The Intermediate World: A Key Concept in Beautiful Thinking

Abstract: The term ‘the intermediate world’ is a key concept in Den skønne tænkning (Beautiful Thinking) and the metaphysics of experience presented by this book. The metaphysics of experience is about the experiences of transcendence and beautiful thinking that take place in the intermediate world. In the article “The Intermediate World,” this subject is introduced through a discussion of thoughts and concepts formulated by Paul Klee (Zwischenwelt), Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (beautiful thinking), Aristotle (phantasia), Immanuel Kant (expanded thinking), Mark C. Taylor (imagination), and Eugenio Trías (the limit). The text depicts the intermediate world as the level of experience at which the understanding does not yet distinguish between subject and object. The intermediate world is thus not a realm between human and world, nor is it something outside the world we know. The intermediate world is rather the present world in its most original state: the ‘place’ where we find the source of all experience and cognition, a source called ‘basic experience’ characterized by sensation, faith, and comprehension. In this realm, imagination is active and takes the form of an objective force rather than a subjective mental power. Imagination opens mind and world, thus allowing not-yet-actualized possibilities to become perceivable.

Keywords: experience, metaphysics, Klee, aesthetics, imagination, Baumgarten, sensitivity, Trías, limit, thinking

1 Introduction

The expression ‘beautiful thinking’ derives from §1 in Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s Aesthetica. Aesthetics is “the science of sensitive cognition,” Baumgarten writes, and in a parenthesis he lists the following synonyms for aesthetics: “the theory of the liberal arts,” “gnoseology of the lower faculties,” “the art of beautiful thinking,” and “the art of thinking analogous to reason.”¹ In my book Den skønne tænkning (Beautiful Thinking), I presented and interpreted Baumgarten’s philosophical aesthetics, Immanuel Kant’s critique of reason, Walter Benjamin’s modern metaphysics, Martin Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology, and a number of current aesthetic theories as pathways to the metaphysics of experience.² The term ‘metaphysics of experience’ I originally coined to denote a philosophy dealing with experiences that are commonly described as, for example, ‘aesthetic’ or ‘religious.’ It indicates a philosophy that in its exploration of such experiences attempts to surpass the way they are treated by dualist philosophies of mind. The metaphysics of experience is thus the philosophy of a realm of experience that, viewed from the perspective of the subject/object-structured way of thinking still reproduced by the majority, constitutes what in Den skønne tænkning I call ‘the intermediate world;’ an experiential level at which subject and

¹ Baumgarten, Ästhetik 1, 11.
² See Jørgensen, Den skønne tænkning, 12. This section in its totality refers to pp. 12-14.

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object are connected in an original way before they are separated intellectually.3

In as early as the 18th century, Baumgarten initiated a philosophical exploration of the intermediate world by introducing his philosophical aesthetics. With his aesthetics, he founded a new epistemology that anticipated the hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy of experience of the 20th century, and he thus also founded a new metaphysics that, unlike traditional metaphysics, revolved around ‘sensitive cognition,’ ‘beautiful thinking,’ and ‘aesthetic truth.’ However, Baumgarten’s thought still originated in rationalism; essentially, his aesthetics therefore belonged to the dualist philosophy of mind. It was formed as a philosophy of human faculties that, thanks to its notion of sensitive cognition, which bridges sense perception and abstract thinking, tended to burst the subject/object-paradigm, but was prevented by its rationalist origins from conducting a proper exploration of the intermediate world. Furthermore, Baumgarten’s definition of aesthetics as the philosophy of sensitive cognition was soon forgotten by posterity, and aesthetics was replaced first by the philosophy of art and later by the study of art.4

As a consequence of this scenario, for many years, my work was motivated by the idea that philosophical aesthetics represents a not yet fulfilled possibility that must be fulfilled, as it is concerned with something that is dealt with in far less detail in other parts of philosophy. However, such a fulfillment cannot take the form of a simple reproduction of the original aesthetics. Instead, it must actualize certain aspects of aesthetics, including its concepts of ‘sensitive cognition,’ ‘beautiful thinking,’ and ‘aesthetic truth’; the result of this effort is what I call the ‘metaphysics of experience.’ Between aesthetics and the metaphysics of experience, there is thus kinship, but not identity. The metaphysics of experience is a philosophy that is meta-physical, but in a modern way. It is not an essentialist philosophy of epistemological objects, that is, of something whose nature can be determined by thought because that nature is a static given. On the contrary, it is a non-essentialist philosophy of the not only aesthetic but also religious dimension of our experiences, and of the not yet actualized volatile-indeterminate possibilities offered by this dimension. The metaphysics of experience discloses no hidden objects behind the world in which we live, but opens a neglected dimension of it: the intermediate world.

Having the ‘intermediate world’ as its key term, this chapter deals with the following questions: 1) in which dimension of the world does transcendence occur? 2) Which faculties are involved when we are present in this dimension, that is, the intermediate world? 3) How might we conceive of the limit implied in all ideas of transcendence, and thus also in the notion of an intermediate world associated with experiencing transcendence? 4) What is the intermediate world, if it is not a locatable domain of the empirical world or a container for experience? 5) How can philosophy access the poetic dimension of the world with which the intermediate world is synonymous when interpreted as sensitive subjectivity?

2 Entering the intermediate world

Aesthetic and religious experiences are experiences of transcendence; they surpass both empirical experience and rational cognition. Such experiences bring insight and qualify as experiences of a surplus of meaning, because they are sensitive rather than sensuous, and because they occur to us rather than being controlled by us. Since ancient times, artists, philosophers and priests have shown great interest in our possibility of experiencing transcendence, regardless of how they interpreted it, but the approach to our experiences of transcendence and thus also their interpretations have changed throughout history. Furthermore, there was not always such a clear focus on the experience as experience – let alone on the

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3 Consequentially, ‘intermediate’ does not mean ‘mediated’ (by, for example, the subject and its faculties), and it only means ‘in between’ if approached intellectually (that is, from a dualist and thus less original point of view).
4 I distinguish between ‘the metaphysics of beauty,’ ‘art theory,’ ‘philosophy of art,’ and ‘philosophical aesthetics’ (see “English Summary” in Den skønne tankning). The metaphysics of beauty and philosophical aesthetics focus on beauty and aesthetic experience, respectively, whereas art theory and the philosophy of art both focus on art. However, art theory deals with the formal aspects of art, whereas the philosophy of art is concerned with questions concerning the nature of art. ‘The study of art’ is an academic approach to art that was developed in the 19th-20th centuries, and which is empirical and analytical and thus based on art theory rather than philosophical aesthetics.
experience as sensate and yet full of insight – as that which was introduced by philosophical aesthetics, that is, in the 18th century.\(^5\)

It is also worth noticing that the designation ‘the intermediate world’ for the ‘place’ where transcendence occurs is a relatively new phenomenon. The painter Paul Klee used this term, that is, its German equivalent die Zwischenwelt, in the early 20th century. To give only one of several possible examples, in an interview, he said that “in our time worlds have opened up which not everybody can see into, although they are too part of nature. Perhaps it’s really true that only children, madmen and savages see into them. I mean, for example, the realm of the unborn and the dead, the realm of what can be, might be, but need not necessarily be. An in-between world. At least for me, it’s an in-between world. I call it that because I feel that it exists between the worlds our senses can perceive, and I absorb it inwardly to the extent that I can project it outwardly in symbolic correspondences. Children, madmen and savages can still, or again, look into it. And what they see and picture is for me the most precious kind of confirmation.”\(^6\)

In English translations of Klee’s terminology, the ‘Zwischenwelt’ mentioned by him is often translated as ‘the in-between world,’ but I prefer to translate the German word ‘Zwischenwelt’ and the Danish word ‘mellemerverden’ with the phrase ‘the intermediate world.’ As an artist, Klee explored the intermediate world referred to by him, and he left behind a wealth of symbolic expressions of its morphology. As stated earlier, Klee regarded the intermediate world as invisible to the physical eye, but he also thought that art could make it visible. “Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible,” said Klee in his Creative Confession.\(^7\) Art does not show the world as we know it, but as it is; art presents natura naturans rather than natura naturata, being rather than the beings. However, unlike others, Klee did not conceive a systematic philosophy of the intermediate world; and those who attempted to do so did not make use of his term. I refer, among others, to the philosophies of ‘attunement,’ ‘mood,’ and ‘atmosphere’ introduced by Martin Heidegger, K.E. Løgstrup, Hermann Schmitz, and Gernot Böhme, but I also allude to both older and newer philosophies of ‘imagination.’ My concept of the intermediate world originates not in Klee’s terminology or his interpretation of the realm by him denoted ‘die Zwischenwelt,’ but rather in inspiration acquired from philosophies of the aforementioned sort, especially philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology.

In Den skønne tænkning, I state that the sensitive cognition mentioned by Baumgarten is of a ‘feeling, sensate, and presentiment’ character, and this is because it is neither simply sensuous nor conceptual, but sensitive.\(^8\) The philosophies that surround the attunement, mood, or atmosphere mentioned by Heidegger, Løgstrup, Schmitz, and Böhme also present us with a level of experience and a dimension of existence in which what happens is of a sensitive character. However, unlike Baumgarten’s approach to this level of experience, the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to the same is not marked by a philosophy of faculties; hermeneutic phenomenology focuses on experience defined as something that occurs, not experience defined as something a subject in the sense of an ego or a person has and controls.\(^9\) In order to obtain better insight into the experiences occurring in the intermediate world, the metaphysics of experience also aims to surpass the subject/object-structured way of thinking appertained to dualist philosophies of mind. Therefore, the actualization performed by the metaphysics of experience of the possibility that philosophical aesthetics remains – the possibility to develop philosophy of experiences of transcendence.

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5 The word ‘sensate’ here refers to ‘sensation’ as in the ‘feeling, sensation, and presentiment’ mentioned in footnote 8. ‘Sensate’ connotes sensitivity rather than sensuousness; expressed in German/Danish, it means empfindend/fornemmende rather than sinnend/sansende. What is sensitive is emotional, whereas what is sensuous is physical. This is why sensitive experiences such as aesthetic and religious experiences do not simply stimulate our senses but provide insight.

6 The conversation is rendered in Felix Klee’s Paul Klee, and the afore-quoted appears pp. 183-184 in a rather free translation. Felix Klee’s rendering of the conversation quotes Lothar Schreyer’s Erinnerungen an Sturm und Bauhaus.


8 ‘Feeling, sensation, and presentiment’ is a translation of the Danish expression ‘følelse, fornemmelse og anelse,’ which, in German, would be ‘Gefühl, Empfindung und Ahnung,’ used in Den skønne tænkning to designate what I also refer to as ‘sensitive subjectivity.’

9 For the mood, the atmosphere, and the attunement, respectively, see the chapters “Tanken om stemthed” (The Idea of Being in a Mood), “Ny fænomenologi, ny æstetik” (New Phenomenology, New Aesthetics), and “Fænomenologi er æstetik” (Phenomenology is Aesthetics) in Den skønne tænkning.
defined as sensitive experiences of a surplus of meaning – includes the further development of aesthetics which hermeneutic phenomenology represents, despite its reluctance toward aesthetics.  

3 Phantasie and imagination

According to Baumgarten, sensitive cognitions are the products of an interplay between what in his time was called the ‘lower cognitive faculties,’ and which included phantasie, or in German: die Einbildungskraft. Of all the lower cognitive faculties, it was precisely imagination that Kant took up in Critique of Judgment when he wished to determine the pure judgment of taste, that is, the experience of beauty. Baumgarten’s concept of phantasie refers, among other things, to Aristotle, who, in On the Soul, distinguished between sense (aisthesis), imagination (phantasia), and thought (noein). When Baumgarten introduced philosophical aesthetics as the philosophy of sensitive cognition, that is, the philosophy of a third power compared to physical sensation and rational cognition, he did more than is usually acknowledged. Not only the fact that Baumgarten actualized aisthesis but also the way in which he did this – his eye for the sensitive rather than the merely sensuous – implied the emergence of new ways to approach phantasie. It created new opportunities for developing philosophy that did not just reproduce the traditional notion of phantasie defined as the representation in mind of aisthesis and as something that can only be pre-reflexive. It was now possible to regard imagination as an aspect, perhaps even the core, of the third power (compared to physical sensation and rational cognition), for the exploration of which Baumgarten introduced new terms such as ‘sensitive cognition,’ ‘aesthetic truth,’ and ‘beautiful thinking.’ 

Aristotle considered phantasie to be reproductive, but Baumgarten regarded the ‘faculty of invention’ (facultas fingendi, dispositio poetica) related to imagination as creative. This thought was continued by Kant, who, in his Critique of Pure Reason, depicted the imagination as both reproductive and productive, and, in his Critique of Judgment, highlighted the productive side of it. According to Kant, it is not only as reproductive imagination but also as productive or rather as creative imagination that the imagination is one of two faculties – understanding is the other faculty – whose free and harmonious interplay is the source of pure judgments of taste, which represent a unifying and transcending way of thinking that Kant referred to as ‘extended.’ Later, Heidegger approved the thesis he identified in Kant’s first Critique that imagination is the common root of intuition and understanding, an idea that, in Heidegger’s interpretation of it, meant that imagination is the basic prerequisite for understanding. According to Heidegger, imagination opens the horizon without which understanding (in the sense of knowledge) would not be possible. Likewise, many other modern philosophers have awarded imagination great importance, and some contemporary theologians regard it as a major theological issue.

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10 This reluctance is apparent in, for example, Heidegger, Nietzsche.
11 In English, both ‘phantasia’ and ‘Einbildungskraft’ are usually referred to as ‘imagination.’ For a detailed presentation and discussion of a wide range of notions of imagination from antiquity to our day, see Jørgensen, “The Philosophy of Imagination.”
12 Aristotle, “On the Soul,” The Complete Works of Aristotle, Vol. 1. For aisthesis, see book III.2; for phantasie, see book III.3. In the English translation of Aristotle’s work, aisthesis understood as a faculty is termed sense, whereas aisthesis understood as an activity is termed sensation, and the products of this activity are called sensations. Aisthesis means not simply physical sense or sensation, but sense and sensation of a more comprehensive nature. Noein is actually thinking understood as activity, that is, as in ‘to think.’
13 For Baumgarten’s view of the relationship between imagination and the faculty of invention, see Mirbach, “Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten,” 33-47.
14 Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A 100-102, and Critique of the Power of Judgment, part one on the aesthetic judgment.
15 The ‘understanding’ here referred to is not the faculty that in German is termed Verstand but the activity termed Verstehen, which also includes the result of this activity. For Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant, see Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics.
16 This theological interest is not completely new. For example, imagination already played an important though negative role for Friedrich Schleiermacher, as he warned against defining religion as “only imagination and poetry.” See Über die Religion in Kritische Gesamtausgabe, 1/2, 312. In the second edition, ‘Fantasie’ was replaced by ‘Einbildungskraft,’ see Kritische Gesamtausgabe 1/12, 278. However, parallel to the emergence of new disciplines such as theological aesthetics, the theological interest in imagination has become more intense. See, for example, footnotes 1499 and 1748 in Den skønne tænkning for numerous examples from recent decades of studies of the importance of imagination in and for theology.
Nevertheless, theology’s attempt to rehabilitate the notion of imagination encounters problems if it implies that humans are equipped with a creativity that should only be ascribed to God – that is, if the consequence of the attempt is that humans cannot only depict something given but can also create new without original. In this case, theology violates the biblical idea of an essential dissimilarity between God and human. However, it is possible to overcome this obstacle by abolishing the traditional notion of imagination as a subjective faculty and by replacing it with a broader notion. For this purpose, theology can find inspiration in philosophical aesthetics, because imagination has been an aesthetic concept since the introduction of aesthetics, and because, since the Romantics, aesthetics has attempted to transcend the way of thinking appertained to dualist philosophies of mind. Theology and aesthetics thus have a common agenda, and theology might find a model in aesthetics, for example, in early German Romanticism and its expanded notion of imagination, including its concept of “progressive universal poetry.”

Marc C. Taylor took advantage of the previously described possibility when, in 2009, he wrote After God, in which an expanded notion of imagination plays an important role. Taylor regards the imagination as the power and activity in all beings that produces all existing figures, right from the empirical forms of nature to our ideas and concepts. The imagination is an infinite process of change that is both figuring and disfiguring or both creative and destructive, namely “the activity through which the figures that pattern the data of experience emerge, are modified, and dissolve.” According to Taylor, the figures referred to by him are not representations, but presentations. They do not represent the existent but put forward something that would not be present without this presentation of it. Imagination is thus the ground of all that exists – it is the source of it – but, because imagination is spontaneous, it itself exists without ground. Imagination is a “groundless ground,” and it is also an “unfathomable ground”. As imagination is the prerequisite for knowledge, we cannot know imagination itself: it is an “abyss” of incomprehensibility.

4 On the limit

Imagination is the “no-thing on which every foundation founders,” and which creates “freely out of nothing,” says Taylor. It is not a subjective faculty but God; or vice versa: God is imagination in the sense of life and death, the power to create and to destroy. Thus, although Taylor’s argument is unconventional, his conclusion is not – except for one important aspect: according to Taylor, imagination is entirely immanent and immanence is opaque. There is no trace in the immanent of anything transcendent, except for the transcendence that imagination itself represents by being transcendent to the concept (but not to experience). We may experience God’s presence as a creative and destructive power, but we cannot understand Him, and only in immanence is He present. Immanence thus contains no fissures. The realm of concepts is fissured, it opens up to experience, but the realm of experience is not. In After God, Taylor thus seems to claim that immanence closes in on itself.

Compared with Taylor, Eugenio Trias’ view on the relationship between the immanent and the transcendent is more uplifting, even in a literal sense. Since Taylor does not regard the imagination as a human faculty, the problem is not that he allots immense power to the imagination but that he takes the aforementioned absolutism of immanence for granted. It is because of Taylor’s radical immaneitism – not

17 See, for example, footnote 260 and the end of the chapter “Sandheden sker” (Truth Happens), as well as the chapter “Aisthesis- eller kraftæstetik” (Aesthetics Focusing on Aisthesis or on Force), in Den skønne tænkning.
18 Taylor, After God, 19. My presentation of Taylor refers in particular to the chapter “Åbenheden i mellemverdenen” (The Openness of the Intermediate World) in Den skønne tænkning. Taylor himself refers largely to Kant, G.W. F. Hegel, other German idealists and, among others, Fr. Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Maurice Blanchot, besides early German Romanticism. In the case of imagination, he refers to Kant in particular, but his interpretation is strongly influenced by the early Romantics. This is most likely because Taylor reads Kant through the aforementioned thinkers and because their philosophies – for example, the philosophies of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Blanchot – are marked by and actualize ideas of an early Romantic origin.
19 Taylor, After God, 125.
20 Ibid., 307.
21 Ibid., 116-117.
22 Ibid., 117.
his romanticism – that I now, to critique Taylor’s view, include Trías’ notion of the limit in my discussion. In the philosophy of Trías, the transcendent is not made something entirely immanent, though it can only be studied in the form of an experience and thus in an immanent form.²³ Trías refers to the transcendent as ‘the holy,’ and he believes that it is only if the holy reveals itself that it can be experienced by us. Such revelation takes place on the limit, which is Trias’ term for what I call the intermediate world, and which is not just a border between the immanent and the transcendent. The limit is also, or more specifically, a space where what is immanent meets what is transcendent, referred to by Trías as a ‘symbolic event.’ This event is made possible by the subject’s encounter on the limit with his ‘daimon,’ interpreted platonically by Trías as an erotic power.²⁴ In the philosophy of Trias, we thus also find a power the format of which is ‘expanded,’ but without Taylor’s depreciation of the transcendent as transcendent.

Trías’ conception of the daimon and his definition of it as an erotic power rest on his notion of ‘being’ as a three-pronged whole consisting of existence (the dimension of being that reveals itself), the holy (a dimension of being that does not show itself), and the being of the limit (in the sense of “a being that highlights the duality and the asymmetry between two areas,” the areas of what appears and what is hermetrical).²⁵ Whenever one says ‘being,’ one also says ‘God’ (or vice versa), Triás thinks, and therefore the concept of the being of the limit must be supplemented by an analogous concept of the god of the limit. This does not mean that God and being are identical, but that they are linked dialectically. Similarly, philosophy and religion are not about the same, but about something related for which they have different names and to which they relate in different ways. According to Trías, the internal connection between God and being consists in the fact that God is being in a personal form and that being is the impersonal substrate of the divine. This is why Trías says that the being of the limit “assumes personal form as the God of the limit.”²⁶ Moreover, this is Trías’ own notion of God, for he also writes that “God is God of the limit: a God who from the limit, which designs and constitutes Him, retains an intrinsic substrate while thanks to the caesura (and the passion that might define this) opens Himself toward the existential revelation.”²⁷

According to Trías, God reveals Himself in the symbolic event that occurs in the intermediate world constituted by the limit, and He lets us feel a presence we can bear witness to, although God as such is out of reach.²⁸ Admittedly, today, all visible traces of such symbolic events have disappeared; gone are all concrete signs of any presence of the holy, that is, such symbolic events no longer occur as visionary experiences; to use Trias’ words, the daimon no longer acts as a manifested presence. However, the consequence of this change is not that nobody any longer meets a daimon – that nobody exceeds what Trías calls ‘the personal subject.’ The consequence is rather that the surpassing and the encounter occur “in secret,” that is, without vision and manifestation, and thus most likely in the form of what in Skønhedens metamorfose (The Metamorphosis of Beauty) published in 2001 I meant by experience of immanent transcendence (as distinct from religious experience traditionally defined).²⁹

As examples of secret experiences of the presence of the holy, Trías mentions love, the painful experience of loss, the proximity of death (both the death of others and of oneself), that is, “all the harrowing and transformative experiences that force existence to seek a change from its ethos, its position,
its actions. These examples represent “experience that exceeds calculation and ‘rational’ computing,” and which thus transcends rationality. Therefore, they also exemplify experience that transcends the personal subject and shows openness toward the self in the sense of the daimon of the individual. Despite the nowadays often unformed and thus seemingly empty nature of the experience, the outcome of such a surpassing of rationality and of the subject is not empty, according to Triás’ own interpretation of it: we do encounter something, even when we think that we do not as we are no longer able to visualize it. We meet our daimons, the powers that open us up and accomplish expansions of the horizons we ourselves constitute – surpassings we do not master, but can try to express.

5 Sensitive subjectivity

Klee instructed the artist to visualize what occurs invisibly in the intermediate world, to create a visual language for the processes and the forms of this world. However, according to Klee, expression is not the only purpose of the effort. If an artist symbolizes what, in the words of Triás, occurs on the limit between the immanent and the transcendent, both the artist and the rest of us might be able to think about what is otherwise invisible, and to consider how to explain the fact that it becomes visible. The artistic symbolization gives food for thought on the ‘thinking eye’ and its ‘creative thinking’ that, besides being at work in the viewer, already unfolds in the image and the artist’s production of it. The artistic visualization of something invisible also offers an opportunity to consider art as a way of comprehending what the understanding cannot understand. Therefore, one must not be surprised by the fact that some contemporary philosophers of science propose to resort to the arts in order to escape deficiencies experienced in modern science that are caused by the understanding’s way of thinking. As early as in the days of Klee, philosophy was advised to do something similar, namely to engage with the arts.

In Den skønne tænkning, I explain the relationship between art, philosophy, and science considered by both philosophers of science and philosophers of art with reference to a common origin of art, philosophy, and science called ‘basic experience’. The intermediate world, which, in the book, is also referred to as ‘sensitivity’ (as distinct from the senses) and ‘subjectivity’ (as opposed to the subject), is unlocatable and indefinite; it is not a container for but rather consists of experiences of transcendence, for example, aesthetic or religious experiences. Basic experience, on the other hand, is the common source of these experiences. Unlike our individual experiences of transcendence, basic experience is not a particular single experience, but our very sensitively sensuous ‘being-there-in-the-universe-together-with-whatever-else-there-is. This source called ‘basic experience’ we experience only in its phenomenal manifestations; we only ‘know’ it thanks to our single experiences and the cultural phenomena in which they manifest themselves, that is, in the form of art and religion, for example. In order to approach the basic experience, one must thus enter the intermediate world – the realm of experience of transcendence, that is, sensitive subjectivity different from the subject. It is only in this way that one can comprehend inner connections between what is otherwise separated analytically; for example, the immanent and the transcendent. If we wish to come closer to an understanding of the relationship between art, philosophy, and science, we must approach basic experience, which itself requires that we enter the intermediate world. Philosophy can take this step by opening itself toward the arts, and the art world can take this step by opening itself toward philosophy (in the sense of philosophia).

30 Triás, Pensar la religión, 228.
31 Ibid., 227-228.
32 Das bildnerische Denken is the title of a book by Klee published in English as The Thinking Eye.
33 See, for example, Tauber (ed.), The Elusive Synthesis.
34 The proponents of this idea include, among others, Benjamin, Heidegger, Theodor W. Adorno, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.
35 See the chapter “Fornemmelse, tro og forståelse” (Sensation, Faith, and Comprehension) in Den skønne tænkning, in which I describe the basic experience as characterized by a trinity of sensation, faith, and comprehension – a trinity itself characterized by equiprimordiality (not hierarchy).
This intermediate world is not the same as life; it is not identical to human existence between birth and death, on earth under the sky. The expression ‘the intermediate world’ is not a (possibly theological) term for the ‘geography’ of existence, from here to there in time and space. This is not what I envisage when I use this expression in *Den skønne tænkning*. Nor is the intermediate world identical to the arts only, viewed as a realm reserved for special individuals who clearly envision something that others cannot see, and whose reality is thus different from other people’s reality. This is also not what I have in mind when I use the expression ‘the intermediate world’ in *Den skønne tænkning*. Moreover, the intermediate world is not a universe created by individual people’s subjective fantasies, without a connection to anything beyond fantasy itself. It is not a psychological phenomenon, although imagination is indeed part of it, for, in *Den skønne tænkning*, imagination is not a subjective faculty but a power in total being. Similarly, the expression ‘the intermediate world’ does not simply refer to the relationship between the human being and the world, although the realm it designates does consist of experience, for, as previously shown, it is not just about any kind of experience. The word ‘experience’ here refers not to physical sensation, mere impression, empirical experience, life experience, or rational understanding, but to something that by its transcending nature truly qualifies as experience.

So what is the intermediate world? It is the sensitive subjectivity in which experiences of transcendence – aesthetic or religious experiences, for example – occur before any crystallization of subject and object has taken place. To be more specific, the intermediate world is the totality of experiences occurring in this realm of experience. Therefore, the ‘place’ for the event that the intermediate world is thus considered to be must be found outside what is generally meant by ‘time and place.’ Furthermore, it appeared earlier that the intermediate world is not a container for, but identical to, the experiences occurring in it; these are experiences of transcendence and therefore the intermediate world is characterized by openness. It is open to what cannot be sensed physically or explained by the understanding, and which is thus called ‘super-sensuous.’ This openness is what Taylor cannot see but Trías (like Klee) is aware of, since Taylor regards immanence as opaque, regardless of how much he cares for immanent transcendence (by him interpreted as imagination’s transcendence of rationality), whereas the limit referred to by Trías is porous, as it is the place where the immanent and the transcendent meet.

### 6 Philosophical ‘method’

The intermediate world is distinguished not only by openness. In the experiences of transcendence that constitute it, a production of meaning takes place, since, to use Baumgarten’s terminology, these experiences are characterized not by ‘unity’ or ‘diversity,’ but ‘unity in diversity.’ Furthermore, despite the fact that experiences of transcendence qualify as events, they can happen anywhere and at any time. Even in the most everyday situations, the world might unfold in experience thanks to which meaning of a different order – that is, a surplus – appears. Furthermore, events are by definition transformative, wherever they occur; no one leaves unaltered the space of experience constituted by events. Even in entirely ordinary situations, a person’s view of the world might suddenly change, and the one to whom this happens is thus also transformed. The sensitive possibility of insight, to which the incidence of such experience testifies, can be regarded a poetic dimension of the world. It is this ‘world poetry’ – the poetry of the intermediate world – that has attracted attention in both philosophical aesthetics and hermeneutic phenomenology. This world poetry is also what the metaphysics of experience illuminates, but in its own way: without aesthetics’ point of departure in a philosophy of faculties and without phenomenology’s reluctance to aesthetics.

Philosophy only has access to the world poetry if it opens itself up to the dimension of ‘feeling, sensation, and presentiment’ in the realm of experience, that is, the dimension by aesthetics dubbed the ‘aesthetic’ side of that realm. It requires broad-mindedness to reflect on what is happening in the intermediate world; it demands openness to the meaningfulness that distinguishes experiences of transcendence as experiences of a surplus. The intellectual ethos thus demanded is a precondition for any attempt by philosophy to

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36 The notion of ‘world poetry’ applied in *Den skønne tænkning* derives from Jørgensen and Winkelmann, *Verdenspoesi*. 

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cherish the world poetry, and the gentle handling of the beauty of the world poetry that is associated with this ethos is a prerequisite for understanding the value of experiencing transcendence. For the sake of the beauty bestowed in the intermediate world, philosophy itself must thus undergo a ‘beautification.’ It must become more sensitive (not just sensuous) and more in search of insight (not just keen on cognition), and it also has to become more accurate (in order, for example, not to confuse semiotic and existential meaning). In the realm of conceptual thinking, philosophy must strive for what Klee sought as an artist, namely, “exactitude winged by intuition.”

References


37 Klee, “Exact Experiments in the Realm of Art, 1928,” 18. This text was first published in Bauhaus.