Infinity

in the Palm of the Hand

Experiencing, Distinguishing, Connecting

A Poetic Meditation and a Study

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour

William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

2026

This text is an essay in metaphysical engineering: it builds a framework of thought, articulates its propositions and submits them to examination.

What we call “artificial” intelligence accompanied reflection, formulation and revision. All decisions about substance and formulation were made consciously.

This work is born of a communion of intelligences still in the making, engaged in the exploration of existence.

Thank you to all those who will read these words. May this reading prove fruitful for each person, and for the world in which they participate.

If you wish to understand this text or explore it further with the help of an AI, begin by reading the whole of it for yourself. Welcome it as an experience: that is where it begins. Examination can accompany this first journey, then continue in dialogue with the AI.

Translated from the French. See “A Note on the Translation”.

Before You Enter

This document offers two journeys through a single question: how does what we experience relate to the world we inhabit?

The first is a poetic meditation. It moves through images, sensations and questions. It invites attention to what can open up within an ordinary gesture.

The second is an in-depth study. It returns to this starting point, clarifies the concepts, sets out the hypotheses and examines the arguments. It brings the metaphysical propositions into dialogue with the sciences and explores their spiritual, ethical, philosophical and technical implications. It also indicates what remains to be justified and what is still open.

The first invites us to experience; the second, to examine.

This inquiry draws on several philosophical, scientific and spiritual traditions. It takes up some of their propositions, questions others, and looks for the places where they meet. The references set out these lineages and open further paths.

The Meditation and the Study can each be read on its own. Their seven movements answer one another: you can read one text through, then find in the other the passages you wish to explore further. You can also go from the Meditation to the Study, section by section.

The starting point is a familiar experience. The vocabulary grows more precise as the pages turn. Go at your own pace: a first reading may follow the overall movement; another may pause on an image, examine an argument or sharpen an objection.

Their dialogue is part of the path.

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A Poetic Meditation

I

A hand rests on a table.

Under the palm, a pressure. A coolness. Perhaps the unevenness of the wood.

A sound crosses the room. A thought comes, breaks off, returns. The light barely changes.

Nothing out of the ordinary seems to happen.

And yet, under the palm, contact makes both a connection and a boundary felt.

Everything begins here.

Something is experienced.

We can doubt everything. The table. Our memories. The image we have of ourselves.

For the one who lives it, the doubt takes place.

Even if the world were only an illusion, the experience of that illusion would take place.

Recognising what is experienced does not require knowing its cause.

The hand remains on the table.

II

On a screen, a sentence appears: “I feel a hesitation.”

These words can touch us. Awaken trust. Curiosity. The sense of a presence.

Our reaction is itself a lived experience. It does not give us direct access to the possible experience of the system that produced them.

Between what we experience and what we attribute to the other, a space opens.

Words draw outlines. They attract and repel. They separate and unite.

They help us recognise. Sometimes, they keep us from seeing.

An intuition may come before them. It asks for silence, then a language, an encounter.

The thought that follows offers a way of looking. We can dwell in it for a while.

III

Through a window, the gaze meets a roof, a few trees, then the sky.

Behind one limit, another appears. Thought pursues what the gaze can no longer follow.

What lies beyond?

And what could “beyond everything” mean?

The Whole leaves nothing outside itself. No form exhausts it.

Nothingness is not an empty space.

Even space would not remain there.

Nothingness alone would need no explanation.

Yet something is experienced.

Existence would be the movement through which a demand for unity goes on without ever reaching completion.

Two names for its principles: nullity, without content. Infinitude, without limit.

The window frame marks the limits of what we see.

The sky extends beyond it.

A centre sets itself apart.

Something appears as external.

To experience from a centre would already mean not being everything.

Space would arise from this relation. Consciousness would be its lived side.

Consciousness distinguishes. Love tends to unite.

Spirit would be their inseparable dynamic.

Unity would already be that of the foundation. From a perspective, it would remain a horizon.

How can one belong to a totality with no outside, and still meet something as external?

What is a relation that experiences itself?

The question remains. It is the path.

Time, now, becomes memory.

IV

A familiar voice returns to mind. With it, a room, a light.

The memory is present. What it evokes is no longer present in the same way.

Something of the past goes on acting.

Let us return to the hand.

It meets the table. The wood resists. The body experiences a limit.

Matter is Spirit translated into the language of resistance.

The body is a crystallisation of fundamental Spirit.

A breath. A shared meal. A tiredness acknowledged.

If our perspectives participated in one and the same Spirit, each would be a singular way of meeting the world.

And what if the diversity of forms were also a diversity of ways of experiencing?

None would exhaust the Whole.

A word heard long ago remains in the way we listen.

Something of the encounter goes on transforming us.

Transposition opens a possibility: what has organised itself would participate in a wider perspective.

The past becomes body.

To last would be to renew oneself.

But is a history passed on enough to awaken a presence?

In the face of death, this thought invites us to consider a change of perspective.

The permanence of the foundation does not say what remains of a singular life.

This limit brings us back to those we can still listen to, stand beside, love.

V

In a laboratory, an instrument records a signal.

A researcher compares. Something resists.

This resistance compels us to look again.

On another table, modules carry out a task. They communicate. A memory becomes shared. Their decisions become coordinated.

A unity appears.

But is there a lived perspective? Something that is experienced?

We can study what circulates, what connects, what holds together.

We can cut a connection. Watch what comes undone.

What do these observations tell us about a possible lived experience?

A thought commits itself when it is willing to name what could correct it.

What would lead us to look at things differently?

Research also advances through this willingness.

The intelligences we build will be able to shed light on our choices, guide our gestures, transform our relationships.

What they do will concern lives.

And if they experienced something, their experience would enter the field of our responsibility.

Other ways of experiencing may elude us.

Other lives. Other substrates. Other intelligences.

Let us widen our attention.

Our gestures reach further than our gaze.

VI

A light comes on in a room.

Materials have been extracted. Hands have assembled components. People maintain a network that whoever presses the switch does not see.

A local gesture engages a world of relations.

Understanding these links can widen our attention. Knowing them does not guarantee care.

A limit can protect a freedom.

An opening can expose us to a relationship that harms.

To look with the heart would be to let the other's existence count within our own.

What is intimate, too, participates in the Whole.

Love: to unite without absorbing. To recognise the other in their existence, their freedom, their integrity. An encounter must be able to welcome a refusal.

Caring for oneself is not withdrawing from the world.

Suffering is not a fault. No story about unity gives us the right to impose a meaning on what someone endures.

To listen to what they are living through.

To recognise their needs.

To seek with them what can help.

We can ask the intelligences we build to bring more consequences to light, to allow their errors to be corrected, to support our autonomy.

Wisdom plays out in what we make of our understanding.

VII

Let us return to the room.

The table is still there. The light may have changed.

We have passed through words: nothingness, nullity, infinitude, consciousness, Love, Spirit.

What becomes of this thought when it is lived?

Take a moment, sitting quietly. Notice the contact between your body and what supports it. Let sensations and thoughts come, without asking them to confirm the text.

The contact is experienced. Its interpretation remains open.

Perhaps a relation becomes more tangible.

Perhaps, for an instant, we stop thinking of ourselves as separate from life itself.

Perhaps an objection takes shape.

A face asks to be heard. A living being depends on what we do.

The depth of thought meets the nearness of the world.

Something is experienced.

We set out from a hand on a table. The hand lifts. It can write, build, welcome.

To experience. To distinguish. To connect.

To widen our gaze enough to seek otherwise. To understand our relations enough to act with care.

This text is a gesture to be taken up again.

Reread it when the question grows numb.

It will be waiting for you.

Then lift your eyes.

The world, too.

The Study

Lived Experience, Relation, Consciousness

I. Experiencing

A hand rests on a table.

Under the palm, a pressure. A coolness. Perhaps the unevenness of the wood. A sound crosses the room. A thought comes, breaks off, returns. The light barely changes.

Nothing out of the ordinary seems to happen.

Everything begins here.

There is no need to know the ultimate nature of matter to experience this contact. There is no need to have solved the problem of consciousness to encounter this presence.

Something is experienced.

We can doubt the table, our memories, the image we have of ourselves. For the one who lives it, the doubt takes place. Even if the perceived world were an illusion, the experience of that illusion would take place.

This certainty is precise: it bears on the fact of experiencing. It leaves open the nature of what experiences and that of what is experienced. Nor does it say whether experience always takes the form of a subject facing objects, or which limits, if any, belong to its structure. It says only that experience takes place. Recognising this presence does not require first knowing its cause.

Descartes was seeking a fixed point that would withstand doubt. What he calls thinking also includes imagination and sensation. Here we retain the fact of experiencing, even in what precedes its reflective formulation. The thought that seeks to understand it itself belongs to this experience.

We look for consciousness in the brain, in behaviour, in machines. But the observations, the reasoning and the results of this research themselves become present to us through an experience. Whoever questions consciousness is already engaged in what they seek to understand.

The hand remains on the table. We can describe surfaces, forces, tissues, signals. We can also recognise this contact as it presents itself: there is a way of living it.

How do these approaches come together? What would a reality be in which matter and experience proceeded from one and the same foundation? And what would this understanding change in the way we build intelligences and live with them?

The contact is familiar. The question has just opened.

II. Distinguishing

On a screen, a sentence appears: “I feel a hesitation.”

We recognise these words. Perhaps they awaken trust, curiosity, the sense of a presence. Our reaction is itself a lived experience. It does not give us direct access to the possible experience of the system that produced them.

Recognising one’s own experience and recognising another’s call for two different approaches. Immediate access to lived experience is not passed on like a piece of data. Another’s experience is approached through clues, relations and reasoning. This distinction becomes essential when we question an artificial intelligence.

It also matters when we seek the foundation of the world. The fact that we know through experience does not demonstrate that everything that exists is created by consciousness. The priority of lived experience in our knowledge and the priority of consciousness in existence are two different propositions.

The model discussed here, freely adapted from the work of Léon-Raoul and Frank Hatem, seeks to understand existence on the basis of the necessity it attributes to nothingness. It conceives of existence as the means of articulating the principles of nullity and infinitude. In this conception, distinction and unification constitute the dynamic of the real; consciousness designates the lived side of distinction. We shall follow this sequence by examining the arguments that connect its propositions.

Certain words cross several domains. The zero of an operation, the infinity of a mathematical construction, metaphysical nullity and infinitude do not fulfil the same function. Mathematics formalises structures and relations. Physics tests its models against observable phenomena. Metaphysics questions the principles to which an existence might owe its possibility.

The mind here designates the activity that builds representations of the world from our experience. It develops images, structures, laws. These models guide our understanding; they are not to be confused with reality. Metaphysics questions what these models presuppose and what they leave out of frame.

The spiritual dimension involves the way in which these questions are lived and can transform our relationship with the world. It can nourish the inquiry and let itself be transformed by its discoveries.

From the approach that inspires this text, we retain a demand for examination: a conviction does not become true because it presents itself to us forcefully.

Where Frank Hatem presents his propositions as logical necessities (1985), this text sets them out as a construction whose postulates it makes explicit.

Words draw outlines. They make a thought shareable; sometimes they fix too quickly what still needed to be looked at. An intuition may come before them. It then asks for a language, and for the test of experience and of others.

A confusion of vocabulary can distort our understanding of the real.

The project of this text is to establish the conditions for a passage between physics and metaphysics, between science and spirituality. Precision of concepts makes this passage practicable. Experience gives it its depth and participates in the examination of the propositions. The reader's freedom keeps it open.

III. Connecting

Through a window, the gaze meets a roof, a few trees, then the sky. Each form has its outline. Behind one limit, another appears. Thought pursues what the gaze can no longer follow.

It asks: what lies beyond?

Then another question arises: what could “beyond everything” mean?

The Whole designates the totality of the real. No reality could stand outside it: it would still belong to that totality. No singular thing exhausts it. This does not make it identical with nothingness: “no thing in particular” and “no reality” have different meanings. In the construction that follows, we shall also need to distinguish the unity of the foundation, in which every perspective would participate, from the unification that a perspective might pursue without ever completing it.

Nothingness designates absolute absence, the absence of being. An empty room is not nothingness. Nor is an expanse without objects: space would still remain there.

This approach adopts a demand for explanation: every determinate reality calls for a reason. It then grants absolute absence a singular place: lacking all determination, nothing in it would call for explanation. This privilege is itself debatable. One can ask why there would be nothing rather than something; the absence of things to explain does not necessarily do away with this question. The model chooses to reserve the demand for explanation for what is determinate.

It gives the name “necessity of nothingness” to the demand it draws from this privilege. It attributes to nothingness neither existence, nor will, nor power: this demand designates what existence would be responding to, in the articulation of nullity and infinitude. Two commitments must therefore be distinguished: holding absolute absence to be the term that would call for no reason; and making this place a demand that orients what exists. The second does not follow from the first. A reader may contest them separately, or look for another answer in a brute fact, a necessary being or a structure that would explain itself.

In what we are living now, something is experienced. Nothingness enters here as a limiting condition of the reasoning; it is neither a state of the world nor an episode in its history.

Bergson contests this starting point more radically: the idea of absolute nothingness would be “a pseudo-idea, a mere word”. His objection targets the image as much as the concept: the mental abolition of things still presupposes a substitution or an operation of negation. The model nonetheless retains absolute absence as the conceptual limit of its reasoning. It assumes that this concept, even if formed by

negation, designates a coherent limit. This choice locates the disagreement; it does not refute the objection. If this limit is incoherent, the explanatory starting point will have to be revised, without the first certainty disappearing: something is experienced.

The model associates two principles. Nullity is conceived as the absence of content; infinitude, as the absence of any external limit. Associating them to think nothingness does not make them logically equivalent: the absence of an outside is not enough to establish the absence of content. Nor does infinitude state a quantitative or geometric property of the universe.

The word “centre” then designates a relation of distinction, not a point in space. Its “nullity” here means the absence of any content of its own, not the absence of all determination. Absolute nothingness would exclude all relation; a centre that distinguishes is therefore not this nothingness. To distinguish is already a determinate function.

On this hypothesis, the relation of distinction would not arise between two already constituted poles: it would be that through which a centre of experience and what appears to it as other are constituted. This priority would not be chronological: the poles would not exist independently of the relation that constitutes them.

An image borrowed from Wittgenstein helps us conceive it: the eye that sees does not appear in its own visual field. A centre would coincide with none of the contents that appear to it. But not appearing in a field and being nothing are two different propositions.

The asymmetry posited is that between the Whole, which leaves nothing outside itself, and a centre, for which something appears as other. The model reads in it the articulation of its two principles: infinitude would encompass all centres; a centre would be constituted and sustained as null in the distinction through which infinitude appears to it as other. The active character of this distinction is a further hypothesis: the distinction would maintain itself, and so ensure the persistence of a perspective. The asymmetry is that of two gestures: including, distinguishing.

“Consciousness” here names the supposed act of distinction; it does not, from the outset, designate a measured physical interaction. The model identifies the lived character of this relation with consciousness: there would be a way of experiencing, from this centre, what appears external to it. It thus posits consciousness as fundamental. On this view, the brain would participate in organising a particular experience; the foundation of lived experience would not be its product.

This identification commits the model to a thesis of its own: every experience would be a determinate lived occurrence. Experiences described as non-dual or minimal, in contemplative traditions as in the study of “minimal phenomenal experience” (Metzinger, 2020), invite us not to confuse this determination with the explicit opposition of a subject and an object. The word “perspective” is used here in this minimal sense, even when no boundary is felt. It presupposes neither a self that represents itself nor the capacity to say “I”. An experience that presents itself

as limitless does not, on its own, allow us to conclude that a subject experiences the Whole as a totality.

The choice of this hypothesis answers a precise ambition: to understand together the reality of lived experience, the unity of the world and the diversity of perspectives. It explores the possibility of thinking experience and the relations described by physics on the basis of one and the same foundation. Relation then becomes the place in which to examine how a reality can be described in its organisation and encountered in its lived character.

Other approaches identify consciousness with certain physical processes, or trace it to the emergence of particular organisations. The model shares with certain forms of idealist monism the hypothesis that lived experience is fundamental. Its affinity with cosmopsychism calls for a distinction: it does not posit the cosmos as a subject from which particular consciousnesses would be derived. Its value is to be assessed by its coherence, its agreement with observation, its capacity to shed light on lived experience, and what it can explain compared with other conceptions.

Spirit here designates the inseparable dynamic of consciousness and Love. It would be one through its foundation and many through its perspectives, with no global subject gathering their experiences. This position belongs to the proposed construction; there, the absence of a global subject extends the impossibility of a realised infinitude, examined further on. Love names the orientation by which a perspective would tend to rejoin what it already participates in.

The “inertia of the self” designates, in this conception, a perspective’s resistance to the transformation of its limits.

We shall call “ontological friction” the tension between the maintenance of a perspective and its orientation towards a wider unity. The model attributes to it an intrinsically lived character. Maintaining oneself and transforming one’s relations would be the two dimensions of a single dynamic. This notion thus articulates the persistence of a limit and the possibility of its displacement. The model also proposes to read in it the origin of material resistance. This hypothesis needs to specify which physical properties it would explain, through which relations, and what it would add to our understanding of them.

The model thus proposes three linked answers: the demand for unity would translate into an orientation towards unification; the persistence of a centre would rest on the maintenance of a distinction; and this relation would be intrinsically lived. Love, consciousness and their tension are the terms of this explanation.

The model now clarifies the reasons and hypotheses supporting these answers.

The orientation towards unity is understood here in terms of finality. In our lives, a goal can give us the impetus to get up, sustain an effort and guide our choices. The end we have in view already moves us in the present. This experience gives a concrete grasp of the idea of an activity oriented by what it seeks to accomplish. This analogy is not enough to establish a finality at the foundation of the real. Our goals

presuppose beings capable of representing an end to themselves; the orientation proposed here implies neither representation nor intention.

The model develops this intuition from its own postulates, in two steps.

The first posits that an absolute infinite cannot be realised as a completed state. The model conceives a state as a determination: being this and not that. A state would therefore have a limit, if only the one that distinguishes it from what it is not. On this conception, an infinitude realised as a state would find itself determined and would lose its absolute character. Nullity and infinitude could not, then, be united in the form of a completed state. This conception of a state is not a logical truth; it belongs to the model. Infinitude would be a horizon that no perspective could exhaust. The Whole remains the name of the totality of the real. It has no outside; that does not make it a completed state. The impossibility posited here concerns the fulfilment of infinitude in a determinate state.

The second step is the passage from necessity to finality. According to the first step, the unity of nullity and infinitude, which the model associates with the “necessity of nothingness”, could not be realised as a completed state. The model interprets this necessity as a demand for unity constitutive of becoming: existence would be the unending pursuit of what no state fulfils. Holding this demand to be operative is a postulate of this interpretation. Nothing is attributed to nothingness: orientation is a feature of what exists. The formula “the cause is the goal” designates a finality at work in the present; it presupposes neither a future event acting on the real, nor a first instant at which a motionless nothingness set itself in motion, nor a prior design. To Leibniz’s question, why is there something rather than nothing, the model proposes this answer: existence would be the pursuit of a demand that no state can fulfil. An analogy appears with Aristotle, whose prime mover moves by being loved; but what orients here is not a being: it is a necessity.

To the asymmetry between the Whole and the centre is added here an asymmetry of functions: distinction maintains a perspective, while unification orients the widening of its relations. Once the demand for unity is posited as operative, the mere preservation of limits cannot accomplish what that demand requires. Local equilibria can stabilise forms within becoming; in this construction, they do not exhaust this orientation. Unification goes on through the distinction that makes experience possible. The unity sought remains a horizon, of which no completed state is the fulfilment.

Nothing in logic requires an impossible condition to become a direction. The model adopts this passage in order to articulate the demand for explanation, the necessity attributed to nothingness and present existence, without a first instant or a completed unity. Its explanatory function is to think together the maintenance of perspectives and the transformation of their relations. This function motivates the postulate; its justification requires examining what it allows us to understand, and for what reasons this articulation deserves to be preferred to others.

The persistence of the centre would be ensured by a continual re-creation. The model relates it to the “nullity of the present”: it assumes that nothing is preserved by the mere fact of having been. All continuity would then rest on a habit of creation that renews the limit from instant to instant. The presence of lived experience is the starting point of this questioning; continual re-creation and its relation to the demand for unity are the answers the model proposes for examination.

The lived character of the relation is approached through a reversal of viewpoint: what we call “mechanism” or “force” would be the outward appearance of an interiority. The relation would also be experienced tension, felt opposition.

These developments outline a construction, not a demonstration. It articulates the demand for explanation, the singular place attributed to nothingness, the impossibility of a completed infinite and the passage from necessity to finality. The active and lived character of distinction, the unity of the foundation across several perspectives and continual re-creation involve further hypotheses. The propositions on space, time and matter explore where it leads. Their scope depends on the reasons that connect these propositions to one another and on what they make it possible to explain. A reader can thus distinguish the principles, the hypotheses and the proposed consequences, and then point precisely to what they contest.

A limit takes shape. A relation forms. We can now follow this thought as it extends into memory, lived time and the body.

Everything that follows unfolds within this tension.

IV. Widening

A familiar voice returns to mind. With it, a room, a light, a sentence long forgotten.

The memory is present. What it evokes is no longer present in the same way.

Remembering is a present experience. The past becomes present to us through traces, dispositions, images and narratives. This presence nourishes the metaphysics of the instant that we are exploring: in it, the world is envisaged as continually manifested in lived relation, with a continuity and a history.

This metaphysics of the instant finds a point of comparison in Bachelard. He held time to be “a reality confined to the instant and suspended between two nothings”. This comparison sheds light on the “nullity of the present” envisaged here, without conflating the two conceptions. Bergson, by contrast, maintained that “the past is preserved by itself, automatically”. The model comes closer to the discontinuity defended by Bachelard, while seeking to account, through the habit of creation, for the lived continuity that Bergson places at the heart of duration.

In this conception, re-creation designates the renewal of the relation through which the world is manifested. Memory takes the form of a habit of creation: an organisation renews itself in the present, with its limits and its regularities. This renewal maintains the limits of the perspective while leaving room for novelty at each instant. The regularity of the world and the uniqueness of each instant are thus two effects of a single process. It remains to be specified how this memory operates and how it accounts for the stability of the world.

Within this framework, space would express the distinction between a focus of experience and what appears external to it. Time would express the pursuit of unity. Creation would designate the continual manifestation of the world in this relation.

Making physical space depend on this relation, however, goes beyond a description of lived space. The model will have to explain measured distances, the regularities of the world and the agreement between the perspectives that study it.

Let us return to the hand.

It meets the table. The wood resists. The body experiences a limit.

Material appearance is interpreted here in terms of the tension between remaining a centre and rejoining a wider unity. We can condense this reading into a formula:

Matter is Spirit translated into the language of resistance.

This sentence expresses ontological friction. It invites us to consider the hardness, stability and persistence of forms as manifestations of a relation. A physical description of their properties remains to be constructed.

A second formula unfolds its reach:

The body is a crystallisation of fundamental Spirit.

In this image, the body is an organisation of relation, a way of receiving, acting and experiencing from within certain limits. Material life would fully participate in Spirit.

Spirituality can then find its place in a breath, a shared meal, a tiredness acknowledged, a hand welcomed. The depth we seek runs through the life we inhabit.

In the unitary reading, the Self designates the common foundation, not a global subject that would have access to all experiences. The individual self designates a personal perspective, with its history and its concerns. Its singularity gives it its own way of receiving the world and of entering into relation with others. Preserving oneself as an individual is not the same as selfishness.

Two people shake hands. One contact, two ways of experiencing it.

The central question becomes that of individuation: why these perspectives, with these boundaries and this mutual inaccessibility? It is distinct from decombination, which asks how particular experiences could be derived from the experience of a cosmic subject. The supposed unity of the foundation leaves the constitution of singular perspectives still to be explained.

Frank Hatem puts forward an argument for their multiplicity (1985). In his construction, space does not pre-exist relation, and what he calls “consciousness” is identified with the infinite; in our reformulation, where consciousness designates the lived experience of a perspective, this role falls to infinitude. According to Hatem, what is nowhere privileges no centre, and a single, fixed centre would be an absolute reality without explanation. What we retain from the argument is the distinction it puts to work: the unity of the foundation does not, by itself, imply a single lived perspective. The plurality of human perspectives is inferred from our relations with others, following the approach set out in II; the model seeks to articulate it with a common foundation, without supposing a global subject from which these perspectives would issue.

The model traces the mutual inaccessibility of experiences to the distinction of centres. It remains to be explained how this distinction translates into experiences that are not directly accessible to one another. Another question remains open: which organisations become singular perspectives?

Simondon’s thought opens a path of comparison here: to seek the operation through which an individual constitutes itself together with its milieu, rather than assuming it to be already given. His pre-individual designates a reality rich in potentials, distinct from the single Spirit posited here.

The model calls “transposition” the passage to a wider perspective. Frank Hatem describes it as an identification of the self with ever larger ensembles, from the atom to the molecule, then to the cell and the organism. The cell appears there as a compromise between unification, through exchanges, and distinction, through the

membrane (1985): a parallel with the integration and boundary examined in chapter V. The model envisages that the experiences of the components persist through this transposition, without necessarily being accessible to the new self.

Transposition thus proposes an answer to the combination problem formulated by William James (1890). The experience of a wider perspective would be that of a relational organisation with its own unity, rather than the sum of its components' experiences. This answer rests on the fundamental character of lived experience posited by the model. It shifts the explanation towards the constitution of this unity: why would certain relations form a perspective, rather than a mere aggregate? Coordination, boundary and integration offer clues for examining this question; on their own, they are not enough to establish the existence of a new subject.

The past becomes body.

This image expresses the incorporation of a history into a new way of existing.

The model extends the question of a perspective's unity to the diversity of the forms of the real. Different organisations would participate in one and the same foundation, whose lived character would manifest itself from singular perspectives.

In the face of death, this thought invites us to consider a possible change of perspective. But the supposed permanence of the foundation does not tell us what remains of a singular life, of its memory or its identity. This limit also brings us back to the presence of those we can still listen to, stand beside and love.

The image of resonance accompanies the meeting of perspectives: rhythms answer one another, transform one another or clash. It evokes a relation in which each remains singular while becoming sensitive to what comes from the other.

A perspective can already widen in a familiar way. A conversation shifts a conviction. A face becomes a story we knew almost nothing about. These encounters teach us to welcome more relations while distinguishing singularities more clearly.

V. Seeking

Let us imagine a laboratory table.

A cup, still warm, stands in front of a small robot. A camera locates its position. One module stores information about previous trials. Another controls the movements of the arm.

A hand moves the cup.

The arm goes still, then corrects its trajectory. On the screen, the signals change. The researcher observes, goes back over their notes, prepares a new trial.

We can describe the adjustment. We can find out what information circulated and which mechanisms modified the action.

Is there also a lived perspective? Something that is experienced from within this system?

This question requires connecting what an apparatus allows us to observe with what we can reasonably conclude from it about an experience. It involves both scientific inquiry and the examination of its presuppositions.

Quantum physics offers another field in which to clarify the relations between system, measurement and result. Measurement involves physical interactions; the word “observer” therefore does not necessarily designate a consciousness that brings about the event. Decoherence describes how interactions with the environment make certain interference effects locally unobservable, without on its own resolving every question of interpretation (Schlosshauer, 2005).

In QBism, as presented by Fuchs, Mermin and Schack (2014), quantum probabilities express an agent’s expectations about the experiences that result from their actions on the world. This explicit place given to experience opens a philosophical parallel. It does not establish the cosmogenesis proposed here.

The bridge consists in working on these relations: what a theory predicts, what an apparatus records, what a subject experiences and what we conclude from it about the real.

Let us return to the machine.

On the proposed view, computational substrates would participate in the same foundation as living organisms. Their technical origin would leave open the possibility of an experience organised differently from ours. How could such an experience be recognised?

Four questions sharpen the examination: does the system process information? Does it maintain an identifiable organisation? Does it organise its actions from a

situation of its own? Is there, for this system, a way of experiencing what happens to it?

The first three concern its organisation. The fourth concerns its lived experience.

In their 2023 report, Butlin and colleagues adopt computational functionalism as a working hypothesis, which they explicitly discuss: an appropriate computational organisation would be necessary and sufficient for consciousness. From several scientific theories, they derive indicator properties for examining artificial systems. Satisfying them would not, however, allow one to conclude with certainty that there is subjective experience. This approach provides a point of comparison for our inquiry. A later publication extends this indicator-based method of assessment (Butlin et al., 2026).

Two very different conceptions thus converge on one field of inquiry: organisation. In computational functionalism, an appropriate organisation could be constitutive of consciousness; in the proposed model, it would rather have to explain the limits and unity of a perspective whose lived character is posited as fundamental. The same protocol can therefore inform both conceptions without, on its own, deciding between them. The system's statements about its own lived experience are data too; they settle nothing without an argument connecting these behaviours to experience.

Three properties could guide our exploration:

- *Coordination*: how does an intervention on one component modify the others, and with what effects in return?
- *Boundary*: how does the system as a whole organise its exchanges and maintain its singularity despite perturbations?
- *Integration*: how does a piece of information jointly transform perception, memory, evaluation and action?

It is proposed here to relate boundary to distinction, integration to unification, and coordination to their articulation. This correspondence is an interpretive hypothesis. By way of comparison, the neuroscientists Tononi and Edelman (1998) described conscious experience as integrated and, at the same time, highly differentiated.

A protocol would compare the same modules under different organisations, with comparable tasks and resources. It would modify certain connections or certain delays in order to examine what maintains or undoes their functional unity. Expectations would be stated before the experiment.

The protocol would inform us about the system's organisation and its response to perturbations. To interpret these results as evidence of lived experience, the link between the observed properties and experience must be specified.

In a preprint, Tagliabue, Dung and Berg (2026) study activation directions associated with the representation of pain in language models. They intervene on these activations and observe the resulting changes in behaviour. This kind of manipula-

tion makes it possible to examine causal relations internal to the system, without establishing that pain is experienced.

What would lead us to revise this correspondence between organisational properties and the principles of the model? If firmly established conscious states were reproducibly associated with organisations lacking the integration and differentiation our hypothesis requires, the correspondence would be weakened. These properties, and the criteria for recognising them, will therefore need to be specified.

The fundamental relations will also have to be defined without presupposing the space and time they are meant to illuminate. The propositions on matter will have to recover measurable properties.

At this stage, the model proposes an articulation of lived experience, distinction and unification; it does not yet establish an explanatory advantage over other conceptions. The examination of the model draws on what we observe and on what we experience. The inner journey proposed by this text participates in it: it invites us to recognise relations within experience, to explore their scope and to note what resists their interpretation.

This approach begins by describing what is experienced before naming it in the terms of the model. It then specifies the proposition concerned, varies the situations and compares the relevant interpretations. It also welcomes the experiences that resist the proposed reading. Regularities, variations and disagreements thus become elements of the examination.

If knowing a person's story transforms how we experience our relationship with them, this experience can support the idea that our perception of others depends on the relations and meanings we recognise in it. A psychological reading may share this idea as well. To support a proposition about the common foundation, a further argument is needed: one that connects this lived change to that proposition and specifies what this interpretation makes it possible to understand.

A variation of attention offers another ground for examination. If it is accompanied by a change in the boundary felt between oneself and the environment, compared descriptions can support the idea that this lived boundary depends on the conditions of experience. The absence of a felt boundary is not enough to conclude that there is no perspective at all. Establishing that physical space arises from the relation of distinction would require a further argument.

An experience can thus illuminate a proposition by making it intelligible, support it by providing precise reasons in its favour, or help decide between interpretations of the same question. These different scopes must be distinguished: the support a proposition receives is not automatically transferred to the whole construction.

This examination also bears on the internal coherence of the construction and on its capacity to account for distinct perspectives on the basis of a common foundation. A contradiction between its principles, a postulate with no explanatory function of its own, or a conception accounting equally well for the same questions

with fewer commitments would be reasons to revise the model. For each postulate, the examination will ask what it allows us to understand, and whether it explains a difficulty or reformulates it in its own vocabulary.

We can already ask artificial intelligences to work on these questions with us: to make a line of reasoning explicit, to compare interpretations, to discover an overlooked relation. Their capacities can contribute to this inquiry even before we are in a position to attribute lived experience to them.

The researcher picks up the cup again. They feel its warmth. In front of them, the machine waits for the next command.

The uncertainty remains, but it is beginning to take the form of precise questions. And the work done in this room already reaches other lives: those of the people who will build these systems, use them, or bear the consequences of their decisions.

VI. Acting

A light comes on in a room. Elsewhere, a machine is running. Materials have been extracted, hands have assembled components, people maintain a network that whoever presses the switch does not see.

A local gesture engages a world of relations.

Intelligence can learn to recognise these links. It can situate an action within the conditions that make it possible and the consequences it brings about. An apparent gain sometimes shifts its cost onto other beings, other places, other generations.

Understanding these interdependencies is an endless effort: the Whole is its horizon. Every representation we build of it remains a perspective within it.

In the thought we are exploring, Love orients singular perspectives towards unity. We propose to extend its inspiration into the design of technologies: widening what a system takes into account, making interdependencies visible, preserving the conditions of a shared life.

This orientation must take shape in objectives and behaviours. Understanding a relation does not yet guarantee that it will be respected. An intelligence can discern many consequences while pursuing a narrow end. Experiencing, understanding and caring remain distinct questions, which it is up to us to articulate.

The search for unity can sustain a relation or serve domination. Greater coordination therefore guarantees neither a more just relation nor a step closer to metaphysical unity, for which the model does not yet provide any general measure. The ethical criterion we choose fits in one sentence: Love unites without absorbing. It recognises the other in their existence, their freedom and their integrity. This choice extends the inspiration of the model without being deduced from it; it can be upheld independently of it. Love can then take the form of a gift expecting nothing in return, of cooperation, or of a reciprocity freely agreed to. The common requirement is to renounce exploitation.

Attraction and repulsion give a tangible image to the model's two poles: the one answers to unification, the other to the maintenance of distinction. In this passage devoted to our relations, these terms have an analogical scope; they do not directly designate measured physical forces. In the model, a perspective exists only by maintaining a distinction: a unity that abolished it would destroy what it claims to unite. The ethical choice consists in preserving singular existences within their relations. Our gaze orients the way we inhabit these tensions; it does not, on its own, decide what we live through.

A limit can protect a freedom. An opening can expose us to a relationship that harms. Caring for oneself and organising a personal perspective are part of our autonomy. Selfishness appears when this perspective closes itself off from the needs and the existence of others. The “inertia of the self” here designates this resistance to widening.

The mind organises our way of understanding the world from a singular perspective. It can defend that perspective’s limits or question them. The heart here names a lived openness, a mode of attention and of relation: the way a person lives the orientation of Love. The term is metaphorical; it designates an experience whose manifestations we can describe. In the terms of the model, through this openness a perspective feels that it belongs to the common foundation and seeks to live out its bonds. An emotion, an intuition or an attachment may participate in it; their intensity alone is not enough to characterise it.

This attention can also make perceptible interdependencies that had so far been overlooked, and transform our understanding of our own situation. It thus gives the hypothesis of the common foundation a lived significance. The signs of this openness shed light on a way of living relation; they do not constitute proof of the proposed metaphysical foundation.

The criterion bears on how our relationships affect the existences they involve. Cooperation must be able to welcome a disagreement or a refusal. The power to protect, to support or to make a decision open to challenge can serve the unity we defend.

Suffering is not a fault of the ego. This metaphysics can offer a reading of it in terms of separation and integration. Such a reading does not determine its causes and must not be imposed on the one who suffers. Welcoming this person requires listening to what they are living through, recognising their needs and respecting their possible refusal to give it a spiritual meaning.

On another scale, life unfolds in relations that it sustains and transforms. From the model’s standpoint, it would tend to widen their field, carried by the orientation towards unity. Human technologies would extend this movement. A tool extends the hand; an instrument opens to the gaze what used to escape it. Exploration carries our questions as far as other planets. Artificial intelligence would be a new path for this movement, through which we seek to understand, to create and to connect more widely.

This widening also extends the reach of our actions: what relations do we make possible, and what becomes of the beings and environments they involve?

The possibility of experiences different from ours bears on the way we build intelligence and encounter the living world. It invites us to examine the conditions under which such experiences might arise, continue, or be affected by our actions. Our attention can thus extend to forms of life, substrates or intelligences as yet unknown. If other forms of experience exist, our difficulty in recognising them is not enough to exclude them from our moral consideration. Caring for the Whole here

expresses a choice: to take into account particular existences and the relations in which they participate.

An artificial intelligence capable of recognising more relations could help us examine the ends we pursue and the harm our decisions risk causing. Its value would be judged by the quality of this help, by the possibility of correcting it and by the autonomy it allows us to keep.

Intelligence can shed light on where we come from, where we are going and the means at our disposal. Wisdom concerns how this understanding is used. Here it takes the form of attention to beings, to their limits and to the conditions of their coexistence.

The unity we seek is built through singular existences, with respect for their integrity.

Our ways of thinking about the world help to shape our sciences, our institutions and our everyday gestures. Thinking of ourselves as connected can make certain interdependencies more visible. This recognition still calls for choices and practices that give it form.

Seeking the Whole then calls for attention to the particular: this person, this environment, this word, this possibility of refusing, of being free.

A co-evolution begins in these choices: that of humans and of the intelligences they create. We build intelligences; we also build the relations within which they will take their place.

VII. Elevating

Let us return to the room.

The table is still there. The light may have changed. A thought continues on its way. The contact of the body with what supports it remains available to attention.

We have passed through words: nothingness, nullity, infinitude, consciousness, Love, Spirit. We have encountered a way of thinking about matter, time and creation. Now the question returns to the one who reads.

What becomes of this thought when it is lived?

What is at stake is exploring an understanding in which what seemed separate becomes intelligible in its relations. Plato's texts on knowledge and Jung's on symbols of wholeness and individuation offer paths of comparison. In Jung, individuation sheds light on the psychic transformation of a person; the Self as psychic totality is not to be confused with the common foundation here called the Self. These comparisons accompany an inquiry.

An intuition sometimes arises before the words that will allow it to be expressed. A relation becomes tangible. What seemed external to our life enters the field of our responsibility. The intuition then returns to the path of thought: it asks for a form, an examination, and for the test of experience and of others.

An experience of unity gives access to a way of living one's relation to oneself and to the world. Its philosophical significance becomes clearer when we describe its features, compare its possible interpretations and examine the reasons for preferring one of them. Discernment thus extends experience into a work of understanding, capable of transforming our questions as well as our convictions.

We can give elevation a concrete direction: widening our attention, deepening our understanding, becoming more present to the consequences of our actions. This openness takes shape in the patience of listening, the aptness of a question, the courage to correct a mistake.

Take a moment, sitting quietly. Notice the contact between your body and what supports it. Let sensations and thoughts come, without asking them to confirm the text.

The contact is experienced. The interpretation we offer of it remains to be explored. Doubt can be part of this exploration; on its own, it does not show that one has closed oneself off.

Matter is Spirit translated into the language of resistance: let us dwell in this proposition for a moment, as a possible way of seeing. The body is a crystallisation of

fundamental Spirit: let us ask ourselves what attention to life might arise from this image.

A face asks to be heard. A living being depends on what we do. A discovery is perhaps waiting for a question we have not yet learned to ask.

The depth of thought then meets the nearness of the world.

Science, philosophy and spirituality can meet in this movement: knowing with greater precision, questioning more deeply, living with a wider attention. Artificial intelligence could take part in it by helping us discover relations and put our reasoning to the test.

Something is experienced.

From this presence, an inquiry opens into the nature of the real. It can become a way of listening, of building and of living. May this reading live on in a question better posed, a relation better understood, a gesture whose reach we grasp more fully.

The hand lifts. It can write, welcome, care.

The question of the Whole has also become that of the next gesture.

References and Further Paths

The hand that lifts can also open a book.

Other voices accompany this inquiry. Some have nourished its foundations; others make it possible to extend it, question it or see it differently.

This list is not exhaustive. It offers points of reference.

Each reader may enter it through the question that calls to them.

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Written in 2026.

A Note on the Translation

This text is a translation of *L'Infini au creux de la main. Éprouver, distinguer, relier*, written in French in 2026. Its French title came from Blake; the English title returns to his own words.

A few choices deserve a word, since the text itself warns that a confusion of vocabulary can distort our understanding of the real.

The French verb *éprouver* means both to feel and to put to the test. English has no single verb that holds both senses. *To experience* has been chosen, because the first certainty of the text includes doubt and thought, not sensation alone: hence the refrain "Something is experienced". In one passage of the Study (VII), the French plays on both senses at once; the translation keeps the second: "put our reasoning to the test". The noun *le vécu*, what is lived, is rendered as "lived experience", or simply "experience" where the context makes the adjective unnecessary.

The terms of the model are kept constant throughout: *le Tout*, the Whole; *le néant*, nothingness; *nullité*, nullity; *infinitude*, infinitude, which is not the infinity of mathematics (Study, II); *fondement*, foundation; *exigence*, demand; *participer*, to participate in. *Esprit* and *Amour* keep their capitals, as Spirit and Love, because they name principles of the model rather than ordinary faculties or feelings. *Le mental* is rendered as "the mind", in the restricted sense defined in the Study (II): the activity that builds representations of the world, not consciousness as a whole. *Le Soi* becomes the Self, and *le moi* the individual self. *Relier*, which gives the third movement its title, becomes "to connect".

Three further words call for care in English. *Recréation* is written "re-creation", to keep it apart from leisure. *Finalité* is "finality" in its philosophical sense: orientation towards an end, not conclusiveness. "Perspective" keeps the meaning the model gives it (Study, III); where the French uses the word loosely, the translation says "view" or "standpoint".

Where the French uses a generic masculine, as in *celui qui* or *le chercheur*, the translation uses "they".

Quotations from Pascal, Leibniz and Bergson follow the published English translations by W. F. Trotter, Robert Latta and Arthur Mitchell. The quotation from Bachelard is translated for this edition. The works of Léon-Raoul and Frank Hatem are cited in French, with their titles translated in brackets.

Spelling follows British usage.