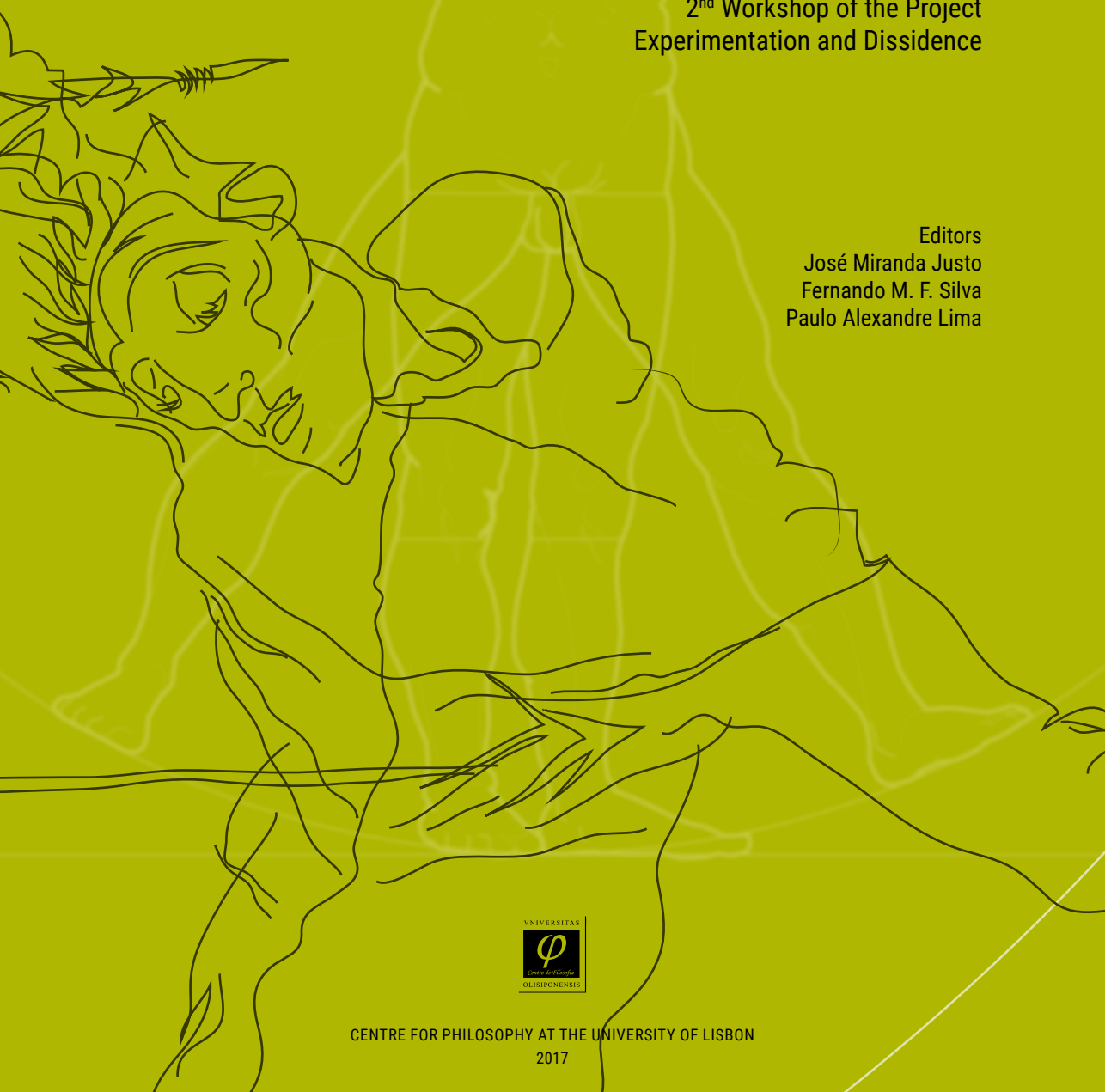


FROM KIERKEGAARD TO HEIDEGGER

2nd Workshop of the Project
Experimentation and Dissidence

Editors
José Miranda Justo
Fernando M. F. Silva
Paulo Alexandre Lima



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2nd Workshop of the Project Experimentation and Dissidence

AUTHORS

José Miranda Justo, Fernando M. F. Silva, Paulo Alexandre Lima

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INTRODUCTION

The research project Experimentation and Dissidence gladly presents its second e-book, with a gathering of the contributions to our second workshop held on the 1st and 2nd of June 2017 at the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of the University of Lisbon.

As it was explained in the introduction to the first e-book of the project, experimentation and dissidence are the guidelines for a broad set of research that explores the inner and/or outer frontiers of philosophical discourse ranging from the second half of the 18th century to the present. These guidelines are aimed at dealing with the crucial topic of the transformation of philosophical thinking during the last two and a half centuries. The transformations of philosophy may depend to a certain extent on the very course of the discipline's internal logic and on the sequence of its main-trend modalities of discourse; but such transformations, especially after the middle of the 18th century, depend also – and perhaps to a larger extent – on the contact between philosophy and other disciplines or discursive realities, and on the singularity of the individual innovative interventions at the periphery of philosophical endeavors. Such singularity and contact are often deeply intermingled: on the one hand, domains like theology, natural science, anthropology, rhetoric, history or the arts (to give just a few examples) frequently converge with metaphysical, ontological, epistemological or ethical topics, thus creating a wide ground for transformative actions; on the other hand, this convergence is often intersected by counter-normative stylistic procedures that give birth to new discursive experiments and, consequently, to new ways of thinking. Dissidence and experimentation are the two meta-concepts that we have chosen to epitomize those, at least partly, unexpected dissenting convergences and the stylistically experimental modulations that are responsible for the creation of discursive novelty.

Since the 18th century, poetry (or broadly speaking, literature) has many times crossed the path of philosophical reflection and has created a wide terrain of new forms that are to a great extent responsible for the kind of transformation that interests us. This is the case with authors like Kierkegaard, Feuerbach, Nietzsche and Heidegger (to mention only some of the names that are found in the present volume). Nevertheless, this action of poetry upon philosophy has generally been treated from the point of view of the particular inventiveness involved (and of the consequent progressive fragmentation of philosophy) and not from the perspective of *difference, singularity* and *style of thinking*. Difference – most notably the so-called “small difference” – is the active-passive element that can open up to the constitution of the concept, and it relies on the poetic process in the sense that the *poiein* is the *putting* of the not-yet-thought into action. As for singularity, it is in a certain sense the opposite of particularity since it does not stem from the unavoidable muteness and isolation of the particulars, but from the exceptional event of a deflection in the course of thought in its communicative, interactive and plural nature; such deflection is poetic in the sense that it not only enlightens the obscure but also obscures the enlightened, thus opening up the possibility for new objects and new modalities for treating these objects. As for the style of thinking, this is a category that has been much neglected, at least from the point of view of the articulation of the architecture of thought and its landscape; landscape of thought means here the set of dynamic procedures that interfere with crystallized rules and are, at the same time, modified by thought itself. Architecture and landscape of thought are poetic not only in the sense that they are an integral part of the putting into action mentioned above, but also in the sense that they involve the efficiency of an irruptive imagery that alters the established system of tropes that tends to confine thought to a mere repetition of the same. In brief, these three categories – difference, singularity and style of thinking –, constitutive as they are of an alternative way of considering the interfering of philosophy with poetry, should be ascribed a more preeminent status among the tools that are at our disposal for the assessment of the transformation of philosophy.

The present volume contains the texts resulting from the contributions presented and discussed over the two days of the event titled “From Kierkegaard to Heidegger”. They all, in one way or another, aim at addressing

the preoccupations sketched above. Dealing with multifarious authors and topics, the contributors always stress aspects of the results of their research that converge with the main issues of the project, i.e. experimentation and dissidence. Marcio Gimenes de Paula gathers Kierkegaard and Cassirer together to propose an innovative interpretation of the theme of the God of philosophers and to underline the Dane's specific tonalities in his treatment of the problem. Adriana Veríssimo Serrão deals with Feuerbach's concept of sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) as an extremely productive manner of abandoning mere abstraction and envisaging man as a being "of flesh and blood", namely as male and female in their concreteness and specificity. José Miranda Justo examines Nietzsche's early essay "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" to determine the role of the "double metaphor" in the criticism of intellectualism. Victor Gonçalves argues that Heidegger was wrong in considering Nietzsche the last philosopher in the history of metaphysics and that, on the contrary, he was the creator of a new metaphysics of immanence favoring an artistic language. Vera Serra Lopes unites "life" and the "tragic" in Georg Simmel's thought in order to establish a reading of the author that acknowledges his specificity in the field of vitalism. Departing from Hamann's influence on Walter Benjamin's early thought on language, Maria João Cantinho investigates the way in which the latter's conception of language and the marks of his influences are inscribed in the singularity of his work. Taking the refreshing and lasting conception of Wittgenstein's *Sprachspiel* as a crucial example, Maria Filomena Molder develops the tension that exists between testing the idea of a dramatically based birth of metaphysics and the emergence of that dramatic form in the philosophical discourse of the author. Vasco Baptista Marques envisages the topic of "lying" in Vladimir Jankélévitch's thought in order to convincingly show that this topic leads the author to understand conscience as an instance of experimentation and dissidence. Carlos João Correia puts Heidegger and Vincent Descombes in dialogue to establish a comprehensive portrait of "ipseity" in its specific difference to identity and individuality. Mafalda Faria Blanc analyzes Heidegger's *Beiträge* from the perspective that, from *Sein und Zeit* onwards, the author creates a new thinking that "moves in the circularity between the meaning of the already-disclosed and already-thought and the inexhaustible abundance of the to-come and to-be-disclosed".

To conclude this introduction I would like to express my gratitude to the Centre for Philosophy at the University of Lisbon that has given us all imaginable support, and to the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia that is responsible for the funding of the project and its initiatives. Special thanks are also due to all participants in the 2nd workshop and in this volume, and especially to the other members of the organizing committee, Elisabete M. de Sousa and Fernando M. F. da Silva for their extreme commitment to the project and dedication to the preparation of this volume.

José Miranda Justo

Main Researcher of the Project E and D

October 2017

THE GOD OF MODERN PHILOSOPHERS IN CASSIRER AND THE ASSERTION OF CHRISTIANITY IN KIERKEGAARD: AN ANALYSIS FROM *PRACTICE IN CHRISTIANITY*

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate the theme of the God of philosophers from the interpretation of Cassirer exposed in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. There, with great astuteness, the thinker points out the importance of the idea of religion and history in the establishment of Christianity as a phenomenon. At the other pole, stating Christianity as an existential decision, Kierkegaard, notably in the *Practice in Christianity*, seems to make an opposition to this thesis but at the same time appears to be the result of the same period and, somehow, participant of the same theses.

Keywords

Philosophy of History, Philosophy of Religion, Kierkegaard, Cassirer, Nineteenth Century

1. Introduction

The expression “God of philosophers” bears in itself a kind of awkwardness. It seems to announce the existence of a very particular kind of divinity, namely, the divinity of philosophers, and in that sense also allows the acknowledgment of another typology of divinity, namely, the divinity of faith, the divinity of believers, regardless of the belief. The birthplace of this expression seems to be that of philosophical Modernity, and its mentor was Pascal. The French thinker seems to be the first to promote the division between that which was peculiar to Christianity and that which, as a

concept, was a construction of the idea. That is why, within the same philosophical Modernity, we can also speak, for example, of a Spinozian God, of a Leibnizian God, of a Cartesian God. In all such configurations, God is part of a system, of a concept which conveys explanations for a certain dynamic and action in the world. In other words, God is the central point of a certain kind of metaphysics, he promotes full meaning and understanding within a model which, more often than not, is logical and mathematical.

In his *Thoughts*, Pascal articulates an ingenious explanation for those who serve God, for those who have not yet found him and for those who are searching for him:

There are only three kinds of persons: those who serve God, having found Him; others who are occupied in seeking Him, not having found Him; while the remainder live without seeking Him, and without having found Him. The first are reasonable and happy, the last are foolish and unhappy; those between are unhappy and reasonable (Pascal 1910: 94).

Perhaps the condition of philosophers borders on an intermediate position, that is, they undertake to search God through their reasoning, but they will not find him through this path. Such a hint is extremely stimulating and may be understood within a model ranging from Pascal to Kierkegaard – here one may clearly realize the difference between the idea of God of philosophers (especially in modern philosophy) and the biblical God of devotion and passion, a theme which is also resumed by the Danish author.

Equally stimulating is Pascal's assertion that "Faith is a gift of God; do not believe that we said it was a gift of reasoning" (Pascal 1910: 99). In other words, faith possesses amplitude and God may offer it to whomever he wishes, in whichever way seems best to him. Reasoning, on the other hand, demands effort, an intellectual compromise and most certainly the affirmation of a will; but, even so, "The knowledge of God is very far from the love of Him" (Pascal 1910: 99). Hence, neither is reasoning underestimated, nor is faith subordinated to it, and so once again we realize here the distinction between the God of philosophers and the God of faith. Let us now move on to the first point of our investigation: how Cassirer understands the theme of the God of modern philosophers.

2. The God of modern philosophers according to Cassirer

According to Cassirer, one of the images most commonly ascribed to the Enlightenment is that its main characteristic consists of a criticism of religion. Two problems deserve to be assessed here. First, because there is a severe difference between faith and superstition, one has to further investigate to what extent Enlightenment, even in its condition of critic of religion, was not perhaps a defender of important components of faith, instead of fighting superstition, as did most of philosophy. Second, there is not in rigor an 'Enlightenment', rather one should perhaps speak of 'Enlightenments', since they are so many of them as to be multifarious (English, German, French and so forth). Hence, as is underscored by Cassirer, not everything was contrary to religion in that period:

Yet it is doubtful if on the basis of such declarations by its champions and spokesmen we can consider the Enlightenment as an age basically irreligious and inimical to religion. For such a view runs the risk of overlooking precisely the highest positive achievements of the period (Cassirer 1951: 135).

Hence, in quite stimulating fashion, there was a philosophy of religion in focus in the 18th century. In that sense, the Renaissance would in truth be the attempt to recover a classic ideal, but, at the same time, one would find in that search a religious renewal: "Not even the Renaissance claimed to be simply a rebirth of antiquity and of the scientific spirit; its aim was rather the transformation or renovation of religion" (Cassirer 1951: 137).

Let it be noted that, in turn, this 18th century Enlightenment inherits a tradition already present in the 16th century, which advocated "a religion within the bounds of humanity" (Cassirer 1951: 137-138). However, Cassirer himself emphasizes the distinction of an essential difference between the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. According to him, the Renaissance, endowed with a strong Catholic matrix, still aspires to reconciling man and God, and despite being aware of the importance of the original sin, does not seem to ascribe it the same weight as does the Protestant tradition, which in turn hinders a humanist reconciliation. That is why, not by chance, the Renaissance is an ally of humanism, and Protestantism seems to be an ally of Augustinianism:

The core of this opposition lies in the radically different attitude of humanism and the Reformation toward the problem of original sin. Humanism never dared openly assail the dogma of the fall of man but its basic intellectual tendency was toward undermining the force of this dogma (Cassirer 1951: 139).

Hence, “all schools of Reformation thought stand or fall with their belief in the absolute and unique truth of the Biblical word” (Cassirer 1951: 139), which is why, for example, the problem of freedom in Luther is an extremely complex theme. For to what extent may one discuss the problem of free will, if will may have been corrupted? According to Cassirer, Protestantism seems to vanquish the first part of this duel against the Renaissance and the idea of sin appears strong not only with regard to the field of theology, but with regard to the very manner of understanding knowledge in modern philosophy. Hence, it does not seem unreasonable that Pascal positions himself precisely between Augustine and Descartes, thus mixing aspects of Christian faith in the modern thesis of method:

But the form and method of Pascal’s reasoning distinguish him from Augustine and mark him as a thinker of modern times. Method in the age of Pascal is dominated by Descartes’ logical ideal of the clear and distinct idea (Cassirer 1951: 142).

That which seems to be at stake is the disappearance of the submission to God and the attempt of a modern rational ideal to prove divine existence. Resulting from this, one still finds in Pascal the discussion of the theme of immanence and the paradoxical sphere, where reason as such cannot yet enter. Curiously enough, let it be noted – following Cassirer’s hints – that Voltaire does not seem to intellectually challenge Pascal’s genius. In other words, by moving to satire and the comical aspect of the problem, Voltaire renounces an intellectual debate with Pascal, and thus seems to resort to a strategy that does not have the courage to challenge theses. The same procedure may be observed in relation to Leibniz, as is indicated by Cassirer: “Leibniz’s arguments are repeated innumerable times and elucidated from all angles, but they are scarcely better understood in their vital connection with the basic concepts and presuppositions of his philosophy” (Cassirer 1951: 148).

As to Rousseau, he has a different attitude towards Pascal, and curiously enough he seems to be his “ally”, almost involuntarily, by criticizing the very limits of human knowledge. However, he certainly differs from the Christian perspective by separating himself from the theme of original sin, as is emphasized by Cassirer: “The idea of the fall of man has lost all its force and validity” (Cassirer 1951: 156). Resulting from this position, Rousseau will be harshly criticized by Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris and a severe critic of the thesis of natural human kindness present in *Emile*.

Hence, a central problem in the 18th century (and also in the preceding century) is the problem of theodicy. This topic will be invariably present in any discussion aimed at more carefully investigating the theme of the meaning of the God of philosophers. However, as is highlighted by Cassirer, “The eighteenth century did not formulate the problem of theodicy alone” (Cassirer 1951: 158). Nor does this century solve such a problem, rather it pushes it to the next century, and here something takes place which is to be closely observed: a turn of the page in German philosophy, that is, a reconciliation of Protestantism with Humanism. Indeed, this is perhaps most visible in the way Hegel, in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, clearly indicates the conversion of Protestantism in the religion of freedom, a theme which will also be explored by the Italian Benedetto Croce, a Hegel scholar and thinker of the 20th century, in his *History of Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Here the Neapolitan thinker further investigates the thesis, though without emphasizing the aspect of Protestantism. Hence, “In its reconciliation with humanism, Protestantism became the religion of freedom” (Cassirer 1951: 160).

In that very context he draws attention to the fact that in the Enlightenment the great enemy of science is not therefore doubt, rather dogma: “Not doubt, but dogma, is the most dreaded foe of knowledge – not ignorance as such, but ignorance which pretends to be truth and wants to pass for truth, is the force which inflicts the mortal wound on knowledge” (Cassirer 1951: 161). However, the thesis is even stronger, for dogma is equally an enemy of faith, and here arises the struggle of faith and science against a common enemy, namely, superstition:

The real radical opposite of belief is not disbelief, but superstition; for superstition gnaws at the very roots of faith and dries up the source from which religion springs. In superstition, therefore, knowledge and faith encounter a

common enemy and the fight against him is their first and most urgent task. They can and should unite to perform this task and on the basis of this union a treaty between knowledge and faith and a determination of their mutual boundaries can be accomplished (Cassirer 1951: 161).

Hence, not even atheism is an enemy to be fought, rather one should fight superstition: “Not atheism, but superstition, is the major evil to be attacked” (Cassirer 1951: 162). Curiously enough, as is emphasized by Cassirer, upon recalling Diderot, prejudice is even worse than ignorance, for prejudice is even further from the truth: “Diderot constantly repeats the assertion that superstition is a graver misunderstanding of and a worse insult to God than atheism, that ignorance is not so far from the truth as prejudice” (Cassirer 1951: 162). It is therefore within that view that one may understand how Feuerbach, a classical author, critic of religion and supposed atheist, is to be an “ally” of Kierkegaard, in the 19th century, in his fight against Christianity and the criticism of culture. According to the author from Copenhagen, Feuerbach is more than just someone who refuses Christianity, rather someone who knows the reasons for this refusal, as may be noted by this small, rather ironic and striking passage from his *Diaries*: “Feuerbach has understood the requirements, but he cannot compel himself to accept them—ergo he would rather renounce being a Xn. [...] Traitors are indeed exactly what Xnty needs. Xndom has betrayed Xnty in a very insidious manner by not truly wanting to be Xn, by wanting to have the appearance of being Xn. Now there is a need for traitors” (Kierkegaard, NB 13:92: 339-340).

If, as was thought by Kant, “Enlightenment is man’s exodus from his self-incurred tutelage” (Cassirer 1951: 163), then the search for knowledge will always be an exercise in boldness, a *sapere aude*. Hence, religion no longer dominates man as it did once, rather, quite on the contrary, its affirmation now departs with even greater strength from the subjective in man, and religion approaches the theme of humanity as it never did before. Hence, “it is not supernatural power nor divine grace which produces religious conviction in man; he himself must rise to it and maintain it” (Cassirer 1951: 164). However, one point must be clarified: religion, despite departing from the subjective aspect, does not become a mere private “opinion” on the divinity, rather it meets with the amplitude of the idea of God within the whole of nature, a trait which it seems to have inherited from a modern tradition by excellence.

Indeed religion now acquires a close proximity with themes of a moral nature, even with the primacy of moral conscience over the Holy Scriptures, as is highlighted by Cassirer: “For there can and must be no radical difference between morality and religion. If a conflict arises between them, if the testimony of the Bible contradicts the testimony of the moral conscience, this dispute should be settled in a way that respects the absolute primacy of the moral consciousness” (Cassirer 1951: 167). Only by understanding such aspects may we adequately approach the discussion on religious tolerance in the 18th century. Only in such a context may we, for example, understand Voltaire’s theses in his *Treatise on Tolerance* and his annotations against superstition, against fanaticism. However, there is one further point: it is within that framework that one can understand, as a natural consequence, the preference of French Enlightenment for natural religion instead of the religion of revelation. Diderot, for example, deems it more compatible with human reason and tends to hold all religions of revelation for distortions of the best religion, namely, natural religion.

It is not our objective to delineate a more extensive assessment of Diderot’s theses. However, and following a hint by Cassirer, it should be noted that there is an approximation between the French thinker and the theses of Lessing, an author deeply influenced by Leibniz and Spinoza, and who will in turn be extremely important in the German context of the 19th century, namely, in the criticism of Christianity. Kierkegaard, for instance, will greatly resort to Lessing’s heritage in several of his works, such as *Fear and Trembling* and *Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*. Hence, it is worth investigating the approximation and dialogue, which indeed took place due to their contemporaneity, between Diderot and Lessing:

In these sentences from Diderot’s essay *On the Sufficiency of Natural Religion* we can already hear overtones of Lessing’s ideas. We are also reminded of Lessing by the sharp distinction which Diderot draws between rational and historical proofs, and by the trenchancy with which he emphasizes that factual testimony, however sound it may appear, can never reach the degree of certainty necessary for it to serve as a basis for proof of general and necessary truths (Cassirer 1951: 171).

Is revelation therefore a certainty? If it is, what is the degree of that certainty? Or is revelation perhaps but a mode of communicating truth? Hence, after Diderot's and Lessing's theses, in the 19th century, religion dislocates its axis, namely, it moves to anthropology, as is highlighted by Cassirer:

Here we have the real foundation of religion. Religion is rooted neither in logical nor in ethical grounds; it merely has an anthropological cause. It arises from the fear of supernatural powers and from man's desire to propitiate these powers and subject them to his will. Here too it is the play of passion and of the imagination which controls and guides the currents of our religious life. Superstition and the fear of demons are the real roots of our conception of God (Cassirer 1951: 179-180).

Let it be noted, then, that religion, even Christianity, may now be confused with superstition, something which does not happen in other centuries. A fair share of the religious criticism produced in the 19th century, namely Feuerbach's criticism, adopts such a perspective. But the 19th century had reserved yet another aspect for Christianity: the approximation between religion and history. Somewhat escaping the webs of metaphysics, religion now seems to be rendered historical: "For the inner transformation of religion is conditioned by the fact that it frees itself from the domination of metaphysical and theological thinking and secures for itself a new standard, a new norm of judgment" (Cassirer 1951: 182). It is true that religion and history had been drawing nearer ever since the beginning of Christianity and that, at its core, Judaism already possesses that characteristic. However, the configuration of Christianity and history in the 19th century is a peculiar one, inasmuch as it was profoundly influenced by the thought of Spinoza, as is highlighted by Cassirer: "His *Theologico-Political Treatise* is the first attempt at a philosophical justification and foundation of Biblical criticism. It would seem paradoxical at first glance that Spinoza should be the one to perform this task" (Cassirer 1951: 184-185).

Even more emphatically, it is Spinoza who builds a large part of the historical framework for an explanation of the Bible. Hence "Spinoza was the originator of the idea of the historicity of the Bible, and the first to develop it with sober precision and clarity" (Cassirer 1951: 185). Curiously enough, he was still the source of inspiration – maybe even the pioneer – of the criticism

produced in the German context of the 19th century. That is why, despite all the criticism, his methodological principle lives on: “But the method as such is not affected by these obvious shortcomings and, despite the hostile reception of Spinoza’s treatise, it was generally adopted” (Cassirer 1951: 186). Cassirer seems to consider Erasmus the source of inspiration of a good deal of the criticism produced in the 18th century, by stating that “Erasmus, not Spinoza, is the real leader of this movement” (Cassirer 1951: 187). Spinoza might not be the master of the 18th century, but his critique will surely be of unequivocal importance for the 19th and 20th centuries. His criticism of the Bible is, without a shadow of a doubt, central for a good deal of what was produced in terms of philosophy and theology in the German context of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Spinoza’s link with the 18th and 19th centuries is to be noted, for instance, in authors such as Kierkegaard and Lessing; the latter, much more than just an admirer of the Dutch thinker, seems to have surpassed Spinoza at least as far as the debate on the relations between Christianity and history is concerned. Lessing’s new view on Christianity seems to go beyond the merely historical in his analysis. In other words, it “is nothing but a theodicy of history, a justification of religion not through a being which has existed from the beginning of time but through religious growth and the goal of this growth” (Cassirer 1951: 192). Hence, not unintentionally, one of the central chapters of Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments*, deeply inspired by Lessing, is precisely devoted to the theme of becoming, that is, the theme of becoming Christian. This is a theme which, in its special connection to Lessing, will be resumed even more sharply in *Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*.

Lessing’s question, which Kierkegaard and other authors of the philosophy of religion have analyzed, reads: “To what kind of certainty does religious belief belong? Is it to be classified with the necessary or with the accidental truths[?]” (Cassirer 1951: 193). Not by chance, there is a stimulating passage of Lessing’s letter entitled *On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power*, where, by seizing Aristotelian philosophy, Lessing resumes the thesis of becoming and holds it in check with historicist theses on Christianity:

But to jump with that historical truth to a quite different class of truths, and to demand of me that I should form all my metaphysical and moral ideas accordingly; to expect me to alter all my fundamental ideas of the nature of

the Godhead because I cannot set any credible testimony against the resurrection of Christ: if that is not a μεταβασις εις αλλο γενοσ, then I do not know what Aristotle meant by this phrase (Lessing 1956: 54).

Indeed, according to Lessing, there was a “ugly, wide ditch” (Cassirer 1951: 194) between history and the truths of Christianity. This thesis of an abyss is welcomed by Kierkegaard who, in *Fear and Trembling*, will use it in a very particular manner, which shows that the problem of history eventually became a problem of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, and would reflect upon the 19th century:

The problem of history for the philosophy of the Enlightenment arises in the field of religious phenomena, and it is here that this problem first became urgent. Enlightenment thought could not, however, stop with this beginning; it was forced to draw new conclusions and to make new demands, which in turn opened up the whole horizon of the historical world (Cassirer 1951: 195-196).

Hence, in *Practice in Christianity* Kierkegaard will criticize the thesis of a God of philosophers, thereby vigorously showing the impossibility of the existence of, for example, a Christ of philosophers. Let us now examine that point.

3. Kierkegaard's *Practice in Christianity*: Christianity as a critic of culture

Before more effectively approaching Kierkegaard's work, a question lingers: can there be a Christ of philosophy and a Christ of cult and religion? As is suggested by Jaeger in the first lines of *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Jaeger 1991: 3 ff.), the debate between Christianity and culture is a gigantic one, and perhaps it has already been undertaken more effectively by Protestant authors of the 20th century, such as Emil Brunner and Karl Barth. Yet, as we have seen in Cassirer, such a question is above all equally philosophical, since it consists of resuming the discussion between philosophy and theology, between themes which move between reason and revealed faith. Hence, Kierkegaard's work *Practice in Christianity* bears such a context, and the question that could be the motto of Kierkegaard's work is: is there a philosophical proposition to be drawn from Christ? And if there were one,

to what extent would it be possible?

Following an old path initially trodden by Augustine and Erasmus, and more strongly developed by Hegel in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Kierkegaard is among those authors who will establish a comparison between the figures of Socrates and Christ. However, despite the fact that he is conscious of the analogy and dwells on it more lengthily in *The Concept of Irony*, he himself promotes such an approximation, aware of the distances and, as he liked to say, the *dissimilarities* between the Greek philosopher and the figure of Christ. Indeed, Kierkegaard will be a fierce critic of the ideal of a *philosophical Christ*, who, in his perception, more than emerging in Hegel's work, was crowned in the Hegelianism of the 19th century. Nepi, an Italian Kierkegaard scholar, clearly points to the criticism produced by the author from Copenhagen:

For Kierkegaard, the Christ of philosophy is none other than a caricature of the Christ of faith, as was for Pascal (1623-1662) the God of philosophers in comparison with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: the God who, also according to Pascal, can be fully known to man only through Jesus Christ (Nepi 1992: 13).

As had been stated by Nietzsche in Aphorism 10 of *The Antichrist*, the blood of theologians and philosophers is incontrovertibly mixed in Germany (Nietzsche 2005: 9). The same conviction is shared by Heine in his inventory *Contribution to the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, and more recently, so did Karl Löwith in *Meaning in History* and *From Hegel to Nietzsche*. Hence, the German context is, ever since the advent of Reformation, a very particular one, and from it one may understand both Hegel's legacy and the criticism produced by his opponents. Kierkegaard falls precisely into this framework. Curiously enough, such a legacy even advances beyond the ecclesiastic domain and, in the German context, the ecclesiastic context and the academic and university context tend to mix frequently. Hence, quite regularly in Kierkegaard's work, academic criticism ends up resulting in ecclesiastic criticism, and in turn, ecclesiastic criticism extends to criticism of the university context and, so to say, culture in general, as is proved by Kierkegaard's unfinished work *The Moment*, which is simultaneously a criticism of Danish church and culture. That is why, while bearing in mind the Italian context,

Nepi stresses the difference between his own country and the German context:

An important fact, connected to the German university system and having no comparison in Italy's academic institution today, has to be taken into account. The connection philosophy-theology is in Italy less incisive than in other countries, such as Germany, where theology faculties in state universities have a recognition and cultural prestige unknown among us (Nepi 1992: 13).

Let it be noted that such a comparison is not merely restricted to the Italian context, rather the problem is common to other Latin peoples, namely, Portuguese, Spanish and French – despite necessary differences – which is why we must not be indifferent to Nepi's statement. It is important to note that this debate, so very German in nature, between philosophical and theological Christianity, which are so often mixed, somehow reflects the older debate between Greek and Hebraic religions, which also seem to be amalgamated in certain points, and it is worth remembering that both formed Christianity as we know it.

Strictly speaking, the very conception of rational or natural theology was already akin to Aristotle's metaphysics, much before it was akin to the Judeo-Christian thesis. Hence, when in modern times Leibniz denominates a project as *theodicy*, he does not do so gratuitously, rather because there was a support for such a conception. It is the same kind of support which will allow Hegel, in the 19th century, to articulate his proposal of a philosophy of religion. The German thinker will explore the thesis of Socrates as a master of morals, hence drawing him closer to the figure of Christ. And despite the fact that Kierkegaard is precisely within this intellectual scope, it is also here that, according to Nepi, one may fully realize the difference in his proposition:

Kierkegaard too, by accepting the interpretation of Socrates proposed by the Christology of Enlightenment, shall see in Socrates 'the champion of natural ethics'. However, he opposes to the philosopher of Athens, in name of the superior rights of religion with regard to a purely natural ethics, the 'paradox' and the 'scandal of faith'. Christ, according to Kierkegaard, may indeed be reached only by moving from an ethical attitude (Socrates) to a religious attitude (Abraham), through the 'leap' from *ratio* to *fides* (Nepi 1992: 25).

In other words, Kierkegaard resumes a traditional theological theme: the concept of “metanoia” (also held as conversion). That is, there is an articulation which attempts to overcome a kind of intellectual conversion proposed by Socrates and aims to achieve a conversion of a religious order. In that very context several other authors may be observed. For example Hamann, in his *Socratic Memorabilia*, indicated Socrates as a sort of proto-Christ; Fichte, in his *Critique of All Revelation*, indicated Christ as the model of an inspired prophet; the same can be observed in Schelling’s romanticism and also in the writings of Hegel’s youth, especially in the works *Life of Jesus* and *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*. However, Kierkegaard’s aversion to the idea of a Christ of philosophers is invariably stated. Hence, his work shows an aspect different from Hegel’s position, which aimed at a reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) between a Greek-style moral and a Judeo-Christian moral. That is, there is an interweaving of universal religion with Judaic religion, and also of the subjective and objective conflict, which equally influences the beginning of Christianity.

Despite his insertion in this very intellectual atmosphere, Kierkegaard stands against this thesis. Hence, strictly speaking, his thought falls within that which he himself will deem a ‘religious thought’, a sort of habile dialectics which derives, from Hegel’s position in the 19th century, the fact that paradox and scandal had been excluded from thought, something which not even ancient philosophy had done. Hence, he aims not at a reconciliation or an answer consisting of a synthesis, rather, quite contrarily to Hegel’s position in *Faith and Knowledge*, at indicating the impossibility that a kind of “speculative Holy Friday” exists.

Kierkegaard’s Christology, which is especially visible in *Practice in Christianity*, thereby diverges from speculative Christology, and achieves an existential tendency. It evokes memories from the thinker’s childhood, who, while abiding his father’s orders, had always sought to truly love Christ. Hence, the small boy standing before the crucifix represents a search for primitiveness, for ingenuity, for awe. It is from such a scenario that we may understand the central theme of the work, namely, the discussion of the paradox of the Man-God.

In that work, written in 1850 by the quill of the pseudonym author

Anti-Climacus, likewise the author of *Sickness unto Death* (1849), there is a continuity of an authorial work which seems to have ended in 1846, the year in which Kierkegaard published the *Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, and suggested that he would cease his activity as writer. Such a fact, as we may plainly see, never took place. In that work the topic of Socrates and Christ reappears. According to the Danish author, both refuse magisterial communication, and, as is observed by Nepi, “[...] they prefer instruction to voice, an instruction in which the content of truth is communicated especially through a life testimony” (Nepi 1992: 37).

The strategic use of the pseudonyms always brings about the question whether they refer to Kierkegaard himself or not. But perhaps more relevant would be to explore the thesis that, in truth, the Danish author lives, by contingency of his own philosophy, a process of reduplication. Hence, Kierkegaard himself seems to live the drama between the penitent and the thinker. It is in this very conceptual horizon that one may understand the relation between two of his pseudonyms, namely: Johannes Climacus and Anti-Climacus. Hence, the very pseudonym Johannes Climacus works as a sort of propaedeutic towards a better understanding of the pseudonym Anti-Climacus¹.

The problem which Kierkegaard again seems to face is that which he had already analyzed in length, through the quill of Johannes Climacus, in *Philosophical Fragments* and *Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, namely, the problem of history in the field of Christianity. This problem is central in the 19th century, and, especially in the *Postscript*, Kierkegaard assesses it through Lessing’s interpretations; Lessing who, a century prior, attempted to think Christianity and subjectivity differently from the manner that would be proposed by the Hegelian and systematic theses of the 19th century. Hence, and not at all inconveniently, Lessing shall indicate that there is a fundamental difference between the religion of Christ and Christian religion.

Kierkegaard, in turn, once again resumes a key topic of Christianity in *Practice in Christianity*, namely, the theme of *kenôsis*, that is, the humiliation of God in relation to man, the theme of God-Man by excellence. In that

¹ A stimulating discussion of this topic may be found in the following article: Possen, D.D., The Work of Anti-Climacus, in *International Kierkegaard Commentary – Practice in Christianity*, vol. 20, ed. Robert L. Perkins, Mercer University Press, Macon, 2004, pp. 187-209.

humiliation the eternal seems to overcome the historical, and in it are also reflected the two religiosities thought by Kierkegaard in the *Postscript*. In that work, the pseudonym Climacus thinks of a religiosity 'A', represented by Socrates. Such a religiosity would move between ethics, irony and aesthetics. In religiosity 'B', also presented in that work, emerge the essential aspects of grace as thought by Christianity. Hence, *Practice in Christianity* is also an indirect answer to Feuerbach and the Enlightenment, inasmuch as both thought Christianity as culture and human production. Its basic structure is constituted by a triple division: a) invitation; b) scandal; c) elevation. In them it is noticeable that the question is much more complex than merely indicating whether Kierkegaard was a Fideist or not.

Practice in Christianity was written in 1848 and published on the 27th of September 1850. This work somewhat reflects the explosive social situation in Denmark (and Europe) at the time. Its content holds a severe criticism of the social movements of a socialist nature which could not understand the individual. Through a comparison between the Christianity of the New Testament and Christendom, its author conveys the reader a clear view of his severe criticism of current Christianity. There is also an acerbic criticism of Lutheranism, which had then sided with power. According to Anti-Climacus, Christendom ended in martyrdom and suffering, and hence destroyed Christianity itself. As already discussed, the work is also an implicit answer to Feuerbach's theses on Christianity, and also to Kant and Hegel's observations, as well as a criticism of Comte's positivism and even an answer to Strauss's *Life of Jesus*. According to him, the historical-scientific demythologization in biblical studies is a wrong process and does not attain genuine Christianity, which is scandal, madness and martyrdom. Hence, both Kant's and Hegel's philosophy did not succeed in taking that step.

Anti-Climacus signs two works in *Kierkegaard's corpus*: *Practice in Christianity* (1850) and *Sickness unto Death* (1849). Both occupy a strategic position in opposition to the skeptical Climacus – the pseudonym (author) of *Philosophical Fragments*, *Postscript* and *Johannes Climacus*. In the sum and contrast of these two pseudonyms one may observe somewhat better Kierkegaard's concept of Christianity. Furthermore, these pseudonyms prepare the *ground* for Kierkegaard's polemic with bishop Mynster and his fight against the state Church in *The Moment*. Let it also be noted that the work

is still influenced by Thomas Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*, and its meaning in the original Danish (*Indøvelse*) evokes a training or initiation in the practice of Christianity (*Christendom*). This is, in a word, a work devoted to deepening and awakening inner life. A Christian point of view of what it means to become a Christian.

At the beginning of the work there is a part entitled *invocation*, which quite intentionally resembles the structure of a liturgy or the summoning of the faithful for a religious ceremony. This Invocation recalls that the worldly passage of Jesus Christ has not become historical past, rather something much more intense. In such intensity resides that which the author shall call the *scandal of Christianity*. After such an *invocation*, there is an invitation in the terms of the Gospel: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Matthew 11:28).

The invitation, to be sure, comes from love. Hence, it is an invitation addressed to all. The invitation is for all, but it should be received by each one, individually. The very invitation comes under the guise of an individual. Only in this sense can one understand Jesus Christ preaching repose for each sinner. If the reception of Christianity happens within each individual, then it must be understood as an inner sign and never as an outer sign.

Also, let it be stressed that from a human point of view, the warning is always more important than the one bearing the warning, that is, the warning is important in itself and in a greater degree than the vehicle of its transmission. The life of he who made the invitation cannot be captured by the historical perspective. His life became the symbol and object of faith, and through it came scandal, that which cannot agree with the ancient Judaic conception of faith.

The scandal becomes even more shocking when one finds that he who invites is Jesus Christ, a worldly man. Many admire the celestial Jesus, but few would acknowledge an invitation from the worldly Jesus, who assumes the shape of a servant. Anti-Climacus draws attention to the fact that Jesus' return to celestial glory is not an object of study, rather his worldly stay is. Jesus' words will be true only if he speaks to men in his *humiliation* (*kenôsis*) and not in his glorification; which is why one should hear his words in the brief interval between his humiliation and his ascension. Hence, nothing can be said of this Christ through history, and here lie his limits. He is a paradox,

an object of faith; for all historical transmission conveys a given knowledge and Christ is knowledge in itself.

Can one then historically prove the divinity of Christ? Now, such a thing would be unthinkable, since one has to face the dire contradiction of wanting to speak of the divinity of a particular man, that is, Jesus of Nazareth. Obviously, a good deal of people will think this is something illogical or scandalous. To consider a particular man as God is to promote scandal and to position oneself against reason. Hence, a common error in the history of the Church is that here Jesus is taken as being too divine, there he is taken too humanely. To want to use history in order to prove that Christ was God is a project bound to fail. One should rather question if the continuity of the life of Christ is more important than his worldly life. For Anti-Climacus, its importance resides precisely in this: God is revealed in the shape of a common man, that is, the emphasis is to be laid upon the God that appears in the shape of a man.

In Socrates, for instance, – it is a fact – the meaning of his life matters more than his words. But in the figure of Christ it is evident that the message is of supreme importance, but this is also inseparable from the messenger, who is at the same time the servant and the savior. After all, Christ is the servant who conveys and is himself truth:

Jesus Christ is the object of faith; one must either believe in him or be offended; for to 'know' simply means that it is not about him. Thus history can indeed richly communicate knowledge, but knowledge annihilates Jesus Christ (Kierkegaard 1991: 33).

Such an idea of Christ as sufferer needs to be recovered with urgency, since Christianity has abolished it and hence decreed the end of scandal. Only the humiliation of Christ is the real condition in order to understand his message. Christianity has *rendered pale* the message of Christ, and hence the latter has to be reintroduced in the former.

To speak of Christ as a contemporary (as is also observed by Climacus in the *Philosophical Fragments*) is also to no avail, for this is not an historical question. It is evident that the system will collide with such a conception and will think that this is no more than a *subjective madness* of some individual who proclaimed himself God. Some may even discuss whether Christ

wished to mount some sort of a political organization or defend a certain system of government. Hence, what must be understood is that divine and human are integrating (and inseparable) parts of the life of Jesus. He who invites – and is the scandal – is also God (and not just a man). Hence, the divine question of who invites goes much further beyond pure compassion before human misery; it is the question of a divine compassion and hence it is the occasion of scandal. The madness resides in the fact that it is absolute, and that it cares not for the contemporaneity of the disciple, rather for the act of *becoming Christian*. In that perspective, historical Christianity is a hoax and all true Christians are contemporaries of Christ, regardless of the time in which they live.

That which establishes a difference is the individual before his God and the acknowledgement of the difficulty of becoming a Christian. The consciousness of sin is the rehabilitation of such an individual. Such a consciousness is the *narrow door* narrated by the Gospel and the ground of faith. In this context one may realize how happy those are who, despite it all, continue believing and are not scandalized. Those whose faith overcomes scandal. Let it be noted that the term scandal is a Christian term by excellence, as it is an obligatory passage towards faith. It transforms a possibility into an act.

The scandal refers to God-Man. Indeed, it is not the whole humanity that is *transformed* into God, rather one specific man, namely, Jesus. The following passage sketches an answer to the theory of religion as a projection of Feuerbach and the pre-Socratic Xenophanes, since not all men are gods, rather one specific man. Such a scandal takes place in a twofold manner: through the elevation of a man who claims to be God and through the humiliation of God to the lowest stage of human condition. Such a Man-God is the absolute paradox. In his position arises a new confrontation: the confrontation with the established order, which proceeds from the struggle between Christ and worldly powers.

The confrontation with the established order is produced due to the natural inner clash of Man-God and that order. The process of internalization unveils the pretense of the divinity of the established order. Thus should Jesus Christ be understood as a scandal, for he does not congregate the exterior (habits) with piety (interiority). To suppress the scandal is the same as suppressing Christ himself. It is, indeed, the possibility of essential scandal

in the sense of elevation, where a particular man speaks and acts as if he were God. He wants to be God, that is, God in the sense of the composed term Man-God.

The scandal is a sign of contradiction and hence it must not be understood by systematic logics. The suffering of Christ is as scandalous as the fact that he drinks and eats. The possibility of this essential scandal means humiliation; where he who deems himself God shows himself as a man of humble condition, poor, suffering and finally impotent. In other words, he renders effective in act the scandal that is God becoming a man.

If God is a man, the question arises: is he not the son of a carpenter? Is he not human? Such questions reveal the distrust that is in Christ's contemporaries. Hence, to what avail is a contemporaneity with God, since there is such distrust? Peter is surely an exemplary figure of distrust, since he represents scandal and doubt.

Incarnation accompanies scandal and both are followed by the suffering of Christ and his followers. The end of scandal represents the equivalence between paganism and Christianity. Such equivalence generates a vulgar religiosity which distorts the harshness of the biblical texts. After all, suffering and martyrdom are the inevitable consequences of Christendom. The adaptation of Christianity to the worldly order represents the end of scandal.

In order to better study this Man-God question, one should beforehand limit its focus. In other words, it cannot be studied by modern philosophy, since it departs from doubt and not from amazement. It can neither be communicated directly, since Christianity is not direct communication. Now, if the master himself is more than the doctrine, the important thing is to know that there is a re-duplication, that is, a paradox of communication. Hence, as is recalled by Binetti: "From the point of view of spirit – the authentically real one –, that God is subject means that He is the 'infinite reduplication' which is present in every finite. God is always subjectivity, never object, and is always subjectivity including for the self-aware subjectivity which conceives Him as the mode of its own reduplication, as the very nothingness of its finite subjectivity" (Binetti 2015: 164).

The essential difference between Christ and man is that Christ is more important than his doctrine, whereas in man the doctrine is more important than the messenger. Hence, Christ is more than a man. God-Man is a

sign and is different from what is immediate. The sign is that which points at something, but such a gesture can only be apprehended by someone who knows what this is about and understands the language of the sign: "A sign is not what it is in its immediacy, because in its immediacy no sign is, inasmuch as 'sign' is a term based on reflection. A sign of contradiction is that which draws attention to itself and, once attention is directed to it, shows itself to contain a contradiction" (Kierkegaard 1991: 125). Man-God therefore equals a sign of contradiction. The miracle draws attention to that signal, especially for those who do not believe. However, this is not a direct communication. The survival of the doctrine and the oblivion of Christ represent the end of Christianity.

Also the form of the servant – which appears here and had already appeared in *Philosophical Fragments* – is that of the incognito, that is, he who does not make himself known. In the divine perspective this is a particular man. Hence, even as a contemporary of Christ, due to his humiliation, it would not be possible to know him. Such a direct recognition of God would be a blasphemy or sin against the Holy Ghost, a sin for which there is no forgiveness, for if he exists incognito, there is no direct communication and that happens due to divine strategy.

Hence, given the impossibility of direct communication, there remains indirect communication. There is, then, a re-duplication of communication. In such a re-duplication, the personality of he who communicates is dissolved and one does not progress towards pure objectivity, but there is a sort of pseudonymic effect in this double reflection. In other terms, there occurs something which may be characterized as a sort of *dialectic knot* and a communication with a *schizophrenic* crisis, due to its many personalities.

In this sort of communication there is also a discourse of option, that is, the human being may decide what he wishes to believe or not. Such a strategy of indirect communication is understood neither by speculative philosophy nor by Christianity. However, that communication reveals the seriousness of the miracle of Christ and of the discourse of option. For Anti-Climacus, only an idol is to be directly recognized. Christ is the chosen, but at the same time the forsaken one of God.

The impossibility to know God is a result of his love for man. This has to be so, for no man can understand a suffering God in the person of Christ.

The possibility of scandal is the negation of direct communication, and also marks the abyss between God and men. Direct communication, in turn, is the refusal of such a difference and also represents the end of scandal. But it should be noted that indirect communication can *seduce* as well as repulse those who hear it.

However, one can only negate direct communication through faith. Such a kind of communication does not care for the *becoming Christian*, and hence only appears serious. In equal fashion proceeds modern philosophy, by believing in direct communication and seeing faith as immediate. Such a philosophy is mere doctrinal opinion, thus representing the end of scandal and paradox.

God-Man can only be understood as an object of faith precisely because it is also a possibility of scandal. It is impossible to understand God-Man by dissociating it from scandal. Only thus can one draw nearer to love and faith. To recognize a god directly equals paganism, and speculative philosophy makes that error by rationalizing faith. Hence, for Anti-Climacus, eighteen centuries of Christianity prove nothing, except for speculation.

A Christian must forget the whole world so as to remember one single thing: Jesus Christ. He is attracted to Christ not just by mere seduction, but the humiliation of that God is for him a true ascension. Believing in the God who humiliates Himself is the Christian condition in order to ascend with him. Christ, by rendering himself the least of all men, gives equal condition for all who wish to follow him. Such a Christ is the son of God, he who is eternally. His history of suffering is real and men are his contemporaries inasmuch as they recognize that suffering. Hence, Christians also have the duty to love inclusively all men. Christ is God's option of suffering for men. Such suffering is unavoidable and happens for love.

The mission of that Christ is to congregate all who set out to follow him and follow his cross. Not to refuse suffering is the duty of the imitator of Christ. Only thus may one bear witness to faith. Let it be noted that, despite everything, man keeps producing images of this God, as was noted by Feuerbach. However, for him (the genuine Christian), his God is more than all such images. Hence, if he bears in mind the real humiliation of God, he should equally humiliate himself.

How, then, may one assert that Christ was the truth? For, as an individual and as God, he refused to answer Pilates' question on truth (John 18:38).

Certainly he is not a triumphant truth as is the Triumphant Church, but a truth to be testified and followed with martyrdom, as the Militating Church. Hence, the main challenge of genuine Christianity is to change and reintroduce its concepts in Christendom. To do so, a Christian must be more than just an admirer (aesthetic kind), rather he must be an imitator of Christ (religious sense). To humiliate oneself is therefore to elevate oneself. To elevate faith and Christianity.

4. Conclusion

In the first section of our paper we assessed, preferentially through Cassirer's interpretation, how the theme of the God of Philosophers evolved between the 17th and 19th centuries. Also we assessed one of the relations most strongly subordinated to it, namely, how the criticism of religion was constituted within the Enlightenment and how such criticism was received in the 19th and 20th centuries, and its inheritance spread.

One of the inheritors of such a legacy was the Dane Kierkegaard. However, one should not understand the term inheritor as a passive condition of mere receiver. Our aim was to display how much the thinker, aware of the philosophical tradition, especially modern philosophical tradition, was a connoisseur of both the traditional metaphysical models such as those of Spinoza, Leibniz and Descartes, and how these articulated their theses of a philosophical God, as well as of biblical heritage and the peculiarity of a God of faith. Hence, his *Practice in Christianity* constitutes a critique of such a proposal, and at the same time the articulation of an alternative to a model of refusal of Christianity, thereby deeming it irrational or historically outdated. In it we understand a deeper discussion of topics already found in Pascal, the important assessment of Christianity beyond a historical phenomenon and a discussion which overcomes the dilemma between "rational" and "irrational", which is commonly restrictively presented.

In conclusion, one should not think that Kierkegaard merely seems to refuse the model of the God of philosophers and the idea of history in Christianity. Instead, he ascribes new meaning to both positions, thereby promoting a critique of the concept of the God of philosophers and reserving for history that which history may resolve. Indeed, the introduction of the themes of moment and choice, which are central in Christian heritage,

are living examples of such a re-articulation, as well as of the new assertion of the centrality of the paradox, which according to Kierkegaard had been banished from philosophy and a more conceptual Christianity. Hence, the aim of the present article has been to resume a key topic in the philosophical tradition, which is also a theme of Western spiritual tradition.

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SENSIBILITY AND ANDROGYNY IN LUDWIG FEUERBACH

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Abstract

How can philosophy establish a vision of the human that does not fall within the traditional dualisms between heterogeneous natures or in the hierarchy of faculties ordered according to a scale of value? How can philosophy avoid that any new principle does not, in turn, result in mere idealization and correspond effectively to existing human beings, beings of flesh and blood? The *Sinnlichkeit* principle, as a sensible way of being, is Ludwig Feuerbach's proposal for this double requirement: of completeness and concreteness. In this article we analyze one of the most relevant aspects of Feuerbachian anthropology, elaborated from the 1840s on: the determination of the dual nature of the sensibility in terms of passivity and activity, or of "feminine" and "masculine". Thus, essential themes such as the sexual constitution of the individual, which transcends entirely the biological to include feeling and thinking; the originary distinction of man and woman as fundamental anthropological difference; or the concrete inter-subjectivity producing humanity can be considered as anthropological *a priori* and elevated to the status of principles of reason. It is the whole understanding of the female that changes, ceasing to be a balance between a degrading naturality and an extreme idealization, to put herself, at par with the male, in the constitution of a bisexual human species (*Gattung*).

Keywords

Sinnlichkeit, Androgyny, Ludwig Feuerbach, Anthropology, Female

1. Masculine and feminine or the dual nature of sensibility

Rising *Sinnlichkeit* to the status of fundamental way of *being human*, Feuerbach consolidates the foretold shifting of the basis for philosophical Anthropology, but also of the concept of rationality, since sensibility, as it

then becomes understood, does not intend to marginalize rationality, nor to set itself against it, but rather to include it and to replace it through amplification. If an idea of reason shaped by attributes such as autonomy, spontaneity or purity is inevitably bound to relegate what contradicts it to the scope of the merely empiric, therefore creating an unsurpassable separation from what pertains to the contingent scope of what is “human”, on the other hand sensibility has enough flexibility to include in itself the most universal human dimensions, without introducing any kind of dualism between heterogeneous natures, nor of hierarchy of faculties ordered according to a scale of value. The identification of reason with the intrinsic human and of the intrinsic human with sensibility is precisely the core of Feuerbach’s proposal of a new rationality, as well as the foundation for characterizing modern rationality as a whole as a veiled theology, dealing with an abstract reason, separated from Man, set above him and imposing itself as a new form of transcendence.

The unifying capacity of sensibility arises from the polarity between activity and passivity which is inherent to it and from the fact that within it passivity does not indicate lack or deprivation, inaction or absence of activity but, on the contrary, becomes an essential condition for activity. Without receptivity, without need and lack, without suffering, nothing would be received, nothing would be given and, ultimately, nothing could exist. Expressed by words such as *Passivität* and *Leiden*, passivity obtains the value of supreme ontological principle, of mode to constitute every being and, therefore, the human being, positively consecrated as an element of concreteness and proximity, and, as such, it is the sole condition for the possibility of connection and communion among beings. Anthropologically considered, the sensible permeability is the matrix for openness to human otherness, the receptivity to the other which sustains the relationship as an inter-personal and reciprocal action dynamism. In their turn, the words *Aktivität* and *Tätigkeit*, which correspond to the independent and self-sufficient exercise of reflexive thought, define the organ of separation and withdrawal from the world, isolation in oneself and concentration in the inside sphere of representations and thought concepts.

Let us dwell on this characterization as it is enounced in some aphorisms in the *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie* as correlation of two

principles – one, the *masculine* principle of the *head*, the other, the *feminine* principle of the *heart* –, in an equivalence of masculine with activity and feminine with passivity which has no longer anything in common with any conservative concept. This is due to not associating a deficiency to the attributes corresponding to the passivity of the *heart*, but rather a strength which, instead of fixating the being in an inevitable stillness, renders it vigorous, “revolutionary”: thanks to it, things are set in motion, since it is passionateness and vivacity, “effervescence, ebullience, blood”. In its turn, masculine, or the activity of the *head*, is imbued with an emphatically intellectual tone, described with traits such as “metaphysical autonomy, freedom and infinitude”, characteristic of a thought which concentrates in itself the signs of stability and gives the vision of the world a reformer sense, opposed to change, seeking position and order, and always tending to put things back in their places.¹

There is an obvious androgyny in this determination of two faces in a *single sensibility* and in the return of the masculine and feminine attributes to the same nature, which is active and is passive, but, more even than that, which can only be active in so far as it is passive, capable of being marked, imbued, stimulated by otherness. It is the masculine-feminine duality, an exclusive privilege of sensibility, which enables the desired foundation of the ontological unity of the human being and frees the human essence from any risk of dualism. Sensibility appears as an indivisible whole, which does not separate itself either in parts or in faculties, but which can unfold in a multiplicity of orientations. Although affection must be recognized as having a genetic priority, in the sense that affection precedes thought, and life is entirely dependent on the quality felt,² from the point of view of the sensible nature intrinsic structure, the dual and alternate composition of activity and passivity, head and heart, will be the sensitive *being*, formed by the *masculine* and *feminine* dynamism which constitutes the human being in general and, as such, every individual. Therefore, the *sensitive being* (*sinnliches Sein*) is as much *pathos* as *logos*, as much affliction as serenity, as much *flesh* (*Fleisch*) as reflection. In consequence, one may express oneself in many ways, on a scale where the head may ascend to metaphysical indifference and the heart may

¹ *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie* (1843), GW 9, 254-255.

² Cf. *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie*, GW 9, 250.

deepen into passion. Because concrete sensibility is before substantial splits or logical distinctions between matter and spirit, potency and act, because it is a sensitive matter, capable of materializing or spiritualizing, there is no longer a place for the traditional image of a feminine as mere potency, apt to indistinctively receive any form proceeding from a creative act: "But only where there is movement, commotion, passion, blood, sensibility, there is also *spirit*".³

In it the dynamic of openness and permeability in the relationship between Man and the World takes its root; from it stems the exercise of a thought which is always carried out in a sway with the beings in the sensitive world. Furthermore, human sensibility is marked by the animation deriving from want, and from the impulse and the movement to fulfill it. The diversified lexicon of passivity, with such words as need (*Not*), want (*Bedürfnis*), wish (*Wunsch*) or impulse (*Trieb*), gives evidence of an activity of want, a force of desire, a freedom of need, in short, an *active passivity*, in contrast to the impassibility of a pure act, incapable of generating anything:

Where there is no limit, no time, no need, there is also no quality, no energy, no spirit, no fire, no love. Only the being in need is the necessary being. Existence without need is a superfluous existence. What is free from any needs does not need to exist either.⁴

³"Aber nur wo Bewegung, Wallung, Leidenschaft, Blut, Sinnlichkeit, da ist auch *Geist*." *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie*, GW 9, 255. As it is the case in many other subjects, Feuerbach's sensibility vocabulary undergoes changes in the transition from the philosophy of religion to anthropological philosophy. In *Das Wesen des Christentums*, the passivity of religious subjectivity is associated to the intimate dimension of the soul (*Gemüt*), and its corresponding feminine principle is marked by the sentimentality (*Gemütlichkeit*) of a discreet homely spirit which enjoys collecting and keeping holy objects and valuable souvenirs, in contrast to the courage of the free spirit, exposed without protection to the vicissitudes of life (GW 5, 128). However, in the scope of his anthropological philosophy, the Latin pairs *Passivität* and *Aktivität* (GW 9, 150) or the German *Tätigkeit* and *Leiden* (GW 9, 153) are used indifferently, suggesting an active, not static, receptivity, also referred to by the *Rezeptivität* and *Empfänglichkeit* synonyms (GW 9, 256).

⁴"Wo keine Grenze, keine Zeit, keine Not, da ist auch keine Qualität, keine Energie, kein *spiritus*, kein Feuer, keine Liebe. Nur das notleidende Wesen ist das notwendige Wesen. Bedürfnislose Existenz ist überflüssige Existenz. Was frei ist von Bedürfnissen überhaupt, hat auch kein Bedürfnis der Existenz." *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie*, GW 9, 253.

2. To be a man or to be a woman: the embodiment of sensibility

Though this metaphorical is imbued with a profound predicable efficiency, providing a conception of unity which is not incompatible with duality and is fructified by it, and refusing an idea of activity understood as sheer spontaneity, capable of producing from itself, the general characterization of *Sinnlichkeit* includes the masculine-feminine dual determination with a mainly analogical comprehension, clearly opposed to the idea of rationality which dominated modern philosophy, predominantly constituted by metaphysical and abstract attributes. Feuerbach still uses it as a cultural forms typology when he associates the speculative type philosophy, or moving within abstract ideas, with the head, and religion, with the heart. Or when he includes metaphysics and theology in the scope of pure act and, in its turn, religion as a manifestation of sentiment and passion, historically and structurally schematizing and categorizing the main matrixes which shape Modernity – the metaphysical-theological and the religious –, figures of a historical movement marked by the separate development of each orientation.⁵

But from the point of view of real analysis of existence, where the new philosophy picks its principles, the embodiment essential plans – which Feuerbach calls *a priori or existential forms* – institute concrete sexuality and the human being's sexual conception. Because, though sensibility

⁵ The contrast of masculine and feminine does not mean a rigid separation of characteristics or faculties, on the contrary, a reunion, as is confirmed by the promotion of a new philosophy, of "French-Germanic blood", capable of uniting German idealism with French sensualism, an expression in which Feuerbach intercrosses distinctive signs of the sexes with characteristics of peoples, assigning to it a "German father" and a "French mother". Feuerbach quotes, and corrects, Johannes Nikolaus Tetens' proposal, calling for a philosophy with a French (or feminine) father (man) and a German (or masculine) mother (woman). In his characterization, perhaps involuntarily, Feuerbach does not go as far as Tetens, who completely diluted the sexual reference in the ways of thinking, with his "feminine father" and "masculine mother", entwining sexual temperament and thought traits in a more decidedly androgynous formulation than Feuerbach's. The initial paragraphs from *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* outline the diverging evolution from philosophy and religion throughout modern post-Descartes times, with philosophy becoming (rational) theology with Hegel, and religion turning into (religious) anthropology with Protestantism. The comparison between Hegel's philosophy and Schelling's also illustrates this contrast between the primacy of the concept, independence masculine principle, and that of intuition, receptivity feminine principle; *Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie*, GW 9, 256.

corresponds to the requirement of a unitary and entire human being, it becomes effectively concrete only when embodied. An individual is then a gradational, but unique, modulation of sensibility. The fact that the individual is one, undivided, endowed with a single nature, without substantial divisions, is due to sensibility, his or hers sole matter. However, individuation is due solely to one's body, the most originator and irrecusable plan of being and in whose cohesion sex intervenes as a real determination, as real sex.

Feuerbach confers an unparalleled philosophical status to human sex, without a match in all previous philosophy, since he frees it from any restrictive aspect, to bestow upon it such an amplitude that it is confounded with the being of the individual:

However, the body is nothing without *flesh and blood*. *Flesh and blood are life, and only life* is the reality, the *effective reality* of the body. But flesh and blood are nothing without the *oxygen of sexual difference*. Sexual difference is not a superficial difference, nor a difference limited to certain parts of the body; it is an essential *difference*; it penetrates *marrow and bone*.⁶

With the body elevated to the status of *own body* (*Leib*) and the subject understood as an *embodied ego*, the individual is conceived as a whole, a subject-body where both, the ego and his/her body, constitute an inseparable unity. Feuerbach may then sexualize the body in the exact measure in which he rationalizes sex, since, as the own body is confounded with the subject, the constitution of a human being as having sex also becomes an *a priori* inherent to the most fundamental anthropological characteristics. On one hand, sex is no longer marked by the biological contingency, which subordinates it to the morally unappreciated plan of an organic nature, so frequently and so easily relegated to the inferior animal plan. On the other hand, since it is no longer confined to the anatomical, physiological and reproductive equipment, it is also no longer marked by the status of a mere object, which an outside look or a scientific attitude may isolate in an analytical observation or even manipulative and experimental perspective.

⁶ "Aber der Leib ist nichts *ohne Fleisch und Blut*. *Fleisch und Blut ist Leben*, und *Leben allein* die Realität, die *Wirklichkeit* des Leibes. Aber *Fleisch und Blut* ist nichts ohne den *Sauerstoff* der *Geschlechtsdifferenz*. Die *Geschlechtsdifferenz* ist keine oberflächliche oder nur auf gewisse Körperteile beschränkte; sie ist eine *wesentliche*; sie durchdringt *Mark und Bein*." *Das Wesen des Christentums* (=WCh) (1841), GW 5, 177.

In short: human sex is not a body part understood as an organic object, but a quality of the individual-subject, an essential element of an identity one *is*, not one *has*. In one's sex there is a concrete self-consciousness, lived in communion with the consciousness of one's own body, felt from within oneself, "from inside the skin". Therefore, the sexualization of the individual goes along with the individualization of the sex. In other words, the difference man/woman is not set in terms of virility and femininity. In Feuerbach's unequivocal expressions, it is a "non mechanical" or accessory determination, but rather "a chemical, intimate" determination, which, unlike in the case of other characteristics, can never be accidental, exterior to reason or confined to an obscure zone. That is the reason why it is a deep, intrinsic characteristic, "which does not penetrate just marrow and bone, it also determines the most intimate oneself (*Selbst*), the essential way of one's thinking, wanting, feeling".⁷ Therefore, the same individual who may say "I am my body", but never "I have a body", may also say oneself and feel oneself "I am a man" or "I am a woman".

Men and women are certainly such also in virtue of anatomical devices (from the exterior body) and biological conditions (from the interior body), but these elements are not separated from others, namely, the superior faculties supposedly free from contamination and contact with bodily marks. From the individual's personal point of view, *to be a man* or *to be a woman* corresponds to recognizing a specific composition which is rooted in him or her, always lived with a sentiment of a situation emerging from sensibility. In parallel with this vision of embodied individuality, Feuerbach accepts the definition of a masculine or feminine subjectivity which, if annulled or repressed, would transform a real personality in an incomplete, impersonal or fictive personality:

The real ego is simply a feminine ego or a masculine ego, not a sexless it, because the difference in sex is not limited to the single sexual parts – only in this case would it be justifiable to disregard it –, it is a difference which penetrates marrow and bone, omnipresent, infinite, a difference which does not start here and finish there.⁸

⁷ "[...] die nicht nur Mark und Bein durchdringt, sondern auch sein innerstes Selbst, die wesentliche Art seines Denkens, Wollens, Empfindens bestimmt." *WCh*, GW 5, 294.

⁸ "Das wirkliche Ich ist nur weibliches oder männliches Ich, kein geschlechtloses Das, denn

The sexualization of the body and, as an extension, of the individual whole is then no longer confined to a given and fixed attribute, which would correspond to an impervious substantialism. The fact that Feuerbach's sexualization perspective is entirely anthropological, in other words, that sexuality is neither congenital nor biological, is stressed by its awareness being a result of a self-identification psychological process. For the awareness of being man *or* being woman and, consequently, of the difference between being man *and* being woman, concurs a process of differentiation in which the genetic perspective of the personal (and sexual) identity being formed by and through otherness attenuates any possible naturalist or determinist interpretation, since an individual personality already differs within the human relationship that precedes it. Therefore, though the natural foundation is accepted, Feuerbach's concept is far from inscribing itself in a strict naturalism, since it is mainly connected to psychological aspects, which always depend from interpersonal relationships.

Such is the clear, and theologically provocative, sense of a sexualization of the divine, as it happens in the analysis of the figure of the son within Christian trinity. He has the Father's masculine essence (creative and metaphysical). But he also has the mother's feminine essence (the sweetness and the sense of depending). The son is then a dual being, indistinctly masculine and feminine, and, as such, an intermediary being, half-man, half-woman, a pre-having-sex lack of differentiation which adjusts very well to the mixed and imprecise figure of an adolescent.

In an analogy with the real transition of the young boy into an adult man, in the plan of divine personalities, the son, born yet without a definition of sex, learns the personal identity of son, but also the sexual identity of man, through the preferential attraction felt to the woman-mother:

The love a son feels for his mother is the first love the masculine being has for a feminine being. The love of a man for a woman, of a boy for a girl, receives its religious consecration – its only true religious consecration – from

der Geschlechtsunterschied ist nicht nur auf die Geschlechtsteile beschränkt – nur in diesem Falle wäre ich berechtigt, von ihm zu abstrahieren –, er ist ein Mark und Bein durchdringender, allgegenwärtiger, unendlicher, nicht da anfangender, dort endender Unterschied." *Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus, besonders in Beziehung auf die Willensfreiheit* (1866), GW 11, 173.

the love of the son for his mother. The son's love for his mother is the first aspiration, the first act of humility from man towards woman.⁹

The forming of the personal and sexual identity within family relationships – since the religious trinity is already a mirror of the human reality in its origin – is deciphered in the light of the inter-subjectivity dynamism, as each member has an identity solely in the interplay of relationships established with the other or with the others. This example is paradigmatic of the bipolar, and not absolute, status of the personality, with each of the terms – father, mother or son – always relative to, and dependent from, one or two of the others, and existing only in that function. Therefore, it is impossible for the genuinely religious man to think a (God)father without the existence of a (God)son or a (God)son without the existence of a (God)mother: “A son is innate to the father, but a mother is innate to the son”.¹⁰

The anthropological and sex analysis of each Trinitarian figure not only

⁹“Die Liebe des Sohnes zur Mutter ist die erste Liebe des männlichen Wesens zum weiblichen. Die Liebe des Mannes zum Weib, des Jünglings zur Jungfrau empfängt ihre *religiöse* – ihr einzig wahre religiöse – Weihe in der Liebe des Sohns zur Mutter. Die Mutterliebe des Sohnes ist die erste Sehnsucht, die erste Demut des Mannes vor dem Weibe.” *WCh*, *GW* 5, 145. As all religious universe, the representation of the trinity is simultaneously real and imaginary, true and illusive, in other words, anthropological and theological. The hermeneutics of sexualizing personal relationships within the trinity leads Feuerbach to consider God's mother (the feminine principle), and not the spirit (*logos*), as the true third term mediating between father and son, at the same time as the incomplete and supra-natural character, i.e., already depurated of the earthly element, of the divine family is evidenced. Mary is the feminine figure consecrated as maternal principle, a maternity yet possible without masculine intervention, from where its religious, apparitional character originates. In his turn, God, the creator is the father figure who autonomously procreates, alone and solely from himself, without the need of feminine cooperation. Since between the two there is no direct connection, the divine family is marked by incomplete and fictitious paternity and maternity, cut off from the element of true conviviality. On the other hand, the voluntary and non-imperative procreation of a son limits the fatherly self-sufficiency and exclusivity, i.e. it limits God as absolute principle and indirectly introduces in the divine a sentiment of love, which is a sentiment of dependency. Therefore, when Protestantism dispenses with the figure of the mother of God, it also excludes Christ's feminine nature, incurring in a contradiction between faith and life. For the explanation of the Trinitarian personal dialectic in *Das Wesen des Christentums* see mainly the chapters “Das Mysterium der Trinität und Mutter Gottes” and “Das Geheimnis der Auferstehung und übernatürlichen Geburt”.

¹⁰ *WCh*, *GW* 5, 145.

confirms Feuerbach's thesis, decisive in the philosophy of religion, that the religious representation of the "divine family" is a projection of the anthropological structure of the "earthly family" but also shows concrete evidence that the community is not a supplement of relation for isolated and self-sufficient personalities, but rather the fundamental condition for the existence of real personalities, who lose all reality and exclusivity outside the reference to otherness, where there is the process of their constituting themselves.

3. Man and woman: sex as mediation between individual and genus

To recognize the distinction between *to be a man* and *to be a woman* from the point of view of the individual also means to recognize the real composition of the two sexes, who belong, as two species or groups, to the same human genus, a compound of individuals from the two sexes, between whom there is a non-transposable nor surmountable, but constitutive and radical difference, in which there is a complementary factor and a diversity propeller. The notion of human genus (*Gattung*), so central as a unitary horizon for all anthropological philosophy, and which Feuerbach adopts in the sequence of eighteenth century doctrines, obtains however a concrete feature, since it is no longer the quantitative unfolding of a human essence with invariable traits, nor the addition of individuals as undifferentiated dots within a collective historic subject, nor a hollow entity or neutral Humanity. From the genus are also removed racial, ethnic or geographical distinctions, which would be barriers to an unconditional universalism. As an encompassing notion, the human genus serves a multiplicity of functions in Feuerbach, with the possibility of being understood as the presumed entirety of singular individuals, but also as the joint whole constituted by two distinctive and complementary sexes, and even as the complex of inter-relations effectively created within the human world.

There is therefore an exhaustively explored reflection on the multiple variants through which it is possible to establish a connection between individual and genus, safeguarding both the individuality irreducible value and the indispensable reference to wholeness, with either the individual being seen as an irreplaceable property of the genus or the latter as property of the individual. There are at least four decisive plans in the complex dialectic of individual and genus, always with the sexual constitution as mediating element:

1. The sexual difference is *origin and quantitative multiplier*, representing the original duality from which comes the unlimited quantitative appearance of individuals. So the *man and woman* pair shows in itself the existence of the multiplicity of genus: “Only man and woman together constitute the true human being, man and woman together are the existence of genus – since their union is the source of plurality, the source of other human beings”.¹¹

2. And the *element of connection* between the individual and the genus which awakens the humble evidence of limitation and incompleteness, tempering individualism and the solipsist temptation, conducting one from the illusion of being exclusive to the awareness of a being who comes true only in (and with) the other in general, with lack of sex associated, on the contrary, to an attitude of proud misanthropy:

But who does not belong to a sex does not belong to a genus either – the sexual difference is the umbilical cord by which the individuality is connected to the genus – and who does not belong to a genus belongs solely to oneself, is a being without needs, purely divine, absolute.¹²

3. And also the parity generating the Humanity, when considered as the unlimited *qualitative differentiation* of its members too. Each new individual is not an arithmetic unity lost in a numeric sequence, but a unique conjunction of new properties, attributes and qualities, with the possibility of being justly defined as a “new character and a new talent of Humanity”.¹³

¹¹ “Mann und Weib zusammen machen erst den wirklichen Mensch aus, Mann und Weib zusammen ist Existenz der Gattung – denn ihre Verbindung ist die Quelle der Vielheit, der Quelle anderer Menschen.” *WCh*, GW 5, 290-291.

¹² “Wer aber keinem Geschlecht angehört, gehört keiner Gattung an – die Geschlechtsdifferenz ist die Nabelschnur, durch welche die Individualität mit der Gattung zusammenhängt –, und wer keiner Gattung angehört, gehört nur sich selbst an, ist ein schlechthin bedürfnisloses, göttliches Wesen.” *WCh*, GW 5, 293. Both the teleological concept of an asexual God as the denial of the sexual impulse to the religious man are part of the same strategy for toning down the concrete diversity of the human genus before a God, a unique individual who congregates in himself all the absolute attributes of Humanity. According to the alert development in the chapter “Der Unterschied des Christentums von Heidentum”, here would lie one of the most diverging aspects between polytheist and differentiated paganism and monotheist and leveling Christianity.

¹³ *WCh* (C) (1849), GW 5, 60.

4. The sexual duality constitutes in itself the *genus visible image* which may represent and substitute the “many” – “Two is the principle and, precisely because of that, it is the perfect substitute for plurality”.¹⁴ And the topic of the complementing dynamic which turns what is finite into perfect and the miraculous power of love consummates: “Miracles are made namely by love, and above all by sexual love. Man and woman correct and complete each other, so that, thus united, they present the genus, the perfect human being”.¹⁵

The bisexual and heterosexual concretion element, introduced in the individual and the genus, is after all nothing but the root of all synthesis, as the man *or* woman analytical disjunction is just the man *and* woman supplementary side, in other words, a founding *synthetic a priori*. If the fact that the individual is sexualized concurs to shatter the hollow notions of an idealized ego without any consideration of a body, being that a man *or* a woman, it also shows its reverse, the constitutive reference to the other that is inscribed in it, i.e. the principle of the relation, which is nothing more than a principle of incompleteness:

in the sense that man, woman is a synthetic concept; since I cannot feel myself or think myself as a man or as a woman without going beyond me, without simultaneously connecting the feeling or the concept of myself to the concept of one other, who is different but nonetheless corresponds to me. [...] since I am a man only because there is a woman, I am not just *a posteriori*, I am *a priori*, from the first to the last foundation of my existence, I am essentially a being with reference to another being outside of myself, I am nothing without this reference.¹⁶

¹⁴ “Zwei ist das Prinzip und ebendamit der vollkommne Ersatz der Vielheit.” *WCh*, GW 5, 138. It is clear that in Feuerbach the “two” comes before the “one”, and the latter does not have any consistency, neither in sensitive reality nor as a subject for thinking, an argument which appears several times, in innumerable contexts, as one may stress his criticism of Max Stirner’s One-Unique, with Feuerbach easily redirecting that lack of sexuality, as with the solitary figures of religion and philosophy, to the field of non-reality and contradiction; cf. *Über “Das Wesen des Christentums” in Beziehung auf Stirners “Der Einzige und sein Eigentum”* (1845), GW 9, 434.

¹⁵ “Wunder wirkt namentlich die Liebe, und zwar die Geschlechterliebe. Man und Weib berichtigen und ergänzen sich gegenseitig, um, so vereint, erst die Gattung, den vollkommenen Mensch darzustellen.” *WCh*, GW 5, 273.

¹⁶ “[...] in dem Sinne, in welchem der Mann, das Weib ein synthetischer Begriff ist; denn ich kann mich nicht als Mann und Weib fühlen und denken, ohne über mich hinauszugehen,

4. A man and a woman: the quaternary relation, from love to religion

With the reference of every being to personal otherness as essential, the idea of a subject becomes unreal when it is extracted from concrete conviviality, and therefore the vision of a self-sufficient subject loses substance and is replaced by the inter-subjectivity expressed in the principle of alliance between *I and You*. The original duality, foundation of all authentic interpersonality, always implies however “the unity supported by the reality of difference”,¹⁷ i.e. the sensitive beings’ simultaneous *unity and distinction*, an antinomy which only seems to be apparent and which Feuerbach solves by crossing the sensibility passive-active duality with the I and You duality of the interpersonal structure. In other words, and having recourse to Anthropological Philosophy fundamental principles, multiplying Sensuality by Altruism, the human relationship becomes understood in the light of a *quaternary* model which subsists only in the alternation of the I and you status in the same subject: “Only sensibility solves the secret of reciprocal action. Only sensitive beings act upon each other. I am I – for myself – and at the same time you – for the other. But I am only that as a sensitive being”.¹⁸

With the specific modality of sensibility being dual polarity, and the sexual incarnation, the sex difference, the rhythm moving the inter-subjective relation is that of quadruplicity, a connection between two doubles, expanding, completing, but simultaneously giving each of them a relative quality. The being in relation, referred to oneself and directed to the other, lives in simultaneous self-affirmation and self-limitation, is at the same time autonomous and dependent, lives and practices a heteronomous autonomy. It is therefore in the love between a man and a woman that the quaternary dialectic is best consubstantiated, distant from the loving which originates

ohne mit dem Gefühle oder Begriffe meiner selbst zugleich den Begriff von einem andern, unterschiedenen, aber gleichwohl mir entsprechenden Wesen zu verknüpfen. [...] denn ich bin ja nur Mann, weil ein Weib ist, bin nicht nur ‘a posteriori’, bin ‘a priori’, vom ersten und letzten Grund meines Daseins aus, bin wesentlich ein mich auf ein anderes Wesen außer mir beziehendes Wesen, bin nichts ohne diese Beziehung.” *Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus, besonders in Beziehung auf die Willensfreiheit*, GW 11, 172.

¹⁷ *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* §61, GW 9, 338-339.

¹⁸ “Das Geheimnis der Wechselwirkung löst nur die Sinnlichkeit. Nur sinnliche Wesen wirken aufeinander ein. Ich bin ich – für mich – und zugleich Du – für anderes. Das bin ich aber nur als sinnliches Wesen.” *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* §33, GW 9, 37.

simply in the unilateral manifestation of a sentiment that may be directed to any being, not necessarily human, without obtaining any echo from that expression. A loving sustained by an insurmountable essential difference which cannot be deleted and is absent from friendship between equals: “the distinction between I and you, the fundamental condition of all personality, of all awareness, is only *real, lively, fiery as distinction between man and woman*. The ‘you’ between man and woman sounds differently from the monotonous ‘you’ between friends”.¹⁹

Sensibility reaches its climax in this form of love, which directs the complex of head, heart and flesh in unison to the creation of a sensible spirituality. It is in such a complete love that sensibility reaches its apotheosis, rendering evident the single wholeness of each one and showing the deep truth of the both subjective and objective identification between to love and to be (loved).²⁰

The inseparability of I and you is shown here in its highest degree of exemplarity since there is no love relationship without the joint interplay of passivity and activity, of receptiveness and donation, of humility and generosity, causing the alternation of self-affirmative and self-restrictive rhythms, converting the sensitive beings into lovers and loved ones, and finding in the sexual sensation the form of union simultaneously most individual and most expansive, most interested and most generous:

No sensation is more subjective than the sexual sensation, and yet none proclaims the need and existence of its corresponding object with more liveliness and energy, since each unilateral sexual attractive is really an attractive which takes the place of another sex, just a cryptogamic attractive.²¹

¹⁹ “[...] der Unterschied von Ich und Du, die Grundbedingung aller Persönlichkeit, alles Bewußtseins, ist nur *ein realer, lebendiger, feuriger als der Unterschied von Mann und Weib*. Das Du zwischen Mann und Weib hat einen ganz andern Klang als das monotone Du zwischen Freunden.” *WCh*, GW 5, 178.

²⁰ Cf. *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* §36, GW 9, 319.

²¹ “Keine Empfindung ist subjektiver als die geschlechtige, und doch verkundet keine lebhafter und energischer die Notwendigkeit und das Dasein des ihr entsprechenden Gegenstandes, denn jeder einseitige geschlechtliche Reiz ist ja eigentlich nur ein das andere Geschlecht vertretender, nur ein kryptogamischer Reiz.” *Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus, besonders in Beziehung auf die Willensfreiheit*, GW 11, 181. The just unilateral sexual impulse, described in this text as an analogy with cryptogamic plant species which have hidden reproductive

Instead of considering love as a pure attitude, or purified from egotistic elements, authentic love is no more than the pure relationship, shown as such, without a dominating pole, self-sufficient, exempt from being conditioned by others or from outside basis, solely enlivening oneself through one's own continual effort to keep and strengthen the immanent bond, without any other reason to be than the pursued movement, without a main pole and without difference in level, *between two*. Whereas the beginning of love cannot be ascertained in time, its end is foretold when a difference in level and hierarchy begins to settle.²²

To some, this understanding of love may seem too realistic, for bringing the receptive and donating dynamic of sexual pleasure into philosophy, whereas to others, on the contrary, it may seem too prosaic and lacking eroticism seduction games or the delirious ecstasies of passion. In the complete loving community Feuerbach identifies the example of ethics concretely exercised in the joint experience of reciprocity, where donation does not imply haughtiness and receptivity does not imply humiliation:

Love demands reciprocal love, reciprocity means love for love [...]. The most intimate and perfect form of love is sexual love; but here we cannot please ourselves without, at the same time and perhaps involuntarily, also pleasing the other human being, yes, the more we please the other, the more we please ourselves.²³

organs, is opposed to the "phanerogamic", obvious impulse, which openly shows the need of a relationship to be fulfilled exclusively in the other. The same sexual matrix stretches, in an analogy, to the global understanding of the sensation which lives from unity (which in Feuerbach's terminology means alliance or cooperation of two elements), but also of the subjective and objective reflexible capability, for instance, between to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, and, ultimately, to life's global process, an attribute exclusive to sensibility.

²² Being a privileged relationship of leveling two equals, in spite of the insurmountable difference marking them, and thanks to that difference, the love between two human beings of two sexes is distinguishable from other forms of relationship in general, such as the connection between doctor and patient, or other manifestations of love characterized by an asymmetric and non-reversible structure, such as fatherly or maternal love.

²³ "Die Liebe verlangt Gegenliebe, d.h. Liebe für Liebe [...]. Die innigste und vollkommenste Form der Liebe ist die geschlechtliche; aber man kann hier nicht sich selbst beglücken, ohne zugleich, selbst unwillkürlich, den andern Menschen zu beglücken, ja, je mehr wir den andern, desto mehr beglücken wir uns selbst." *Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus, besonders in Beziehung auf die Willensfreiheit*, GW 11, 77.

It is not difficult to recognize in it the real example of a pacified will, devoid of renunciation, where interest and disinterest, egotism and altruism become confounded, since “in as much as I please myself, at the same time I please the other I, just in accord with his or her impulse for happiness do I *want to please mine*”.²⁴

As a paradigm of the relationship based on the joint pursuit of happiness, in quaternary love the formulation of the ethical principal of *mutual happiness* is implicit, without any conflict between pleasure and duty or between personal happiness and the happiness of the other. From the ethics of love also comes the value of enduring religiosity as an immanence which transcends itself, a bond which simultaneously connects and goes beyond the strict sphere of its terms:

And this religion is the single one to remain, at least so long as there is not only one unique human being on earth; for, as long as we have *two* human beings, as man and woman, we also already have religion. Two, difference, is the origin of religion – the you is the God of the I, because I am not without you; I depend from you; without a you – no I. The existence of two human beings, as man and woman, is enough for the existence of religion too.²⁵

5. Equality of men and women: the achievement of sensibility

Though the strong presence of the feminine *thematic* in Feuerbach’s doctrine may have been sufficiently demonstrated in the previous analysis, an evaluation of Feuerbach’s *position* on the feminine may lead both to a surprisingly innovative synthesis and, on the contrary, to one still eminently conservative. Such considerations are largely due to the theoretical points of view adopted by the author of the interpretation, who may either emphasize a

²⁴ “[...] indem ich mich selbst beglücke, zugleich das andere Ich beglücke, daß ich nur in Übereinstimmung mit seinem Glückseligkeitstrieb den meinigen befriedigen will.” *Über Spiritualismus und Materialismus, besonders in Beziehung auf die Willensfreiheit*, GW 11, 77.

²⁵ “Und diese Religion ist die allein bleibende, wenigstens so lange, als nicht ein “einzigster” Mensch nur auf Erden ist; denn sowie nur *zwei* Menschen, wie Mann und Weib, haben, so haben wir auch schon Religion. Zwei, Unterschied ist der Ursprung der Religion – das Du der Gott des Ich, denn ich bin nicht ohne dich; ich hänge vom Du ab; kein Du – kein Ich.” *Über “Das Wesen des Christentums” in Beziehung auf Stirners “Der Einzige und sein Eigentum”*, GW 9, 436.

distinguishing position, stressing the insurmountable difference between woman and man, or, instead, dim the sexual differences in a complementation between feminine and masculine subjectivities, which is more consensaneous with all the encompassing logic of sensibility. The problem might then be brought to the following expression: does Feuerbach accept the equivalence between woman and feminine, man and masculine?

In the plan of its founding principles, and independently from cultural, sociological or historical points of view, the philosophy of sensibility is, both in its spirit and literally, a vehement refusal of formal uniformity, a continual exaltation of the beings' singularity and plurality. From its original point of view, it is opposed to any uniformed equality. The reality is the world of differences, which thought may unify without falling into the danger of abstracting, as long as it keeps them and reconciles them as similarities, i.e. through *kinship* (*Verwandschaft*) bonds. It is through a kinship epistemology and ontology that Feuerbach founds a non-conceptualist theory of knowledge, correspondent to a non-essentialist concept of essence.²⁶

At an explanatory level, Feuerbach's model of being and life, of ontology and anthropology, is horizontal and plural. The bond among the singulars is the emblematic figure of reason. There is no hierarchy among the modulations of sensibility, although a genetic priority must be attributed to passivity. There is no hierarchy either between the sexes, which takes Feuerbach's thought away from the misogynous prejudices deep-rooted in the dominant philosophical tradition, prejudices which may go in the sense of lowering because of nature, but also in that of a no less humiliating idealization of the woman, which is nothing but the other side of the same. However, he is also kept at a distance from the radicalism of some feminism in our time, since this gives mainly an image of rivalry and conflict between domineering and dominated, to which one might conversely reproach the one-sidedness and the assumed misandry or androphobia.

Under these circumstances, the treatment of woman and the feminine also comply with the main foundation and horizontal vision of existence, independently of the features they may acquire in a given sociological reality or a certain historical moment. The understanding of being man and being woman does not involve definite social aspects, roles played within a society

²⁶ Cf. *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft* §7, GW 9, 272.

or a certain kind of family, nor psychological conflicts among individuals. As anthropological concepts of general application, both the sexualization of subjectivity and the bi-sexualization of the human genus are permanently valid existential patterns.

The fact that the doctrine of sensibility has a strong sex matrix justifies our having characterized it in terms of *androgyny*, recovering both the ancient etymology of the Greek word and the renewed interpretations of the human psyche dual orientation.²⁷ Androgyny is distinguishable both from the hermaphrodite coexistence in the same individual of sexual organs from both sexes and from the fusion without differentiation in another, be it a third or a new sex.²⁸ Feuerbach may then accept the association feminine-passivity and masculine-activity without a consequence of sexist cleavage or value prejudice. It serves as the foundation for the decisive understanding of the being of being human as a wholeness of different, a unity of multiple. It is worth stressing that, unlike with the pairs “feminine” and “masculine”, Feuerbach does not linger in giving precision to the “woman” and “man”

²⁷ As Carl Jung and Gaston Bachelard established with the *animus-anima* pair in domains of symbolical activity and of imagination productions, the polarity masculine-feminine encompasses the sex modalities at the same time as it transcends them: “Deux substantifs pour une seule âme sont nécessaires pour dire la réalité du psychisme humain. L’homme le plus viril, trop simplement caractérisé par un fort *animus*, a aussi une *anima*, une *anima* qui peut avoir de paradoxales manifestations. De même, la femme la plus féminine a, elle aussi, des déterminations psychiques qui prouvent en elle l’existence d’un *animus*. La vie sociale moderne, avec ses compétitions qui «mélangent les genres» nous apprend à réfréner les manifestations de l’androgynie. Mais dans nos rêveries, dans la grande solitude de nos rêveries, quand nous sommes libérés si profondément que nous ne pensons même plus aux rivalités virtuelles, toute notre âme s’imprègne des influences de l’*anima*.” G. Bachelard 1978: 52-53.

²⁸ Rigorously, the option between differentiation (biological) and constructivism (cultural) does not fit to Feuerbach, as it does not fit to him the recent distinction between sex and gender, since the difference, though natural, does not have an exclusively biological character, nor the concrete personality, though built in the relationship, allows overcoming (or altering) one’s sex. Accepting the two sexes are complementary and sufficient, the possibility of a third gender would be absolutely foreign to Feuerbach, even in the sense of a moderate position such as that of Elizabeth Badinter 1992: 86 (*XY. De l’identité masculine*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1992), more mindful of behaviors and roles within the couple and the family, asking for a reinvention of a masculine condition through the show of the feminine nature inscribed in chromosome Y. The possibility of a homosexual love relationship would be different, but Feuerbach does not consider it, though not excluding it either, since it would fit into the I and You structure as making the complementarity of two human beings concrete, although incomplete.

attributes, as if the only quality worth of consideration to define them were precisely the need of and the reference to the other inscribed in each of them. Scarce are also the sentences referring to sexual traits and psychological conditions in the opposition of woman-femininity and man-masculinity, and they are always in a context of polemics, either against the idea of a personality devoid of body and sexually neuter, or against a mixed subjectivity uniting in an obscure way creative activity and engendering receptivity.²⁹ However, he does recognize that there are real differences in level, with an effective subordination of woman, a perspective which is not absent. It appears in his work in two planes.

In the first he denounces historical and cultural representations, namely the depreciatory status of woman, associated with a repressed sexuality. It is important to point out that, for Feuerbach, the negative consequences of the spirit and flesh or soul and body duality fall mainly upon woman, symbol of carnal impurity. The irrationality of de-sexualization is a cultural and theoretic error, leading to most serious consequences, setting as a norm what is anti-natural and imposing it as a life value, in gradational forms such as renunciation, abstinence, deprivation or mutilation.³⁰

The other is social and political, converging on the idea for the future of a community without anyone domineering or being excluded either, with the condition of equality in legal and political rights. In an important statement, towards the end of his life, Feuerbach makes it quite clear that the anthropological difference does not imply transposing any difference to the social structure level:

Though I have always defended and recognized the sex difference as essential and not just in body, but in spirit as well, I never inferred from that an inferiority of the feminine spirit. Man and woman are not only different in body, they are also so in spirit; but does this difference mean subordination and exclusion of women from spiritual and universal occupations, and not just domestic?³¹

²⁹ Cf. *WCh*, GW 5, 179.

³⁰ On the aspects of religious duality in *Das Wesen des Christentums*, the main contexts are the following chapters: "Das Mysterium der Trinität und Mutter Gottes", "Das Geheimnis der Natur in Gott", "Der Unterschied des Christentums von Heidentum", "Die christliche Bedeutung des freien Zölibats und Mönchtums" and the *Anhang* in general.

³¹ "Ob ich gleich stets die Geschlechtsdifferenz für eine wesentliche habe, so habe ich doch nie auf eine Inferiorität des weiblichen Geistes geschlossen. Mann und Weib sind nicht nur

Only here does Feuerbach take a stand about the feminine condition in his time, as a concrete social matter, and he does so without any question, though it is an isolated statement in his work. Commenting the emancipation demands made by movements in his time, he considered imperious, as “a task for the future”, the intervention of women in public life and the fight for equal legal rights, along with the workers’ emancipation:

Beyond the great matters of workers and capitalists, such a task corresponds to emancipation or equalization of women’s rights with those of men. [...] Then, let us allow women to enter politics as well! They are bound to be as good politicians as men, only another kind of politicians, perhaps even better than ours. [...] As well as men, women have heads; then why are they not supposed to wear civic crowns, why not give them the means to open paths to obtain such crowns? In short, the emancipation of women is a cause and a matter of justice and universal equality, to which Humanity aspires at present, an aspiration it is proud of, but which would be frustrated if women were excluded.³²

leiblich, sondern auch geistig unterschieden; aber folgt aus diesem Unterschied Unterordnung, Ausschliessung des Weibes von geistigen und allgemeinen, nicht nur häuslichen Beschäftigungen?” *Brief an Wilhelm Bolin* (June 1870); SW, XIII, 363.

³² “Eine solche Aufgabe ist, ausser der grossen Arbeiter und Kapitalistenfrage die Frauenemanzipation oder Gleichberechtigung der Weiber mit den Männer [...]. Lassen wir die Frauen nur auch politisieren! Sie werden gewiss ebensogut wie die Männer Politiker sein, nur Politiker anderer Art, vielleicht selbst besserer Art als wir. [...] Die Weiber werden ebensogut wie Männer geköpft; warum sollen sie nicht auch Bürgerkronen verdienen können, warum sollen ihnen nicht die Mittel gegeben, die Bahnen geöffnet werden, solche zu verdienen? Kurz, die Emanzipation des Weibes ist eine Sache und Frage der allgemeinen Gerechtigkeit und Gleichheit, die jetzt die Menschheit anstrebt, eine Bestrebung deren sie sich rühmt aber vergeblich wenn sie davon das Weib ausschliesst.” *Brief an Wilhelm Bolin*, SW, XIII, 362-363. These important considerations were made under the influence of news about American suffragettes’ movements, which Feuerbach mentions having obtained from *Die neue Zeit* magazine, published in New York. In general, Feuerbach’s stand on the emancipation of women is an aspect not yet much documented, even though other proofs of this position may be found in *Nachlaß*, still being published. The same must be said about the promotion of Feuerbach’s humanist and liberating ideas, mainly concerning the philosophy of religion, in the American cultural environment, which may have been fairly significant. Relevant is the letter addressed to him by Ottilie Assing, from New York, telling him about the impression of “spiritual liberation of the human being” caused by reading the translation of *Das Wesen des Christentums*, where she found a theoretical basis, and a stimulus, for the then on-going anti-slavery movement, with people like the freed slave Frederick Douglass playing an important role (Letter from Ottilie Assing to Feuerbach, from 15th May 1871; SW XIII, 365-366). On the interest Feuerbach showed in America on his later years cf. the elements published by his friend and biographer

For the complete accomplishment of the human being and the attainment of a community of whole beings, where only bonds are possible, not splits, it is a condition of the individuals' inalienable dignity, and therefore an imperative for Humanity, that equality of rights for men and women, which is the same as *all individuals*, be established.

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Wilhelm Bolin in *Biographische Einleitung* (SW, XII-XIII) and in Bolin 1891: especially, 295-301. The English language translation above mentioned (*The Essence of Christianity*, London, 1854) was made by George Eliot, (masculine) pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880).

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE: THE DOUBLE METAPHOR AND BEYOND

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Abstract

Nietzsche begins his essay “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” (June 1873) with a violent attack against the intellect. The intellect is the defensive weapon of a weak animal, operating in dissimulation, hiding behind the pathos of “truth”. The “truth” of the intellect is based on language, which in turn is based on the double metaphor. Metaphor has its starting point in a “nervous stimulus”, and this indicates clearly the essentially physiological – and biological – nature of Nietzsche’s understanding of humanity and, consequently, of the author’s philosophical position towards what is human. Here we can catch a glimpse of the roots of Nietzsche’s anti-intellectualism, which leads to a double perspectivism, where the perspective of the “intuitive man” (the mythical one) appears in radical opposition to the perspective of the “rational man” (the abstractive one).

Keywords

Nietzsche, double metaphor, physiological processes, perspectivism, myth

1

It is well known that Nietzsche’s 1873 essay “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” starts with a violent attack against the intellect: “The intellect, as a means for the preservation of the individual, develops its main forces in dissimulation.” (KSA I, 876) Dissimulation – or simulation, or pretense [*Verstellung*] – here is a means of self-preservation (or self-conservation) of an animal without “horns” or strong “fangs”, an animal in which the “art of dissimulation attains its summit”:

here deception, flattering, lying and cheating, talking behind the back, posing, living in borrowed splendor, being masked, the disguise of convention, acting a role before others and before oneself, in short, the constant fluttering around the single flame of vanity is so much the rule and the law that almost nothing is more incomprehensible than how an honest and pure urge for truth could make its appearance among men. (Id.)¹

In fact, the focus of Nietzsche's attack is this "urge for truth", which – existing as it does – is certainly dishonest and impure, and is supported all along by a certain pathos: the pathos of "truth". The text's style makes the question clear with respect to the weapon needed to fight this pathos of truth. It can only be another pathos: the pathos of "lie". It is not a symmetrical pathos, in the sense that one would aspire to lie, but a pathos against the lie of "truth". Nietzsche then enacts a fight that can be described as one of pathos against pathos. In this fight, the topic of language (and metaphor) plays a major part.

This is to say that the problem of language and metaphor in this context cannot be treated independently of the "pathetic" and fierce combat fought between the two parties. Language, word and metaphor cannot be read as mere concepts within a neutral theoretical framework; they have to be seen as counter-concepts, as weapons that have a polemical value in the fight against intellectualism. They do not aspire to state the "truth", but to dismantle the pseudo-truth of the intellect.

After mentioning the "legislation of language" (*Gesetzgebung der Sprache*), which furnishes the "first laws of truth" in articulation with the "valid and obligatory designation of things" that determine what "truth" should be, Nietzsche asks himself about the sense of the "conventions of language" and poses the question of whether language is the "adequate expression of all realities" (KSA 1, 878). This questioning is crucial in Nietzsche's plan of combat. As a matter of fact, the question about the adequacy of expression to realities can only have a negative answer, dictated by the unavoidable evidence of the very combat, and only out of the negativism of this answer can something positive – and new – appear in the next step of the disarticulation

¹ I follow, only with small modifications, the translation presented at: http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl201/modules/Philosophers/Nietzsche/Truth_and_Lie_in_an_Extra-Moral_Sense.htm [date: 3.October.2017].

of “truth”. This positive something is precisely a certain conception of metaphor. Nietzsche continues:

What is a word? The image of a nerve stimulus in sounds. But to infer from the nerve stimulus, a cause outside us, that is already the result of a false and unjustified application of the principle of reason. [...] The different languages, set side by side, show that what matters with words is never the truth, never an adequate expression; else there would not be so many languages. The “thing in itself” (for that is what pure truth, without consequences, would be) is quite incomprehensible to the creators of language and not at all worth aiming for. One designates only the relations of things to man, and to express them one calls on the boldest metaphors. A nerve stimulus, first transposed into an image! First metaphor. The image, in turn, transposed into a sound! Second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere (*Ueberspringen der Sphäre*), right into the middle of an entirely new and different one. (KSA 1, 878-879)

The ferocious criticism against the untruth of “truth” here falls fundamentally on the double mortal leap of the double transposition gesture, i.e. of the double metaphorical movement. As a basis of human language – and consequently as a basis of the pretensions of truth – there is a sequence of two unjustified and totally arbitrary transposition procedures. In fact, it seems that Nietzsche, fundamentally, has the arbitrary nature of both leaps in view when he uses the expression “*jedesmal vollständiges Ueberspringen der Sphäre*”. In this case, here we would have an anticipated radical criticism of what will become, with Ferdinand de Saussure and his heirs, the primeval basis of structuralism, i.e. the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign.

However, from the point of view which I adopt, the quoted passage integrates another factor that deserves major attention. We said before that the negative character of the potential answer to the question of the adequateness between expression and realities opens the door to a positive setting of a certain conception of metaphor. One will then ask in what measure the idea of the double metaphor, which is contained in the quoted passage, reveals a positive character. In fact, at first glance that conception seems to be essentially negative, since it underlines the accusation of the ungrounded leap against the two transposition instances. Upon closer inspection, however, we understand that – thanks to the (artificial) connection established

between the nerve stimulus and image, first, and between image and sound, afterwards – Nietzsche not only dismantles a certain conception of truth, but also constructs a theory on the function mode of metaphor that largely surpasses what we know from the previous tradition. Metaphor here – namely, the “bold metaphor” which had been part of the vocabulary of literary studies and rhetoric for a long time – is much more than the simple substitution of an image for another image, or of one expression for another expression. The sequence nerve stimulus/image/sound deterritorializes metaphor from its rhetorical or aesthetic (or even strictly verbal) matrix to introduce it in a functionally different field: a nerve stimulus is a physiological fact, and this fact is taken here to be the basis of transposition. This means that metaphor becomes, in the first place, physiological. This means that Nietzsche conducts a kind of thinking against metaphor – and against the intellectualism (where it has its first and deepest root). This is a kind of thinking that builds up a new conception of metaphor, a physiological conception or, if we want to adopt another expression, a biological conception.

In the author’s fragments situated immediately before the essay “On Truth and Lie...”, Nietzsche points out the physiological character of the processes involved in truth and lying, and also in knowledge, more than once. In the fragment 19[102] (KSA 7, 452) we can read the following synthetic formulation: “Truth and lie physiological.” On the one hand, this formulation, albeit not in an entirely explicit way, already points to the metaphorical substrate of truth and lie, and to their mode of existence as biological and not spiritual. On the other hand, fragment 19[179] is explicit about the character of “knowing”:

Man is a superiorly pathetic animal and he takes all his proprieties for as important as if the world’s hinges would turn around on them. // The analogous reminds the analogous and compares with it: this is the knowing, the fast subsuming of the similar. Only the analogous understands the analogous: a physiological process. [...] (KSA 7, 475)

This insistence on the physiological – of which the pathetic, designated by Nietzsche as “superiorly” human, is an integrant part, since it is grounded in a pathos that is also enacted by the organs of sensibility – determines an underlying level of humanity that is necessarily and fundamentally

biological or vital; this is in clear opposition to what is admitted by other modes of philosophizing that are grounded in a supposed spirituality of the human condition. According to this point of view, the physiological basis of metaphor clearly indicates a biological existential ground that encompasses all men. If we use a distinction Nietzsche makes in the final stage of the essay "On Truth and Lie...", this biological existential ground applies both to those men who, passing through the level of abstraction, take metaphor to its last consequences – those of total rationality – and to those who, despising the primacy of rationality, put all their strength into intuitive living.

From this point of view, it is possible to verify that Nietzsche in the 1783 essay (and even in the year before) has already embraced a kind of thought where the *primacy of life* completely substitutes the role of any metaphysical grounding, whether it be of a more ontological or theological nature.

In this context, however, an observation is needed to avoid any false interpretation of the role of metaphor in the essay from July 1873. It is common knowledge that this text – as also the 1872 annotations for the lectures on rhetoric² – makes use of the work of a little known linguist, a certain Gustav Gerber, entitled *Sprache als Kunst*, the first volume of which (the one that Nietzsche did read) had been published in Bromberg in 1871. In fact Gerber, in his conception of language, starts with a "nerve excitation" (*Nervenreiz*) in order to establish a sequence that continues with "sensation", "sound", "representation", "root", "word" and ends with the "concept".³ Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, Nietzsche's conception is not an imitation of Gerber's, in the first place because Gerber, in opposition to what happens in Nietzsche, does not mention the "image" (*Bild*) and does not refer to the double metaphorical transposition. And, moreover, what is even more important in the characterization of the specificity and originality of Nietzsche's position is the fact that he joins the physiological moment of the "nerve stimulus" directly with the radical criticism of the intellect (and of intellectualism), which is very far from the sort of preoccupations manifested in Gerber.

² See the reference to the research of Anthonie Meijers in Böning (1988), p. 415 (n. 437).

³ See Böning (1988), pp. 424-425 (n. 513).

2

In the essay “On Truth and Lie...” the distinction between “rational man” and “intuitive man” (KSA 1, 889) works as the horizon of a reflection, which has fundamentally the combat against intellectualism in view. To abandon the metaphysical grounding and to use a primacy of life in its place is, above all, to dismiss the intellect in what concerns its foundational claims. The horizon of the combat, i.e. the distinction between rationality and intuition, plays the part of a fundamental option, opening the door to a choice of the will that comes before the very exercise of any rational activity. To choose the road of the intuitive man is equivalent to an option for a power that accomplishes the will (which is not yet the “will to power” of the late Nietzsche, but anticipates it in some crucial aspects).

The rational man and the intuitive man adopt diverse perspectives. The perspective of the former one is fundamentally determined by the metaphor and by the abstraction derived from it. The perspective of the latter is determined by myth, which makes the intuitive man an integral part of a civilization. In this sense, Nietzsche writes:

The man who is guided by concepts and abstractions only succeeds by such means in warding off misfortune, without ever gaining any happiness for himself from these abstractions. And while he aims for the greatest possible freedom from pain, the intuitive man, standing in the midst of a culture, already reaps from his intuition a harvest of continually inflowing illumination, cheer, and redemption – in addition to obtaining a defense against misfortune. (KSA 1, 889)

The man of conceptualization, of the movement of abstraction and of intellectualism is not able to “gain any happiness for himself” because his life perspective is completely limited by abstraction, i.e. by a conceptual and intellectualized language that is deeply affected by dissimulation and lie. On the contrary, the intuitive man, i.e. the one who maintains a direct relationship with things as myth allows, as a pre-intellectual organizational narrative, can situate himself in the field of a harvest of “continually inflowing illumination, cheer and redemption”. The two opposite perspectives are a result of the opposition between abstractive language and mythical language. This

means that the perspectivism we can detect in Nietzsche⁴ is not universal and has not a single motion; this perspectivism necessarily implies a double motion. The two types of perspectivism play against each other.

From this position, which deserves the designation of a double perspectivism, Nietzsche will proceed in 1874, in the second part of his *Untimely Meditations*, to the hermeneutical consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of history *for life*. The disadvantages will be subtly associated with intellectualism – this is to say, with the perspective of the rational man –, while the advantages will be precisely associated with the radical criticism of intellectualism – and consequently with the perspective of the intuitive man.

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⁴ On Nietzsche's perspectivism see, in particular, Marques (1966).

NIETZSCHE: TOWARD A METAPHYSICS OF IMMANENCE

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Abstract

In this short article we want to show that Heidegger made a mistake when he designated Nietzsche as the last representative philosopher in the history of metaphysics, and thus still fatally within it. Contrariwise, to do justice to his will and art of inverting everything, we will defend that if Nietzsche perseveres in metaphysics, he does so – when we overlook the more immediate contradiction – in virtue of immanence. Thus, we will first present the reasons that led Martin Heidegger to denounce Friedrich Nietzsche as a metaphysician and a nihilist, as the one who ended that great cultural movement in the West. Second, we will defend that, in all truth, Nietzsche's thought is not nihilistic; he does not close the door on the old metaphysics, but rather opens the door to a new metaphysics, an immanent metaphysics, which favors an artistic language.

Keywords

Heidegger, Nietzsche, Metaphysics of Immanence, Nihilism, Art

Wer das Tiefste gedacht, liebt das Lebendigste
[Who has thought the deepest, loves what is most alive]
Hölderlin

Friedrich Nietzsche's work, one of the most polymorphic oeuvres that we know of, has survived its interpreters almost intact. It thus maintains an unexpected freshness despite being almost one hundred years old, and withstanding thousands of analyses and commentaries (to use an expression

from Maria Filomena Molder, this is despite the fact that Nietzsche is not the author of his own fame).¹ Nietzsche's work exists philosophically within the paradox of being meta-philosophical, protecting itself from academicism, and unavoidably remaining in the philosophical arena. When we look at it from a different angle, an experienced reader understands that the larger hermeneutical problem is not with regards to content, but with regards to the fact that Nietzsche's oeuvre is two-faced. For this reason, it is necessary to guess in order to understand something in Nietzsche's thought. In a more Nietzschean vocabulary, it is impossible to get inside this author without a set of affirmative hermeneutic forces that are free and inventive enough to understand the vital flows within the work and to continue re-writing it. One needs intellectual courage and lucid moments of ecstasy to read Nietzsche, and these are virtues that perhaps we do not have. In the same way, Martin Heidegger's work – which is, by chance, even more entwined with biography than Nietzsche's – cannot withstand the mistake of a pre-fabricated interpretation. From the outset this is because *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger's magnum opus, goes no further than an analysis of the *Dasein*, which should have been completed with a treatise on Being that was never realized (or, to play on Heidegger's ideas, it was always forgotten). But we will follow it, as much as possible, with his hermeneutic indication when he writes: "We attend to a thinker only by thinking. This requires that we think everything essential that is thought in his thought."²

1

Although Nietzsche is only cited twice in *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger thoroughly read his work. It seems that he studied Nietzsche more than he studied Kant or Hegel, for example: between 1936 and 1942, he devoted six seminars to the study of Nietzsche at the University of Freiburg im Breisgau (later published in 1961 in *Nietzsche I and II*); in 1943, he gave a lecture entitled "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead;'" and in 1953 he gave a lecture entitled, "Who is Nietzsche's Zarathustra?" And if there was this greater disagreement between Nietzsche and Heidegger about the question of metaphysics that we

¹ Molder 2014: 149.

² Heidegger 1998: 235 (Heidegger 2002: 190).

have mentioned here, there were just as many agreements (for example, anti-Platonism, but also the overcoming of the Aristotelian metaphysics of the substance and the suggestion of a return to a pre-Socratic Greece, which is closer to an ontological dynamic found in Heraclitus that is still absent from a dogmatic rationalism). Moreover, both Nietzsche and Heidegger rejected absolutist theologies in their own ways.

Therefore, we advise potential readers of Nietzsche's work to continue to consult Heidegger's commentators like, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy: about the moment when Heidegger was in the midst of his final polemic episode due to his Nazi sympathies and anti-Semitism, which amplified after the publication of the *Black Notebooks*, Nancy wrote that "before we throw Heidegger to the wind, it would be sensible to consider this entire moment and this entire historical constellation of thought."³ For Nancy, it serves to "remember that the only consequence of this thought is to call into question, and call into play, the Being as it has been understood by all ontologies, from Plato to us."⁴ And it led to the hypertrophy of reason (*Vernunft*) by making little of thought (*Denken*).⁵ Hence Heidegger, since the 1930's, denounced the danger of the philosophy of thought. And this, as he wrote in a number of places including in the *Letter on Humanism*, should not continue to be the subject of philosophical discourse. After the first Platonic and Aristotelian schism, Western metaphysics led thought about Being astray and later exiled it to the rationality of Cartesian metaphysics in a quest for the concept of Being in the entity of the *cogito*. This is then later inscribed, as mentioned in "Overcoming Metaphysics,"⁶ in technology (precision and logic more than production and management). With Nietzsche, this metaphysics was completed without being overcome; in Heidegger's celebrated and controversial words, he was the "last metaphysician" and not a new thinker who was beyond metaphysics.⁷ As Heidegger defends in the same essay, in point IV,

³ Nancy 2017: 75.

⁴ *Idem*: 74.

⁵ In *Off the Beaten Track*: "Thinking does not begin until we have come to know that the reason that has been extolled for centuries is the most stubborn adversary of thinking." (Heidegger 2002: 199).

⁶ Heidegger 2000.

⁷ In *Nietzsche II*, at the beginning of chapter VI, "Nietzsches Metaphysik," Heidegger writes: "Das Denken Nietzsches ist gemäß allem Denken des Abendlandes seit Platon Metaphysik."

it is perhaps because “metaphysics belongs to the nature of mankind,”⁸ or perhaps because he aspired to the heroic responsibility of inaugurating a post-metaphysical thought.

In *Nietzsche I*, Heidegger chooses five *Grundworte* as conditions, and proofs, from Nietzschean metaphysics: will to power (the being of the entity as such, the *essentia* of being); nihilism (the history of the truth of the entity determined in this way); eternal return (the way in which the entity in its totality is the existence of the being of the entity); the overman (the humanity that is required for this totality); justice (the essence of the truth of being as will to power). Moreover, Nietzsche maintains the experience of the divine in virtue of the Dionysian, and for Heidegger this reveals an onto-theological structure. In *Nietzsche II*, Heidegger asserts that the will does not need any other purpose beyond itself, and this once again shows its metaphysical and nihilistic essence; there is an unyielding forgetting about the being in a metaphysics of the will to power;⁹ further to that, a nihilism that is unable to overcome the death of God, and the erosion of supreme values, are factors that deplete thought and turn action into something inconsequent, degrading living altogether. If for Nietzsche the overcoming of metaphysics would lead to the inversion of Platonism, substituting what is intelligible with what is sensuous, then Heidegger defends that Nietzsche ended the metaphysics of Platonic ideas.¹⁰ In the text on the death of God, (1961: 257).

⁸ “Die Metaphysik gehört zur Natur des Menschen.” Or, in point II: “Metaphysics cannot be dismissed as a view. It is, by no means, to be thought of as a doctrine that is no longer believed in or liked.” (*Die Metaphysik läßt sich nicht wie eine Ansicht abtun. Man kann sie keineswegs als eine nicht mehr geglaubte und vertretene Lehre hinter sich bringen.*)

⁹ What is defined in a later text on the death of God is almost unexpected, as it disregards the numerous hermeneutic attempts to remove the expression from the stricter sense of power, like: “Clearly, then, the will ‘to’ power is the striving to come to power.” (*Wille zur Macht ist demnach eindeutig das Streben, an die Macht zu kommen.*) (Heidegger 2002: 174).

¹⁰ “‘God is dead’ means: the supersensory world has no effective power. It does not bestow life. Metaphysics, which for Nietzsche is Western philosophy understood as Platonism, is at an end. Nietzsche understands his own philosophy as the countermovement against metaphysics, i.e., for him, against Platonism.”

As a mere countermovement, however, it necessarily remains trapped, like everything anti, in the essence of what it is challenging.” (Heidegger 2002: 162). We remember that, in a note from 1870, Nietzsche wrote: “Meine Philosophie umgedrehter Platonismus” (Band 7, 1999: 7[156]).

however, Heidegger brings metaphysics and nihilism together and thus places Nietzsche within this immense plan to devalue life.¹¹

2

2.1

Nietzsche always fought against metaphysical discourses framed in idealist visions, this is pursued to the sublime in his final book, *Ecce Homo*, where he chooses a new centrality focused on the day-to-day.¹² It is true that his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*, revolves around the expression “metaphysics of art” (*Metaphysik der Kunst*),¹³ based on a united and primordial will (the Dionysian *Ur-Einen*),¹⁴ when what is Romantic and what is nihilistic is transmuted into a “this-worldly consolation.” Already in the nearly thirty paragraphs of the first part of *Human, all too Human I*,¹⁵ Nietzsche systematically attacks metaphysics (as found in §20), recognizing the great effort that is required to overcome it. This allows him to diverge from the aesthetic metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy* and his masters of the absolute: Schopenhauer and Wagner. Straightaway in §1, Nietzsche proposes to re-establish philosophy, recovering the heuristic antithesis of a metaphysical *deus ex machina* that miraculously solves genetic problems from the idea of “things in themselves” (*Dinge an sich*). Considering that “everything has become; there are no *eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths,”¹⁶ Nietzsche now appreciates the

¹¹ “Metaphysics is an [“the” in the first edition, 1950] epoch of the history of being itself. In its essence, however, metaphysics is nihilism.” (Heidegger 2002: 198)

¹² Among other questions: when and what to eat; when and where to work; typologies of sicknesses and convalesces; to live alone or with family; the hierarchy of healthy climates; what and how much light do we need.

¹³ This term is more familiarly known as the “metaphysics of the artist” (*Artisten-Metaphysik*), but this expression only came about in “Attempt at a Self-Criticism”, in the re-edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1886.

¹⁴ Although this may already be the “great stimulus of life.”

¹⁵ Or, as Maria Filomena Molder has suggested, from Paolo d’Iorio: *Human things, all too Human* [*Coisas humanas, demasiado humanas*]. This title begs the question of precision in the translation, and what is more adequate for the sense of the book (2014: 32).

¹⁶ Nietzsche 1996: §2, 13.

“unpretentious truths.”¹⁷ Nietzsche’s criticism of metaphysics, highlighting its epistemological ineffectiveness, extends through various paragraphs in *Human, all too Human* I. Even if Nietzsche later abandons the rather positivist tone of this book, he will leave traces of it throughout his oeuvre – for example, in *The Dawn*, he questions a-historical moral values; in *The Gay Science*, he secularizes truth; in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, he underlines the grandeur of creating new values for a new man and a new world without God or metaphysics; in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he invents a philosophy of “maybe” and an immanent Dionysus (the “Genius of the heart” who wants to learn with humans); in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche historicizes all axiology; *The Antichrist* dismantles Christian nihilist transcendence; in the *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche attacks metaphysical language; in *Ecce Homo*, as we have seen here, he elevates what is prosaic to one of the most important conditions of reality. When forced to summarize Nietzsche’s thought, we will say that he wanted to overcome Socraticism (the hypertrophy of the rational) and develop a freer thought, connected to life, less forged by the hegemony of dogmatic reason, which is ontological, axiological, and theological. As Nietzsche mentions in the fifth point of “Reason’ in Philosophy,” the metaphysics of language puts into orbit a “prejudice in favor of reason [that] compels us to posit unity, identity, duration, substance, cause, materiality, being,”¹⁸ which is an uncritical and reductionist rationality that insistently establishes new transcendences and new intelligibilities that are disconnected from life.

2.2

Now, Nietzsche wanted to overcome metaphysics but, as he stated in §20 of *Human, all too Human* I, this requires an enormous critical effort. First, this is because Nietzsche himself easily slips into metaphysical territory; it is difficult to understand the will to power, the eternal return, or the overman without providing a metaphysical framework. Secondly, Nietzsche always exaggerated the notion that metaphysics was old-fashioned, which is to say a thought that is beyond current trends, even when he spoke about apparently

¹⁷ *Idem*: §3, 13.

¹⁸ Translator’s note: Nietzsche 2003: §5, 17.

banal themes – for example, diet or the weather. Nietzsche wanted to establish a new order, a *chaosmos* (to use a term from Deleuze), suitable for “free spirits.” This calls for a certain kind of eternity, as we find, by chance, at the end of the third part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,¹⁹ for a new integrated vision of the world: to overcome metaphysics and completely enter into immanence, to return to Earth with the intensity and completeness of the pre-Socratic Greeks (although Nietzsche was a utopian in the long run, which was painful and dangerous above all – as Heidegger mentions – because Nietzsche continues to be the prisoner of many of the categories he invented and, we might argue, if he had liberated himself from these categories, then he would have risked an extreme discursive dissolution). Nevertheless, Nietzsche never stopped building a genealogy of metaphysics after *The Birth of Tragedy*. And if he kept the intelligible/sensible polarization – where he preferred to develop the latter in his field of veracity for the organization of a new metaphysics, a metaphysics of immanence (in which he maintained the will to conjure up the sterile chaos of disorganization separated from the former, but irrepressibly kept this metaphysics away from his decision that appearance is complete and exhaustive reality)²⁰ – he placed a new discursive centrality in art instead of truth or good.²¹ Our world does not tolerate

¹⁹ “For I love you, oh eternity!” (“*Denn ich liebe dich, oh Ewigkeit!*”), which the narrator repeats, symbolically and ironically, seven times. (Nietzsche 2006: 184).

²⁰ In the clearest way possible, in *Posthumous Fragment* 40[53] from 1885, Nietzsche writes that appearance is the only and true reality of things (“*NB. Schein wie ich es verstehe, ist die wirkliche und einzige Realität der Dinge.*”). In §54 of the *The Gay Science* he had already written: “What is ‘appearance’ to me now? Certainly not the opposite of some essence... To me, appearance is the active and living itself” (Nietzsche 2001: 63). And the world of appearances is not the opposite of the true world, so here Heidegger cannot use the argument of inversion to preserve the *status quo* considering that “At the same time that we abolish the real world, we also abolish the world of appearances.” (*Twilight of the Idols*, “How the ‘real world’ at last became a myth,” 6). This is to say that new appearances, and not a negative of truth, are still connected to the old order that Nietzsche wanted to negate.

²¹ Today, it is rare for authors to follow Heidegger’s notion of the “last metaphysician.” To our knowledge, it is only John Richardson who maintained this thought when he wrote *Nietzsche’s System* to “show that Nietzsche has a metaphysics – to show it by presenting, in conceptual and argumentative detail, a metaphysical system that both fits and clarifies what he says (writes). Such a project might seem perverse, but would be so only, I think, if it had the intent or effect of diminishing Nietzsche. My aim, at least, is otherwise: to show the great interest and fruitfulness of his thought, precisely as a metaphysics.” (1996: 3). In a different way, Jean

traditional metaphysics because it is not a totality, a unity, essence, or substantiality. On the contrary, the world is plural, composed of singularities, accidents rather than necessities. For this reason, the metaphysics of immanence will have to be the metaphysics of separation, modification, opposition, contradiction, a game of agony that is both united and organized. When we return to Earth, looking for what is untimely within the conditions of reality, there are always conditions of interpretation (even though these conditions carry with them a sense of fatalism, their neo-Stoic *amor fati*). The French reception of Nietzsche invested more in this aspect, preferring a Nietzsche who was fragmentary, indeterminate, perspectivist, and truly contradictory. For Derrida or Deleuze, for example, Heidegger was the last metaphysician.

In this way, Nietzsche will attempt to distress the traditional totalities of metaphysics, or those on the threshold of metaphysics, over the course of several years. The subject's identity disappears behind a driving composition that we can call a "body;"²² the truth will be substituted by a perspectivism that is in constant proliferation; the native foundations (that are steady and sacred) will not withstand the fragmentary assault of genealogy; the great *a priori* of Kantian time and space will be transferred to an *a posteriori*; Schopenhauer's *will* will be transformed into an always plural will to power (the "*zur Macht*" is "to become" in diverse directions without an end in sight),²³ advancing through multiple forces (associating and disassociating themselves, always acting and producing the world through interpretation) of nihilism, intrinsic logic, and for this reason these are unifying; Western history since Ancient Greece will be defeated homeopathically; supreme values, widespread certainties, will be transmuted not into a new table of laws but into a legislative ethics that will decide what is good and what is evil in every circumstance. But for this new order to flourish, a new humanity is

Granier justified his presence in the final stage of metaphysics as a passage from the "metaphysics of the spirit" to the "metaphysics of life." (1966: 615 and *passim*).

²² "Body" that is now a "great reason" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I, "The Despisers of the Body"), and not, as Michel Haar writes, a new absolute, "but a 'new infinity,' an infinity of interpretation" (1993: 11).

²³ As he wrote in a *Posthumous Fragment* from 1886/7: "To impose becoming on the character of being – it is the highest form of *will to power*." ("*Dem Werden den Charakter des Seins aufzuprägen – das ist der höchste Wille zur Macht.*") (Band 12, 1999: 7[54]).

required: one that is even less complete than the former Man, the *Übermensch* is an organism that lives in permanent self-overcoming (*Selbstüberwindung*), always wanting to be other. And as we have said before, it is also necessary to love Earth, following Zarathustra's example, so that the truly sensible is no longer the inverted and deformed image of the intelligible (a strong, and indeed dangerous, invention of ascetic ideas) and thus expels resentment in its entirety.

However, what still remains to be done is to move the demiurgic center of truth and good into a vital game of permanent creations, appearances and vanishings, to a life that is full of experimentation and establishes regularities that are reduced and temporary. Everything is done on the plane of immanence, where metaphysical entities pulse but never completely become a-historical. By being immanent, metaphysics is also fragmented and discontinuous; it does not even approach anything absolute – if there is a *logic* in Nietzsche, it is one that is multifarious and goes back-and-forth. It is a messianism without a Messiah, to borrow an image from Jacques Derrida. Everything is written in new artistic gospels. In §25, Book III, of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche sees in art the power to invert the values of good and truth: “sanctifying” the lie “sanctifies” life. It is enough that artists do not allow themselves to be corrupted physically and ideologically by the frauds who established various kinds of optimism (this is what happened to Wagner). Now, the direction of physiological aesthetics; this is the position that is clearest with respect to moral and epistemological problems (imbriated, as always, with problems that feed the nihilism of science and moral ascetics), and its suicidal alienation never ceases to surprise us. For this reason, let us consider the multitudinous notes on art found in the notebooks from 1887/88, as this is clearly the most frequent theme in these notebooks. We would argue that if Nietzsche had not suffered the collapse in January 1889, he would have dedicated one or two more books to artistic creation (in opposition to Kant, they would have been on creation and not reception). We understand this to be the natural evolution of Nietzsche's “inversion of all values” that leads to the metaphysics of the immanent and the radical devaluation of nihilism. Nietzsche demonstrates this idea, for example, in the enormous scope of this *Posthumous Fragment* (we cite only the beginning of it here):

Art and only art! It is what makes life possible, and the great temptation that leads us to living, the great stimulus of life / Art as the only antagonizing force superior to all of the negation of life, art, anti-Christianity,²⁴ anti-Buddhism, anti-nihilism *par excellence*.²⁵

Thus, to exalt the epidermal, art becomes the immanent abyss, and thereby recovers its intrinsic metaphysics.

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²⁴ We remember here that, for Nietzsche, Christianity was a “Platonism for the masses” (for example, Band 5, 1999: §16).

²⁵ Band 13, 1999: 17[3]. Also, among other posthumous fragments, here is one from 1887: “Art and nothing if not art. It is the great facilitator of life, the great stimulus of life...” (Band 3, 1999: 11[415]).

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LIFE AND THE TRAGIC IN GEORG SIMMEL'S PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

In this short essay, I aim to explicitly show that it is the concept of "life" (*Leben*) that constitutes the metaphysical basis of Georg Simmel's thought. Simmel's philosophy could be included in the Vitalist schools of thought of the philosophy of life; but there is also another fundamental concept which is central to his thought – which is the concept of the *tragic*. Thus, in bringing forth his idea of life, I intend – through texts such as his final book, *The View of Life (Lebensanschauung)*, particularly the first chapter of the book, which is entitled "Life as Transcendence" and passages from Simmel's posthumous diary (*Tagebuch*) – to pay special attention to the tragic character of life and to the question of the forms that, together with life, constitute the cardinal points of Simmel's philosophy.

The idea of life that permeates all of Simmel's thought is inseparable from the question of the forms and from the concepts of "more-life" and "more-than-life". Life appears simultaneously as "more-life" and "more-than-life", as Simmel says in *Lebensanschauung*.

The tragic in Simmel shows up in many forms, *strata* and domains of life, but it is derived from one primordial tragedy of life itself. I will try to make visible this underlying and fundamental aspect in Simmel's philosophy.

Keywords

Georg Simmel, *The View of Life*, Life, The Tragic

If there is any idea that traverses the entire thought of Georg Simmel, it is the idea of life. His thought is generally associated with vitalism, the philosophy of life. The philosophies of life were also named philosophies of striving (Remo Bodei, 2006), for they tend to eliminate the static and stereotypical

forms of conceptualism that directly or indirectly anticipate the philosophies of existence.

Lukács made himself a spokesman of this critique of irrationalism, identifying the context in which philosophy arises in the chapter “Essence and Function of Vitalism” in *The Destruction of Reason*.

At that time, a mechanistic materialism took hold of the natural sciences and an agnostic and positivist neo-Kantianism became dominant. Philosophy was beginning to be reduced to logic, a theory of knowledge and psychology, as a kind of opposition to the excesses of irrationalism, as well as to the Hegelian system. In this context, the questions on the conception of the world were totally excluded from philosophy.

In fact, a significant and distinctive aspect of Simmel’s philosophy, for example by comparison with Bergson, is precisely the “tragic”, life is the substratum or the grounding of Simmel’s philosophy. That is why it is necessary to probe that category further in order to understand his philosophy.

It would be impossible to speak about life without mentioning forms/shapes, and Simmel’s question is one of life and its forms and their interrelation. My investigation will be guided by four fundamental concepts of Simmel’s thought: life, forms, individuality and the tragic.

Life is a concept seldom approached merely in its biological sense. On the one hand, it suffers from a scientific and technical reductionism; and on the other hand, it gives rise to an unreachable mysticism. The philosophy of life, however, may not be reduced to just one of its manifestations or forms. Here, life is not merely biological life. For Simmel, who lived in the nineteenth century, life is approached as a metaphysical category, much like “Being” was to the Greeks, or “God” to the Middle Ages and “Nature” to the Renaissance (Georg Simmel, 1989: pp. 286, 287).

One of the concepts to which Simmel appeals is the concept of *Erleben*, which we could translate as “lived”, “lived life” or “effective lived life”, i.e with consciousness. According to Vladimir Jankélévitch,¹ it is precisely in the distinction between *Leben* and *Erleben* that the German philosopher grounds his philosophy of life (Jankélévitch, 1988).

¹ Notwithstanding his valuable analysis of Simmel’s thought, the author identifies life with thought (Jankélévitch, 1988: p.12), which in our view is extremely reductive. Of course, life is lived by the subject where it is perceived, but it constantly escapes this subject and thought. If it were not so, Simmel would be an idealist, something that he himself would reject.

Life is a continuous and creative becoming that we experience in ourselves, although it implies something that is beyond the individual who lives, its manifestations are individual and it is lived individually. That is why we cannot reduce life to either *Leben* or *Erleben*.

Simmel refers to the category of life in all his texts but in his last work, considered to be his philosophical testament or capstone work, *Lebensanschauung (The View or Intuition of Life)*, the philosopher speaks more systematically of that notion of life.

Initially, Simmel draws here the formal structure of our existence, which can then have many contents and outlines. This structure presents the human being as a limited being, as a border being (as he had already done in his essay, *Bridge and Door*), in a double meaning. On the one hand, the human being establishes limits and demarcations; and on the other hand, the human being is one who continuously overcomes limits, replacing them by other limits.

The limit in itself is necessary, but every singular limit may be overcome by a new position, a new limit. It is given necessarily and no limit is given definitively – it may always be overcome. As Simmel puts it: “The inherent displaceability and displacement of our boundaries mean that we are able to express our essence with a paradox: we are bounded in every direction, and we are bounded in no direction.” (Georg Simmel, 2010: p. 2.)

One of the elements that confirms this intuition, as Simmel says, is self-consciousness. The “I”, positing himself as an object of knowledge and judgment, judges himself as an other, as a third party, and in this way overcomes himself though remaining the same. He thus becomes, simultaneously, subject and object. This identity can no longer be understood as a fixed and substantial identity, and this process is extended to infinity.

This transcendence expresses itself in the theoretical domain, in the conscientiousness, as it does in the ethical domain which is expressed in the will. As Simmel puts it:

That man overcomes himself means that he reaches out beyond the bounds that the moment sets for him. There must be something at hand to be overcome, but it is only there in order to be overcome. Thus, even as an ethical agent, man is the limited being that has no limit. This hasty sketch of a very general and not especially profound aspect of life may serve to prepare the

way for the conception of life to be developed here. As a point of departure, I will take up a consideration of time. (Georg Simmel, 2010: p. 6)

Concrete life has limits over and under itself. The consciousness of these limits arises from the fact that life, becoming more abstract and more comprehensive, changes and overcomes the limit, recognizing it as such. The unitary act of life encompasses the limit and the overcoming of the limit, even if this seems to imply a logical contradiction. There would only be a contradiction if we tried to solidify in a logical scheme two antinomic positions. It is the unitary process of life that supports each time the last position to move to a superior position.

In “Life as Transcendence”, the first and most important chapter of *Lebensanschauung*, Simmel also develops an important reflection on time that helps us to understand his conception of life. If the “present” is to be identified with the moment, then the present is not time, the same way that one point does not make space.

On the other hand, if we consider the meeting point between past and future – where the past no longer exists and the future is yet to be – then only the present is real. Crystallizing past and future gives rise to the three logical and grammatical positions: past, present and future. However, as Simmel puts it, in fact, there is an immediate and continuous extension of life – of the present – to the past and into the future.

Taking this into account, one could claim that reality is not temporal. Concepts like past, future and present are simply exterior and logical considerations about reality. Life, subjectively considered, does not adequately fit this; it is a temporally extended reality.

It is precisely by contrasting mechanical events, which are fundamentally indifferent to the past and the future, that we understand life as temporally extended.

Only life, through past and future, transcends the present. Life and only life brings forth temporal extension, i.e. time itself. Life is essentially temporality. As Simmel claims: “(..) Time is real only for life alone. (...) Time is the – perhaps abstract – form in our consciousness of that which is life itself, as experienced in inexpressible, immediate concreteness.” (Simmel, 2010: p. 8) And also, Simmel writes:

This mode of existence does not restrict its reality to the present moment, thereby pushing past and future into the realm of the unreal. Instead, its unique continuity is sustained outside of this separation – its past actually exists into its present, and its present actually exists out into its future. (Simmel, 2010: p. 8)

Hence one realizes that life is a continuous flux where there is no place for the strict concepts that are used to describe it, although such crystallizations are a fundamental aspect of life, without which one would not even be able to conceive it. Thus, according to Simmel, an absolute flux without a fixed point, just as Heraclitus conceives it, would be limitless and as Simmel states “would not contain the boundary over which a reaching out is to occur, nor the subject which reaches out (...).” (Simmel, 2010: p. 9) It always has a unitary centre from which the flux departs. Its transcendental movement can only be understood if we consider it as a “going beyond” in relation to a fixed unitary point.

Forms imply limits, differentiation and organization around a real or ideal centre in which the various contents of life flow and solidify. Generally speaking, the forms are not changeable, they are invariable and fixed. Although within the forms we may find subsequent distinctions – such as the existing distinction between dead forms and living forms – the tendency is always the autonomization of forms and their fixation as opposed to the flow of life. An altered form is already a new and distinct form and not the same. The form is individual, it can be repeated in infinite concrete contents, but as a pure form it is always only one, or as Simmel says: “Two equal forms are not thinkable.” For Simmel, to see in the forms a transformation is the fruit of an anthropomorphic projection of our own life experience.

As the philosopher states:

Equipped with this metaphysical uniqueness, form impresses on its bit of matter an individual shape, makes it peculiar to itself as distinguished from differently formed items. Form tears the bit of matter out of the continuity of the next-to-one-another and the after-one-another and gives it a meaning of its own, a meaning whose determinate boundedness cannot be reconciled with the streaming of total being if the latter is truly not to be dammed up. (Simmel, 2010: pp. 11, 12.)

Continuity, on the other hand, does not accept such centres and limits and continually surpasses these forms. That is, life is simultaneously this perennial flow and at the same time concrete form, defined and objectified in various subjects and contents; it is both the unlimited and the limited that continually surpasses itself.

What Simmel understands as the self-transcendence of life, this movement is the immanent transcendence of life.

Life is a continuous flow, but the bearers of this life are individuals, that is, closed beings, outlined and distinct from each other, as we may observe in this quotation:

Although the stream of life flows through – or, more accurately – flows while these individuals, it dams up in each of them and becomes a sharply outlined form. Each individual then asserts itself as a complete entity, both against other individuals of its kind and against the total environment with all its contents, and it does not tolerate any blurring of its periphery. Here lies an ultimate, metaphysically problematic condition of life: that it is boundless continuity and, at the same time, boundary-determined ego. Furthermore, vital movement is somehow held still not only in the “I” as a total existence but also in all experienced contents and objectivities, as at a single point. Wherever something with a definite form is experienced, life is caught up as it was in a blind alley, or feels its streaming crystallized in and given form by that something; it is bounded. But since life’s further flowing is incessant all the same – since the persisting centrality of the total organism, of the “I”, or its more relative contents, cannot nullify the essential continuity of the flowing – the idea arises that life pushes out beyond the given organic, or spiritual, or objective form; that it overflows the dam. (Simmel, 2010: p. 9)

And a few pages later, Simmel writes:

It is not only in the individual conceived as a unitary existence that life stiffens by crystallizing itself around a centre but in each concrete content, in every objectivity, in everything that presents itself in a certain form. Since its perennial flow cannot be stopped and annulled once and for all, there arises the representation that it overflows each time beyond the organic or spiritual form, in which it seemed to have, for a moment, fixed. (Simmel, 2010: p. 22, 23)

But, according to the philosopher, saying this is not enough. There is a need, a demand for individuality to separate itself from the continuity of life: “Nevertheless, individuality is everywhere something alive, and life is everywhere individual.” (Simmel, 2010: p. 12)

And this antinomy, as much as it may appear, is not only conceptual and intellectual but real. Simmel states: “That duality lies embedded in the very depths of the feeling of life, but there it is of course surrounded by a living unity and it is recognized as a duality only where it steps over the edge of that unity, so to speak (as happens only in certain culture-historical situations) (...).” (Simmel, 2010: p. 12)

The intellect is only able to reach the essence of life as a transcendence of itself, seeing it as the superation of dualities in unity; that is to say, this division and distinction exists only in view of our understanding, but in reality there is a unitary movement, as Simmel puts it:

We are not divided into life free from limits and form made secure by them; we do not live partly in continuity, partly in individuality, the two asserting themselves against each other. Rather, the fundamental essence of life is precisely that internally unified function which, albeit symbolically and inadequately, I have termed the transcendence of itself (...). (Simmel, 2010: p. 13)

We could divide those “realities” by naming one “life” and the other “individual form”, but then we would have another concept of life involving the form as a part of itself.

As the philosopher claims: “Self-transcendence thus appears as the unified act of the building up and breaking through of life’s bounds, of its alter, as the character of life’s absoluteness – which makes its analysis into autonomized opposites quite intelligible.” (Simmel, 2010: p. 13)

Schopenhauer’s “Will to Life” itself and the Nietzschean “Will to Power” are nothing more than two concrete expressions of this idea. With differences, in the first, “the boundless continuity of life” is more present, and in the second, there is “the individuality as circumscribed by form” (Simmel, 2010: p. 13). Although, according to Simmel, the crucial point has escaped both philosophers in that life is precisely the union of both aspects. That is due, partially, to the fact that the philosophers have centered themselves

only on the will, when instead that characteristic is extended to all expressions of life. This is exactly what Simmel means when he characterizes life as being simultaneously “more-life” (*Mehr-leben*) and “more-than-life” (*Mehr-als-leben*). This is, literally, on one hand, an unconditional affirmation of life; and on the other hand, a statement of form. This “more”, in any case, is not an additional element with which life complements itself, but is the very process that turns everything into life.

This is how one understands that death is also part of this self-transcendence of life and inherent to life itself. Life is simultaneously the affirmation of itself and tendency towards nothingness – the “self-preservation and annihilation”. On the one hand, it tends to rise and it is growth and life; and on the other hand, it tends to go downward and it is aging and death.

If “more-life” corresponds to the affirmation of life, to its immediate manifestation, “more-than-life” are the forms in which life inevitably crystallizes, playing a mediating role; but at the moment that it does crystalize, it can only do so by going against this impulse, against life.

This thus happens on a metaphysical level, just as in the various concrete domains of (human) life; religiousness, for example, clashes directly with religious institutions and dogmas, while at the same time it would be difficult to think of them without these forms; while at the same time revealing them, they annihilate it. In love, the feeling of love for an individual inevitably clashes with a possible relationship between the two individuals.

The only impediment to understanding life as such, as we have just described, comes to us through logic. What the understanding does is analyse and decompose life and it does so by dividing it into parts which are opposed, then later attempting to recompose them into a unitary unit. But when the split-off is effected and the elements split off in their dialectical opposition become solidified, successive synthesis appears to be logically contradictory.

However, the contradiction exists only for logical reflection, to which each form is a valid entity on its own, so it understands each form as being absolutely separated from all other forms and does not understand its derivation from the vital movement itself and in the background the web of relations that intertwine them.

By analysing it logically we smash life, we break up its unity, although it can not be understood in any other way, as Simmel says; vitally, that is, in

itself, life is the actual unity of that opposition.

As we have already mentioned, it follows obviously that this life is not understandable and logically apprehensible. Beyond every determined content, every thought, every will, we feel something like the ineffable and the inapprehensible (which Simmel describes perfectly in the experience in the Alps).

Our representations, our knowledge and values, despite their objectivity and historical effectiveness, are perfectly independent of the life that created them.

As Simmel claims:

Just as life's transcendence, within the plane of life itself, of its current, delimited form constitutes more-life (although it is nevertheless the immediate, inescapable essence of life itself), so also its transcendence into the level of objective content, of logically autonomous and no longer vital meaning, constitutes more-than-life, which is inseparable from it and is the essence of spiritual life itself. (Simmel, 2010: p. 16)

Life is that unity through which we can think of everything else. As we have seen, life in any of its expressions is eternal flow, and therefore always opposed to form. From this derives what Simmel calls the "eternal struggle" – though sometimes invisible and subterranean, often evident – between the progress of life and the rigid immobility of the "singular states of culture", whence derives the very continuous transformation of culture.

If on the one hand, everything we have seen seems to be necessary and inevitable, on the other hand, modern culture seems to be the place *par excellence* where conflict becomes evident, in which the contrast between the vitality of creative subjectivity and the form produced is crystallized and dead.

Simmel's philosophy of life flourishes from or at least goes along with a certain conception of modernity and we cannot separate the thought of Simmel as a whole from his considerations of modernity. Here is a fundamental aspect of the modern view of the world: internal contradiction and antagonism are inherent marks in the core processes and phenomena that structure modernity, such as money, the division of labour, and so on.

In the domain of culture, we find an irreconcilable chasm between objective and subjective culture, while the former develops exponentially, the latter only slowly, unable to accompany the former. The objective products

that the subject produces, grow and become autonomous, the subject not being able to give them a sense and take ownership of them.

If the modern human being breaks with the whole, decomposing and analysing the parts, he also feels a need to find new units. He needs to find ways to capture the vital flow but lives in danger of petrification, proliferation and autonomization of forms, regardless of the vital flow from which they sprouted.

Every single concept is a form of life, a delimitation of it. But to delimit life is also to reveal its transcendence. The life that is impossible to adequately represent, manifests itself as a negation of itself. Here is the tragedy. In his *Fragment on Love*, Simmel tells us that the fundamental aspect of the tragic is that life creates for itself an indispensable form that is nevertheless unbearable, but, by the simple fact of being form, it is hostile both to the mobility and individuality of life.

The tragic is not a matter of mere conflict, duality or contradiction, although it is also all of this, the tragic has a deeper metaphysical charge. In *The Concept and Tragedy of Culture*, the philosopher tells us:

We would probably characterize the following as a tragic fate as opposed to a sad or, viewed from outside, a destructive one the fact that the annihilating forces aimed against an entity stem from the deepest layers of this very entity; when it is destroyed, a fate is completed which is planned within itself and is the logical development, so to speak, of the very same structures with which the entity built up its own positive nature. (Simmel, 1997: p. 72)

In a few words, the tragic is an immanent force of destruction, inevitably necessary and without an apparent (re)solution.

As Simmel tells us in his diary:

The essence of the tragic may perhaps be described thus: that a fate is aimed destructively against the vital will, nature, sense, and value of a particular being – and that at the same time this fate is felt to proceed from the depth and necessity of this same being. The tragic element in the loss of a wife is, as a rule, that the relation of dependency that destroys her is nonetheless established in the fundament of her essence. The falling roof slate kills a young, hopeful, vital person – this in itself is really only sad, not tragic. For the latter proceeds from the feeling that the death was in fact the necessity and meaning of this very person, but one whose fulfillment is aimed against others of

his necessities and meanings. The amount of tension by which what destroys a life was necessitated by an innermost element of this very same life – this is the measure of the tragic. (Simmel, 2010: p. 183)

And this tragedy, which is primarily a tragedy of life or a tragic life, we will find it in countless areas of Simmel's philosophy, such as in the topics of freedom, seduction, love, money, individuality, and so on.

In the foundation of life resides a fundamental antinomy that makes it express itself in a continuous self-transcendence: "The transcendence of life is revealed as the true absoluteness in which the contrast between the absolute and the relative is collapsed." (Simmel, 2010: p.10) Or, as Simmel states in the same paragraph from *The View of Life*:

Through such an elevation above the contrasts inherent in the basic fact that transcendence is immanent in life, the eternally felt conflicts in life come to rest: life is at once fixed and variable; of finished shape, and developing further; formed, and ever breaking through its forms; persisting, yet rushing onward; bounded and free; circling around in subjectivity, yet standing objectively over things and over itself – all these contrasts are but unfoldings or refractions of that metaphysical fact: the innermost essence of life is its capacity to go out beyond itself, to set its limits by reaching out beyond them; that is, beyond itself. (Simmel, 2010: p. 10)

As we have seen, the "more-than-life" is all that, in trying to grasp (*Begreifen*) this life, in the sense of apprehending and exposing it, inevitably ends up showing something other than life. If life is movement and forms are crystallizations, it is easy to understand how they collide immediately, however it would not be possible to do without any of these aspects or to subsume one in the other. Life in expressing itself goes beyond itself, thus becoming more than life. All this, as Simmel says, reveals the movement of self-transcendence, immanence, of life itself.

Thus, we understand that Simmel refuses, on the one hand, the reduction of the world, of life, to the continuous, immediate movement; and on the other hand, to the mechanism of petrifications, of forms. Life thus comes to constitute a third way among these seemingly exclusive alternatives.

This is one of the fundamental intuitions of Simmel which we find in many of the aspects with which the philosopher is concerned.

It would be legitimate to question ourselves about the (re)solution of this tragic. The tragic should not be understood in an eminently pessimistic and sad way. It is something perfectly inevitable and although the (final) synthesis of this process is something we will not find; we may perhaps find, as Simmel suggests in his reflections on the landscape in *The Philosophy of Landscape*, moments of reconciliation.

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LANGUAGE AS PROLEGOMENA TO "HIGHER EXPERIENCE"

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Abstract

Georg von Hamann's philosophy of language is known to be extremely important in the forming of young Walter Benjamin's thought. The refusal of instrumentalism of language and his concepts of pure and messianic language, in the 1916 text, «On Language as Such and the Language of Man», when he points his critique of the bourgeois concept and refusal of language as a medium, is created in a particular concept that constitutes one of the main vectors of his thought. Not only does Hamann appear as a privileged author, as quoted in the text, but he also borrows from other authors such as Herman Cohen, a Neo-Kantian, and still seeks the genesis of a messianic conception of language in the Kabbalah. In this text appear not only the authors who so greatly influenced Benjamin's concept of language but also how Benjamin integrated that influence and created new configurations in his thought. It is in language, experience and also history, that young Benjamin sets, since early on, the bases of his thought and of his work, while establishing a dialog with his influencing authors. What matters the most, however, is not so much the marking of his thought, but especially the way the markings are inscribed in the singularity of his work.

Keywords

Language, Messianic, History, Experience, Translation

Every phenomenon of nature was a word, – the sign, symbol, and pledge of a new, secret, inexpressible but all the more fervent union, fellowship, and communion of divine energies and ideas. All that man heard at the beginning, saw with his eyes, looked upon, and his hands handled was a living word; for God was the word.

J. G. Hamann, *The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross*¹

Immanuel Kant is not the only author who is very present in Walter Benjamin's work; there is actually another author I would like to emphasize: Johann Georg Hamann. For the specific reasons that we will point out here, Hamann was the mediator (Molder, 1992) for the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and immediately began to prepare a critique of the work itself. His text *Metakritik über den Purismen der Vernunft (Metacritique of the Purism of Reason)* was never published during the author's lifetime.

Hamann was aware of the need to establish the assumptions regarding the possibility of knowledge; thus he chose language, and its use determined by historicity, as the basis of his thought. Hamann recognized the inseparable and "impure" relation between thought and language and clearly understood – as Benjamin would read in great detail (Benjamin, 1972) – that the laws of thought could not be pure. Kant fell into this "trap," from Hamann's point of view.

In language, where reason cannot be purified, we can find a history and condition of an entire people. This is a conception that, by sacrificing the purity of reason – here Hamann is referring to Kant and to Kant's exclusively scientific and severing language – does not take into account the elements and entanglements that give life to thought and sets aside an essential part of human experience. As José Miranda Justo explains, in his insightful afterword to a translation of Hamann, this "interest in *language* and not in the abstract faculty of language" (Justo, 2017: 118) acknowledges the origin of a unique thought, which is to say "an activity of thinking that constitutes discovery, that is situated beyond the limits of something that every language offers and is already configured" (ibidem: 119). If one's mother tongue is the origin – for poetry, as it is for philosophy, and as it is for all communication

¹ Hamann, G. V. (2007). *Writings on Philosophy and Language*. Translated by Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

between individuals – how can we imagine the possibility of eliminating its misunderstandings, its impurity, its undomesticated nature, its sheer force, and unexpected and unforeseeable energies, without destroying its very essence? To us, this appears to be the essential question. As Miranda Justo says, “the possibility of *more thought* resides not in the abstract linguistic capacity, but in the deviant uses of language” (ibidem).

Much like a common language, we find there is a common experience among individuals that is perpetuated by tradition; this language suffers mutations, which introduce alterations to the standing rules that, despite their desire to remain in force, also contribute to the characteristic precarious stability of language. And, as it happens in the poetic act, it is only possible to make philosophy in one’s mother tongue – something that naturally distinguishes philosophy² from the other sciences, which Benjamin tackled in detail in the “Prologue” to *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*:

It is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the question of representation [*Darstellung*]. In its finished form philosophy will, it is true, assume the quality of doctrine, but it does not lie within the power of mere thought to confer such a form. Philosophical doctrine is based on historical codification. It cannot therefore be evoked *more geometrico*. (Benjamin, 1998: 27)

Benjamin clearly asserts that it is impossible to reduce philosophical prose to a mathematical language, a language that eliminated the problem of presentation and can present itself in its “rigorously objective” and purely universal, abstract form. The same cannot be said of philosophy, which deals with the mother tongue. The “historical codification that Benjamin speaks of” addresses the internal evolution of language and its concepts, which always escape the most complete definition.

In truth, as Maria Filomena Molder has expressed, whenever the philosopher thinks, “the philosopher always thinks in his or her mother tongue or

² It is for this reason that Benjamin claims in the “Prologue”: “it is characteristic of philosophical writing that it must continually confront the question of representation (*Darstellung*).” *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*; translated by John Osborne. New York: Verso, 1998, 27. Whereas mathematics eliminates the problems of misunderstanding in the mother tongue, philosophy and philosophical prose are constantly confronted with the breathing of the mother tongue. V. G.S., I, 1, “Erkenntniskritische Vorrede”: 207.

that which was elected as such by tradition” (Molder 1995: 37). This mother tongue is the origin; tradition is not the only thing that feeds it, but also personal experience and philosophical thought. If mathematics and science can eliminate the mother tongue, due to the fact that these sciences have created a conventional and rigorously objective language, then philosophy will have to deal with the mother tongue. It is precisely this aspect that turns into the possibility to think.

So what is Hamann’s perspective on language (and his critique of Kant) and why did it have such a strong impact on Benjamin? Could it be that of a messianic language, as the young Benjamin sensed and discussed in his text *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man (Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen)*? What we are referring to here is the search for language as a magical reality.³ It can also be understood as a messianic promise, as Benjamin later defined.⁴ In this sense, language is understood as a reality that is highly spiritualized – and not merely instrumental – that expresses the essence of humanity to the highest degree.

In his essay *On Language*, on the one hand Benjamin recovers Hamann’s thought and defiance of the Enlightenment⁵ and reductive (relative to experience) thought. On the other hand, he did not allow himself to be overcome by what he called “bourgeois theories of language,” which he believed adulterated the essence of language. These are the most instrumental conceptions

³ “Mediation, which is the immediacy of all mental communication, is the fundamental problem of linguistic theory, and if one chooses to call this immediacy magic, then the primary problem of language is its magic.” Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Volume 1: 1913-1926; edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996: 64. [G.S., II, 1, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972: 142, 143] See also *Briefe I*: 126, where Benjamin writes to Martin Buber (in a letter from June 1916) and claims: “I can understand writing as such as poetic, prophetic, objective in terms of its effect, but in any case only as *magical*, that is as *un-mediated*” (Benjamin, 1994, Letter 45: 80).

⁴ G.S., I, 3, B 14, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1972: 1239. We can also find the idea of a messianic language as a promise here: “Its language is liberated prose – prose which has burst the fetters of script [*Schrift*] and is understood by all people (as the language of birds is understood by Sunday’s children). – The idea of prose coincides with the messianic idea of universal history” (Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Volume IV: 1938-1940, Translated by Edmund Jephcott and Others, Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003. “Paralipomena to ‘On the Concept of History,’” p. 406).

⁵ Hamann’s *The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross* appears as a criticism of Johann Gottfried Herder’s *Treatise on the Origin of Language*.

of language, which do not consider language (as Benjamin did) to be a spiritual and metaphysical essence. What arose in Benjamin's essay was a metaphysical conception of language,⁶ supported by the mystical tradition and by the Kabbalah itself. In Menninghaus's essay (Menninghaus, 1980), *Walter Benjamins Theorie der Sprachemagie*, the author highlights this relation between the Kabbalah and Kabbalistic theory and Hamann's thought, especially in Hamann's text *Aesthetica in Nuce*, which bears the subtitle "A Rhapsody in Kabbalistic Prose." It was in this text that Hamann put forward his ideas on language, according to Menninghaus, who emphasized the compelling link between Hamann and the Kabbalistic tradition.

Hamann also spoke of the language of "things" and referred to the language of "nature," presenting a theological vision (and this is what interests us in our effort to understand his relation to Benjamin). For Hamann, on the one hand, language was the true foundation of the human experience in its entirety. On the other hand, Hamann put forward a reading of Plato that Benjamin also shared. The bitterness in his interpretation of *Cratylus* (a reading that Benjamin shared), relative to his theory, fell back on the problem of proper names, a question that appears in Benjamin's text.

Hamann made it quite explicit that language is the "presence of things," the manifestation, phenomenon and, at the same time, evidence, that it presents by means of an image. These are magnetic fields that generate, on their own, untamable forces and these images constitute the source of all knowledge and human happiness, radiating the mystery of the Revelation. And knowledge is only produced in the act of reuniting fragments, collecting them,⁷ and interpreting them.

This text by Hamann had a significant effect on Benjamin, as a young man, when he wrote *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*; Hamann's metaphysical conceptions of language as a gift [*Gabe*] and as Revelation [*Offenbarung*] (Benjamin, 1972:147) were also attractive to Benjamin's thought. They allowed him to reconsider Kant's concept of experience (*Erfahrung*) and reformulate it in an effort to find a "higher level of

⁶ This is a term that Benjamin only uses during this period of his thought; he later abandons it.

⁷ *Aesthetica in Nuce*, Paris: ed. Vrin, 2001: 18. We refer here to a part in the text when Hamann tells us that we cannot use nature more than "(...) *disjecti membra poetae*. Reuniting them is the task of the wise; interpreting them is the task of the philosopher (...)"

metaphysical experience.” Thus language is the foundation of all reason and thought and, simultaneously, has a divine nature like pure manifestation – that is, as Revelation.

If, on the one hand, we refer to what Hamann calls the “genealogical priority of language,”⁸ that which gives it its primitive and metaphysical nature, reveals itself in the mother tongue and transcends logical functions. The idea of priority refers to the presentation of language in its immediate and primordial state, which comes before its logical and instrumental use. This conception of language as a “genealogical priority” – and not as logical or instrumental – influenced Benjamin’s thought. He saw in Hamann’s thinking the possibility to brush aside the instrumental conceptions of language, and favor a metaphysical and magical reality.

Thus what is called the “genealogical priority” of language, rather than being a characteristic of language that is discovered through deduction or induction, corresponds to the fact that we are unable to understand thought or the human experience without it. With respect to language and philosophy, as intimately articulated reality (as the mother tongue opens the door to philosophy and the possibility of thought), we find it necessary to mention here that, for Hamann, the philosophical experience – as an historically determined discourse – is something that flees from unconditional and atemporal truth, “always offering itself up to the possibility of critique” (Justo, 2017:154). As Miranda Justo describes, this freedom of thought before the critical exercise is deconstructive and can be identified as *irony* (ibidem:154).⁹

In his correspondence with Gershom Scholem, Benjamin writes exhaustively about his readings of Kant and Kant’s importance to him. In a letter to Scholem (Benjamin, 1993: 149-156), dated October 1917, the same year he wrote *On the Program of the Coming Philosophy* (*Über das Programm der Kommenden Philosophie*), Benjamin clarified a series of questions that were the

⁸ *Metacritique on the Purism of Reason*: 211 “If then a chief question indeed still remains – how is the faculty of thought possible? the faculty to think right and left, before and without, with and beyond experience? – then no deduction is needed to demonstrate the genealogical priority of language, and its heraldry, over the seven holy functions of logical propositions and inferences.”

⁹ Miranda Justo writes of another process, *analogy*, that also forms part of the construction of meaning in criticism.

object of his reflection at this time. In this letter, Benjamin announced that he would start working on Kant and history (Benjamin, 1993:158), with the intention of transforming this theme into the topic of his doctoral dissertation.¹⁰ Later he would forgo this project, as we can see in his letter to Scholem (Benjamin, 1993:151). In a letter dated from a time around December 23rd, also addressed to Scholem, he explains: “I find Kant’s thoughts entirely inappropriate as the starting point for, or as the actual subject of, an independent treatise.”¹¹ In the same letter, he confesses the disappointment he felt after reading *Ideas for a Universal History with A Cosmopolitan Purpose*: “As far as Kant’s history of philosophy is concerned, my exaggerated expectations have met with disappointment as a result of having read both of the main works that deal specifically with this.”¹² This disappointment was clearly related to his dissertation project. The reason Benjamin gave Scholem as the reason for his disappointment was the fact that “Kant is less concerned with history than with certain historical constellations of ethical interest.”¹³ It was not history that was the fundamental object of Kant’s text, but history subordinated to the possibility of accomplishing ethics.

Even if Benjamin had changed his mind about the choice of a topic and title of his dissertation, we clearly see in his text *On the Program of Coming Philosophy* that it constituted a first draft of the “eternal task”¹⁴ Kant referred

¹⁰ Initially, Benjamin had thought to give his doctoral dissertation the title: “The Notion of ‘Eternal Task’ in Kant.” He later chose to focus his studies on the concept of Romantic art criticism, and adopted this topic as the subject of his doctoral work.

¹¹ *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910-1940*, edited and annotated by Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno, translated by Manfred R. Jacobson and Evelyn M. Jacobson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994: 105, Letter 58, dated ca. December 23, 1917.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ In *Ideas for a Universal History with A Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), Kant develops nine propositions with regard to the historical progress of human morality. In the eighth proposition, he refers to human history as a whole: “One can regard the history of the human species in the large as the completion of a hidden plan of nature to bring about an inwardly and, to this end, also an externally perfect state constitution, as the only condition in which it can fully develop all its predispositions in humanity” (*Kant’s Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim: a Critical Guide*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty and James Schmidt, (*Idea for Universal History*, translated by Allen Wood: 19), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Now, in accordance with Kant, this perfection requires infinity in time – this provides the reason for talking about history as an “eternal task” of moral evolution and the complete

to (and that Benjamin deemed to correspond to a form of messianic thought). When he wrote this text, Benjamin still believed that it would be possible to develop philosophy as a philosophical program. His idea, which he carried out in his dissertation on the concept of art criticism in German Romanticism, had to do with his discovery of the messianic element in the thought of the early Romantics – Schlegel and Novalis – and thus Benjamin abandoned his project to study Kant. What was it that occupied Benjamin’s mind? As he wrote to Scholem in a letter dated June 1917 (Benjamin, 1993:138), early Romanticism was attractive to him for two reasons, which we have already discussed here: on the one hand, it was a movement that maintained tradition in the present and, on the other hand, it was the starting point for establishing a messianic perspective on history. Moreover, Benjamin recognized Kant’s importance¹⁵ in assigning a modest role to metaphysics and determining the conditions of a possible *a priori* experience with great precision (and originality). It was in Kant’s concept of experience (*Erfahrung*) that Benjamin discovered a new configuration of phenomena and knowledge derived from transcendental structures.

But what is experience? Declaring a “return to Kant,” Hermann Cohen¹⁶ identified a theory of experience as objective knowledge in Kant’s philosophy. Even if Benjamin had read Kant carefully and with great persistence, the Judaic interpretation put forward by Hermann Cohen (the founder of the neo-Kantian school) infiltrated his interpretation. In the first edition of his work, Hermann Cohen speaks of this “return to Kant,” to cite Helmholtz, as one of the great scientific minds of his time. For Cohen, *Erfahrung* was a fundamental term for modern philosophy, in the sense that it set aside

perfection of human dispositions (see, for example, the translation by Artur Morão). Hermann Cohen uses the concept of “eternal task,” however, in his work *Kant’s Theory of Experience [Kants Theorie der Erfahrung]*. With regard to Hermann Cohen’s influence on Benjamin’s thought see Tamara Tagliacozzo, *Esperienza e compito infinito nella filosofia del primo Benjamin*, Roma: Quodlibet, 2003.

¹⁵ We remember here that, although Benjamin shared some of Hamann’s viewpoints on Kant, Benjamin maintained the question of purity and *a priori* in the same way that he also maintained the idea of a transcendental consciousness (something that Hamann completely rejected).

¹⁶ H. Cohen finished his work *Kant’s Theory of Experience (Kants Theorie der Erfahrung)* in 1871. Scholem and Benjamin attended Hermann Cohen’s courses in Berlin before World War I (1914-1918).

any abstraction and would turn into a form of scientific expression, one to which devoted all of his time. The term covered the field of reflection just as much as it did the field of sensation, simultaneously making it the “source” and “content” of knowledge; the polyvalent concept designated the “object” at the same time as it designated the “method” (Tagliacozzo, 2003: 297-331).

For Cohen, the concept of experience transformed itself into the nucleus of Kantian philosophy, starting from the critical separation of the spheres of “science” and morality, where experience is identified as the concept of natural knowledge (ibid.). And, in this sense, the concept of experience [*Erfahrung*] was freed from its vague and customary meaning, thereby allowing criticism to open the door to a new and improved dimension for this concept. It granted a more objective dimension to knowledge, demarcated and “reconfigured” by criteria that were given to it with the maximum amount of legitimacy: the *a priori* conditions of knowledge or its conditions of possibility.

The Kantian theory of experience had been adapted in the second half of the nineteenth century to the requirements of the scientific culture that was prevalent at the time – the psychophysiological interpretations of Wundt and Helmholtz. In effect, it was against this “psychologism” that the Marburg school and particularly Hermann Cohen, revolted, demanding the specificity of the transcendental method when Kant’s philosophy had been reduced to an auxiliary role in experimental science.

There was yet another, different, tendency to a philosophical return to Kant: the school represented by figures like Heinrich Rickert – with whom Walter Benjamin studied – and Wilhelm Windelband. This Neo-Kantian school asserted a trend toward widening the horizon of the Kantian theory of *Erfahrung*. It was under the influence of this school that Benjamin pursued his study of Kant. He turned his critique toward Kant’s concept of *Erfahrung*, looking to rediscover (and widen) Kant’s metaphysical potential:

The problem faced by Kantian epistemology, as by every great epistemology, has two sides, and Kant managed to give a valid explanation for only one of them. First of all, there was the question of the integrity of an experience that is ephemeral. For universal philosophical interest is continually directed toward both the timeless validity of knowledge and the certainty of a temporal experience which is regarded as the immediate, if not the only, object of that

knowledge. (Benjamin, 1996:101)

The permanence of knowledge is derived from another question, that is, the unity of knowledge itself. If, for Kant, the concept of experience was supported by the unity of knowledge and a transcendental consciousness, then it was necessary for Benjamin to find a foundation that gave validity to experience and did not reduce it to merely a scientific plane. Benjamin saw this as the main obstacle in Kant's theory: "The reality with which, and with the knowledge of which, Kant wanted to base knowledge on certainty and truth is a reality of a low, perhaps the lowest, order" (Benjamin, 1996:100).

In this way, the experience Kant valued was the one according to which he would "take the principles of experience from the sciences – in particular, mathematical physics" (ibidem:101). Kant's epistemology, according to Benjamin's theory, was satisfied with an empty concept of experience. The reason for this was not specifically Kantian, but was related to Kant's worldview [*Weltanschauung*], which "was that of the Enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*) (ibidem:101). It meant applying the concepts of mathematical physics to human experience, in a quantitative order; this model of experience, which was reduced to Newton's model of mechanics, became weak because it was emptied of its spirituality. Benjamin did not criticize Kant¹⁷ so much as he criticized the values that ruled during that era and thus determined the context of Kant's thought, and coincided with his concepts of knowledge and experience.

In order to limit the importance of metaphysics, the modern era weakened the notion of experience:

Just what the lower and inferior nature of experience in those times amounts to, just where its astonishingly small and specifically metaphysical weight lies, can only be hinted at in the perception as to how this low-level concept of experience also had a restricting affect on Kantian thought. (ibidem:101).

¹⁷ *G.S., II, I: 159*: But in its most essential characteristics, it is not all that different from the experience of the other centuries of the modern era. As an experience or a view of the world, it was of the lowest order. The very fact that Kant was able to commence his immense work under the constellation of the Enlightenment indicates that he undertook his work on the basis of an experience virtually reduced to a nadir, to a minimum of significance. Indeed, one can say that the very greatness of his work, his unique radicalism, presupposed an experience which had almost no intrinsic value and which have attained its (we may say) sad significance only through its certainty. ("On the Program of Coming Philosophy," p. 101)

As we can see, Benjamin did not really criticize Kant as he claimed “nowhere does Kant deny the possibility of a metaphysics” (ibidem:102). What Kant wanted to do was “to have criteria set up against which such a possibility can be proven in the individual case.” It was Kant’s age that rejected metaphysics, “the Kantian age did not require metaphysics” (ibidem).

From Benjamin’s point of view, despite identifying Kant with this inferior notion of experience that characterized his age, Kant also paved the way for elaborating “the prolegomena to a future metaphysics and, in the process, of envisioning this future metaphysics, this higher experience” (ibidem:102). But, as Benjamin recognized: “It is of the greatest importance for the philosophy of the future to recognize and sort out which elements of the Kantian philosophy should be adopted and cultivated, which should be reworked, and which should be rejected” (ibidem:102).

Benjamin could not be clearer about whether this new philosophy was possible: “this simultaneously presents the primary challenge faced by contemporary philosophy and asserts that it can be met: *it is, according to the typology of Kantian thought, to undertake the epistemological foundation of a higher concept of experience.*” (ibidem: 02, italics ours).

And he added, “and precisely this is to be made the theme of the expected philosophy: that a certain typology can be demonstrated and clearly drawn out from the Kantian system – a typology which can do justice to a higher experience [*höheren Erfahrung*].” (ibidem:102).

Alternatively, Hamann’s critique of Kant in the *Metacritique* already showed Benjamin that Kant’s concept of experience was insufficient. Conversely, the Wizard [or Magus] of the North provided him with a gnostic model to recover the components that were suppressed by Kant’s epistemology – with his irreconcilable discord between understanding and sense – these prolegomena that Kant ignored and that “prohibited the theoretical understanding of that which is beyond the sensible and the scope of reason” (Seligmann-Silva, 1999:125, 126).

This is precisely what Hamann would draw attention to – the necessity of metaphysics and that, for Hamann just as much as for Benjamin, language would act as the exemplary shape of human experience and would be superimposed over the discord that the Kantian system established. Language is

taken to be a mystery and Revelation, and also a precarious reflex of human knowledge that is full of gaps. If, on the one hand, language points to the restoration of unity, then, on the other hand, we always recognize the value of its rough and fragmentary nature.

If, as we saw before, experience in Kant's age did not need metaphysics, this fact did not impede the possibility of establishing a perspective on the future metaphysics, which would be built on the foundation of a higher experience. If Kant had completed a purification of epistemology, "which Kant ensured could be posed as a radical problem – while also making its posing necessary – not only a new concept of knowledge but also a new concept of experience should be established, in accordance with the relationship Kant found between the two." (Benjamin, 1996:104).

This would then formulate a "new concept of experience, which would be established on the basis of the new conditions of knowledge, would itself be the logical place and the logical possibility of metaphysics." (ibidem). The distinctive feature of the coming philosophy and its task "can be conceived as the discovery or creation of that concept of knowledge which, by relating experience *exclusively* to the transcendental consciousness, makes not only mechanical but also religious experience logically possible." (ibidem:105).

This is to say that to use transcendental consciousness¹⁸ as the foundation would guarantee the logical possibility of knowledge and experience, and also open it to religious experience (and thus not be limited to purely mechanical knowledge). If Kant's conception of transcendental dialectics already shows "the ideas upon which the unity of experience rests" (Benjamin, 1996:107), and that for a "deepened concept of experience continuity is almost as indispensable as unity, and the basis of the unity and continuity of that experience which is not vulgar or only scientific, but metaphysical, must be demonstrated in the ideas. The convergence of ideas toward the highest

¹⁸ Kant made a clear definition of this theme, in his work *The Critique of Pure Reason*, when defining the synthesized unity of apperception as the highest point that connects all of the uses of understanding. Thus the "I think" – the transcendental apperception – should accompany all of my representations and it is this unity of consciousness, *a priori*, that confers the unity of the whole to all knowledge and experience. Contrary to Hamann, Benjamin maintains this principle from Kant, which he addresses in his text *On the Program of Future Philosophy*. However, despite the fact that his text presents a careful reading of Kant, we do not know to what extent the Neo-Kantians, with whom Benjamin studied, influenced his understanding of Kant.

concept of knowledge must be shown.” Therefore, the “(...) great transformation and correction which must be performed upon the concept of experience, oriented so one-sidedly along mathematical-mechanical lines, can be attained only by relating knowledge to language, as was attempted by Hamann during Kant’s lifetime” (ibidem:108).

Thus, through the idea that the Kantian concept of experience should give way to language – as Hamann¹⁹ had proclaimed – Benjamin proposed an “opening to a higher experience.” Only language, as the manifestation of Revelation, could present what is most sacred and intimate of human nature, thus granting access ‘to true experience’; only language can confirm “the systematic supremacy of philosophy over all science.” (ibidem:108).

But what concept of higher experience did Kant set free (in spite of everything), which the Neo-Kantians ignored? It was the “religious and historical experience” that he designated as *metaphysical experience*. Kant essentially bequeathed the possibility of a future philosophy to the present, and gave Benjamin the opportunity to recognize, at the same time, *the possibility for an opening to a higher experience*.²⁰ Upon seeing the possibility for a “reconstruction” of the concept of experience,²¹ Benjamin calls our attention to the fact that the determination of the “true criteria for differentiating between the values of the various types of consciousness will be one of the highest tasks of the future philosophy.” (Benjamin, 1996:104) Although the types of empirical consciousness correspond to many other types of experience, these otherwise possess a value of imagination or hallucination, precisely because it is impossible to establish an objective relation between empirical

¹⁹ “For Kant, the consciousness that philosophical knowledge was absolutely certain and *a priori*, the consciousness of that aspect of philosophy in which it is fully the peer of mathematics, ensured that he devoted almost no attention to the fact that all philosophical knowledge has its unique expression in language and not in formulas or numbers.” (Benjamin, 1996: 108) G.S., II, 1: 168.

²⁰ The term “messianic experience” does not appear in this text, but we find it latent in Benjamin’s anticipation of a concept of higher experience, which rejoins history, science and religion. Where do we find this fusion of religion and history if not in the messianic perspective, which Benjamin mentioned before to Carla Seligson?

²¹ “It should be made a tenet of the program of future philosophy that in the course of the purification of epistemology which Kant ensured could be posed as a radical problem – while also making its posing necessary – not only a new concept of knowledge but also a new concept of experience.” (Benjamin 1996: 104 / G.S., II, 1: 163.

consciousness and the objective concept of experience. The experience that is truly of interest, according to Benjamin: "(...) all genuine experience rests upon the pure 'epistemological (transcendental) consciousness,' if this term is still usable under the condition that it be stripped of everything subjective" (ibidem:104).

Although Benjamin accepted the question of *a priori* and the transcendental consciousness from Kantian theory, he nevertheless rejected the difference between subject and object:

The task of future epistemology is to find for knowledge the sphere of total neutrality in regard to the concepts of both subject and object; in other words, it is to discover the autonomous, innate sphere of knowledge in which this concept in no way continues to designate the relation between two metaphysical entities." (ibidem:104).

It was this unity of experience – that does not distinguish between object and subject – that Benjamin called the "higher experience."

Finding the conditions of possibility of experience within the framework of the transcendental subject was, in effect, Kant's great invention; he created a concept of experience that relies on objective knowledge, considering that the conditions of possibility are designated as universal and aprioristic, of the subject – thereby guaranteeing objective knowledge and shaping empirical phenomena from space and time. Pure forms and *a priori*, space and time, form the given; these are united in the consciousness of the subject and grant knowledge its essential characteristics of objectivity and universality, which contribute to a new concept of experience. If Kant gave us the possibility of a new concept of experience for the foundation of "prolegomena to a future metaphysics and, in the process, of envisioning this future metaphysics, this higher experience" or of a logical place, then we understand Benjamin's intention to create a new program for the philosophy of history founded on the new concept of experience. What is the relation between the concept of history and the concept of experience?

As it seemed to Benjamin, the philosophy of history was dying (in the sense that much theodicy and the positive perspective of it are based on the idea of progress). It was not just dead, finished and passed over, but it had suffered the petrifying touch of the Medusa. Moreover the historical view

of progress, stripped of religiosity, was alienated in its homogeneous vision of time that lacks any possibility for redevelopment, that is to say, a vision of time as something irreversible. The possibility of finding a “place” to establish the breaking point of history for a new vision, oriented toward a messianic temporality, which is heterogeneous and discontinuous, lay in the same place as prolegomena to a new concept of experience in the coming philosophy.²² If, as Benjamin had noted, the broadening of the concept of experience had passed through the “great transformation and correction which must be performed upon the concept of experience, oriented so one-sidedly along mathematical-mechanical lines,”²³ this would not have been possible unless language was prolegomena between knowledge and experience.

It is language that grants the spiritual essence to humanity; it is also language that reveals this essence. And if this is the case, as Benjamin had thought, that the spiritual essence of language is identical to its linguistic essence (Benjamin, 1972:142), then the crucial question in his text *On Language* – “Mediation, which is the immediacy of all mental communication, is the problem of linguistic theory” (Benjamin, 1996:64) – is the original problem of the “magic of language.”²⁴

In 1915, the year before he wrote *On Language*, Benjamin became friends with Gershom Scholem. It was the same year that Benjamin returned to Munich and became deeply interested in Romanticism, certain Kabbalistic texts (it was during this time, thanks to Scholem, that he learned of Joseph Molitor and Franz von Baader’s translations).²⁵ We would once again like to

²² Although he does not refer to the term “messianic,” Benjamin always speaks of the task of a future metaphysics, based on a concept of higher experience that would rejoin history, science, religion. Benjamin already refers to this “state of moral and ethical perfection” that is useful for the higher experience in *The Life of Students*. Nevertheless – and this is our interpretation – Benjamin had already prepared this text at the same time as writing *On Language*, where he clearly alluded to the conception of messianic language.

²³ Benjamin, 1996: 108.

²⁴ G.S., II, 1: 143: “(...) so ist das Urproblem der Sprache ihre Magie”.

²⁵ Cf. Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (1981), translated by Harry Zohn, New York: New York Review of Books, [2003]: 48 “That period marked the beginning of his interest in Franz von Baader, to whom Max Pulver had drawn his attention in Munich, and in Franz Joseph Molitor, who was a pupil of Schelling and Baader and the only serious German-language philosopher to study the Kabbalah.”

In Benjamin’s correspondence, especially in the letters that Benjamin wrote to him from

highlight here Benjamin's "project" – found during the beginning of his philological work – between *On Language* (written in November 1916 and attached to a letter that was sent to Scholem) and *On the Program of the Coming Philosophy* (1917). If Benjamin defended a metaphysical and magical conception of language in *On Language*, it was in this perspective on language (developed in *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*) that were required prolegomena to the concept of experience (and it was this perspective that Benjamin defended in *On the Program of the Coming Philosophy*).

Only a metaphysical vision of language, as Hamann imagined it, could overcome the weakness of Kant's concept of experience; a metaphysical conception of experience was needed in order to broaden the conceptual field of experience – a field that was previously exclusive to Newtonian and mechanistic theories. If Kant "devoted almost no attention to the fact that all philosophical knowledge has its unique expression in language" (Benjamin, 1996:108), in accordance with Benjamin, then this correction or transformation (*ibidem*) was essential (as Hamann had already done in his treatment of Kant). And this metaphysical vision of language – that Benjamin proposed as a correction – was already developed in *On Language as Such and On the Language of Man*.

The mere communicative function of language and the instrumental vision of language, parallel to the mechanistic vision of experience and knowledge, as they were presented in Kant's era, are consequences of the philosophical thought of the *Aufklärung*. If Kant's concept of experience weakened it to this extent, as Benjamin recognized, then the linguistic theory that reflected the thought of this era was also an "impoverished vision" of the same; it revealed the need for a revision of the "bourgeois view" of language. Benjamin's intention appears clearly to us here: to restore a "higher experience" (that is, metaphysics) not only to the concept of experience but also to the concept of language. Benjamin could only find the foundation he needed in linguistic theories, where a "higher experience" appeared as a

Dachau, from May 23rd, 1917 and June 1917, respectively, we can read about Benjamin's great interest in Baader and Molitor's texts, and also his interest in the Romantic authors – Friedrich Schlegel and Novalis – who, without a doubt, are just as present in his study of language as they are in his study of translation and, moreover, in the study he would publish on Romanticism, *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism*, Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Briefe I*: 134/139.

metaphysical reality.

Benjamin already knew Hamann and Humboldt's theories on language, and the mystical conceptions of language, which he wrote about in his text during the summer of 1916. We know from the letters Benjamin wrote to Martin Buber (Benjamin, 1994: 79, 80) and Scholem, the invitation Buber extended to Benjamin to collaborate in the journal *Der Jude* was the ultimate "provocation" that gave rise to Benjamin's text. It was in this letter that Benjamin set out the reasons why he could not agree with Buber's use of language as a political instrument (countering Buber's appeal for the participation in World War I, and admonishing him about using writing to serve this purpose). Apart from attributing the serious responsibility for human action and morals to literature,²⁶ an attitude he adopted especially after Heine committed suicide (for refusing to participate in the country's mobilization for war), he completely renounced the idea that language should be used instrumentally for political purposes or for the purpose of war. He confronted the instrumental character of language in this letter – that is, when language is "degraded to pure instrument" – with what Benjamin believed to be the only legitimate characteristic of language: "I can understand writing as such as poetic, prophetic, objective in terms of its effect, but in any case only as *magical*, that is as *un-mediated*." (Benjamin, 1994, *To Martin Buber*: 80)

We understand that the seeds were planted here, not only for the constitution of a theory of language that "corrected" Kant's concept of "experience" but also for a theory that would pave the way for a metaphysics and a higher plane of human experience, arising from the correction to the Kantian concept of experience. The claim of a new perspective on history, anchored in a new conception of language, could only have its Archimedean point in a correction of the Kantian concept of experience, a project that he later abandoned. Benjamin understood this idea by reading Hamann and the early Romantics: the glimpse of a vision of history that cleared the way for religion and metaphysics.

Language "only expresses itself purely where it speaks in name – that is, in its universal naming." (Benjamin, 1996, *On Language*: 65) From this

²⁶ *ibidem*: "The opinion is widespread, and prevails almost everywhere as axiomatic, that writing can influence the moral world and human behavior, in that it places the motives behind actions at our disposal."

point of view – and from the point of view of universality and intensity – the naming language is perfect and only humans have a perfect language. In this perfect language, the linguistic essence and the spiritual essence are identical and, for this reason, it is (on the highest level) communicable, in the language of naming, for the reason that “there is no such thing as a content of language; as communication, language communicates a mental entity – something communicable per se.”²⁷

As we mentioned earlier, one hears the strong echo of Hamann here, particularly in the question of language as Revelation. Once again we understand the clarity of Benjamin’s claim: to find prolegomena to the “higher experience” described in *On the Coming Philosophy*. It is not by chance that Benjamin quoted Hamann in *On Language*: “Language, the mother of reason and revelation, its alpha and omega” (Benjamin, 1996:67). And “the equation of mental and linguistic being is of great metaphysical moment to linguistic theory because it leads to the concept that has again and again, as if on its own accord, elevated itself to the center of linguistic philosophy and constituted its most intimate connection with the philosophy of religion. This is the concept of revelation” (Benjamin, 1996:66). To justify what he wrote to Buber, in his letter Benjamin demands “the crystal-pure elimination of the ineffable in language” (Benjamin, 1994: 80). Opposing the idea of a misunderstanding and the existence of the “ineffable in language” (Benjamin, 1994: 80), where we find the mystical theories of religion, Benjamin claimed:

This, however, is precisely what is meant by the concept of revelation, if it takes the inviolability of the word as the only and sufficient condition and characteristic of the divinity of the mental being that is expressed in it. The highest mental region of religion is (in the concept of revelation) at the same time the only one that does not know the *inexpressible* (Benjamin, 1996, *On Language*: 67, italics ours).

This power of Revelation comes together in the naming of things, in pure communication. In this way (and despite what we find in Benjamin’s *The*

²⁷ *ibidem*: 66. It is for this reason that Benjamin claims, in the letter to Buber from July 1916 (*Briefe I*: 125, 126) that “the crystal-pure elimination of the ineffable in language is the most obvious form given to us to be effective within language and, to that extent, through it.” (Benjamin, Letter 45: 80). In the sense of naming, language is “sayable” to the highest degree because it knows of nothing except pure communication.

Task of the Translator [1923]), we can conclude that Benjamin was already looking into questions on the legitimacy and the aim of translation and was preparing his theory of language when writing *On Language*. This text would then serve as the foundation for his theory of translation, and would appear as the true messianic task – to bestow his full power on the “project” sketched out in *On Coming Philosophy* – and would lead to pure and messianic language. But if the expression of the messianic task did not appear clearly developed in *On Language*, the theory of naming (as the foundation of language) contained the germ of a messianic task; it would be the task of translation to (re)discover and restore the symbolic power of language, which is to say the “secret password” it wears around its neck.

This is actually the meaning of the final paragraph of *On Language*, when Benjamin speaks of the “residue of the creative word of God” (Benjamin, 1996: 74) that passes through all of nature; the name gives a voice when it names something, just as naming saves knowledge. Benjamin is certainly speaking here about the breath of pure and divine language that passes through all of nature and that speaks to mankind through name, in an immediate and magical way. This is the condition of passage, in human language, to a “higher experience” where history, language, and thought can find themselves again and encounter a unity; this is not a formal or logical unity, but one that is open to the multiple possibilities of *saying*. In the same way that language can be a bridge, history, criticism, and translation can be qualities of a possible construction (or at least a desire for meaning in an erotic and foundational sense) of inquiry.

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THE DRAMATIC PATTERN OF THE WITTGENSTEINIAN *SPRACHSPIELE*

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Abstract

From its very beginning, philosophy has developed a dramatic plot. Formally, it is known as dialectics, and its origin is religious, or to say it more precisely, oracular. It is also very telling that Greek tragedy – contemporaneous with the rise of philosophy – draws from this very same source.

Plotinus (the last Greek philosopher, as Giorgio Colli called him) has shown us that we live almost always in the “two”. This is related to the unfolding inherent to intelligence and to the creation of forms. The dramatic plot I mentioned must have something to do with this fertile unfolding.

With relation to Wittgenstein, and especially his concept of the *Sprachspiel*, we find in it one of the most refreshing examples for exploring the tension between the testing of that link and the way authors like Dante, Goethe, Nietzsche or Benjamin provide strong touchstones of it. That is what I wish to address in this paper.

Keywords

Sprachspiel, Drama, Actor, Dissimulation, Instinct

“You remind me of someone who is looking through a closed window and cannot explain to himself the strange movements of a passer-by. He doesn’t know what kind of a storm is raging outside and that this person is perhaps only keeping himself on his feet with great effort.”

Hermine Wittgenstein, *Family Recollections* (quoting her brother Ludwig)¹

¹ Later in this paper I shall address this quotation. At this moment I cannot avoid calling attention to the hints of Kafka and Beckett in its tone.

Arrival on the scene

From its very beginning, philosophy has developed a dramatic plot. Formally, it is known as dialectics, and its origin is religious, or to say it more precisely, oracular. It is also very telling that Greek tragedy – contemporaneous with the rise of philosophy – draws from this very same source.

Plotinus (the last Greek philosopher, as Giorgio Colli called him) has shown us that we live almost always in the “two” (i.e. “the second hypostasis”, the “*noûs*”, to use his own terms). This is related to the unfolding inherent to intelligence and to the creation of forms. The dramatic plot I mentioned must have something to do with this fertile unfolding. Among the many authors who interest me the most, such as Dante, Goethe, Nietzsche, Benjamin, and Wittgenstein, what I find, or glimpse, in them is the tension that exists between the testing of that link and the way they provide strong touchstones of it.

With relation to Wittgenstein, and especially his concept of the *Sprachspiel*, we find one of the most refreshing examples for exploring this tension. That is what I wish to address in this paper. It is rather remarkable how the originality of his conception of the *Sprachspiel* remains intact despite the many years of research that has been done on it.

1

To begin, I shall offer a few examples and uses of dramatic similes in Wittgenstein’s texts before language appeared to him as *Spiel* (even if he, very early on, considered it to be related to scenes that speak for themselves to the one who is willing to listen to them).

In order to understand and make understandable the relationship between a propositional element, “names”, and what is going on in the world, the “state of affairs” [*Sachlage*], Wittgenstein uses in the *Tractatus* 4.0311 the simile of the “tableau vivant” [*das lebende Bild*], which is the application of a Baroque performative technique: to represent a pictorial scene in flesh and blood, which requires a stage director (i.e. a function; the director could be an amateur), and a precise discipline of motion and rest, constantly demanding comparisons and calibrations in relation to the original model. So the names are intended to be like characters from a dramatic scene whose performance

in suspension represents the *Sachlage*: “A name stands for a thing, another for another thing, and they are combined. In this way the whole group – as a tableau vivant – represents the state of affairs”.

This is one of the most penetrating and demanding variations on the model that seems to have been the primitive source for the pictorial [*bildlich*] conception of language in the *Tractatus*: the visual/spatial – a staging scene – the representation of an accident.²

Some years later, during 1930 (*Culture and Value*, MS 109 28: 22.8.1930) we come upon an amazing reverberation of the theatrical simile. Wittgenstein introduces us to a peculiar experience lived and stated to him by Paul Engelmann, where he imagined himself being seen by others as he shuffled through his papers at his desk or read letters from his ancestors – being seen by someone, much like in theatre.

But against all the natural expectations, this is not about life understood as a theatrical play, as Shakespeare or Calderón de la Barca would say; for both it is the very inconsistency, the meaninglessness of life, that leads them to regard life as a device engineered by man himself, even if its source may be Creation itself as in Calderón (this thus inverts the Aristotelian point of view of a “*mimêsis tês praxeôs*”). It is a view according to which life energy is drawn into all kinds of networks and webs of staging, invalidating the difference between life and theatre, so that human life on earth is nothing but an illusion.³

On the contrary, Wittgenstein’s way of considering Paul Engelmann’s description has to do with the possibility of being seen by someone in the sense that this someone is seeing the other one living – something we do, as

² Cf. Georg Henrik von Wright, “Biographical Sketch”, in Norman Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, Oxford, 1984. And also the enlightening considerations of Frederick Rokem about *Fall*, *Zufall*, and *zufällig* in Chapter 5, “Accidents and Catastrophes”, from his book *Philosophers & Thespians. Thinking Performance*, 2010.

³ “A shadow of a dream”, as Pindar wrote. As it is known, Calderón has many things to say concerning the relationship between dream, life and theatre. It is very telling that Wittgenstein did not use this archaic image (so common in philosophy since the Greeks; resumed by the moderns especially since Descartes). The reasons are twofold, for he is very convinced that 1) we only know what a dream is because we are able to wake up, and 2) nothing would change in our lives if, instead of things being the way they are, they were supposed to be a dream of a life. Cf. PI I, §448; PI II, VII §§ 1-2, but especially PI, II, XI §166. And also OC, §§383, 642, 643, 676.

Wittgenstein reminds us, every single day without noticing it. This, in turn, provides a perspective on life that makes it worth contemplating it as a work of art gazed upon by God. The one who is seeing a chapter of someone's life feels as if he or she is being like God not being God, a situation both uncanny and wonderful. In this example, life is not theater; life deserves being contemplated, deserves being praised, and so life becomes a sort of unconceivable, improbable or unlikely theatre, whose characters do not go searching for their author.

Nothing could be more remarkable than seeing someone who thinks himself unobserved engaged in some simple everyday activity. Let's imagine a theatre: the curtain goes up & we see someone alone in his room walking up and down, lighting a cigarette, seating himself, etc. so that suddenly we are observing a human being from outside in a way that ordinarily we can never observe ourselves; as if we were watching a chapter from a biography with our own eyes, – surely this would be at once uncanny and wonderful. More wonderful than anything that a playwright could cause to be acted or spoken. We should be seeing life itself.⁴

But considering the fact that it is so very common for someone to watch others living, why is it that we are not able to notice it? The answer is that we lack the right perspective. But what does this mean?

Let's see: The theatrical pattern of the contemplation of life arises from the same manuscript as an artistic one, which means that art allows us to observe it from the "right point of view",⁵ which is qualified as seeing things *sub specie aeterni*.⁶ At the end of the same notation, Wittgenstein adds another kind of activity that is keen to the artistic one: a certain way of doing

⁴ CV, MS 109 28: 22. 8. 1930. It is almost impossible not to compare these words with Stanislavsky's insights about the difference between living and acting. Cf. *An Actor Prepares*, transl. Elisabeth Reynolds Hapgoog, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1965.

⁵ One year before he had written: "The human gaze has the power of making things precious; though it's true they become more costly too." CV, MS 106 58:1929.

⁶ "The miracles of nature. We might say: art *discloses* the miracles of nature. It is based on the *concept* of the miracles of nature. (The blossom, just opening out. What is *marvelous* about it?) We say: 'Look, how it's opening out!'", CV 1947, 64e. The expression *sub specie aeterni* appears often during the years he's preparing the *Tractatus* and also in the *Tractatus* itself. It is not easy to find it again after the 1930s. But its resonances continue to be heard as is evidenced in the former quotation.

philosophy, which can neither be done seated before the world nor even walking through it but rather by flying above it at a good distance: “the way of thought which as it were flies above the world and leaves it the way it is, contemplating it from above in its flight”. A certain distance positioning the viewer to allow things to stay the way they are.⁷

I consider that Wittgenstein later turns this “right point of view” into the “ethnological approach”,⁸ when earthly elements like human beings’ shadows, the phases of the moon, the changing of the seasons or the phenomena of death, birth and sexual life, as well as earthly human activities like everyday words, rites, myths or beliefs, “play a part” in one man’s thinking (“his philosophy”); these are taken as “what we really know and find interesting”.⁹ Both “the right point of view” and “the ethnological approach” (its later variation) are in accordance with the injunction: “Let us be human. –” (CV, MS 119 83: 7.10.1937).

2

On Certainty §471: “It is so difficult to find the *beginning*. Or, better: it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not to try to go further back.” What is this beginning? How can we find it? Why is it so difficult to begin at the beginning?

In order to answer these questions we will turn to two *dicta* by Goethe for aid: *Im Anfang war die Tat* (the end of the verse 1237 from *Faust*) and “the *causa finalis* of the world and the human action is dramatic poetry”¹⁰ (letter to Madame von Stein on March 3rd 1785, a few months before he left for Italy). Wittgenstein quotes the first one at least twice (in *Culture and Value*, MS 119 146: 21.10.1937, 36e, and *On Certainty* §402), but not the second one. But since I found it I cannot stop thinking about its resonances and its truth, and I return to it again and again.¹¹ And I am returning to it yet again this time.

⁷ This will be resumed in *Philosophical Investigations*. I shall address it later.

⁸ “If we use the ethnological approach does that mean we are saying philosophy is ethnology? No, it only means we are taking up our position far outside, in order to see *the things more objectively*”, CV 1940, 45e.

⁹ Cf. “Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*”, PO, pp.127-129.

¹⁰ Once more, this has nothing to do with Shakespeare or Calderón’s ideas.

¹¹ Cf. my essay “Cries, false substitutes and expressions in image”, in *Wittgenstein on Forms of Life and the Nature of Experience*, pp. 39-63.

Let us consider the context of the first quotation from Goethe: this is the moment when Faust returns to his *Studienzimmer*, followed by the black dog – whose metamorphosis is named Mephistopheles – he found during his walk with Wagner, his *famulus*, by the city gates. Faust opens a book, the Fourth Gospel, and prepares himself for the labour of translation:

Geschrieben steht: „Im Anfang war das *Wort!*“
 Hier stock'ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort?
 Ich kann das *Wort* so hoch unmöglich schätzen,
 Ich muss es anders beisetzen,
 Wenn ich vom Geiste recht erleuchtet bin.
 Geschrieben steht: Im Anfang war der *Sinn*.
 Bedenke wohl die erste Zeile,
 Dass deine Feder sich nicht beeile!
 Ist es der *Sinn*, der alles wirkt und schafft?
 Es sollte stehn: Im Anfang war die *Kraft!*
 Doch, auch indem ich dieses niederschreibe,
 Schon warnt mich was, dass ich dabei nicht bleibe.
 Mir hilft der Geist! Auf einmal seh'ich Rat
 Und schreibe getrost: Im Anfang war die *Tat!*
Faust, vv.1224-1237

It says: “in the beginning was the *Word*.”
 Already I am stopped. It seems absurd.
 The *Word* does not deserve the highest prize,
 I must translate it otherwise
 If I am well inspired and not blind.
 It says: In the beginning was the *Mind*.
 Ponder that first line, wait and see,
 Lest you should write too hastily.
 Is mind the all-creating source?
 It ought to say: In the beginning there was *Force*.
 Yet something warns me as I grasp the pen,
 That my translation must be changed again.
 The spirit helps me. Now it is exact.
 I write: In the beginning was the *Act*.
 [Walter Kaufmann's translation, 1961]

In the first canonical version *logos* is translated as *Wort* (*verbum*, word). However, this translation does not satisfy Faust – the eternal discontented

– and he turns to the Spirit for aid. In his mind then comes the word *Sinn* (mind, intelligence, thought). But he refrains himself: how can “*der Sinn*” be responsible for the effectiveness and the creation of things? No, it cannot be. Instead of “*der Sinn*”, it must be *die Kraft* (force, energy). His pen begins to write and already it seems to him that this choice is not yet what he is looking for. Once more he asks for assistance from the Spirit. In one go, like sudden insight, he writes (with confidence): “Im Anfang war die *Tat!*”

So there is a movement from *word* to *intelligence*, from *intelligence* to *force* and finally from *force* to *deed*. Deed is the final and definitive choice. However, the former choices are not cancelled without regard. On the contrary, they continue acting on the last choice, justifying it and increasing its accuracy: word, intelligence, force, all of them live and to all of them are given life by the deed and we cannot go further back: *And write with confidence: In the beginning was the deed!*

What kind of deed or act is at stake here? Answering this question implies that we immerse ourselves in the concept of *Sprachspiel*,¹² as it is introduced and developed in the *Philosophical Investigations* and other writings:¹³ “The origin & the primitive form of the language-game/language-play is a reaction; only from this can the more complicated forms grow”¹⁴ (CV, *ibid.*). The countless kinds of reactions combined with their living contexts form what we call learning how to speak (cf. PI I, among others, §§1-5, 7, 19, 23). It is about training, accepting, refusing, using, and not about signs and their meaning:¹⁵ “Children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, etc.

¹² There is an irrepressible partiality in translating *Sprachspiel* as “language-game”, given that the uses of the German word “*Spiel*” are at least twofold: as game, and as play. There is a dramatic energy in the word created by Wittgenstein that we lose – although not entirely – with its reduction to *game*. Regarding my essay, I have decided in most of the cases to use the German expression, but I will also resort to the double translation.

¹³ Especially “Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*”, *On Certainty*, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* I and II, and *Culture and Value*.

¹⁴ Wittgenstein often seeks this primitive reaction which “may have been a glance or a gesture, but it may also have been a word” (PI II, XI §182). For example: “What is the primitive reaction with which the language-game begins, which then can be translated into the words such as ‘When this word occurred I thought of [...]’”, *LW*, MS 137-138 (1948-1949), 133. I will address these “more complicated forms” further ahead.

¹⁵ “[...] Precisely not *one* sign, which designates something, but rather something that has *sense*, which sets up a sense that exists without regard to truth or falsity. [Here there are some

etc. – they learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, etc. etc.” (OC §476).

This is precisely what is at stake with the insight that “Words are deeds” (CV, MS 179 20: ca. 1945, 53e). The examples concerning the variety of language games/plays send us back again and again to this insight, particularly in *On Certainty*, where Wittgenstein focuses on a bundle of certainties in which we cannot go further back due the threat of ruining what we call our world:

[...] If the water over the gas freezes, of course I shall be as astonished as I can be, but I shall assume some factor I don't know of, and perhaps leave the matter to physicists to judge. But what could make me doubt whether this person is N.N., whom I have known for years? Here a doubt would seem to drag everything with it and plunge it into chaos.¹⁶

The difference between these two kinds of doubt must be stressed: one concerns knowledge (the study of physics), while the other is related to a certainty upon which my whole life is sustained, which nourishes my entire life. When Wittgenstein presents us with a list of *Sprachspiele* (a choice done among countless ones) in §23 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, we notice a similar disparity. For example, between “giving orders and obeying them”, “constructing an object from a description (a drawing)”, “forming and testing an hypothesis”, “play-acting”, “singing catches”, “solving a problem in practical arithmetic”, “translating from one language to another”, “asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying”. On the one hand, as it is clear, the last group of language games/plays are related to the second kind of doubt, i.e. they pervade our entire life, and at the same time they also have something in common with some of the former ones, such as translating, play-acting or singing catches, where the very creativity of language is at work. On the other hand, praying and inventing riddles are more complicated forms of language games/plays than giving out or obeying orders.

variants] It is the arrow and not the point [...].” *LW*, vol. 2, 22e. Cf. also *PI*, I, §282: “But in the fairy tales the pot can see and hear!”.

¹⁶ OC §613. I shall not go more in depth about the issues on certainty, doubt, belief, conviction and knowledge, which thoroughly pervade *On Certainty*.

3

When we take all of this into account, it is obvious that the roots of the *Sprachspiel* are dramatic. The beginning has a dramatic structure, i.e. at least two characters acting upon and reacting to one another. If we went further back than this beginning, then we should fall out of the world where we live to one we are not yet acquainted *with*. This is what Wittgenstein aims to clarify.

In most cases (after the 1930's) Wittgenstein speaks about *Sprache* as a mother tongue. And he speaks about it in two distinct manners. First, whenever he handles it explicitly, showing always a sharp attention to the small and elucidative differences – he really does help us to see that words are deeds – between the uses of words in different mother tongues (most of the time in German and English, and sometimes in French): “The English ‘I’m furious’ is not an expression of self-observation. Similarly in German ‘Ich bin wütend’; but not ‘Ich bin zornig.’ (‘Terribly doth the rage within my bosom turn...’ It is a trembling of rage.)” (LW I, MS137-138 (1948-1949) §13).

And second, every time he is inventing new experimental, imaginative, dramatic scenes, such as “Let’s imagine you travelled to a distant tribe, people having this or that kind of language”, “Say to yourself”, “Suppose you are in front of this or that”, “Suddenly you see someone falling on the street”, “Look at the blue of the sky”, “Imagine your parents don’t recognize you” or “Try to not believe that someone who’s feeling pain is feeling it” and so on. All of them are invitations to staged actions, *Gedankenexperimente*.

In both cases something very relevant is being pointed out about the “very beginning”: our words are living acts taking part in a form, a stream, an element, a way, a system, a pattern, a weave of life. He uses all these terms,¹⁷ even though “form of life” is employed more often and it is the first expression chosen by Wittgenstein to conceptualize a kind of activity in which human beings play their language games/plays (cf. PI, I, §23). In any case, all of them – just as “form of life” is – are meant to be that which is given to us (cf. PI II, XI, §345). It is from this basis that he justifies his nausea concerning Esperanto. Despite it being seemingly a “mother tongue”, Esperanto is a constructed and invented language (for noble reasons, but Wittgenstein

¹⁷ Cf. among many other writings and sections: PI I, §23; PI II, V, §31; LW I MS 137-138 §211; LW II, MS 42e, OC §§ 105, 144, 152.

does not care about this at all) and so it is like a forgery: “The feeling of disgust concerning the Esperanto, a invented mother tongue & yet ‘plays at language.’” (CV, MS 132 69: 26.9.1946, 60e).

The form, pattern or stream of life provide the multiplicity of landscapes for the language-games/plays, i.e. a complicated weave of actions and reactions which are lively received and worked out as a tradition, time and time again recreated, transformed, recommenced time and time again by children who are learning to speak: “After all, one can only say something if one has learned to talk” (PI, I §338). In fact, Wittgenstein learns a lot from children¹⁸ (and has also learned a lot from his own childhood) and primitive rituals, in particular, the ability of being able to see a face in everything in front of him, being able to assume that everything speaks for itself, i.e. everything wears an expression: “A theme, no less than a face, wears an expression.” (CV, MS 132 59: 25. 9.1946, 59e) This is another touchstone of the dramatic pattern Wittgenstein uses to apply his tendency for personification. What I mean is that this personification tendency runs parallel to his discovery that the meaning of a word has to do with its use:¹⁹ “As children we learn concepts and what one does with them simultaneously” (LW II, 43e). And so Wittgenstein not only finds out that: “[...] (Meaning is a physiognomy)” (PI I, §568), but also relates use with the breath of the word: “Every sign *by itself* seems dead. *What* gives it life? – In use it is *alive*. Is life breathed into it there? – Or is the *use* its life?” (*ibid.* §432)²⁰

Therefore speaking and wanting to speak, or to mean something, is a movement such as addressing something or addressing someone: “We want to say: ‘When we mean something, it’s like going up to someone, it’s not having a dead picture (of any kind)’. We go up to the thing we mean.” Or: “Yes: meaning something is like going up to someone.” (PI, I §§455, 457)

¹⁸ Although he is aware of his own limitations on this: “[I haven’t yet estimated correctly the *beginning* that the child is making]”, LW, MS 137-138 (1948-ß1949), 16e.

¹⁹ Numerous cases in *PI* from the very beginning, already at the end of §1: “But what is the meaning of the word ‘five’? – No such thing was in question here, only how the word ‘five’ is used”. And at §2 he establishes in the clearest way the primitive nature, in the sense of being restricted, of the philosophical concept of meaning. But this is also found in *OC* and other writings.

²⁰ “What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use” (PI, I, §116).

Worte sind Taten. Words as deeds are acts weaved within a multiplicity and variety of threads: diction, intonation, expression, desire,²¹ entangled with gestures, motions, attitudes, beliefs:

In this way I should like to say the words “Oh, *let* him come!” are charged with my desire. And words can be wrung from us, – like a cry. Words can be *hard* to say: such, for example, as are used to effect a renunciation, or to confess a weakness. (Words are deeds).²²

According to the testimony by Hermine, Wittgenstein’s elder sister, this employment of all kinds of staged similes, parables, *Gedankenexperimente*, seems to have its source in a habit cultivated by brothers and sisters: “Since we, his brothers and sisters, very often communicated with each other by way of comparisons [*Gleichnisse*]”. The best confirmation for this is the quotation used as an epigraph above. In fact, it is Ludwig’s answer to this sister’s perplexity about his decision of becoming an elementary school teacher.

[...] The real discovery is the one that makes me capable of stopping doing philosophy when I want to. – The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring *itself* in question – Instead, we now demonstrate a method, by examples; and the series of examples can be broken off – Problems are solved (difficulties eliminated), not a *single* problem. There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies. (PI, I §133)

These comparative methods – that he sees as different therapies –, developed with the imaginative staging examples, are the very condition that lets everything stay the way it is, the condition of not doing injustice to the facts, attempting to not reduce their dissimilarities to some previous and quick similarities or sameness, admitting the diversity of the uses of the words, their multiple faces. It is also the condition, and this is the hardest thing to understand, to stop performing philosophy (i.e. no longer being tormented

²¹ Wittgenstein knew what he was talking about whenever he mentions desire. That is patent in both his previous quote and in the quote that opens this paper’s section 4.

²² PI, I, §546. Cf. also 534, which ends with this parenthesis: “(A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction)”.

with questions which put philosophy itself into question): “Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a “Proto-phenomenon” [*Urphänomen*]. That is, where we ought to have said: *this language-game is played [dieses Sprachspiel wird gespielt].*” (PI I, §654)

“The language-game is played”.²³ This is the pre-condition for the saying that “My life consists in my being content to accept many things” (OC, §344), which rhymes with the conception that “Philosophy simply puts everything before us and neither explains nor deduces anything. – Since everything lies in open view there is nothing to explain [...]” (PI I, §126). Here two Goethean insights interweave with one another: first, the *Urphänomen*, i.e. the condition of the phenomenon inseparable from the phenomenon itself,²⁴ and, second, the passage already quoted above where dramatic poetry is the *causa finalis* of the world and human action, an immanent *causa finalis*, without an exterior objective, reproducing itself like pleasure.

The dramatic energy of the *Sprachspiele* is what gives our language its depth. Tanizaki’s simile (*The Praise of Shadows*) applies here with great accuracy: the branches of a tree that intersect and interweave form a cabin, if they separate everything is flat again.²⁵

4

At bottom, I am still afraid. – I am afraid, I can’t stand this fear! – I am afraid of his coming, therefore I am so restless. – Oh, now I am much less afraid of it than before. Now, just when I should be fearless, I am afraid!

There could be various explanations:
I am afraid! I can’t stand this fear!

²³ Let us recall the end of the quotation from footnote 6: “Look to the blossom (just opening out)” which runs in parallel to the *Sprachspiel* being played, something Wittgenstein notices when looking at what happens when we are speaking. In fact, according to him, conceptual & aesthetical problems are not separated (CV, MS 138 5b: 21. 1. 1949).

²⁴ And so Goethe concludes “everything factual [*alles Faktische*] is already theory” (M.u.R. 488, HA 12, p. 432), which is the contrary of an empiricist point of view and is related to the Wittgensteinian conviction that “Nothing is so difficult as doing justice to the facts.” (“Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*”, PO, p. 129). For a development of Goethe’s concept of *Urphänomen* cf., among other sources, *Die Farbenlehre* §§ 175-177; HA 13, pp. 367-368; M.u.R. 15-17, HA 12, p. 366-367; *Conversations with Eckermann*, 18. 2. 1829, AA 24, p. 319.

²⁵ I thank Ana Campos for having reminded me of these words from Tanizaki.

I am afraid of his coming, and that is why I am so restless.
 I am still a little afraid, although much less than before.
 At bottom I am still afraid, though I won't confess it to myself.
 Now, just when I should be fearless, I am afraid!
 I am afraid; unfortunately, I must admit it.
 I think I'm still afraid. [Cf. PI II, ix, p. 188a]
Last Writings of Philosophy of Psychology I, MS 169 (ca. 1949) §§ 46 e 47

When we read these paragraphs, which sound like cues in a play or, more precisely, like an actor preparing himself for a role, an actor becoming an actor, i.e. what comes immediately into our mind is an affinity with a dramatic method exercise, such as Stanislavski's method (if one can call it this, considering its plurality).²⁶ One of Stanislavski's exercises is learning how to speak the same words uttered in diversified contexts, dispositions, and attitudes, for instance the words "yes" and "no". It is very hard, indeed! But the exercise also concerns how to utter punctuation, a comma or a question mark, which is even harder. Such exercises are intended to become forms of self-discovery since many physical, affective, spiritual elements and energies of the actors, an ocean unnoticed by them, were brought to the scene without a pre-designed program. These are exercises that seem very similar to Wittgenstein's *Gedankenexperimente*.

What do we see in the quote above? We see several images related to desire and fear. This is one of the most frequent dramatic scenes, *Gedankenexperimente*, imagined by Wittgenstein. The other one – used even more often – is about pain. Both can assume very poignant aspects, both point out many things in Wittgenstein's own life, however unrecognizable as such.

Concerning pain, there is always the question: how can we be sure that someone is in pain and is not dissimulating that he is in pain? Wittgenstein uses the concept of dissimulation in two different ways: on the one hand, as a dramatic or theatrical simile; on the other hand, to express an ethical problem. Sometimes the two intersect with one another and it is difficult to tell them apart. For instance, when Wittgenstein compares the Irish with the English, stating that the former do not wear as many masks as the latter

²⁶ It seems to me that these paragraphs put Stanislavski's idea about the actor being someone who feels and who observes himself simultaneously in evidence. Cf. *An Actor Prepares*.

(cf. *Philosophical Investigations*), he is applying a dramatic device (the mask) to compare two ways of moral behavior. But especially in the *Late Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, Wittgenstein resorts to dramas and actors to clarify the misunderstandings of dissimulation. At a first glance, it seems he follows Diderot's paradox (perhaps he was not even aware of it, but that is not the issue here), i.e. "feeling the pain he does not feel", which is not precisely the same thing as being a *fingidor*, i.e. pretending in Pessoa:

Autopsicografia

O poeta é um fingidor.
Finge tão completamente
Que chega a fingir que é dor
A dor que deveras sente.

E os que lêem o que escreve,
Na dor lida sentem bem,
Não as duas que ele teve,
Mas só a que eles não têm.²⁷

A few words about these verses. First, the poet is a *fingidor*, he pretends to have pains that he really feels. Here Pessoa's *ars poetica* is presented to us *in nuce*, a form of acting as a "*dédoublement*" or multiplying of characters. Second, the persons who are reading the poem are unable to feel the two pains the poet has had: the one he has felt and its metamorphosis into the one he is pretending to feel. The readers only feel the pain they have not had. And so poetry is not only fiction (even in regard to this word one must pay

²⁷ "The poet is a pretender / Pretends so completely / That comes to pretend that pain is / The pains that they really feel

And those who read what he writes, / In pain feel good read, / Not the two he had, / But only they do not." (Translation: Douglas Storm)

"The poet is a pretender / He pretends so completely / That he even pretends / The pain he really feels.

And those who read his writings, / Sense well in the pain they read, / Not his two but only / The one they lack." (Translation: Marilyn Scarandino Jones).

"The poet is a faker / Who's so good at his act / He even fakes the pain / Of pain he feels in fact.

And those who read his words / Will feel in his writing / Neither of the pains he has / But just the one they're missing." (Translation: Richard Zenith)

There are at least seventeen different English translations of this poem.

copyright to Pessoa). It is necessary to specify the particular kind of fiction that is at stake here. To pretend has a dramatic energy; it has to do with the unfolding of characters, as Pessoa himself explains to his friend, the critic João Gaspar Simões, in a letter dated December 11th, 1931, where he comments on a book written by Simões on Sá-Carneiro and Pessoa entitled *O Mistério da Poesia*:

[...] the study in regards to myself [which] only falters for basing itself as true facts, on facts that are false due to my not being able but lie, artistically speaking [...] I have never missed my childhood; I have never missed, truth be told, much of anything. [...] Everything else are literary attitudes, *felt intensively by dramatic instinct* whether they are signed by Álvaro de Campos or by Fernando Pessoa [...]. (Italics are mine)

Thus, “fingidor”, *pretender* in Portuguese, and especially in Pessoa, is not the same thing as dissimulator. Actually, fictional literary attitudes are infused with a “dramatic instinct”. One would hardly refer to dissimulation by dramatic instinct. And the creativity of this instinct is such that it avoids the reduction of a pretender to a mere liar, a cunning scoundrel, or just a simple faker.

Dissimulation is a very important theme for Wittgenstein, one he struggles with from the 1930s to his last days. It is found in the context of the images of what the human interior may be, as a thing that is hidden (such as a thing in a box, for instance), images that we have become used to employ based on things we call “external”. Images that deceive mislead and bewitch us.²⁸ The suspicion of dissimulation – for example, in relation to someone in pain – is one of the possible arguments that hamper or curtail one’s trust in another person to whom one is speaking to. Its irrepressible expansion (for it is an attractive and even tempting theory) leads one to conclude about the inaccessible inner self of each person. Theoretically speaking, idealistic solipsists exult (for how can one identify a solipsist acting in the practice of life?). However, Wittgenstein is not satisfied with this and, like a dog that keeps gnawing on a bone, he returns time and again to dissimulation until

²⁸ These images can be compared with the “closed window” Wittgenstein talks about in the parable – chosen as the epigraph of this paper – he has invented to answer his sister’s criticism. In fact the “closed window” is an obstacle to understand what is going on with the man on the street.

the last year of his life.

The actor is not dissimulating. La Lupe, unforgettably singing “Lo tuyo es puro teatro” is saying that, yes, that man is a false lover, his kisses are artifices she does not believe in, and this is, undoubtedly, one of the most common uses of theatre: an art of dissimulation. However, such a use is only effective when the gates that separate life from theatre, life from art are crossed (this does not weaken my conviction of the inseparable relationship that exists between life and drama, and that theatre is only possible due to that very relationship. I will return to this point). It is not by chance, surely, that the word “hypocrite” was first used to refer to an actor, and ended up being used as a moral concept.

Dissimulation precisely implies a disciplined rationality, integrated in a system of moral, social and political finalities. For instance, Socratic irony is a figure of dissimulation that has been converted into a combative analytical method, hence its cruelty.

The mask prevents any shadow of misunderstanding that the concept of dissimulation might trigger when referring to an actor. And the same paradox by Diderot would slide as it were, like an arrow into an anointed shield. But even if this is the case (and that is the way I see it), one cannot avoid the infiltrations of deliberate lies in the actor’s task, considering how bad actors according to Aristotle (cf. *Poetics*, IX, 1452a) used so many exaggerated gestures and vocalizations to please the audiences, and the mask became an accessory. This is what the word *overacting* means: when the actor’s mask is under the illusion of theatre, it makes the spectator cry “what a good actor he is!” This is when things go sour: the play is not touching the boundaries of life.

Although the manner Wittgenstein dealt with dissimulation, within a theatrical context, has paved the way for these considerations on fiction, pretending, and theatrical instinct, he did not exactly consider them directly (we still have to speak about where instinct is concerned, however). The use he gives to theatrical representation and to the actor’s task have, above all, the following goal: to provide us with touchstones that enable us to question the illusionary image that we usually have to surmise the interior of a human being. In effect, in theatre we can *see* different circumstances, different contexts of sentences portraying different aspects of dissimulation, and thus

theatre becomes a source of understanding where the misunderstandings caused by that illusionary image are founded. Here are a few examples:

A play, for example, shows what instances of dissimulation look like.

Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology I, MS137-138 (1948-1949), §263

That an actor can represent grief shows the uncertainty of evidence, but that he can represent *grief* also shows the reality of evidence.²⁹

Ibid. II, p. 67e

The contexts of a sentence are best portrayed in a play. Therefore the best example for a sentence with a particular meaning is a quotation from a play. And whoever asks a person in a play what he's experiencing when he's speaking?

Ibid. vol. I, MS137-138 (1948-1949), §38

It is very curious that in the last quotation Wittgenstein on the one hand speaks about "a quotation from a play" and not about seeing/hearing an actor performing. And, on the other hand, he immerses himself into the drama, among the characters, introducing as it were a reduction to the absurd: "What are you experiencing/feeling?" asks one character to the other, which is something far beyond Brecht's distancing effect, something that is not supposed to be asked. What if we questioned the pain of Hecuba in the *Trojan Women* by Euripides or the anguish of Cassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*?

Let us briefly take a look at instinct. We find two enlightening passages in Wittgenstein's work. The first is when Wittgenstein underlines the fact that language, and language games/plays, do not find their origins in deductions or inductions, they do not stem from any reasoning whatsoever. In the beginning was the deed. Wittgenstein is asking us to look at man as one looks at an animal. The person who imagines a bond between instinct (and all the variations thereupon) and language will be more correct than one who has the illusion that language is a controllable object in accordance with our own every "reasons and little reasons".³⁰

²⁹ "It is not the relationship of the inner to the outer that explains the uncertainty of the evidence, but rather the other way around – this relationship is only a picture-like representation of this uncertainty". *Ibid.*, p. 68e

³⁰ An expression from a text by Goethe, "Über den Wert des Apercus", edited by Franz Schmidt, 1967.

I want to regard man here as an animal; as a primitive being to which one grants instinct but not ratiocination [*Raisonnement*]. As a creature in a primitive state. Any logic good enough for a primitive means of communication needs no apology from us. Language did not emerge from some kind of ratiocination [*Raisonnement*]. (*On Certainty* §475)

The second passage is found in “Remarks on Frazer’s *Golden Bough*”, where he creates an opposition between an explanation of the evolutive, historical and causal nature of common human acts, such as stomping one’s feet on the ground or hitting a tree with a walking cane, to the acceptance that there is nothing but “Instinct-actions”, which speak for themselves, that is to say, of their fury. The same can be said of any ritual:³¹ so is human life, and its *causa finalis* is dramatic poetry. Wittgenstein meets Goethe once again, even if the former is not explicitly quoting the latter.

When I am furious about something, I sometimes beat the ground or a tree with my walking stick. But certainly I don’t believe that the ground is to blame or that my beating can help anything. “I am venting my anger”. All rites are of this kind, such actions may be called Instinct-actions.
Philosophical Occasions, pp. 137-139

³¹ In these remarks, Wittgenstein has taught us to consider the doubtful character of applying the concepts of cause and causality (as well as the evolutive explanation one) to the ritualistic ceremonies of so-called primitive peoples. Wittgenstein’s point is that we are considering these rituals from a scientific-technological point of view, nurtured in our own, progress-laden civilization. Our point of view is held under the illusion that technical inventions have suppressed the strong feelings of human beings, namely, fear, and also consider the “primitives” as innocent children who, unable to understand natural causes, substitute them with symbolic causes, as in the cases of rain rituals of a number of African tribes, rituals that would lead to rain-making. What is awkward, says Wittgenstein, is that these people only perform such rituals in the rainy seasons, when predictably they will occur: “I read, among many similar examples, of a Rain-King in Africa to whom people pray for rain *when the rain period* [[72]] *comes*”. This means that they don’t really believe that he is able to make rain; otherwise, they would pray and perform their rituals in dry periods, when the earth “is a parched and arid desert”. *Ibid*, 130-131. For a development of the relationship between primitives and Western people, in the framework of Aby Warburg’s “The Ritual of the Serpent”, cf. my essay, “A escada, o raio e a serpente. Variações sobre a natureza humana”, in *Qual é o tempo e o movimento de uma eclipse? Estudos sobre Aby Warburg*. Edited by Anabela Mendes, Isabel Matos Dias, José M. Justo, Peter Hanenberg, Universidade Católica Editora, Lisboa, 2012, pp. 189-212.

Just as language was not born from a sort of rationality, neither was theatre. Let us imagine ourselves as animals, Wittgenstein asks, foreseeing a relationship between language and instinct, something that is quite hard to accept immediately despite countless evidence.³² Wittgenstein asks us to acknowledge the fact that we are instinctual beings, and that that is the path one follows to arrive at language (just as a child reaches for milk, the cat reaches for a mouse, the flea reaches for the dog).³³

For Wittgenstein, the word is life. That is why he enjoys Faust's translation of the Fourth Gospel's first verse – In the beginning was the deed –, for what is at stake here is life in its very incalculability, and *logos* has a long tradition of argumentative, deductive and inductive rationality. *Worte sind Taten*.

That before myth comes animality, it is what the Greeks had foreseen, and what Giorgio Colli helped us comprehend.³⁴ The first scene is an erotic scene, a boundless secret scene between Queen Pasiphae and the sacred bull (perhaps Zeus, perhaps Dionysus): the Minotaur, the result of that passion, is hidden within a labyrinth that had been built for that very same effect by Daedalus, a follower of Apollo. We are here before one of the keystones of Greek culture. The satyr, in turn, from the same cloth as the Minotaur, that is to say, half man and half beast, although inverting its halves, is the enthusiast who opens the path to the actor's birth.

Nietzsche can be of great help here. From the very beginning, i.e. from *The Birth of Tragedy*, it seems to me that he knows about a deep kinship between the figure and the energies of the actor.³⁵ Acting is a kind of musicality: simultaneously being possessed and being out of oneself. It is a sublime drunkenness, which makes one under its influence to be multiple, to have no name, to create a mask. Only through this musicality had Nietzsche made the discovery of the origin of tragedy, the result of a stream of religious dances from which visions of the god Dionysius are generated.

³² "It is always by favour [*Gnade*] of Nature that one knows something." (*On Certainty*, 505)

³³ "The squirrel does not infer by induction that it is going to need stores next winter as well. And no more do we need a law of induction to justify our actions or our predictions", OC, §287 (23.9.50).

³⁴ Cf. *La nascita della filosofia*, Adelphi, Milano, 1975.

³⁵ We will not discuss the whole issue of pretending and dissimulation, which would become a theme for Nietzsche especially after *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, where the critical reevaluation of Wagner's music is concerned.

Nietzsche sees the actor's training as follows (cf. *The Birth of Tragedy* §7). First of all there is a community of enthusiastic people, satyrs, half men, half goats, men out of themselves because of something they see and feel concerning life (the god Dionysus is their lord). Singing and dancing together, suddenly one of them moves forward as if some image that everyone is beginning to see was projected on him. This means that Apollo joins Dionysius. This one moving forward is the first actor, still under the influence of Dionysian *mania*, but already sketching out a distance that is also the emergence of a character, an agent of Dionysian pain, an Apollonian mask. We can consider the second and third actors, the latter definitively stabilized with Sophocles, as variations and also as a result of the first actor. However some of the previous religious community members will not transform themselves into actors, even if they continue to experience visions concerning life, but now these visions are already a game of performing forces, a plot of actions: human life. Tragedy has begun.

Coda

And now the question remains whether we would give up our language-game which rests on 'imponderable evidence' and frequently leads to uncertainty, if it were possible to exchange it for a more exact one which by and large would have similar consequences. For instance, we could work with a mechanical "lie detector" and redefine a lie as that which causes a deflection on the lie detector.

So the question is: Would we change our way of living if this or that were provided for us? – And how could I answer that? (*Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology* II, MS 176 (1951))

Neither will I answer this question: how could I be able to do it? Although there is something undeniable: it would be impossible to use a lie detector on a dramatic performance on stage.

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THE DISSIDENCE OF ONE WITH ONESELF: LYING IN VLADIMIR JANKÉLÉVITCH

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Abstract

This article attempts to demonstrate how, by examining the problem of lying in his *Traité des vertus*, Vladimir Jankélévitch thematises consciousness as an instance of experimentation and dissidence, conceiving the lies produced by it as experiments in domination of the other and, above all, as the space of different kinds of dissidence of one with oneself.

Keywords

Lying, Consciousness, Dissidence

This article proposes to retrace some of the major lines of the phenomenology of lying developed by Vladimir Jankélévitch, in order to draw attention to the multiple operations of dissidence (between one and others, but, above all, between one and oneself) that this theory uncovers in the lying consciousness. The text which will serve as our guide is, evidently, the brief essay which the author dedicated to the study of lying. If we refuse to mention this essay's name, it is because – much like that of a professional liar – it changed a number of times, in accordance with the five different versions which Jankélévitch produced of the text between 1940 and 1970.¹ In the first three, the problem of lying was always approached in line with a double concern: 1) to follow on from the phenomenology of the illnesses of conscience which

¹ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1940); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1942); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1945); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1949); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970). This is far from a singularity or an anomaly in the context of the philosophical production of the author, who would repeatedly carry out complex rewriting processes on his works and articles.

Jankélévitch had begun to develop at the beginning of the 1930s,² and 2) to lay the foundations for the intentionalist and temporally circumstantiated ethics which he would come to develop at the end of the 1940s. This is the ethics proposed by the *Traité des vertus*, in whose *corpus* the essay on lying would end up being included, as part of a chapter concerning sincerity, which appears in both of the distinct editions of this work. It is, indeed, with reference to the second version of this chapter (which represents the fifth, the final and the richest of the metamorphoses experienced by the text on lying) that this essay will be supported from hereon. Let us be clear from the outset: the crutch that it offers us is not the most stable. Indeed, in the manner of the majority of the writings of our author, its reflection on the subject of lying is notable, from a formal point of view, for its fragmentary and asystematic nature, stretching over a range of highly diverse topics, without any particular care for order or unity. Even so, it is possible to outline seven general thematic nuclei within the chapter which concerns us, namely: those with respect 1) to the conditions for lying; 2) to the relationship of lying with time and language; 3) to the motive for lying; 4) to the punishment for lying; 5) to the hermeneutics of lying; 6) to self-lying, and 7) to the lawfulness of lying. As it would be impossible to analyse all of these topics here with a minimum of rigour, we shall concentrate on those which allow Jankélévitch to detect an inter- or intrasubjective division, abstaining, in this way, from the study of questions relative to the hermeneutics and the lawfulness of lying. Let us begin, then, by examining *where* the author identifies the very root of lying.

1. The conditions for lying

Jankélévitch's essay opens with the endorsement of an evidence: lies require, as a necessary condition, the presence of a consciousness which is capable of creating them.³ Nonetheless, from the evidence that there can be no such thing as an unconscious lie (in that lying supposes, at the very least, the consciousness of true and false), it is not deduced that every consciousness is

² Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1933), on remorse, and also, (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1938: 129-219), on boredom.

³ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 452).

necessarily deceptive, nor that consciousness is a sufficient condition for lying, which amounts to the same. This condition, according to Jankélévitch – who, on this point, advocates the position argued by Augustine in *De mendacio*⁴ –, is rooted in the desire to deceive (*voluntas fallendi*).⁵ In reality, in order for lying to occur, it is not sufficient for us to be aware of truth and falsehood (as this knowledge does not, of itself, compel us to lie), nor for us to declare a falsehood (as this act could be the result of a simple error made in good faith). To this end, it is first necessary that knowledge and act combine, or better still: that, being aware of truth and falsehood, we declare a falsehood with the express intention of deceiving. In this way, a first split is produced in the lying subject, who finds himself divided between knowledge and the desire for truth, between what he knows and what he says.⁶ It is a split which, according to Jankélévitch, the Plato of the *Hippias Minor* refuses to consider as a feasible possibility.⁷ Let us see: although he maintains that the liar is superior to the truth-teller (because, in contrast to the latter, the former is invested with the dual power of uttering either the truth or a falsehood)⁸, Plato also assumes that this superiority is merely notional, that is to say, that it will never translate itself into the active intention to deceive. Strictly speaking, here as in the *Laws*, Plato views the agent as an entity which is “passive with regards to the truth”, as a “[...] receptive intelligence which conceives of the possibility of falsehood, but which does not have the strength to articulate it”, or which only articulates it by accident.⁹ Within this framework, lying

⁴ Cf. (AUGUSTINE 1863: 488-494).

⁵ In this way, Jankélévitch also reveals the specific difference between lying and other possible practices which deny the truth – such as irony, which denies it, not with the intention to deceive, but with the intention to mediate the revelation of truth, inviting the ironized to participate dialectically in an exercise in deciphering the hidden meaning. On the distinction made by our author between lying and irony, cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 453, 475-476 and 486); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1964: 59-68 and 85-87).

⁶ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 453-456).

⁷ Cf. (PLATO 1996: 23-45).

⁸ Cf. (PLATO 1996: 374a).

⁹ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 454): “Cet optimisme lui-même repose sur une conception tout intellectualiste de l’*ἐκούσιος* considéré comme esprit entièrement spéculatif et cognitif, c’est-à-dire passif au regard de la vérité: – intelligence réceptive, qui conçoit bien la possibilité du faux, mais n’a pas la force de l’articuler.” Cf. (PLATO 1984: 860d); (PLATO 2002: 86e e seg.).

is thought of as a virtuality which, if anything, attests to the intellectual supremacy of a potential liar, of a deceiver who will never be able to actively deceive intentionally (*ἐκών*),¹⁰ prisoner as he is to the speculative obligation to express the truth. It comes as no surprise, then, when Jankélévitch tells us that, in Platonism, bad will is a fictional hypothesis that, through a knock-on effect, ends up cancelling out goodwill (which is now identified permanently and effortlessly with the will *tout court*).¹¹ From this exercise in determining the conditions for lying (and the accompanying digression concerning the *Hippias Minor*), let us retain the essential points, namely: the affirmation that the pneumatic intention to deceive – and, inherently therefore, the fissure opened in the subject between his knowledge and his desire for truth – represents the core element of all lying, which consequently cannot be reduced to the grammatical fact of uttering a non-truth.¹²

2. Lying, time, language

Once he has established what exactly it is that constitutes lying as such, Jankélévitch attempts to circumstantiate the lying consciousness in time, demonstrating how time designates the principle of a constant ontological lie, which allows for the occurrence of voluntary lying by opening a cleft between the truth of the person and the linguistic signs which aim to express it. Indeed, since it compels the same to become other – “other to oneself and other to this other”, in an incessant dynamism of *alteration* – Jankélévitchian time is heralded as “the first lie”.¹³ Or, if one prefers: a kind of ontological apostasy which, promoting the successive dissidence of one with oneself, implies that the same will come to be (in the future) that which (in the

¹⁰ Cf. (PLATO 1996: 370e).

¹¹ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 455 and 493-494).

¹² Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 457 and 492). For Augustine too, the principle of lying resides in the *animi sententia*. Cf. (AUGUSTINE 1863: 489).

¹³ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 518): “Le temps est le premier mensonge”; (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1974: 301): “[...] chaque être, à chaque instant, devient par altération un autre que lui-même, et un autre que cet autre. Infinie est l’altérité de tout être, universel le flux insaisissable de la temporalité”. For the characterisation of time as alteration, see (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1938: 57); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1951: 73); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1960: 29-30, 89 e 235-236); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1961: 118-119); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1966: 210-211); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1980 1: 21-22, 31-32 e 102-103); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1980 2: 185); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1984: 40).

present) it is not.¹⁴ As Jankélévitch writes in the *Traité des vertus*:

Time [...] makes one lie, in that it is the organ of disapproval; the same, through chronology, becomes other, and then another; because that's what it is to become: [...] to be another than oneself, to be what one is not [...]; becoming is the continual alteration which brings about the other. By a sort of continuation of alterity, becoming creates people unequal to themselves, dissimilar to themselves, at the same time that it renders all predication synthetic and gives to momentary truth the disturbing dimension of depth.¹⁵

Subject to time, personal truth can therefore be thought of as a permanent historical and dialectical alteration, which, according to our author, is fatally betrayed by language, that is to say: by the system of spatial signs which, verbalizing a transitory truth in the process of autoconfiguration, crystalize it in stationary utterances. Indeed, as language cannot synchronically decant the contents of each and every one of the moments which compose our conscious lives, it necessarily fosters the creation of a growing *décalage* between signifieds (temporal and mobile) and signifiers (spatial and static).¹⁶ The gap which interposes itself between a truth which is determined successively and a language which paralyzes it in the moment naturally favours

¹⁴ In reality, for Jankélévitch, time affects, not only the modes and forms of being (in which case he would only be sanctioning a simple, epidermal *modification* or *transformation* of substance), but also the very “nucleus” of being. He therefore does not permit being to be defined – in the manner of classical philosophers – by the permanence of the same in itself.

¹⁵ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 459): “Le temps [...] fait mentir en ceci qu’il est l’organe du démenti; le même, par la chronologie, devient un autre, et puis un autre encore; car c’est cela, devenir: [...] être un autre que soi-même, être ce qu’on n’est pas [...]; le devenir est l’altération continuée qui fait sans cesse advenir l’autre. Par une sorte de continuation d’altérité, le devenir fabrique des personnes inégales à elles-mêmes, dissemblables d’elles-mêmes, en même temps qu’il rend toute prédication synthétique et qu’il donne à la vérité momentanée l’inquiétante dimension de la profondeur”. Concerning the relation between time and lying, cf. also (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1974: 56); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1994: 205): “Le temps est la dimension naturelle de la feinte”.

¹⁶ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 459-460): “[...] comme nos moyens d’expression ne représentent, au regard de ces innombrables vérités intérieures dont la succession compose notre histoire, qu’une certaine fidélité instantanée, comme la sincérité-limite n’est, à la rigueur, que la véracité ponctuelle d’une seconde, il faudrait multiplier les traductions à l’infini pour serrer au plus près la vérité totale. Quelle patience plus qu’humaine y suffirait? quel instrument dynamique, quelle infatigable sincérité, et à chaque moment compromise?”

our dishonesty, inviting us to pass off momentary truths as eternal. Here we are, then, before a conflict which, in Jankélévitch's virtue ethics, engenders the dilemma of fidelity and sincerity: either, removing itself from time (but running the risk of betraying itself), the consciousness affirms the imperishability of the word given in the moment, or, submitting itself to time (but running the risk of perpetual abjuration), it affirms the transitory nature of all historical pronouncements.

One must choose from two options: either intemporal fidelity which, ceaselessly and increasingly diverging from our inner truth, becomes more and more anachronistic, backward and insincere; [...] or a sincerity meticulously and literally contemporary of one's present, a sincerity imprinted minute by minute onto the passing moment... But, [...] the price to pay for this juxtapositional simultaneity [...] is perjury and continual apostasy [...]. Sincerity in infidelity or fidelity in insincerity – this is thus the alternative...¹⁷

This being said, let it be clear: it is not only because of time that language lies. Quite to the contrary, according to our author, it already lies in and of itself, in the sense that it constitutes an organ-obstacle (*organe-obstacle*). What is Jankélévitch alluding to with this paradoxical composite expression? To those realities which suppose, of themselves, the mutual interweaving of a positive and a negative, or better still: of an organ and an obstacle, whose unity – contradictory but inseparable – creates a complex where the organ functions, not *in spite* of (*quamvis*), but precisely *because* of (*quia*) the opposition imposed upon it by the obstacle which it represents to itself.¹⁸ Such, for

¹⁷ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 460): "Il faut choisir de deux choses l'une: ou bien une fidélité intemporelle qui, divergeant sans cesse davantage d'avec notre vérité intérieure, devient toujours plus anachronique, plus retardataire et plus insincère; [...] ou bien une sincérité minutieusement et littéralement contemporaine de son présent, une sincérité contrepointée minute par minute à l'instant qui passe...: mais [...] le prix à payer pour cette simultanéité [...] juxtapositionnelle, c'est le parjure et la continuelle apostasie [...]. La sincérité dans l'infidélité ou la fidélité dans l'insincérité: – telle est donc l'alternative..."

¹⁸ On the subject of the organ-obstacle, cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1953: 105-106): "La connaissance positive n'est possible que par la mixtion du positif et du négatif, c'est-à-dire que l'obstacle qui l'empêche est l'instrument même de sa possibilité. Ce paradoxe ironique du Malgré qui est, non pas accidentellement mais *en tant que Malgré*, un Parce-que, c'est tout le mystère des rapports de l'âme et du corps; car si l'organe trouve en lui-même l'entrave de l'obstacle, il serait encore plus vrai de dire: c'est la résistance de l'obstacle, et c'est la limitation par l'obstacle qui est l'organe, – l'organe, c'est-à-dire le moyen de percevoir, et de s'exprimer et d'exister

Jankélévitch, is the eye (which enables sight in so far as it impedes it), fear (which fosters courage in so far as it impairs it) and death (which makes life possible in so far as it limits it).¹⁹ Such is language too, which only reveals meaning at the same time as it distorts it, acting towards it, therefore, as an organ-obstacle, as a mixture of an instrument and an impediment, where the power to deceive the other is given together with the power to make oneself understood.²⁰ Within this framework, the liar does little more than use to his advantage the chiasma inherent to language, employing it particularly as an obstacle, which is the same as saying: as a device to obscure the truth.

3. The motive and the punishment for lying

Following this long digression concerning the relationship between lying, time and language, Jankélévitch attempts to outline the motive for lying, thereby questioning the nature of that which leads the consciousness to deceive. The answer that he proposes to this question takes its lead from classical morals, denouncing selfishness or *philautia* (φιλαυτία) – i.e. the desire to

individuellement". Here we are dealing with a paradox which Jankélévitch often uncovers in the context of the philosophy of Bergson. Cf. (BERGSON 1963: 108-109, 448-449, 574-575, 603, 831-832, 872 et seq. 1020, 1151-1152 and 1242-1243). Cf., also, (FICHTE 1977: IX), on the necessity of resistance in general (*Widerstand*) for the determination of any and every activity.

¹⁹ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1966: 89-90); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1978: 90); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1979: 156); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1981: 111): the eye is the organ and the obstacle of sight / the ear is the obstacle and the organ of hearing; (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1949: 185); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1981: 138): thought and fear are the organs and the obstacles of courage; (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1960: 230); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1966: 88 et seq., 107 e 406 et seq.); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1978: 172-173); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1981: 74): death is the organ and the obstacle of life...

²⁰ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1936: 35); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1947: 17-18); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1951: 114), (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1960: 212 et seq.); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1966: 89-91); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1980 2: 30); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 462-465): "[...] notre langage [est] un instrument à double tranchant aussi propre à voiler qu'à manifester. Précisons d'ailleurs que cette disjonction et ces croisements contrariaires représentent non pas un abus ni un mésusage (comme si l'homme employait à s'isoler ce qui lui est donné pour communiquer), mais une contradiction interne, une nécessaire impossibilité qui fait tout le tragique de notre destin: le corps par exemple n'exhibe l'âme qu'en la défigurant, – et pourtant il faut que l'âme se rétrécisse et se déforme et se démente dans un corps pour se rendre visible; tout de même le pouvoir de tromper est donné à l'intérieur du pouvoir de se faire comprendre non point comme son effet secondaire, mais comme sa rancçon, – comme le verso de l'alternative" (p. 464).

amplify the vital space of the ego – as the ultimate reason for all lies.²¹ In this way, if consciousness constitutes the *psychologically necessary condition* for lying, alterity constitutes, in its turn, the *socially necessary condition* for lying (since our selfishness can only affirm itself when confronted with another, in general). From a sociological perspective, lying operates, according to our author, as a mere substitute for violence, configuring a stratagem which proposes to manage the social alternative, that is to say: the competition of selfishnesses immersed in the fight for survival and recognition, in the context of a finitude where their desires typically exclude each other. The price to pay for this strategy of sublimating physical violence will, however, be quite high. Indeed, due to the abyss which it opens up between knowing and saying, lying plunges the consciousness into a state of constant alert and insomnia, obliging it, at all times, to defend (through a kind of continual creation) its fictions against their disapproval by reality.²² The internal punishment to which the lying consciousness condemns itself is, therefore, that which makes it captive to its own avalanche law (*loi d'avalanche*), read: to its necessity to elaborate a sequential system of lies, which allow it to maintain the credibility of a first sham.²³ It is a permanent movement of dissimulation which, for Jankélévitch, promotes the dissolution of the social identity of the liar: “[...] as they [the liars] are no longer either what they are – and bury in silence –, nor that which others judge them to be – as this they are by imposture and by simple fraud, it must be concluded that they are no longer anything whatsoever”.²⁴ In reality, if he is anything, the liar will be, at best, an example of the living dead, a ghost walled into his ipseity, and whose ipseity is always invisible for others. Why? Firstly, because the words and affection given to him are invariably intercepted and deviated by the opaque screen formed by the double that he pretends to be. Here, we can already

²¹ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 466-468); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1960: 268-270); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1980 1: 38-39).

²² Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 472-473), where Jankélévitch defines lying as a “second nature perpetually re-willed by a will”.

²³ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 473 and 533).

²⁴ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 474): “La vraie punition des menteurs et des farceurs, c’est la perte de leur ipséité; comme ils ne sont plus ni ce qu’ils sont et qu’ils ensevelissent dans le silence, ni ce que les autres croient qu’ils sont, – car ils le sont par imposture et par simple escroquerie, il faut conclure qu’ils ne sont plus rien du tout”.

summarize the three different kinds of split (inter- or intrasubjective) which, according to Jankélévitch's reading, lying demands or provokes, namely: 1) the psychological split between knowledge and the desire for truth in the subject; 2) the ontological split between the subject and itself in time and 3) the sociological split between the subject and others in the world. In addition to these, Jankélévitch investigates a fourth possible split in the lying consciousness: that which would be motivated by inherent insincerity, or, if one prefers, by lying to oneself. Here we have a hypothesis which implies the psychological splitting of the liar into two distinct persons, suggesting that he could allow himself to become so entangled in the deceptions that he produces, that he ends up simultaneously playing the roles (disjoined, as a rule) of author and victim of his own shams. However, can such a fragmentation of ipseity even be possible? This is what, to conclude, we must try to ascertain.

4. Lying to oneself

Needless to say: if it exists, lying to oneself supposes, as a *sine qua non* condition, that the self does not coincide necessarily with itself. Which is to say that, far from conforming to a simple substance that would always agree with itself, to an indivisible monad (which would be fatally submitted to the logical principles of identity, non-contradiction and the excluded middle),²⁵ the self only conforms to a centre diffusing a range of tendencies, impulses and conflicting sentiments, which threaten to fracture it from the inside at any moment. It is a "polyphonic conception" of the self that Jankélévitch subscribes unreservedly,²⁶ admitting, not only that it can be divided between its knowledge and its desire, not only that it can contradict itself in time, but also that it can be fragmented by a myriad of incompatible desires, in a similar manner to the tragic women of Racine, who desire contradictories alternately and, at times, even *uno eodemque tempore*. With the theoretical

²⁵ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1938: 42); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1960: 215); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1968: 145); (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 514): the self transcends the logical principles of identity, non-contradiction and the excluded middle.

²⁶ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 514): "[...] la structure de la conscience est une structure polyphonique où plusieurs voix superposées cheminent parallèlement et simultanément sans souci des discordances, contradictions ou équivoques".

viability of lying to oneself established (or, in other words, the viability of an internal partition of the subject), one must ask: what distinguishes the double consciousness of the liar who lies to others from the double consciousness of the liar who lies to himself? Formulated in this manner, the question already provides its answer: that which distinguishes them is precisely the variation of the indirect complement of their fraudulent operations (others, in the first case; himself, in the second) which, in turn, demand a different kind of dominion over oneself. Let us see: in order to be able to deceive others, the common liar needs, first of all, to not deceive himself, keeping perfect control of the oblique relationship that he weaves between what he expresses and what he knows.²⁷ We shall say then that, although he is double in relation to others, the consciousness of the common liar always remains unified for himself. It is precisely the unity of self-consciousness which appears to dissolve in the case of the self-liar, who, losing control of the series of reflective splits that he carries out, allows himself to be contaminated by his own double game, simultaneously assuming the functions of deceiver and deceived. It could be argued – and not without reason – that Jankélévitch does nothing more here than bring self-lying back to schizophrenia, identifying it with the alienated and demented system of a consciousness which is a stranger to itself, which atomizes into a multiplicity of reciprocally incommunicable persons. Anticipating this objection, the author of the *Traité des vertus* wastes no time in indicating the element which, in his view, constitutes the specific difference between self-lying and schizophrenia, namely: the presence in self-lying of a directing and englobing supra-consciousness (*surconscience*), which surreptitiously governs and links the two or more divided consciousnesses that it produces. Strictly speaking, for Jankélévitch, lying to oneself constitutes an intermediary case between lying to others and schizophrenia, between the extreme lucidity of the former and the extreme blindness of the latter, revindicating an opaque and murky consciousness, semi-alienated and auto-mythomaniac, which – like that of Yakov Golyadkin in Dostoyevsky's *The Double* (who writes letters to himself as though he were another, with the semi-conscious intention of exorcising the image that he has of himself) – plunges willingly into the

²⁷ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1960: 209-210 and 267-268).

deceit that it creates, vaguely sensing that it is playing a role in a comedy.²⁸ Jankélévitch says as much when he risks the following analogy:

This dishonest, alienated individual is like a player without a partner who pretends to play a game against himself, make-believing that he does not know the intentions of his adversary. But, as he is his own adversary, his strategy is a pseudo-strategy and a continual cheat: his manoeuvres are blocked and thwarted from the start, for it is the same player who simultaneously invents the tactical idea and the parry which neutralises this tactic. The two players in this mock duel are, in a way, the puppets of the supra-consciousness. Far from playing a 'double game', the supra-consciousness unmakes the game as it makes it, revealing to one [of the players] all the secrets of the other.²⁹

What does this mean? It means that the self-lying consciousness is not maintained in an equilibrium of indifference (*aequilibrium indifferentiae*) between the two or more figures into which it splits, clandestinely adopting an absolute reference system – that of the supra-consciousness –, around which all of its pantomime organises itself³⁰. It means, in sum, that the dissidence of one with oneself engendered by self-lying represents, at best, a simulacrum of dissidence, a travesty of auto-alienation, behind which hides a consciousness which, for convenience's sake, pretends to itself that it is many at the same time.

²⁸ Cf. (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 509): "L'insincère, en vraie *causa sui*, se trompe soi-même: trompeur trompe, à la fois agent et patient, mystificateur et dupe, auteur rusé et victime crédule du mensonge, il se méprend sur soi, mais non sans se douter de quelque chose; il s'embrouille délicieusement, complaisamment dans l'équivoque qu'il a créée". Cf., also, (DOSTOÏÉVSKI 2003).

²⁹ (JANKÉLÉVITCH 1970: 507): "Cet aliéné de mauvaise foi ressemble au joueur dépareillé qui feint de jouer une partie contre soi en se faisant croire à lui-même qu'il ignore les intentions de l'adversaire; mais comme il est à soi son propre adversaire, sa stratégie est une pseudo-stratégie et une tricherie continuée: ses manoeuvres sont bloquées et déjouées au départ, le même inventant à la fois l'idée tactique et la parade qui neutralise cette tactique; les deux joueurs, dans ce duel pour rire, sont en quelque sorte les marionnettes de la surconscience; loin de jouer 'double jeu', la surconscience défait le jeu au fur et à mesure qu'elle le fait, en révélant à l'un tous les secrets de l'autre".

³⁰ On the idea of an equilibrium of indifference, cf. (LEIBNIZ 1999: 1355).

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THE IPSEITY QUESTION: DESCOMBES AND HEIDEGGER

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyse Heidegger's idea of ipseity (*Selbstheit*) following the interpretation of Vincent Descombes' work, *Le Parler de Soi* (2014).

Keywords

Self, Ipseity, Selfhood, Identity, Individuality

My aim in this paper is to analyse Heidegger's concept of *ipseity*, taking into consideration the critiques formulated by the French philosopher Vincent Descombes in his recent work *Le Parler de Soi* (2014). The latter has become, since the 1980s, one of the most influential names in French analytic philosophy, particularly due to his affiliation with Wittgenstein's philosophy, namely defending methodologies centered in language, in line with the main theses argued in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953).

The theme in *Le Parler de Soi* is not new in the work of the French philosopher. In fact, books such as *Complément de Sujet* (2004), *Dernières nouvelles du moi* (2009) and *Les Embarras de l'Identité* (2013) express the author's interest in the subject's multiple metamorphoses, or, as Jean Beaufret's terms it, the "haemorrhage of subjectivity" dominating French philosophy of the 1940s. Even Descombes' study on Proust¹ does not neglect central questions in this area, such as the approach done to the myth of interiority, the solipsism and the private language in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. What

¹ Descombes. *Proust: philosophe du roman*. Paris: Les Éditions du Minuit. 1987.

is, in a brief summary, the thesis argued in *Le Parler de Soi*? According to Descombes, following Descartes, a new philosophical concept emerged, the I (*le moi*) that eclipsed former central notions such as soul or intellect. That event emerged, according to Descombes, from a strange conceptual alchemy that transformed a personal pronoun, me, into a pure and autonomous entity, and from that moment on was designated in its substantive form – the I. In Descombes' view, the paradox derives from this strange transmutation of a third person I to one at the same level as other entities, as a means to explain the first person perspective, the one that answers the question “who am I?” As he states in the beginning of the work: “how do philosophers acquire a substantive (“the I”) from our common use of the pronoun I?”² In other words, how “it is me” becomes “there is A ME”, or, “from the nomination of the I to the I being nominated”.³ Being a critic of the private language argument, Descombes argues that the best understanding of the self requires an observation of the person, in its different aspects, particularly in the analysis made possible by a philosophical grammar.

The work in question is constituted by three sections, “the alchemy of the self”, “the first person and the others” and “subject and belief”. It is in the first section where he analyses Heidegger's line of thought. On first viewing, a rushed reader might be surprised by this choice, due to the blunt well-known Heidegger's critiques – I am referring to his work *Being and Time* – of all philosophies of consciousness and subjectivity, which are still influenced by an epistemological model emerging from the representative opposition between a subject that knows and a cognitive object, a model that constitutes, in the German philosopher's view, the hallmark of modernity. Descombes is well aware of this critique, and his purpose is to highlight the paradoxes in the way Heidegger transcends the subject problem, namely by introducing the notion of ipseity (*Selbstheit*). This term was translated into French by Kojève and Sartre, as “ipséité”, as a way of expressing what Heidegger was aiming for in the notion of *Selbstheit*, as *Dasein*'s “being one's self”.

Descombes analyses the concept of ipseity in the last section of the “alchemy of the self”. That section is entitled: “the question of human individuality”. The question guiding this section is clearly stated: “My question, in

² Descombes 2014: 13.

³ Descombes 2014: 27.

what follows, refers to the specific individuality of human beings, it concerns the circumstance of the individuality of a being capable of manifesting his consciousness of being a particular human being, himself and not any other".⁴ Under the influence of Heidegger, but also of French phenomenology, this "individuality" was thereafter named ipseity. It translates a particular way of placing the philosophical question about the nature of self-identity, that is, the question "who?" (Who thinks? Who acts? Who talks?). In translating the German term *Selbstheit* – which is a substantivation of *Selbst* proposed by Heidegger in §64 of *S.u.Z.* – the French thinkers recovered a medieval philosophical term, *ipseitas*, and therefore ipséité or ipseity. How can we define *Selbstheit* or *ipseity*? What is central is the relationship with oneself, without which, each and every one of us wouldn't be the person he is, or wouldn't be himself. To designate this unity of being, this continuity with oneself, Heidegger proposed the concept *Jemeinigkeit* or *Jemein*. *Je* designates "always" and *mein*, "mine", that is "always mine" (the French translate it as "*mienneté*"), conceptually, expressing Dasein's continuous relationship with one-self. This is, at least, Descombes' starting point to characterize ipseity.

Descombes also explains the reason for the use of the Latin term *ipseitas* to express the notion of *Selfhood* or *Selbstheit*. He shows us that Heidegger, in a philosophical argument later reaffirmed by Ricoeur, refused the term *Ichheit*, egoity, to the extent that the experience is spoken in all personal pronouns, that is not only the I (the *Ich-Selbst*), but also the you (*Du-Selbst*) and he (*Er-Sie-Selbst*). This is the difficulty in translating the concept of *Selbstheit* into Latin languages – how strange would it sound if, for example in Portuguese we would say "Si-dade"! This leads to the rehabilitation of an old scholastic term, *ipseitas* (also a nominalization of "same", i.e. "*ipse*").

Thus, *Ipseitas* or ipseity are synonymous with individuality (*individualitas*) to the extent that, as pointed out by Descombes, the expressions "*Iipse Caesar*", "the very own Cesar" and "Cesar himself" were common in ancient Rome. As an example, we could add the expression "*ego ipse*" ("myself" or "my own"). This expression is not only for people or human beings but it could also be used about individual objects. In an example chosen by Descombes, "the doors (or valves) ... opened themselves", "*valvae... se ipse aperuerunt*", in the sense that they have opened by themselves, without anyone else's

⁴ Descombes 2014: 144.

interference. Even if one wanders whether we are assuming a sense of action in things that are, in principle, motionless, it is clear that the Latin expression “*ipse*” or “*ipseitas*” involves some kind of individuality, even if it is a person or a door. We understand individuality as all that can be logically isolated from other things, which does not mean that we cannot place it in a relational context. In fact, individuality does not require any sort of physical isolation in which the individuals would move around in a mysterious ether, but rather it accounts for the logical subjects in any situation. The question of knowing why, for example “this tree” is individual while the forest where it is placed is a set of individual trees, naturally emerges. In fact, it is not possible to apprehend the individuality of the forest in the same way this is done for a tree. The interesting question is to understand the reason for that difference. If not more, a tree is composed of many cells in the same way a forest is composed of many trees; the same problem can be found in the members of a club. The fact that a particular club exists does not mean that it has the same kind of individuality of its individual members.

However, as Descombes highlights, ipseity, according to hermeneutics, has a distinct meaning from the concept of the individual. Ipseity, in this new context, is the individual that is able to apprehend his own individuality, to go to its limit, be able to hold a first-person discourse and express oneself. He is able to do it by using personal pronouns and other indexical forms – for example: “I am here and now”. As stated by Descombes,⁵ “each one of us” (I, You, He/She) is every being that is able to sustain a first-person discourse.

So, how can we conceive of human individuality? Is it that it has a particular property differentiating it from other entities (this pen, for example, is quite different from the one next to it. However, they could be from the same brand, and have similar properties regarding color, shape, time of existence)? One solution to the question is the one pointed out by Leibniz stating that all true individuality has the print of infinity. This strange statement allows the philosopher to highlight that we will never have detectable, descriptive, factual and empirical properties that are able to solve the problem concerning the principle of individuation. That is why Leibniz, in *New Essays* (III.iiii.§6-7), resorted to an example also chosen by Descombes – which is of Martin Guerre and his hypothetical double cheating on his wife and relatives.

⁵ Descombes 2014: 145.

For Descombes, the issue of the person is the same as the issue of the individual (in the traditional meaning of *ipseitas*). One could think that Leibniz would have a different interpretation, to the extent that for him there are true and false individualities, such that the authentic ones are the ones with the monad print, which require, even in non-human organisms, the existence of a minimal degree of perception, the so called “petites perceptions” or “small perceptions”.

Heidegger does not place ipseity as individuality – what differentiates an individual from the other – but rather focus attention on how each individual comprehends himself, or how he apprehends himself as a unique being. The classic answer to this question – consciousness – does not satisfy Heidegger because he sees in it the subjective print of modernity. In fact, in the modern tradition, consciousness of the self (self-consciousness) would be the obvious answer. We can take Locke as an example. Locke does not hesitate in claiming that consciousness is the genuine answer to the question of personal identity: “Personal identity can by us be placed in nothing but consciousness, (which is that alone which makes what we call Self) without involving us in great absurdities.” (2.27.21). I quote Descombes: “the subject of consciousness is to himself (ego) his own object. Through its consciousness, one concludes, each one is available to oneself as subject (or, in a more precise way, as an object one finds to be identical to the subject)”.⁶

This is the modern traditionalist answer that Heidegger’s hermeneutics seeks to challenge, to the extent that consciousness is one among many properties, similar to the attributing expression stating that the door is open, the rock is hot, etc. We would say that this human being has the attribute of being conscious. Challenging this procedure, Heidegger asks the question: in what ways selfhood offers itself? (*In welcher Weise is das Selbst gegeben?*) For Heidegger, selfhood offers itself through choice, as a crucial decision. That choice might or might not reveal selfhood in its authenticity (as when one forgets about himself in daily concerns). Thus, there is an individual indetermination, of *Dasein*, about oneself. Quoting Heidegger: “Dasein simply is not like the common being, similar to himself in the formal-ontological way in which each thing is identical to itself [...] Dasein carries an identity particular to itself: ipseity.” Ipseity is a self-appropriative act; but it can likewise “let itself be determined, in its being, by others, and exist in a not-proper way,

⁶ Descombes 2014: 149-150.

forgetting itself”⁷

Every human being’s identity can be taken in two ways: as a singular individual (medieval philosophy’s *ipseitas*) and as ipseity imposing the choice of being or not oneself. Heidegger tells us at the beginning of *Being and Time* that *Dasein* always understands itself in terms of its possibility of being itself or not. This Hamlet style choice – to be or not to be – has little to do, as highlighted by Descombes, with an individual other than ourselves. Descombes states that “this choice is not so much the choice between being myself or being my neighbor, Napoleon, or that gentleman passing in front of me”⁸. For Heidegger, the inauthentic answer to the question is to talk about self-identity, as one talks about this pen, this tree, this river. The authentic one comes from understanding the adoption of a practical attitude towards oneself. Going to its limit, we can ask: am I authentic or not? It is a much more radical question than simply knowing if I am going to be a lawyer or an engineer, if I stay in Lisbon or am going on a trip to Australia. According to Heidegger, the difference is an ontological one, i.e. the difference between Being and beings.

The genuine form of identity, ipseity, only belongs to individuals that take on the task of owning their own existence, of making themselves. We should emphasize that this is not dualism. As mentioned by Françoise Dastur, the response to daily concerns is given by a neutral attitude or, as Thomas Nagel had said, it is the “view from nowhere”; in contrast, making the authentic response, through *Dasein*, the human being understands himself. Dastur highlights that there are not two subjects such as the neutral and the authentic one, but rather two different ways of being the same subject.

Quoted by Descombes, Tugendhat demonstrates that Heidegger opposes “constancy” (*Ständigkeit*) or the permanence of an individual substance to the maintenance of selfhood (*Selbst-ständigkeit*), which is akin to Ipseity. Like Descombes, the Czech philosopher thinks that the Heideggerian question – *sich verstehen* / understanding – is paradoxical and meaningless if taken only in cognitive terms. That happens when we find in the Heideggerian question one other problem: “how can it be that I am not myself?” As Descombes asks: “how is it possible the case of me not being me?”⁹ According to Tugendhat,

⁷ Heidegger 1975: 242-243.

⁸ Descombes 2014: 153.

⁹ Descombes 2013: 94.

the solution is in the practical aspect of the problem: “what to do with myself?” and “what should I do and what can I do?”

However, for Descombes, even the practical solution does not hide the problem with Heidegger’s view. Simply put, according to Descombes, Heidegger’s mistake was the involuntary confusion between the question “Who?” and the question “What?”. One simple example proving this ambiguity is the question “who decided to close the door?” The answer is, of course, a singular person, that is, it was X and not Y or Z deciding to close the door. Let us see the question from another angle: who made my decision to close the door? Was it really me or was it an inauthentic gesture? In this case, we are evaluating someone’s actions. In this case, we are not answering to the question “who?” but rather qualifying the agent. In the first question we are addressing the singular person (x and not y or z). In the second question the goal is to qualify, to evaluate the practical attitude concerning his own life. The I is no longer a personal reflexive pronoun but an attribute. Thus, Descombes posits that Heidegger’s ipseity is circumstantial, and, as such, it is relative, rendering without answer the question “who?”. “This who? does not have a referential meaning (who is it?) or an agency meaning (who is the agent of this action?) and it is now circumstantial”.¹⁰

However, for me, the highlighted paradox opens up a new horizon. Ricoeur already pointed this out: “What is still me when I say I am nothing but a self without the assistance of sameness? Isn’t that the meaning of many dramatic, even terrifying experiences about our identity (...)? Many conversion narratives testify about those nights about personal identity. In these moments of extreme stripping, the null answer, far from declaring the question empty, addresses it and sustains it as question. The only thing that can’t be abolished is the question: who am I?”¹¹ (*Identité narrative*, 29).

The question about “who?” (Who speaks? Who acts? Who is it?) does not have a satisfying answer unless we keep it open in our minds. Or, as Heidegger would say, we are pushing to the limit in the way we characterize *Dasein*. Ipseity is the imprint of that being that owns in itself the possibility of questioning being.

¹⁰ Descombes 2014: 143.

¹¹ Ricoeur 1988: 304.

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THE “LEAP” – ANOTHER WAY OF GROUNDING IN THE ONTO-HISTORICAL THOUGHT OF HEIDEGGER’S *BEITRÄGE*

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Abstract

The ontological-fundamental thinking, that began with *Being and Time*, constitutes an attempt at a new approach to the question of being, as an alternative to what was done by classical philosophy in terms of an essentialist fixation of becoming and then carried out by modern rationality within the framework of the techno-scientific apparatus. Instead of the insisting closure of a reactive thinking that keeps itself safe from the subversive and innovative power of time by submitting truth to the controlled repetition of the original “*eidōs*”, Heidegger proposes a thinking that is open and receptive to the clearing of truth – into which this thinking is always already thrown as factual life that is determined by historicity.

Insofar as it is a hermeneutical mode of thinking, this new thinking moves in the circularity between the meaning of the already-disclosed and already-thought and the inexhaustible abundance of the to-come and to-be-disclosed, which extends beyond the limits of what was said and thought up to the present times. In this perspective, thinking in agreement with being does not mean to correspond to a stabilized referential of truth or to a fixed table of values, but rather to pay attention to the truth that is inscribed in the history of being and that is active in it, by better clarifying what has already been open, deepening and rendering explicit its own un-thought – in sum, by exploring new dimensions of meaning.

In particular, the onto-historical path opened in the “*Beiträge*”, as a supplement to that of *Being and Time*, does not take place without implying a deep immanent transformation of hermeneutical thinking in what concerns the abandonment of the transcendental-horizontal perspective. The projective thinking now acknowledges itself as being thrown and appropriated by being itself in the form of a calling that engages it in a determined direction of meaning. It is this “turn” (*Kehre*) that does not take place without a “leap” (*Sprung*), without the abrupt passage to another way of grounding, in which the openness that is determined to the establishing power of time, as an “abyssal ground” (*Ab-grund*) of truth, overturns

all remains of apriorism. Hermeneutics now determines itself as the characteristic of a relational thinking that is capable of hearing the message that emerges from its historical situation and lets itself be addressed by it in a questioning that therefore does not cease to have its own freedom of anticipating projection.

Keywords

Essencing, Event, Leap, The Last God, The Other Beginning

1. A Historical Approach to the Question of Being

The *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Contributions to Philosophy)*, which Heidegger wanted to preserve unpublished until the end of his life, constitute the first and the broadest programmatic summary of the new approach to the “question of being” (*Seinsfrage*), which the philosopher intended to carry out after *Being and Time (Sein und Zeit)* and which he generically designated as “onto-historical thinking” (*Seynsgeschichtliches Denken*).¹ The plan came up in 1932, after the important conference *On the Essence of Truth (Vom Wesen der Wahrheit)*, which was written between 36/37, after the courses on Hölderlin and the *Introduction to Metaphysics (Einführung in die Metaphysik)*. The text, also contemporary with the lectures on Nietzsche and the *Origin of the Work of Art (Ursprung des Kunstwerkes)*, seeks a unitary interpretation of the history of metaphysics, which in Heidegger’s point of view had come to an end with nihilism and the planetary domination of the “technical apparatus” (*Gestell*). Throughout his confrontation with the figure of Nietzsche, National Socialism and Hölderlin’s theology of history, the author seeks a new beginning for philosophy with the help of the concrete possibilities contained in language and art.

¹ The German reference edition is the following: M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65, Frankfurt am Main, Vittorio Klostermann, 1989. For a first reading of the text, we recommend the following Brazilian translation: *Contribuições à Filosofia (Do Acontecimento Apropriador)*, Rio de Janeiro, ed. Via Verita, 2014. We have decided not to quote particular passages in order not to pervert or decontextualize the author’s thought in its original movement. We have only indicated the work’s most significant sections and paragraphs (for which we use the abbreviation GA 65) by way of illustration of our own commentary on the text.

In comparison with the *opus magnum*, the novelty of the *Beiträge* is the primacy now given to the temporality of being in relation to the question of the “being-there” (*Dasein*), very much in tune with the announced *Kehre* (“Turn”) from the point of view of *being and time* to that of *time and being*. What is at stake is no longer the inquiry into the sense of being from the perspective of a transcendental and also formal grounding of its truth, but rather – as the subtitle of the work *Vom Ereignis (On the Appropriating Event)* suggests – the attempt to think and say being from itself as a temporal occurrence that endows, projects and constitutes thinking. It is a matter of having access to the origin, to the inexhaustible “beginning” (*Anfang*) of history, which always exceeds every historical “outset” (*Beginn*); in a word, it is a matter of a “primordial thinking” (*anfängliches Denken*) that is capable of facing the abyssal and untamed element of the truth of being and of saying it.² This, however, involves not only the subordination of the projecting initiative of *Dasein* to the historical thrownness of being itself, but also the development of a new understanding of what thinking means, different from that which metaphysics intended to perpetrate with the help of logic, in order to achieve a complete and systematic knowledge of beings in their totality, be it grounded on ideas, values or any other kind of structural ground.³ For, in our author’s perspective, being cannot be mistaken for an essence, it does not amount to a common genus nor even to a transcendental one, achievable by means of an abstraction from the particular beings and then raised, as a supreme universal, to the level of an unshakeable ground. It certainly constitutes an ultimate referential of truth, but one that always instantiates itself, that is, opens itself and happens in a particular and surprising way in a finite and temporal occurrence, namely, the same occurrence into which existence finds itself thrown and which thinking takes into custody and reflects in its historicity.⁴

The negativity that in *Being and Time* permeated existence in its most extreme and original possibility of being, namely, that of being capable of ending and of its own non-being, is now extended to being itself, which is not limited to constituting the ontological condition of human historicity, but

² On this “primordial thinking”, see GA 65, §§ 20-23 and § 42.

³ GA 65, §§ 262-263.

⁴ Cf. GA 65, §§ 27-28.

rather finds itself as historical, an original action that makes distinct modes of being-in-the-world happen outside itself. But understanding this means abandoning metaphysics' representative and predicative way of thinking in favour of that other, phenomenological way of thinking which gives primacy to the "thing itself" (*Sache selbst*), that is, the phenomenon which eminently consigns "being" (*Seyn*), such as being, of and from itself, shows itself as concealing-disclosing the beings themselves. The success of this new approach, however, depends on the capacity thinking might have to develop, in language, new possibilities of saying – hence the attention given by the philosopher to art, in particular to poetry.

The fugue structure of the *Beiträge* does not present a linear composition that progresses from one topic to the other until the achievement of a conclusive thesis, in the manner of the traditional exposition in metaphysics. Instead, it scans in crossed voices the unique and singular motto of the *Ereignis*, where every section or "fugue" (*Füge*) refers to the whole of a distinct point of view, trying to say in each and every moment the same about the same, although from a different (but nevertheless always essential) region.⁵ The philosopher thus seeks to open a way, among other possible and perhaps more essential ones, that may be capable of rethinking the "question of being" (*Seinsfrage*) in new terms, and it is in this same spirit that we, readers, are invited to put into practice along with him the primordial thinking attempted therein, returning always and in different ways to that which is proposed for us to think, which concerns the openness of truth in which we find ourselves as historical beings.

Nevertheless, in the age of the "technical apparatus" (*Gestell*) and integral calculability, in which everything is seen from the perspective of what is useful and effectible as a possible "energy reservoir" (*Bestand*), what mainly resonates and can be heard is the "abandonment and forgetting of being" (*Seinsverlassenheit* and *Seinsvergessenheit*).⁶ In effect, once it is reduced to something representable (idea, substance or objectivity) and is accessible to the actions of intending and objectifying, being – devoid of room to manifest itself – withdraws itself and falls into forgetfulness. In the face of such a state of affairs, the question to be raised, Heidegger observes, is to know whether this is the end of the history of being or whether it is possible, on the

⁵ Ibid., § 39.

⁶ Ibid. See Section II in its entirety, especially §§ 50 to 59.

contrary, to wait for a new beginning – a beginning capable of implementing another way of thinking it, one that is distinct from the intellectualizing perspective of metaphysics. What matters is not wanting to know more or better but rather recovering dimensions of truth and possibility which in such an epistemic perspective are prevented from being manifested and developed. In a word, what matters is gaining consciousness of the abyssal depth and richness of being, which was sensed already at the time philosophy was born but remained unthematized because the Greeks preferred the security of ideas to the kairological structure of tragic time.

It is in this historical context that the philosophical contributions of these Annotations should be taken: as a way in which the Black Forest thinker attempted to give a new impulse to the question of being, which had remained on a certain standby or even in an impasse since the publication of *Being and Time*. The “appropriating event” consigns what is essential in the perspective there outlined, and in this new approach the concept of “being-there” (*Dasein*) undergoes a change in meaning that is worth noting, for it attests the aforementioned turn from an anthropological point of view to an ontological one. In effect, according to the new orthography, it does not designate the “there-being” (*Da-sein*), already and in the first instance the human reality, but rather the site of openness of truth that being establishes by manifesting itself in “existence” (*Ek-sistenz*) and that allows it to be as it is or in its own proper way. Such “clearing” (*Lichtung*) is where humans dwell; thrown into it and exposed to it, they arrive at what they essentially are: those who search for, preserve and keep the truth of being, opening in beings regions capable of receiving anew the gods in flight. In times of indigence and of greatest danger, they are “the precursors” (*die Zu-künftigen*) who track the signs of the possible coming of the “last god” (*der letzte Gott*) and thus wait for and prepare a new beginning of history.⁷

2. What Makes Itself Heard and Is at Stake in the Historical Situation

The historical imprint of the reflection carried out in the *Beiträge* is at once indicated in the first two fugues, in which the philosopher shows us the present-day situation of thinking. The falling structure of everydayness, which

⁷ Cf. GA 65, VIth and VIIth sections.

the existential analytic characterized through publicity, instrumentality and calculability, now appears as having been transposed into the region of the history of being, in particular the contemporary history of being, where technique assumes the gigantic proportions of an apparatus that ends up dissolving everything in the uniformity of the quantitative.⁸ This is the time of indigence into which being has withdrawn, leaving beings, without truth or protection, exposed to the avarice of profit.

However, such a critical state of affairs, which Nietzsche called nihilism, is not something occasional or fortuitous⁹ in our author's eyes, it is rather the extreme and ultimate expression of a spiritual movement which in the West began with the Greeks, developed with Christianity and solidified with Modernity, which we could call the technical configuration of the world. Because of this configuration and its hegemonic power, other forms of truth or other ways in which being manifests itself and produces were put in second place or were simply ignored, in particular, time in its remarkable ontological productivity. Beings, in their emerging coming-to-presence, thus ended up being reduced to an autonomous pole of identity – the substance, referential of truth, to which certain attributes constantly belong. A process of emptying being as essencing begins with this, which through the growing objectification brought by mathematization will cover itself until it falls into complete oblivion. At the source of this tendency is the Greek experience of the power of *physis*, which they tried to tame by resorting to the pragmatic perspective of *technê* and *poiêsis*.¹⁰ Beings were, then, interpreted by them as something calculable and effectible from previously thought forms or models. Such a conception, already present in Plato and Aristotle, was then passed over to subsequent philosophy, and it can be found both in the Jewish-Christian doctrine of creation from causality and in the modern metaphysics of subjectivity, now under the form of a categorical and properly transcendental dimension, from which the world is determined as representation and will.

However, the indigence of the spiritual situation of contemporary times is such that the philosopher feels compelled to ask whether the

⁸ Ibid., §§ 70-71.

⁹ Ibid., § 72.

¹⁰ Ibid., § 97.

above-mentioned retraction of being is definitive and signals the near end of history or whether, on the contrary, there is room for hope for an alternative, being thus refusing itself only temporarily.¹¹ If this is the case, then there would be room for an attempt at another beginning of history, by preparing a fulguration of being capable of giving birth to a new time with the help of “memorial thinking”. It all depends, he observes, on whether we intend to persist in the emptiness of the end, to remain the rational animal of machineries – insisting on the interpretation of being from beings and by analogy with beings – or whether, on the contrary, we dare to “leap” into the other beginning;¹² and if this is the case, it all depends on whether we intend to assume ourselves as the site of manifestation of truth, by asking why and in what sense beings are for us, and by claiming to ourselves a being-there that is for the god. Carrying out such an inquiry calls for a new grounding of being from its abyssal truth, which is the temporalization of time, and for a conception of the possibility of a future history that takes this truth as a point of departure.

As we shall see, every speculative effort of this work intends to prepare the possibility of such an occurrence, by grounding time-space or the clearing towards an original essencing of being. What is at stake is restoring the truth of beings, taking them from their uprooting and redirecting them to their proper context of truth, which presupposes the capacity of re-projecting anew this same truth from a temporal leeway.¹³ In other words, it is a matter of rendering explicit how being unfolds its essence in beings, no longer as an unmoving and separated entity but rather as the most intimate and concrete advenience of these same beings – a revealing and singularizing process of individuation, which occurs through the contention between that which the philosopher calls the contrasting forces of the “Earth”, which covers itself, and the “World”, which opens itself and rises.¹⁴

While we do not know whether, when and whereto the “transition”

¹¹ Cf. GA 65, § 44.

¹² Ibid., § 117.

¹³ Ibid., §§ 4, 46 and 84.

¹⁴ On the contention between Earth and World, a recurrent theme in the author’s thinking in this period, see GA 65, § 139 and the conference *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, in Holzwege, GA 5, Vittorio Klostermann, 1977, pp. 5-25 (Portuguese transl.: *A Origem da Obra de Arte*, in *Caminhos da Floresta*, Lisboa, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2012, p. 47).

(*Übergang*) to the new history will be realized, one thing is certain: in order for it to take place, one must return to the first beginning and make explicit what remained to be thought in the Greek experience of being as *alêtheia*, the richness of which exceeds by far everything that was thought about it and as a consequence of it.¹⁵ By thus returning to the impulse of its “beginning” (*Anfang*), thinking becomes principial, it takes a “step backwards” (*Schritt zurück*) from the *parousia* to the temporal truth of being-as-history, and gains power to ask about the hidden ground of *a-lêtheia*, whence beings come to presence. It is *a-lêtheia* that leads thinking towards thinking time in a new way, taking it from the subaltern place to which metaphysics deferred it and which converted it in that metrical and linear structure which accompanies as its measure the movement of physical bodies. This means seeing time as being an essencing of being itself, which opens itself in the form of a clearing in the ek-sistence of the being-there by making beings present while simultaneously withdrawing itself.¹⁶

3. The “Leap” (*Sprung*) into the “Essencing” (*Wesung*) of Being

The idea of the transition from the first to the second beginning, which guided the previous analysis of the first two fugues, should not mislead us into thinking that this is a matter of a pacific transition, one without ruptures – and it is precisely this that the third fugue treats, with the suggestive image of the leap. Indeed, the passage referred to above requires the revisitation of Greek philosophy and of metaphysics as a whole with the purpose of deconstructing them in terms of that which ended up being their governing question, namely, the being of beings or *ousia*, in order to lead the question back to this other, more fundamental question of the truth or essencing of being.¹⁷ But such a propaedeutic mediation should not make us forget that the full access to the sense of the latter question is not automatic. On the contrary, it has its own demands, which have to do with an in-depth transformation from the kind of thinking associated with the theoretical and representative attitude, which leaves being aside, into this

¹⁵ Cf. GA 65, § 85 and the whole third section of the work.

¹⁶ On the interpretation of time in metaphysics and in Heidegger, see GA 65, section V, d), §§ 238-242.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, § 100 and § 113.

other, existential kind of thinking that incorporates being in itself. It is this kind of questioning that guides thinking towards the acknowledgement that everything which it understands and was falsely interpreted as presence and ground derives from a more original ontological understanding of existence, in which being already finds itself open as an afflux of presence and a continuous coming to itself.

In this latter perspective, which is that of Heideggerian hermeneutics, every projection of meaning is always already determined by facticity, that is, grounded in a possibility which is itself, insofar as it is pervaded by negativity, finite;¹⁸ and it is the deepening of such a negative component of being that leads us to the understanding of the connection of the latter with “time”, as is revealed by the splitting or dismembering of existence between the having-been and the coming-to-be, as well as by the singularity and strangeness of such a to-come, which is suspended over us, that of the possibility of our impossibility.¹⁹

The “leap” (*Sprung*) consubstantiates, then, this torsion on itself, through which thinking, abandoning the representative posture and embracing the movement of temporalization of existence, the coming-to-presence of the present, goes directly to what it is given to think, namely, the “essencing” of being in beings. The leap, the entrance and acceptance of the site where one always already is and that bears the name of “the Event”, allows thinking to make the experience of being the “there” (*Da*) of the manifestation, of the eclosion and safekeeping of truth. By appealing to the decision, to the commitment to and in favour of the truth of being, it prepares thinking to hear and accept the sense of being. For being, a non-appearing phenomenon that never appears in itself, addresses one as “saying” (*Sage*), it speaks through the world, and it is through being that we also speak and put-into-work the “clearing” opened by it.

The experience of belonging to being is therefore what distinguishes this hermeneutical thinking from every kind of transcendental knowledge of the conditions of possibility. In its coming to the openness in an afflux of presence and possibility, it recognizes itself as already having been thrown, as being there present in the midst of beings, rooted in the earth and rising itself in a

¹⁸ Ibid., § 122 and § 146.

¹⁹ Ibid., §§ 161-162.

world. However, man easily gives up this truth of his, and turning his back on the saying of being, simply explains being through universals, without wanting to know why and in which sense being is for him and manifests itself to him. Inquiring into this involves an in-depth reinterpretation of being itself, which is not arbitrary insofar as it is grounded in the historical necessity that being itself has of disclosing itself, and is different from age to age.

4. The Event of “Grounding” (*Gründung*)

Now, the leap is itself productive and founding, for by diving into this fissure of being, this original outside itself of its abyssal occurrence, it accomplishes the “turn to and in the event” (*Kehre im Ereignis*), thus allowing thinking to have access to the origin, the temporalization of time in its eclosion, in its own distinct and articulated modes. Coming back to the plane of immanence, the evenemential tissue of the existence in situation, it is its own onto-genesis that thinking then beholds as a site where the givenness of being may occur, which this same being uses in order to draw nearer to beings. In the instantaneity of the “there”, a time-space of truth and meaning therefore opens itself to a being-history of man with beings.²⁰

As a decision for being beyond its concealment and withdrawal, as knowledge of the abyss that sustains the openness that we are, the reflection of the *Beiträge* reaches its highest point in the fourth fugue. There the author speaks about the way in which being essences in the instantaneous event of the temporalization of time, thereby unfolding and grounding the openness of the interval between the to-come and the have-been, which man and beings are called to inhabit. What is at stake is the openness of sites, regions of truth, which determine the mode of being of a humanity and the way this humanity sees the surrounding beings.

The philosopher refers to two complementary ways of grounding, around which the reflection turns: the grounding of the “there” in a “temporal leeway” (*Zeit-Raum*) on the part of the “event” and the “sheltering” (*Bergung*) of truth, thus essenciated by the “projecting grounding” (*Er-gründen*) of the being-there.²¹ But because this latter grounding is already secondary and is

²⁰ Cf. GA 65, §§ 180-182.

²¹ *Ibid.*, section V, b), §§ 187 and 188.

grounded in a previous manifestation of being, its nature and reach depend on the kind of experience the being-there has of being. The philosopher distinguishes between three possibilities: the grounding is said to be “abyssal” (*Ab-grund*), if being is experienced as a reservoir of incommensurable possibilities of manifestation, by far exceeding the historical openings of Western thought; it is said to be “original” (*Urgrund*), if being is sensed as an appropriation, the clearing of a void and the settlement of a site where gods and men are called for belonging together; finally, it is said to be “inessential” (*Ungrund*), if, as today, being is absent, that is, if it presents itself as refusal and withdrawal.

The first mode of grounding, related to the “event”, concerns the grounding of the “there” through the opening of a “temporal leeway”. It refers to the more original domain of history, to this instantaneous event by which space and time, moving out of the abyss, come together in contraposition and reciprocity.²² While spacialization brings with it a site and the possibility of dwelling, temporalization involves a refusing itself, a negativity, but none of them occurs without the other. The event simultaneously produces the ekstatal and contrasting removal of time into the future and into the past, joining them in the instant of essencing understood as giving and refusal. What still comes joins what already has been and has withdrawn in an essential way, and this in turn refers to the future; both constitute, in their contraposition, a present that is the way time occurs in its proper movement.

But the event does not just have a temporal sense. It also bears this other, existential sense, which concerns the movement of becoming, of coming-to-itself: in sum, of “appropriating” (*eignen*) what one is. The philosopher relates the etymology of “event” with the old German word *Er-äugen*, to look in the eyes, in order to point out that which, by coming to us, investing us and calling us with its look, makes us see not simply what shows itself but also what conceals itself, namely, the “giving” (*Schenkung*). In this way we are appropriated and invested in that which we are called for to be, namely – the disclosers and heralds of truth, who have access to the manifestation of being as withdrawal. If we join both meanings together, the temporal and the existential ones, the term *Ereignis* acquires the sense of “event of appropriation”, the expression into which it is usually translated, through which one

²² *Ibid.*, § 242.

intends to indicate the movement by which being, in its evenementality, comes to itself to be in itself and constitutes itself as “ipseity” (*Selbstheit*).²³

As a coming to and a being near itself of being itself – the reflexive fold through which the turning takes place, the “turn” of the event – ipseity does not amount to the affirmative and self-positing subject of idealism, nor to the mere ontical factuality of the human. It constitutes, rather, the creating ground of the latter, which gives it its vocation and projects it to be a mediator of the truth of being in the midst of beings. Such an encounter between the ipseity of the there-being and the human takes place in the present, whence the latter flows with the dynamism of time-space, in order to contribute, through decision, to the embodying of that present. The human, corresponding to that which shows itself, and relating it with that which already is and with that which will be, then becomes itself through the exercise of language, by receiving in the word the whole richness of the essencing of time – not just what happens but, above all, what covers itself and is to be made visible.²⁴

One understands thus that the second way of grounding, the “projecting grounding” (*Ergründen*) of the being-there, may be carried out by humans every time, by assuming the being-there into which they are thrown and being in accordance with it, they put-into-work the truth by means of a thinking saying, one which is born out of a hearing not just of that which manifests itself but also of that which covers itself. In effect, in order for truth to be preserved and remain in its openness as a disclosing event, it needs to become visible even in its own concealment, which involves its inscription in a particular being – thing, work or tool. The safeguard of truth is, therefore – indeed, in analogy with this truth – creation; so it requires a project and its realization. The former measures the whole of the extension of the openness, including the hidden horizons of past and future; the latter gathers and inscribes the event that conceals itself in the work, experiencing it as an existent thing, carrying it out as an act and an offering.

Though contemplating other modalities – such as building or the action of technique, art or politics – the preferential mode of safeguarding truth is however, in Heidegger’s perspective, language: everything one says in a

²³ Cf. GA 65, § 197.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, section V, e), §§ 243-247.

language, in particular in the words of thinkers and poets. By articulating the counter-swinging temporalization of time between the being-possible and the having-been, language opens for being a site of its dwelling, it constitutes the space where the manifestation originally withdraws and the world can happen, therefore truly accomplishing a “topology of being” (*Topologie des Seyns*).²⁵

5. The Last God

This brief presentation of the *Beiträge* would remain incomplete if we did not mention the last two fugues, where the contours of the Heideggerian theology of history are drawn. There the philosopher answers to the indigence and affliction of the age of technical calculability described in the first fugues through the prophetic announcement of the possible coming of the last god. This is his answer to nihilism and the modern project, which supports it, of an absolute autonomy of subjectivity – certainly no longer in the positive and objectifying form of an onto-theology, but rather in the finite and particularizing frame of a philosophy of the event. In effect, the latter, by opening, in the space-time of existence, a mode of being of the human, which is always communal – a way of inhabiting a language and a territory – also brings with it the possibility of a new relationship with the divine, always a disclosing one and of an apophatic character.

God, being and man belong together in the event and essenciate in reciprocal dependency, god needing being to reveal itself to man, and being needing man to irradiate in beings. God, however, transcends being; it is the name for an unattainable mystery, which the temporal interval, opened by being, simultaneously draws near and removes from man. The event appropriates god for the existence and the existence for god, insofar as man, answering to the necessity of the latter, finds meaning for himself, and thus also frees himself and the other beings from the arrest of technique. By

²⁵ In the *Seminar in Le Thor* (1969), Heidegger relates the expression *Topologie des Seins* with the question of the truth of being, understood as the site or “locality” (*Ortschaft*) where being manifests itself (cf. *Seminare*, GA 15, p. 344; in the French translation: *Questions IV*, Paris, Gallimard, 1976, p. 278). In this respect, cf. also the author’s text: *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*, 4th edition, Tübingen, Neske, 1977, where can be read (p. 23): “(...) das denkende Dichten ist in der Wahrheit die Topologie des Seins. Sie sagt diesem die Ortschaft seines Wesens.” “(...) the thinking poetizing is in truth the topology of being. It says to this poetizing the locality of its essence.”

enduring the openness of existence, he becomes the founded founder of the truth of being, of its abyssal openness as it takes place in the ekstatal temporality; and it does this by preserving and safekeeping in time the signs of the last god's passage.

In the hour of greatest danger, the "unknown god", as Hölderlin calls it, announces its possible coming, and with it the new beginning of history, by sending a "wave" (*Wink*) from its far distance.²⁶ This comes to light suddenly, scattering in a plurality of places, of distinct historical openings, the announcement of such a coming; but it can only be recognized by those who, being open to truth, take the decision in favour of its safekeeping and live the time-space of existence as the site of an epiphany. They are the "precursors" (*die Zu-künftigen*) who lead the way and have their eyes fixed on the time to come, prophetically divining what is to come.²⁷

Man, appropriated by being and eksisting in the midst of its essencing, is open to the signs of the coming or the retreat of the last god. He lets himself be called by that which constantly invests the limits of his world in the form of an absence or a calling, and which nonetheless is never able to present itself. Such a calling or wave, not being anything ontical and not referring to something intra-mundane, in or out of the world, has to do with the event, it points to that which in existence gives being and which conceals and withdraws itself as givenness without being mistaken with something transcendental – it is a disturbing and unavailable potency that has to do with mystery. Like the existence which it touches, this potency appears and discloses itself only insofar as it is said and is inscribed, by the creative action of thinking, in the poetical or thinking word, as this inexhaustible meaning which pervades all things and rescues them from carelessness, but which only lets itself be interpreted as the mystery itself: as an abyss of nothingness, which never lets itself be drained or definitely said, unless the word becomes silent again.

²⁶ See GA 65, the whole section VII and § 255.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, § 252.

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