Interactive comment on "Vollzug und Sprache Physischer Geographie und die Frage geographischen Takts" *by* B. Zahnen

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The response by Barbara Zahnen to my review deserves acknowledgment, both for the fair tenor of its criticisms of my initial reading and for the fact that it is written in English, allowing a wider circle of readers to get a better sense of the point of the original paper. The assertion that I misrepresented some aspects of the argument in the original paper is fair, especially with respect to the latter, more strongly hermeneutical sections of Zahnen's argument, which, as the response makes clear, I hardly discuss.

One of the central points of dispute is the anthropocentrism I claim Zahnen's argument shares with Actor Network Theory. It is clearer now, after the exchange, that Zahnen's account of the "tragenden Anspruch der Sache" differs from the sense in which non-human 'actants' in ANT can be said to 'communicate'. The key difference

she emphasizes in the response is that this Anspruch, unlike in the case of ANT, is "led and carried" by "the ununderstood" [das Unverstandene], which Zahnen prefers to my translation ("the not-understood"). The central role of "the ununderstood" is not as clear in the original paper, perhaps because of its sheer length and the range of ideas playing an important role in the argument. The author's response clarifies this.

The reason Zahnen gives for preferring her translation of das Unverstandene is that it allows her "to avoid the danger of being trapped in a kind of thinking bound to a binary logic which is incompatible with the issue of my paper" (C10-C11). This incompatibility is characterized in terms of different "attitudes". The word "attitude" is of course not casually chosen by Zahnen, but has a long philosophical tradition. Regardless of exactly how Zahnen would define it in this case, however, an attitude cannot help but be expressed in a more or less explicit commitment to focus upon certain question or issues and not to focus upon others. It is undoubtedly true that my review is animated by an attitude of inquiry more positively oriented toward a binary logic, though I would dispute the idea that this orientation constitutes a "trap", or in general, that it is ever possible fully to extricate thinking from reliance on binaries.

Although Zahnen's response to my review goes a long way toward clarifying the core issues of her project, its considerable persuasiveness still seems to me to presuppose the basic adoption of a particular attitude, an adoption that does not itself emerge as a necessary or unavoidable practical consequence of her argument. Her success in appealing to fellow physical geographers faces its stiffest challenge here: how to bring colleagues over to a new and unfamiliar philosophical attitude that would then allow them to join her in shaping a new practice of physical geography.

If Zahnen's original article can be taken as an indication, this attitude brings with it a re-ordering of priorities, for example, a commitment to spending more time and effort on reflective consideration of, as well as reading and writing about, the embodied processes of physical geographic research , and (perforce) less time and effort on carrying out such research in the traditional sense. Thus there would have to be a conversion

to the view that the different kind of knowledge produced in this reflective, hermeneutical register is valuable enough to make it worthwhile foregoing the production of some measure of what has hitherto been understood as physical geographic knowledge. Persuading physical geographers, from their positions within current scientistic priority structures, to shift those structures in this direction, is a bold but worthwhile project.