

- tion (epitomized by the once-shocking but now also intensely boring MTV aesthetic). Television has in fact been the vector for these “digital” transformations (their preparatory precursor). It was the first mainstream medium to restructure itself in a way that institutionalized a primacy of event over content (a development that came into full expression in the 1980s). Television is a serialization of events that are as forgettable as they are spectacular. Those two attributes go together: it is the self-erasing of each event by its inherent forgettability that leaves a clean slate for the next spectacular event in the series. Spectacularized banality becomes the momentum motorizing the process. The quotes from M. M. Bakhtin are from “The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art,” in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Laipunov, trans. Vadim Laipunov (Austin: University of Texas, 1990), 309–15.
- 14 Nicholas Negroponte, *Being Digital* (New York: Alifred A. Knopf, 1995).

6 Chaos in the “Total Field” of Vision

- 1 Experimentation with the Ganzfeld began with the work of German psychologist W. Metzger. The Gestalt psychologists took up the concept, which later passed into the general domain of American experimental psychology. For a Gestalt treatment, see Kurt Koffka, *Principles of Gestalt Psychology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935), 110–28. It will become clear that the directions developed here diverge sharply from the Gestalt paradigm, while benefiting from its practitioner’s experimental ingenuity. Gestalt theory centers perception on figure-ground relations composing actually existing functional wholes whose dynamic is equilibrium-seeking. Here, the conditions of perception are considered to be nonfigurative and to concern movement and limit-states more than centerings; any wholeness is virtual, and the dynamic is far from equilibrium. For a valuable critique of Gestalt theory, see Raymond Ruyer, *La conscience et le corps* (Paris: PUF, 1950), 85–96, and *Néo-finalisme* (Paris: PUF, 1952), 67–71. Although the Gestalists were interested in the Ganzfeld precisely because it seemed to offer a primitive Gestalt or total “configuration,” since it was conceived in terms of purity, or in psychological terminology “homogeneity,” it still qualifies as a scientific reductionism. The defining characteristic of the Gestalt reduction is that it is to a field rather than to a simple function or fundamental element. Gestalt reduces experience to a pre-organized kernel of itself rather than to atomistic ingredients whose operating principles are to found at other levels, for example the biophysical (from which the Gestalists segregated the psychological by means of a parallelism). The Gestalt method might be characterized as an *endorreduction* of experience. It

is Gestalt’s heroic combination of “wholism” (emphasis on germinal self-consistency) and experimentalism that makes it a fertile ground for reflection (if ultimately unsatisfying, philosophically).

- 2 The *Ganzfeld* did not entirely fade away after experimental psychology lost interest in it. It relocated itself. In the mid-1960s it became a concern of experimental artists concerned with the conditions of perception (in particular Robert Irwin and James Turrell). Still later it entered the annals of parapsychology. A World Wide Web search of the term will uncover hundreds of sites dedicated to it. From a New Age perspective, the Ganzfeld’s uncertain empirical status, the phenomenal liminality described in this chapter, is wishfully interpreted as a threshold to a “deeper,” collective consciousness. A great deal of parapsychological research has been done to establish that Ganzfeld states increase receptivity to direct mind-to-mind thought transfer (the ultimate in wireless communication—don’t be surprised if your next Nokia is made with Ping-Pong balls). The Koestler Parapsychology Unit of the University of Edinburgh (http://moebius.psych.ac.uk/L_index.html) organizes and assesses double-blind experiments to test claims of extrasensory perception, with an ongoing focus on the Ganzfeld. The unit’s director, Robert Morris, claims statistically significant results for certain ESP-detecting Ganzfeld experiments. For an interview with Morris on this topic, see “Tales of the Paranormal,” *News Scientist*, 3 March 2001, 46–49. Morris’s claims are of course contested by other researchers. For a review article reporting negative results for Ganzfeld trials, see Julie Milton and Richard Wiseman, “Does Psi Exist? Lack of Replication of an Anomalous Process of Information Transfer,” *Psychological Bulletin* 125 (1999): 387–91.
- 3 Walter Cohen, “Spatial and Textural Characteristics of the *Ganzfeld*,” *American Journal of Psychology* 76 (1957): 409.
- 4 Lloyd L. Avant, “Vision in the *Ganzfeld*,” *Psychological Bulletin* 64, no. 4 (1965): 256.
- 5 Cohen, “Spatial and Textural Characteristics,” 409–10.
- 6 Avant, “Vision in the *Ganzfeld*,” 256.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 247.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 James J. Gibson and Dickens Waddell, “Homogeneous Retinal Stimulation and Visual Perception,” *American Journal of Psychology* 65, no. 2 (April 1952): 268.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 267–70.
- 11 Gibson and Waddell, “Homogeneous Retinal Stimulation,” 268.
- 12 Avant, “Vision in the *Ganzfeld*,” 246.
- 13 The “formlike” or “objectlike” emergences of the *Ganzfeld* can be assimilated Gilles Deleuze’s Leibnizian “inflections,” for which he adopts Bernard Cache’s term “objectie” in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom