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## DOODLES OF BEING: SURVEYING, DEFINING, AND IDENTIFYING THE IDEA OF ONTOGRAPHY

### I. *Survey*

#### I.1. *Initial Screen*

A good way to introduce and develop unfamiliar ideas – in this case the idea of ontography<sup>1</sup> – is to make use of an analogy. We are all aware of the difference between software and hardware in our daily usage of laptops, tablets, mobile phones, and other such devices. Although the software is immaterial and the hardware is material, both heavily rely on each other, both cooperate via interfaces and both would be meaningless without their counterpart: the hardware makes the software work, while the software describes the hardware such that the latter becomes observable and controllable. The meaningful existence of the one implies the meaningful existence of the other – and vice versa. However, we also know that the harmonious cooperation of software and hardware is never guaranteed. Sometimes, the hardware is too slow to adequately run the fancy game or video editing program we have just bought, and at other times, not all hardware devices can be used because there is no driver or no kernel yet. In the respective cases, we would either have to update the immaterial forms of the software or the material

<sup>1</sup> The present article is based on STADLER 2014 (especially on sections 1.2, 1.3 and 4.3), where I develop the idea of ontography in more detail.

contents of the hardware to gain the ideal result of a smooth workflow. What prevents us from transferring this scenario to the case of philosophical ontology? If we assume that reality is a kind of hardware whose existence can only be meaningful if we access it with the right forms of our immaterial thinking, and if the software of our thinking only make sense if it is concerned with what is real (instead of merely with what is already or only inside the software, i.e. inside our perception and thinking), then we should also take into consideration the possibility of updating our thinking from time to time. Only this “updating” could guarantee optimal results for ontological questions like what is real, what are the most real, i.e. the fundamental structures of reality, and can or how can these structures be described correctly and meaningfully.

We are aware of the fact that the word “ontology” is composed of two parts: the determinative “onto”, which refers to being or reality, and the determinatum “logy”, which means “word” or “doctrine”. Therefore, ontology is the doctrine of being. To take the analogy further, we can say that the determinative of ontology signifies the hardware and the determinatum the software. So one could say that an ontologist is operating at the interfaces of reality and thinking, both taken in their most general or categorical senses. The determinatum “logy”, however, denotes “lógos”, which not only means doctrine, but also “word”. Hence, the idea suggests and indeed historically<sup>2</sup> suggested itself that language is closely connected to, i.e. somehow mirroring the fundamental categories of being and that ontology can be understood as a verbalization or linguistic formalization of its subject matter. In the context of our analogy, this would mean that the best way to describe and access the nature of the hardware in question is by developing and using textual code in a command line, as some of us did back in the day when using MS-DOS or still do with the Unix shell in their favorite Linux environment. Nevertheless, in the scenario of our analogy, graphical user interfaces have long been developed that essentially facilitated the handling of our hardware devices. Well and ever better designed combinations of visual elements *and* text have made the acquaintance with and observation of our hardware much more faster and intuitive. Could not the same be the case in philosophical

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. SIMONS 2014.

ontology? How could a not merely linguistic, but also «visual thinking» (ARNHEIM 2004) change or even improve the way the nature of reality can be observed, reflected on, and expressed? If A. Spelten is right in hypothesizing that visual models provide a unique and irreplaceable form of visual cognition<sup>3</sup>, is it not possible and beneficial to expand the discipline of ontology with notions developed under the name of “ontography”, whereby the former is, amongst others, enriched with visual forms of thinking and depicting reality? How could such a theory look like? Which frame conditions, which theoretical parameters would the development of such an update entail? How can it be possibly defined? In addition, can we even survey some “core developers” of ontography within the history of philosophy?

### 1.2. *Developers of Ontography*

Let us try to answer the questions just posed in reverse order, starting with the last one. Can we survey some core developers of ontography within the history of philosophy? As the name “ontology” has been coined for the first time in 1606 by German philosopher Jacob Lorhard and been established on a broader scale only in the second half of the 18th century by the writings of Christian Wolff<sup>4</sup>, it does not seem to be promising to start the quest for sources of the word “ontography” within the history of

<sup>3</sup> «Seeing and understanding form a unity that exceeds a purely illustrative nature. Models do not illustrate an explanation, but give a visual explanation. The obtained cognition is itself of a visual nature and cannot be replaced by other forms of explanation» (SPELTEN 2008: 43). Original: «Sehen und Verstehen bilden eine Einheit, die weit über einen illustrativen Charakter hinausgeht. Modelle illustrieren keine Erklärung, sondern geben eine visuelle Erklärung. Die gewonnene Erkenntnis ist dabei selbst visueller Natur und kann nicht durch andere Erklärungsformen ersetzt werden». [All translations of this paper are, if not indicated otherwise, my own work and therefore neither definite, nor official].

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. SIMONS 2014. Interestingly, already Lorhard himself saw the value of graphical elements (in his case the extensive usage of diagrammatic trees) to demonstrate ontological ideas (cfr. LORHARD 1606). Therefore, one could say that in its hour of birth, the name “ontology” was accompanied by a then unnamed twin who came into its own only centuries later under the name of “ontography” – although both have been constituents of philosophy long before their respective naming, of course.

philosophy<sup>5</sup> before the actual appearance of the word “ontography”. Apart from one exception, all of the scattered instances of the word “ontography” within the history of philosophy can be located not earlier than in the second half of the 20th century and later. The exception is a short article by German philosopher and author Karl Christian Friedrich Krause. His article with the title *Ueber die Wesensprache (lingua et character essentialis, auch Pasilalie und Pasigraphie bisher genannt)*<sup>6</sup> was published in 1822 in the 30th issue of the Viennese «Literarischer Anzeiger». Therein, Krause argues in favour of the Leibnizian development of a universal language that transcends all natural languages and prevents the contingency of all sciences that are based on natural languages. After bemoaning the qualitative decay of German, which otherwise would have been very well suited for such a universal language, Krause describes the ideal universal language as follows:

Hence several profound thinkers from different origins rightly demanded: an essential language (“linguam essentialem s. vere realem”) according to the law of science itself and to the prototype of language in general, to be constructed anew, i.e. independent of all former languages. This task simultaneously entails the following: that this essential language (*ontoglossa*) should be presentable both for the eye (as *ontography*, as a language of primitive signs) and for the ear (as *ontolaly*, as a language of primitive sounds), so that both expressions of the same lingual structure (lingual organism) can be fully translated into each other. Furthermore, this task entails that the single, essential, simple signs and the whole structure of the essential language should not be developed arbitrarily, but out of the essentiality of the human mind and of all things cognizable, and that all its signs should be suited, as a lawful and combinatorily complete proto-alphabet, to denote everything a human can become aware of by intuition, sensation, and

<sup>5</sup> For the purpose of this paper, it is sufficient to concentrate on genuinely philosophical instances of “ontography”. Outside of philosophy, however, the word “ontography” has been used in anthropology (Albert Piette, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro), in physics (Richard F. Kitchener), and in the so-called “Science, technology and society”-studies (Michael Lynch). Neither in philosophy nor in one of these disciplines, however, an influential conception of “ontography” has been established so far. Cfr. HARMAN 2011: 124.

<sup>6</sup> “On the language of essence (lingua et character essentialis, that has been called *Pasilaly* and *Pasigraphy* so far”.

will. And that out of all this, a self-explaining dictionary and a similar grammar will result<sup>7</sup> (KRAUSE 1822: 234f.).

Krause thus characterizes ontography as the optical side of an ideal universal language that is composed of primal signs and sounds. The denotation “primal” or “primitive” refers to the fundament of reality on which the fundamental conformity of the human mind and everything that is generally cognizable for this mind is based. It thus refers to a sort of primal interface of mind and matter, whereby the latter is not only knowable to the former, but can also be adequately expressed by an essential language. The construction of this language should rather be understood as a reconstruction, a lingual reformation of structures that are pre-linguistically real and only made visible by the ontography. So let us keep in mind the basic characteristic of ontography that can be found in the article of Krause:

(a) Ontography is a language of primal signs that optically mirrors the common essence of human cognition and cognizable reality.

It seems to be only in 1978 that the concept of ontography appears for the second time in a philosophical context, albeit again in a not further systematically elaborated manner. Only in one short passage of his book *Une Théorie du Savoir*, French philosopher Jacques

<sup>7</sup> «Daher schon mit Recht tiefsinnige Denker aus mehrern Völkern die Forderung aufgestellt: eine wesentliche Sprache (Wesenssprache, “linguam essentialem s. vere realem”) nach dem Gesetze der Wissenschaft selbst, und nach dem Urbilde der Sprache überhaupt, von Neuem, unabhängig von allen zeitherigen Sprachen zu schaffen. Diese Aufgabe umfaßt zugleich folgende: daß diese Wesenssprache (*Ontoglossa*) sowohl für das Auge (als *Ontographie*, als Urzeichensprache), als auch für das Ohr (als *Ontolalie*, als Urtonsprache), darstellbar sey, so daß beyde Äußerungen desselben Sprachgliedbaues (Sprachorganismus) sich vollständig anpassend in einander übersetzen lassen, ferner, daß die einzelnen wesentlichen einfachen Zeichen und der ganze Gliedbau der Wesenssprache nicht willkürlich, sondern aus der Wesenheit des menschlichen Geistes und alles möglichen Erkennbaren entwickelt, – und daß alle ihre Zeichen gesetzmäßig, mit combinatorischer Vollständigkeit verbunden, als ein Uralphabet, zu Bezeichnung alles Dessen, was der Mensch anschauend, empfindend und wollend inne werden kann, geschickt sey. Und daß sich hieraus zugleich ein sich selbst erklärendes Wörterbuch und eine ähnliche Sprachlehre ergeben».

Schlanger mentions ontography and distinguishes it from its theoretical counterpart, ontology:

In the context of ontography, the subject creates theoretical works that integrate the observed ontological given according to the regularities of exhibition and writing. Ontography processes that which is given within an ontological domain by starting from the observation of partial aspects understood by the subject and generating a complete knowledge, a knowledge that covers a whole domain of which only some asperities have been perceived and observed. Ontography is also the place where the ontological world of imagination unfolds itself, the place where the ontological imagination comes into effect. The ontological work is not a description of that which is, it does not reflect on the cognitively real, but it constitutes and presents that which could be and which has to be in the light of the as-is state. Taking its starting point from the observed ontological given, the ontological imagination of the subject produces ontological wholes, new ontological maps for which the ontological given of the foundation serve as marks of reference and as measures of verification<sup>8</sup> (SCHLANGER 1978: 103).

In this passage, ontography is presented as an operational step in the fabrication of ontological knowledge, a productive combination of ontologically perceived features of reality towards a consistent whole. It seems here as if ontology could only come to its result via ontography, because Schlanger implies that there cannot be any ontological works without an ontographical synthesis of the imagination. The ontographical visualizations or “maps” of the ontologically given are directly derived from the observation of

<sup>8</sup> «Dans le cadre de l'ontographie, le sujet constitue des œuvres théoriques qui intègrent les données ontologiques observées, en suivant des règles d'exposition et d'écriture. L'ontographie traite de ce qui est dans un domaine ontologique donné, en partant de l'observation de points partiels que le sujet saisit, et en produisant un savoir complet, un savoir qui couvre tout un terrain, dont seules quelques aspérités avaient été perçues et observées. L'ontographie est ainsi le lieu où se déploie l'imaginaire ontologique, le lieu où la faculté d'imagination créatrice joue à plein. L'œuvre ontologique n'est pas une description de ce qui est, elle ne reflète pas ce qui est en termes cognitifs, elle constitue et présente ce qui peut être, ce qui doit être à partir de ce qui est. En partant de données ontologique observées, l'imagination ontologique du sujet produit des ensembles ontologiques, des cartes ontologiques nouvelles pour lesquelles les données ontologiques de fondement servent de références tout comme de moyens de vérification».

reality's fundamental structures. Together with «the regularities of exhibition and writing», these structures are taken as a basis and therefore cannot arbitrarily be invented during the process of ontographical visualization. Still, for the accomplishment of any ontological knowledge, the final ontographical step is extremely significant, because its task is to not only synthesize and visualize the ontological observations, but also to enrich the factual existence of the latter with domains of modalities. Schlanger's characterization of ontography could therefore be summarized as follows:

(b) Ontography is based on a faculty of (b) productive imagination that shapes the factual-ontological given into maps of modal wholes.

The next historical characterization of ontography has been already formulated in the 1950s, but was only posthumously published in 1990. Again we have to deal with a very short paragraph in a French book on the nature of knowledge, this time written by Alexandre Kojève and entitled *Le concept, le temps et le discours. Introduction au Système du Savoir*. In the last chapter of this book, «Le temps et le Concept», Kojève interprets the way the notion of being is shaped in the Eleatic philosophy of Parmenides. According to Kojève, “being” is understood here as a space that is inwardly curved in a homogenous, ontologically undivided fashion: timeless and immobile, «un point géométrique instantané» (KOJÈVE 1990: 289). Outwardly, the Eleatic being has no borders; it is not even restricted by nothingness. The only limitation of being is necessarily self-imposed. Because of its unlimited expansion, it lacks the possibility to transcend itself<sup>9</sup>. Everything that is, including being itself, is necessarily and invariably immanent of being. In order to demonstrate this special Eleatic notion of being, Kojève attempts to interpret it in terms of an image with an infinite sphere that is only restricted by itself. This image would be “ontographical” by nature. «Parmenides himself seems to have taken into consideration (albeit in and through his onto-graphical *image*) the *immanent constrictions* of being»<sup>10</sup> (ibid.: 289f). Nevertheless, after the time of Parmenides,

<sup>9</sup> «Car puisqu'il n'y a rien en dehors de lui, l'Être ne peut pas se dépasser soi-même» (ibid.).

<sup>10</sup> «Parménide lui-même semble avoir tenu compte (ne serait-ce dans et par son *image* onto-graphique) de *limites immanentes* de l'Être».

this ontographical image of a sphere of being that is only limited by itself had to make place for the attribution of infinity to the outer shape of being and thus the natural self-restriction of being has been forgotten. Consequentially, many problems of a logical nature arose, based on the difference of finiteness and infinity. Those problems, however, do not belong anymore to the domain of visual imaginativeness, but to logical-conceptual reasoning: problems of ontology, not of ontography<sup>11</sup>. In any case, for our momentary purposes it is not the Eleatic notion of being and its aftermath that is important, but the characterization of ontography that is given by Kojève in this context.

(c) Ontography is a visualizing-imaginative form of thinking and is therefore different from ontology understood as a conceptual-logical form of thinking.

In the second volume of his extensive trilogy *Spheres* (1998-2004), Peter Sloterdijk explicitly refers twice to the distinction between ontology and ontography made by Kojève. In the context of the first reference, Sloterdijk describes an example, or rather a symbol of ontography, namely the Farnese marble statue of Atlas that models the mythological idea of the titan carrying the world on his shoulders. According to Sloterdijk, this carried globe symbolizes the “imago mundi”, i.e. the perception of the world in its wholeness, including the metaphysical notion of a mysterious, inexplicable heaven that has been more and more enlightened, rationalized and evened out in the post-mythological ages. But whereas after the abolition of heaven’s mythological and metaphysical dimensions, the terrestrial globe has been depicted solely as an isolated thing that is stabilized for pragmatical reasons by stands of wood and metal, the Farnesian Atlas still presents «a picture in the philosophically sophisticated sense of the word: given intuition of the non-given. If one can talk with Karl Marx of a human made medium except of

<sup>11</sup> «Mais après lui [Parménides, M.S.], pendant de longs siècles, la Philosophie a voulu rendre discursivement compte du fait de l'absence de “frontières extérieures” de et dans l'Être (ou de l'Un-tout-seul parméniénien, voire du “Théos” platonicien) a engendré, dans la Philosophie en général et dans l'Ontologie en particulier, des difficultés insurmontables (vu la “finitude” incontestable et reconnue de tout *Discours* quel qu'il soit) que nous pouvons passer sous silence» (ibid.: 290).



money that has “metaphysical moods”, then it only can be the ancient European celestial globe. Here it is the case that there cannot be any valid onto-logy that doesn’t require a complementary onto-graphy»<sup>12</sup> (SLOTERDIJK 1999: 79).

Accordingly, ontology and ontography would be two complementary disciplines whereby the latter consists in the philosophical visualization or visual modelling of non-given entities. This characterization of ontography correlates in a more general formulation with the second passage of Sloterdijk’s work in which ontography is mentioned: «That there have to be images is motivated in the coercion of the intelligence through death and absence; that there can be images is founded in the primordial, supplementary function of onto-graphy. If writing means ideally depiction in the dissimilarity, then image means depiction in the similarity»<sup>13</sup> (ibid.: 151). This could mean that in the light of the medium, every image is an analogical reproduction of the illustrated entity and therefore in one way or another participates in the latter. Mere writing on the other hand places the described entity into a categorically divergent medium that does not ontologically participate in the originally given. This participation of the image is based on the “primordial”, i.e. irreducible status of ontography, which actually enables the visuality or the “being an image” of an image as the result of an analogical transformation of the maintained ontological matter in question into another medium. The ontological mode of the image should therefore be understood as being analogical by nature<sup>14</sup>. In addition, this ontological mode is a

<sup>12</sup> «[stellt] ein Bild im philosophisch anspruchsvollen Sinn des Wortes dar: gegebene Anschauung vom Nicht-Gegebenen. Wenn man mit Karl Marx je einem menschengemachten Medium neben dem Geld “metaphysische Mucken” nachsagen darf, dann kann es nur der alteuropäische Himmelsglobus sein. Für ihn trifft zu, daß es keine gültige Onto-Logie geben kann, die nicht einer komplementären Onto-Graphie bedürfte».

<sup>13</sup> «Daß es Bilder geben muss, hat sein Motiv in der Nötigung der Intelligenz durch den Tod und die Absenz; daß es Bilder geben kann, gründet in der primordialen ergänzenden Funktion der Onto-Graphie. Wenn Schrift idealtypisch Darstellung im Unähnlichen meint, so das Bild Darstellung im Ähnlichen».

<sup>14</sup> According to A. Brunner, no ontological proposition at all would be thinkable without the usage of analogies. «The similarity or analogy is a fundamental feature of all being entities or of being itself. It is already an

necessary one, because it lies in the essence of our finite existence to self-reflectively stay eternalized and everlasting, i.e. to overcome its finiteness through the ontological mode of the image, wherein eternity can be somehow “captured” and everpresent. If we connect this interpretation of the second passage with the first passage and condense it to a concise formulation, we can conclude that

(d) Ontography models the non-given in an intuitive [*anschaulich*], analogous form and underlies all images as an ontologically necessary condition.

The fifth and final characterization of the concept of ontography can be composed of the thoughts of the two different object-oriented ontologists Graham Harman and Ian Bogost who, unlike the philosophers mentioned so far, used ontography as a more or less systematically developed *terminus technicus* of their respective theories. At this point, however, it will be sufficient to regard their quite similar characterizations of this concept without their slightly different intra-theoretical systematizations of it. There are two texts of Harman where useful characterizations of ontography are given. The first one is a blog entry from 14th July 2009. He probably mentions the term ontography there for the first time with the intention to include it in his ontological work, albeit initially «in a half-joking spirit» (HARMAN 2009). Although in this blog entry, Harman is still a bit vague about his personal definition of and philosophical plans with this term, he seems to be intuitively convinced that this could be an appropriate concept for his ontological notion. «And isn't “ontography” a pretty good name for what I'm doing? Geographers who make maps have a limited number of basic personae to deal with: rivers, woods, highways, mountains, and the occasional giant television towers. By analogy, “ontography” would deal with a limited number of dynamics that can occur between all different sorts of objects» (ibid.). With the help of two analogies of proportion, this statement can be interpreted instructively. First: that which geographical maps are for

analogical claim to call being entities “being entities”. Whoever actually, and not only by words, denies analogy, could not talk anymore at all» (BRUNNER 1950: 448). Original: «Die Ähnlichkeit oder Analogie ist ein Grundzug aller Seienden oder des Seins. Daß wir die verschiedensten Seiende Seiende nennen können, schon das ist eine Behauptung der Analogie. Wer sie tatsächlich, und nicht nur in Worten, leugnen wollte, könnte nicht mehr reden».

geographers, ontological maps are for ontographers. Second: that which elemental, topographical signs are on geographical maps, dynamic, general relations of objects are on ontographical maps. This double analogy of proportion seems to be affirmed by the second characterization of ontography, which can be found in Harman's book *The Quadruple Object* (2010), where he states, «Rather than geography dealing with stock natural characters such as forests and lakes, ontography maps the basic landmarks and fault lines in the universe of objects» (HARMAN 2011: 125). In both characterizations, however, the special ontological commitment of Harman resonates, namely the concentration on objects, free of subjective or even subjectivist and anthropocentric claims on their mode of being or existence. If we permit ourselves to parenthesize this special commitment for the moment, then we will get a characterization of ontography as a kind of map of being with "topographical" emphases.

Although in his book *Alien Phenomenology, Or What It's Like to be a Thing* (2012) Ian Bogost systematizes the term ontography explicitly different from Harman, both thinker's general conception of ontography appears to be connatural. This connaturality consists in the ontological orientation towards objects as well as in the conception of ontography as a kind of map of being, which becomes very clear in the following passage in *Alien Phenomenology*: «From the perspective of metaphysics, ontography involves the revelation of object relationships without necessarily offering clarification or description of any kind. Like a medieval bestiary, ontography can take the form of a compendium, a record of things juxtaposed to demonstrate their overlap and imply interaction through collocation. [...] Ontography is an aesthetic set theory, in which a particular configuration is celebrated merely on the basis of its existence» (BOGOST 2012: 38). Here again, we learn that ontography can be understood as a kind of cartography of the most basic or important modules of reality and their relations (in this case with other objects), with a special focus on their aesthetic design and without the necessity of an all-explaining legend or textual comment. Ontography, thus understood, seems to be the immediate ascertainment of the essential aspects of the presented (domain of) reality. The implied shivering in the face of the mentioned medieval bestiaries could be analogously interpreted as the affective

«celebration» in the face of the ontographically presented structures of reality. As in the previous characterizations of ontography we have already included its cartographic traits, the following fifth characterization shall highlight this affective immediacy of ontography, with which Harman would certainly agree. He himself actually points out that his ontographical model has to entail such an affective power: «If not compelling, then it will resemble just another amateur or crackpot system of the world» (HARMAN 2011: 124). Moreover, according to Bogost, one of the main qualities of ontography consists in its peculiarity that makes that «[a]n anonymous, unseen situation of things is presented in a way that effectively draws our attention to its configurative nature» (BOGOST, 2012: 52). The commitment to this demand for attention of an ontographically presented situation is nothing less than «the reentry into a singular existential domain, one no longer broken down into crass hemispheres of nature and culture» (ibid.: 38). With a bit of interpretative freedom and by leaving away the cartographical and genuinely object-oriented aspects, we can conclude with the following summary of Harman's and Bogost's characterizations of ontography:

(e) Ontography is the creation of an affective immediacy by means of the evidence of the presented basic elements and configurations of reality.

## II. *Compilation of a Definition*

The second to last question at the end of the first paragraph was: how can ontography be possibly defined? Out of different references and characterizations of this concept, which were mainly found in the rather recent history of philosophy, we have just distilled five concise ideas. However, before I would like to suggest a final definition composed of these ideas, it would be appropriate to make the reader aware of a certain inconsistency this listing of ontography's different characterizations results in. It is the relation between ontology and ontography that is at stake here. Both concepts somehow target at the acquisition and description of the

fundamental structures of being or reality<sup>15</sup>. But how do ontology and ontography relate to each other? Is ontology the lingual and logical side of the coin, whereas ontography is the visual and intuitive? If we determine this relationship in such a manner, idea (c) would probably agree, while (a) in contrast characterized ontography itself as a “language of primal signs” and thus as a language. Are ontology and ontography supposed to be one and the same discipline just with different emphases or do they have to be classified as two different things, two necessary or sufficient components of one complementarity? It seems that Schlanger and Sloterdijk would argue for the latter view, while Krause and Harman/Bogost would argue for the former. Is ontography something that comes after ontology, so to speak a subsequent visual generalization and supplementation of ontological conceptualizations and perceptions, like Schlanger suggests and Harman/Bogost imply? Or does ontography antedate ontology, as Kojève states considering the historical development of philosophy and Krause carves out by means of the idea of an order of being with primal elements? Or is there a temporal and epistemic simultaneity, a sort of interdependency between the two concepts, as Sloterdijk vaguely accounts for?

Regretfully we have to assert that all five given characterizations of ontography are in urgent need of explanation and differentiation. Many questions remain open, amongst others the question concerning an unambiguous determination of the relation between ontology and ontography. This circumstance could be problematic for a definition compiled out of these characterizations if and only if this definition is supposed to provide an unambiguous determination of the relation in question. Such a definition, however, would presuppose that certain aspects of the discussed designations have to be disregarded, while others have to be preferred. This I would have to justify again, which is, due to the scarcity of the collected data, only doable by arbitrary personal preferences. However, there

<sup>15</sup> As ontology is traditionally identical with general metaphysics (cfr. VOLLRATH 1962), I agree with Theodore Sider: «Metaphysics, at bottom, is about the fundamental structures of reality. Not about what's necessarily true. Not about what properties are essential. Not about conceptual analysis. Not about what there is. Structure» (SIDER 2011: 1).

is another possibility to deal with this ambiguity in the relation of ontology and ontography: to avoid any unnecessary ambiguities and personal preferences in the definition, we leave this point on the table for now and place the elaboration of this desideratum on a semantic level<sup>16</sup> higher than the definition itself. There are only two central ideas that should be captured in the definition and that probably are compatible with all five characterizations. First: the acquisition and description of the fundamental structures of reality can be both of a conceptual (ontology) and non-conceptual (ontography) nature, whereby both parts are relatable to language in the broadest sense, i.e. they are *somehow* communicable. Baumgarten's classic determination of ontology as the "science of the most general predicates of being"<sup>17</sup> would therefore apply to ontography as well. Second: in ontology, the description of the most general structures of being or reality is based on the latter's mediate acquisition (mainly via proofs, conclusions, elaborate speculations, logical laws, syntactic and symbolic formalizations, semantic truth determinations), while ontography's acquisition is rather immediate: direct vision and pointing out, affective influence, stimulation of the imagination, active overcoming of dualisms, being-in instead of taking distance, realized and experienced wholeness instead of cognitive alienation, intuition instead of discursivity, simple accessibility instead of complication, visual presentation or manifestation instead of conceptual representation of the subject matter<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> My understanding of "semantic levels" is based on H. Stachowiak's classic book *Allgemeine Modelltheorie* (1973), where he develops a "meta-model" with which «the world is experienced by a single person in the intellectual dimension of his or her informational habitus» (STACHOWIAK 1973: 199).

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. §4 of his *Metaphysica*: «ONTOLOGIA (ontosophia, metaphysica, metaphysica universalis, architectonica, philosophia prima) est scientia praedicatorum entis generaliorum» (BAUMGARTEN 1757: 2).

<sup>18</sup> If Jean-Luc Marion is right in claiming that metaphysics is a science of proving whereas phenomenology is a theoretical activity of mere "showing", ontography could be understood as something in between metaphysics (as traditionally including ontology) and phenomenology – although for Marion, there seems to be an unbridgeable gap between metaphysics and phenomenology. «In all science – therefore in metaphysics – it is a question of proving. To prove consists in grounding appearances in order to know with certainty, leading them back to the ground in order to lead them to certainty.

Perhaps one could say, based on Kant, that ontography strives for the ideal of an *intellectus archetypus*, which is able to experience and “see” the nature of reality at one glance, while ontology entails the application and perfection of our *intellectus ectypus* in order to conceptualize its subject matter deliberately and discursively<sup>19</sup>. With characteristics like these, I do not want to imply any precedence or causal nexus between ontology and ontography. I do suggest, however, that by virtue of a simplification of the further handling of the two concepts, we could introduce a distinction between ontology in the narrower sense, as a philosophical method that bears on language, logos and discursivity, and ontology in the broader sense, i.e. as the intention, the project, or the philosophical discipline to carve out the fundamental structures of reality and existence. Regarding ontology in the narrower sense, ontography would be an alternative method, while ontology in the broader sense would include both ontography and ontology in the narrower sense. I will try to maintain this differentiation in the following and will eventually pick it up explicitly.

Now it is time to formulate a definition of ontography with the help of the five summarized ideas we have found. Let us first classify and partition these ideas by arranging them in a table with four sections that apply to almost all of them by some means or other. The sections are: form, matter, activity, and result. The partitioning table can look as follows:

But in phenomenology – that is to say, at least in what it intends, in the attempt to think in a nonmetaphysical mode – it is a question of showing. To show implies letting appearances appear in such a way that they accomplish their own apparition, so as to be received exactly as they give themselves» (MARION 2007: 7).

<sup>19</sup> Cfr. (KANT 2000: 274ff.).

Idea	Form	Matter	Activity	Result
(a)	optical	cognition and cognizable reality	to mirror	primal language
(b)	cartographic	the factual-ontological given	to shape	modal wholes
(c)	form of thinking	–	to visualize, to imagine	–
(d)	intuitive, analogous	the non-given	to model	images
(e)	evidence	basic elements and configurations of reality	to present	affective immediacy

If we summarize the single sections by superordinating the general classifications to the more specific ones and by merging concordant classifications, we will obtain the following four general *elements of ontography*:

*Form*: intuitive-analogous form of thinking (“optical” and “intuitive” have been merged; “cartographic” has been included in the more general “intuitive”; “evidence” has been partly included in “intuitive” and partly in “immediacy” in the result-section);

*Matter*: given and non-given basic elements and configurations of reality (as the act of cognition is itself part of reality, it can be included in this aggregated element, but should always be regarded as presupposed);

*Activity*: shaping modelling (“to visualize” has been partly included in “to model”, partly in “intuitive” in the form-section; “to mirror” has been tolerantly merged with “to model”; “to imagine” and “to present” have been merged with “to model” and “to shape”);

*Result*: holistic immediacy (“primal language” is included both in “to model” and “basic elements and configurations of reality”; “image” is included in “intuitive”).

Out of these four definitory elements, a definition of ontography can be formulated:

*Ontography is the shaping modelling of given and non-given basic elements and configurations of reality in an intuitive-analogous form of thinking in order to achieve holistic immediacy.*



With this definition in hand it will be significantly easier, if not even fully feasible, to analyse existing philosophical theories according to their ontographical aspects, whereby from now on, “ontographical” will refer to the just posed definition.

### III. *Identification in H. Rombach's Strukturontologie*

Heinrich Rombach (1923-2004) was a German professor of philosophy at University of Würzburg<sup>20</sup>. One can identify the form-element of our definition of ontography, i.e. the “intuitive-analogous form of thinking”, with what Rombach calls *Struktur*. According to Rombach, three main forms of thinking can be found in the history of western philosophy: substance-thinking in antiquity and the middle ages, system-thinking in late nominalism and modern philosophy, and structure-thinking that basically designates parts of contemporary philosophy, but can be traced back to certain exceptional thinkers such as B. Pascal, N. of Cusa, Meister Eckhart, and the early R. Descartes. All three forms of thinking have to be understood as entailing their own ontologies with inherent specifications respectively, whereby there neither is an unbridgeable gap between one of these ontologies and another, nor is there a sudden historical jump between them. Substance-thinking, system-thinking, and structure-thinking can overlap and influence each other. But while substance-thinking is supposed to be derived from neolithic, settled agriculture<sup>21</sup> and emphasizes the staying, the

<sup>20</sup> Rombach obtained his PhD (ROMBACH 1952) in Freiburg im Breisgau under the supervision of M. Heidegger and E. Fink. He published a variety of books, articles, and encyclopaedia entries in the fields of phenomenology (ROMBACH 1980), ontology (ROMBACH 1988), anthropology (ROMBACH 1987), history of philosophy (ROMBACH 2010), pedagogic (ROMBACH 1979), the philosophy of images (ROMBACH 1977), intercultural philosophy (ROMBACH 1981) and what he called “hermeticism” as opposed to hermeneutics (ROMBACH 1983).

<sup>21</sup> «The basic thought of substance is derived from the basic experience of the grain, made in the transition from the pre-historical horde culture to the neolithic farmer culture. In anthropology, this is called the neolithic revolution. [...] The radical and surprising aspect of this revolution is the recognition of the grain as the staying base stock, which unfolded itself anew in the plant (was) [sic] and in doing so assumed other and new shapes, but also found back again to its basic figure. By this, the ripe result of the growth process

present, the immobile, both system- and structure-thinking situate the single, formerly substantive entity in a broader network of other functionally connected entities. In system-thinking, which is derived both from the Copernican and Galilean sky with its calculable and systematizable constellation of stars (cfr. ROMBACH 1987: 39) and from the invention of machines and clockworks, every entity in this network loses its individuality and singularity<sup>22</sup> and can be fully described and analyzed by mathematical methods (as *mathesis universalis* in the Cartesian sense). But whereas in system-thinking there is an absolute difference between the whole and its parts, structure-thinking integrates the whole into its parts and vice versa as being not identical, but “idemic” in a dynamic, open and unpredictable fashion. Structures-thinking is derived from the experience of nature as a creative, not merely created force, and from the experience of artworks (ROMBACH 1994: 144) as inherently

could be used as grain for new sowing. [...] From this basic experience, the Greek drew the concept of the essence (*ousia* or *eidos*), whereby they pointed at the still unshaped interior that maintains itself as the same across all levels» (ROMBACH 2003: 140). Original: «Der Grundgedanke der Substanz stammt aus der Grunderfahrung des Kornes, wie sie beim Übergang der vorgeschichtlichen Hordenkultur zur jungsteinzeitlichen Bauernkultur gemacht wurde. Man spricht in der Anthropologie hier von der neolithischen Revolution. [...] Das Grundlegende und Erstaunliche dieser Revolution bestand darin, daß man das Korn als den bleibenden Grundbestand erkannte, der sich in der Pflanze (war) [sic] neu entfaltete und dabei andere und neue Formen annahm, aber doch wieder zu seiner Grundgestalt zurückfand, so daß das reife Ergebnis des Wachstumsprozesses als Korn zur neuen Aussaat verwendet werden konnte. [...] Aus dieser Grunderfahrung zogen die Griechen den Begriff des Wesens (*ousia* oder *eidos*), womit sie das selbst noch gestaltlose Innerste meinten, das sich über alle Stufen hinweg als Dasselbe erhält».

<sup>22</sup> «The system thought is universally valid and implies that everything is connected in a relational way and determined through this connection. That which happens to a being entity is not anymore the result of its essential core, its interior, its substance, but of its “function” that it has in terms of another entity. The determining is not the singular anymore, but the connection, the base does not lie in the individual, but outside of it» (ROMBACH 1977: 45). Original: «Der Systemgedanke gilt universal und besagt, daß alles in relationaler Weise zusammenhängt und allein durch diesen Zusammenhang bestimmt wird. Das, was sich mit einem Seienden tut, ergibt sich nicht mehr aus seinem Wesenskern, aus seinem Innern, aus seiner Substanz, sondern aus der “Funktion”, die es im Hinblick auf anderes hat. Das Bestimmende ist nicht mehr das Einzelne, sondern der Zusammenhang, der Grund liegt nicht im Individuum, sondern außerhalb seiner».

meaningful wholes with individual, interconnected moments in which the whole is ceaselessly and dynamically mirrored.

Rombach's elaboration of these three forms of thinking is very ambitious and detailed, both in a systematic and in a historical sense. We already saw that I took his structure-thinking as the form-element of the definition. This information may be sufficient to take a closer look at the way Rombach transforms this form of thinking into visual models, to not only express and illustrate, but mainly to actively create visually shaped manifestations of his form of thinking reality. In the context of this identification of the activity-element of ontography, one could refer to H. Leisegang's characterization of "models of thinking": «A *model of thinking* should be understood as a presentation of conceptual relations and other figures of thinking by a drawing that enables to work with the concrete model instead of abstract concepts and relations»<sup>23</sup> (LEISEGANG 1951: 53). Already a superficial examination of Rombach's main ontological work, his phenomenological *Strukturontologie*, reveals a rich collection of self-made and imported drawings and images that all serve the purpose of developing and concretizing the main aspects of structure-thinking. Not only is Rombach's so-called *Künstlerontologie* (i.e. ontology of/for artists, cfr. ROMBACH 1988: 298) derived from the experience of artworks, it also is almost impossible to obtain an adequate notion of Rombach's thinking and ontological commitment without a certain visual imagination and only on the basis of the conceptual, highly abstract, and interconnected structural categories he develops. Rombach is aware of this difficulty, however, and justifies his extensive and pragmatic usage of graphical models accordingly.

General formulations miss our subject, single descriptions do not highlight the basics. So only the method of using "models" remains: single descriptions solely provided for the sake of general principles. If it is a matter of "models" [...], it is a matter of general descriptions of single cases. They can be wrong in detail, if only they mark the principle distinctively [*einzelheitlich*] enough. Therefore, we will use "models" as

<sup>23</sup> «Unter einem *Denkmodell* soll die Darstellung von Begriffszusammenhängen und anderen Denkgebilden durch eine Zeichnung verstanden werden, die es erlaubt, statt mit den abstrakten Begriffen und Relationen mit dem konkreten Modell zu arbeiten».

objects of demonstration. They are accentuated typographically to make clear that in these cases, other demands are valid: not the ones of technical accuracy, but the ones of ontological-typological conciseness. We will help ourselves with models, when the profile of a certain circumstance can only become apparent in the vanishing point of different perspectives. Models thus appear in the plural. They provide indications, not knowledge. They guide and are not the aim themselves. Therefore the understanding of structures has to jump from model to model in order to get the full picture of the basic circumstance in question<sup>24</sup> (ibid.: 19).

In the following, I would like to introduce a small selection of Rombach's visual models, firstly to exemplify some aspects of his own form of ontographical thinking, secondly to show how the activity-element of ontography can be identified in Rombach's philosophy, and thirdly to suggest a helpful distinction that is not made by Rombach himself. I think that the visual models Rombach uses consist of two different types. The first type of visual models pragmatically illustrates a certain notion or ontological category and is highly heuristic and symbolic, a contingent diegesis that serves the purpose of exemplification. Its design could be depicted otherwise as well, if only it would fulfil the same function of bringing an idea into light. The second type, however, almost mimetically and immediately presents an ontological notion such that there is a necessary resemblance between idea and model that directly mirrors the

<sup>24</sup> «Allgemeine Formulierungen verfehlen unseren Gegenstand, einzelne Beschreibungen heben das Grundsätzliche nicht hervor. So bleibt hier nur der Weg über "Modelle", Einzelbeschreibungen, die nur um genereller Gesetzmäßigkeiten willen gegeben werden. Handelt es sich um "Modelle" [...], so handelt es sich um allgemeine Einzelbeschreibungen. Sie können im einzelnen falsch sein, wenn sie nur das Allgemeine scharf (einzelheitlich) genug markieren. Wir werden also "Modelle" als Demonstrationsobjekte benutzen. Sie sind typographisch abgesetzt, um damit zum Ausdruck zu bringen, daß hier andere Anforderungen gelten: nicht die der fachspezifischen Richtigkeit, sondern die der ontologisch-typologischen Prägnanz. Mit Modellen helfen wir uns überall dort, wo eine Verfassung nur im Fluchtpunkt verschiedener Perspektiven ihrer Selbstdarstellung erscheint. Modelle tauchen daher in der Mehrzahl auf. Sie geben Anhaltspunkte, nicht Wissen. Sie leiten an, sind nicht selbst Ziel. Strukturtypisches Verstehen muß darum von Modell zu Modell springen, um aus deren Auswechselbarkeit auf die Grundverfassung zu schließen».

resemblance between the idea and the real ontological state of affairs the idea is about. I hypothesize that only the second type of the Rombachian models can lead to the result-element of the definition of ontography, namely the holistic immediacy, by not only mediating the idea into the mind-set of the perceiver, but by additionally demonstrating “real” traits of the ontological subject matter in order to make the reader not only apprehend the *theory* in question, but the ontological *reality* itself. For lack of a better term, let us call the first type “non-ontographical *Struktur*-models” and the second type “ontographical *Struktur*-models”.

### III.1. Two non-ontographical *Struktur*-models

#### III.1.1. Korrektur (Correction)

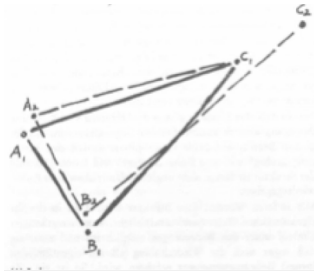


Image 1 (Rombach 1988: 81)

All single moments of a Rombachian *Struktur* perform a constant and polydirectional process of correction, whose incidence and consistency enables the *Struktur* as a whole to elevate itself and whose weakening can lead to its gradual perfection, “rolling in”, or even sudden passing. This process of mutual correction of the moments of a dynamic *Struktur* can be characterized as a constant “re-proportionalization” of the moments’ proportions: a continuing and intensifying equivalence of a *Struktur*’s internal moments. «A certain proportion allows an anticipation of certain further proportions; the fulfilment of these new proportions, however, retroactively changes the initial proportion, which, because of its

changed value, creates new proportional expectations»<sup>25</sup> (ibid.: 81). According to Rombach, this process can also be called “life”. «The *Struktur* passes through itself without ever repeating itself. Its immeasurableness and fathomlessness we sight out with the concept “life”, which is not understood here as the concept of a certain domain, but as an ontological category»<sup>26</sup> (ibid.).

In order to illustrate this dynamical and self-correcting life of a *Struktur*, Rombach draws the following model that he, however, does not comment further. Presumably, the triangle  $\bar{A}_1\bar{B}_1\bar{C}_1$  symbolizes the initial proportion of three *Struktur*-moments, the segment  $\bar{C}_1\bar{A}_2$  the «anticipation of certain further proportions», the indicated triangle  $\bar{A}_2\bar{B}_2\bar{C}_1$  a «certain further proportion», whose «fulfilment» retroactively corrects the initial triangle  $\bar{A}_1\bar{B}_1\bar{C}_1$ . The segment  $\bar{B}_2\bar{C}_2$  represents another anticipation, another «proportional expectation». At this juncture, Rombach uses a model that visually underlines and illustrates what he verbally said and that can be reasonably useful for this purpose. But I suggest to classify this model as being non-ontographical by nature, because it does not directly express the appearance of an ontological structure itself, *de re*, but that adumbrates the described state of affairs geometrically and *de dicto*, whereby the concrete design of the drawing is contingent and it is valuable as long as its function is fulfilled. One could have achieved, for example, the same heuristic aim by using a quadrangle with four *Struktur*-moments, which proves that idea and model are not congruent and do not stimulate a certain ontological experience of holistic immediacy.

<sup>25</sup> «Eine bestimmte Proportion läßt einen Vorgriff auf bestimmte weitere Proportionen zu; die Erfüllung dieser neuen Proportionen verändert jedoch rückwirkend die Ausgangsproportion, die aus ihrem veränderten Wert heraus wiederum neue Proportionalitätserwartungen stiftet».

<sup>26</sup> «Die Struktur läuft in sich durch und wiederholt sich dennoch nie. Ihre Grenzenlosigkeit und Unauslotbarkeit zielen wir mit dem Begriff “Leben” an, der hier nicht als Bereichsbegriff, sondern als ontologische Kategorie gemeint ist».

III.1.2. *Werden (Becoming)*

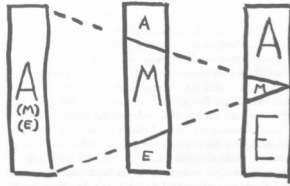


Image 2 (Rombach 1988: 263).

The second *Struktur*-model is also derived from Rombach's *Strukturontologie* and illustrates the *Struktur*-ontological category *Durchbruch* (breakthrough). This category indicates that every point in time of a becoming structure is a moment that is constantly influenced by every earlier and later point in time. Nothing is completed in the beginning (A, for *Anfang*), merely present in the middle (M, for *Mitte*), and indeterminable in the end (E, for *Ende*). In every period of a structure, beginning, middle, and end are directly given and mutually influenced, but always in a temporally different meaning and intensity, dependent on a structure's internal temporality, as the following quote explains. «The change does not take place in a stable horizon of time as such. Time as such – this does not exist. “Over time” time itself also changes. There is no “as such”. In an average development, one can roughly distinguish the phases “beginning”, “middle”, and “end”. [...] “Development” does not mean, however, going through a period of time, but the transformation of the time horizon, whereby “going through”, “time”, and “period” have a different meaning respectively»<sup>27</sup> (ibid.: 263). The graphical model illustrates the ontological coexistence of all three phases of time as well as a possible mutual influence over

<sup>27</sup> «Die Veränderung erfolgt nicht in einem gleichbleibenden Horizont von Zeit überhaupt. Zeit überhaupt - das gibt es nicht. “Mit der Zeit” verändert sich auch die Zeit. Es gibt hier nichts “überhaupt”. In einer durchschnittlichen Entwicklung lassen sich in größter Unterscheidung die Phasen “Anfang”“, “Mitte” und “Ende” unterscheiden. [...] “Entwicklung” ist aber struktural nicht das Durchlaufen einer Zeitstrecke, sondern die Verwandlung des Zeithorizonts, wodurch “Durchlaufen”, “Zeit” und “Strecke” jeweils etwas anderes bedeuten».

time. Again, I would suggest classifying this model as a non-ontographical, “de dicto” *Struktur*-model that indeed clarifies and exemplifies one of Rombach’s ontological notions of becoming, but is not a direct “portrait” of this ontological process.

### III.2. Two ontographical *Struktur*-models

#### III.2.1. *Spirale* (Spiral)

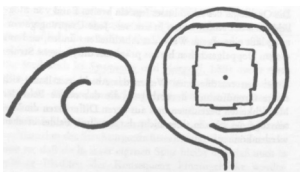


Image 3 (Rombach 1988: 272).

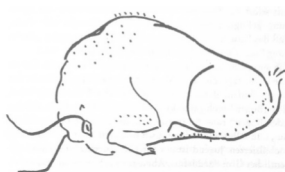


Image 4 (Rombach 1988: 273).

A real “model of thinking” in the sense of the above quoted H. Leisegang in the form of the Rombachian *Struktur*-thinking would be the spiral. Only a spiral or helical depiction can adequately express the self-accomplishment as a “rolling-in” of a *Struktur*, which is why the visual spiral has not only been used for the purpose of Rombach’s *Strukturontologie*, but is indeed, according to Rombach, a universal, human expression of an ontological experience.

The spiral is the movement pattern of a fundamental experience of human existence through which the latter obscurely and indeterminably feels connected with all living. Therefore, the spiral appears in multiple shapes as self-interpretation, it is surrounded by a court of symbolism. One of its most elaborated forms is the *labyrinth*, another the *mandala*, which is a symbol of meditation in all cultures<sup>28</sup> (ibid.: 273).

As the basic pattern of a spiral immediately expresses the gradual completion of an ontological *Struktur* and as the spiral is conserved in depictions of labyrinths and mandalas, those “elaborated forms” can lead to the result-element of our definition of ontography, i.e. a

<sup>28</sup> «Die Spirale ist Bewegungsbild einer Grunderfahrung des Daseins, in der sich dieses, dunkel und unbestimmt, mit allem Lebendigen verbunden weiß. Sie tritt darum in vielfacher Gestalt als Selbstinterpretation auf, hat einen Hof von Symbolik um sich. Eine ihrer ausgeprägtesten Formen ist das *Labyrinth*, eine andere das *Mandala*, ein Meditationssymbol in allen Kulturen».



holistic and immediate experience of reality as such. This proves to be the case in the successful practice of meditation with the help of a helical mandala or in the complete absorption during the pattern discovery of a labyrinth and generally becomes noticeable in basic experiences of (anti-)climaxes. «A spiral is a curve that enhances itself, a curve of enhancement. All processes of life proceed in this manner – for better or worse: *circulus vitiosus* or – why less known? – *circulus probatus*»<sup>29</sup> (ibid.: 274). To make this ontological category appear, Rombach provides three drawings. The first one (image 3, left) shows the pure form of a spiral, while the second one (image 3, right), originally derived from a healing ritual of the Indian Navaho tribe (ibid.: 272), presents a twofold implementation of both a labyrinth and a mandala. The third drawing (image 4) loosely depicts the painting of a buffalo, discovered in the cave of Altamira (Spain)<sup>30</sup>. Here, the ontological or ontographical form of the spiral is visualized as an immediate, holistic experience of reality in the figure of a buffalo and instanced by Rombach as a presentation of one aspect of his “*Struktur-ontographical*” ontology.

### III.2.2 *Mäander (Meander)*

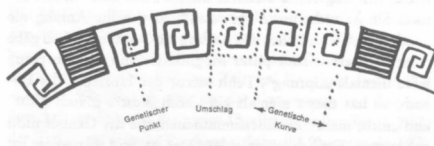


Image 5 (Rombach 1988: 282).

<sup>29</sup> «Spirale ist sich steigernde Kurve, Kurve der Steigerung. Alle Lebensvollzüge verlaufen so – zum Guten oder zum Schlechten: *Circulus vitiosus* oder – warum eigentlich weniger bekannt – *Circulus probatus*».

<sup>30</sup> Rombach comments this image as follows: «Freely according to cave drawing (Altamira, lying buffalo). Rolling-in. Repetition of the basic experience in the image of the eye, multiple genetic obtaining as experience of the origin of force. Sleep as psychic image of rolling-in in the sense of going back to the genetic point» (ibid.: 273). Original: «Frei nach Höhlenzeichnung (Altamira, liegender Büffel). Einrollung. Wiederholung der Grunderfahrung im Bild des Auges, mehrfache genetische Einholung als Erfahrung des Ursprungs von Kraft. Schlaf als psychisches Bild von Einrollung im Sinne von Rückgang auf den genetischen Punkt».

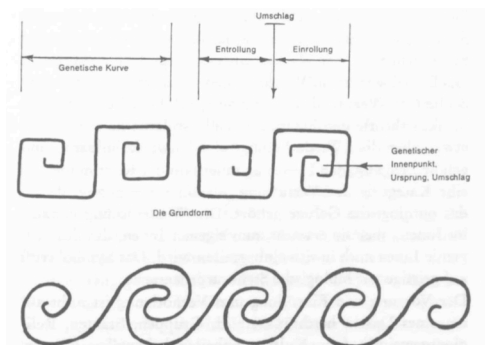


Image 6 (Rombach 1988: 283).

The spiral is the ontographical figure of the *Struktur*-ontological category “rolling-in”. However, to roll in is not the only genetic moment of a *Struktur*. The *Struktur*-typical sequence of self-repetition as a development according to its own internal temporality also entails the categories of “rolling-out” and the absolute zero-point, into which the rolling-in rolls in and out of which the rolling-out rolls out. If these three moments or categories are taken into consideration altogether, the basic form of the spiral transforms into the meander. The form of the meander is mainly derived from the pre-conceptual perception of some river beds, but has also been ethnographically displayed and therefore experienced as the sequence of ancestry and cultural elevation (ROMBACH 1977a: 83).

It [the meander, M.S.] originates out of the spiral, if the latter is shaped as turning in and then as turning out; in the zero – point the movement jumps round. All life has this manner of movement. It unfolds itself, rolls out – and rolls in again. In the bosom of this life movement new life is formed, which again rolls out and in – and so forth. Rise and demise – therein the same maintains itself<sup>31</sup> (ibid.: 82).

<sup>31</sup> «Er [der Mäander, M.S.] entsteht aus der Spirale, wenn diese zunächst eindrehend, dann ausdrehend gestaltet wird; im Innenpunkt springt die

Image 5 clearly displays the transformation of the spiral model into the meander model, which image 6 firstly explains (upper row) and then depicts according to the pattern of an antique bowl<sup>32</sup>. Apart from Greek and Roman culture, this pattern can also be found in Peruvian textures. It is a culturally and socially universal way of expression and experiencing a certain immediate, holistic connection with some of reality's ontological principles.

Therefore, the meander is the ornament that can be found in all higher cultures, because everywhere humans have experienced that the genetic curve is the basic figure of life and that a life, especially the social life, is the more fulfilled, the purer the genetic curve can be drawn in its meandering form<sup>33</sup> (ROMBACH 1980: 183).

#### IV. *Last words about first glimpses*

To conclude, let us pick up again our analogy from the beginning of this paper. Arguing in favour of ontography, be it via the introduction of historical sources of this concept (section 1), be it by preliminarily defining this notion (section 2), be it via an "ontographical" interpretation of ontologies that depict graphical elements (section 3), is like the development and promotion of a user interface with which (a) the epistemic interaction between the experiencing thinker

Bewegung um. Alles Leben hat diese Bewegungsweise. Es entfaltet sich, rollt sich aus – und rollt sich wieder ein. Im Schoße dieser Lebensbewegung bildet sich das neue Leben, das sich wiederum ausrollt und einrollt – und so weiter. Aufgang und Untergang – darin erhält sich das Gleiche».

<sup>32</sup> Rombach comments this image as follows: «Bowl of the Codrus painter, around 430-420 B.C., meander edge, London. Rolling-out and rolling-in as principle of movement; jumping round in the zero-point. Alteration in the genetic curve. The rolling-out "repeats" the rolling-in, the rolling-in "repeats" the rolling-out» (ROMBACH 1988: 282). Original: «Schale des Kodros-Malers, um 430-420 v.Chr., Mäanderumrandung, London. Ausrollung und Einrollung als Bewegungsprinzip; Umsprung im Innenpunkt. Umschlag in der genetischen Kurve. Die Ausrollung "wiederholt" die Einrollung, die Einrollung "wiederholt" die Ausrollung». – The visual meander pattern is frequently used by Rombach, cfr. also (ROMBACH 1991: 105), (ROMBACH 1994: 148, 160), (ROMBACH 1980: 183f.).

<sup>33</sup> «Darum ist der Mäander das Ornament, das sich in allen höheren Kulturen findet, denn überall hat der Mensch erfahren, daß der genetische Bogen die Grundfigur des Lebens ist und daß ein Leben, gerade das soziale Leben, umso erfüllter ist, je reiner der genetische Bogen in seiner mäandrischen Form gezogen werden kann».

and the experienced reality can be justified and (b) images of reality's basic categories can be provided such that the latter become intuitive and evident even on a pre-conceptual and not exclusively linguistic level. Thereby the visual enrichment of ontology can signify much more than just contingent exemplifications of an idea or fancy decorations of the theory in question. The usage of ontographical models is much less arbitrary, but all the more necessary if we assume with cognitive philosopher M. Johnson that every person's, thus also every philosopher's embodied state of being in the world shapes the way we think, talk, and symbolize the world in response via certain sets of «image schemata», i.e. basic visualizable patterns underlying all conceptual, abstract reasoning (JOHNSON 2005: 24; 2007: 141). Even if we develop ontological theories about reality as a whole, about reality's basic structures and categories, about existence and being, we are primarily bound to our embodied experience of reality and to the spatial conditions of reality's "hardware" environment. By using (onto-)graphical models to adequately express certain basic notions of reality, we would not only do justice to the image schemata created by our embodied interaction with reality, but we could also benefit from the singular «cargo» (MAHR, 2008) every visual model transports by providing immediate glimpses of the ontological subject matter in question.

Long before Heinrich Rombach, it was N. of Cusa who, in the first book of *De docta ignorantia* (cfr. KUES 2002: 1-113), argued that the best way to understand the nature of Being, God or the Absolute, is to begin with simple geometrical patterns whose analogical evidence and gradual development can lead us to the essence of the invisible, but always experientiable fundamentals of reality. In the spirit of this kind of reasoning via the depiction and perception of visual models, by being aware of the historical background of ontography and simultaneously motivated to define and apply this concept, we could re-evaluate and classify current efforts to include graphical elements into an ontological theory in an unprecedented way. Whether it be elaborated coordinate systems (SOHST 2009: 326), computer generated graphics (WILSON 2008: 307), raster graphics (MEIXNER 2010: 12), hierarchical pyramids (GUARINO 2014: 198), figurative drawings (SMITH 2004: 9, 133), or just simple doodles (VAN INWAGEN 2009: 255) – several contemporary philosophers working in the field of ontology are apparently experimenting with the possibilities of

displaying an idea about being itself or a basic event, law, or order of it. Although or even because the present paper can only provide first glimpses, I think that with an ongoing and open elucidation of the concept of ontography, we can ever better explore the interfaces we share with reality itself for the sake of ontological inquiries. For an accurate emulation of reality's basic qualities into communicable images and patterns of any kind, we should update, amongst other things, our capacity of visual thinking such that a smooth and embodied workflow in accordance with the structures of being is guaranteed.

ABSTRACT. – Some philosophers enrich their ontological theories with graphical elements. Others declare “ontography” as coequal or superior to ontology to justify and disclose methodical ways with which being can be modelled or experienced. This article will provide a survey of the idea of ontography. Out of historical instances, a definition will be developed and its applicability be demonstrated by means of an identification of H. Rombach's *Strukturontologie* as being “ontographical” according to parts of the definition. The conclusion of this article will suggest further developments for ontography.

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