Clumsy Utterings and Gestures

[1] The main strand of narration is printed left-justified.

[2] To be living means to bring forth a world (from Maturana & Varela's "The Tree of Knowledge").

[3] This is said in the spirit of Alfred North Whitehead's "philosophy of organism," which postulates that a complete description of the universe must not only include the laws of physics, but also those of biological organization. No vitalist non-physical forces are required, just an acknowledgment that the organizational principles of organisms are contingent on evolutionary history and (at least partially) self-determined by the internal dynamics of biological agents themselves.

[4] Hegel's "Setzung der Voraussetzungen," a fundamental dialectic principle of biological agency.

[5] This takes the transcendence of physical laws into open-ended constructive evolution. If every evol- ved agent is historically unique, then its particular organizational principles extend the set of rules governing the universe by a tiny little bit, and not only life, but indeed the whole universe, will never be exactly the same again.

[6] The ways in which agents initiate actions (and therefore change the course of the universe) will remain forever opaque to any limited external observer.

[7] We use language, that imprecise tool, to express the internal worlds of experience we bring forth, and to compare ours to the experiential worlds of others. However, much richness of our subjective experience is lost in the process, since much of what happens to us remains tacit.

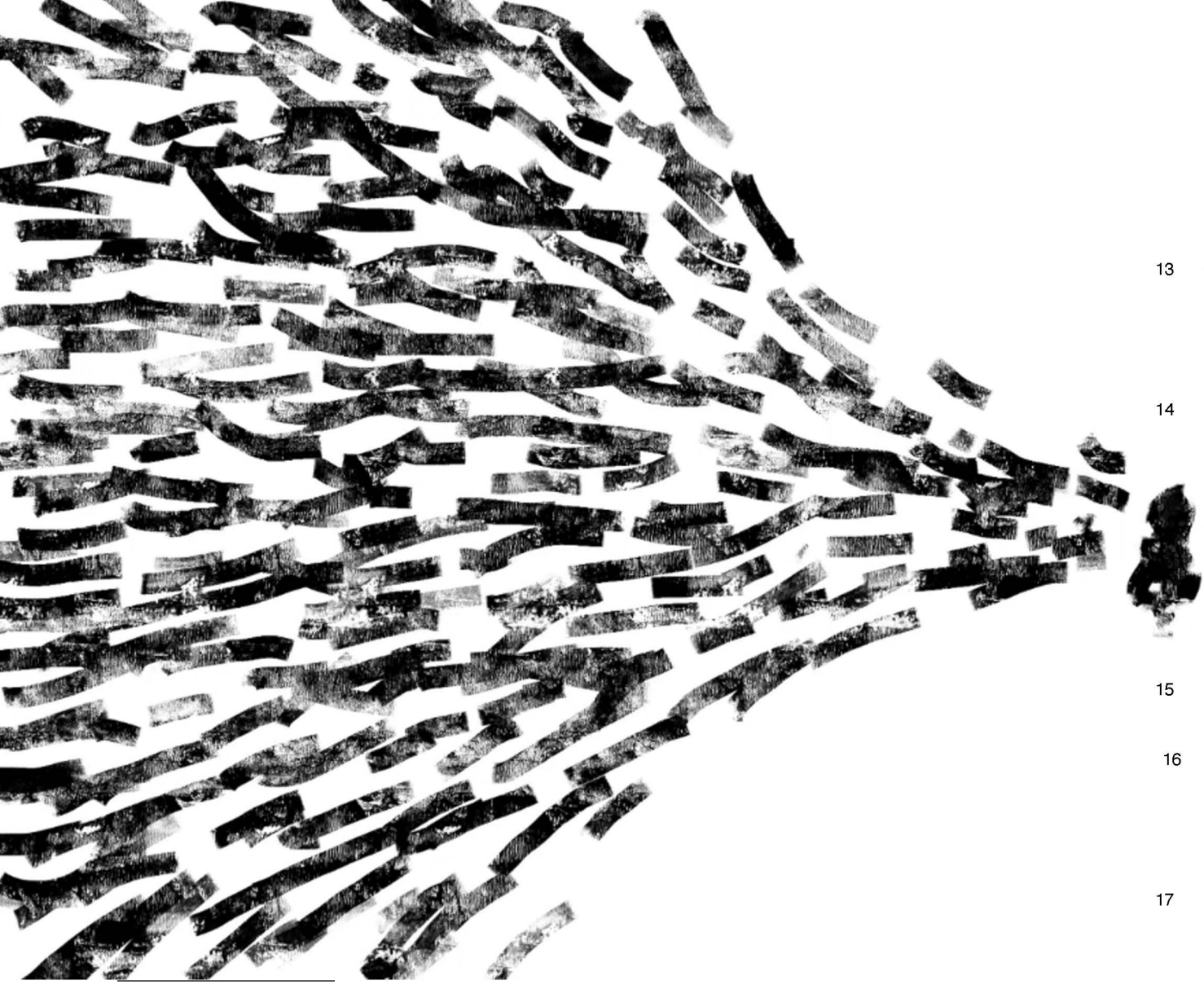
[8] “Inner-dimension blindness” is a term taken from Hanzi Freinacht’s “The Listening Society.” It is one of the major blind spots of the modern scientific worldview, still rooted in the kind of positivism that declared all subjective experience empty metaphysics, void of meaning and beyond the reach of reliable knowledge. Freinacht’s metamodern philosophy tries to replace this modernist worldview with a metamodernist perspective, an imperfect grand narrative, which transcends positivist thinking without falling into fashionable postmodern relativism, negativity, and despair.

[9] Here comes the voice of science (of course, it is right-justified)!

[10] Aristotle states that humans distinguish themselves from animals and plants by our “rational principle,” a capability of carrying out rationally formulated projects using our deliberative imagination. This means we are capable of rational action, not that we always act accordingly!

[11] Actually, many animals are now known to use tools, which makes us just a little less special.

[12] Another reference to perspectivism replacing objectivist realism. We, as individuals or as species, can never step out of our own heads to gain a “view from nowhere” on the world. Our knowledge will always be colored by our limitations and biases, which depend in many ways on our individual, societal, and historical context.



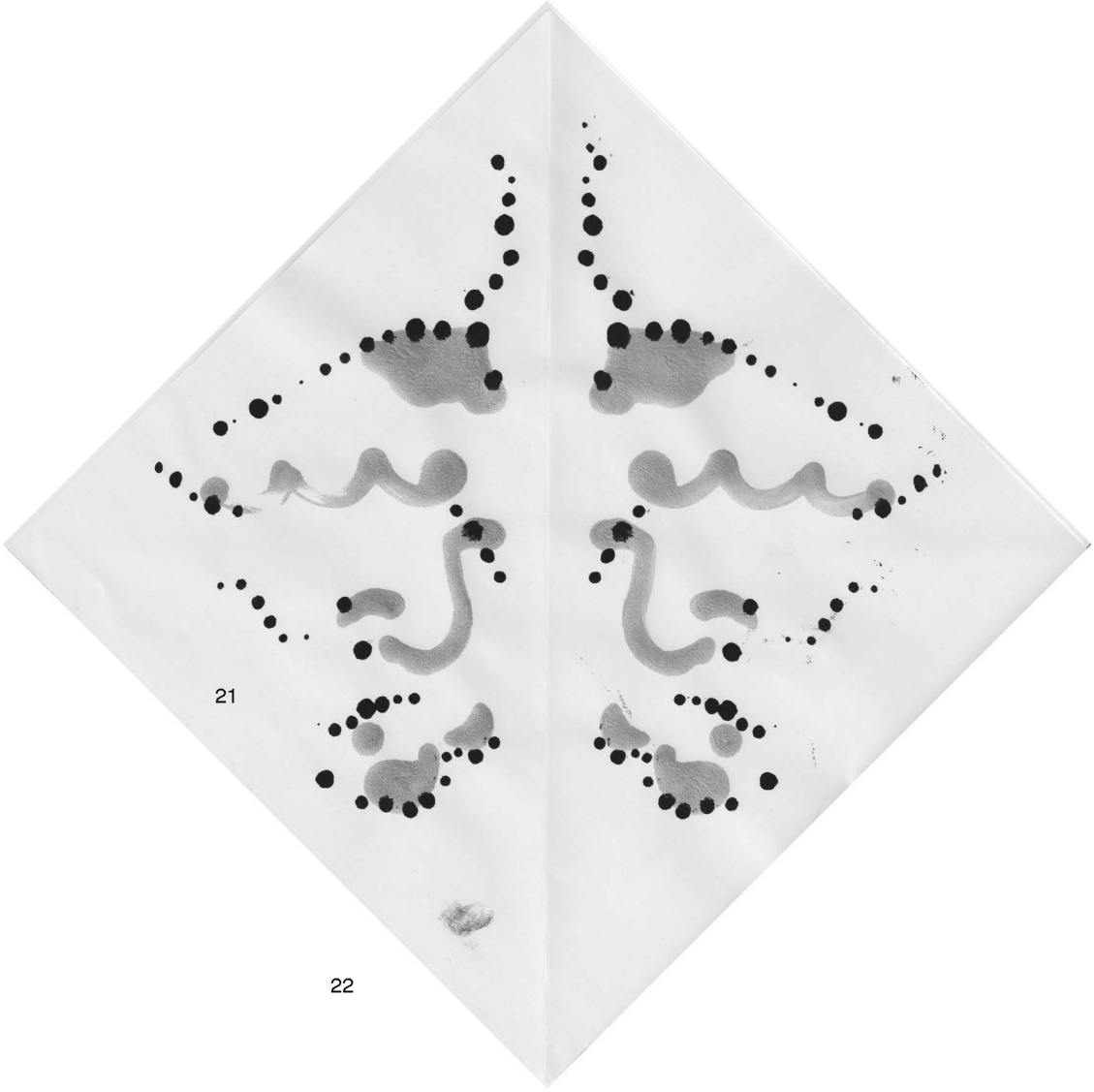
[13] We build our world of knowledge. An important aspect of perspectival realism is that it reconciles the fact that human knowledge is constructed by limited human beings, in a given context, with the observation that some explanations are more trustworthy than others, in that given context.

[14] Unlike postmodernist relativism, perspectival realism acknowledges the existence of a causal struc- ture of the world that is independent of the observer. We may not be able to step out of our own heads, but there still *is* a world out there that doesn't necessarily bend to our wishes (or, in fact, care about or depend on our existence). We can only experience this world from our own perspective, and we cannot know anything that is not in some way connected to what we experience.

[15] One central theme of this text is what A. N. Whitehead called the fallacy of misplaced concreteness: mistaking the abstract for the concrete. How many successful scientists do I know who come to live within their own models? So many of us eventually start mistaking the map for the territory.

[16] The rainforest metaphor is from William Wimsatt's "Re-engineering Philosophy for Limited Beings," a book every scientist should read. Wimsatt contrasts his"rainforest ontology" with the "ontological desert" of reductionist physics. The world is a multi-levelled jungle, ever increasing in complexity as it evolves into an unknown and open future. Not your traditional clockwork universe at all.

[17] Surely one of the most attractive features of the modern mechanistic world view is that it suggests a predictable universe that can be understood and brought under our control. However, complexity theory, taken seriously, and our practical experience show us that this is not so. Every model of a complex system must remain incomplete in some ways, missing those variables and interactions that are not visible or relevant in the current context of investigation. As Heraclitus already said: Nature likes to conceal herself. In the real world, there are always such hidden side effects, always surprises, unintended consequences. Our knowledge of the world will forever remain incomplete.



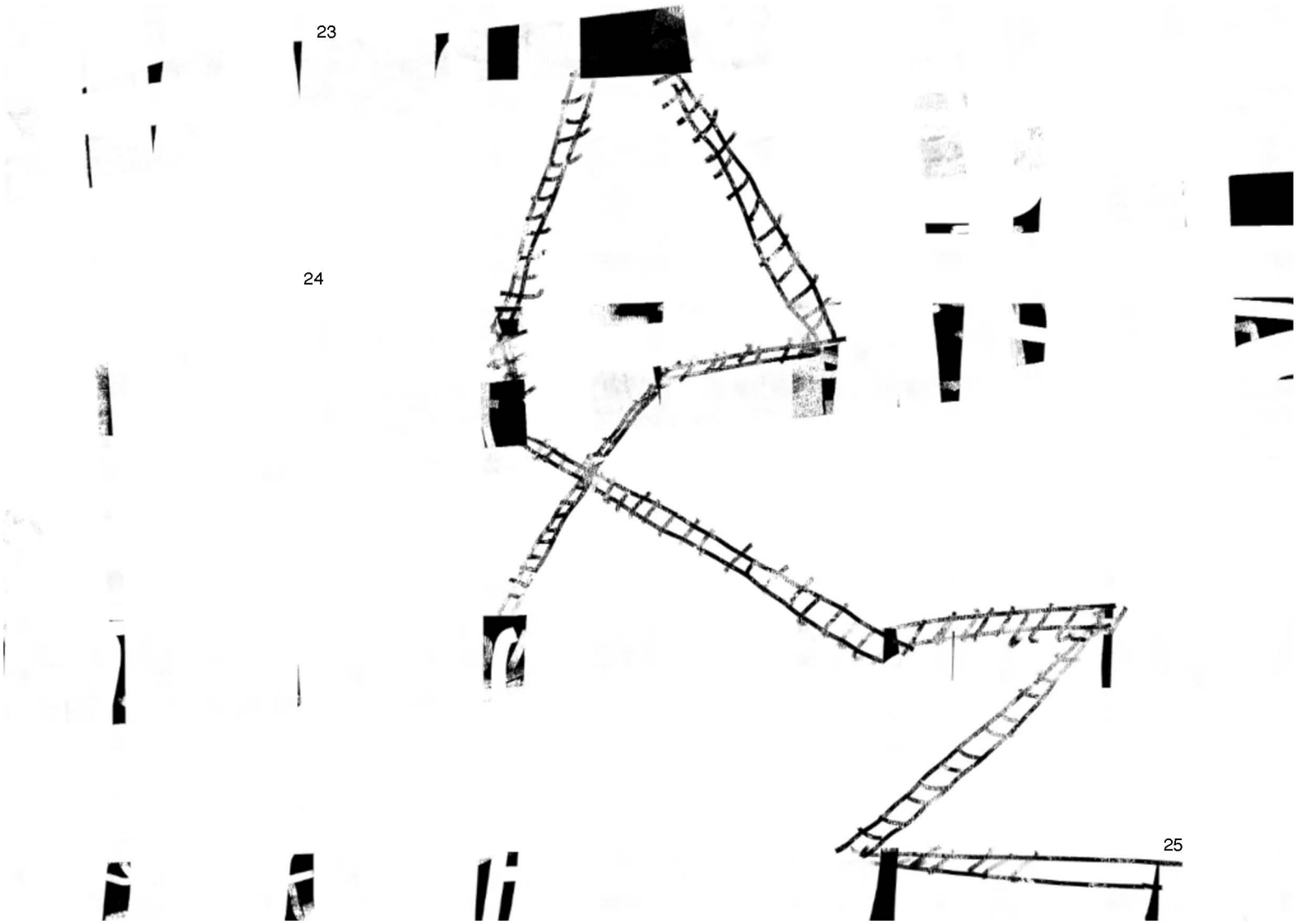
[18] “Fabricated” as in “constructed like a scaffold,” not “invented with the intention to deceive.” The ambiguity is intended, however, as we are clearly fooling ourselves when we mistake our theoretical models of the world for the real thing. Self-delusion, by the way, can be evolutionarily advantage- ous, as Robert Trivers describes in his entertaining “Folly of Fools.” But note that Trivers is talking about a slight overestimation of our personal capabilities, not the kind of society-level delusion we are currently experiencing. Reality has a tendency to catch up with you, if you consistently ignore it.

[19] “The ten thousand things” are a Taoist metaphor for the material world. I first encountered this phrase in Ursula Le Guin’s excellent rendering of the “Tao Te Ching” into English. I read from this book almost daily. And so should you..

[20] Taoists distinguish between the material world, the things we can name, and the underlying Tao, the Way, an current pervading everything that cannot be directly grasped. Our only hope to catch a glim- pse of it is through dedicated meditation and spiritual practice. A powerful metaphor for all the world’s mysteries we do not (and maybe cannot) rationally capture through logic and language.

[21] It should be obvious by now that our modern mechanist world view loses at least as much as it gains. By generating the illusion of predictability and control, we tend to dismiss the vast unknown (and the truly unknowable, whose extent will forever remain a mystery) as trivialities compared to the im- pressive progress we have made in understanding the world. This, of course, is dangerous hubris. It is irrational to assume that limited human beings will ever be able to obtain anything more than a partial and biased understanding of the world we live in.

[22] Interestingly, it is exactly ourselves that we seem to understand the least. While many domains of the physical world exhibit relatively simple regularities, we seem unable to understand what drives our own actions and those of other human and non-human agents. This is exactly why modern science suffers from “inner-dimension blindness.” Nietzsche’s “Gay Science,” the science of ourselves, is nowhere to be seen. Maybe it is not a science at all, but something much deeper?



23 HyperNormalisation is a term, first introduced by anthropologist Alexei Yurchak, to describe the situation during the final years of the Soviet Union. Everyone knew the system was failing but had to maintain the pretense of a functioning society for lack of an imaginable alternative. HyperNormali- sation is also the name of a documentary film by Alan Curtis, which argues that since the 1970s, politicians, financial experts, and technological utopians have given up on the complexities of the real world, and replaced it with a fake reality run by corporations. This hypernormal simulacrum is, for those within it, more real than real. The film is available online: https://vimeo.com/191817381.

24 I have already stated above that any serious theory of knowledge must build on human experience. The traditional aim of epistemology, to define knowledge in the abstract as “justified true belief” (first postulated in Plato’s “Meno” and “Theaetetus”) has proven to be unachievable in practice. Counterexamples can always be found, as illustrated by Edmund Gettier in his pithy 3-page paper published in 1963. Post-Gettier naturalistic epistemology has more modest but also achievable aims. It tries to pragmatically ground trustworthy knowledge in the cognitive and social processes that generate it in practice. In this guise, it has almost become an empirical science itself.

25 The hypernormalisation of our mechanistic modern worldview means that the clockwork universe is no longer a metaphor. The world itself has truly become a mechanism. This may be the ultimate fallacy of misplaced concreteness of our time. As Whitehead already realized, the world is not a mechanism at all: it is processual, open-ended, unbounded, creative.

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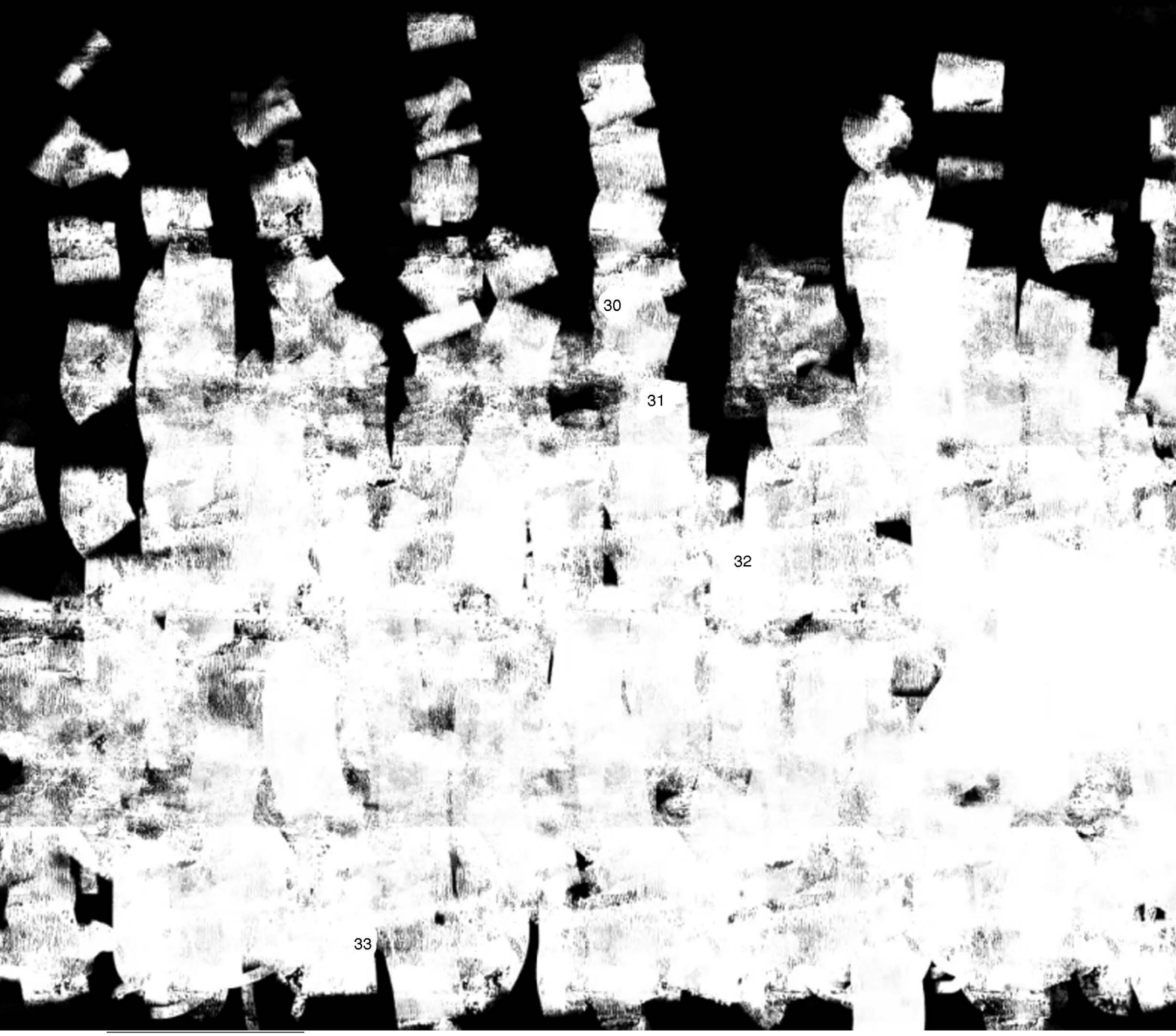
[26] The ultimate manifestation of seeing ourselves as automata or machines is our constant quest for self-optimization. Many of our current spiritual crises are rooted in this empty self-image. Nietzsche saw this age of nihilism coming. God is dead indeed. She probably died of a heart attack in the gym.

[27] Maybe the biggest piece of evidence that the mechanistic worldview is nothing but a metaphor comes from the fact that it has adapted as our technology has evolved over the past few centuries. In the time of Descartes and Newton, the world became a clockwork, and organisms self-winding clocks (De La Mettrie). Later, the human body became a steam-driven automaton, and in the late 19th century it became an intricate chemical factory. Today, of course, we are more sophisticated, and view bodies as computers, driven by genomic codes. None of these metaphors hold up to much close scrutiny, and yet they prevail. Philosopher and historian of science Dan Nicholson has written a number of excellent articles on this topic.

[28] Inner-dimension blindness again. Every being carries within it an intricate subjective world, which is no less real than the “objective” material world around us. Judging by the richness of our own inner world, we can only surmise that the sum total of these individual perspectives hold content that may be more complex and extensive than the entire “external” universe combined. Yet, the modern positivist worldview denies their usefulness, even their very existence..

[29] The artist’s perspective is presented as (somewhat surprisingly) centered.



[30] I reveal a somewhat naïve, idealistic, and oversimplified view of art here: art seen as the exploration and expression of our inner dimensions.

[31] Nietzsche's three transformations in his Zarathustra. We first set out into the desert laden with the burden of our duties. The lion rebels against those, casting them off, but tires itself out fighting. At last, we become child again. The true freedom of exploration as play. Infinite play, to use James Carse's powerful metaphor, which was further developed by Simon Sinek.

[32] So much of society, art and science included, has become a game of making yourself heard over the din of all other voices. How beautifully quiet our would it be if we learned to listen again.

[33] It is a source of constant amazement to me how conservative artists and scientists can be. They of- ten do *not* like to be disturbed in their thinking routines. Too busy exploiting our ideas, we forget that exploration requires us to let go of our preconceptions. As Whitehead pointed out, the most revolutionary insights come from reconsidering those habits of thought that are most firmly en- trenched. The more successful we become in what we do, the less willing we tend to be to accept intrusions that shake our convictions. This is basic human psychology. We have invested too much in building those scaffolds to keep on breaking them down. The mechanistic worldview helps us ratio- nalize this refusal, by dismissing the inner dimensions of our experience, our often confusing and turbulent inner life, as irrational, limited, and biased. But this hinders true understanding of our- selves, since it treats our inner fount of creativity as a mystery, forever beyond reliable inquiry.

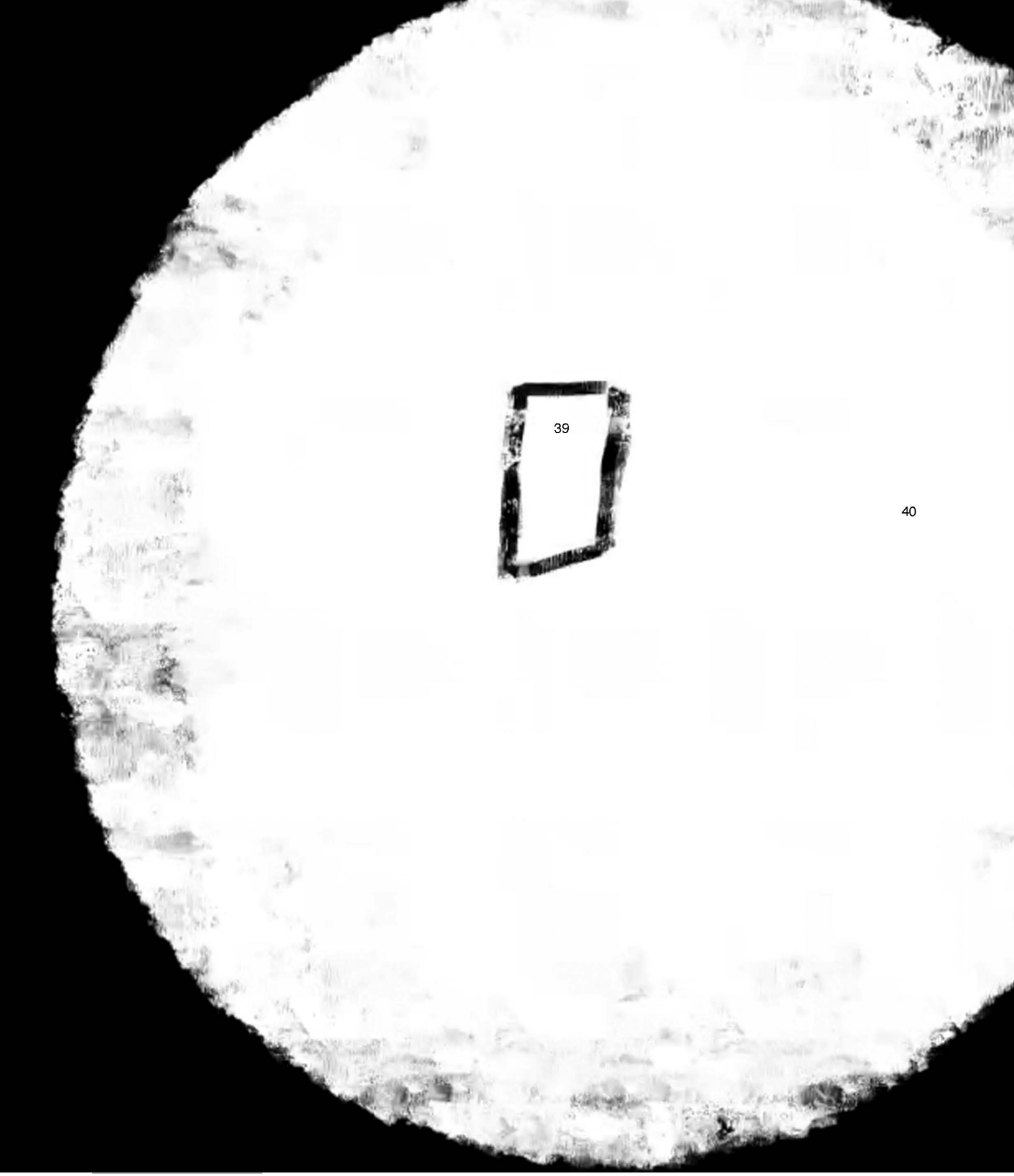
[34] "Negative capability" is a concept introduced by romantic poet John Keats in one of his personal letters. He capitalized "Mysteries," but that seemed a bit too romantic in the context of an arts & science performance.

[35] Art is back, not subdued by our difficulties to keep an open and receptive mind.

[36] Of course, only an artist would say something like this. A scientist prefers to explain the abyss away, except when describing their heroic act of genius to a captivated audience years after the complex (and usually mundane) circumstances of a scientific discovery have faded into history, and it is time to glorify one's own contribution. Sheila Jasanoff writes about this kind of scientific myth-making.

[37] It seems that nobody is quite sure where this phrase (or the associated idea of the world carried by a turtle) comes from. Maybe it has its roots in Hindu mythology. To me, it came via Terry Pratchett's discworld novels, that much is certain. Here it is used to convey the uncomfortable feeling we get from using infinite regress as an explanation for real features of the world.

[38] I just wanted to point out that I actually quite like Art Noveau and its "undulating vanities." The world would be a dull place indeed if everything was reduced to function.



[39] The attentive reader may have noticed already by now that this text blames contemporary art and science for having sold their soul. Pervasive commodification is the societal disease of our time. In an ironic recursive turn, it impoverishes those inner worlds that we have been neglecting with our superficiality (positivist or otherwise) even further. A race to the bottom of shallowness.

[40] The text has taken a pessimist, almost nihilist, turn. It's high time for some pragmatic scientific optimism to reenter the picture! Unfortunately, this kind of linear thinking is unlikely to save us.

[41] The voice of art is back. This time, surprisingly down to Earth.

[42] Our exact motivations do not matter here, since the whole effort remains shallow, and all of it is ultimately self-serving. Transdisciplinarity as a buzzword. Just for show. In my experience, patching art & science together in this way is very common, but rarely yields interesting results or insights.

[43] The idea that transdisciplinary is a good thing, no matter what, is very widespread. It's fashionable to be transdisciplinary. Sometimes, we forget that it is not really necessary in many situations. Innova- tion does not simply consist in mindless recombination. Instead, it often occurs through an unexpec- ted act of reframing that cannot be forced, formalized, or automated. Playing around with unusual mixes of approaches can be fun, for sure, but it is rarely also productive. Transdisciplinarity is hard, and we still know very little about the kind of circumstances under which it actually pays off.

[44] How often, these days, do we think that we can make progress by sheer effort? Increase pressure, innovation will follow. This reveals a rather protestant work ethic, with a little Nietzschean willpower thrown in. In reality, creativity requires subtlety and leisure. Slowly melting the scaffold away would reveal much more than hurriedly soldering together what results in an awkward fit, all just to meet some arbitrary deadline imposed by nothing else than our desperate need to be productive.

[45] The image I wanted to evoke here is of a mechanistic cage that insulates us from the lush, rich, confusing, and sometimes dangerous jungle that is actual reality. At first, the cage keeps us safe from predators roaming the forest. It makes our lives better. But then, it starts to cut our connections, causing us to lose our grip on reality (uncoupled couplers), until it stops the supply of life-suppor- ting oxygen from the air around us. To survive, we must now reverse our self-imposed isolation.

[46] Knowledge is power. Power brings recognition. But that is not the same as understanding, which involves a subjective change of our cognitive state. And understanding is not wisdom, which arises only when that change of state is translated into appropriate action (see below). The circle is closed when we realize that only by acting in the right way can we generate the knowledge we actually need. We can gather as many facts as we want. Without realizing what is relevant in our particular situation, they do not make sense. Without acting on them, they remain utterly devoid of meaning.

[47] By rendering our conceptual contraptions more complicated, we strive to imitate the complexity of the real world. But complicated is not complex. The former is rigid, yet brittle. Prone to failure and breakdown. The latter is flexible, yet robust. Adaptive and self-correcting. The confusion between the two may be modernity's biggest mistake. The mistake that will ultimately undo it.

[48] Objectivist realism, sooner or later, becomes a self-defeating doctrine. If we can actually achieve a "theory of everything"(something that some physicists are still avidly pursuing) what is left for scien- tists to do? Fill in the gaps? If we succeed, we put ourselves out of work. It's as if artists were aiming at producing the perfect piece of art. The one that could never be surpassed, that ends all art. But don't fret. This will never happen. The world is not like that. Was it Douglas Adams who said that on the day someone discovered what the universe is and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced with something even more bizarre and inexplicable? I find that thought very comforting.

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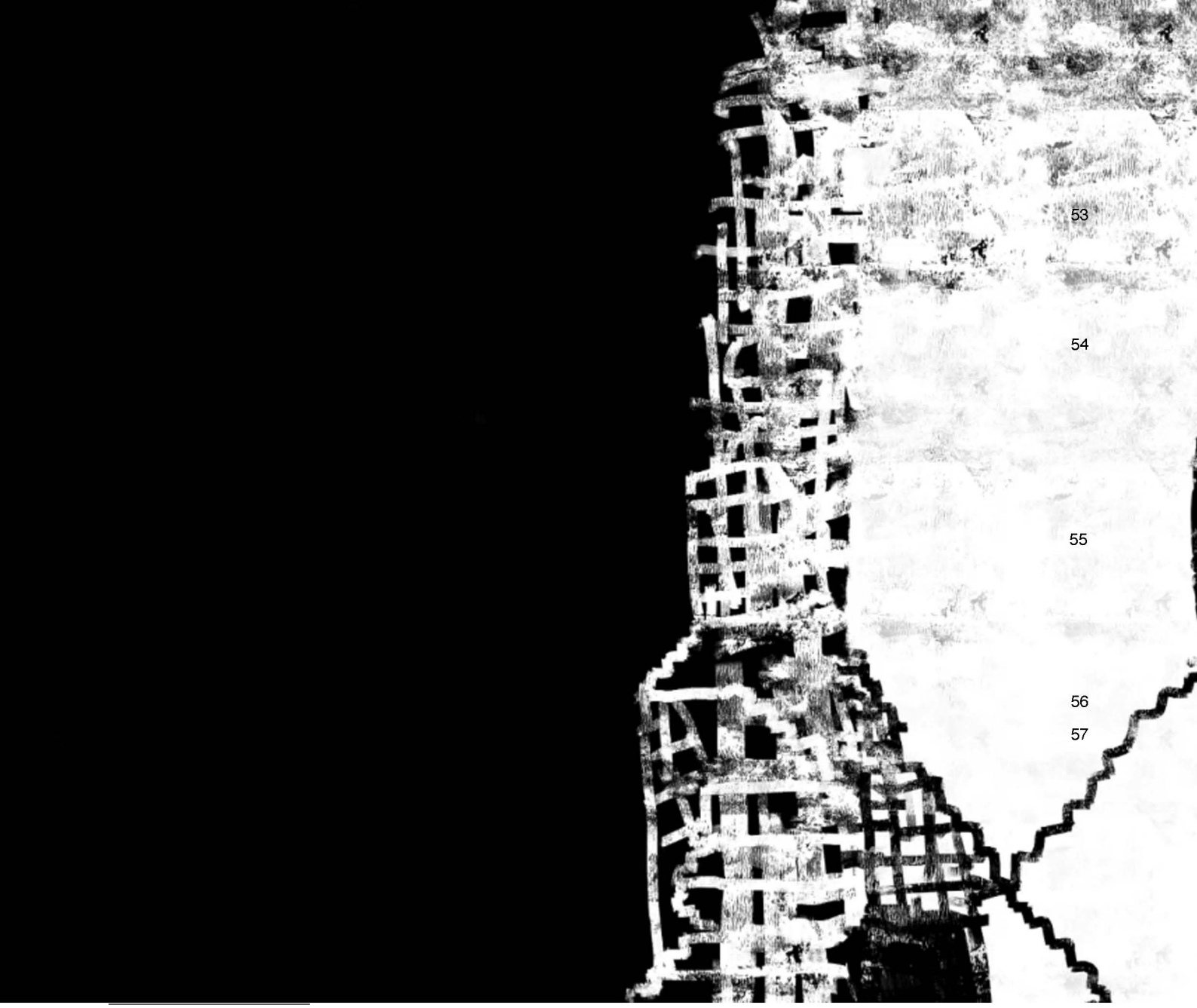
[49] See, that's exactly the problem with "the theory of everything." It will not explain everything after all. In fact, it will be so far removed from our everyday experiences that most people will not even notice that we have finally achieved it. The whole point of an evolving universe is that whenever we understand one thing about it, this understanding opens up a whole range of new questions we can ask, problems we can solve. Truly successful science simply continues generating new science. It does not explain everything. The aim is to keep on learning. Each piece of scaffold we mount will create new intermittent spaces. New structured voids. This process is unlikely to ever end.

[50] Ok. This is a bit melodramatic. It's not likely that this is ever going to happen. I guess the point is that finding the right solution to a problem more often than not requires us to put aside what we know. We must create spaces, not fill them with more categories and concepts. Otherwise, we trap our- selves in our own formalized constructions. This is a central point. Let's not beat about the bush.

[51] Now this is unexpected. Our scaffolds were not built for this! What follows is no longer science's voice of reason. It is no Nietzschean ubermensch either. More likely, it is Nietzsche's fool.

[52] In what way are the arts and sciences as we have constructed them accidents of history? We cannot really know, since we cannot repeat the experiment. We can realize though that we have indeed con- structed them. They are not simply given to us by necessity. Realizing our historical agency, can we find new ways of engaging our inner and outer realities? Are we trying hard enough to do that?



[53] We have come to quite a strange but crucial moment in history. We are losing our grip in a new age of anxiety. We must realize how we got here. Both John Vervaeke and William Irwin Thompson do this by looking at Plato's myth of the cave. Scientists once were philosophers, on their way out of the cave through the process of anagoge. Artists were creating the myths that enabled the ascent from inner to outer world. Modernity has lost this sense of self-transcendence. Scientists have become experts in casting shadows in the cave, artists its interior decorators. Opening new windows means getting out of our shackles, behind the shadows that keep us distracted and pinned to the wall.

[54] This is serious play. Embodied experimentation. We must become children again, yes. But children with intent and focus. This is one of the many paradoxes of the human condition.

[55] Hegel's dialectic again: positing the presuppositions. Rules generate opportunities, opportunities generate rules. This is not mere feedback. One could not exist without the other. Freedom and constraint interpenetrate by opposing each other in ever more intimate ways.

[56] This is Galadriel, of course, from Tolkien's "Fellowship of the Ring." The elves of Middle Earth were too dignified to be good at playing, at opening windows. That is a task for hobbits. But elves remember the perennial truths worth playing with. They are myth embodied.

[57] Mindlessly pursuing science or art (or whatever) for the sake of productivity, scrambling after popu- lar recognition, that's as far as you can get from a state of mindfulness, a state of flowing insight, the achievement of self-transformation. Absorbed by our petty little finite schemes, we have lost sight of the only game that truly counts: our infinite collective play to make sense of our world.

[58] More precisely, I used to care earlier in my life when I still thought that it would be a good idea to follow a given career path to succeed within the boundaries of academia. Nowadays, I have recogni- zed it as the unnecessary constraint on my intellectual freedom and agency that it has become. Ask not what you can do for the system, but ask what the system can do for you. If it does nothing, then it's not a useful system for me, and I must forge my path according to my own needs and principles.

[59] We're finally getting somewhere. Everything I've said so far is mere prelude.

[60] The great blemish of postmodernism. Its criticism of modernity hits hard and true, but grand narra- tives are no longer tolerated. Deconstruction is easy, especially if the building of modernity is crum- bling already under its own weight. We cannot simply demolish it. We need an overarching vision of the world more than ever. The trick is to rebuild by synthesizing rather than destroying old tradi- tions. We're all floating in Neurath's boat, forced to rebuild our ship at sea while trying not to drown.

[61] The mold clouding our minds is cynical relativism, and our general crisis of meaning. In our post-truth world, any discourse is as good as any other. Everybody is entitled to their own opinion, their own facts even, in the marketplace of ideas. Any kind of knowledge is as arbitrary as any other. This is madness. We're zombified: covered with mold, sitting in the damp prison that is our own solipsism.

[62] This is unjust to Yeats. He did not envisage our postmodern condition. Negative capability is a tem- porary suspension of certainty, an overcoming of anxiousness, as we sit comfortably with not know- ing. The postmodern condition is quite the opposite. It is becoming a permanent confusion, an over- whelming anxiousness, as we lose all our bearings and connection in our relationship with the world.

63 The fool again. The joker that speaks unspeakable truths. *Parrhesia*, as Foucault calls it.

64 I would have loved to see a multi-screening of Julian Rosefeldt's "Manifesto," one of these shows they did where all the versions of Cate Blanchett in the film read all the manifestos at the same time on a wall of screens. A jumble of manifestos. A meta-manifesto. The ultimate call to arms.

65 In our present time, manifestos have been hyper-individualized, like everything else in our culture. They sprout up in the form of short essays (on the blogging site "Medium," for example). Everybody has their own manifesto now. We are all the dude with the 2000-word Medium essay. Nobody reads this shit. Let us be silent. Our manifesto, short and sweet: put an end to all manifestos!

66 What is a manifesto if not yet another set of rigid constraints that we build around us? The only ma- nifesto I would write is a liquid one, entirely self-referencing, consisting exclusively of instructions on how to change itself, so it could *self-manifest* and *adapt*, according to need or mood.

67 From "The Big Lebowski." The Dude is a process philosopher.

68 Whiffs of Schrödinger here. But not the wave function. Collapsing sets of opportunities, more like it. Collapsing sets of actions at our disposal. A set of goals pulled towards the one we choose to pur- sue. Enabling an action is always the exclusion of others. We must focus to build. And focus is hard.

69 Too little agency to realize relevance. We cannot decide what we care about.

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[70] Exit the fool. The joker who speaks truth but does not have the power to affect change. If this were a Zarathustrian play, we'd expect the hero to enter and proclaim their truths. Instead, we get the narrator with a dry analysis of the situation. But maybe that's what we need right now?

[71] Constant relentless procrastination. The inability to collapse opportunities through choices, due to an embarrassment of riches. There is so much we could do. So we won't do anything.

[72] This is a crucial turning point. Inaction turns from predicament to choice. The central insight of the Taoist: to do not-doing. But, as we shall see, this does not come easily to the modern Western mind.

[73] One of the more interesting approaches based on this insight is Otto Scharmer's method of "presen- cing," letting go of preconceptions to be truly present, sensing the situation. A kind of mindfulness for problem-solving, with the aim to detect propensities, potentials, and attractors that outline the emerging future. Presencing requires time; time in which we do nothing but be present.

[74] What was promise turns into threat. The crack does not really offer a new view of the outdoors. At first, it is an ominous portent, too small to see through; an indicator that our building is crumbling. As it grows, it becomes a danger to our integrity. Panic ensues and we no longer see what's behind.

[75] Perception of reality breaks down if we become exposed to it too quickly. Plato points this out in his parable of the cave. Anagoge is to ascend slowly, cautiously, transforming yourself in the process. Being thrown out of the cave at once won't leave time for adaptation. This is what modernity is do- ing: we blast open the cave. Running ahead blinded, we must learn to go slow again or we will crash.

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[76] Now, at last, incipit Zarathustra.

[77] Coincidentally, this whole stanza is made out of Black Sabbath song titles. They have an appro- priately Nietzschan vibe to them. (Except maybe the last one.)

[78] That romantic notion of negative capability will only get you so far. Structurelessness is tyranny, as Jo Freeman already wrote. We must have structure to have agency, to have a grip on reality. The idea is not to abandon structure, to deconstruct it. The task is to build it back better. Not filling the void with structure, but to develop a dynamic support that generates new spaces for us to explore..

[79] We're born as rigid mechanics. Putting the world in fixed boxes around us is what we do. The lack of a solid structure to hold on to leaves us with vertigo. We prefer delusion over seeing this truth. Most major religions have been built on this principle. Even scientists are easily afflicted. (Artists do have an advantage on us there.) How to move beyond mechanism: girders, couplers, steel? Rigid control, robust stasis? This, my friends, is our central challenge. How to ground our world on nothing solid?

[80] Whitehead has advice: if you really want to change the world, you must re-examine that which every- body else takes for granted; that which is obvious to everybody but you. In an interesting twist of fate, Peter Thiel, silicon valley libertarian and wannabe feudal overlord, has come to the exact same conclusion. He is a Girardian, not a Whiteheadian, but there we go. Thiel's wisdom is thus: to build your own company, you must pursue a relevant opportunity that nobody sees but you. For most ge- neric problems, lateral thinking is not of much use. All we need is hard work. But here, lateral thin- king will lift you out of the plane, out of the ordinary. Such a radical shift of frame is what we want.

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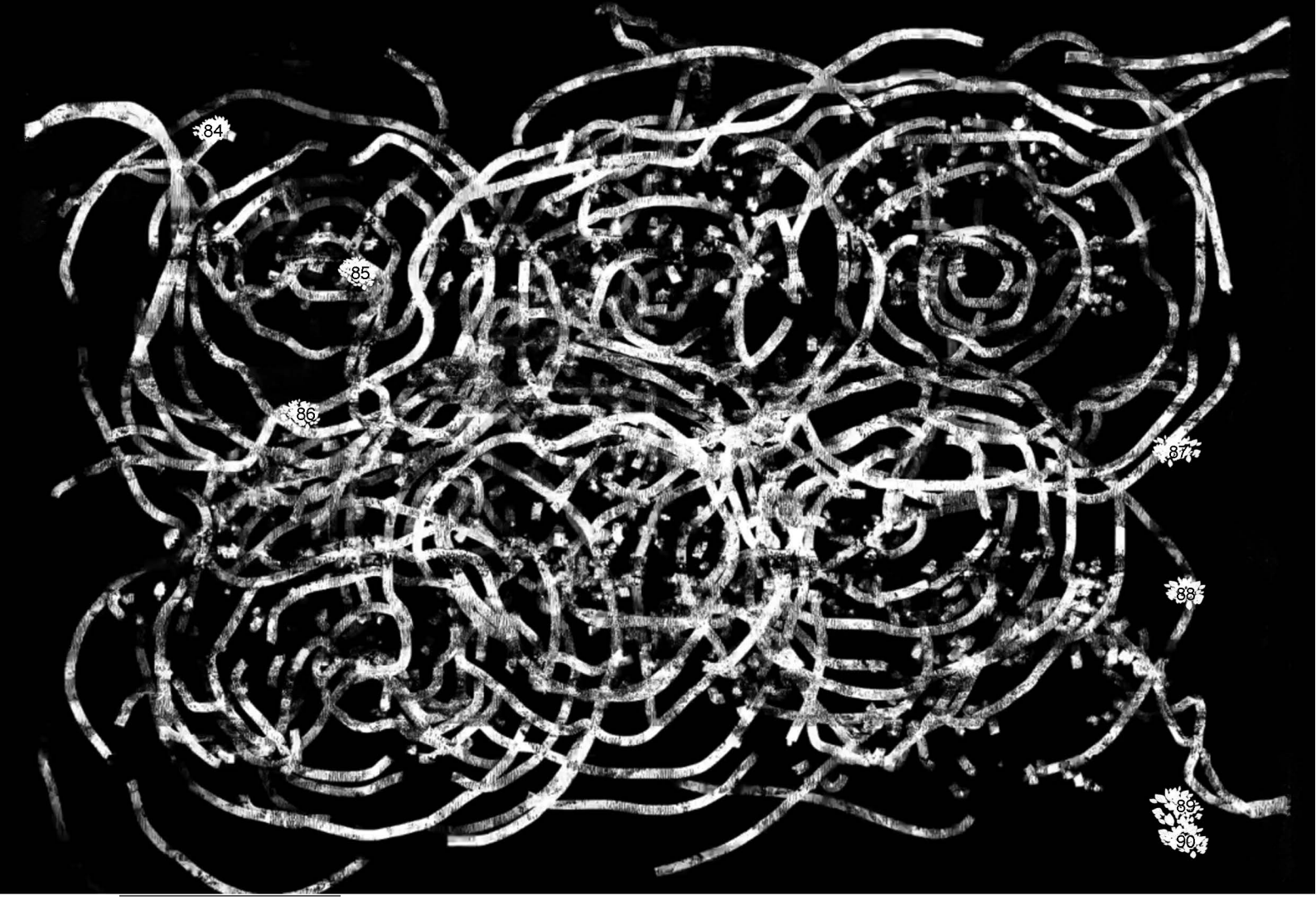
81 Maurice Merleau-Ponty calls this “getting a grip” on our reality. It is not simply about knowing as many facts as possible about the world, but about aligning your inner world with what is relevant in your environment. It’s an agent-arena relationship (to use Cllifford Geertz’ term). Getting a grip, as Vervaeke puts it, is an adaptive process beyond the level of our rational thinking. Harry Frankfurt has noticed this as well, arguing that making ethical decisions first requires us to identify what we care about. None of this can be decided rationally. Nor is it generalizable. You need to make sense *in your particular situation,* right now, in the presence of endless possibilities. There is so much we could know, so much we could care about. And our situation constantly changes. We have not even begun to understand how we ever get a grip. Even worse, we have barely begun to pay attention. Probably, that’s one of the main reasons why we’re increasingly losing touch with reality these days.

82 I think it is a tremendously comforting thought that each one of us has an instinct to make sense of the world, to get a grip. We get confused because we forget how to use it. All too often, we try to rationalize our failures. Sometimes, we’re all just overthinking our situation. At other times, how- ever, we’re not using our reason enough. What’s missing is an adaptive guiding process that tells us when our view of the world is out of alignment. This can be trained. It takes practice. We can’t just think it through. Wisdom must be cultivated. The seed is still there. We only have to let it grow.

83 Now that’s going to be a toughie. 2,500 years of tradition and boundary building have firmly entren- ched a set of cultural institutions and personal habits that no longer work for us, but will be hard to shake. We’ve been trying to transcend them for a while now, ever since Hegel or Nietzsche (or who- ever first uttered it) stated that our old beliefs in a supernatural domain were dead. We must turn the process of meaning-making inside out. We don’t have to escape this world (the cave) for a better one (the ideal, the divine, the One). Instead, we must turn inside, to rediscover and cultivate the pro- cess by which we make our world, our meaning, inextricably entwined with other people, other crea- tures, and the non-living aspects of the world. We can’t leave Plato’s cave. There is nowhere to go. But we must turn it inside out, and finally look beyond those shadows, *our* shadows, on the wall.



[84] Picture a naked bearded dude, dripping wet, running through a Sicilian town.

[85] Looking at the intellectual history of the West, I am awestruck time and again how much we believe we can make sense of the world by simply looking at it. We literally sit on our couch (hence the meta- phor above) staring out of a window. Hume's argument on causality is a perfect example. He did not know how to get from the observation of a regularity to a causal connection. I always wonder: did he ever bump his toe? There is no lack of causality there. There is no lack of consequences to our vari- ous actions. And yet, we seem to have become more solipsistic over time. We now genuinely believe that we can act in ways that have no consequences at all. This comes from a neglect of action in the Western intellectual tradition. Some philosophers recognized this. C. S. Pierce certainly did. But mos- tly we're still stuck in our heads. We need to get off that couch and open that window. Get some fresh air. It's pretty stuffy in the halls of philosophy departments and arts academies these days.

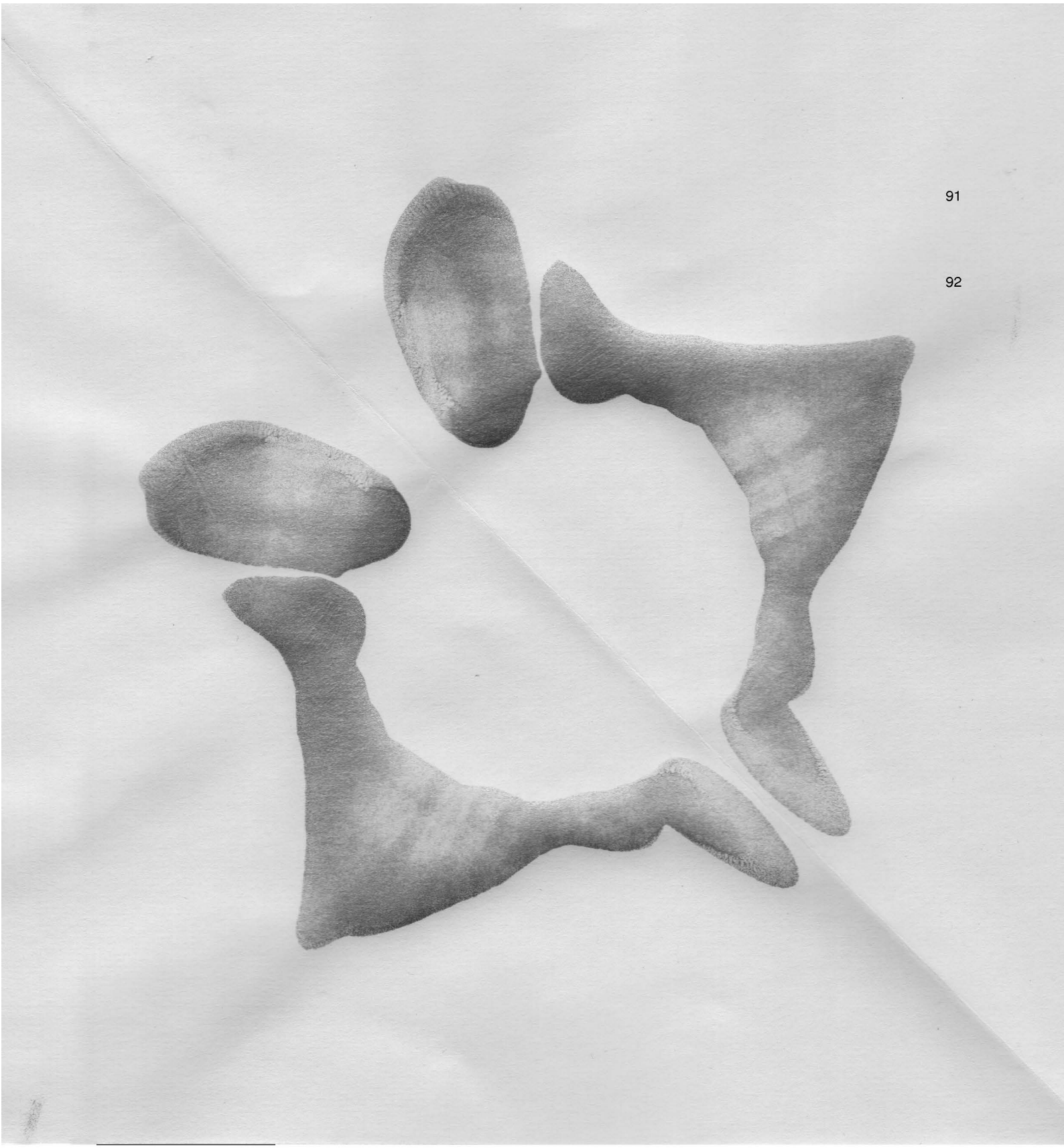
[86] The emphasis here is on active movement. *Doing stuff*. Praxis. Theoria is immensely important. (Take it from a theorist like me.) But it matters only insofar as it can be usefully combined with proportio- nate and meaningful activity. That's the difference between knowledge and wisdom right there: to be wise is to know how to take appropriate action in a given situation.

[87] Actually, we managed to open this one ourselves. Bravo!

[88] Well. Maybe we don't exactly have a plan, really. More like an intention. Or hope. Or vague idea. A vision, maybe? An intuition. We are flexible, but not quite sure yet what we are flexible about.

[89] This is from Denis Walsh: an impredicative cycle. "Impredicative" is a word used by mathematicians to denote definitions that include the concept being defined (either directly or indirectly). Russell's barber who shaves those that don't shave themselves. That kind of thing. Without goals no opportu- nities. Without opportunities no actions. Without the ability to act, no goals. It's all circular in a way that everything in this process presupposes everything else. It makes your head spin if you think about it for too long. This is life. Literally. I mean it. This is the core of what it means to be alive.

[90] In fact, it is fundamentally what we *are*.



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[91] We return, not by accident, to Hegel's "positing the presuppositions." It's the engine that generates worlds. The German idealists, often ridiculed today, may have the last laugh. They may have gotten this much right, after all. We *do* generate our world. At the same time, though, the empiricists got it right as well. None of that world we generate is detached from our experience. It's all rooted in our agent-arena relationship, our connection to reality. The world at large does not care about us. It is undoubtedly independent of our minds. We arrive at a kind of "both, and" situation. Idealism and empiricism are both right. Synthesized at last in a dialectic manner that Hegel would have greatly appreciated. This synthesis is neither subjective nor objective. It is what Vervaeke calls transjective: rooted in the underlying *relationship* between subject and object.

[92] I think that the vision of you and me as churning worldmaking vortices is just really, you know, *wow*.