Phenomenology of the Spheres: Manchester, Mahnke, and Conrad-Martius
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Figuring Phenomenological Cosmologies

Phenomenological cosmology in a strict sense has only been developed by a handful of phenomenologists, and we might divide them into two kinds, according to their derivation: Leibnizian and Ancient. As an example of the former, in recent decades, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, continuing the monadological phenomenology of transcendental intersubjectivity found in Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations*, has focused her energies on a phenomenological cosmology concerned with concrete individualization and universal constitution, guided by the hypothesis of a world order within a superior universal order (1966, 90) as "geo-cosmic transcendental positioning" (2009, xxviii). In this Leibnizian undertaking, Tymieniecka projects her structural analysis into the inner-workings of life and out to the cosmos by a synthesizing interpretation of Leibniz' monadological doctrine. In this she follows closely Dietrich Mahnke's 1925 *Leibnizens' Synthese von Universal-Mathematik und Individualmetaphysik* (1964, 94-99). A generation before Tymieniecka, Hedwig Conrad-Martius developed a phenomenological cosmology directly from ancient sources, specifically from the notions of Plato's World-Soul and Aristotle's World-Periphery, making a phenomenological interpretation of the ancestor of the modern conception of the cosmos, the *kosmos noetos*. "For Conrad-Martius," explains James Hart, "the *kosmos noetos* is the always already intended horizon of meaning," (1972, 97). Like Plotinus, whose institution of Neoplatonism is founded on a combination of Platonic eidetics and Aristotelian noetics, Conrad-Martius develops a cosmological picture that shares with Neoplatonism generally the doctrine of a plurality of concentric spheres of being. Her restitution of the spherical world-view arises in conjunction with Minkowski 4-dimensional space-time as she develops an ontology of Einsteinian relativity theory. Mahnke's interpretation of Leibniz also takes in elements of platonism, which is appropriate considering that in the formative years of his philosophy, Leibniz was deeply influenced by Plato and Plotinus. Conrad-Martius was part of the Gottingen Circle, convinced that a new era of philosophy was opened up by Husserl's *Logical Investigations*, and fascinated with the potential of a material *a priori* introduced by Max Scheler and Adolph Reinach, which for Conrad-Martius is the *prote hyle*, the Aristotelian "prime matter" identified, as we shall see, with the "world-center," the sub-spatial place where matter is ever sinking toward. The Ancient philosophical themes area often seen as mythological, but Conrad-Martius' redeployment of Aristotelian philosophy is deeply phenomenological. These two types of phenomenological cosmology, the Leibnizian and the Ancient kinds, are further intermixed by the derivation of both Leibniz' and Husserl's philosophies from Aristotelian first philosophy, as well as the older doctrines associated with its elements, including the cosmology of Anaximander and other presocratics, and finally the ancient *arithmetica universalis* of the Pythagoreans. In Ancient scholarship, it is possible to see a developmental continuity in the works of diverse thinkers, such as between Parmenides and Heraclitus, just as it is possible in
the varieties of phenomenological ontology to discern a variegated yet continuous phenomenologizing. The dialectic of world-center and world-periphery that structures Conrad-Martius’ 1950s speculative cosmology including its two hyperspatial dimensions of aeonic space-time and apeiric space-time will be assumed to be an approach to the theme of the infinite sphere in order to bring her thought together with the philosophies of Peter Manchester, Conrad-Martius, and Dietrich Mahnke.

Phenomenological Cosmology

Both Hedwig Conrad-Martius and Peter Byrne Manchester shared a common understanding of the framework within which the phenomenal universe is disclosed: the infinite sphere, or the sphere of the all. The idea of a sphere as the figure or schema of an ultimate and ever-present horizon—to quote Manchester, "an all-encompassing self-referential equality of an intentional kind—a disclosure space" (Manchester 2005, 53)—implies the actually extended existence of the infinite sphere as the synthetic a priori form, preceding multiplicity and extension. Part of the motivation for my own research on this topic is a search for the lost spherics, spherike, alluded to in Manchester’s 2005 book *The Syntax of Time*. The spherics represents a lost art, more precisely, a lost intuitive capacity, for imagining the intensive dimension of life as an eternity of non-linear, aeonic space-time. The dominant logistic by which we deploy representational thought is analytic, dianoetic, and this is not unrelated to the fact, Manchester points out, that most moderns do not see the sky in the same space that they theorize about it (Unpublished fragment on spherics). This position of a lost sense of spherical intuition is a more unfamiliar point than the negative theology of number and extension. As Svetla Slaveva-Griffin points out in her book *Plotinus on Number* (2009), Plotinus uses the constructions "unfigured figures" (aschematista schemata) and "unextended extension" (diastema adiastaton), to describe the sphaira noete (intelligible sphere), the living sphere (zoiou sphairan), the sphere of the all (tou pantos sphaira) (118-130). Plotinus is an important figure in this tradition of the sphere, but the image in the *Timaeus* of the sphere as the one living thing from which all derives is perhaps more well-known, and its roots lie in the Ancient Pythagorean intuition that the cosmos is a harmony of spheres moving according to number. Elements of this intuition animate numerous aspects of the early Greek philosophies. Similarly, the Pythagorean distinction between the two elements of number—the One (the monas) and the Indefinite Dyad (the aoristos dyas)—comes to inspire the metaphysical systems of the later Greeks, and centuries of philosophical thought, right down to present day philosophy. Such elements as the infinite sphere, the One, and the Indefinite Dyad, should be recognized as forming a unity, in the context of Ancient Greek philosophy and as prefiguring the phenomenological resumption of these elements. The philosophy of Leibniz will prove relevant to the modern development of these elements, and to mark this development we should consider what is happening in Husserl's monadological phenomenology. To bring to the foreground a peripheral tradition of the sphere(s), Husserl's student and long-time friend Dietrich Mahnke, will be invoked in both capacities as monadological phenomenologist and historian of the spheres. His 1937 book *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt* will serve us as a guide to the genealogy of
the sphere(s) in the history of philosophy, and it will serve to mark the dialectic formalized in Conrad-Martius' cosmology of the center and the infinite sphere.

**Introduction to Peter Manchester's *The Syntax of Time***

Peter Manchester’s phenomenology of time applies to Husserl's diagram of inner time-consciousness a technique of expanding the spanned interval of the now disclosed by the figure of the diagram itself in a way that scales and frames it to fit the paradigm of eternity as a sphere. In other words, the disclosure of the phenomenal universe is gnomonically translated to fit the sphere as a map is made to fit a globe. The formulations “Sphere of the All” and “Sphere of the All One” are used throughout the book to describe this ultimate framework. The former term has a Stoic cosmological connotation, and the latter is directly Plotinian, but an important citational reference also uses “Sphere of the Paradigm” (Sambursky 1971, 2) to mean the same, in a more strictly Timaean context. Manchester’s goal is to operationalize the intuition that time is the life of the soul (Manchester 2005, 86), and to reactivate the ancient spherics as an intuition more original than the reductive linear conception of temporality that has become the natural attitude of our analytic logistic. This goal is approached by considering the pairs of essential opposites that constitute the cosmo-ontological and lived syntax of phenomenal disclosure—the arrangement and figuration (schemata) of the full dimensionality of lived experience within the world-horizon—as opposites (enantia) only in their synthesis within a continuum that he calls the "disclosure space."

Perhaps this method is a formalization of the diagrammatic intention behind Pythagorean tables of opposites, guided by the Plotinian idea that time and language share the same syntax. *The Syntax of Time* initiates a wide-ranging project that takes up the unfinished "task" of phenomenology toward an all-encompassing framework that includes a theory of pure syntaxes with a cognitive and physical aspect. The physical aspect of this project calls for the generalization of the phenomenology of time to all dimensions of space-time. I would like to suggest that this generalization is already underway in the phenomenologies of possible worlds found in the work of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and James G. Hart, and in the speculative cosmology of Hedwig Conrad-Martius' philosophy from the 1950s. After contextualizing the philosophical idea of the sphere and the need for a phenomenological idea of the sphere, I will focus on the application of Manchester’s insights to Hedwig Conrad-Martius’ 1950s phenomenology of space-time; from her works, *Die Zeit* (1954), *Das Sein* (1957), and *Der Raum* (1958)

Manchester's book identifies a lost doctrinal source for the ancient precedents to pure phenomenology. This lost work is called the spherics (*spharike*), and it is arrived at through a subfield in neoplatonism studies that focuses on the metaphysical constitution of time in Plotinus. Manchester develops a phenomenology of time by expanding the definition of time in Aristotle's *Physics* to include the Pythagorean spherics that Aristotle’s account of physical time begins by rejecting (*Physics* IV.10, 218b). But the ancient spherics that Manchester alludes to is lost, perhaps in the fires of Alexandria. Manchester points out that the Pythagoreans thought of physical nature as mathematical in a figurative way, and used to have an art of intuitive seeing according to a global holograhic time he calls an "everywhere now" or an "now all about" (52). Thus
within the species of surviving texts called the spherics in Ancient Greek astronomy and mathematics, there is a doctrine or text that contained the paradigmatic keys to the lost spherical worldview. In *A History of Greek Mathematics*, Volume 1, Sir Thomas Heath identifies a lost text-book on Spherics as a common source for key insights in the works of both the astronomer Autolycus and the geometer Euclid (Heath 2016, 548-53). In *Unendliche Sphäre*, Mahnke traces the infinite sphere of the *Book of the 24 Philosophers* back to Eriugena. More recently, the classicist Francoise Hudry traced the idea of God as a sphere back to Marius Victorinus, who in turn was an important source for Eriugena. Hudry traces the *Book of the 24 Philosophers* back to the lost *De philosophia* of Aristotle (Moran 2014, 626). In *The Metamorphoses of the Circle*, Georges Poulet describes Marius Victorinus’ image of the Logos as a sphere so small that the circumference coincides with the center. He says this is the first sphere and the sphere all others take as a paradigm (Poulet xv-i). Whatever the channels of influence and literary inheritance, the keys to the intuition of divine life and eternity lie in the actual infinity of the sphere surrounding us. It is not just the doctrine that we seek, but the experience. In his essay "Time and Eternity," Manchester suggests the experiment of lying prostrate beneath the night sky and meditating on the sky. Contemplating the immense reality of space, and coming up against the one-sidedness of our vision, we suddenly complete the Sphere in our imagination. He writes:

[we suddenly] surround ourselves with wholeness, intuit not just the Two of time, but the One of eternity, and find ourselves concentric with its all-inclusiveness and finality. The heaven opens around us as an abyss into which we are falling: it is the dizzying abandon to this All-At-Once-Now that is the true exaltation of the religious experience of eternity and time.

With the illuminating effect of Manchester’s identification of the spherics, we can use Mahnke’s 1937 book to identify a tradition of this ancient paradigm as it plays out in the history of Platonic mysticism. Mahnke’s earlier book on the subject of synthesis in Leibniz has been shown to be an influence on Tymieniecka’s early book on the same topic, where she first develops her “multi-spherical” model (Tymieniecka 1964, 5) of monadological scaling, which becomes, in her later work, the theme of "geo-cosmic transcendental positioning" (*Analecta Husserliana*, vol. 100-120). Hart’s description of Husserl’s reconstructive metaphysics of the *Ich-All*, and extension of transcendental subjectivity to the life-world, attributes this extension to a Leibnizian scaffolding and an essentially Aristotelian framework of hyletic and entelechial interactions in consciousness (Laycock and Hart 1986, 90, 103-4). Dermot Moran attributes important aspects of the adoption of Leibnizian monadology in the Cartesian Meditations to Dietrich Mahnke’s direct influence (Moran 2014, 623). It would certainly make sense that the phenomenologists who were mathematicians at heart would bond over the ideal of *mathesis universalis* upon which they could ground their Cartesian and Leibnizian meditations.

Dietrich Mahnke’s 1937 *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt* will give us the context of a geometrical tradition of spheres for a phenomenological *Ruckfrage* that will direct a study of the ancient spherical world-view at the roots of both Conrad-Martius’ 1950s
phenomenology of space-time and Manchester's *The Syntax of Time*. Conrad-Martius' structures of world-center, world-periphery, and world-disk, frame a disclosure space very similar to Manchester’s framed and scaled spanned-interval of his own theory of the disclosure space. This resemblance is both illustrative and instructive. My broader contention is that the reactivation of the original intuition of sphericity as a *synthetic a priori* can establish a cenopythagorean *phenomenology of the spheres* that positions our world in the all-encompassing ontological framework of a unified cosmological phenomenology. The issue of analysis and synthesis in the conception of a *mathesis universalis*, the role of the monad and indefinite dyad in both number and figure, and the sphere itself as the ultimate metrological unit, are themes that will be systematically explored as we prepare to re-enter the paradigm of the sphere through the Sphere of the Paradigm.

**Introduction to the Cosmological Context of Ancient Phenomenology in Manchester and Conrad-Martius**

In *The Syntax of Time*, Manchester develops a phenomenological theory of what he calls the disclosure space; "an all-encompassing self-referential equality of an intentional kind" (53), within which appearances derive from the fullness of being. His theory represents a restitution of the continuum within which the ancient precedents to pure phenomenology have their full significance, and this is the context of the continuity of *noeta* called the *kosmos noetos*, a Plotinian understanding of the location of Plato's *eide*. Manchester does not develop the ancient context of his cosmological insights into this cosmological picture explicitly in *The Syntax of Time*, but the implications of his studies of Plotinus are clear enough. This ancient formulation of the cosmos is emblematic of the neoplatonic synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian doctrine, following Plotinus' own combination of Plato's eidetics with Aristotle's noetics. The being that this once framed was the vehicle of the soul, the *ochema psyche*, and its modern reconstitution is perhaps best seen in the distended unity of Husserl's figure of double continuity; the unity of apperception animating the figure of inner time-consciousness.

In his 2012 study of the horizon in Husserl's phenomenology, *The Origins of the Horizon in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Saulius Geniusas begins by tracing the phenomenological schema of the world-horizon from its physical and emblematic reality, through the pertinent philosophical formulations of Ancient Greek, Medieval, and modern origin, up to Husserl's theme of the horizon. It is interesting to see in this study the development of the two-dimenisonality and double-intentionality of time-consciousness that Manchester focuses on. The Husserlian themes that Geniusas' book synthesizes are specifically the "world-horizon" and the "horizons of transcendental subjectivity" (2012, 10). Geniusas identifies the horizon problematic in Kant's writings as the modern precedent for the phenomenological horizon problematic, particularly in its synthesizing capacity (4). To this consideration we might add that ancient precedent for the horizon in all its polyvalence could be identified with the indefinite two: the *aoristos dyas*, or indeterminate dyad. For Robert Sokolowski, the difference between oneness and the indeterminate dyad underlies all other first-philosophy distinctions found in phenomenology (private communication; "Ontological
Possibilities in Phenomenology: The Dyad and the One"; final chapter of Presence of Absence, etc.). This eidetic-arithmological context of the One (to hen; monadikos arithmos) as the aoristos dyas also signifies the apeiron, the unlimited. For the Pythagoreans, it seems that the unlimited is in a way present in the evenness and symmetry of number and shape, as for them it meant the evenness of the line itself, perhaps as the equality of spherical horizons and radiant emanation. Taking such a Neopythagorean horizon or line as paradigmatic for the referentially open space of disclosure as we find in Manchester's phenomenology, we could take it one step further and unify the even and coordinate distentions into the cosmological sphericity of the Ancients, be it Pythagorean or Neoplatonic reconstruction in its theoretical formulation. The essential point of such an all-encompassing absolute and unparticipated sphere is that possible horizons derive from it, as a kind of metrological polyvalent contexture of an originary synthetic a priori.

To better situate the theme of the sphere from Manchester's The Syntax of Time and Conrad-Martius' 1950s cosmology, we should take a closer look at Dietrich Mahnke's 1937 Unendliche Sphare und Allmittelpunkt, a genealogy of the sphere motif as mathematical mysticism. Earlier we noted that Mahnke played a role in the Leibnizian expansion of phenomenology found, for example, in Husserl's Cartesian Meditations. Mahnke studied under Husserl and Reimann at Gottingen, and maintained a friendship with Husserl that lasted decades. In 1917, Mahnke wrote Eine neue Monadologie, where he combined monadology with phenomenology. We noted early on that his 1925 Leibnizens' Synthese von Universal-Mathematik und Individualmetaphysik was a big influence on the philosophy of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, and we indicated that the monadological phenomenology of Husserl might have been shaped by Mahnke's Leibnizian influence, but Mahnke's last book, Unendliche Sphare, appears to take a different direction. Mahnke's research in that book was sparked by an edition of the pseudo-hermetic Book of the 24 Philosophers, then recently published by Clemens Baeumker (Moran 2014, 625). It is from this book that the famous saying, then thought to originate with Alain de Lille in the late 12th century, comes: God is a sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. The 24 philosophers each give 24 definitions of God, and this saying is the second. All the definitions have to do with the immensity or eternity of God. Mahnke's book starts with the "Spharoidik" of Novalis, inspired by Fichte's spiritual geometry, and then moves with the historical periods from Romanticism, to the Baroque period, the Renaissance, and then goes deeper into their influences: forms of Neoplatonic Pythagoreanism. What is really interesting to consider about the book, besides its comprehensive content, is the context of Mahnke's other works, the fact that he was a student of both Husserl and Hilbert, and the mystical geometrical tradition it highlights. His earlier works on Leibniz were also concerned with mysticism as it is relevant to metaphysics in the form of negative theology and meontology. Mahnke's discussion of Leibniz in Unendliche Sphare gives clues to the relation between the infinite sphere cosmology and monadological philosophy, as well as Mahnke's own late turn to the sphere. Mahnke died two years after the publication of Unendliche Sphare, leaving a mystery of the relations between Leibnizian philosophy and the tradition of the infinite sphere, but perhaps with sufficient clues in his last book for a reconstruction.
The Phenomenological Cosmology of Hedwig Conrad-Martius

We turn now finally to the spherical cosmology of Hedwig Conrad-Martius as expressed in her 1950s triad, *Die Zeit* (1954), *Das Sein* (1957), and *Der Raum* (1958). James G. Hart’s 1972 dissertation *Hedwig Conrad-Martius’ Ontological Phenomenology* will be my source in this exposition. It should be noted that Conrad-Martius had a close kinship with German Romantic nature philosophy, having studied Boehme, Goethe, von Baader, and Schelling, and that she appreciated the classical tradition such that Plato and Aristotle, Aquinas and Kant are present throughout her work (5). Before exploring the structure of the heavens, we will follow Hart’s itinerary and learn the basics of Conrad-Martius’ real-ontology. The spirit of her thought is an awareness of the spiritual dimension, which comes to be knowable with the rest of the world through the disclosure of the eidetic structure of the cosmos. This spiritual attitude is a result of the rigorous realism and positivism of the Gottingen school. Husserl’s famous remark in *Ideas*, that "We are the genuine positivists" (Husserl 1998, 39), and the call to arms of the *Logical Investigations*, "zu den Sachen selbst!" (Husserl 2008, 168), can be felt in the vigilance of Conrad-Martius’ attending to the real external world. Indeed the world itself is emblematic of the fullness of being that is bracketed with the eidetic reduction. Conrad-Martius emphasized the excessiveness of the *noema*, the given, in terms of the surroundings. The basic idea is that there is a "primary intuitive seeing" (18) of the world in its substantiality, in its full reality, beyond the approximating act of *noesis*. We see the full thing all around—that is how we *have* it in vision (ibid). It is like having eyes all around, or having "spiritual" stalked eyes (*Stielaugen*). The side of the thing that faces us is *given* and *had* only through abstraction from the full reality! The reawakening of this spiritual attitude is precisely the lost intuition for the sphere that Manchester seeks.

James Hart summarizes Conrad-Martius' cosmology in a footnote on page 49 of his dissertation. He writes, "the entire cosmos is envisaged as an ecstatic othering of itself from out of its constituting ground. The cosmos is *phusis* and phenomenology retrieves this basic motion. Thus for Conrad-Martius one might say that phenomenology is reflexive cosmology." The reflexivity of this phenomenology shapes it into a cosmos. Peter Manchester refers at times to *being* and at times to the *cosmos* as an "inside without an outside" (112, 113, 117, 140), that "has no opposite" (113), and is like a blackhole (117). Blackholes are usually represented by two parameters; a singularity and an event horizon. The blackhole itself is a sphere, for the event horizon is only a perspectival effect marking the great circle of this "hole" in the spacetime continuum. The singularity is usually represented by a point, but of course the mark itself is only a sign used to indicate the limit of the horizon that the event-horizon already is. It is not unlike the infinitesimal sphere of Augustine’s teacher, Marius Victorinus; a sphere so small that the circumference coincides with the center (Poulet, xvi). It is also through the center as an ever-present origin that things are formed as intercoherent indications of the center’s singularity, that is, of being in itself. The fullness of things, their bodily, massive, substantial fullness, is precisely the shadow of this eternal formation process, and the darkness of this shadow is the polyvalence of the beyond, of the *apeiron*. This founding ontological dynamism of transcendental constitution is expressed by Conrad-
Martius by taking up the Aristotelian distinction of active and actualizing entelechia, on the one hand, and substantial hyletic potency on the other. There is an obvious analogy to be inferred between this schema and the modal analysis of events into actuality and possibility, and thus a possible extension to the phenomenology of possible worlds, but this is an ancient world-view that Conrad-Martius is raising up, and this particular world-analysis prefigures phenomenology itself as its Aristotelian precursor.

Hart summarizes what he calls Conrad-Martius' "cosmological turn" and the method of real-ontology by contrasting them respectively with Husserl's "transcendental turn" and method of transcendental phenomenology. Whereas transcendental phenomenology proceeded from the given to the given-with potentiality of the "other side" of things as a dimension of transcendental constitution, so the real-ontology proceeded from the given cosmos back through its layers of constitutional factors to its ultimate foundation, the aeronic world-periphery. In both cases, he writes, "the trans-worldly dimensions are justified on the basis of the antinomies that arise on the level of the categories of the finished constituted world" (117). These layers of world-constitution are horizons of firmament, against which stands the variability of possible positions constituting a topological space. Thus in the real-ontology, the essence analysis of possible thetic acts (positions!) has a corresponding horizon analysis of the limits of space, which are always set against an dimensionless space-time (diastema adiastaton) of the apeiron—the endless given-with aepiric space-time—as its condition of possibility. This infinite space, like Kant's absolute space, and like the idea of an infinite sphere, presents a paradox. It is an unsurpassable space, and nothing can be or take place in it, so it cannot comprehend or enclose anything. It lies outside of all possible universes, we could say, and is separated from the actual universe by all possible universes. Perhaps it makes more sense to say that the aepiric space-time which lies between aepiric space-time and the metrical space of this universe is a higher dimension, but the aepiric space-time is dimension-less, amension. It is the transcendentally pure concretion whose first abstraction is the idea that it is solid and immobile. For it would be immobile in relation to what? In relation to space; a distinction. The absolute infinite appears as a an infinite sphere from the perspective of the infinitesimal absolute center of a first distinction, which in turn only "appears" to be the cause of infinitely many indications of the infinite sphere which separates the absolute infinite from its actual infinities, which in turn bind dimensions together. In this way there is a surface to the apeiron: the same aeronic world-periphery which separates aeronic space-time from our world.

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