

From the desk of H. P. Deleuze

Singapore, October 1897

Notes on *Amphibian*

When I first encountered *Amphibian* there was a strong if not disquieting peculiarity. This was the first time I had ever investigated the works of a man named Ruben Pang. So I asked myself: *Has this been arranged for something besides the works? What is to be seen?* This may sound a bit peculiar but please bear with me as I consult my notes. *It was as if the arrangement of the works opened a hole in the floor, through the wall, the whole room a perpetual door.* I was unsure then as today. I had a feeling which I continue to live. This was hard for me to unfeel. Yet I am compelled to tell you my story.

For many years I studied a most arcane science. Some call it philosophy. And by this I work for resolution. For there seems an ontological claim in this exhibition. Allow me to explain. Ontology comes from the ancient Greek *on* and *logos*. The former is defined as 'being' and the latter: 'speech, account, reason, definition, rational, faculty, and proportion.' I note there are numerous iterations and competing definitions of this word. Here I provide the most stable version in order to remark on the sublime ontology *Amphibian* evokes.

In other words *Amphibian* possess a fundamental form or what the ancient Greeks term *eídos*. If so, this form seems generated through a singular arrangement, the particular and exact lay out of this exhibition. This was so, according to my notes: *This eídos contains eidetic variations of a single form, a formless interlocutor of the self, out of time?*

Yet whatever is out of time reaches into now. But this is nearly absurd. Yet this mystery must accord to at least a single point, *manifoldly*, in space-time. Theorizing as I have there seems what the Greeks termed *dynamis*, a type of spectacular geometric alignment, and one we may not readily see! So says my notes: *shall we fail to rely on the organon of sense itself! Our access to it, by virtue of multiple points, the works themselves?*

What I could make of this phantomic, geometric field concerned to me (at the time) something fundamental: *The quiet lines of some non-apparent manifold, secondary forms are engendered; generated*

by our movement through this dynamis, with them, into them, among them? Strums the ancient instrument, the manifold itself?

Reduced to mere poetry the philosopher in me sought to track it down. To correct the mystical for the empirical. Tracking these illusions I sought to certify their origin, the self-deception that existence must be! For what secrets stand behind appearances if not the incomprehensibility of forever? *For illusions are first our own apparitions, the trick of tracking down is in our own thoughts.* Accordingly illusions duly protect this form – the illusions we make that is. And only the most absolute and brave philosopher will attempt to upend his own reflection!

Yet I must admit to a speculative breath washing over me. I may only source my notes to describe it: *Why do I feel the wind of the sea in an enclosed room? Why do I feel something lurching behind me?*

The arcane science I use to solve the phenomenon *Amphibian* must first deal with the imagination. It fools us, it was Pascal's most formidable foe! Yet the imagination is a great joy! I was caught up in it, says the notes: *Be warned, when it drops us from the flight of abstraction a gut level terror pierces from inside. Then our only concept is internal, neither trauma nor memory – a fundamental shape change or reorganization.* And in my notes I remark of a smell: *an ozone afar, a far way lurking permeation of the common masks we don? A geometric blossom which reorganizes biological functions.* Whom among the viewing, in this depeopled reality enfearing disease; who among you dare remove this mask? *Do I fear my amphibian skin?*

Let us consider the becoming of some *thing*, the entry of some *thing* through a door, a door outside the common walls of the gallery. A door which swings wider than the walls and closes into a single point. No, I must set my imagination aside. With courage I asked: *What type of muse could an amphibian be? Why name a muse thus? It must not be.* One is apt to think of the amphibian integument, its various layers and porosities which aspirate, exhale, excrete, and eat.

Yet where is this skin? I feel on the edge of madness, having come to this far off city in the midst of a pandemic. Nonetheless let us think beyond some disquieting half-figure, the unseen but felt, despite the weird sense of a last laugh; a humor behind eyes we meet. No. Let us consider it true enough and try to

unsee it in the mind. With us there is a formless impression – I truly must call it that. It lurks behind acute sensation.

Let us strum with the mind's curious curved finger, this thread of thought, the thread which ties itself to a virtual corner, a corner beyond actual space-time, outside the walls we stand within. From the beach at night, *nine casting hands to a night kept, red globe* "Have a Safe Trip Dear." One turns only to receive a message from ancient Ur, or so the notes said. *A most strange line of tablets! Yet these tablets are not written in cuneiform. It is not punctured clay. It is from another place, the writing comes from inside, something slithered out, with an indifferent crawl, moving in accord to some vestigial will, as if dropping in from without.*

Upon review of these most haunting notes I tried to coagulate a thesis: *This vestigial will reminds us, of our diluted facsimilia, the day to day which denies, a great absolute architecture of the incomprehensible, our sense for which, decays as clouds in sunset do disintegrate into space. The dance illusion floats before us. This will reminds us of a movement lost.*

More profane reads the notes: *I need suppress the imagination, the migration of memories, a life we find in sleep, reaching back behind the brain, formerly performed, the grip of the instinct, to collision of forms, a movement becoming, amphibian cadence, of a depth behind time, a dance despite the title: Forever!?*

I am a scholar of the most ancient, natural science, the parent of all sciences: Philosophy! This science owes only poetry for its progenic status. And I declare, as my time runs thinner: How could these tablets of *Forever* have parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5? *Forever* here is a sequence *shattered into tablets from which the amphibian, the near formless thing, slithered hitherto.* Yet if we see how they – *and yes, these figures must be 'they'!* – crowd upon an entry in each tablet, might we come to understand the *horror vaccui* of forever. *Aspiration, exhalation, inspiration, inhalation. Time to eat.*

The tablets! Are they amphibian skin, some world terrain? *What is being eaten? Is it the stars of night and early morning, clouded by the horns of a constantly illuminated planet? Have I now unsee the stars? Consult the bloodied moon in Safe Trip.*

Let us turn from my neurotic trepidation. Back to the works! They are significant points or objects in themselves. Each has a topography and there one finds spaces, figures, movements. The illusions we inflate and situate into ideas. For this is at the heart of *eídos*.

The hour is running thinner and there is something I must omit – something to miss. I itch beneath my face, a face this mask has become. I glimpse this work “Face Donor.” I am seeking an origin. Here the entry point is forming; *a feeling of an oculus*. Quickly, my notes! *An origin? The world here seems upended, the amphibian left the sum of our face; what it sees*. And further to the left “There’s a Star in Her Eyes” floats a sideways turned eye! *Can you see the strumming strings? The decoagulated morph in exploding flesh rain?*

Back to the tablets! *Brave Men Run in My Family* – and so the story of running, of being routed; *the trauma’s embrace, ever loving ember, ever latching, ever piercing. This must be what is meant when the gut singer horns in a vacuum. No sound.*

Upon the back wall a story unfolds forever. The amphibian moves through each never to be grasped. *In a row its moves, like a needle and thread through each portal*. In each tablet found is a forever curling upon a point we cannot traverse. We shall, in want of origin, consult the illuminations of the paintings which remain!

Yet the hour is late, I feel no walls, only the working integument; becoming amphibian! Says my notes: *As if my brain dilated, stretch’d in the most brane ways, as a page in an old book flapping, soaked by the oil of fingers, and the eyes of readers; eyes which leave ev’r upon each leaf n drips of dreams!*

Going to persevere! Ah, *Chrysalis!* The eye turned center! The eye of “There’s a Star in Her Eyes”? *The movement of an orifice, the turning manifold, ethereal innards* – and then – the painting opens the hole, exhalation and inhalation: *Chamber Music!*

We must end. Come to the end of the circuit as we find *Polyculture*. Here the path once orated by Homer, that of horn or ivory, I cannot tell – illusion or fulfillment – one must decide – is lain open; this horn of *Gut Singer*. Says the notes: *It is a path by which the body in bed is an open window, a drape of flesh, of nine points, of a manifold undrawn*. And we see no end in the search of an origin, only folly; *Only the organs of*

eidos, the works themselves, facsimilia. And now, on this faded hour, I write my last words. I have removed my shoes to walk in dream silt. Here among frogs, salamanders, and well-tempered beings; wiping dream salt from my tired eyes to let drift in a sea of light pollution.

Yours most sincerely,

H. P. Deleuze