

# Poets of the Heart

## Friedrich Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo

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*Prelude...<sup>1</sup>*

My article reads Friedrich Nietzsche and Sri Aurobindo Ghose as *artist-philosophers* and *poet-seers* who followed the great reason of their lived-bodies (Nietzsche 1985, 34). Taking the multiple planes and sheaths of their bodies seriously,<sup>2</sup> they were forced to invent a hybrid style of doing philosophy in which they constantly aligned the performance of thinking with their aesthetic sense (Böhler and Granzer 2019a; 2019b; 2021). Thinking philosophically thus became a sensible matter. A kind of arts-based-philosophy, in which thoughts are generated in a constant dialogue with emotions, which are stimulated, while one thinks: Does the production of a thought sound

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- 1 This article is a revised and extended version of the research proposal “Art in Philosophy: Philosophy in the Arts. The Significance of the \*Heart\* in Artistic-Research (AR) and Performance Philosophy (PP)”, sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): Grant-Doi 10.55776/AR822. <https://www.mdw.ac.at/the.heart/> (last accessed: 12 June 2025)
  - 2 On an image of thought which thinks on a “thousand plateaus”, see Deleuze and Guattari 1987. Later, in his book on Foucault, Deleuze clarified the concept of plateaus further, by interpreting the thousand plateaus of one’s self as archeological layers which constitute the foundation of one’s past. They are not just lying one above the other like slices, but they are also intra-connected by a thousand lines which run through them in a queer, criss-cross manner. Combining Guattari’s concept of transversality (Guattari 2000, 43) with Foucault’s concept of archeology, the lived-past thus becomes a dimension of the present. On the concept of transversality see Deleuze 1986; Deleuze 1994.

well? Does it feel coherent? Is the wording of a certain formulation well-tuned?

While one is performing arts-based-philosophy, one's aesthetic sense continuously tastes the coherence of thoughts in a logical, but also a sensible manner. Obviously, arts-based-philosophy is not just arguing with words but generates a sublime form of feeling that sensually informs us (*aisthesis*) about the coherence of a thought in a bodily-felt-sense (Skora 2007).

In the case of artist-philosophers, who are those to perform philosophy in such an aesthetic manner, the coherence of an assemblage of thoughts can therefore never simply be reduced to the question of its logical consistency. As-if thoughts would not be entangled at all with all the other planes of one's existence; with one's appetite, desires, feelings, visions, inspirations and intuitions, but also with external relations in which a lived-body finds itself right at the heart of its world in so many relational affairs with other human, non-human, and more-than-human beings. So many...!

Contrary to the image-of-thought, which considers thinking to be an entirely autonomous act, arts-based-philosophy experiences the creative performance of thinking as a sensitive form of mattering. It is no longer considered to be an immaterial event but has rather become an emergent matter in which thoughts emerge out of a sensible field of related thoughts, with which they are logically *and* sensibly connected. One's aesthetic sense constantly informs one in a bodily-felt sense whether a certain formation of thoughts *feels* coherent and tastes sound while one is thinking. The flashing of a thought has therefore not only a certain degree of logical coherence, but also a certain sensible quality. It could eventually be the case that a new thought appears in one's conceptual research which sounds coherent according to logic but feels unsound aesthetically. In this case, the mattering of a new thought within the relational field of related thoughts triggers a bodily-felt-resistance which gives a logically coherent thought a bitter, unsound taste.

*Unthought thoughts...*

This is even true for still unthought-thoughts which have not mattered yet but are about to matter—for thoughts in their making. Because once they emerge, they too are appearing in a relational field in sensitive connections with other thoughts, with which they are logically but also sensually entangled. As-if the flashing of a particular thought would send a subtle (electro-magnetic) impulse through the entire network of related thoughts with which it is physio-logically intra-connected in one's mind in a sensible manner. Whenever one thinks a particular thought, the entire network of related thoughts seems to be stimulated at once as the referential context which constitutes the referential meaning of a particular thought, where it starts to make sense.

This is true in particular if one is still *in search* of a yet unthought-thought. In such a case, the *researching* mind activates new combinations of thoughts in an *experimental* manner in order to probably find the yet unthought-thought one is searching for, through *playful variations* of already given sets-of-thoughts which are available in one's mind. It is this *free-associating* state of mind that is obviously trusted to eventually trigger the yet unthought-thought.

One could call the performance of such a kind of mindful research arts-based-thinking. Firstly, because it is an *experimental* mode of thinking *in search* of yet unthought-thoughts (mindful re-search), and secondly because it is an *aesthetic* mode of thinking, concerned with both, the logical *and* the sensible coherence of a certain set of thoughts. The performance of thinking thus becomes a creative act in-itself; it becomes arts-based-philosophy. That is, philosophy in search of new concepts (Deleuze 1994, p. 40).

*Artist-philosophers...*

Artist-philosophers are precisely those kinds of philosophers who in actu perform such an artistic-mode of thinking in their philosophical research. When they start thinking, they do not yet have the thought they are looking for but search for it in a sensible way. Being experimentally engaged in creative forms of mindful research, the

playful mind-set of artist-philosophers is basically turned toward the *virtual* plane of their existence. Which is precisely that plane-of-being from which unthought-thoughts, unfelt-feelings, not-yet-staged modes of expressions *eventually emerge*: A non-place of a virtual 'future' which has not yet mattered but is about to matter. The conditions for the mattering of a particular thought are there, the searched for thought is currently about to matter, but it still has not yet been grasped fully so far.

In artistic research, the virtual future of something which has not yet mattered but is about to matter is evidently no distant, utopian matter. One does not search for a non-place in order to leave it at that. Artistic research is rather passionately interested in finding a way to let the non-place of the not-yet<sup>3</sup> *happen here-and-now*; right in the midst of one's artistic research; and induced by it. One is *currently* engaged with the *possible mattering* of a not yet staged thought, a not yet staged feeling, or other modes of yet unexpressed-expressions while one is performing artistic research. It is precisely this *eventuality* of a possible mattering here and now that one is currently concerned with.

One might even claim that artistic research is all about mattering: Mattering of thoughts, of feelings, of visions, of inspirations, of intuitions, of artefacts, of public demonstrations etc. etc. etc. It is not about matter as an already constituted thing or body of thoughts, feelings, artefacts which would already be ready at hand to be just used (*natura naturata*). Rather, artistic research is a process of mattering in which matter is actually about to matter in space and time. Toying with Karen Barad's new materialism, based on philosophy-physics, one might say that it is exactly the mattering of new forms of matter that matters most in artistic research and philosophy-physics (Barad 2007, 2012).

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3 On the notion of locality and non-locality from the perspective of quantum-physics see the contribution by Tanja Traxler & Reinhold A. Bertlmann

*The heart-mind...*

The physiological sensibility of a thought, its special flavor, can never be entirely separated from the rhizomatic multitude (Böhler; Kruschkova; Granzer 2014; Deleuze; Guattari 1987) of all the sensible channels which run from one thought to another thought, but also from the plane of thoughts to the plane of feelings. Namely by traversing the mental and the vital planes of one's lived-body in a *transversal* manner.<sup>4</sup>

It has often been mentioned that in ancient Chinese philosophies the word *xin* was referring to the faculty of the heart with its capacity to feel as well as to the faculty of the mind with its capacity to think. Therefore, most Sinologists used to translate the word *xin* as *heart-mind*. Since one's heart-mind traverses different planes of one's existence at once in a queer, cross-chipping manner, it simultaneously belongs to the regime of the mind *and* the heart. From the perspective of one's heart-mind, finding a *sound* expression among thoughts, words, or other expressions in one's heart-mind is neither a matter of one's mind *nor* of one's heart but of both at once. One might therefore say that artist-philosophers who are performing arts-based-philosophy are in actu in search of a sound logical, but also of a sound aesthetic ratio in their heart-minds. A series of thoughts which pops up in their minds has to satisfy both faculties at once, their heart and their mind, and not just either one or the other; as-if one's heart and one's head would exist completely independent of each other in autonomous, entirely separated planes-of-being, without any *transversal line* that would be able to run through these planes in a queer, cross-chipping manner and thereby intra-connect one plane, the plane of thoughts, with the other, the plane of feelings. Questions such as: "How does a thought actually resonate in one's heart-mind?" "What does the mattering of a thought, its incarnation in a relational field, sound like?" "What is its flavor?" "How does it feel?" "How does it taste?" "Does it actually satisfy the aesthetical sense operative in one's heart-mind?" Such questions are core for the

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4 For transversal thinking as a queer cut through several separate planes, see also Guattari 2000, 43.

*aesthetic* mode of thinking, operative in one's heart-mind, because they take the alignment of mental thoughts in one's 'head' and their relatedness with a certain set of feelings in one's 'heart' seriously. Thoughts actually resonate with the feelings of one's 'heart' while one is thinking. As a consequence, they are in fact accompanied by a certain flavor and taste. Thinking-feeling / feeling-thinking. This is what one's heart-mind is in actu concerned with while one is thinking in an aesthetic manner.

If a performance of thinking tastes indeed unsound, one's aesthetic taste even starts to resist and intervene actively in the performance of thinking by *modulating and regulating* the given set of thoughts in accordance with one's aesthetic taste.<sup>5</sup> In such a case, the flavor of the entire cocktail of thoughts has been *corrected* by one's sense of taste in the course of a fine-tuning process that finally made the modulated set of thoughts sound also aesthetically coherent. Not just logically, but also in a bodily-felt-sense, that makes sense in a sensible manner.

*Koinê aisthêsis...*

This is true for all forms of artistic research, not just for the artistic mode of thinking. Either one is searching for a sound expression in painting, in music, in theater, in performances, film-making etc. What these modes of doing art have in common is precisely the fact that they are constitutively forms of *artistic research*. They all search, over and over again (re-search), for a sound expression that still lies in the air; unexpressed, unarticulated, unthought, unfelt, not-yet-staged. In Plato's *Tímaios*, Tímaios once called the element ether the most sublime form of air (Plato 2021, 58D). As-if artists would get in touch with the most etheric planes-of-being while they are doing artistic-research. As-if one could find the unthought-thoughts, the unfelt-feelings, the unexpressed-expressions precisely there, in the lofty, airy zones of a highly sublime ethereal space that almost

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5 On the laws operative in the association of thoughts and affects, see Spinoza *Ethics*, 1994.

resembles a non-place. A void, full of virtual possibilities (*vyoman*),<sup>6</sup> ready to matter once, as South-Asian-philosophies would probably call it.

In *De Anima*,<sup>7</sup> Aristotle therefore characterized the sense of taste as *koinê aisthêsis*. Taste is literally a *synesthetic* form of sensing, which gives us a bodily-sensed flavor of the overall taste of a certain sensorium of sensations. Even though Aristotle's term *koinê aisthêsis* has later been translated into the Latin language as *sensus communis* and in modern times even as *common sense* (Hagner 2008), originally it meant the place of an aesthetic experience in which a certain set of sensations comes together in one single impression (flavor) which reveals the overall coherence of a sensorium of substances, thoughts, feelings in the *taste* of the overall *flavor* of such compositions.

#### *Artefacts of artist-philosophers...*

*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is probably one of the most striking examples in the genealogy of Continental Philosophies in modern times, in which the artist-philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was actually already realizing a crossover of art & philosophy, where words, concepts and thoughts started to dance; precisely due to their aesthetic soundness and coherence (Kimerer 2006; Tuncel 2020, 2021). Nietzsche himself considered the epic poem *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to be primarily a musical composition (Parkes 2008, 11; Tuncel 2022). And Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze read Nietzsche's way of doing philosophy as a form of play-writing—longing for a stage to be performed (Foucault 1977; Deleuze 1994).

In the context of Indian philosophies, *Savitri. A Legend and a Symbol* (Aurobindo 1997), the poetic magnum opus by the Kavi<sup>8</sup> Sri

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6 In South-Asian philosophies, the ether is an empty space, full of potentials. See Dyczkowski 1992, 55.

7 “tôn koinôn echomen aisthêsîn koinên.” (Aristoteles 1931, III, 2, 425, 15)

8 A Kavi is a spiritual poet. Aurobindo translates the word Kavi in the context of the Veda as poet-seers (Aurobindo 1998). It is an aim of this article to read Aurobindo as an artist-philosopher (Kavi), who has not only been nominated for the shortlist to get the Nobel Prize for literature in 1943, but who has written in many different artistic styles. See, for instance,

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), is another striking example in modern times of a philosophical work that finally started to express its philosophy in the style of an epic poem rather than by sheer logical argumentation. Thereby, Aurobindo just reiterated a way of performing philosophy that was in fact the way in which one had been doing philosophy for centuries in India in ancient times, e.g. in the epic age (Gonda 1977; Banerji 2020). And the oldest of all Vedas, the *R̥gveda*, was composed by poets (*Kavis*) in hymns, who expressed their insights into the cosmos-genesis of the world in poetic terms and public performances in which they chanted their hymns. Aurobindo's view in this regard was clear and unambiguous.

In ancient times the Veda was revered as a sacred book of wisdom, a great mass of inspired poetry, the work of Rishis, seer and sages... The name given to these sages was Kavi, which afterwards came to mean any poet, but at the time had the sense of a seer of truth. (Aurobindo 1991, 1)

In Vedic times, the poets (*Kavi*) were considered to be holders of the truth-of-being (*satyam*).<sup>9</sup> They were obviously not considered liars, as they were regularly addressed in Hellenistic times by the philosophers of their time.<sup>10</sup> What gave them such a highly esteemed status in Vedic times was precisely their social reputation, that they were assumed to have envisioned the truth-of-being *themselves*. This was the reason why they were also called seers (*R̥si*). They had reached a certain stage of consciousness themselves, in which they could *intuitively see a truth* that appeared appealing. At the same time they

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his collection of poems, the epic poem Savitri, his poetic masterpiece, and many reflections on art and poetry, in which he presents us an intellectual art theory.

- 9 *Satyam* is an adverb meaning “truly,” “certainly,” “necessarily.” It derives from the Sanskrit term *sat*, which means “that which is true”; and *yam*, which means “to hold,” or “to examine.” It is often used as a synonym for the adjective *satya* (“true,” “truthful” or “authentic”).
- 10 Right at the beginning of his *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Aristotle quotes the widely used saying of his times that “poets tell many a lie” (Aristotle 1966, *Metaphysics*, 983a).

were also able to *translate* their visions and deep insights into sound words which finally found their well-tuned poetic expressions in the hymns of the Veda. Aurobindo therefore deliberately coined the word poet-seers<sup>11</sup> for them, to express this double character of their very nature. They were poets (*Kavis*), and at the same time they were seers (*Ṛṣi*), both at once.

In the context of the *Ṛg-Veda*, the term *satyam*, the truth-of-being, which they were supposed to hold (*sat-yam*), was often associated with two other attributes, namely the vast (*br̥hat*) and the upright (*ṛtam*).<sup>12</sup> The *Kavis* apparently experienced the realization of *satyam* in the course of their poetic research as an opening of their heart-minds. In their experience, envisioning the truth-of-being, *satyam*, was a mindful form of experience associated with a transformation of their hearts and their minds, which both became vast, bright, shiny (*br̥hat*), and, at the same, time honest, sincere, correct, right, upright (*ṛtam*) in the course of this revealing event.

*The other heading...*<sup>13</sup>

If one compares this high estimation of the poets as seers-and-translators-of-the-truth-of-being in Vedic times with the widespread shaming of the poets by the philosophers of Hellenistic times, one can get a first taste of the differences between these two intellectual cultures concerning aesthetic matters. To mention just some telling examples.

Right at the beginning of his *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Aristotle quotes the widely used saying of his times that “poets tell many a lie.” (Aristotle 1966, *Metaphysics*, 983a) Plato’s ban of the poets from

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11 Poiesis is the ancient Greek word for letting something appear in being, where poetry is the calling into being by words. The performative speech-act par excellence.

12 “*satyam ṛtam br̥hat* (*Satyam Ritam Brihat*)..., the Truth, the Right, the Vast. [Atharva-veda 12.1.1].” Aurobindo 2001: <https://incarnateword.in/dict/sans/satyam-rtam-brhat-satyam-ritam-brihat> (last accessed: 12 June 2025) See also Aurobindo 1991, 17.

13 On the relation of caput, capitalism and the European heading see Derrida 1992.

his ideal state has become legendary in terms of the way in which the most respected philosophers of the Hellenistic period viewed the arts in the ancient Greek beginnings of Europe's intellectual history. Less well known is the rumor, handed down over centuries in ancient Greek and Latin cultures, that Socrates advised his master student Plato to burn his art-works before practicing the Socratic form of *epistēmē* (Böhler 2019c).

One could easily extend the list by other examples from ancient Greek times, but also by numerous examples from the intellectual European history in modern times. For instance, the well-known claim by Hegel in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, that the arts can no longer have the same privileged status for us which they once held in the ancient Greek culture. Or Schopenhauer's reduction of the function of art to a sedative, needed to calm down the souterrains of one's lived-body.<sup>14</sup> Or Kant's analysis of beauty as a kind of pleasure, rooted in a disinterested (non-pragmatic) form of intuition. For Kant, the primordial access to the arts actually takes place by contemplating them. He did not estimate the arts as a stimulating force, operative in artistic research, in which one's entire heart-mind is put in a Dionysian state of intoxication, as Nietzsche later holds. All these references, except the last one, show clearly one and the same tendency. Namely, that in the intellectual history of Europe the relation between art & philosophy has altered in favor of a philosophy of Science and not in favor of the arts.

This is true also, or even exemplarily true, in regard to our current times. In the so-called West and all the Westernized cultures, the arts are obviously no longer granted the privileged role of ancient Vedic times. Today, as a rule, people do not assume anymore that the arts could be capable of revealing the truth-of-being (*satyam*). Generally speaking, they do not hold such a privileged status anymore. And even the arts themselves are no longer claiming today to possess a vision of *satyam* that would inspire the public in such a way that their heart and mind would become bright and upright. As if the truth-of-being (*satyam*), revealed in artistic research, would

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14 See the introduction in this book.

quasi-necessarily go hand in hand with the feelings of beauty and delight (*ānanda*).

Who could believe such untimely myths today? In the midst of our contemporary societies? – – –. Indeed. One would have to become outmoded, uncontemporary and radically untimely if one shared such a Vedic belief today. But who is willing to confront herself with such untimely, foolish matters?<sup>15</sup>

The intellectual history of European modernity has shown in a striking manner that socio-political questions on the wellbeing of the human race should be the major concern of humanists in respect to the cosmo-genesis of nature within which humans find themselves.

Taking into consideration that the anthropomorphic socio-political point of view on the cosmo-genesis of nature became the core issue at stake in the wake of the intellectual history of European modernity, it is probably wise to mention that the de-evaluation of the arts in modern times in comparison to the Sciences is a historical process that in fact goes hand in hand with the rise of the colonial era of European Imperialism and the capitalization of the entire globe. A historical epoch in which the head (*caput*) first started to become the governing principle of our entire global *Da-sein* (Hagner 2008). At the very beginning of this epoch the leading thinkers of European Modernity started to imagine the faculty of thinking (*cogito*) to be an entirely autonomous one. As-if the act of thinking was a *cōgitātiō* which was able to act entirely independent of any empirical influence (*res extensa*) in a non-sensual, purely intelligible realm of freedom (*res cogitans*); autonomous, self-governing, entirely separated from the rest of the world, untouched by any worldly influences. In the course of this intellectual history, the kinglike status of the head (mind) was successively replacing the former government of the heart which in pre-modern times was considered by most cultures, and even by ancient philosophers such as Aristotle, to be the central organ and seat of cognition. As-if Western civilizations would have to

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15 On the role of the fool in the context of artistic-research and performance philosophy see the contribution by Susanne Valerie [Granzer] in this anthology.

lose their hearts first in order to allow the history of colonial Imperialisms to emerge by subjecting everything, even one's feelings, under the government of the head (mental-mind) as the intellectual capital needed to capitalize Europe and finally the entire globe. Europe and the West thus became the head (*caput*) as well as the capital historical scene (*caput*) of this entire imperial-capitalist era (Derrida 1992).

Meanwhile, almost all academic cultures worldwide have been globalized in the sense of this intellectual history and its *epistēmē*. Often without knowing anything about the historical genesis of the epochal rise of history, which lies behind the academic process of subjectivation that trains the academic elites all over the globe to more or less reproduce the academic image-of-thought developed in the course of the intellectual history of Europe and the so-called West. Viewed from the perspective of such a historical process of intellectual subjectivation—a process that usually takes place in secret, that is, unnoticed—the creation of academic agents of the European *epistēmē* appears to be still in the making today. From this point of view, the so-called post-colonial times seemed to be less post-colonial than one usually imagines. If Whitehead is right, that the intellectual history of Europe can best be understood as a series of footnotes to Plato,<sup>16</sup> the Platonic *epistēmē*, with its de-evaluation of the arts, has meanwhile reached a global scale. Would it not therefore be wise to begin the deconstruction of the hegemony of the Socratic *epistēmē* with a reversal of Platonism, as suggested already by Nietzsche and Deleuze? (Deleuze 1994, Nietzsche 1967)

As a result of the genesis of this intellectual history, most academic departments of philosophy today are engaged in analytical philosophy as the hegemonic form of the Socratic way of thinking in contemporary times (Oßwald 2024). The *aesthetic taste*, operative in the heart-mind, has almost completely lost its reputation at such departments, in favor of logical analyses, formalized in mathematical terms. Hence, as a rule, the philosophers at today's philosophy departments are usually no longer artist-philosophers or poet-seers

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16 “The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato.” (Whitehead 1979, 91)

(Kavi) who would perform arts-based-philosophy in the wake of an aesthetic image of thought, as the prelude to a philosophy of the future.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary. They appear as-if they had displaced the sensual, aesthetic layers operative in the souterrains of one's lived-body and even in the performance of thinking.

*The day-break...*

According to Aurobindo, the high estimation of the spiritual poets and the privileged status of the arts in general in Vedic times was grounded in the conviction of the people at that time that the arts were actually able to reveal a truth-of-being (*satyam*) that originates from a plane-of-being that is actually beyond the mental plane-of-being on which the human mind usually operates in its everydayness. These supra-mental planes—which are called supra-mental precisely because they operate literally beyond the reach of the mental plane—were assumed to be *virtually* there, but veiled, in secret, dormant, non-manifest (*avyakta*). They were *virtually real*, but since they currently rested in the background of the psycho-mental awareness of most people, they could not realize them themselves. As-if they would not be there at all.

Though these over-mental planes-of-being were said to *currently* sleep in the dormant chambers of nature (RV 10.129.1-5)—“nature loves to hide”, said Heraclitus (Heraklit 2004, DK B 123),—they were considered to be accessible *in principle* (*tattvas*) for everybody in the wake of the further evolutionary developments of everyone's nature. It is a crucial doctrine of Aurobindo's philosophy and many other traditions of South-Asian philosophy that only some planes and principles-of-being (*tattvas*) are currently awake (*buddha*) in nature, while others are currently non-manifest (*avvakta*). And, as long as the non-manifest planes are sleeping, they are in fact not actively operative in nature-herself and in those beings which currently inhabit nature. For instance, human beings.

According to Aurobindo's reading of the ancient doctrine of the five sheaths of the body (*pañcakośa*) (Aurobindo 1990, 10-16)—a doc-

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<sup>17</sup> See the introduction to this book.

trine which one can find already in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* (~ 600 BCE)—the evolution of the human species has currently unfolded only three of five sheaths of the body. Namely the physical, the vital and the mental sheath. The third, the constitution of the mental sheath (*manomayakośa*) operative in the lived-body of humans, is characterizing the distinct nature of the human species in comparison to non-human forms of being. But even though only three sheaths are currently active in the lived-body of humans, there are two more sheaths sleeping in the background of the manifest nature of human beings. Currently they may be hidden, veiled, covered, occult, sleeping, latent, only virtually real for the human species. But according to Aurobindo, the mental human mind could *in principle* unfold these hidden planes of nature, namely by activating hidden chambers of one's intellect (*buddhi*), thereby developing supra-mental capacities of the intellect which so far have not yet been activated and therefore did rest in a non-manifest, veiled and inanimate manner in the background of the mental human mind, as-if dead.

This is exactly the reason why, according to Aurobindo, the psycho-mental awareness of most people is currently not aware of any supra-mental plane-of-being. The mental mind operative in humans has therefore a certain right to claim that supra-mental planes do not exist, because the mental mindset indeed lacks their experience. But this assumption fails once this anthropological view of the momentary condition of the human mental mindset and its own psycho-mental awareness stops to take itself to be the measure of all things. What, if nature herself would be capable of unfolding supra-mental capacities in *her* chronically recurrent unfolding? What if *her* evolutionary ascent and descent would be capable of producing such supra-mental beings *sub specie aeternitatis*?

While Aurobindo, in accordance with the Veda, assumes that the higher activations of the intellect (*buddhi*) are usually inactive in mental human beings (*manas*), he argues in alignment with the Veda that poetic-research can eventually awake some of the dormant chambers in one's \*mental-mind\* by virtue of the awakening of the intuitive mind and intuitive forms of reasoning (*pratibhā*) in the lived-body of a Kavi (Gnoli 1985; Saxena 2010; Desphande 1989). Such an intuitive form of mind is neither irrational nor entirely beyond the

range of the human intellect (*buddhi*), but it is literarily supra-mental (*unmanā*) in the very sense that the poetic-mind operates on a plane-of-being that currently evolves \*beyond-the-mental-mind\* (*unmanā*) right next to the \*mental-mind\* (*manas*). While most people have activated the mental mind as part of their innate human nature, the intuitive mind (*pratibhā*) is momentarily activated only by some people, for instance in Kavis and other creative minds which in earlier societies were called geniuses. A word that has fallen into disrepute, as so many others in our times.<sup>18</sup>

Terminologically, Aurobindo called the successive break-through of one's mental mind into the supra-mental planes-of-being the realization of a *gnostic plane-of-being* (*vijñāna*) (Aurobindo 1999,11-18). Once it unfolds in a lived-body, it is said that the constitution of the gnostic knowledge triggers the mattering of a sublime gnostic sheath in a lived-body, which was traditionally referred to as *vi-jñānamayakośa*. *Kośa* means sheath, and *vi-jñānamayakośa* means a sublime sheath of the body that is composed (*maya*) in the course of the fabrication of gnostic knowledge (*vi-jñāna*). *Jñāna* literally means knowledge, and *vi-jñāna* an intensified, intuitive form of knowledge in which the performance of the intellect speeds up and finally operates so quickly that it can intuit the unity of all principles of being (*tattvas*) at once in one single gaze (*trikāladrṣṭi*).

### *Trikāladrṣṭi; The Vision of The Threefold Temporality of Time...*

While the human species, in the evolutionary course of its development, has usually activated only three of the five sheaths of the body (*pañcakośa*), namely the physical (*annamayakośa*), the vital (*prāṇamayakośa*) and the mental one (*manomayakośa*), the supra-mental planes-of-being, *vi-jñānamayakośa* and *ānandamayakośa*, are said to be usually inactive in them. They are virtually there in Nature, but not yet manifest and not yet awake in the mental-mind.

For Aurobindo, the historical unfolding of the higher, supra-mental faculties of the intellect (*buddhi*) will eventually take place in the

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18 Almost nobody today seems to experience the discrimination of such words as a form of discrimination anymore.

evolutionary wake of a historical gnosification-process in the course of which the psycho-mental awareness of the ordinary human mental mind will become intuitive in its very nature and not just in some extraordinary human beings, as the Kavis were in ancient Vedic times. A historical process that is already in its making today, according to Aurobindo. But even though he considers our epoch to eventually jump beyond the mental sphere of being, by activating supra-mental forms of the intellect which have been sleeping in Nature for such a long time, only the full activation (*prabuddha*)<sup>19</sup> of the gnostic-plane-of-being, in which the gnostic sheath of a body is fabricated in a lived-body, will finally be able to grasp all principles-of-being (*tattvas*) at once by one single intuition. A state of gnostic awareness, which Aurobindo identified with *trikāladṛṣṭi*. The Sanskrit term denotes a sort of visionary seeing (*draṣṭṛ*) by which the threefold temporality (*trikāla*) of a particular past, present and future unites into one integral vision of all three dimensions of time in one single gaze.

For Aurobindo, *trikāladṛṣṭi* is therefore a state of awareness that does not treat objects as ready-made-things with a ready-made-sense but as forms of becoming (Banerji 2012) which themselves appear in the course of time as a particular unfolding of the three constitutive dimensions of time (*kāla*): the current unfolding of a past time, the current unfolding of a present time and the current unfolding of a future time that still rest in the background of nature as a hidden resource of future unfoldings and becomings. From the perspective of the gnostic vision of a threefold temporality (*trikāladṛṣṭi*), every single being appears in-itself to be in a state of *statu nascendi*;

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19 The full activation (*prabuddha*) of the gnostic plane takes place in the *trikāladṛṣṭi*, the vision of the three dimensions of time at once (cf. Aurobindo 1999, 885–906). With the full-activation of the supra-mental planes of consciousness the three higher planes of the intellect, *viññāna-ānanda* and *saccidānanda*, are activated. The concept of *trikāladṛṣṭi* shows striking similarities with Fichte's and Schelling's concept of *Intellectual Intuition* as well as with Spinoza's conception of a third kind of knowledge that unfolds in a *scientia intuitiva* which perceives all things *sub specie aeternitatis* (Fichte 2012; Schelling 2000; Spinoza 2007; Waibel et al. 2012; Böhler 2012). The tantric term *unmanā* literally means beyond the mental mind (Dyczkowski 1992, 23).

as a pregnant form of becoming and continuous sense-making that unfolds in time as its quasi-transcendental condition. Quasi, because the threefold temporality of time is not just a formal but also a material form in which the mattering of (everything) takes place: Transcendental Empiricism.<sup>20</sup>

The progressive self-manifestation of Nature in man, termed in modern language his evolution, must necessarily depend upon three successive elements. There is that which is already evolved; there is that which, still imperfect, still partly fluid, is persistently in the stage of conscious evolution; and there is that which is to be evolved and may perhaps be already displayed, if not constantly, then occasionally or with some regularity of recurrence... (Aurobindo, 1999, 9-10)

The gnostic vision by which the Kavis envision the continuous unfoldings of the three-folds-of-time in one single stroke (*trikāladṛṣṭi*) is neither a determining nor a reflective form of judgment (Kant) but a *playful, experimental, associative, aesthetic* one, because it perceives all sorts of things as being in *statu nascendi* themselves. The things themselves evolve and thereby become what they are. And insofar as the unfolding of the threefold temporality constitutively implies a field of hidden potentials which are about to matter once, the current appearance of a thing is 'just' a prelude and a sign of further becomings.

In coherence with the vision of this threefold ground of time the Kavis had to compose their hymns in a way that corresponds with their gnostic vision of time. Their language could not just be logically stringent, which would have made the things, but also words, which they had in mind, determinate beings without future possibilities. Nor could their style of expression be entirely arbitrary, without any determinate nature which defines a thing from its inherent past. Perceiving everything to be in a state of *statu nascendi*, they had to express the apparent true state of beings in an experimental, play-

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20 Rightly so, Deleuze characterized his own philosophy as transcendental empiricism (Deleuze, 1994).

ful, associative, aesthetic, necessarily vague manner. In short: They had to allow the letters, words, sentences of their hymns to dance in alignment with their heart-mind.<sup>21</sup>

Such a playful, freely-associating style of experimental thinking is a poetic form of artistic research that actually triggered a state of consciousness of heightened self-awareness in the heart and mind of the Kavis, which made their own heart-mind vast and upright. These blissful intoxications (*soma*) are obviously a core reason why so many artists are *passionately* longing for the eternal return of their artistic mode of existence. They usually *want* to be artists and *repeat* the intensive experiences they are going through in their artistic research. Precisely because the intensive state of awareness that pops up in artistic research tastes so desirable and appealing for those who consume it. Naturally, they want to loop it, make it return again, full-heartedly, passionately, chronically, in order to reveal more and more potentials which so far have been arrested in the dormant chambers of their heart-minds.

Presumably, it was the experience of this intensive state of intoxication (*soma*) in which hidden potentials of the human nature start to reveal what gave the ancient arts their sacred (and occult) character. They healed the heart-minds, who consumed them, from suffering. And if one recalls that the poet-seers of Vedic times were not just creating hymns for themselves but were *chanting* them in public rituals as “singers and priests of sacrifice” (Aurobindo 1991, 2), one starts to sense why the poetic truth-of-being has also been called a truth that was not just inspiring the eyes but also the ears of those people who were listening to and consuming their chants during public events,<sup>22</sup> which eventually made the audience upright and fast.

It is this intuitive, gnostic vision, and not the mental form of judgment and reasoning, which the ancient poet-seers in Vedic times were addressing by the word *satyam* (Gonda 1963; Aurobindo 1991, 1998). Through the acceleration of their intuitive, poetic minds (*prat-*

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21 The German word “Stimmigkeit” literally refers to “voice” (Stimme), which runs through the entire multitude of feelings, measuring their common temper and grade of soundness.

22 On *satyaśrutaḥ* see also Aurobindo 1991, 16.

*ibhā*) they were finally able to stimulate a supra-mental plane of being (*sat*) and knowledge (*vijñāna*) that made them feel upright, vast and bright; *satyam*, *rtam*, *brhat*. In the wake of such an expansion of their own psycho-mental awareness they finally could see, but also intuitively hear (*śruti*) the sound coherence of the things they were cordially and mindfully in touch with by virtue of their fine aesthetic taste. Here lies the reason for Aurobindo why “the Veda itself describes them as *kavayah satyaśrutaḥ*, ‘seers who are hearers of the Truth.’” (Aurobindo 1991, 1) The accelerated gnostic forms of thinking allowed the Kavis to see the truth-of-being (*satyam*), but also to hear the coherence and soundness of the *statu nascendi* of the things, they were mindfully in touch with themselves in their being-in-the-world.

### *The Dawn...*

Darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning was this all, an ocean without mental consciousness out of it the One was born by the greatness of Its energy. It first moved in it as desire which was the first seed of mind. The Masters of Wisdom [Kavis] found out in the non-existent that which builds up the existent; in the heart [*hṛdaya*] they found it by purposeful impulsion and by the thought-mind. ... Their ray was extended horizontally; there was something above, there was something below... Below is the dark sleep of the subconscious, above is the luminous secrecy of the superconscious. These are the upper and the lower ocean.<sup>23</sup>

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23 RV 10.129.3-5. Translation Aurobindo 1998, 106-107. Cf. also *ibid.* 101-108, 111, 309. In *The Life Divine*, at the beginning of Chapter 25, Aurobindo gives a partially revised translation of this hymn. See Aurobindo 2005, 254. RV 10.129.1-5. It is said that Aurobindo meditated on the creation hymn regularly over several decades of his life, because he appreciated the extraordinary clarity and intensity of vision operative in this Sūkta. See: Sri Aurobindo Studies, The Integral Yoga, <https://sriaurobindostudies.wordpress.com/2010/01/> (last accessed: 12 June 2025).

The *Nāsadiya Sūkta*, the famous hymn of creation which many schoolboys and schoolgirls still chant in India today, informs us that the *Kavis*, which in Vedic times were also addressed as masters of wisdom, actually bridged the utmost opposition one can imagine; namely the opposition between being (*sat*) and non-being (*asat*). They were able to traverse this opposition by virtue of their passionate and rigorous mindful research into their heart-mind. The *Nāsadiya Sūkta* explicitly highlights the fact that it was their research into the depth of the heart [*hrdaya*] which actually opened their (gnostic) eyes and ears for a sound and coherent understanding<sup>24</sup> of the entire process of creation.<sup>25</sup>

In the first place, says the hymn, creation was operating on an unconscious layer in an ocean without mental consciousness. It became fully conscious only much later, namely in the wake of the rigorous and passionate mindful research [*pratīṣyā*] of the *Kavis* who, in the course of their artistic research, did dive into the very depth of the heart, in order to explore its abysses. Thereby they discovered, for the first time, the full architecture of the ocean of the heart (*hrdyāt samudrāt*).

In the depth of the heart, at its very bottom, their researching souls encountered the lowest cardiac region, namely the ocean of the subconscious (*apraketam salilam*). It was there from the very beginning, but in a dormant state; dark, unmoved, impassive. A darkness hidden by another darkness. As tantric philosophers will say later, this ocean without mental consciousness was located there “wrapping itself inwardly around the *Bindu* of the Heart it slumbers there in the form of a sleeping serpent and is aware of nothing at all.... like one affected by poison. O beloved, She is awakened by the resonance of supreme awareness...” (Dyczkowski 1992, 73) Since the heart was, in the first place, sleeping in the lower ocean of the sub-

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24 Jean-Luc Nancy’s text “A L’Ecoute” (Nancy 2002) provides a profound philosophical reflection on the connection of hearing and understanding.

25 In German, the word for togetherness is “Zusammengehörigkeit.” It literally means hearing the togetherness of things. The focus is on listening to how things belong together.

conscient (*apraketam salilam*), it has technically also been called “the emptiness of deep-sleep” (Dyczkowski 1992, 34 and 43-46) in several traditions of South-Asian-philosophies, in particular in tantric contexts.

From this dormant emptiness (*vyoman*) the rivers of clarity (*ghṛtasya dhārāḥ*), which are all off-springs of this lower heart-ocean (*hṛdyāt samudrāt*), actually do arise. Firstly, they appear as secret undercurrents within the ocean of the subconscious itself, but on their journey, in the course of which their streams expand, their currents are said to be successively purified, step by step, by the inner heart-mind (*antar hṛdā manasā pūyamānāḥ*) which is operative in Nature’s evolutionary upraising. It constantly clarifies them, makes them more and more subtle, vibrant, vivid and knowledgeable. The lower ocean of the subconscious and all its off-springs are thus acquiring the form of vibrant matter (Bennett 2010), which culminates in the gnostic stream of awareness that awakes in the lived-body of the Kavis, triggered by their full-heartedly research into the depth of the heart. Precisely as-if the hymns of the poet-seers possessed the magic power to stimulate the ocean of the subconscious at the very bottom of their heart in such a manner that the dormant serpent, that so long had been arrested there in the emptiness of deep-sleep, suddenly woke up and erected a gnostic fountain of clarity and heightened awareness in the Kavis themselves.

With such a cardiology, the heart is evidently not considered to be just a human organ within a human organism, and also not only the seat of human emotions, but the very archetypical fabric of the cosmos itself, as Aurobindo highlights in the following passage.

The heart in Vedic psychology is not restricted to the seat of the emotions; it includes all that large tract of spontaneous mentality, nearest to the subconscious in us, out of which rise the [energetic streams of] sensations, emotions, instincts, impulses and all those [streams of] intuitions and inspirations that travel through these agencies before they arrive at form in the intelligence [as streams of consciousness]. This is the ‘heart of Veda and Vedanta, hṛdaya, hṛd, or brahman. There in

the present state of mankind the Purusha is supposed to be seated centrally. (Aurobindo 1998, 271f.)

The Kavis were passionately committed to dive into the ocean of the subconscious (*apraketam salilam*) at the very bottom of their hearts, because their intuitive minds were said to reside nearest to the subconscious which allowed them to awake the rivers of clarity, which were sleeping there, to their full potential and expansion, by virtue of their profound and passionate research into the very cosmic architecture of the heart. Most ancient texts claim that the gnostic rivers of clarity can only erect in the psycho-mental awareness of the poet-seers once the rivers of clarity have been released from the obstacles (*kleśa*) which so far have blocked them from streaming upwards on serpentine roads, higher and higher, until they finally have acquired the capacity to touch the upper ocean of the heart, which Aurobindo identified with “the luminous secrecy of the superconscient.” Only then the rivers of clarity are currently in touch with the truth-of-being (*satyam*), which opened the heart-mind of the Kavis horizontally and vertically. “Their ray was extended horizontally; there was something above, there was something below...”, says the *Nāsadiya Sūkta*.

At the peak of their journey, the rivers of clarity, which have constantly been purified by the inner heart-mind (*antar hṛdā manasā pūyamānāḥ*) in their evolutionary upraising, opened the gnostic eyes and ears in the Kavis. Their psycho-mental awareness suddenly appeared to expand horizontally into a vast brightness (*br̥hat*) and vertically into an open, upright position (*rtam*) that allowed them to transgress all archetypal regions of the heart at once in a transversal manner by descending and ascending all five planes of the body at once. The physical, vital, mental, but also the supra-mental regions of the heart, which now have started to become operative and active in the gnostified minds and the gnostic intellect of the poet-seers. Flooded by the gnostic river of clarity (*ghṛtasya dhārāḥ*), which runs through themselves from the very bottom of the heart-ocean, the psycho-mental streams of consciousness operative in the Kavis finally reached that gnostic quality of awareness that provided their arts with a sacred, healing character.

Above, they found the cardiac region of the upper ocean of the superconscient, and below, at the very bottom of their hearts, they found the lower ocean of the subconscient. They both marked the lowest and the highest cardiac region of their Vedic heart-mind. In-between them all the rivers of clarity streamed from the lower to the upper ocean and from there back again into the lower ocean. This is the triple world of Vedic times, according to Aurobindo. The flame of inspiration,<sup>26</sup> which drives and feeds the intuitive mind of the poets, now allowed them to constantly ascend and descend between these two cardiac regions of the heart-mind and to express the gnostic streams of consciousness by the hymns and chants they were performing for the public in public performances.

*The poetic truth of creation...*

What their mindful and passionate research into the depths of their hearts finally revealed to the poets themselves was the profound truth that lies at the basis of every creation: Namely that being (*sat*) is grounded in non-being (*asat*). Being (*sat*) appears to follow non-being (*asat*), because everything that is, in the first place, came into being and finally returns into non-being after it has been. It is this astonishing fact which seemingly made the poetic-heart of the *Kavis* wonder (*camatkāra*). Things obviously have not been before they started to be. But what do we mean by this *asat*, non-being, from where everything comes into being and into which everything seems to fade away again? Does it not imply that the existence of finite beings has been granted to them by others who actually did let them come into being? But in this case, non-being is not just something that comes before or after something comes into being or vanishes from being. In this context, *asat* rather appears in the middle of those who are already and who seem to be able to bring something into being in

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26 The flame arises from *Agni*, the god of fire, who is the first of all Gods addressed in the Veda. This flame of aspiration is operative in the *Kavis* as their seer-will (*kavikratu*) which resides in the middle of their hearts (*kratur hr̥di*). “*Agni* is a seer-will, *kavikratu*, he is the ‘will in the heart’, *kratur hr̥di*.” (Aurobindo 1991, 16).

the middle of their own Da-sein (being-there). As-if non-being was a dimension of beings who are alive. As-if creative beings had access to non-being right in the middle of their lives.

And this is not only true for physical beings which bodily appear in time and space. It is also true for the mattering of thoughts, feelings and psychological matters in general. They all arise out of non-being. They originate, appear, show up and fade away again. Before they were thought, or felt, or expressed, they actually did not exist (*asat*) but rather had to be fabricated in a creative way.

It is this *access of beings to non-being* that is effective in every creation, which one could call, with Deleuze, the *virtual plane* of one's existence. It is an inherent dimension of all creative beings in which the eventuality of events is at stake. Something that so far has not mattered and so far has played no role is about to matter and play a role. Once beings *access* the virtual plane of their existence, they actually enter a plane of possibilities (*posse esse*), ready to matter once.

The creative minds of the poet-seers, by virtue of their passionate and rigorous artistic research into their hearts, allowed them to finally realize the overall architecture of the Vedic heart. It is this revelation which they themselves brought into being as creative wanderers between *sat* (being) and *asat* (non-being) in the course of their artistic research.

*The quasi-transcendental map of the heart...*

For Aurobindo, the creation hymn thus draws a quasi-transcendental map of the overall architecture of the Vedic experience of the gnostic heart. At the very bottom of the heart-ocean (*hrdyāt samudrāt*) one finds the lower ocean of the subconscious (*apraketam salilam*), void of any mental activity. The researching mind of the poets is perceived to be the place nearest to the subconscious (Aurobindo 1998, 271-272) which is the lowest cardiac region of one's heart-mind. Queering<sup>27</sup> the utmost binarities of being & non being by virtue of

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27 Crossing binarities in a chiastic, fleshly manner (Merleau-Ponty 1964) is definitely one of the typical functions of the Heart in many traditions of ancient Indian philosophies (cf. Dyczkowski 1992, 211-212).

their wholehearted research (*pratīṣyā*) into the heart, in the wake of their profound research the poet-seers found the truth that lies on the basis of all creation. Namely, that all forms of being (*sat*) are fundamentally grounded in non-being (*asat*). Realizing this truth (*satyam*) as the quasi-transcendental horizon under which all becoming is appearing, will appear and has been appearing, the poet-seers became capable of releasing the (gnostic) waters of clarity (*ghṛtasya dhārāḥ*) which up to then had been veiled in the ocean of the subconscious at the bottom of the heart. Their passionate artistic research woke them up, so that the purified rivers of clarity could finally unfold their full potential. Full-heartedly following the offspring of these waters of clarity, which were constantly purified by the Inner-Heart-Mind (*antar hṛdā manasā pūyamānāḥ*) in the course of their evolutionary upraising in nature, the Vedic poets finally became capable of arriving at the upper ocean of the heart, the ocean of the superconscious, which was the peak and destiny of their entire journey. This upper cardiac region of the heart-ocean was said to be the home of Agni, the truth-consciousness, into which the passionate flame of the seer-will awakes, once the gnostic-rivers-of-clarity have released the dormant serpent that has been arrested in the emptiness of a deep-sleep in “the secret heart-cave, *hṛdaye guhāyām*, as the Upanishads put it” (Aurobindo 1999, 149–150). Being currently in touch with this (supra-mental) upper region of the heart, the Vedic poets became capable of realizing the gnostic dimension of the heart behind the vital heart that had been veiled in the secret heart-cave of the lower heart-ocean from the very beginning of time. By entering the realm of a gnostic truth-consciousness (*vijñāna*), which is the abode of the seer-will operative within the Kavis, the gnostic sheath finally unfolds within the lived-body of the Kavis themselves, as a sublime bodily layer of their (own) lived-bodies (Aurobindo 1999, 703–704; Muller-Ortega 1989, 68; Dyczkowski 1992, 43).

While the mattering of the gnostic heart necessarily appears to be trans-human for those who identify themselves with the vital heart—the gnostic heart was actually the virtual object the Vedic poets were aspiring for in their heart-minds (Banerji 2020; Beldio 2015; Böhler 1996, 2022, 2023; Maharaj 2018; Mascha und Seubert

2022; Wolfers 2017). And since for Aurobindo the vital heart-mind, in its everydayness, is actually an *amalgam* of both hearts—of the vital heart in the foreground, and of the gnostic heart in the background (Aurobindo 1999, 72, 181, 203, 231),<sup>28</sup> Faust’s legendary words, “two souls are dwelling, alas!, in my breast,”<sup>29</sup> appears to be indeed a perfectly proper description of the *cardiac amalgam* pulsating in the human breast in two different modes, tempers and rhythms in a hybrid manner.

### *Transimmanence...*

For Aurobindo, as well as for Indian philosophies in general, the not yet manifest sheaths that have not yet been activated in a lived-body are actually *virtual* possibilities of nature. Virtual possibilities have not yet been actualized but eventually could matter in a future to come. Considered from the perspective of eternity, they are *substantial* possibilities of nature herself in the very sense in which Spinoza defined the words ‘substance’ and ‘nature’ in his *Ethics* (Curley 1994). Virtual possibilities are considered from a *substantial* point of view, precisely when one views nature *sub specie aeternitatis*, that is, under the gaze of eternity. Can she, in her *eternal* (evolutionary) unfolding, *once* matter the possibility one has in mind? Questioning nature in such a manner, *sub specie aeternitatis*, is precisely that *third-kind-of-knowledge* which Spinoza called *scientia intuitiva* (Curley 1994; Waibel 2012; Böhler 2012). On the other hand, substantial possibilities of nature are precisely virtual, insofar as they are potentials of nature herself, which have not yet been actualized so far in the evolutionary upraising of nature herself (*natura naturata*) but could matter once in a future to come (*natura naturans*). Insofar as virtual possibilities have *not yet* been actualized in nature, they are indeed *virtually real*, in the very sense in which Deleuze defined the virtual plane of being in *Difference and Repetition*. “The virtual is not actual, but it is fully real in so far as it is virtual.” (Deleuze 1994, 208)

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28 On the notion amalgam see also Latour 2004; Debaise 2017.

29 Original German: “zwei Seelen wohnen, ach!, in meiner Brust” (Goethe 1949, Vers 1112).

Virtually real possibilities are eventually real. They are about to matter. And the event of their mattering is precisely the decisive moment in which they are actualizing their virtual reality.

To claim that possibilities have the ontological status of being virtual-real implies that eternal possibilities are finally self-existent entities (*svayambhū*) which rest *beyond our manifest nature* (*natura naturata*) but *not necessarily beyond the substantial regime of Nature*. That is, nature considered from an integral perspective *sub specie aeternitatis* (Böhler 2022). The virtual plane of nature therefore possesses, in a strict sense, a *transimmanent character* (Agamben 1999; Steinweg 2012). Virtual possibilities *currently transcend* the constitution of one's *manifest nature* (*vyakta*), but they are nevertheless *immanent possibilities* of one's *not-yet-manifest* (*avyakta*) nature which eventually matters in a future to come (*Para-nature*). From the perspective of eternity; that is, from a substantial, integral point of view, the not-yet-manifest part of one's nature is always already an integral part of one's nature. What Spinoza once called *amor dei intellectualis*, the intellectual love of God, in which the *scientia intuitiva* unfolds a third kind of knowledge which intuitively everything *sub specie aeternitatis*, apparently comes very close to Aurobindo's Vedic vision of the overall architecture of the gnostic heart which culminates in the three-fold-vision-of-time, *trikāladṛṣṭi*.

*Nietzsche's Day-break...*

The ontological dilemma of the trans-immanent nature of the virtual has been brought to a striking point on the cover-page of Nietzsche's book *The Daybreak* (1997), where he placed the overall motto of his book by quoting the following sentence from the *Rgveda*. "There will have been given so many daybreaks which have not yet gleamed. *Rigveda*." (English translation A. B.)<sup>30</sup>

What is core for us concerning this quote is the *materialism-of-the-dangerous-perhaps* that Nietzsche's citation from the *Rgveda* implies. When Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, charac-

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30 German Original: "Es gibt so viele Morgenröthen, die noch nicht ge-leuchtet haben. *Rigveda*" (Nietzsche 1997, coverpage).

terized the new species of philosophers of the future to be philosophers of a “*dangerous perhaps*” (Nietzsche 2002, 6), he was actually highlighting the fact that philosophers of the future will aspire the mattering of *contingent events* that per-haps happen (Derrida 1997). The aspirations which arose in the wake of this new species of philosophers of the future from the bottom of their hearts are obviously drawn toward a virtual future. But the *mattering* of the virtual future, which they currently approach in their heart-minds, is still a matter of eventuality. \*Event-ually\* it will have taken place, once. \*Event-ually\* not.

It is therefore no coincidence that Nietzsche, with his fine taste for words, in the German original starts the quote literally with the words “Es gibt Morgenröthen...”: “Day breaks are given...” They are given when the virtual cloud of possibilities is *in fact* collapsing, to borrow a formulation from quantum physics (Barad 2007, 280; Traxler 2017).<sup>31</sup>

Contrary to many traditional *darśanas* in the history of Indian philosophies and fully in agreement with Nietzsche’s attempt to overcome “The ascetic Ideal” (Nietzsche 1967, 97-163; Böhler 2017), Aurobindo does not call on the plane of the virtual to finally reach merely a peaceful state of mind, as classical Patañjali-Yoga would hold.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary. Aurobindo’s Integral-Yoga rather demands a *Sādhak* (Yoga-Practitioner) to enter the silence and calmness of a virtual void that rests beyond (para) one’s *manifest* Nature with the *trans-immanent aspiration* of one’s heart to actually mobilize, inflame and induce virtual possibilities to matter. In this very sense one might claim that the poetic heart, in its deepest depths, cares for the mattering of events that so far have not yet flashed by virtue of burning and inflaming what Aristotle called first matter: The first and most sublime form of yet unformed matter, *prote-hyle* (πρώτη

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31 In their contribution in this volume, Tanja Traxler & Reinhold A. Bertlmann give us a view on this matter from the perspective of quantum-physics.

32 The classical definition of yoga in Patañjali’s Yoga-Sūtra considers yoga “*yogaś citta-vṛtti nirodah*”. Yoga is the calming down (*nirodah*) of turbulent movements (*vṛtti*) operative in one’s mind (*citta*). (Translation A.B.).

ūḷḷ), in which matter is ‘present’ in a virtual state of matter—material-in-potential. South-Asian philosophies have addressed this root-matter as *mūla-prakṛti*. It is a virtual, shapeless form of matter; not an empty void (*sūnyatā*), but a space full of potentiality, where the particularization of physical particles (*annamayakośa*) actually originates (Böhler 2024; Jung 1996, 18, 20).

### *The Virtual,...*

Insofar as the epic poems *Savitri* and *Thus spoke Zarathustra* are no narratives of the world as one finds it completed (*natura naturata*), but rather of the world *in its making* (*natura naturans*), they both aspire to a future that, at first, has to be addressed *poetically*, precisely because it had to be called into being first in the constitution of a poetic language. Referring to something that *\*event-ually\** takes place—perhaps it will happen, perhaps not—both artist-philosophers had to hold in advance the speculative belief and confidence (*śraddhā*) that Nature herself will be capable of realizing the future they are striving for, at least *sub specie aeternitatis* (Nietzsche 2002; Derrida 1997; Waibel 2012).

### *Nietzsche, the other artist-philosopher...*

According to Lou Andreas Salomé’s description of Friedrich Nietzsche’s works (Salomé 1894), Nietzsche himself must be considered a precursor (Paulo De Assis and Lucia D’Errico 2019; Böhler and Granzer 2017, 193–213) of the new species of philosophers to come which he envisioned in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Precisely because he followed already the *aesthetic image of thought*<sup>33</sup> (Deleuze 1994, 129–167) he had described as the typical feature of the new species of the philosophers of the future he saw arriving. Whenever Nietzsche performed thinking, writes Salomé (1894, 70), he actually did *taste* simultaneously the flavor (*rasa*) of the thing he was addressing in a mindful manner. Regardless whether the object was physical, psychic, mental or supra-mental. His sense of taste and artistic temperament appar-

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33 See the introduction in this book.

ently forced him to continuously produce a “*bodily-felt-sense*” (Skora 2007, 421) toward anything that crossed his mind—quasi-automatically, in passive synthesis,<sup>34</sup> that is to say, machine-like: How does the atmosphere among people taste? Which bodily-felt-sense does a thought trigger? Does a particular idea taste sound or *contrecœur*? How does an artefact move us—sensually, bodily, aesthetically, cordially? Does a word or artefact reach one’s heart at all? And if so, which registers and regions of the heart? Or does it stimulate no feeling at all?

Even the most abstract logical ideas, says Lou A. Salomé, triggered an emotive response in Nietzsche’s heart. Which apparently proves that he himself was an artist-philosopher who already possessed this new, contrary taste to that of most ancient philosophers who still followed the ascetic ideal (Böhler 2017, 2019d; Sommer 2019). In other words, Nietzsche was no longer thinking *against* the sense of taste in his heart but in co-operation with it. Thereby he literally became an aesthete in the very sense of the Sanskrit term *sahrdaya*, which literally means “somebody with a (sublime, sensitive, purified, well-formed) heart-mind”.

*Educating one’s taste...*

In her book *Actors and the Art of Performance: Under Exposure* (2016), Valerie [Granzer] has shown how actors and actresses develop an extremely fine taste of the environmental circumstances they are actually exposed to on stage: The light- and soundscapes they are physically embedded in while acting on stage. The requisites, costumes, and the stage design, which they experience as non-human co-actors on stage. And of course, actors and actresses possess a very fine taste for the social relations with the other performers and the audience while acting. It is a sublimation of one’s sense of taste that actually takes place in the art of acting.

At the same time, their artistic awareness is not just sensitively aware of external relations but also of the animation of their souls, which goes hand in hand with the art of acting on stage. The intox-

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34 On “passive synthesis” see Husserl 2001; Deleuze 1994; Böhler 2005.

ication of the performers actually catapults them out of their familiarity with themselves, into a dimension which can frighten them, precisely because it de-subjectivates them by virtue of opening an uncanny dimension of themselves within themselves (Valerie [Granzer] 2016, 5-15).

But even offstage, in one's everydayness, people taste the flavor of the relational affairs they find themselves environmentally, socially and mentally (Guattari 2000) ex-posed<sup>4</sup> to and actively engaged with. For instance, what it tastes like when much-needed water is missing. Or what a shitstorm tastes like that circulates on the Internet. Or what it tastes like when one suddenly loses one's job in a certain situation. Or what it tastes like when one gets a new job after having been unemployed for a long time. Or what it tastes like when one falls in love, writes a book, grasps a new thought etc. A lived-body actually feels the *worldwide* circumstances it is environmentally, socially and mentally embedded in and actively engaged with in its heart, while it finds itself atmospherically tuned in to a certain situated mood and manner.<sup>35</sup>

According to ancient Indian philosophies, the *relational affair* with the rays of the sun, for instance, does actually trigger a special feeling within a lived-body, insofar as it milks (Aurobindo 1998, 125, 126, 217, 236) the rays of the sun under its skin (White 2009). The *experienced* temperature of the sunlight might actually taste hot, cold, warm, bright, or even too hot, too cold, too warm, too bright for the lived-body that has been affected by the rays of the sun on its bodily surface (Folkers 2022). But what a lived-body is currently experiencing in a bodily-felt-sense under such a condition is neither the sun as an 'object' at a certain distance that would exist entirely separated from the sensing 'subject,' nor the lived-body as a so-called 'subject' that would exist entirely separated from the affecting sun, but the *relational affair* among them. It is no wordless subject that currently feels too hot, too cold, quite warm etc. but an environmental, rela-

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35 The German word for mood, Stimmung, still echoes the waving nature of atmospheric bodies. Cf. Böhler 2024; Ingold 2016; <https://contingent-agencies.net/contingent-agencies-symposium/> (last accessed: 12 June 2025).

tional subjectivity (Guattari 2000; Manning and Massumi 2014) which finds itself in a relation to the sun. Only after an environmental contact with the sunrays has ‘objectively’ been established, a lived-body is actually capable of ‘subjectively’ measuring, sensing, tasting and feeling its specific relation toward the sunlight in a bodily-felt-sense of the temperature that currently shows up in the relation of the affecting sun *and* the affected body. It is still the sun that makes us feel hot while we ‘milk’ its rays and finally taste the quality of our bodily relation toward it (Ingold 2016; Derrida 2005).

We therefore consider taste not to be just a subjective, secondary quality (Locke 1997) or even simply a private affair within an individual that would take place merely inside a body but a primary quality of an intimate relational affair that actually takes place among more than one body in an environmental manner (Debaise 2017; Stengers 2011; Deleuze 1988; Bösel and Wiemer 2020; Hörl and Burton 2017; Böhme 1995; Angerer, Bösel and Ott 2014; Massumi 2010; Folkers 2022).

A *sahṛdaya*, that is somebody thinking mindfully in companionship with one’s heart, can even emphatically feel in the place of many others. Somebody else may experience a shitstorm on the Internet, but nevertheless one can compassionately (Nancy 2008, 39, 149) feel what it tastes like in place of the other. A *sahṛdaya* from the rank of Fyodor Dostoevsky was even capable of emphatically and compassionately feeling like a multitude of characters at once in his writings. For example, how bitter it tastes when one lives in the midst of a milieu that finds pleasure in torturing others.

It is important to emphasize that the concept of *sahṛdaya* in Indian philosophy and aesthetics has also a strong social-political value; hence it is written, for instance in the Śiva-Sūtra, that once a mind enters into the emptiness of the heart, “(all sense of being) a brahmin, Ksatriya or (even) a murderer [ceases]” (Dyczkowski 1992, 42). Cast and gender distinctions have long been relevant for the social sphere, but they are left behind as being insignificant once somebody enters the aesthetical sphere of a *sahṛdaya*; of somebody in touch with the heart (Lakshmanjoo 2000, 105).

As Martin K. Skora (2007, 424) has convincingly shown in the context of Kashmir Shaivism, touching a thing or an idea in a self-re-

flexive manner (*vimarśa*, from the root *mṛś*, to touch) should not be considered to be merely a *cognitive* sort of abstract knowledge in the context of ancient Indian philosophies in general and in the philosophies of Kashmir Shaivism in particular but rather the *aesthetic experience of a bodily felt-sense* (Skora 2007, 432, 444; Muller-Ortega 1989).

*Epilogue...*

I would like to conclude my article with some aphorisms by which I practice a style of thinking that attempts to grasp the mattering of a thought in actu. Thinking thus becomes an experimental laboratory of thoughts in their making. A kind of thought-image (German: Denkbild).

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In the laboratory of thought, where matters unthought-of so far are made thinkable, one is thinkingly confronted with the driving forces of thought. Here, thoughts no longer blaze their trail independent of one's instincts, of one's desires, of one's desiring-production, of one's dreams, but in communion with them. Thinking consults its own desires when thinking while thinking. In this case one thinks with one's heart and one's mind.

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On his long peregrinations in the forbidden, Nietzsche eventually realized that "most conscious thinking of a philosopher ... is secretly guided by his instincts and forced into certain channels" (Nietzsche 2002, 7).

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For Nietzsche, as for Spinoza, thinking is not opposed to the affects; rather, it writes them out in full. Articulates them. Lets them, the

affects, have a say and thus get a voice. By challenging—wholly in the sense of Sigmund Freud—the independence of cogito from the sou-  
terrain of our corporeality he has installed a new concept of thought  
that even includes a corporeal foundation of logic.

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“Even behind all logic and its autocratic posturings stand valuations  
or, stated more clearly, physiological requirements for the preser-  
vation of a particular type of life.” (Nietzsche 2002, 7) For Nietzsche,  
even logical considerations do not take place in dissociation from the  
conatus of those who execute these considerations. Does this apho-  
rism not bear clear witness to Nietzsche’s Spinozism?

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But what is meant by a lived-body striving to remain in being? Spino-  
za strongly insists that being is not identical with existence. To strive  
to remain in being? Is this probably supposed to mean to strive to  
chronically remain within the loop of the eternal unfolding of Nature  
herself?

\*\*\*\*\*

“I will not stop emphasizing a tiny little fact that these superstitious  
men are loath to admit: that a thought comes when ‘it’ wants, and not  
when ‘I’ want. It is, therefore, a falsification of the facts to say that the  
subject ‘I’ is the condition of the predicate ‘think.’ It thinks: but to say  
the ‘it’ is just that famous old ‘I’ – well that is just an assumption or  
opinion, to put it mildly, and by no means an ‘immediate certainty.’”  
(Nietzsche 2002, 17)

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“Is intuition not acknowledged as a legitimate argument in decision  
processes in many situations in life?” (Böhler 2019, 243)

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Should artistic research in this case be nearer to our life-world than 'purely' scientific research methods which downgrade intuition to a private feeling, *as-if* by feeling one did not quote a historically generated heritage we share with others wherever someone feels something within one's lived-body from the perspective of a given cultural background? (Cf. Böhler 2019, 243).

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Is not intoxication just that condition of the lived-body when it experiences this being-outside-itself within its own lived-body? Is this not confusing?

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The orgiastic: one is outside oneself, wholly in touch with others. One feels the other, within one's own lived-body. It is confusing indeed... (Cf. Böhler 2019, 244).

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Nietzsche thinks intoxication as the mind's most primordial experience in which one is entirely in touch 'with-oneself' only, because it allows for the organism's 'getting out of itself.' Intoxication is an intimate form of ec-stasis. It opens up the organism, makes it ec-static. In a state of intoxication, a lived-body opens up to its own surrounding. It becomes world-wide, open to the world, porous, flesh; part of a world intimately shared with others. "As soon as one gets outside oneself, one senses the world in a Dionysian, that is to say, artistic manner." (Böhler 2019, 244)

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"All seeing is essentially perspective, and so is all knowing. The more emotions we allow to speak in a given matter, the more different eyes

we can put on in order to view a given spectacle, the more complete will be our conception of it, the greater our 'objectivity'. But to eliminate our will entirely, once and for all to unhinge our affects, be it that we were able to do so: how? Would that not mean castrating our instinct?..." (Nietzsche 1967, 119)

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In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche gets to the point regarding his new, arts-based concept of thought that understands itself as and antipode and counter-ideal to the ascetic ideal of a thinking becoming fleshless—he writes: "I have kept a close eye on the philosophers and read between their lines for long enough to say to myself: the greatest part of conscious thought must still be attributed to instinctive activity, and this is even the case for philosophical thought." (Nietzsche 2002, 6-7)

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"In this passage Nietzsche challenges the possibility of entirely isolating and separating the sphere of thought from the plane of our corporeal being-in-the-world. Because, for him, thinking is too intimately entangled with the driving forces of our corporeality and guided into certain directions by them—in secret." (Böhler 2019, 243)

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This is exactly what to me seems to be a decisive feature of a philosophy about to ascertain itself as artistic research. It is no longer enough to keep the research problems away from one's own lived-body in the 'good' old ascetic manner, as if one were not corporeally affected and touched by the game of asking questions in which one is involved, seeking, researching, thinking, enquiring, investigating, reflecting, analyzing, sorting, musing, feeling ...

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“In that case, is it not the development of the history of ideas to which ‘my’ idea of thinking philosophy as artistic research is indebted to? One *captures* a thought when one thinks it *oneself*.” But one is also part “of a conceptual field in which one thinks, *with* which one thinks, when one is thinking.” (Böhler 2019, 241)

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“When one researches artistically, one cogitates, sorts, reflects, analyses problems *rationally*, but one also follows one’s own intuition, and now and then one even obeys one’s instincts if one thinks and researches *artistically*. Is not this moment of research commonly suppressed methodically when one thinks *about* research *scientifically*?” (Böhler 2019, 243-244)

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Arts-based research obviously demands a double reading by which one engages rationally as well as affectively in the research one is dealing with. On the one hand, one is required—as Deleuze writes in *Spinoza. Practical Philosophy*—to set out soberly on the “search for the idea of the whole and the unity of the parts” of the research one dedicates oneself to; on the other hand, in parallel one is likewise required to get involved with an affective reading, “without an idea of the whole”. A reading “into which one is dragged or put”, because it puts one’s lived-body “into motion or at rest, moves intensely or calms down, according to the speed of this or that part.” (Deleuze 1988, 167f.)

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It was not only Spinoza and the doctrines of affection and the need for a *scientia intuitiva* which he developed in the third and fifth book of his *Ethics*. Of course, it was also the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche which became more and more crucial for the question that struck my mind and finally the depth of my heart.

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Artistic research is a playful, associative, experimental form of research, on the wait of something ready to matter. Is this not exactly what Deleuze meant when in his Bacon book he wrote that painting and music are not about the “reproduction or invention of forms, but about the capturing of forces” (Deleuze 2003, 56)

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I am still brooding over my research proposal and asking myself whether research on the heart should not be negotiated in public space? The research festivals Philosophy On Stage at Brut Wien and Adishakti (Tamil Nadu), which we plan to realize in the framework of our current research project, was supposed to tackle precisely this aspect: philosophy, as artistic research, should not always take place behind closed doors. Its research is public. The public itself has to be taken seriously as a core moment of the research performance itself.

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“For the sensitive observer or listener who commands an aesthetic sense, there is a very beautiful term in Sanskrit: *sahṛdaya*. *Sahṛdaya* literally means as much as ‘one who has a heart’ ... One who has a heart also is capable of taking up the prevailing mood of a work of art.” (Bäumer 2016, 92, translated by AB) Well then, heart, take your leave and be well!

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