The term “plurality” is often used in an emphatic sense. Then it evokes something non-homogenous, something, which cannot be determined conceptually, and which is not reducible to or deducible from something else. Plurality in the emphatic sense is characterized by an essential diversity. What belongs to it differs from each other, and it is only in plurality as long as this difference is retained. But on the other hand the elements of a plurality do not fall apart so that they would be indifferent for each other. The differences that belong to plurality are also relations or, if these relations are symmetrical, interrelations. The relations or interrelations constituting a plurality are always ambiguous; plurality is never schematic, and therefore it cannot be captured by a definite description. It has not been established in advance as a rigid system so that it would force its potential elements under its conditions. Rather plurality lets beings be. Therefore it is emphatically regarded as the adequate mode of being for those beings in respect to which it is requested and affirmed.

In consequence of this first sketch plurality understood emphatically can be distinguished from sheer manifold. A manifold is not necessarily plural. It can be organized by a leading principle that makes it a whole. Every individual that can be identified conceptually is of this kind; being identified it is regarded as a particular determinate object that has a manifold of aspects and properties ruled by the organizing principle. But even a manifold not organized in this way is not necessarily an emphatically understood plurality. It can be a disparate agglomeration or cluster of entities or particles, which cannot even be identified as particulars. A heap of sand is a manifold of this kind, but it is no plurality at all.

Plurality in the emphatic sense then is neither a whole that is organized by a leading principle, nor is it chaos. In contrast to chaos, it must be a structured manifold, but, in contrast to an organized whole, it must be structured in such a way that there is nothing dominating its components or elements. Accordingly these components or elements are not integrated by a plurality,
and this, again, means that a plurality does not constitute the being of its components or elements. Every component of a particular plurality may also be there otherwise—a component of another plurality, but also discrete, isolated or also under the dominance of something else. Taking part in a plurality however, something can be there as itself, even more so as if it would be discrete or self-contained. Plurality highlights as plurality; the interplay of its elements increases their potential to be there.

If these reflections are appropriate, pluralities are no ontological states that constitute something in its substantiality or as a property of a substance; they are also no deficient modes of substantiality, no privations of formerly well-structured beings. Rather they are modes of appearance that let their elements appear. Accordingly they cannot be described as such modes without considering the appearing elements. Appearance as such, mere appearance does not exist; it is necessarily the appearance of something. But on the other hand, appearance cannot be understood only in reference to the appearing elements. Modes of appearance must as such be described, and this is not possible without a general conception of appearance.

There is no way out of this circularity; one has to accept it and to describe the mode of appearance that plurality is in referring to a particular plurality as to a particular plural appearance of something. But the decision which particular plurality to choose is not necessarily at random. There is a reliable criterion; the plurality to choose must be immediately recognizable as appearance. It must be eminent appearance, and then the particular character of the plurality that appears eminently can be examined and elucidated. Thus what has been indicated as plurality in an eminent sense should become intelligible.

Artworks appear eminently. This can be experienced by the very fact that artworks do not fit into their surroundings. They are no integral parts of our life-world, but rather interrupt our normal everyday perceiving and understanding. Pictures, which are artworks, e.g. do not belong to our furnishings and equipment. Pieces of music, which are art, can easily be distinguished from everyday noise including music that is not made for listening but only as soundscape. Poetical language does not belong to normal speech, and an architectural artwork would always contrast clearly with the manifestations of architectural routine. Artworks make us stop. They claim and allow attention that is exclusively devoted to them. We even realize this when we do not give them extended attention, but, after listening or contemplating just for a