. This is indicated by the concept, as familiar as it is opaque, of *virtuality*. The virtual space of cybernetic media is the modernized outside that can no longer be presented as one form of the divine interior; it is made feasible in the shape of technological exteriority—and hence as an outside that lacks any inside counterpart from the outset. Cybernetic virtuality was preceded by philosophical virtuality, admittedly, which had been founded with the Platonic exposition of the world of ideas. Classical metaphysics already cast vulgar spatial thought into a crisis, for Plato made the virtual sun known as “good” rise over the sensual world, and it is only from this that everything that is “real” about the three-dimensionally sensual gains being at all. The current

writings about virtual space are just in time to participate in the 2,400-year anniversary of the discovery of the virtual.

The concept of the sphere—both as an enlivened space and as the imagined and virtual orb of being—is ideally suited to recapitulating the transition from the most intimate to the most encompassing, from the closed to the burst-open concept of space. That the space-spawning extraversions of the spheres show a touch of the weird and even the monstrous was hinted at by Rilke, who did more for the poetics of space than any contemporary thinker, in a decisive verse:

And how perplexed must any womb-born creature feel, who is obliged to fly thin air.²⁸

The theory of spheres is a morphological tool that allows us to grasp the exodus of the human being, from the primitive symbiosis to world-historical action in empires and global systems, as an almost coherent history of extraversion. It reconstructs the phenomenon of advanced civilization as the novel of sphere transference from the intimate minimum, the dual bubble, to the imperial maximum, which one should imagine as a monadic round cosmos. If the exclusivity of the bubble is a lyric motif, the inclusivity of the orb is an epic one.

It is in the nature of the matter that the phenomenology of imperial roundnesses must turn into a critical gynecology of the state and the large-scale church; in the course of our account, we will in fact show that peoples, empires, churches and, above all, modern nation states, are not least space-political attempts to recreate fantastic wombs for infantilized mass populations by

imaginary and institutional means. Because the greatest of all possible container figures had to be envisaged as the one God in the age of patriarchal metaphysics, however, the theory of the orb leads directly to a morphological reconstruction of Western ontotheology: this doctrine conceptualizes God Himself, in Himself and for Himself, as an all-encompassing orb of which esoteric doctrines circulating since the High Middle Ages would claim that its center was everywhere and its perimeter nowhere.²⁹ Was the process of the Modern Age not identical, in its deep structure, to the attempts of European intellectuals to find their bearings in this unstable super-orb?

From the early Middle Ages, Catholic infernologists considered that humans are beings which could fall out of the divine round space. It was only with Dante that hell was cleared up geometrically: in his vision, even those who are excommunicated from the divine orb after judgment will remain contained in the immanences of hell's circles—we shall refer to these, with the rings of the *Commedia* in mind, as the anti-spheres. Their description, as remains to be shown, anticipates the modern phenomenology of depression and the psychoanalytical separation of analyzable and non-analyzable spirits.³⁰

In examinations of the metaphysics of telecommunication in large-scale social bodies, we will show how the classical empires and *ecclesiae* managed to present themselves as sun-like orbs whose rays break forth from a monarchic center to illuminate even the periphery of all that is.³¹ Here it becomes apparent why the attempts of classical metaphysics to conceive of all that is as a concentrically organized monosphere were doomed to failure, for more reasons than immanent construction errors—why, in fact, such a hyper-orb, because of its forced abstractness, was a

flawed immunological design to begin with. The widespread homesickness for the Aristotelian world that is seeing a particular revival today, and which recognizes its goal in the word “cosmos” and its longing in the phrase “world soul,” exists not least because we do not practice any historical immunology, and draw the dangerously false conclusion from the evident immunodeficiencies of contemporary cultures that earlier world systems were constructed better in this respect. The livability of the classically totalistic systems of former times is a peculiar matter, however. One need only recall the Gnostic claustrophobia under the tyrannical walls of heaven, or the early Christian unease about encompassing the world at all, to judge how far the world of late antiquity already saw reasons to revolt against the flawed immunological design of its official cosmology. We will explain how the Christian epoch was only able to discover the formula for its success in a historic compromise of its immune systems, both the personalistic-religious and the imperial-constructivistic—and why their decline had to result in the technization of immunity that characterizes modernity.

Finally, it will have to be shown how the delayed failure of the European dream of universal monarchy supplied the driving forces for the terrestrial globalization process, in whose course the scattered cultures on the last orb will be drawn together into an ecological stress commune.³²

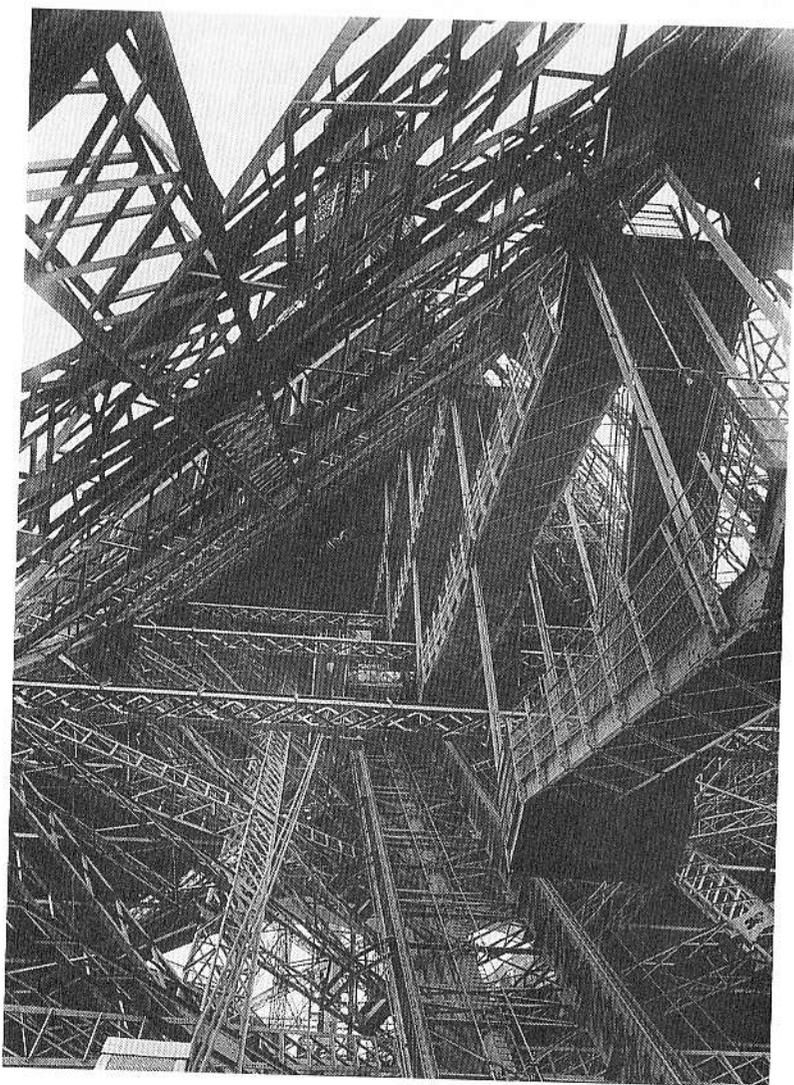
The third book will address the modern catastrophe of the round world. Using morphological terms, it will describe the rise of an age in which the form of the whole can no longer be imagined in terms of imperial panoramas and circular panopticons. From a morphological perspective, modernity appears primarily



Planetarium under construction in Jena in the 1920s

as a form-revolutionary process. It is not by chance that its conservative critics decried it as a loss of the center and rejected it as a rebellion against the divine circle—to this day. For Catholic Old Europeans, the essence of the Modern Age can still be expressed in a single phrase: spheric blasphemy. Much less nostalgically, though taking an untimely non-Catholic path, our spherological approach supplies the means to characterize the catastrophes of world form in modernity—that is, terrestrial and virtual globalization—in terms of non-round sphere formations.

This *contradictio in adiecto* mirrors the formal dilemma of the current contemporary state of the world, in which global markets and media have ignited an acute world war of ways of life and informational commodities. When everything has become the center, there is no longer any valid center; when everything is transmitting, the allegedly central transmitter is lost in the tangle of messages. We see how and why the age of the one, the greatest all-encompassing circle of unity and its bowed exegetes has irrevocably passed. The guiding morphological principle of the polyspheric world we inhabit is no longer the orb, but rather *foam*. The structural implication of the current earth-encompassing network—with all its eversions into the virtual realm—is thus not so much a globalization as a foaming. In foam worlds, the individual bubbles are not absorbed into a single, integrative hyper-orb, as in the metaphysical conception of the world, but rather drawn together to form irregular hills. With a phenomenology of foams, we shall attempt to advance—in concepts and images—towards a political amorphology that gets to the bottom(less)³³ of the metamorphoses and paradoxes of the solidary space in the age of multifarious media and mobile world markets. Only a theory of the amorphous and non-round could, by examining the current fame of sphere destructions and sphere regenerations, offer the most intimate and general theory of the present age. Foams, heaps, sponges, clouds and vortexes serve as the first amorphological metaphors, and will help to investigate the formation of inner worlds, the creation of contexts and the architectures of immunity in the age of unfettered technical complexity. What is currently being confusedly proclaimed in all the media as *the* globalization of the world is, in morphological terms, the universalized war of foams.



The Eiffel Tower

As an inevitable result of the subject itself, we shall also encounter perspectives on sphere pathology in the modern-postmodern process. Referring to a pathology of spheres displays a threefold focus: a political one, in so far as foams tend to be ungovernable structures with an inclination towards morphological anarchy; a cognitive one, in so far as the individuals and associations of subjects can no longer produce any complete world, as the idea of the whole world itself, in its characteristically holistic emphasis, unmistakably belongs to the expired age of metaphysical total-inclusion-circles, or monospheres; and a psychological one, in so far as single individuals in foams tend to lose the power to form mental-emotional spaces, and shrink to isolated depressive points transplanted into random surroundings (correctly referred to systemically as their environment). They suffer from the immunodeficiency caused by the deterioration of solidarities—to say nothing, for the moment, of the new immunizations acquired through participation in regenerated sphere creations. For sphere-deficient private persons, their lifespan becomes a sentence of solitary confinement; egos that are extensionless, scarcely active and lacking in participation stare out through the media window into moving landscapes of images. It is typical of the acute mass cultures that the moving images have become far livelier than most of their observers: a reproduction of animism in step with modernity.

In fact, the soul in the non-round age must, even under the most favorable conditions, be prepared for the fact that for the single bubbles, the self-completing, released individuals who furnish their personal spaces medially, the hybrid global foam will remain something impenetrable; at least navigability can partially replace transparency. Certainly, as long as the world

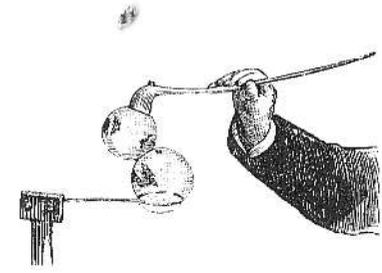
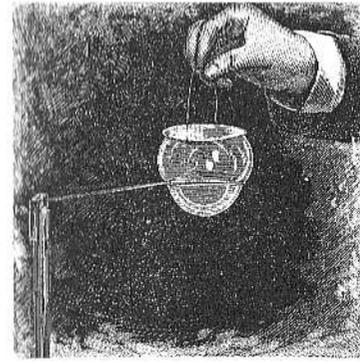


Annika von Hausswolff, *Attempting to Deal with Time and Space*, 1997

could still be panoptically overviewed as a whole from a single ruling point, it seemed intelligible through the self-transparency with which the divine orb illuminated itself in order to possess itself completely at every point. The notion of human participation in such a provision of transparency released imperial and monologic forms of reason; the world as a whole was illuminated by the circumspection that ruled from the center. God Himself was nothing but the center and the perimeter of the orb of being that was projected and viewed by Him, and all thought that based itself on Him shared analogously in the sublimity of His central view. In the foam worlds, however, no bubble can be expanded into an absolutely centered, all-encompassing, amphiscopic orb; no central light penetrates the entire foam in its dynamic murkiness. Hence the ethics of the decentered, small and middle-sized bubbles in the world foam includes the effort to move about in an unprecedentedly spacious world with an unprecedentedly modest circumspection; in the foam, discrete and polyvalent games of reason must develop that learn to live with a shimmering diversity of perspectives, and dispense with the illusion of the one lordly point of view. Most roads do not lead to Rome—that is the situation, European: recognize it. Thinking in the foam means navigating on unstable currents—others would say that it changes, under the impression of the thought tasks of the time, into a plural and transversal practice of reason.³⁴

With this neither gay nor sad science of foams, the third book of *Spheres* presents a theory of the current age whose main tenor is that deanimation has an insurmountable lead over reanimation. It is the inanimable outside that gives food for thought in intrinsically modern times. This conclusion will inevitably drive the nostalgic yearning for a conception of the

world, which still aims for a livable whole in the education-holistic sense, into resignation. For whatever asserts itself as the inner realm, it is increasingly exposed as the inner side of an outside. No happiness is safe from endoscopy; every blissful, intimate, vibrating cell is surrounded by swarms of professional disillusioners, and we drift among them—thought paparazzi, deconstructivists, interior deniers and cognitive scientists, accomplices in an unlimited plundering of Lethe. The rabble of observers, who want to take everything from without and no longer understand any rhythm—have we not long since become part of them, in most matters and at most moments? And how could it be any different? Who could inhabit in such a way that they inhabit everything? Or in such a way that they do not interfere in anything exterior? The world, it seems, has grown much too large for people of an older type, who strove for true community with things both near and far. The hospitality of the *sapiens* beings towards what arose behind the horizon has long been strained beyond the critical level. No institution, not even a church that thought *kata holon* and loved universally—let alone an individual who reads on bravely—can imagine that it is sufficiently open for everything that infiltrates, speaks and encounters it; viewed from any point in our lifeworld, the vast majority of individuals, languages, works of art, commodities and galaxies remain an unassimilable outside world, by necessity and forever. All “systems,” whether households, communes, churches or states—and especially couples and individuals—are damned to their specific exclusivity; the zeitgeist celebrates its responsibility-free connivance in the external multiplicity with increasing openness. Intellectual history today: the endgames of external observation.



From C. V. Boys, *Soap-Bubbles, and the Forces which Mould Them*, London, 1902

Whether these diagnoses lead to disturbing and restrictive conclusions or to beneficial openings and syntheses is an open question. In all three parts, this treatise on spheres as world-creating formal potencies is an attempt to speak about the contemporary world without innocence. Anyone who relates experiences of the Modern Age to themselves must stand by the loss of innocence in three respects: psychologically, politologically and technologically. What makes this more difficult is that a complicated difference between losing innocence and attaining adulthood reveals itself. Be that as it may—it is nothing new that thinking means breaking with harmlessness.

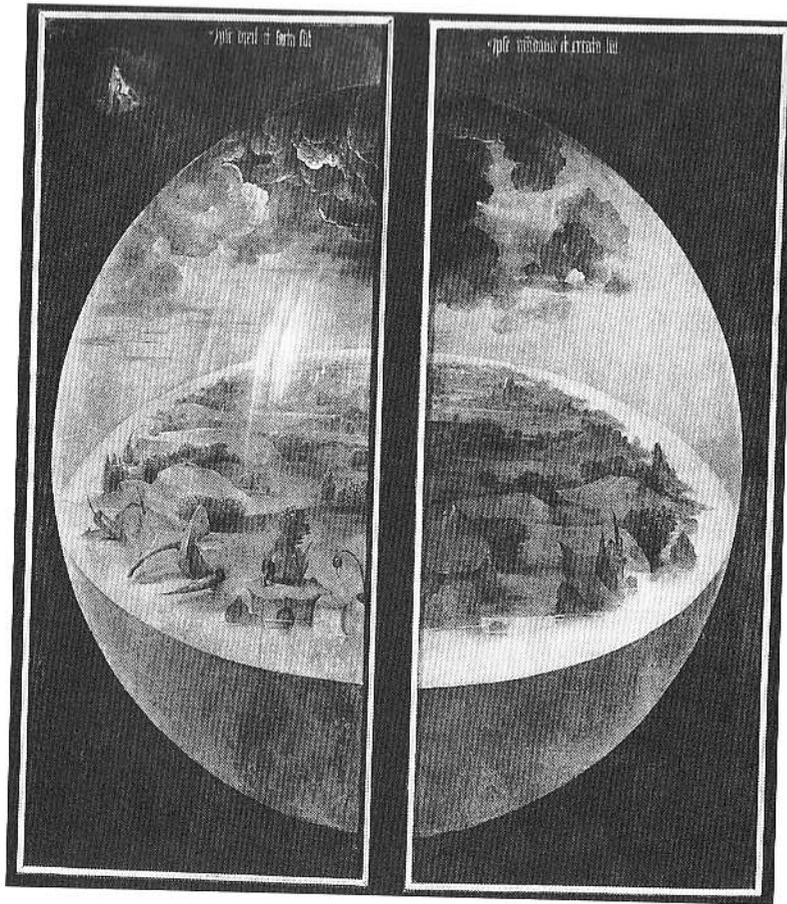
The present account of the rise and the changes in the shape of the spheres is, as far as we know, the first attempt since the failure of Oswald Spengler’s “morphology of world history” to restore the highest priority in an anthropological and culture-theoretical investigation to a concept of form. Spengler’s morphological pretensions, despite his invocation of Goethe as a patron, were doomed to failure, because they applied to their

objects a concept of form that could not possibly do justice to their willfulness and history. It was already a brilliant act of force to isolate cultures in general as “life forms of the highest order,” declaring them windowless units that grow and decline purely according to immanent laws, and force was even more necessary for Spengler to interpret his cultures as thousand-year empires of a regional soul disposition—as soap bubbles of the highest order, so to speak, that would be kept in their shape through internal tensions of an occult nature. The descriptions of life presented under the sign of morphology for the eight cultures he acknowledged may have their place of honor in the history of cultural philosophy as the monument to a great, perhaps incomparable speculative and deductive energy; it is, however, a monument best placed in one of the quieter corners. As far as the application of morphological concepts in the cultural sciences is concerned, Spengler’s example has so far had rather discouraging effects. Our own attempt can therefore not be overly indebted to such a model—except as an impressive demonstration of what should be avoided in future.

If we speak here of spheres as self-realizing forms, we do so in the conviction that we are not imposing concepts—and if they were imposed in a certain sense, it would be in a manner encouraged by the objects themselves. The theory of the spheres: that means gaining access to something that is the most real, yet also the most elusive and least tangible of things. Even to speak of gaining access is misleading, for the discovery of the spheric is less a matter of access than of a slowed-down circumspection amid the most obvious. We are always ecstatically involved in spheric circumstances from the start, even if, for deep-seated and culturally specific reasons, we have learned to overlook

them, think past them and exclude them from our discussions. Because of its orientation towards objectivity, European scientific culture is an undertaking that aims to de-thematize spheric ecstasy. The animated interiority we shall attempt to show in all basic circumstances of human culture and existence is indeed a *realissimum* that initially eludes any verbal or geometric depiction—any representation at all, in fact—and yet, at every point of existence, forces something resembling original circle and orb formations—thanks to a potency of rounding that takes effect prior to all formal and technical constructions of circles.

The inherent morphological dynamic of the worlds shared by those who live together in reality is that of *arrondissements*, which form as they please without any contribution from the geometricians. The self-organization of the psychocosmic and political spaces lead to those metamorphoses of the circle in which existence gives itself its spheric-atmospheric constitution. The word “self-organization”—which is used here without the usual scientific hysteria—is meant to draw attention to the fact that the circle holding humanity is neither purely made nor purely found, instead rounding itself spontaneously on the threshold between construction and self-realization. Or, more accurately put: it realizes itself in rounding events—just as those gathered around a hearth group freely *and* decidedly around the fireplace and its immediate advantages of warmth.³⁵ Hence the spherological analysis initiated with this first volume, beginning with the micro-forms, is neither a purely constructivist projection of rounded-off spaces in which people imagine they are leading a shared existence, nor a purely ontological meditation on the circle in which mortals are captured through an inaccessible transcendent order.



Hieronymus Bosch, *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, outside view with closed wings

As an introduction to a medial poetics of existence, the initial aim of spherology is simply to retrace the formations of shapes among simple immanences that appear in human (and extra-human) systems of order—whether as organizations of archaic intimacy, as the spatial design of primitive peoples, or as the theological-cosmological self-interpretation of traditional

empires. At first glance, the present study, especially in its second part, could thus have the appearance of a cultural history defamiliarized with the aid of morphological, immunological and transference-theoretical concepts. This view, though it does not yet lead to our central concerns, would be neither entirely false nor entirely unwelcome—provided one is willing to admit that only from philosophy can the intelligence learn how its passions find concepts.