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META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy

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Contact person: Dana Lungu

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**Contact**

Center for Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy  
Department of Philosophy  
Faculty of Philosophy and Social and Political Sciences  
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi  
Bd. Carol I, no. 11  
700506, Iasi, Romania  
Tel.: (+) 40 232 201284; Fax: (+) 40 232 201154  
Email: editors[at]metajournal.org  
Contact person: Dr. Cristian Moisuc

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# **Research Articles**

## Addiction as Embodied Powerlessness

Ion Copoeru, Nicoleta Szabo  
Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca

### Abstract

This paper tries to show that the naturalistic view of addiction is mired in contradictions that stem from reducing the addict to a weak-willed subject who loses control over his or her body. From a phenomenological perspective, addiction reveals itself to be a habit which eventually becomes harmful, but has its primary sources in the embodied needs of a worldly subject. The aim of this paper is to uncover the dimensions of the lived addiction that are neglected in the contemporary naturalistic discourse: the lived-body (*Leib*) and the worldly context of the addict. Firstly, we try to do justice to the variety of addictions by underlying that their new and surprising forms are determined by the intersubjective tissue wherein the subject operates. Secondly, the loss of control in addiction, how the subject deals with the tendency to satisfy a need, is experienced as powerlessness, as expressed in the accounts of ecstasy addicts regarding altered states of mind. The last section of this paper will argue that this sense of powerlessness cannot be equated with a weakness of the will because a strong, forceful will engenders the same vertigo of being prey to strange powers. The embodied aspect of addiction and the spontaneous, bodily need it saturates will clarify further this claim.

**Keywords:** addiction, embodiment, powerlessness, weakness of the will, need

In a recent post, well-known film director Lena Dunham spoke about her “apology addiction”:

I had men more than twice my age for whom I was the final word on the set of “Girls,” and I had to express my needs and desires clearly to a slew of lawyers, agents and writers. And while my commitment to my work overrode almost any performance anxiety I had, it didn't override my hardwired instinct to apologize. If I changed my mind, if someone disagreed with me, even if someone else misheard me or made a mistake... I was so, so sorry. ‘If you say sorry again, I'm going



to lovingly murder you,' Jenni texted during a meeting. 'I'm sorry,' I texted back. (Dunham 2016)

One may contend that such an addiction does not really exist. Nevertheless, this extensive use of the term is not entirely unjustified. The notion of “addiction” has been coined by the psychoanalyst Joyce McDougall in 1978 in order to “fill in a semantic void” (Leroy 2015) created by the sudden burst of “behavior addictions” (sex, eating, gambling, etc.). It seems however that the semantic void has not yet been filled, since almost every year we hear of a “new” addiction and this surge enjoys a constant thematic attention from numerous professionals in the field of addiction studies (see, among others, Trouessin 2015 or Karim & Chaudhri 2012). In fact, the heavy, and sometimes, outright creative use of the term<sup>1</sup> is symptomatic of a cultural change and might provide valuable clues about the underlying essential core of the phenomenon of addiction.

The successful career of the concept of “addiction”, cheered on in today’s discourse available both in everyday life and in the scientific and philosophic communities, represents in our view an indication of the fact that *it might actually describe a slightly different phenomenon than its conceptual predecessors and/or competitors* (dependence, substance abuse, altered states of consciousness or the obsolete French term of *toxicomanie*). Compared with the older ones, which have been restricted to the field of the medical science, “addiction” has the advantage of pointing to aspects which are far beyond the medical sphere. That is the reason why it is susceptible to be part of a process of overmedicalisation<sup>2</sup>. However, its capacity to encompass a large variety of aspects might help us as uncover the fundamental phenomenon which generated the behaviours that need to be described, understood and eventually tackled.

We find some hints in the above mentioned post of Lena Dunham. Addiction is somehow related to others, to work environment, to anxiety, to changing minds and affects. Except for the reference to “hardwired instincts”, which is in fact a mechanical one, *there is little talk about the body*. It seems that, since no substance is involved and the behaviour in question is a purely verbal one, a discussion about the role of bodily operations or substrata would be out of the question. It is

astonishing that Lena Dunham, who in her films explored deeply the question of gendered body in contemporary society (Weitz 2015; Marghitu & Ng 2013; Woods 2015; Householder 2015), fails in this case to recognize the fundamental dimension of corporeality or embodiment<sup>3</sup>. The reason might be the fact that she endorses, as the vast majority of our contemporaries, a dualist vision of the human person, in which the self – an abstract, disembodied self – is supposed to exert a form of control over the body – a machine-like body.

Leaving aside the dualist Cartesian presuppositions of Lena Dunham's reflections, the extension of the use of the term "addiction" that she proposes brings nevertheless to the light some neglected or taken for granted aspects of this phenomenon. We noticed that the behaviour that bothers her occurs only in certain situations or, more precisely, do not occur when she is focused on her work (which, most probably, will make her a workaholic). We cannot speak in this case of "lack of control" and even less of "weakness of will". It seems that she acts differently in different situations, which is considered a sign of good mental health and a precondition of success. That shows that our behaviours are highly context-dependent. If this is true, addictive conducts are answers to a particular (physical, cultural, social, and normative) context and that they cannot be assigned solely to the individual's self or mind.

Irrespective of the paths one would take in exploring the meaning of addiction, there is an almost palpable sense of powerlessness, of which many accounts on addiction, either personal or public, draw an anguished picture. Even scientific (naturalist) accounts cannot avoid to make reference to it. (Flanagan 2013, 66-67)

While the signs or the outcomes of powerlessness let themselves be described by a naturalistic approach of addiction, the source of powerlessness and the capacity to recover need a more comprehensive framework in order to be identified. This paper explores addiction as *embodied powerlessness*, i. e. as a way that the bodily subjects strive to accommodate to forms of injunctions that they perceive as being external, when in fact their overpowering grip is internally elaborated and motivated. Should we frame the experience of addiction as "loss of control"?

Is addiction a weakness of the will? This paper will advocate for a phenomenological approach, in which the aspects related to “control” and, implicitly, willing are dealt with in a manner that allows their articulation to the world to be revealed.

## 1. Loss of control in addiction?

“One wants to know what it is like to be alcoholic – if, that is, there is any commonality to the experiences of alcoholics [...]”. (Flanagan 2013, 66) The same can be said about any other addiction. But what exactly do we want to know and to what purpose? Owen Flanagan – a well-known naturalistic philosopher and a participant in AA meetings – summarizes the expectations concerning the accounts on addiction:

One wants to know about such things as whether and if so what kind of loss of control alcoholics experience in relation to alcohol (as well as any and all affective and cognitive deficits). One wants to know what the brain is doing and how it contributes to the production of the characteristic phenomenologies and control (and other cognitive and affective) problems. One wants to know what effect heavy drinking has on vulnerable organ systems (e.g., the brain, the heart, and the liver). And, of course, all along the way, one should want to know how the sociomoral-cultural-political ecology normalizes, romanticizes, pathologizes (and so forth) alcoholism and its relations, heavy drinking, recklessness under the influence, and so on. (Flanagan 2013, 66)

But is it that what we really intend to know when we read the account of the struggle to recover from addiction and to cope with life? While it is true that we are highly curious to know when and how one lost control over her life, we are even more interested to know and learn how the person regained control. What emerges in the first place from addiction narratives is a *sense of powerlessness*. There are plenty of such stories, but we are not always ready to see beyond the factual data or the underlying moral judgements. When the account is placed in an intersubjective framework, the empathy will lead us to discover that what we have in front of us is a vulnerable subject. (Bernet 2000; Staudigl 2007; Throop 2012)

While many addicts are describing their experience of addiction in terms of “loss of control” or “weakness of will”, it does not mean that they grasp accurately its content and

dynamic. It might happen, for example, that the terms of the discourse are borrowed from other exemplary reports or that the addict tries to present his situation in terms that are familiar to the interlocutor and/or generally accepted by the society.

For example, not everyone is interested in what the brain is doing and some are heavily trying not to think to the damages that a particular substance might do to certain organs of their body. And besides, not every addiction involves substance abuse. We might object, therefore, to the naturalist view, such as that expressed by Flanagan, that the “characteristic phenomenologies” of addiction are highly variable, depending on person, culture etc., and, in fact, they might prove to be less than “characteristic”. Not everyone in the contemporary societies, including the Western ones, shares a naturalistic view of the body and it is not certain that such a view will contribute to the solving of the addiction problem. In fact, we can see from Flanagan’s own discourse on Alcoholics Anonymous epistemological framework (Flanagan 2013, 68-69) that the success of the AA is not related to the objectivity of their account of addiction. He actually stated that AA functions as what Foucault called an *episteme*, placing its members under pressure to re-describe their experience of addiction to fit the AA mould (see also Levy 2013, 7-8). What AA actually does cannot be understood solely at the level of individual experience and inter-individual exchange of ideas. It re-replaces the addicted persons in another (physical, social-cultural-normative) environment, which means that addiction is a social, not an individual problem.

The naturalistic accounts of addiction fail by disconnecting the individual’s experience from the experience of the others. Owen Flanagan, for example, argues openly that the second perspective – that of the addicted individual narrating her experience – should not be regarded as privileged. He dismisses the accounts provided from this perspective as being modified by the views imposed by the AA and, then, as misdescribing addiction (alcoholism, in this case). The epistemological certitude comes with a cost, which is the loss of exactly what should be the outcome of the inquiry: how to change a painful experience,

how to describe the change of particular problematic behaviours, and finally how to point to, preserve and strengthen the “operative centre”, supposing that we acknowledge that there is one.

Addiction entails difficulty in exercising self-control. It is possible, therefore, that all accounts of addiction might be false or, at least, not entirely accurate. The question of accurate descriptions of addiction might be itself misplaced; what counts in these cases is what it works, what helps the addicted individual to get more control over her life. The practitioners in this field ask themselves, naturally, why does it work. As Flanagan suggested in the case of AA, that is probably a repository of practical wisdom about self-control and recovery. It might belong to it also the rhetoric of “loss of control”, which encourages the addict to see her abstention as a sign of regaining control. (Levy 2013, 8)

If addiction is not necessarily “loss of control”, how could we describe it better? What we are advocating in this is a phenomenological approach, in which the aspects related to “control” and, implicitly, willing are dealt with in a manner that allows their articulation to the whole embodied and worldly situation of the subject to be taken into account.

In the footsteps of Erwin Strasser (1969), Sean Leneghan adapted the phenomenological (Husserlian) perspective and its methodological framework to an ethnographical study of ecstasy (Leneghan 2011). It is in the dialog between the researcher and the participant (*recte*, the addicted person) that „the unique *Welt-Stimmung* (world-mood) and the overall dynamic trajectory [...] of ecstasy experience” were to be configured (Leneghan 2011, 39). Going back through layers of human interactions, this phenomenologically informed anthropological inquiry brings to the light the processual *morphology* of the varieties of ecstasy experience (as mode of being-in-the-world). It investigates the specific aspects of lived ecstasy. It begins with the activities that take place in the primary sites of consumption and goes further towards the cognitive and body expressions of users’ experiences and their attempts to *keep a control* of their (altered) mind states. In a first level codification of the primary ethnographic reports, there are frequently employed terms like:

“modifications”, “intensifications”, and “modulations”. They are pointing to a fluid typology of the subjective experience of the user, interpreted with the “devices” – types and concepts – forged for describing the ordinary states of consciousness. The peculiar states of mind which are following initial phases of consumption, as well as the modified intersubjective field resulting from ecstasy use and the phase of “scatting” (the post-plateau phase), are extensively documented on the basis of users’ accounts and researchers’ participative observations.

The experiencing and the corresponding description of what is lived in the “altered” states of mind are helping the researcher to gain access to the subjective world(s) of ecstasy users. It is the starting point for communication and understanding between the user and the possible listener or the observer, who is experiencing the same objects in the mode of as-if. The reporting user and the listener are building a common experience around the noematic kernel of their specific modes of experiencing. A shared experience, a sense of being together is possible even in the case of the strangest ways of feeling.

If we take into account also the pragmatic effects of experiencing, the most bizarre experiences are not pushing people away from one another, as they may appear in a naturalized perspective. On the contrary, they bring people together. Not only those directly involved, but also these ones and the others, who didn’t undergo this particular experience. For they are answering to the intentions of the others as the special ones, as the ones who did this or that, or needed this or that.

Although the purpose of this experience is a kind of hetero-transformation of the psycho-physical unity of the individual, the problem that she or he encounters is that of the dissolution of the world engendered in such states (Leneghan 2011, 42), a form of unavoidable internal degradability of that experience. Socially, it takes the form of “addiction”, which is defined here as “repeated consumption” (Leneghan 2011, 43), and of the strategies for moderating use. A genuine sense of the power of the self appears through the reports on “tolerances, addiction, reconstitution and fading away”. (Leneghan 2011,

193). A “subject” timidly reaffirms itself when the magic vanishes. Some are seeing a transcendent goal, like “*being able to dance generally*” (Leneghan 2011, 183) or are invoking a “Golden Mean”: “anything in moderation”. (Leneghan 2011, 183)

## 2. Weakness of the will and possibilities of action

It is often heard that addiction designates a weak-willed person. This direct and simple claim is oblivious to its own ambiguity: is it the addiction that produces the *akratic* subject? Or, on the contrary, the lessening of the will gives way to addiction? If forced to reflexivity, those who uphold this claim reduce its ambiguous meaning to an equally rushed (moral) diagnostic: the addict does not have the will to stop feeding his addiction, he lacks the will to say no. If he tries to end it, and therefore has the will to stop, it is a weak will that tumbles back into addiction. If the addict has the will to say no, he lacks the will to enact it. The proponents of this claim with regard to addiction seem to cling to a simple equation of getting in and out of self-harmful behaviours: the willing addict should be an equally willing de-addict; where the will creates the addiction, the will can make it go away. The will at work in the habit of addiction is the same and continuous with the will of getting-out-of-addiction. The unity of the will should be proof of its undiluted strength. The force of the will is a given and, according to this naïve view, the addict prefers to devise the ruse of its weakness as an alibi for its continual indulgence.

The problem with this claim that identifies a weak willed subject, engulfed by addiction, who can simply sort himself out by mobilising a stronger will, is that it completely eludes the defining role of the body, habit and need and their relationship with the will. At the same time, there should be a distinction between will and the subject’s bundle of powers, of what he can do – Husserl calls it the sphere of “*Ich kann*” (1989, 270) – of his capabilities or abilities. The will does not operate in a vacuum: even from a phenomenological perspective, it is not enough to describe the essence of the will as the execution by a decision-making subject of a project guided by an intended aim because it expresses a form of intentionality adequate for a disembodied consciousness and equally detached from the chain

of meaningful historicity. Paul Ricoeur (1949) proposes, therefore, the enlargement of the Husserlian *cogito* whereby the practical intentionality of the will gains its whole gamut of eidetic relationships with the consciousness, the body and the world. So much so, that the willing subject is a practical subject whose activity is founded by a synthesis of voluntary and involuntary acts<sup>4</sup>; the spontaneity of consciousness has a complicated bond with the bodily spontaneity. The relationship between the will and the involuntary is not, *a priori*, an oppositional one; it is a dynamic and reciprocal rapport wherein the involuntary prepares, triggers and sustains the activity of the will which, in turn, brings about the overall meaning of the practical act. But, at the same time, the input of involuntary activity (preformed skills or instinctive bodily conducts, emotion, passion, habit) might contribute, through all kinds of “organically”-lived disturbances, to the loss of the willing intentions in the density of the body and which, in that case, lead to form a stumbling block, a resistance to the exercise of the will in its immediate spontaneity. The involuntary acts, thus, impose a temporary or fatal limit to the willing subject. It must be clearly stated, though, that practical limitations come not only from the involuntary, bodily side of the subject’s activity, but also from its being precisely a human being who ages and whose capabilities become fixed and ossified or corroded by time.

A first confusion that arises from the discourse concerning the weak-willed addict has to do with what “weak” means; it seems to indicate an objectivistic and naturalistic view of willing: if only the addict would apply more force to his will! It is similar with the perspective that the natural sciences endorse with regard to the hungry and disturbed body: eat less (obese), eat more (anorexic). These quantitative understandings of the relationship between willing and body do not succeed in grasping the subjective meaning of the lived addiction or the lived anorexia nervosa. And this naturalistic approach leads to a paradox that I shall deal with below.

The involuntary activity of the lived body, which is different from the objective body, is an important source of embodied capabilities for the subject. By doing and acting, the subject accumulates and develops forms of power or potency



(“being able to”) that appear to him/herself only in reflection. They are, at the same time, sedimentations of prior actions and possibilities of future actions. Certain capabilities seem to be innate: Ricoeur (1966) talks about preformed skills that translate instinctive powers of bodily movements and achievements. Not everybody possesses the ability to play the piano or to become a great boxer. Not everybody becomes addicted (to dance, to box, to alcohol, drugs, etc.). The foundation of acquiring these highly developed habits is provided by pre-reflexive, instinctual forms of bodily behaviour. They offer to the will a grip on the lived body, without being thematically grasped by consciousness. And the lived habits are usually so versatile and supple that the effort of bodily willing falls out of the sphere of subjective awareness: a pre-reflective, bodily spontaneity fulfils a triggering impulse to which the will only needs to give its agreement. Willing is easy exactly because it is sustained by the power of the subject inscribed in his acquired bodily habit. Why is it that this will, that accomplishes a project almost without effort, is not called weak instead of easy, seeing that the subject does not need to exert a strong will to engage in habitual conduct? If that were the case, the subject whose will follows the tendency and force of the habit should be weak-willing: the winning boxer or fighter who uses the “melody cells” (Ricoeur 1966, 284) and rhythms of his instinctive and acquired skills and habits should have, according to this view, the weakest will. The correct explanation is that the corporeal capability of the subject, shaped and amplified by the repetition of habit, along with practical possibilities successfully tested and sedimented, offers to the will an easy, pre-formed way of execution which is extremely efficacious. Easy means here efficacy: the effort of the body and the reflexive will do not have to intervene in order for the project to be carried through<sup>5</sup>. There is already a pre-given course of action in the form of the acting possibilities of the embodied subject. The driven dancer dances easily; the trained boxer boxes easily. The addict keeps being addicted easily. The lived body is docile and easy to master and delivers efficaciously the satisfaction of the completed action. When the subject possesses the power of doing and the necessary know-how,

everything is easy: the will becomes almost effortless and easy, the body docile.

It seems counter-intuitive to describe addiction under the guise of power. It is a practical power, a form of doing acquired through habit and sedimented as a latent possibility available to a willing subject. Viewed from the point of view of habit, addiction is a practical, subjective ability. And the converse seems true: in every skill acquired, there is a kind of obsession or addiction at work. But it is wrong to reduce addiction to habit. Even to bad habits. A first way out of this restricted perspective is furnished by the common parlance of “the force of habit” – again, a naturalistic vocabulary. And why speak of the force of habit when it is so easy to execute the habit itself? According to Husserl, for example, whose notions of habit and habituality (*Habitualität*) are more extended than Ricoeur’s, habit exhibits a compulsion of, or a tendency to, repetition, irrespective of the fact that the habit is governed by instinctive drives, or by value-motives<sup>6</sup>. On the contrary, for Ricoeur, the habit does not possess in itself this kind of driving force:

The need of a habitual action is actually secondary to the habit; it is an aspect which is sometimes present, at other times absent. These contradictory effects cannot be explained by habit but by its ingression into the deeper organic life of needs and sources of interest. I do not feel deprived of typing, of doing acrobatics, or of solving equations for the sole reason that I have mastered these activities and that I don't have an occasion to exercise them. They are inert tools which have no source of interest within themselves, though the need of earning a livelihood, a wish to surprise my acquaintances, etc., can suddenly animate these habits and attribute to them a demand of which they are devoid in themselves. (Ricoeur 1966, 114)

The tendency to repetition does not belong to habit itself because otherwise it can't be explained why a habit that once produced pleasure and satisfaction by its execution, now it engenders disgust and revulsion: for example, a professional habit such as correcting papers might become tedious. Or eating eggs for breakfast one more time turns out to be a disagreeable prospect. Therefore, habits in themselves are neutral because they provide the easiest way for the powers of

the subject to exercise themselves. But the subjective abilities and potentialities do not trigger the habit; they only prepare its actualization. To use Husserlian terms, the powers of the subject are like a parenthesized or neutralised habit (and preformed skills), practical possibilities kept in suspension until the triggering impulse engages them in actual action. The force of the habit, its tendency to set off the chain of action is sparked off ultimately by need. The intentionality of need presupposes a lived or experienced lack and an impulse oriented towards something not given in presence. This needy intentionality is thus an active affect, a pre-action, an urge that strives to satisfy an indigence felt organically, before any representation and will come into the scene. The basic level of need is constituted by the corporeally inscribed drives or tendencies towards vaguely determined vital “objects”: hunger tends toward food, thirst toward liquids, etc. If the will could, in principle, master the tendency of need, it cannot however control its impetus: I can refrain from eating, but I cannot help feeling hunger. Another important difference between Husserl and Ricoeur should be noted quickly: whereas Husserl makes habit collapse into the drive category in order to diminish the dualism of nature and spirit, or nature and freedom, in the make-up of the subject (both instinctual behaviour and value-motives gain the force of a drive when taken up by the habit), Ricoeur keeps habit and drive separated and adopts the tactic of undermining this dualistic view of the subject by showing that the first rank of value-motives are actually fostered by need itself: before any act of positing by the willing subject, there are values that emerge and attract the will in virtue of the bodily flesh, of the subject being embodied. This primary spontaneity of the lived body generates vital values toward which the will turns as receptivity: bread is good, water is good. When the need enters the form of habit, the easiness of execution, that we talked about earlier, becomes a value-motive, a good for the bodily subject. The vague intentionality of need, that searches for intentional objects to satisfy and saturate it, is revealed to the subject through habitual behaviour, through regular ways of action. And need usually takes the path of the easiest practical option: habit offers an easy outlet for latent needs. Efficacy, the

least expenditure of effort, seem to define the relationship between need and the available repetitive action of habit.

Whence comes the appearance of the force of the habit though? Why is it that the habit seems to create new needs? Ricoeur states that: “In extending need by an easy conduct, in showing to it *that* it can and *how* it can satisfy itself, the schema of available action in some way infects the need itself.” (Ricoeur 1966, 114). And also: “Si donc l’habitude affecte le besoin au point de sembler l’inventer, c’est par choc en retour de la forme usuelle acquise sur des besoins latents”<sup>7</sup> (Ricoeur 1966, 109). If the need triggers the habit, the latter offers to the need the available, customary paths for its saturation. The shock produced when a habit extends a need does not have the meaning of pressure or constraint, like when two opposing forces meet. On the contrary, the shock is the result of the easiness with which the need is satisfied by habit. And because of this easiness of execution, the habit infects the need itself to have recourse to the same pre-given form of action every time the urge is pressing. That’s why Ricoeur speaks of habit as a “quasi-need” (Ricoeur 1966, 114): habits are inert tools until the need gives them the impetus of actualizing a subjective power; but, in the aftermath of habit and need working together, the habit takes the appearance of a “quasi-need”, obfuscating its real source. Habit is ultimately a means to satisfy needs. Its force consists in giving to the need easy access to pre-established ways of action and to pre-formed powers of the subject.

What about addiction which, sometimes, deals with “fabricated” needs? There are forms of addiction that enhance, at overwhelming levels, the vital needs: food addiction, sex addiction, etc. and they can be easily integrated within Ricoeur’s theory of need and habit. Nevertheless, one of the most spread conception about addiction is that it creates new needs for the subject: drugs, alcohol, gambling, etc. Does not the habit create these needs after all? Ricoeur claimsthat:

It is never true that habit creates a need – even the most artificial needs, such as needs of tranquilizers and stimulants, always refer to the genuine tissue of need in which exercise had worked a kind of derivative bloodletting. Usage never does more than reveal the

primitive sources of motivation which then function along lines of least resistance. (Ricoeur 1966, 115)

The point that Ricoeur makes here is that artificial needs are not external or imposed needs, created by the object of habit, but, that they are in fact, the needs of the embodied subject who uses the habit in order to find alleviation. The object of the habit is coveted by the subject because it appears to him/her with the appealing traits that the need bestows upon it. Someone who's not into ballet, does not get the appeal of ballet shoes or ballet music. Someone who is not into drugs, stays immune to their pleasurable allure. The artificial need is not created by habit, but it corresponds or expresses a *bona fide* need that profits, in a motivated way, of the easy route toward satisfaction provided by the available habit. Having to deal with artificial needs means that there is an unsatisfied genuine need that strives for saturation.

One more thing should be said at this point. What will can do, when confronted by need, is not to take a directly oppositional stand against it. The common sense which claims that addiction entails a weak-willed subject seems to imply that if the addict could oppose more strongly his/her addiction, things would improve. Or, Ricoeur stresses relentlessly that the involuntary and the will are not opposing categories: even when the necessities of the unconscious, character and life come into play as fatally limiting the practical powers of the subject, there should be a consenting will that experiences them not as limiting, but as a source of (limited) freedom. This oppositional and domineering stance demanded from the will in order to parade its force and strength proves to be ruinous when seen from the perspective of addiction, too. Binswanger, for example, in his study of Ellen West (Binswanger, 1958), a patient who suffered from food addiction and opposed it with a mighty will and who ended up in suicide, reveals that West's behaviour since she was a baby was characterised by "wilfulness", by a will to oppose her own organic tendencies (to gain weight while simply growing up), her family and her social world whose values did not appeal to her<sup>8</sup>. This excess of the will, directed straightforwardly and confrontationally towards herself, the others and the world corresponds to the pure self-positing

power of the consciousness seen as the only generator of values and motives for action and satisfaction. Wilfulness means, ultimately, a strong claim by the conscious self to be the sole breeder of values and the sole container of impetus for action, opposing thus strongly the needs of the body and the ways of action supported by the pre-given world. All West's incursions in the sphere of playful activity (riding, hiking) and that of working and action (university, social work) were short-lived because they did not offer satisfaction to what were her genuine needs. She could form technical and professional habits, but they did ultimately disappoint her. In the long analysis of her illness, Binswanger unveils step by step how need comes to take over her life completely: the intentionality of need is characterised by a powerful drive to eat (the tendency) and by an "animalic hunger" (the lack) (Binswanger 1958, 291). Ellen West expresses in her diary the same idea as Ricoeur: "I can summon up such a will power that I actually eat nothing. But I cannot suppress the desire for it." (Binswanger 1958: 254). Her ideal of slimness equalled with the ideal of being bodiless. Her confrontational and wilful attitude expressed itself within the spasmodic relationship with her addiction: periods of almost complete refusal to eat, followed by overwhelming outbursts of animalic hunger and total capitulation. Her will strongly opposes the tendency to eat so much so that she does not eat almost at all. She cuts off her body completely by exercising her imperious will. But the bodily need cannot be totally suppressed by a head-on, wilful opposition that ultimately does not satisfy the body and does not clarify and explain the need.

The analysis of Ellen West conducted by Binswanger (1958) shows what are the perils of complying with a highly polemic and combative will, which in everyday vocabulary might be admirably described as strong will. Addiction, because it's a problem of need and not of will, should be addressed not in a spirit of antagonism between the involuntary and the voluntary, but in the more integral and synthetic view of the embodied subject. The most important task for the will is to understand the source of the habit of addiction which is need. The will is not a kind of blind strength that can bar a habit from occurring and a need from being satisfied just because it

wills it so. The will is a reflexive will, it is an intentional activity of the embodied consciousness and, therefore, a source of meaning for the habit and action in general. The willing subject should approach addiction with a willingness to comprehend the need that feeds the addiction. The difficulty comes from the fact that need is ultimately the basic layer of embodied affectivity and is steeped in obscurity. But at the same time, will cannot become excessively reflexive in the sense of pure intellectual rumination. Again Ellen West talked about the vertigo she felt when doing solely the work of the mind (“The only work I do is mental” – Binswanger 1958, 255), again breaking off any relation with the frightening body: “It drives me to despair that with all my big words I cannot get myself further. I am fighting against uncanny powers which are stronger than I. I cannot seize and grasp them” (Binswanger 1958, 259). And Ricoeur talks of an *analogon* of this over-reflexive will that the non-addict encounters in hesitation: “in the chaos of my intentions lurks the conviction of my powerlessness. I experience not my possibility, but my impossibility: “I am not up to it”, “I am out of my depth”, “I am lost, swamped” – “I feel powerless” (Ricoeur 1966, 138).

Consequently, to develop an oppositional, strong will is not the way to go in finding a durable remedy against addiction. The reflexive will should, on the contrary, be receptive to the troubles and disturbances of meaning and organic functionality expressed by the need saturated in addiction. The body in need tries to communicate vaguely and obscurely through this addiction what it lacks and what the addiction saturates. Need is incoercible because the subject is embodied and the will cannot just banish its presence by applying force. One cannot just forcefully will addiction away; what one could hope to achieve is not to bend the need to an almighty will, but to find other ways of satisfying it than addiction. The will is affected by the activity of the subject because, especially in habits, the will meets the pre-reflexive, obscure involuntary: need. The will before the addiction is not the same with the will after the addiction.

### 3. Conclusions

In confronting the naturalistic approaches of addiction with a phenomenological perspective of the worldly embodied subject, the investigation of addiction uncovers deeper aspects related to both intersubjective and embodied practices that ultimately facilitate the addiction to take place. Addiction is not a problem of the will or of loss of control, but of embodied needs that socially sanctioned discourses keep out of view so that they don't undermine the success story of the recovering addict. The difficulty comes not from the fact that there is a weak will that cannot cope with the force of habit; the seriousness of addiction stems from the fact that there are unsatisfied needs, i.e. a powerful experience of lack and drive that, not having been given a chance to fulfilment, extends itself, according to the easiest practical option, in habits by using the capabilities of the subject and the available stock of possibilities of action. And because all these processes take place at the involuntary, pre-reflexive level of the embodied subjects, the reflexive will has to deal not with addiction as habit, but with addiction as need, as involuntary spontaneity of the embodied subject.

The sense of powerlessness that the subject of addiction experiences is, consequently, related to the work of the need and its lack: the impetus that triggers a bodily action cannot be suppressed. If the tendency can be controlled, its origin – the lack – cannot. One cannot ignore the body he/she lives in. The will can take over the tendency of need, but cannot make the lack disappear. The reflexive will should accept it and provide alternative ways of fulfilling it. And, on the other hand, the powers of the subject, his/her capabilities are acquired through the fact that the subject has a body and through repeated, successful actions. As any other iterative activity, as any other habit, addiction is a form of power: not every subject is able to consume alcohol on a daily basis, for example. But these abilities are not in themselves triggers for action: the need, guided by the will, is in charge. The feeling of powerlessness comes from the “uncanny powers” of the needy lack, to use Ellen West's expression, for which the powers of the subject cannot find other alleviation than addiction. To recover a sense of power means that the urge of the need starts to lessen its grip on the embodied subject. At the same time, it must be



stressed that this powerlessness is most acutely felt when the will stands in a stark opposition with the tendency of need: engaging in this polemical, almost static attitude, produces a split between an almighty, self-positing subject and a bodily existence deemed to be transformable at will, at the drop of a hat. And this, as we have suggested, is the worst solution for addiction.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> There is a perfume called “Addict”, which is a proof that the term is receiving also positive connotations. See *Dior Addict by Christian Dior – perfume review*, where the author notes that “they were hoping the name – and the tag line, “Admit it” – would get attention, and they got their wish”. (Robin 2008)

<sup>2</sup> For the aspects related to recent developments in the study of medicalization, see Conrad (2013).

<sup>3</sup> She mentions, nevertheless, the topic of domination in contemporary society.

<sup>4</sup> A comparison between Ricoeur’s (1949) concepts of voluntary and involuntary and Husserl’s notions of activity and passivity should be interesting to be drawn.

<sup>5</sup> This idea of easiness of execution, of short-circuit of satisfaction is also delineated by psychoanalysis. See, for example, Rik Loose (2002).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. E. Husserl (1989): “Habits are necessarily formed, just as much with regard to originally instinctive behavior (in such a way that the power of the force of habit is connected with the instinctive drives) as with regard to free behaviour. To yield to a drive establishes the drive to yield: habitually. Likewise, to let oneself be determined by a value-motive and to resist a drive establishes a tendency (a “drive”) to let oneself be determined once again by such a value-motive (and perhaps by value-motives in general) and to resist these drives. Here *habit and free motivation intertwine*.” (Husserl 1989, 267).

<sup>7</sup> We give here the original French formulation of Ricoeur text because the English translation omits the word “shock”: “If, then, habit affects need to the point of seeming to invent it, it does so in turn by the encounter of the acquired customary form and latent needs.” (Ricoeur 1966, 115).

<sup>8</sup> For a broader view of L. Binswanger’s main concepts and methodology, one may consult Binswanger (1963).

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**Ion Copoeru** teaches philosophy and ethics at Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca. His research interests are located mainly in phenomenology (intersubjectivity and normativity, particularly in the work of Husserl and Schutz) and ethics in professions, with focus on the professions of law and healthcare. He is author of *Aparență și sens* [Appearance and meaning] (2000) and *Structuri ale constituirii* [Structures of Phenomenological Constitution] (2001), editor or co-editor of several collective volumes, such as *Phenomenology* 2005, Vol. III (with Hans Rainer Sepp) (Zeta Books, 2007), *Phenomenology* 2010, Vol. III (with P. Kontos and A. Serrano) (Zeta Books, 2011), *Recherches phénoménologiques actuelles en Roumanie et France* (with Alexander Schnell) (Olms, 2006).

**Address:**

Ion Copoeru  
Centre for Applied Philosophy,  
Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca  
1, M. Kogalniceanu street,  
400084 Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
Email: [copoeru@hotmail.com](mailto:copoeru@hotmail.com)

**Nicoleta Szabo** is doctoral student of the University of Amiens, where she prepares a thesis on the concept of intersubjectivity by Husserl. She translated into Romanian several books, among them being Günther Anders' *The Outdatedness of Human Beings* (Tact, 2015). She is co-editor (with Ion Copoeru) of the volume *Beyond Identity. Transformations of Identity in a (Post-)Modern World* (Cluj-Napoca, 2004). She published, also, a series of articles on phenomenological topics: „L'artiste versus l'homme ordinaire. Phénoménologie de l'histoire à partir du quotidien” (2006); „La philosophie de l'art de Konrad Fiedler. Interprétation phénoménologique” (2005).

**Address:**

Nicoleta Szabo  
Centre for Applied Philosophy,  
Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca  
1, M. Kogalniceanu street,  
400084 Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
Email: [szabo\\_nicoleta@hotmail.com](mailto:szabo_nicoleta@hotmail.com)

## Sens et non-sens de l'hylétique dans la phénoménologie de Husserl

Aurélien Zincq

Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique, Belgique

Université de Liège, Belgique

Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo", Italie

### Abstract

#### Meaningfulness and Meaninglessness of the Hyletic in Husserl's Phenomenology

The purpose of this paper is to stress the constancy of the Husserlian conception of sensible contents. I argue that Husserl, despite some significant changes in his philosophical views between 1901 and 1913, always maintained that sensations have a founding role to play in perceptual experience. The proposed interpretation is build against the idea of a scission in Husserl's work as regards the status of sensations—an idea which became widespread due to the so-called (neo-)Fregean readings of phenomenology. Even if the notion of sense ("Noema") gains in importance in the *Ideas*, I argue that this does not discredit the sensuous stuff when it comes to the constitution of perceptual objects.

**Keywords:** Husserl, Stumpf, Føllesdal, Concept, Intentionality, Sensations, Phenomenology

### Introduction

Ces dernières années, une interprétation radicalisée de la lecture frégréenne de la phénoménologie, historiquement introduite par le philosophe norvégien D. Føllesdal (Føllesdal 1969), a défendu la thèse selon laquelle le noème, en plus d'être réduit à un concept, organiserait seul le contenu sensible relevant de l'acte de perception. Cette interprétation « conceptualiste » de l'intentionnalité est soutenue par l'extension de la notion de sens aux actes de perception, qui constitue l'une des facettes de l'idéalisme de Husserl à partir des *Idées I*

(Brisart 2009, 399). Elle voit dès lors dans le tournant opéré dans les *Idées I* une rupture franche avec toute idée accordant aux sensations la capacité à constituer, même en un sens minimal, un donné structuré et régi par des lois, et instituant un monde d'objets que la perception pourrait saisir de façon non problématique (cf. Brisart 2011a). Alors que, dans les *Recherches logiques*, Husserl aurait reconnu aux contenus sensibles un caractère fondateur pour les actes de perception (Brisart 2009, 399), la position idéaliste adoptée dans les *Idées I* dénierait aux sensations toute autonomie, les moments sensibles ne recevant de sens que par un acte qui le leur confère. Le tournant idéaliste de la phénoménologie husserlienne signifierait ainsi la récusation de tout pourvoi d'un sens autre que celui provenant de la *Sinngebung* (Benoist 1997, 21) et, par conséquent, d'un sens interne au sensible, qui fonctionnerait comme sa légalité propre. Dans cette perspective, le tournant idéaliste porterait Husserl loin des positions qu'il soutenait dans les *Recherches* et, *a fortiori*, dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*, où il n'hésitait pas à affirmer que les sensations informent les actes de perception.

Dans cette étude, je souhaiterais défendre l'idée que, en dépit des changements philosophiques majeurs qui interviennent entre la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* et les derniers travaux sur les synthèses passives, Husserl a toujours conservé aux contenus sensibles leur caractère fondateur des actes de perception. En d'autres termes, mon but est de démontrer que Husserl n'a jamais renié l'idée que les sensations informent les actes de perception, pas plus qu'il n'a voulu minorer leur rôle dans le processus de constitution des objets individuels donnés dans l'expérience perceptive. Husserl a certes, dans les *Idées I*, étendu aux actes de perception la possession d'un sens, mais cela n'implique pas qu'il faille voir dans ce geste une dénégation, voire une exclusion des contenus sensibles du processus de constitution. En outre, la notion de sens telle qu'elle est employée par Husserl ne peut être identifiée à un concept.

Pour réussir à mettre en évidence la continuité de la conception husserlienne des contenus sensibles, je suivrai un ordre chronologique, de la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*

jusqu'aux premières théorisations des synthèses passives. Nous verrons alors comment la notion de sens, ou de noème, étendue dans les *Idées I* aux actes de perception, ne remet pas en cause les prérogatives accordées par Husserl, dans les *Recherches logiques*, aux contenus sensibles et, au contraire, conforte ceux-ci dans leur pouvoir constituant. J'analyserai les passages cruciaux où Husserl tente de définir le sens noématique en tâchant de déterminer la spécificité de celui-ci, loin de toute réduction logico-sémantique.

### I. Le statut des « moments figuraux » dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*

On peut résumer l'ambition de la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* comme la tentative de réaliser la genèse empirique du concept de nombre. L'objectif de Husserl dans ce premier ouvrage consiste en effet à mettre en lumière le processus d'émergence des concepts fondamentaux de l'arithmétique, dont au premier chef celui de multiplicité, au départ de l'expérience sensible. Je ne rappellerai pas dans le détail les résultats de ces *Recherches psychologiques et logiques*, pas plus que les soubresauts que connut la rédaction de l'ouvrage — tout cela a déjà été abondamment commenté (cf. Brisart 1998, Brisart 2002, Ierna 2012). Ce qui m'intéresse en particulier dans ces pages, eu égard à la thématique qui est ici traitée, est la distinction établie par Husserl entre les *contenus de réflexion* et les *contenus primaires*, c'est-à-dire entre l'activité psychique et l'expérience sensible sur laquelle va s'effectuer cette activité — notamment grâce au travail de l'abstraction. C'est dans la première partie de la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* que Husserl développe sa théorie de l'abstraction, processus grâce auquel l'esprit peut produire des collections dont les termes auront été liés par un acte psychique. R. Brisart a remarquablement saisi les enjeux de ce processus:

Selon que la motivation psychologique soit d'obtenir des multiplicités, alors des contenus, aussi divers soient-ils, peuvent toujours être réunis en une collection à la simple condition de faire pour chacun d'eux abstraction de ses marques particulières et distinctives de façon à ne le considérer que comme un contenu quelconque, soit encore une unité qu'on pourra alors unifier aux autres ensemble. (Brisart 2003, 27; cf. Husserl 1972, 94)

La liaison collective est une relation psychique se manifestant à la condition que l'esprit se tourne vers les phénomènes physiques dans le but d'en saisir les relations internes. Comment s'explique alors le passage au concept de nombre à partir de ces collections ?

Par suite, le passage du concept de multiplicité au concept de nombre ne relève que d'un nouveau déplacement de l'intérêt psychologique: alors qu'il se portait tout d'abord sur l'unification collective des abstracta, il se porte à présent sur la multiplicité ainsi formée pour simplement spécifier la quantité d'unités abstraites dont elle est faite et associer au résultat de ce dénombrement un nom de nombre déterminé. (Brisart 2003, 27)

La théorie de Husserl attribue un rôle prééminent au phénomène de l'attention: les nombres sont le résultat d'activités exercées sur des contenus concrets (Husserl 1972, 371). On sait que Husserl abandonnera cette conception au milieu de son ouvrage, car elle le conduisait au devant des plus grandes difficultés, notamment en ce qui concerne la genèse des nombres 0 et 1, de même que celle des nombres imaginaires. Husserl laisse ainsi tomber sa théorie de la liaison collective et sa conception du processus abstraitif (Brisart 2003, 28-31), et renonce dès lors à faire de la liaison collective le seul moyen pour que soit produites des totalités (des collections). Ce renoncement amènera Husserl, dans la deuxième partie de la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*, à faire du nombre le corrélat d'un processus signitif: le nombre ne sera donc plus un *abstractum*, mais le signe d'une multiplicité (Brisart 1998, 55). Or, cette « découverte des processus signitifs » est rendue possible par la mise au jour du concept de *moment figural*, que l'on peut brièvement définir comme l'appréhension immédiate d'une multiplicité sous la forme d'une unité. Par un processus d'intuition unitaire du moment figural qui, pour reprendre la formule de Husserl, nous saute directement aux yeux, nous avons affaire à une multiplicité, sans qu'il faille jamais en dénombrer un à un les membres (Brisart 1998, 40). Les moments figuraux appartiennent de ce fait aux contenus primaires, puisqu'ils ne sont pas le produit d'une réflexion psychique.

De cette brève incursion dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*, on peut retirer deux enseignements fondamentaux. (1) Le



premier est que l'expérience sensible est pour Husserl, tant dans la première que dans la seconde partie de l'ouvrage, intégralement séparée de l'activité psychique. Nous verrons dans la prochaine section comment cette distinction va évoluer dans les *Recherches logiques*. (2) Le deuxième enseignement est que l'appréhension des individus nécessaires à la liaison collective, ou des moments figuraux saisis dans une intuition unitaire, relève de la perception sensible immédiate. En d'autres mots, l'expérience sensible procure directement, pour reprendre l'expression plus tardive des *Recherches logiques*, des « ultimes contenus fondateurs phénoménologiquement vécus » (Husserl 2009, 217)<sup>1</sup>, comme c'est le cas des moments figuraux: ils sont une multiplicité sensible, qui exprime « une certaine *constitution intrinsèque caractéristique* de l'intuition unitaire totale de la multiplicité, qui peut être appréhendée d'un seul coup d'œil » (Husserl 1972, 250). En ce sens, on dira que l'expérience sensible est « autonome » ou encore « non problématique »: les objets qui nous apparaissent ne sont pas le résultat d'une activité psychique et, quand bien même un acte psychique serait par ailleurs nécessaire à leur constitution en collection, c'est parce qu'ils se manifestent avec évidence, et de façon unitaire, que leur réunion en collection est possible.

Bien sûr, il ne faut pas confondre le premier et le deuxième enseignement. Comme nous allons le voir avec l'étude des *Recherches logiques*, ce n'est pas parce que l'on abandonne la thèse d'une séparation entre l'expérience sensible et l'activité psychique, que l'on doit renoncer à l'autonomie des contenus primaires. Mais la question se pose alors de savoir ce que signifie l'autonomie du sensible si l'expérience perceptive est le résultat d'une activité psychique.

## II. Les « contenus primaires » dans les *Recherches logiques*

La *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* avait dissocié les contenus primaires des phénomènes psychiques. Dans une optique rigoureusement Brentanienne, Husserl y associait les sensations aux phénomènes physiques. Les *Recherches logiques* vont remettre en cause cette partition héritée de Brentano au

profit d'une intégration des contenus primaires dans la sphère des phénomènes psychiques. En effet, comme Husserl le constate dans l'Appendice à la VI<sup>e</sup> *Recherche*, la forclusion totale des contenus primaires dans le domaine du physique, opérée par Brentano, ne va pas sans susciter d'innombrables équivoques. Cependant, on peut se demander si le fait de considérer les contenus primaires comme un vécu réel de la conscience n'implique pas la perte de leur « autonomie », c'est-à-dire de leur caractère fondateur de l'expérience perceptive.

Selon Brentano, les phénomènes physiques sont les diverses qualités des objets qui nous affectent « de l'extérieur ». Ce sont des « qualités phénoménales », dont nous avons les sensations. Le matériau des phénomènes physiques est de la sorte analogue, selon R. Brisart, au matériau de nos contenus primaires ou contenus de sensations (Brisart 2013, 37). Or, comme le soutient dorénavant Husserl dans les *Recherches*, les qualités phénoménales ne sont pas nos sensations car les sensations sont des vécus réels de la conscience et, de ce fait, sont des phénomènes psychiques (Brisart 2013, 37). Husserl distingue à présent, dans le domaine de l'expérience phénoménale, deux classes de vécus: l'une, intentionnelle, qui correspond au domaine des phénomènes psychiques de Brentano, et l'autre, non intentionnelle, qui est constituée des sensations et des contenus primaires (Fisette 2011a, 42). Husserl explique les raisons de cette distinction dans la V<sup>e</sup> *Recherche*:

*Les sensations* tout comme les actes qui les « appréhendent », ou les « aperçoivent » sont en ce cas vécus, mais elles *n'apparaissent pas objectivement; elles ne sont pas vues, entendues, ni perçues* par un « sens » quelconque. *Les objets*, par contre, apparaissent, sont perçus, mais ils ne sont *pas vécus* (Husserl 2010, 188).

Pour Husserl, et à l'inverse de Brentano, il est impératif de distinguer le sentir (*empfinden*) et le percevoir (*wahrnehmen*): les contenus primaires (ou contenus de sensations) ne sont pas intentionnels, mais ils participent au vécu concret qui, quant à lui, est intentionnel. Il n'est donc plus possible d'affirmer que les sensations (et ce, même s'il s'agit d'une hallucination) ne sont pas présentes dans le complexe du vécu, bien qu'il ne faille pas en conclure que ce sont les sensations qui sont perçues. La subtilité de l'analyse husserlienne réside dans cette séparation

entre le vécu et le perçu. Pour reprendre l'illustration célèbre, je n'entends pas des sensations auditives, mais les vocalises de la cantatrice. Ainsi, « à la sphère des vécus en général appartient aussi l'ensemble des contenus sensoriels, les sensations » (Husserl 2009, 289). Cela ne signifie rien de moins que les sensations relèvent du contenu réel de la perception, quand bien même elles ne sont pas ce qui est visé dans l'acte perceptif.

Toutefois, les contenus sensibles ne peuvent pas rendre compte, à eux seuls, du fait que, dans la perception, un objet est présent devant nous (Fisette 2011a, 55). L'appréhension (*Auffassung*) des contenus sensoriels ne suffit pas à constituer un véritable objet. Si l'on reprend l'exemple bien connu du mannequin de cire dans le musée de Berlin, on se rend compte que le seul contenu sensoriel ne permet pas de déterminer l'objet perçu, parce que des objets différents peuvent correspondre à ce même contenu (*cf.* Fisette 2011a, 53). « Le perçu requiert, comme le note très justement D. Fisette, un mode de conscience qui appréhende ces contenus sensibles en les interprétant de manière à établir une relation déterminée avec l'objet perçu » (Fisette 2011a, 54). Dit autrement, ce qui est spécifique à la perception, et qui confère au matériau sensible son sens objectif, ne relève pas des contenus primaires, que Husserl nomme encore « contenus réels », mais bien plutôt du *contenu intentionnel*: ce qui est visé par l'acte — ce qui ne signifie pas que l'*intentio* elle-même n'appartienne pas au contenu réel.

On peut néanmoins s'interroger sur les raisons pour lesquelles les contenus primaires ne sont pas envisagés par Husserl comme des contenus intentionnels. Pourquoi l'appréhension des contenus primaires ne serait-elle pas une condition suffisante pour vivre une expérience perceptive ?

Que tous les vécus ne sont pas intentionnels, c'est ce dont témoignent les sensations et les complexions de sensations. N'importe quel fragment du champ visuel, senti, de quelque manière qu'il puisse être rempli par des contenus visuels, est un vécu qui peut contenir toutes sortes de contenus partiels, mais ces contenus ne sont pas en quelque sorte des objets. (Husserl 2010, 202)

Les sensations rendent possible la perception, mais, en tant que telles, elles ne sont prestataires d'aucune perception d'objet (Brisart 2013, 39). Or, la question se pose inévitablement

de savoir comment nous pouvons passer du contenu sensible à la visée d'un contenu intentionnel, surtout si, comme le remarque D. Fisette, il faut plus que le premier pour atteindre le second.

Ce qui permet aux contenus primaires de fonder le contenu intentionnel est simplement l'activité de la visée, qui effectue un travail d'animation (*Beseelung*) des données sensibles. Ce processus d'animation n'a rien d'un travail sémantique ou conceptuel car Husserl sépare, dans les *Recherches logiques*, les registres de la perception et de la signification :

Il ne faut pas seulement, en général, distinguer entre perception et signification de l'énoncé d'une perception, mais reconnaître qu'il ne se trouve même aucune partie de cette signification dans la perception elle-même. La perception qui donne l'objet et l'énoncé qui le pense et l'exprime au moyen du jugement ou plutôt au moyen des « actes de pensée » combinés en l'unité du jugement, doivent totalement être distingués. (Husserl 2009, 36)

En d'autres mots, les sensations sont seulement appréhendées, l'acte de perception duquel elles sont le contenu concret se chargeant de déterminer ce dont il s'agit comme objet dans la visée perceptive. Les sensations possèdent de la sorte un contenu informatif, sur lequel se fonde l'acte de perception par lequel est visé un objet (assimilé au contenu proprement intentionnel de l'acte) mais, en dernière instance, il revient à la perception de définir son objet. Ainsi, au musée de cire, je peux bien me laisser tromper, dans un premier temps, par mes sens, il n'en reste pas moins que, dans un second temps, c'est-à-dire quand je réoriente ma visée, je ne perçois plus un homme de chair et d'os, mais bel et bien un mannequin. Comme on le voit à partir de cet exemple, les sensations constituent le point d'appui de la visée intentionnelle et, bien qu'elles fondent ou informent le contenu intentionnel, elles ne s'y réduisent cependant pas.

Si l'on constate, dans les *Recherches logiques*, une intégration des contenus primaires dans le domaine du psychique, qu'en est-il de ce que j'ai appelé ci-dessus le caractère non problématique des contenus sensibles ? Que les sensations soient un vécu réel de la conscience, cela implique-t-il une dépendance des contenus primaires vis-à-vis de l'acte

intentionnel, au sens où seule la visée permettrait aux sensations d'exercer leur caractère fondateur ?

Husserl soutient dans les *Recherches logiques* une « “théorie forte” du donné sensoriel », en considérant « les sensations comme de véritables contenus fondateurs, avec lesquels la réceptivité du donné devient un facteur déterminant de l'activité intentionnelle de la conscience » (Brisart 2013, 33). Cela revient à dire que les sensations disposent d'un rôle prépondérant dans l'acte de perception, tout simplement parce qu'elles fondent les actes intentionnels, c'est-à-dire que ce n'est *que* sur la base du contenu informatif des sensations qu'un acte intentionnel perceptuel peut se former. Certes, comme l'affirme Husserl, « c'est le caractère d'acte qui anime pour ainsi dire la sensation et qui, selon son essence, fait en sorte que nous percevons tel ou tel objet » (Husserl 2010, 188), mais les sensations n'en jouent pas moins le rôle de « contenus figuratifs pour les actes de perception » (Husserl 2010, 196-197). Les sensations ne sont pas elles-mêmes des actes; ce n'est que sur la base des sensations, qu'un acte peut se constituer (Husserl 2010, 196-197). Les sensations fournissent un point d'appui à la visée perceptive pour que celle-ci puisse se réaliser, elles ne sont cependant pas ce qui est visé en propre dans l'acte de perception (Brisart 2013, 40). Ainsi, à moins de supposer que nos compétences perceptives se réalisent toujours dans un environnement conçu artificiellement pour les tromper (Brisart 2013, 41), on peut tout à fait affirmer que l'objet auquel renvoie nos sensations (et que nous saisissons en tant qu'objet grâce au travail d'animation), est bel et bien existant, présent « en chair et en os », là devant-nous. L'appréhension qui détermine l'acte de perception consiste le plus souvent à accepter ce qui se manifeste de façon non problématique depuis le contenu sensible: « C'est dans ce caractère phénoménologique de l'appréhension qui charge de sens des sensations que consiste ce que nous appelons l'apparaître de l'objet » (Husserl 2010, 150).

Indépendamment des changements qui interviennent, entre la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* et les *Recherches logiques*, concernant les contenus sensibles et le rapport qu'ils entretiennent avec la sphère du psychique (et notamment leur inclusion dans celle-ci à partir des *Recherches*), le caractère

fondateur accordé par Husserl aux sensations, quant à lui, ne varie pas. Cette conception des sensations constitue l'une des facettes (mais pas la seule) du « réalisme » des *Recherches*: ce qui est visé se manifeste indépendamment de l'acte par lequel il est visé — une thèse qui vaut autant pour les objets idéaux que pour les objets physiques (cf. Gyemant 2010, 5, Plourde 2008).

Dans cette perspective, que signifierait une approche « idéaliste » des contenus sensibles ? Si, comme cela est passé dans la vulgate, Husserl aurait effectivement abandonné la position réaliste qui était la sienne dans les *Recherches logiques* en faveur d'une position idéaliste dans les *Idées I*, quelle peut bien être l'incidence d'un tel changement de posture en ce qui concerne les sensations ? La conception idéaliste des contenus primaires enlève-t-elle à ceux-ci le caractère fondateur des actes perceptifs que leur octroient les *Recherches logiques* ? Si cette conception idéaliste se borne à soutenir que les contenus primaires ne sont pas les « ultimes contenus fondateurs psychiques » (Husserl 2009, 217), elle n'est dans ce cas pas en coupure avec la lecture réaliste: celle-ci affirme en effet que c'est la visée intentionnelle qui, par son travail d'animation, permet de faire en sorte que nous percevions tel ou tel objet (Husserl 2010, 188). Cela revient à dire que les seules données sensibles ne suffisent pas pour vivre une expérience perceptive. Quelle pourrait être alors la position défendue par une conception « idéaliste » ?

En forçant le trait, la conception idéaliste des contenus sensibles, que Husserl aurait soutenue dans les *Idées I* en réduisant la double modalité de l'intentionnalité dans les *Recherches logiques* (signification et intuition) à une seule (signification), pourrait être associée à l'idée selon laquelle les contenus sensibles n'informent plus du tout l'acte intentionnel (cf. Brisart 2013, Føllesdal 1969). De la sorte, l'apparaître de l'objet ne serait nullement subordonné aux sensations qui constituent le contenu réel de l'acte, mais au concept de sens, ou de noème, désormais introduit au sein de l'acte de perception. Les sensations joueraient de ce fait un rôle (presque) nul dans la constitution de l'objet de l'expérience perceptive, qui serait précisément subordonnée au sens noématique. Est-ce là seulement admissible, tant du point de vue exégétique que philosophique ?

Je pense que cette conception ne résiste pas à une analyse approfondie des textes de Husserl. Dans la prochaine section, je tenterai de montrer comment le traitement des contenus sensibles est identique tant dans la phase réaliste (les *Recherches logiques*), voire psychologiste (la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*) de Husserl, que dans sa phase idéaliste transcendantale (que l'on fixe traditionnellement à partir des *Idées I*). Les rapports désormais entretenus entre les *data* hylétiques (anciennement « contenus primaires ») et le noyau noématique de l'acte intentionnel ne brouillent pas du tout la conception des contenus sensibles que Husserl a pu soutenir avant son tournant idéaliste-transcendantal. De cette façon, s'il est tout à fait autorisé d'affirmer que Husserl va progressivement transformer sa première phénoménologie, que l'on peut supposer réaliste (*cf.* Benoist 1997, Brisart 2013, Plourde 2008, Seron 2003, 270-274), en un idéalisme transcendantal clairement affirmé, cela ne signifie en aucun cas un déni du caractère fondateur ou informatif des contenus sensibles. Quelles sont alors les conséquences de l'élargissement de la notion de sens aux actes perceptifs s'il ne remet pas fondamentalement en cause ce que j'ai appelé « l'autonomie du sensible » ?

### **III. Phénoménologie hylétique et phénoménologie noématique**

Devenue transcendantale, la phénoménologie constitue une science éidétique descriptive de la conscience pure. Toutefois la phénoménologie transcendantale, en dépit de son intérêt pour les vécus purs, n'est pas une phénoménologie sans phénomènes, selon la critique qu'a pu adresser C. Stumpf à la phénoménologie pure de Husserl (*cf.* Stumpf 2006, 127, Stumpf 1939, 188-200). Elle possède au contraire ses propres données, qui deviennent telles dans une « expérience transcendantale » caractéristique (Seron 2001, 38), l'*épokhè*, c'est-à-dire la mise entre parenthèses de tout jugement à l'égard de l'existence du monde, le retour réflexif sur le vécu de telle façon qu'il apparaisse comme un phénomène pur (*cf.* Husserl 1985, 101-103). Le vécu pur, selon son caractère intentionnel, fait toujours face à la réalité. « Réduite » après l'*épokhè* phénoménologique, la

réalité demeure dans l'acte au titre de *noème* (Sokolowski 1984). Il reste tout à fait possible d'examiner l'objet « réel » dans la réduction, en tant qu'il relève de la corrélation intentionnelle. Ainsi réduit, et considéré au sein de cette corrélation, l'objet devient le noème, c'est-à-dire le « constitué » du vécu (Seron 2001, 40).

Le noème n'est cependant pas inclus réellement dans le vécu: il lui reste extérieur — transcendant<sup>2</sup>. Il est, pour la conscience, quelque chose d'*idéel* — inclus intentionnellement dans le vécu. Le noème est donc la composante non réelle de l'acte intentionnel. Plus exactement, il est ce que l'on appelle le *sens* du vécu intentionnel:

Tout vécu intentionnel a un noème et dans ce noème un sens au moyen duquel il se rapporte à l'objet; inversement, tout ce que nous nommons objet, ce dont nous parlons, ce que nous avons sous les yeux à titre de réalité, tenons pour possible ou invraisemblable, pensons de façon aussi indéterminée qu'on voudra, tout cela est déjà par là même un objet de conscience; autrement dit, d'une façon générale, tout ce qui peut être et s'appeler monde et réalité doit être représenté [...] au moyen de sens. (Husserl 1985, 452)

Le sens que renferme le vécu intentionnel est le noyau du noème complet, celui-ci étant en outre composé d'autres parties abstraites. Le sens, pose Husserl, est un unique fond nucléaire, qui ne varie pas selon la nature et l'espèce du vécu. Les corrélats noématiques pourront être différents selon le type de vécu — s'il s'agit d'une perception, d'une hallucination, d'un jugement, etc. —, mais ces variations relatives aux couches externes du corrélat noématique n'affecteront pas le sens noématique, qui reste identique à lui-même en dépit des changements qui peuvent toucher les différents vécus. Par exemple, l'arbre qui est imaginé, perçu, représenté, etc., reste toujours le même « arbre » en tant que tel, bien qu'il apparaisse selon des modalités essentiellement différentes les unes des autres (perception, imagination, etc.). Les caractères périphériques du noème rendent compte de ces changements d'espèce, sans que le « noyau » en soit touché. L'arbre peut apparaître tantôt « en chair et en os », tantôt comme *fictum*, tantôt comme imaginé, etc., il n'en reste pas moins qu'il s'agit toujours du même « arbre », dont la reconnaissance, la conscience d'identité, est assurée par le sens noématique. Un même noème d'objet est



donné à la conscience, indépendamment de la façon dont il est caractérisé par le genre de l'acte, que ce soit un acte de perception, d'imagination, etc. (Husserl 1985, 354)<sup>3</sup>.

Il est important de noter que le noème, par exemple dans le cas d'une expérience perceptive, ne s'identifie nullement à l'objet perçu, mais qu'il signifie bien plutôt *le perçu en tant que tel*, envisagé dans le cadre de la réduction:

*L'arbre pur et simple (schlechthin)*, la chose dans la nature, ne s'identifie nullement à ce *perçu d'arbre comme tel* qui, en tant que sens de la perception, appartient à la perception et en est inséparable. L'arbre pur et simple peut flamber, se résoudre en ses éléments chimiques, etc. Mais le sens — le sens de cette perception, lequel appartient nécessairement à son essence — ne peut pas brûler, il n'a pas d'éléments chimiques, pas de force, par de propriétés naturelles (*realen*). (Husserl 1985, 308-309)

On peut imaginer en outre, pour prolonger l'exemple husserlien, que l'arbre, au lieu de flamber, soit seulement « halluciné »: il n'en restera pas moins que la perception sera toujours une perception de cet arbre, au fond du jardin et que, partant, elle possèdera toujours son unique sens « arbre », ainsi que son caractère thétique.

Bien évidemment, cette scission entre perçu, imaginé, souvenu, etc., et l'objet intentionnel (le noème) ne va pas sans susciter quelques difficultés. En effet, comme le remarque Husserl, deux « réalités » doivent désormais s'affronter, alors qu'une seule se présente (à la perception) et qu'une seule est possible (Husserl 1985, 312). Comment éviter ce problème ?

C'est la chose, l'objet de la nature que je perçois, l'arbre là-bas dans le jardin; c'est lui et rien d'autre qui est l'objet réel de « l'intention » percevante. Un second arbre immanent, ou même un « portrait interne » de l'arbre réel qui est là-bas, au-dehors, devant moi, n'est pourtant donné en aucune façon et le supposer à titre d'hypothèse ne conduit qu'à des absurdités (Husserl 1985, 312).

Le noème joue le rôle de contenu intentionnel parce qu'il est la réalité perçue (ou, plus largement, « intentionnée ») en tant que celle-ci est *réduite*. La notion de noème n'a donc de sens qu'à l'intérieur de la réduction phénoménologique: le « sens [noématique] est précisément le *corrélat* qui appartient à l'essence de la perception phénoménologiquement réduite » (Husserl 1985, 314). Par conséquent, les deux réalités dont

parle Husserl dans l'extrait cité ci-dessus ne se télescopent jamais, car elles répondent à deux points de vue sur l'acte irrémédiablement inconciliables. Du côté de l'analyse noématique, on s'abstiendra de porter un jugement sur la réalité perçue (puisqu'elle aura été mise entre parenthèses), mais pas sur le fait que la conscience perceptive est *de iure* une conscience de la réalité perçue — le noème de la perception étant l'indice d'un tel rapport à la réalité. Du point de vue de l'attitude phénoménologique, il est toujours possible de décrire la « réalité comme telle », c'est-à-dire selon la façon dont elle apparaît. On tient alors compte, par exemple, de la manière dont « le perçu » se présente, selon telle ou telle face, etc. (Husserl 1985, 314-315).

Si le noème est le contenu intentionnel, qu'est-ce qui se trouve contenu réellement dans la perception en tant que vécu ? On retrouve, selon Husserl, les composantes matérielles (*stoffliche*), c'est-à-dire hylétiques, et noétiques (Husserl 1985, 336-337). Quelles sont, par suite, les différences entre les composantes hylétiques — réelles — et les composantes noématiques — irréelles ? On se doute que le vécu possède ses parties réelles, précisément parce qu'il est l'acte d'une conscience déterminée et que, même si la perception devait se révéler hallucinatoire, elle n'en resterait pas moins un véritable acte de perception, dirigé vers un arbre en fleurs situé au fond du jardin. Comment cependant comprendre la situation précise de ce moment irréel « à l'intérieur » du vécu concret ? Une précision de la part de Husserl s'avère nécessaire :

La couleur du tronc d'arbre, en tant que purement elle accède à la conscience de perception, est « la même » exactement que celle que nous attribuions à l'arbre réel *avant la réduction phénoménologique* (du moins comme homme « naturel » et *avant l'immixtion de connaissances physiques*). (Husserl 1985, 337 [traduction modifiée] C'est moi qui souligne).

À quoi appartient *in fine* cette couleur bien précise ?

Cette couleur, *mise entre parenthèses*, appartient désormais au noème. Mais elle n'appartient pas au vécu de perception en tant que composante réelle (*reelles*), bien que nous trouvions également en lui « quelque chose comme de la couleur ». (Husserl 1985, 337 [traduction modifiée])

Qu'en est-il de la nature de ce « quelque chose comme de la couleur » ?

La couleur sensuelle (*Empfindungsfarbe*) [...] est le moment *hylétique* du vécu concret dans lequel « s'esquisse » la couleur noématique, ou « objective » (*objektive*). (Husserl 1985, 337 [traduction modifiée])  
C'est moi qui souligne)

À travers une multiplicité de couleurs changeantes (par exemple: les couleurs du feuillage de l'arbre, qui fluctuent selon l'ensoleillement, l'agitation du vent, etc.), qui s'offrent toutes comme une « multiplicité continue de couleurs sensuelles », une seule et même couleur noématique s'esquisse alors (*ce vert*). Cette dernière, insiste Husserl, accède à la conscience en tant que couleur identique et en soi-même invariable.

De cette brève analyse on peut conclure que, d'un côté, le contenu hylétique appartient au vécu concret en tant qu'il en est une composante réelle et, d'un autre côté, que *ce qui* se figure et s'esquisse, *par l'entremise* du contenu ou du moment hylétique de l'acte, appartient au noème ou, selon l'expression de Husserl, « entre dans le noème ». On retrouve de la sorte ce que je disais plus haut à propos du caractère indiciaire du noème: à travers la façon dont la réalité apparaît ou s'esquisse dans les données sensuelles, l'unité d'un « sens » déterminé — mais transcendant, irréel — se manifeste également. Si le noème appartient par conséquent au vécu, ce n'est nullement de la même façon que ses constituants réels (*reellen*) qui, pour ce vécu, sont ses véritables constituants (Husserl 1985, 339). La réduction phénoménologique nous fait voir que ce vers quoi la conscience est dirigée n'est pas, pourrait-on dire, la chose en elle-même, mais bien plutôt le sens que recèle cette chose qui se manifeste à moi, par exemple perceptivement:

La perception n'est pas le fait brut qu'un objet soit présent (*ein leeres Gegenwärtighaben des Gegenstandes*); « *a priori* », l'essence propre de la perception implique qu'elle ait « son » objet, et qu'elle l'ait en tant qu'unité d'une *certaine* composition (*Bestand*) noématique. (Husserl 1985, 340)

Ce n'est pas seulement le fait brut que le ciel bleu soit présent maintenant qui importe, pour reprendre un exemple des *Idées II*, ce qui pourrait tout à fait être le cas dans une conscience en général du ciel bleu; ce qui intéresse l'analyse phénoménologique est la visée spécifique qui caractérise cet acte de perception (Husserl 1996, 26). On y retrouve en effet,

grâce aux réductions phénoménologiques et éidétiques, *l'unité d'un sens identique* — saisi conceptuellement comme *noème* —, qui est celui visé *hic et nunc* par le scientifique observant le ciel bleu. Sous les différents aspects selon lesquels le « ciel bleu » se manifeste au scientifique qui le regarde — c'est-à-dire qui y est attentif, qui *l'objective* dans son acte de perception —, un sens unique, qui peut être reconduit à cette proposition judicative: « Le ciel est à présent bleu », devient l'objet de la visée intentionnelle du scientifique. Cet objet n'est pas une composante concrète (réelle) de la perception, comme peuvent l'être les composantes hylétiques, mais il est bien plutôt son contenu irréel ou idéal.

#### IV. Hylétique et contenus primaires: quels changements ?

Au § 85 des *Idées I*, Husserl part de la réflexion d'ordre général selon laquelle l'intentionnalité, en tant qu'intentionnalité de la conscience dans l'unité de son flux, « ressemble à un milieu universel qui finalement porte en soi tous les vécus, *même ceux qui ne sont pas caractérisés comme intentionnels* » (Husserl 1985, 287-288). On distinguera par conséquent, en suivant cette remarque de Husserl, (1) les vécus, ou les moments de vécu, qui sont intentionnels et (2) les vécus qui ne portent pas en eux cette propriété. Le deuxième type de vécu a déjà été rencontré: ce que Husserl, dans les *Recherches logiques*, et auparavant dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*, appelait « contenus primaires ». De quoi sont composés de tels vécus ?

[À ce groupe] appartiennent certains vécus « *sensuels* » [*sensuelle Erlebnisse*] formant une unité en vertu de leur genre suprême: les « *contenus de sensation* » [*Empfindungsinhalte*] tels que les *data* de couleur, les *data* de toucher, les *data* de son, etc., *que nous ne confondrons plus avec les moments des choses qui apparaissent*, avec la qualité colorée, la qualité rugueuse, etc., qui au contraire « *s'esquissent* » de manière vécue au moyen des précédents. De même les sensations de plaisir, de douleur, de démangeaison, etc., ainsi que les moments sensuels de la sphère des impulsions (*Triebe*). (Husserl 1985, 288)

Il y a deux raisons pour lesquelles Husserl change la terminologie de « contenus primaires », qu'il avait adoptée

précédemment, et opte pour celle d'hylétique. Premièrement, la notion, soutient-il, lui paraît à présent inadéquate (en 1913) ou, pour être exact, pas suffisamment caractéristique. Husserl s'en expliquera dans ses *Leçons de Psychologie phénoménologique* du semestre d'été 1925:

Le concept général de *hylé* offre l'élargissement le plus important pour le concept de *datum* de sensation que l'on doit tirer de la sphère purement subjective, et supprime toutes les confusions qu'impose le mot confus et ambigu de « sensation » [auquel, peut-on ajouter, les « contenus primaires » faisaient directement référence]. (Husserl 2001, 158)

Deuxièmement, l'expression de « vécu sensible », qu'il aurait également pu employer, se heurte, précise Husserl, à de nombreuses équivoques: on pourrait en effet la confondre avec la perception sensible ou l'intuition sensible — qui sont déjà de véritables vécus intentionnels (Husserl 1985, 290). Le terme neutre de « matière » apparaît donc à Husserl comme étant le plus adéquat.

Toutefois ces deux remarques, l'une terminologique et l'autre philosophique, ne semblent pas remettre fondamentalement en cause les analyses relatives aux contenus primaires. Husserl soutenait déjà, au § 15 de la V<sup>e</sup> *Recherche*, que les sensations affectives étaient de la même étoffe que les « *data* hylétiques » de l'expérience sensible (*data* de son, de couleur, etc.):

Dans la sphère très vaste de ce qu'on appelle les sensations affectives, on ne peut trouver de caractères intentionnels. Quand nous nous brûlons, la sensation de douleur ne peut assurément être mise sur le même plan qu'une conviction, une présomption, une volition, etc., mais elle est sur le même plan que des contenus sensoriels comme le rugueux, le poli, le rouge ou le bleu, etc. (Husserl 2010, 196)

Quant à savoir si, par hasard, les sensations peuvent être considérées comme un vécu intentionnel, la réponse de Husserl, comme on le sait, est catégorique: « Personne ne pensera [...] à qualifier les sensations de vécus intentionnels » (Husserl 2010, 196)<sup>4</sup>. En ce sens, lorsque nos sens sont affectés par un objet physique, nous faisons l'expérience de cet objet physique (l'arbre perçu au fond du jardin); nous ne faisons pas l'expérience de la *hylé*, qui n'est ni une donnée immédiate de la conscience, donc intentionnelle, encore moins un objet au sens

du phénoménalisme (cf. Fisette 1994b, 82) — on se souviendra de l'exemple de la cantatrice.

On retrouve de la sorte, dans les *Recherches logiques*, les mêmes caractéristiques attribuées aux contenus primaires que, plus tard, aux *data* hylétiques — hormis la notion elle-même. Qu'est-ce qui distingue alors, au final, les contenus primaires des *data* hylétiques ou matériels ? Comme on l'a vu, les *data* hylétiques entrent comme composantes dans un très grand nombre de vécus concrets qui, quant à eux, sont intentionnels. Comment les *data* hylétiques sont-ils inclus dans les vécus intentionnels ?

Par-delà ces moments sensuels [les *data* hylétiques] on rencontre une couche qui pour ainsi dire les « anime », leur donne sens (*sinngebende*) (ou qui implique essentiellement une donation de sens) (*Sinngebung*); c'est par le moyen de cette couche, et à partir de l'*élément sensuel qui en soi n'a rien d'intentionnel*, que se réalise précisément le vécu intentionnel concret. (Husserl 1985, 288-289)

Husserl précise un peu plus loin le rapport entre les *data* hylétiques et le vécu intentionnel:

Les *data* sensibles se donnent comme matière à l'égard des formations intentionnelles ou de donations de sens de degré différent, à l'égard de formations simples (*schlichte*) et de formations fondées (*fundierte*) de manière originale. (Husserl 1985, 289)

Les *data* hylétiques sont la matière sensuelle à laquelle s'applique la forme intentionnelle: la noèse. Elle est le fondement de la donation de sens. Le flux de l'être phénoménologique, c'est-à-dire la suite des vécus concrets dans le présent vivant de la conscience, possède une couche matérielle et une couche noétique; ensemble, ils forment le vécu concret. L'hylétique a pour rôle de fournir un « tissu intentionnel, une matière possible pour des formations intentionnelles » (Husserl 1985, 298). La matière est animée par des moments noétiques, dont elle supporte les appréhensions. Ces donations de sens rendent possible le fait que le moi se tourne vers un objet — et non pas vers des « données sensibles » (Husserl 1985, 338-339). Dans sa *Psychologie phénoménologique*, Husserl revient très précisément sur ce rôle dévolu aux *data* hylétiques:

Les « *data* hylétiques », les purs *data* de sensation [...] ne sont pas par eux-mêmes des perspectives mais le deviennent [...] par le biais

de ce qui précisément leur donne la fonction subjective d'être l'apparition de ce qui est objectif. (Husserl 2001, 155)

Ainsi, par exemple, dans le vécu qui constitue la perception de ce papier blanc, on dira que le blanc est indissociablement lié à l'essence de la perception concrète: le blanc est porteur d'une intentionnalité en tant qu'il offre une matière pour des formations intentionnelles, mais il n'est pas lui-même la conscience de quelque chose (*cf.* Husserl 1985, 117-118). Le « *datum* phénoménologique » blanc qui, par définition, n'est pas en soi intentionnel, fournit une trame possible pour une activité noétique. Grâce à la noèse, qui appartient au vécu concret, le *datum* hylétique de la blancheur devient le blanc de ce papier-ci. Il permet par conséquent — et c'est là un point important — que, la formation intentionnelle se réalisant, ce papier blanc soit reconnu comme le même, malgré les différentes esquisses sous lesquelles il apparaît. Un passage de la *Psychologie phénoménologique* de 1925 explicite ce travail d'animation:

Lorsqu'on voit une chose spatiale cela n'est possible que parce que des *data* hylétiques et visuels sont sentis et qu'ils se trouvent dans une certaine fonction subjective, que par conséquent ils ont en soi le caractère spécifique de ce qui s'esquisse, caractère qui ne les change absolument pas dans leur être propre mais qui leur donne précisément le « caractère de ce qui est conscient »: ils sont apparition de telle chose. (Husserl 2001, 155)

Les perspectives (*Abschattungen*) sous lesquelles l'objet m'apparaît ne sont pas à confondre avec les *data* hylétiques. Au contraire, ces derniers n'orientent les premières qu'à la faveur de l'appréhension noétique. Ce n'est que dans le cadre de la réflexion que les modes de donnée des perspectives, qui reposent sur les *data* hylétiques, peuvent ressortir. Sinon, dans l'attitude naturelle, les données objectives de la perception sont dirigées directement sur ce qui est objectif et spatial (Husserl 2001, 156).

Si on ne peut pas faire l'impasse sur la corrélation noético-noématique et son extension aux actes perceptifs, ni sur le concept de réduction, on remarquera néanmoins que le travail noétique ne semble pas très différent du travail d'animation

(*Beseelung*) qui prévalait dans les *Recherches logiques*. Dans la V<sup>e</sup> *Recherche*, on trouve ainsi ce passage:

C'est le caractère d'acte qui anime pour ainsi dire la sensation et qui, selon son essence, fait en sorte que nous percevons tel ou tel objet, que, par exemple, nous voyons cet arbre, nous entendons cette sonnerie, nous sentons le parfum de telle fleur, etc. (Husserl 2010, 188)

Quelques lignes plus bas, Husserl spécifie ce caractère d'acte qui produit une certaine animation de la sensation:

La situation [...] est la suivante: les sensations jouent [...] le rôle de contenus figuratifs pour les actes de perception, ou bien (comme on le dit sans éviter tout malentendu) les sensations connaissent une « interprétation » [*Deutung*] ou une « appréhension » [*Auffassung*] objectives. Elles ne sont donc pas elles-mêmes des actes, mais avec elles des actes se constituent, à savoir quand des caractères intentionnels du genre de l'appréhension perceptive s'en emparent pour les animer en quelque sorte. (Husserl 2010, 196-197)

En ce sens, ce qui permet que je n'entende pas des sensations auditives, mais la voix de la cantatrice ressortit à l'appréhension objective du « contenu primaire ». Si l'on agrmente cet exemple des nouvelles théorisations des *Idées I*, on dira que les esquisses par lesquelles j'appréhende la voix de la cantatrice, différentes, par exemple, selon le lieu à partir duquel j'écoute l'air chanté, le deviennent grâce à l'animation noétique des *data* hylétiques (les *data* sonores) qui « constituent » la mélodie que la cantatrice est en train d'interpréter (*cf.* Husserl 1998, 88).

Bien que la perception est envisagée, dans les *Idées I*, comme un acte noétique dont la corrélation est le *noème* qui « anime » les *data* hylétiques, elle ne diffère pas essentiellement, en ce qui concerne le statut du sensible, de ce qu'en disait déjà le concept d'animation des *Recherches logiques*. C'est toujours la simple appréhension, l'acte de perception, informé de ce qu'il doit appréhender, qui « anime » les *data* hylétiques. Comme dans les *Recherches logiques*, la seule perception est suffisante pour l'écoute de la mélodie, celle-ci se constituant dans l'acte d'appréhension auditive. Que ce soit dans les *Recherches* ou dans les *Idées I*, les contenus primaires, ou désormais les *data* hylétiques, possèdent toujours ce même caractère fondateur de l'acte de perception. Qu'il ne semble pas y avoir de perception



selon les *Idées I*, sans visée d'un sens, cela n'autorise pas à dénigrer aux sensations tout pouvoir constitutif de l'expérience perceptive. On voit comment une conception unilatéralement idéaliste des *Idées I*, qui soutiendrait que l'apparaître de l'objet n'est pas subordonné aux sensations constituant le contenu réel de l'acte, ne semble pas correspondre aux propos de Husserl sur la complexité du rapport entre *data* hylétiques et activité noétique.

## V. Interprétations contemporaines de l'hylétique

Dans le sillage de l'interprétation néo-frégéenne de l'intentionnalité proposée par D. Føllesdal, une autre lecture idéaliste des contenus sensibles s'est développée récemment (cf. Brisart 2011a, Brisart 2011b, Brisart 2013). Cette deuxième version de l'idéalisme, que l'on pourrait à bon droit appeler « linguistique », soutient que seule la possession d'un concept permettrait de vivre une expérience perceptive. En régime husserlien, cela revient à poser que le contenu intentionnel est intégralement conceptuel ou, plus simplement encore, que le noème est un concept (cf. Dewalque 2011)<sup>5</sup>. Par conséquent, le travail d'animation des sensations serait le résultat d'un travail d'ordre conceptuel.

Je ne jugerai pas ici de la portée philosophique de cette interprétation « conceptualiste » de l'intentionnalité (cf. Zinçq 2012). Toutefois, comme j'aimerais à présent le démontrer, je pense que, du seul point de vue exégétique, cette interprétation se heurte à toute une série d'extraits de Husserl qui vont dans le sens d'une lecture résolument « réaliste » des contenus sensibles — même dans le cas des *Idées I* —, c'est-à-dire qui soutient l'idée du caractère fondateur, non problématique, des sensations. Pour mener à bien mon projet, je partirai d'une citation de R. Brisart qui résume assez bien ce « travail » du noème/concept dans l'acte de perception. Cela me permettra de mettre en évidence quelques points forts de cette lecture idéaliste. Je proposerai ensuite quatre remarques critiques, qui visent à la fois à une meilleure compréhension de la notion de noème, ainsi qu'à une précision de son rôle dans l'acte intentionnel. Voici la citation de R. Brisart:

Celui-ci [le noème] est une structure sémantique [sc. au sens que j'ai indiqué précédemment, c'est-à-dire un concept] de détermination grâce à laquelle des objets se constituent en tant qu'unités discernables et identifiables, en même temps que des *data* hylétiques se transforment en autant d'apparences d'un même objet. Cette double constitution — celle d'un objet identique et celle de ses apparences liées les unes aux autres comme les apparences d'un seul et même objet — relève d'un processus intentionnel unique, mais dont le donné hylétique est exclu; comme, pour ainsi dire, maintenu à la lisière du processus de constitution lui-même. (Brisart 2013, 49)

Tout d'abord, on notera que ce n'est certes pas un noème que je vois dans le fond du jardin ou quand je regarde en direction du ciel, car celui-ci est un concept d'ordre méthodologique qui, comme on l'a vu, ne reçoit sa signification que dans le cadre de l'attitude phénoménologique. Ce vers quoi se dirige la conscience en appréhendant le ciel bleu, c'est, dans le moment de cette expérience perceptive, « le ciel à présent bleu » (Husserl 1996, 26). Un sens innerve le vécu concret, qui fait en sorte que celui-ci conquière son caractère intentionnel. Peut-être le météorologue, qui objective le ciel bleu, s'illusionne-t-il de le percevoir bleu; il n'en reste pas moins que son acte de perception, par lequel il vise un objet déterminé, possède toujours son « sens de perception » duquel nous pouvons dire, *grâce à la réflexion phénoménologique*, « que, en lui ou par lui, la conscience se rapporte à un objet en tant qu'il est le "sien" » (Husserl 1985, 436). On peut citer un passage du § 97 en faveur de cette idée:

*En opérant la réduction phénoménologique*, nous accédons même à cette évidence éidétique générale: l'objet arbre, qui dans une perception en général est déterminé en tant qu'*objectif*. [...] La matière [hylétique, sensuelle] [...] est « animée » par des moments noétiques, elle supporte (tandis que le moi est tourné non pas vers elle mais vers l'objet) des « appréhensions », des « donations de sens », que nous saisissons dans la réflexion sur (*an*) et avec la matière (Husserl 1985, 338. C'est moi qui souligne).

Deuxièmement, on retiendra que ce n'est pas par l'entremise du noème, comme s'il était, ainsi que le soutient D. Føllesdal, « ce en vertu de quoi la conscience se relie à l'objet », que l'appréhension naturelle de l'objet se réalise (Føllesdal 1969, 682). J'ai souligné précédemment que Husserl ne souhaitait pas que l'on confonde les deux « réalités », noématique et réelle,

ni que l'on fasse en sorte qu'elles se télescopent. Ces deux réalités doivent être rigoureusement distinguées car elles correspondent à deux « points de vue » sur la perception. Le noème est très précisément le corrélat de la noèse: il est donc *stricto sensu* ce qui est pensé. La perception est dirigée vers son objet — elle est perception de son objet (Husserl 1985, 339); elle n'est ni perception du noème, ni perception de l'arbre « à travers » le noème. Dans la réflexion, on rend compte par le noème du fait que la perception est perception *du* tronc de l'arbre, *du* ciel bleu, etc., qu'en d'autres termes elle possède un sens: elle ne vise pas n'importe quoi dans l'espace de la perception sensible, mais un arbre, le ciel, etc. L'extrait précité du § 97 vient confirmer cette remarque.

Troisièmement, je pense qu'il est nécessaire de relativiser la thèse selon laquelle le donné hylétique est, pour le Husserl de la phénoménologie transcendantale, *intégralement exclu* du processus de constitution<sup>6</sup>. En effet Husserl, toujours dans cet important § 97, affirme que

tout changement dans le statut hylétique de la perception, s'il ne supprime pas franchement la conscience de perception, doit avoir au moins pour résultat que l'objet qui apparaît devienne objectivement « autre », soit en lui-même, soit dans le mode d'orientation lié à son apparaître. (Husserl 1985, 338; cf. Dewalque 2013)

Les *data* hylétiques valent par conséquent plus que comme conditions limites du processus de constitution et, partant, ils n'en sont pas exclus. La *hylé* limite certes le nombre de noèmes pouvant s'appliquer à un objet, mais elle fait plus encore que limiter le nombre de noèmes mobilisables dans une situation donnée — comme le soutiennent D. Føllesdal (1984b, 95) et, dans une version radicalisée, parce qu'il réduit le donné sensible à une simple pression exercée sur la perception, R. Brisart (2013). On peut à bon droit soutenir que la *hylé* conditionne également la perception: dans un registre normal de perception, l'arbre au fond du jardin offre un assez bon appui pour ma prestation intentionnelle.

Qu'en est-il enfin de l'idée d'identifier noème et concept ? S'il ne relève pas de l'objet de cette étude de se pencher sur le bien-fondé philosophique de cette hypothèse, elle n'en demeure pas moins indéfendable du point de vue de l'exégèse des textes

de Husserl sur le noème. Ainsi que l'observe Husserl dans les *Idées III*, le sens noématique peut être envisagé comme une extension du concept de « signification » :

[Le noème] n'est, quant à lui, *rien d'autre que* la généralisation de l'idée de signification [*Bedeutung*] au domaine total des actes. (Husserl 1993, 106. C'est moi qui souligne)<sup>7</sup>

Dans sa *Lecture frégéenne de la phénoménologie*, D. Fisette note que le sens du mot « généralisation » (*Verallgemeinerung*) est déjà expliqué au § 124 des *Idées I*, dans lequel Husserl précise que le « signifier » et la « signification » sont une extension de concepts relevant de la sphère linguistique à l'ensemble de la sphère noético-noématique — ce qui, à l'inverse, n'implique pas que la sphère noético-noématique se réduise à celle du logico-sémantique. Il s'ensuit alors que la sphère linguistique est envisagée comme un domaine *parmi d'autres* du sens, un cas particulier du sens noématique, du sens en général (Fisette 1994a, 41). Le sens noématique de l'acte appartient à la sphère du sens en général — une sphère dont le sémantico-linguistique est une région parmi d'autres et non pas l'intégralité de celle-ci. Voici un extrait décisif de cet important § 124 :

Nous envisageons uniquement le « signifier » (*Bedeuten*) et la « signification ». À l'origine, ces mots ne se rapportent qu'à la sphère verbale, à celle de « l'exprimer ». Mais on ne peut guère éviter — et c'est là en même temps une démarche importante de la connaissance — d'élargir la signification de ces mots et de leur faire subir une modification convenable qui leur permet de s'appliquer d'une certaine façon à toute la sphère noético-noématique: donc à tous les actes sans tenir compte s'ils sont ou non combinés à des actes expressifs. Ainsi, nous n'avons même jamais cessé de parler, pour tous les vécus intentionnels, du « sens » — bien que ce mot soit employé en général comme équivalent du mot « signification » (Husserl 1985, 418-419).

Bien qu'il ne relève pas du propos de cette étude de juger si, d'un côté, parler du sémantique ou du noématique sans jamais le concevoir comme du conceptuel, cela a tout simplement du sens ou si, d'un autre côté, on peut parler dans les *Recherches logiques* d'une *Deutung* sans *Bedeutung* (Brisart 2013, 40), il n'en reste pas moins que Husserl n'aurait jamais admis que toute expérience perceptive soit de façon exclusive le résultat d'une activité d'ordre conceptuel — et encore moins que le

contenu noématique soit intégralement conceptuel. En bref, les données sensibles ne sont pas un matériau brut, un chaos et un fouillis de sensations et d'impressions sensibles qu'une activité intentionnelle — et surtout pas conceptuelle — viendrait ordonner et constituer en un objet d'expérience « en bonne et due forme ».

## VI. Réhabilitation de Stumpf: vers les synthèses passives

Sur le chemin qui conduit des contenus primaires aux *data* hylétiques, on a affaire à un approfondissement de la structure du sensible, déjà interrogée dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* lorsque, au départ des travaux de Brentano, Husserl s'intéressait à la genèse des concepts fondamentaux de l'arithmétique. À ce sujet, la position de Carl Stumpf — qui dirigea la thèse de Husserl *Sur le concept de nombre*, reprise dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*, et qui fut le dédicataire des *Recherches logiques* —, à l'intérieur de l'itinéraire husserlien, est paradigmatique du remaniement opéré à l'égard de la thématique des données sensibles<sup>8</sup>. En effet, dans la « Remarque » qu'il ajoute au § 86 sur « Les problèmes fonctionnels » des *Idées I*, Husserl signale que « la phénoménologie de Stumpf correspondrait plutôt à l'analyse qui a été caractérisée [...] comme hylétique » (Husserl 1985, 299). La phénoménologie stumpfienne, en tant que doctrine des phénomènes sensibles, est ainsi intégrée à l'édifice de la phénoménologie transcendantale — au titre insigne, indique Husserl, de *psychologie éidétique*. L'énoncé a de quoi surprendre. D'une part, il consacre Stumpf comme le précurseur de la psychologie phénoménologique — et, à ce titre, de premier psychologue « éidétique », bien avant la *Psychologie phénoménologique* de 1925 — et, d'autre part, en ce qui concerne la question qui occupe cette étude, il signale la réhabilitation des recherches de Husserl sur les phénomènes sensibles qui ont précédé le tournant transcendantal, notamment sur les contenus primaires, que ce soit dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* ou dans les *Recherches logiques*.

Ainsi que cela est désormais bien connu, Stumpf a exercé une influence déterminante sur les recherches du « jeune Husserl ». C'est ce qui fait dire à D. Fisette que la phénoménologie

husserlienne, largement redevable à Stumpf, lui est aussi en fait largement *indissociable* (cf. Dewalque 2015, Fissette 2015). Cette influence sur le jeune Husserl se retrouve toujours, comme je l'ai suggéré, chez le Husserl de la maturité, celui de la phénoménologie transcendantale notamment dès les *Idées I* et au-delà. Ainsi, plusieurs concepts fondamentaux de la psychologie descriptive de Husserl, et que l'on retrouvera plus tard dans la phénoménologie des synthèses passives, tirent leur origine des travaux de Stumpf (Fissette 2006, 81)<sup>9</sup>. On peut à juste titre considérer la phénoménologie des synthèses passives comme la poursuite du projet husserlien d'une réflexion sur les contenus primaires (cf. Leclercq 2012). Outre le passage précité des *Idées I*, qui valorise directement la méthode de recherche proposée par Stumpf pour éclaircir les légalités sensibles et qui, ce faisant, pourrait tout à fait devenir une véritable phénoménologie hylétique, ce qui me fait pencher en faveur de cette thèse est que le concept d'association, c'est-à-dire le concept-clef de la phénoménologie de la passivité, assume, en même temps qu'il les valorise et les étend, les prérogatives accordées par Husserl aux contenus primaires, notamment le fait de pouvoir constituer des moments d'unités indépendamment de toute saisie active ou judicative. Or, ce sont précisément les recherches de Stumpf, celles autour du concept de fusion et, en général, sur la constitution des champs sensibles, qui sont à la base de la théorie des contenus primaires<sup>10</sup>. La mention de Stumpf dans les *Idées I* suggère dès lors la présence d'un lien indéfectible entre le concept de contenus primaires et celui de *data* hylétiques. De fait, si, d'un côté, la phénoménologie hylétique correspond à la phénoménologie selon Stumpf, alors que celle-ci était déjà à la base de la théorie husserlienne des contenus primaires et que, d'un autre côté, Husserl poursuit ses recherches sur la perception et ce, bien après le tournant transcendantal, en s'appuyant toujours sur les théories de Stumpf, qu'il revalide donc dans les *Idées I* sous la forme de la phénoménologie hylétique, nous sommes légitimement en droit de considérer que la phénoménologie des synthèses passives poursuit toujours — certes avec des inflexions théoriques — les premières recherches de Husserl sur les contenus primaires et, en un sens, les propres recherches de Stumpf.

## Conclusion

Indépendamment des remaniements successifs de la phénoménologie husserlienne qui, de psychologie descriptive deviendra un idéalisme transcendantal, on peut observer tout au long du développement de l'œuvre de Husserl la persistance d'une conception « forte » des contenus sensibles. La phénoménologie des synthèses passives viendra accentuer ce caractère fondateur de la sensibilité, maintenant régie par des lois qui la structurent et affranchie de toute constitution logico-éidétique. De la sorte, la réflexion de Husserl sur les contenus sensibles aura, à chaque pas de son itinéraire, consisté à les préserver d'une réduction à un seul problème sémantique.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Je dis ma dette à l'égard de l'admirable texte de R. Brisart (Brisart 2013), que je suis ici dans son analyse du passage de la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* aux *Recherches logiques* concernant les contenus sensibles, ainsi que dans son appréciation globale de ce dernier ouvrage.

<sup>2</sup> Cette conception est celle des *Idées I*. Husserl reviendra sur celle-ci quelques années plus tard, en considérant que le noème est un moment *réel* du vécu (cf. Husserl 1998, 83).

<sup>3</sup> Les caractères qui affectent le noyau noématique ne sont pas tout le noyau noématique; le sens n'est pas altéré par ce qui affecte le noème. Dans son célèbre article sur « La notion husserlienne de noème », D. Føllesdal établit une distinction très nette entre deux composantes du noème (thèse n° 2): « Un noème a deux composantes: (i) une qui est commune à tous les actes qui ont le même objet, exactement les mêmes propriétés, orientés de la même manière, etc., abstraction faite du caractère thétique de l'acte, c'est-à-dire que ce soit une perception, un souvenir, un acte d'imaginer, etc.; (ii) la deuxième composante est celle qui est différente dans des actes dont le caractère thétique est différent » (Føllesdal 1969).

<sup>4</sup> Je ne développerai pas ce point sur les sensations affectives. On prendra par ailleurs garde, à la lecture de ce passage, particulièrement important, d'en retrancher ce qui appartient à la deuxième édition, et qui en modifie grandement le sens et la perspective.

<sup>5</sup> Pour mémoire, il est à noter que la théorie husserlienne de l'intentionnalité, notamment ses développements sur le sens noématique, est l'enjeu de débats mouvementés dans la tradition anglo-américaine. Les protagonistes principaux sont (ou étaient) D. Føllesdal, H.L. Dreyfus, M. Dummett, R. McIntyre, J. Mohanty, R. Sokolowski. Je ne reviendrai pas ici sur ces débats, ce qui m'écarterait du sujet de cette étude. Pour une idée de l'importance de ces débats sur la notion husserlienne de noème (et, particulièrement, sur sa

lecture « frégéenne » par D. Føllesdal), on consultera Fisette 1994 et Daniel 1992.

<sup>6</sup> « Dans le cas de la perception, la *hylè* sert de conditions limites (*boundary conditions*) qui éliminent la possibilité d'un certain nombre de noèses, mais sans en réduire les possibilités à une seule » (Føllesdal 1984a, 40).

<sup>7</sup> Sur l'interprétation du passage en question, on peut consulter Fisette 1994a, 86.

<sup>8</sup> Sur le rapport Stumpf-Husserl, cf. Dewalque 2012; Fisette et Fréchette 2007, 80-92; Fisette 2011b; Ierna 2009; Rollinger 1999, chap. III; Rollinger 2000-2001; Schuhmann 2000-2001; Spiegelberg 1960. En règle générale, comme le signale Fisette (Fisette 2006, 80), il existe très peu de travaux sur C. Stumpf et E. Husserl, que ce soit en français ou en langue étrangère. Il y a donc là une sérieuse lacune à combler. Sur C. Stumpf, on mentionnera la publication récente Fisette & Martinelli 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Un bref coup d'œil dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique* attestera déjà l'importance de l'influence des ouvrages de Stumpf sur Husserl: son *Raumbuch* de 1873 et les deux volumes de sa *Tonpsychologie* (Stumpf 1965a, Stumpf 1965b). On retiendra la reprise des concepts de « liaison collective » (*kollektive Verbindung*), de « fusion » (*Verschmelzung*) et de « moments figuraux » (*figuralen Momente*). Sur la réappropriation husserlienne du concept stumpfien de fusion, cf. Holenstein 1972, 118-131. Dans la *Philosophie de l'arithmétique*, Husserl se réclame explicitement de Stumpf quand il indique son propre usage du concept de fusion (Husserl 1972, 249-253).

<sup>10</sup> Les théories de Stumpf et de Husserl connaissent bien entendu des points de dissension (cf. Holenstein 1972, 118-131 et Rollinger 1999, 100-114).

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**Aurélien Zincq** est titulaire d'un Master en philosophie de l'Université de Liège. Il réalise actuellement un doctorat en cotutelle entre l'Université de Liège et l'Università degli Studi di Urbino "Carlo Bo" grâce à une bourse d'Aspirant du Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique. Ses recherches doctorales portent sur l'émergence et les transformations du concept de *Gestalt* au sein de la tradition philosophique autrichienne au tournant du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Il étudie en particulier les travaux menés par A. Meinong et ses étudiants à Graz (R. Ameseder, V. Benussi, S. Witasek), ceux qui les ont inspirés (E. Mach et C. Ehrenfels), mais également leur postérité dans les œuvres philosophiques et littéraires de L. Wittgenstein et de R. Musil.

**Adresse:**

Aurélien Zincq  
F.R.S.-FNRS Research Fellow  
University of Liège  
Department of Philosophy  
Place du 20-Août, 7  
4000 Liège, Belgium  
Phone: 0032 (0)4 366 55 93  
E-mail : [aurelien.zincq@ulg.ac.be](mailto:aurelien.zincq@ulg.ac.be)

## The Typicality and Habituality of Everyday Cognitive Experience in Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology of the Lifeworld

Alexis Emanuel Gros  
University of Buenos Aires,  
University of Belgrano, CONICET

### Abstract

The aim of this paper is to systematically analyze Schutz's phenomenological account of the typicality and habituality of everyday cognitive experience, and to identify the Husserlian *leitmotifs* that inform it. In order to do so, I will proceed in three steps. First (1), I will briefly present the main lines of Schutz's theoretical project; second (2), I will scrutinize his Husserlian account of typification as a passive sort of interpretation; and finally (3), I will examine his –also Husserl-inspired– analysis of the structure and genesis of the habitualized stock of knowledge at hand.

**Keywords:** Alfred Schutz, Social Phenomenology, Phenomenological Sociology, Typicality, Habituality

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The Vienna-born sociologist and philosopher Alfred Schutz develops a phenomenological theory of the lifeworld (Endreß 2006, 338; Eberle 1993, 315). The main aim of this theory is to systematically describe and analyze the way in which the pre-scientific, everyday subject experiences, knows, and interprets his sociocultural and natural environment. Indeed, Schutz's phenomenology of the *Lebenswelt* provides eidetic descriptions of the fundamental features of lived,

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quotidian experience in first-person perspective, namely: temporality, spatiality, corporeality, self-interpretation, empathy, etc.

Within the framework of his analytic of the lifeworld, Schutz makes a thorough phenomenological description of the typicality and habituality of everyday cognition. This description, which mainly draws on late Husserl's insights – namely, his ideas on passive syntheses and phenomenological genesis –, is doubtlessly one of the most well-crafted – and therefore most influential – aspects of Schutzian work. However, it could be argued that Schutz's phenomenological account of typicality and habituality is only superficially treated by the secondary literature on his work (cf. Wagner 1983; Fischer 2012; Barber 2004; Hanke 2002; Endreß 2006; Crossley 1996, among others).

With the aim of repairing this defect in the secondary literature, in this paper I intend to systematically examine Schutz's approach to this matter, identifying the Husserlian *leitmotifs* that inform it. In order to do so, I will proceed in three steps. First (1), I will briefly present the main lines of Schutz's theoretical project; second (2), I will scrutinize his Husserlian account of typification as a passive sort of interpretation; and finally (3), I will examine his –also Husserl-informed– analysis of the structure and genesis of the habitualized stock of knowledge at hand.

### **1. Alfred Schutz's Theoretical Project: A (Husserlian) Philosophical-Phenomenological Foundation of (Weberian) Interpretive Sociology**

Schutz is commonly considered as a “philosopher of the social sciences” (Embree 2016). More precisely, his intellectual project consists in establishing a philosophical-phenomenological foundation for interpretive sociology (Eberle 1993, 66; Endreß 2006, 340). Schutz's thought, in effect, can be described as a theoretical building resting on two columns, namely, a *sociological* one – Max Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* – and a *philosophical* one – Edmund Husserl's phenomenology– (Fischer 2012, 31)<sup>2</sup>.

Schutz is an interpretive sociologist, insofar as he follows Weber's definition of both the object and method of

sociology (Wagner 1983, 123). According to Max Weber, social reality is a “*Zusammenhang*” – *i.e.* a plexus, structure or network – of meaningful (inter)individual actions (Srubar 1988 12). In this view, sociocultural formations –the Nation, the State, the People, etc.– are not hypostasized entities, but precarious configurations, which constitute and re-constitute themselves through the meaningful behavior of social actors (Weber 1984, 30ff).

As opposed to naturalistic behaviorism and mechanistic determinism, Weber claims that individual human action is essentially meaningful (Weber 1984, 30ff). That is to say, it is not mechanically triggered by physicochemical stimuli or objective social structures, but rather it is motivated, regulated, and orientated by the actor’s world and self-interpretation. For this very reason, says Weber (Weber 1984, 19), the main task of interpretive sociology consists in the “understanding” [*verstehen*] of the “subjective meaning” [*subjektiver Sinn*] the everyday subject gives to his behavior.

Although he agrees with Weber’s main tenets, Schutz (1981, 14ff; 1962, 117) criticizes him for not clearly defining the fundamental notions of his sociological account, namely: “subjective meaning”, “understanding”, “motives”, “ends”, among others. For Schutz, this theoretical negligence jeopardizes the strictness and validity of social-scientific empirical research based on the Weberian paradigm.

According to Schutz, Weber’s conceptual ambiguities are due to the fact that he does not operate with a thorough theory of the experiential, cognitive, and interpretative workings of pre-scientific subjectivity. In Schutz’s view (1981, 9; 1962, 117), only a philosophical theory of subjectivity can underpin a “subjective” sociological research program such as the one of Weber. To put it differently, “one cannot speak meaningfully about subjective understanding if one does not know how consciousness works” (Wagner 1983, 20).

Indeed, for Schutz (1981, 9; 1962, 117), interpretive sociology must rest on an exhaustive theory of the way in which pre-scientific subjects experience, know, and interpret *their* lifeworld. The Viennese thinker finds traces of such a theory in Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology; a philosophical account



that, as it is well known, intends to rehabilitate the status of lived experience in first-person perspective, systematically forgotten and neglected in modernity by different sorts of reductionism: naturalism, historicism, and psychologism (Waldenfels 2009, 269).

It should be noted, however, that Schutz is not an orthodox Husserlian, but a “critical phenomenologist”, *i.e.*, a phenomenologist who makes an eclectic and idiosyncratic reading of Husserl (Wagner 1983, 47). The Schutzian reading of Husserl is heterodox, insofar as it is deliberately biased both by Schutz’s sociological interests, and by the influence of thinkers such as Henri Bergson, Max Scheler, William James, George Herbert Mead, and Martin Heidegger, among many others (Belvedere 2011, 28-40; Wagner 1983, 14).

Schutz’s main theoretical aim consists in describing the invariant features of the everyday *praxis* of constitution of meaning taking place in the quotidian lifeworld (Eberle and Srubar 2010, 23). For this reason, he revisits the most concrete kernel of Husserl’s philosophy, namely, his descriptions of the essential features and dimensions of subjective lived experience –intentionality, perception, corporality, spatiality, temporality, attention, habitualities, etc.–, while he distances himself from the metaphysical, idealistic, and solipsistic aspects of the transcendental-phenomenological project launched in *Ideen I* (cf. Husserl 2009a, 139ff).

In this way, Schutz (1962, 149) develops his own account of what Husserl (2009a, 158) calls a “constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude” [*konstitutive Phänomenologie der natürlichen Einstellung*]. “We may say that the empirical social sciences will find their true foundation not in transcendental phenomenology, but in the constitutive phenomenology of the natural attitude” (Schutz 1962, 149).

## **2. The Typicality of Everyday Experience: Schutz on the Concept of Appresentation**

### ***Schutz and Husserl on Typicality***

The late Husserl (1973, 349; 1972, 399) states that “the factual world of experience is experienced as a typified world”. Everyday subjects do not apprehend worldly things as unique

and unrepeatable objectivities, but as *exemplars* of pre-known *types* of objects: “Things are experienced as trees, bushes, animals, snakes, birds; specially, as pine, linden, lilac, dog, viper, swallow, sparrow, and so on” (1973, 349; 1972, 399).

Due to this pre-acquaintanceship with the typical structures of mundane objects, says Husserl (1973, 37; 1972, 33), the pre-scientific individual develops a bond of “familiarity” [*Vertrautheit*] with his life-worldly environment. That is to say, he never experiences *totally* novel and unknown things. “Even the [...] things of this world that are unknown to us are, to speak generally, known in respect of their type. We have already seen like things before, though not precisely this thing here” (Husserl 1977, 111; 1995, 114).

When characterizing cognitive experience on the pre-predicative level, Schutz (2003, 335; cf. 2011, 129; 1962, 59) draws on the latter Husserlian insights. “The world, as has been shown by Husserl, is from the outset experienced in the pre-scientific thinking of everyday life in the mode of typicality” (Schutz 1962, 59).

The expression “*from the outset*” is crucial for properly understanding Schutz’s account of the typicality and familiarity of the lifeworld. If the world appears *from the outset* in the mode of typicality, then there is no need of performing complex cognitive acts –such as deductions, comparisons, or conclusions by analogy– in order to experience it in this manner. Rather, in common-sense thinking, the lifeworld *immediately* shows itself as a structure of pre-known empirical types (Schutz 2003, 335; cf. 2011, 129; 1962, 59).

Arguably, the best way to characterize Schutz’s account of everyday experience is by a negative definition. For him, the lifeworld is *neither* experienced (1) as a “sum of sensation data” *nor* (2) as an “arrangement of individual unique objects” (Schutz 1962, 7).

(1) Arguing against sensory empiricism, Schutz (2011, 129) claims that what we *immediately* perceive in our pre-predicative experience are not meaningless and formless sensorial data, but rather *meaningful* objects: “mountains, trees, animals, birds, dogs, fellow-men, and so on”.

(2) Furthermore, he maintains that worldly objects appear to us “*within a horizon of familiarity and pre-acquaintanceship*”

(Schutz 1962, 7). That is to say, we never experience things as unique and unrepeatable, but as *exemplars* of already known empirical types.

Following Husserl (1972, 399), Schutz (1962, 7) claims that apprehending an object in its typicality implies passively anticipating – or “protentioning” – certain typical features that it will show in the immediate future. To put it differently, the moment we recognize an object as an exemplar of an already known type, we know *what to expect of it*. In this sense, it could be argued that empirical typifications carry along “open horizons of anticipated similar experiences” (Schutz 1962, 7).

For instance, “when we see a dog, we immediately anticipate its additional modes of behavior: its typical way of eating, playing, running, jumping, and so on” (Husserl 1972, 399; 1973, 331). These passive anticipations or “protentions”, however, can be disappointed. That is, they may be not fulfilled by the actual experience of the object.

Schutz (2003, 336; 1962, 8) does not restrict himself to repeating Husserl’s reflections on pre-predicative experience. He also tries to supplement them with his own thoughts on the problem of relevance. Indeed, Schutz (2003, 335) criticizes Husserl for not seeing the fact that “typification takes place [...] according to particular structures of relevance”.

In Schutz’s view, one and the same object can be typified in many different ways. For example, I can see my own dog as “my friend and companion Rover”, as a “mammal”, “an animal”, an “object of the outer world”, etc. (Schutz 1962, 8; 2003, 336). Yet, why do I select *one* of these empirical types over the other possible ones? That is to say, why do I see the dog as “my friend Rover” instead of merely seeing it as “*a* mammal” – or the other way round?

According to Schutz (1962, 9; 2003, 336), the *How* of typification is determined by the “relevance system” of the individual subject, that is, by his personal interests at the moment of perception. It could be argued that every empirical type has a pragmatic connotation, insofar as it carries along an “index” which refers to an actual problem to be practically or theoretically solved (Schutz 2003, 338).

In Schutz’s words: “The system of relevances [...] determines what elements have to be made a substratum of

generalizing typification, what traits of these elements have to be selected as characteristically typical, and what others as unique and individual, that is, how far we have to penetrate into the open horizon of typicality” (Schutz 1962, 10).

***Typification as Passive Interpretation: Passive Synthesis and the Process of Appresentation***

As mentioned, for Schutz, it is not necessary to perform complex cognitive activities – deductions, comparisons, etc. – in order to apprehend worldly things as meaningful objectivities. Rather, objects are perceived *from the outset* – that is, *at first sight* – as exemplars of general types: We see horses, tables, trees, books, computers, fellow-men, etc.

*Prima facie*, thus, it seems that for Schutz pre-predicative typification does not entail any sort of interpretative activity by the subject: The object *immediately* appears as such. This, however, is not the case. Drawing on Husserl (1995, § 50), Schutz (1962, 295ff; 2011, 113) conceives of typical apprehension of the life-world as a kind of *passive interpretation*. More precisely, according to Schutz, typification is an *automatic* and *unconscious* sense-giving activity that takes place by means of what Husserl calls “passive synthesis”.

The late Husserl (1995, § 38) distinguishes two modalities of constitutive genesis, *i.e.*, two ways in which consciousness constitutes objectivities, namely: (1) “active genesis” [*aktive Genesis*] – which implies the working of “active synthesis” [*aktive Synthesis*] – and (2) “passive genesis” [*pasive Genesis*] – which entails the operation of “passive synthesis” [*pasive Synthesis*].

(1) In active genesis, says Husserl (1995, 80; 1977, 77), “the Ego functions as productively constitutive, by means of subjective processes that are specifically acts of the Ego”. In other words, the subject *actively* and *explicitly* intervenes, by means of complex cognitive or volitive acts, in the constitution of objects. In Husserl’s view, all operations of practical reason and logical thinking involve the performance of *active* syntheses of this kind.

By means of spontaneous operations of different kinds, the ego articulates, elaborates, or interprets pre-given objects,

and in doing so, he produces objectivities of a new kind, namely, “categorical objects” [*kategoriale Gegenstände*] (cf. Husserl 2009b, § 40-52). “Thus, in collecting, the collection [is constituted]; in counting, the number; in dividing, the part; in predicating, the predicate and the predicational complex of affairs; in inferring, the inference; and so forth” (Husserl 1995, 80; 1977, 77).

According to Husserl (1977, 78. My emphasis), “anything built by activity necessarily *presupposes, as the lowest level, a passivity that gives something beforehand*”. To put it differently, insofar as it consists in the articulation or elaboration of *pre-given* objects, active genesis rests upon an always-already given experiential ground that is constituted by means of *passive* genesis.

(2) On the contrary, passive syntheses do not entail any active or explicit intervention of the ego. Rather, they work *automatically* and *unconsciously*, that is to say, “without any interference of the mind” (Schutz 1962, 297). In Husserl’s view, these mechanisms – which remain totally unnoticed for the subject in natural attitude – are responsible for the constitution of “the ‘ready-made’ object that confronts us in life as an existent mere thing” (Husserl 1995, 81; 1977, 78).

The everyday subject, thus, has an environment of objects only because of the continuous and uninterrupted – although obscure and unnoticed– workings of passive genesis. In spite of its apparent fixity, thus, the pre-predicative lifeworld is always *in status nascendi*: It eternally constitutes and re-constitutes itself by the secret work of passive syntheses. Paradoxically, it could be argued that passivity is also a way of subjective activity, although the lowest one (Gander 2012, 225). Indeed, without the obscure “activity” of passive genesis – *i.e.* without this passive form of spontaneity –, no objectivity could appear as such at first sight.

Now, in more specific terms, how does this “passive interpretation” of the *Lebenswelt* work? That is to say, how do passive syntheses contribute to the constitution of the typicality of pre-predicative experience? In order to answer these questions, Schutz continues drawing on Husserlian reflections.

Following Husserl (1995, § 50-51), Schutz (1962, 295) finds an answer to these issues in the concept of “appresentation”

[*Appräsentation*] or “analogical apperception” [*analogische Apperzeption*], understood as a peculiar modality of the widest phenomenon of “coupling” [*Paarung*] or “coupling association” [*paarende Assoziation*]. In “*Symbol, Reality and Society*”, Schutz (1962, 295) writes: “We restrict ourselves to the discussion of that particular form of pairing or coupling, which Husserl calls ‘appresentation’ or ‘analogical apperception’”.

The passive synthesis of appresentation, as understood by Husserl and Schutz, is a complex phenomenon which cannot be grasped in one stroke. In order to analytically understand its complexity, it is useful to differentiate three “moments” in its working, namely: (i) a moment of “association”, (ii) a moment of “passive interpretation”, and (iii) a moment of “co-presentation”. These three moments, it should be noted, are not clearly separated in our lived experience. This distinction, thus, has merely heuristic value.

(i) In a first moment, the “new” object evokes in the subject “‘obscure’ recollections of the similar” (Husserl 1972, 172; 1973, 140; cf. Schutz 1962, 297). There takes place an automatic association between the actual perception and “similar” typical past experiences. Following Husserl, Schutz (2011, 113) characterizes passive association as a process of – total or partial – “superimposition” [*Deckung*]. In “Reflections on the Problem of Relevance”, Schutz (Ibid.) writes:

by means of what Husserl calls the passive synthesis of recognition, he [the everyday subject] superimposes the actual perception of a corporeal object of such-and-such shape, such-and-such extension, such-and-such color with the recollection of previous perceptions of corporeal objects having typically similar, like, or same, shape, extension, color, and so on.

(ii) According to both Husserl (1995, 113, 116) and Schutz (1962, 166, 297), this passive association acts as a “motivational fundament” [*Motivationsfundament*] to an – also automatic – “meaning transfer” [*Sinnesübertragung*]. Because of the “*Deckung*” between the sedimented experiential type and the “new” object, the meaning of the first is passively “transferred” to the second. “As the result of this overlaying, there takes place in the paired data a mutual transfer of sense, an apperception of each according to the sense of the other”

(Husserl 1995, 116; 1977, 113). Following Husserl, Schutz (1962, 295) emphasizes that this “analogical apperception” should not be confused for a conclusion by analogy. “Apperception is not inference, not a thinking act” (Husserl, 1995, 114; 1977, 111).

In *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*, Schutz (1981, 112; 1967, 84) defines “interpretation” [*Auslegung*] as the “referral of the unknown to the known, of that which is apprehended in the glance of attention to the schemes of experience”. Following this definition, it could be argued that this second “moment” of the appresentational process is an *interpretative* one. It is, in fact, a – passive – sense-giving operation in which the unknown – the “new” object – is subsumed under the known – the sedimented empirical type.

(iii) The third “moment” of this process implies a “co-presentation” [*Mitgegenwärtigung*]. The passive interpretation of an object as an exemplar of an empirical type triggers the “appresentation” of certain features or aspects of it that are not “present” at the moment. The subjective actor – implicitly, non-thematically – “assumes” and “anticipates” that the perceived object has certain sides or aspects, which are absent right now but *waiting to be seen*.

This is so because the subject – passively – presupposes that this holds true *for every object pertaining to the alleged type* (Husserl 1995, §50; Schutz 1962, 295). When observing the front cover of a book, for example, I cannot simultaneously see its back cover; however, I *know* it has one because *every book* does. “The frontside, which is apperceived in immediacy or given to us in presentation, appresents the unseen backside” (Schutz 1962, 295).

In stricter terms, appresenting means “a kind of making ‘co-present’” [*Als-mitgegenwärtig-bewußt-machen*] (Husserl 1995, 112; 1977, 109). It is a passive and mediate modality of intentionality that operates in every perceptive act, apprehending as co-present – that is, as being “co-there” [*Mit-da*] (Husserl 1995, 112) – certain aspects of the thing that are not perceptible at the moment. “An appresentation occurs even in external experience, since the strictly seen front of a physical thing always, and necessarily appresents a rear aspect, and prescribes for it a more or less determinate content” (Husserl 1995, 112; 1977, 108).

In order to properly understand the Husserlian-Schutzian conception of appresentation, one must give account of the particular complexion of external perception. Following Husserl (2009, § 44), Schutz (1962, 295) claims that perception is essentially inadequate and one-sided. It never gives us the object in its wholeness. The onesideness of perceptive acts is due to the perspective character of vision, which, in turn, follows from our corporeal anchorage in space. “Strictly speaking”, writes Schutz (1962, 295. My emphasis), “if we apperceive an object of the outer world, then that which we *really* see in our visual perception is merely the frontside of the object”.

In spite of the unilateral character of perception, in natural attitude we *see the whole* thing. For example, we “perceive” a “house”, although, strictly speaking, we only see its facade. For Husserl (1995, § 55), and also for Schutz (1962, 295), this is possible due to the workings of appresentational mechanisms which, in an automatic and unnoticed way, “complete” our fragmentary experience of the object (cf. Crossley 1996, 5-6).

In virtue of appresentations, the kernel of what is perceived – or presented – gets associated with a “surplus” [*Überschuß*] of co-perception –the appresented. Following this train of thought, an object can only appear as such if the perceived and the co-perceived merge into the “*functional community* [*Funktionsgemeinschaft*] of one perception, which simultaneously presents and appresents, and yet furnishes for the total object a consciousness of its being itself there” (Husserl 1995, 125; 1977, 122).

Following Husserl (1995, 112; 1977, 122), Schutz (1962, 295) claims that the co-presentation of the absent sides of an object is also a “more or less empty anticipation” – *i.e.* a “protention” – of what we might perceive if we turned the object around or if we walked around the object”. This more or less empty prefiguration of the unseen sides of the thing can be verified “by a corresponding fulfilling presentation (the back becomes front)” (Husserl 1995, 112; 1977, 109). However, the anticipation may well be disappointed –for example, if the object does not have a backside. This, in Husserl’s words, causes its “explosion” (Husserl 1977, 90).



### 3. Typicality and Habituality in Schutz: The “Stock of Knowledge at Hand”, its Structure and Genesis

#### *Structure of the stock of knowledge at hand*<sup>3</sup>

Following Husserl, Schutz (2003, 337) claims that “our knowledge of the lifeworld is [...] a knowledge of the typicality [*Typik*] of its objects and processes”. As quotidian subjects, we have a bond of familiarity with our lifeworldly environment because we *know* the typical features of the different types of objects and events that conform it. “To the type ‘dog’, e.g., belongs a stock of typical attributes with an open horizon of anticipation of further such attributes” (Husserl 1973, 401; 1972, 331).

For Schutz (2003, 333; 2011, 169; 1962, 7), the “stock of knowledge at hand” [*Wissensvorrat*] is the sum-total of “available knowledge” that an individual disposes of in a certain moment of his biography. It is, put differently, an inventory of empirical types of objects, events, and situations that emerges as a product of the “sedimentation” of past experiences (Schutz 1964, 283; cf. 2003, 333).

According to Schutz (1981, 103-104; 1967, 77), the elements – or types – that constitute the stock of knowledge at hand are available “in the form of mere passive possession” [*passives Haben*]. That is, they are “stored away” within consciousness, resting in a “dormant” state (Schutz 2011, 175). Every sedimented typification, however, can be “woken up” from its sleep whether by passive associations or explicit activities of the ego. This happens when the type at stake is, in a certain way, “relevant” for the interpretation of the “new” object (2003, 337; 2011, 111).

In this sense, Schutz (1981, 112; 1964, 283) states that the stock of knowledge is a “scheme of interpretation” used by the everyday subject as a means for defining his situation within the lifeworld. Indeed, as above stated, interpretation is nothing but a subsumption of a “new” experience under an already-known empirical type. It could be argued, thus, that “all interpretation of this world is based on a stock of previous experiences of it” (Schutz 1962, 7).

According to Schutz (1962, 74; 1964, 284), the stock of knowledge has a precarious status. That is to say, it is always “in a continual flux”, growing, modifying, and correcting itself with every new experience. The current available knowledge at hand is, thus, only valid “until further notice” (Schutz 1962, 74). In case of not being adequate or pragmatically sufficient to defining the “new” situation, it may be put into question, revised, or modified.

The *Wissensvorrat* is, furthermore, far from being a systematic, ordered, and coherent system of knowledge. This is because it constitutes and upgrades itself following the pragmatic, *naif*, and irreflexive logic of common-sense thinking. To put it differently, the stock of knowledge at hand lacks the clarity and distinction that characterizes scientific theories (Schutz 1962, 74).

Rather than being a monolithic and homogeneous block of knowledge, says Schutz (1962, 284), the *Wissensvorrat* is structured in different “zones of distinctness and vagueness, of clarity and obscurity, of precision and ambiguity”. We possess a detailed and thorough knowledge about certain lifeworldly things, whereas we have a vague and obscure acquaintance with others (Schutz 2011, 169-174). In order to give account of this “differentiation of our knowledge” [*Differenzierung unseres Wissens*], Schutz (2003, 331; cf. 1962, 174) draws on a conceptual distinction developed by William James, namely, the one between: (a) “knowledge of acquaintance” and (b) “knowledge about”.

(a) Most of our stored knowledge is “knowledge of acquaintance”. This kind of knowledge, says Schutz (2003, 331), constitutes a *superficial* acquaintance with some typical features of a phenomenon or event that is sufficient to accomplish pragmatic ends. The everyday subject is a “layman” concerning the majority of mundane phenomena. That is, he knows only their “What” [*Was*], but not their “How” [*Wie*] or “Why” [*Warum*] (Schutz 2003, 331).

An average user of PC’s, e.g., knows which button to press in order to turn on and off his PC. However, he does not know much about the myriad of technical processes – both in terms of software and hardware – which are involved in the workings of a computer. These processes are for him not only

unknown and incomprehensible, but also *irrelevant* (Schutz 2003, 331). It is enough for him that the computer turns on and off when he presses certain button.

(b) In contrast, the “knowledge *about*” constitutes a thorough and clear knowledge of a certain type of lifeworldly phenomenon (Schutz 2003, 331). The subject is an “expert” in the object at stake: He does not only know its “What”, but also its “How” and “Why” (Schutz 2003, 331). For example, a computer technician possesses an exhaustive and rigorous knowledge about a PC. He does not only know how to turn it on and off, but also has an acquaintance with the technical processes responsible for its workings.

According to Schutz (1964, 122-123), quotidian actors are normally “experts” in some topics and “laymen” in others. A cook, *e.g.*, possesses knowledge *about* the preparation of certain meals, but only knowledge *of acquaintance* concerning the workings of his oven. Thus, in case the latter stops functioning, he has to resort to a certain specialized technician.

In this sense, says Schutz (1964, 123), the knowledge of the “social distribution of knowledge” constitutes a crucial part of the *Wissensvorrat*. That is to say, the everyday subject knows *whom* to turn to when in need of help in an unfamiliar field of practice. “It is sufficient to know that there are experts available for consultation should he need their advice in achieving his practical purpose at hand. His recipes tell him when to see a doctor or a lawyer, where to get needed information and the like” (Ibid.).

Now, how does Schutz explain the inequality in the social distribution of knowledge? Why are we “experts” in some fields and “laymen” in others? Schutz gives two closely linked answers to these questions: (1) one in terms of a sociology of knowledge, and (2) another in terms of a phenomenology of natural attitude.

(1) Schutz claims that social distribution of knowledge constitutes a “fundamental category of social life” [*Grundkategorie des sozialen Lebens*] (2003, 331). Every society is a structure of roles, occupations, and professions. The individual actor represents one – or many – of these roles and, for this reason,

has a determined field of expertise (Schutz 1962, 330-331; 1964, 123).

For Schutz (1962, 13), most of our everyday knowledge has a “social origin”, that is, it is acquired in primary and secondary socialization. This, however, does not mean that every individual possesses the *same* stock of knowledge. Rather, “knowledge is socially distributed”: Each *type* of social actor receives, during his education, a certain *type* of stock of knowledge (Ibid., 13).

According to Schutz (2003, 331), the study of the “inequality in the distribution of knowledge” [*Ungleichheit der Verteilung des Wissens*] is the main problem of a “sociology of knowledge” [*Wissenssoziologie*]. In other words, “knowledge is socially distributed and the mechanism of this distribution can be made the subject matter of a sociological discipline” (Schutz 1964, 121).

(2) In individual terms, Schutz (2011, 177) considers that the depth and clarity of our knowledge about a phenomenon depends upon our interests or system of relevances. In *Reflections on the Problem of Relevance*, he states: “it could be said that the difference between the two levels of knowledge – knowledge *of* and *about*– can still be explained by its sufficiency for our purpose at hand, which is determined by the systems of motivational relevances prevailing at the time in any particular situation” (Schutz 2011, 177).

Following pragmatist and proto-pragmatist authors such as James, Bergson, Heidegger, and Scheler, Schutz (2011, 174) argues that our quotidian knowledge of the *Lebenswelt* is always “codetermined by a pragmatic motive”. That is to say, the everyday subject does not aim to know the “true nature” of lifeworldly objects, but merely to know them in a *sufficient* way for attaining his practical aims. In this sense, Schutz claims that “our curiosity is satisfied and our inquiry stops if knowledge is sufficient for our purpose at hand” (2011, 178).

In this perspective, thus, our knowledge *of* only becomes knowledge *about* if this is *necessary* for the fulfillment of our pragmatic ends. For instance, an individual who is willing to become a professional musician needs to possess a thorough and exhaustive knowledge *about* harmony and rhythm, whereas

for a hobby guitarist it is sufficient to have a rudimentary knowledge of musical theory that allows him to play a couple of rock songs.

In order not to misunderstand Schutz's account, it should be emphasized that these two answers to the question about the cause of the unequal distribution of knowledge – (1) and (2) – are closely linked to each other. In fact, there are no pure individual relevance systems. The social distribution of knowledge conditions – but not mechanically determines – the complexion of individual relevances (Schutz 1962, 13).

### ***Genesis and history of the stock of knowledge***

Schutz (1964, 283) argues that “the stock of knowledge has its particular history”. Rather than being an inventory of innate ideas such as the one depicted by Descartes, the individual *Wissensvorrat* constitutes a product of a genetic process. In more specific terms, Schutz claims that our stock of knowledge emerges in virtue of the “sedimentation” in consciousness of the “outcome[s]” – or achievements [*Leistungen*] – of past intentional experiences.

The intentional achievements of elapsed lived experiences do not completely disappear of consciousness. They remain stored within it in form of a “habitual possession” (Ibid.). In a 1957 paper, Schutz (2003, 333) writes: “This current stock of knowledge is nothing but the sediment of all our experiences of previous definitions of past situations”.

Schutzian reflections on the “history” of the *Wissensvorrat* draw on the late Husserl's *genetic* phenomenological investigations. In contrast to Kant, Husserl (1995, 68; 1977, 66) does not understand the ego as an “empty pole of identity”. Rather, he conceives of it as a “substrate of habitualities” [*Habitualitäten*] (Husserl 1995, 68; 1977, 67). In texts like the *Cartesianische Meditationen*, Husserl carries out a thorough investigation of the way in which these subjective habitualities emerge and operate.

In his view, it is an essential law of consciousness that “with every act emanating from him and having a new objective sense” the ego “acquires a new abiding property” (1995, 68; 1977, 66). Indeed, from the point of view of a genetic phenomenology,

the subject does not remain equal to himself, but, in virtue of his experiences, he acquires a permanent inventory of objective meanings and “validities” [*Geltungen*] (Gander 2012, 127).

In Husserl’s view, this occurs (a) on the level of practical reason, and (b) on the level of pre-predicative perception.

(a) For example, if I decide something, my act of decision elapses, but my decision remains. “From now on *I am abidingly the Ego who is thus and so decided*, ‘I am of this conviction’” (Husserl 1995, 68; 1977, 66). In this way, my decision becomes an “abiding *habitus*” of my subjectivity.

(b) According to Husserl (1995, 81; 1977, 79), something analogous occurs on the level of pre-predicative perception. The fact that the everyday subject can “at first glance” perceive an object *qua* exemplar of an empirical type is due to “an essentially necessary genesis”. Indeed, for Husserl, in the perceptual field of very young children there are *still* no “things” or “objects”. That is why, during their first years of life, they have to *learn how to see things*. “With good reason it is said that in infancy we had to learn to see physical things, and that such modes of consciousness of them have to precede all others genetically” (Husserl 1995, 81; 1977, 79).

This primitive learning of the typicality of the lifeworld, which takes place in early infancy, *remains* present in adult subjectivity in the form of an abiding *habitus*. It is in virtue of the sedimentation of this “original becoming acquainted” [*ursprüngliches Kennenlernen*] that grown-up individuals are able to *immediately* –that is, *at first sight*– apprehend mundane things as exemplars of general types (Husserl 1995, 82).

In this sense, it could be argued that every immediate apprehension of an object as such “points back to a ‘primal instituting’ [*Urstiftung*]” in which the object was constituted for the very first time (Husserl 1995, 114; 1977, 80). After learning for the first time what “scissors” are, *e.g.*, the child acquires the capacity of perceiving “scissors” at first sight.

Following Husserl, Alfred Schutz (2011, 190) understands the stock of knowledge at hand as a “system of habitualities”. For him, every element of the *Wissensvorrat* points back to a primal or original event of “acquisition of experience” [*Erfahrungserwerb*] (Schutz 2003, 339). “This process of

acquisition of experience”, writes Schutz in “*Strukturen der Lebenswelt*”, “leads to the sedimentation of the stock of knowledge, which is ordered according to types and degrees of familiarity” (2003, 339).

According to Schutz (1962, 13-14; 2003, 348), the acquisition of knowledge takes place in two different ways, namely: (a) and *individual* one, and (b) a *social* one. In this sense, it could be stated that the contents and structuration of the individual stock of knowledge depends upon two main factors: (a) the “biographical situation” [*biographische Situation*] of the individual at stake and (b) the “historical situation” [*historische Situation*] of the social group to which he belongs (Schutz 2003, 331).

(a) Following the genetic Husserl, Schutz (2003, 333) claims that the empirical types that are stored in the stock of knowledge arise as a product of the sedimentation of past definitions of situations. Yet, for Schutz, the *aproblematic* definitions of the environment – *i.e.* the ones which proceed automatically in virtue of passive syntheses of appresentation—do not contribute with novel types to the stock of knowledge at hand (Schütz and Luckmann 2003, 179).

Indeed, new empirical types only emerge in cognitive *activities* aiming to solve interpretative *problems*—that is, in *active* syntheses (Schutz 2003, 337). What we find in our stock of knowledge as “typified experience” [*typisierte Erfahrung*] is nothing but the material that was sufficient in the past for solving practical and theoretical problems (Schutz 2003, 339). In other words, we acquire new knowledge when we find a novel solution to a “problematic” object, *i.e.*, an object that cannot be subsumed under none of our available typifications. For example, the resolution of an interpretative problem can take place by means of the “invention” of a new empirical type.

After its “creation”, the new empirical type becomes a constituent part of the *Wissensvorrat* and can be automatically “applied” – by means of presentations – to the definition of novel situations (Schutz 2003, 337). According to Schutz (1981, 104), this passive application of the new type proceeds *in one stroke*. It does not entail a “step-to-step” [*schrittweise*] reconstruction of the “polythetic” [*polythetisch*] process in which it was created.

In this sense, Schutz (1981, 101) claims that the *Wissensvorrat* consists in *already-made* empirical types that can be grasped in a “uniradial glance” [*einstrahliger Blick*], that is, “monothetically” [*monothetisch*]. “Let us therefore limit the term ‘stock of knowledge at hand’ to the store of already constituted objectivities of experience in the actual Here and Now, in other words, to the passive ‘possession’ of experiences to the exclusion of reconstitution” (Schutz 1967, 78).

(b) According to Schutz (1962, 13) – and this is critical for fully understanding his account –, only a very small part of the knowledge of quotidian subjects originates in individual experience. The most part of it has a “social origin”. It is acquired by the individual in the “long process of education” [*langer Prozess der Erziehung*] through the mediation of parents, teachers, and other figures of authority (Schutz 2003, 330; 1962, 13).

In Schutz’s view, the process of education does not only involve the acquisition of a set of socially approved typifications. It also entails the learning of how to “correctly” apply them to the definition of quotidian situations. “Already as children, we must learn what to attend to and with what to put it in relation with in order to define the world and our situation within it” (Schutz 2003, 339). In this sense, it could be argued that our adult ability to interpret objects and events of the *Lebenswelt* at first sight is, to a great extent, “a result of learning” [*ein Resultat des Lernens*] which has become “habitual possession and routine” [*habituellder Besitz und Routine*] (Schutz 2003, 339).

For Schutz (2011, 288; 1962, 348), the typical knowledge acquired in the process of education is part of the “culture” [*Kultur*] or “relative natural conception of the world” [*relativ natürliche Weltanschauung*] of the group to which the individual actor belongs.

The concepts of “culture” and “relative natural conception of the world” –which are understood by Schutz (2011, 288; 2003, 330; 1962, 348) as synonyms– refer to the “*socially approved knowledge*” of a social group in a certain moment of its collective history. This socially approved knowledge is set of cognitive and practical recipes, which are “taken for granted”



and “accepted as beyond question” by all the members of the in-group (Schutz 2011, 288; 2003, 330). For the Viennese phenomenologist, this *cultural* stock of knowledge plays a crucial role in the everyday life of the group, insofar as it works as a “common scheme of interpretation of the common world” [*gemeinsames Interpretationsschema*] (Schutz 2003, 330; cf. 1962, 14).

#### 4. Conclusion

Although it is one of the fundamental parts of his phenomenology of the lifeworld, Schutz’s account of the typicality and habituality of everyday cognitive experience is only superficially treated by the secondary literature on his work. In order to correct this defect, in this paper I intended to systematically analyze this account, and to identify the Husserlian *leitmotifs* that inform it.

Following the late Husserl, Schutz claims that the *Lebenswelt* is pre-predicatively experienced in a typical manner. Everyday subjects do not perceive worldly things as unique and unrepeatable objects, but as exemplars of types of objectivities already experienced in the past: as dogs, trees, animals, tables, books, etc.

Also drawing on Husserlian insights, Schutz characterizes the typificational apprehension as a sort of *passive interpretation* that takes place by means of appresentations. The passive synthesis of appresentation is a complex process. In order to analytically grasp its complexity, it is useful to differentiate three “moments” in its working: one of association, one of interpretation, and one of co-presentation.

Inspired on Husserl’s reflections on the habituality of experience, the Viennese thinker claims that the passive interpretation of the lifeworld is based on the so-called *Wissensvorrat* or stock of knowledge at hand. This stock is the sum-total of the available knowledge that an individual possess in a certain moment of his biography. More precisely, it is an inventory of sedimented cognitive and practical types which are both acquired in social-educational processes and in personal experience.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a product of a wider research project on Schutz's phenomenology which is embodied in my PhD Thesis: "The Problem of the Other in Alfred Schutz's Phenomenology", defended in 2016 at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). I would like to thank Prof. Carlos Belvedere and my fellow researchers of the Group of Studies on Phenomenology and Ethnomethodology at the UBA. I am also in debt to Dr. Jochen Dreher and Dr. Andreas Göttlich for their help and support during my two research stays at the *Sozialwissenschaftliches Archiv Konstanz (Alfred-Schütz-Gedächtnis-Archiv)* at the University of Konstanz. Finally, I would like to thank Emma Caterinicchio for her contributions as English proofreader.

<sup>2</sup> Fischer's characterization of the Schutzian theoretical project is very useful, insofar as it grasps its kernel in a simple and illustrative manner. However, taking this characterization too literally could lead to a dangerous simplification of Schutz's thought. For this reason, it is necessary to complete and nuance this view by means of two explanatory statements. (i) First, Schutz is not an uncritical reader of Husserl and Weber. Rather, he makes a critical and creative appropriation of the work of both thinkers (Wagner 1983, 14). (2) And secondly, Husserl and Weber are not the only theoretical influences of Schutz. He also dialogues with other theoretical perspectives that present affinities with his Weberian-Husserlian point of departure (Belvedere 2012, 28-40). On the *sociological* level, he articulates Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* with the symbolic interactionism of Cooley and Thomas, among others; whereas on the *philosophical* level, he puts in relation Husserl's phenomenology with William James' pragmatism, Henri Bergson's vitalism, Martin Heidegger's existential philosophy and Max Scheler's eclectic phenomenology.

<sup>3</sup> Schutz (2011, 172ff) makes an interesting distinction between the stock of knowledge "*at hand*" and the stock of knowledge "*in hand*". The latter consists in "existential knowledge" – knowledge of our ontological situation as human beings existing in the world– and "routine knowledge" – automatized know-how: walking, running, riding bicycle, playing a musical instrument, speaking our mother tongue, etc. (Schutz 2011, 173, 176). In this paper, I will only examine Schutz's account of the knowledge "at hand", since I am interested in his approach to the typicality and habituality of everyday *cognitive* experience.

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**Alexis Emanuel Gros** (PhD in Social Sciences) is Assistant Professor of "Cultural History" at the University of Belgrano. Lecturer of "Social Phenomenology" at the University of Buenos Aires. Post-Doc Researcher at the CONICET.

**Address:**

Alexis Emanuel Gros

University of Buenos Aires

Mario Bravo 376, 2A. City of Buenos Aires, Argentina

E-mail: [alexisgros@hotmail.com](mailto:alexisgros@hotmail.com)

## **Foetal Space in Real Time: On Ultrasound, Phenomenology and Cultural Rhetoric**

Tom Grimwood  
University of Cumbria

### **Abstract**

The development of four-dimensional ultrasound pre-natal scans carries with it an intriguing range of philosophical questions. While ultrasound in pregnancy is a medical test for detecting foetal abnormalities, it has also become a social ritual in Western culture. The scan has become embedded within a discourse of the parent's ante-relationships with their future child as much as it is a screening function. Within such a scene, the advance of technology – the move, for example, the increasing addition of dimensions to pre-natal imaging, from 2D to 3D and 4D – is inextricably merged with the spatial rhetoric of the foetus. Drawing on both Heidegger's insights into the relationship between the human and technology, and debates within feminist cultural theory, this paper explores how these spatial and temporal rhetorics of the foetal ultrasound relate to the philosophical motifs around self, knowledge, gender and the technical image. It charts these relationships through an analysis of two classic images of the foetal self, before considering how the fourth dimension of ultrasound – that of real-time image streaming of a foetal scan – enhances, develops and critiques these motifs.

**Keywords:** Heidegger, Technology, Feminist Philosophy, Ultrasound, Visual Culture

### **I. The Spatial Rhetoric of Real Time**

The development of four-dimensional ultrasound pre-natal scans carries with it an intriguing range of philosophical questions. While there are, of course, many clinical studies regarding the clinical effectiveness and benefits of incorporating a live streaming video into the otherwise static three-dimensional imaging, the potential risks of higher-than-usual levels of ultrasound energy, as well as the possibilities of viewing a foetus' responses in real time to external stimuli (see, for

example, Martínez-Moratalla et al. 2012; Kim et al. 2005; Deng et al. 2011), these all rest on broader interfaces between particular cultural and philosophical trajectories. As Nick Cantlay has argued (2011), ultrasound in pregnancy is a medical test for detecting foetal abnormalities, but unlike most medical tests it has become a social ritual in Western culture: the scan has become embedded within a discourse of the parent's ante-relationships with their future child. As such, the prenatal scan can be visualised far more as a chance to see and "meet" their baby for the first time, and to take home their first "family picture," whilst remaining generally unaware of its screening function. Within such a scene, the advance of technology – the move, for example, the increasing addition of dimensions to pre-natal imaging, from 2D to 3D to 4D – is inextricably merged with both the visual culture of contemporary culture, and the spatial rhetoric of the foetus: a rhetoric which situates the foetus as a hybrid 'object-person' for parents to view, engage and conceptualise. Heidegger (1993a) famously reflected on this blurring between technology and human creativity in his essay on "The Question Concerning Technology". Here, he rejects the longstanding view that technology is merely an instrument of human activity, and arguing that it is rather an *enframing* which guides our interpretations. As such, the nature of the frame – the literal space around the image of the foetus – becomes a complex site of tension between the technicity of the ultrasound, and the cultural poetics of childbearing. Hence, while the technological developments that enable pre-natal imaging to be presented in real time raise a whole range of medical, ethical and epistemological questions, these all rest, I would argue, on a phenomenological question of how such a tension is negotiated within the enframing of the image itself.

It is all too easy to overlook such poetics; particularly in the shadow of the recent rise of materialist currents of thought within contemporary philosophy that pertain to offer a move beyond the perceived anti-science of postmodern thought, and a more enthusiastic engagement with technologies as sites of ontological significance. The turning-against the "linguistic turn" – Foucauldian discourses, Derridean texts and so on –

and a turning-towards a re-energised realism, critical of the anthropomorphic foundations of post-Kantian “correlationism” has, by now, become well-established in current debates. But we should be cautious about assuming too quickly that material realisms can extract themselves from unfashionable notions embedded within the phenomenological tradition, such as hermeneutics or cultural rhetoric. As Arthur Bradley has argued, theories which aim to disturb our sense of technology as inert and instrumental – from technological determinists through post-human theorists and speculative realists – all too often find themselves returning to traditional antinomies: “man and matter, idealism and materialism, anthropocentrism and techno-scientific realism” and so on (Bradley 2011, 161). In doing so, the rapid expansion of our technical capabilities – the every-growing hyper-realisation of screened images in all areas of culture – frequently carry with them embedded rhetorics that are harder to discern; leading to what Allenby and Sarewitz describe as “a flight into tradition barely disguised by the language of high technology.” (2011, 11)

In this paper I want to pursue the phenomenological question of the ultrasound through three points. Firstly, I want to suggest that despite these impressive technological advancements, the spatial rhetoric of the foetus remains a hermeneutic problem to be thought through. I will explore this by drawing on both Heideggerian and feminist themes to explore how the spatial and temporal rhetorics of the foetal ultrasound have traditionally related to the philosophical motifs around self, knowledge, gender and the technical image. Secondly, I will chart these relationships through an analysis of two classic images of the foetal self before, thirdly, considering how the fourth dimension of ultrasound – that of real-time image streaming of a foetal scan – enhances, develops and critiques these motifs.

## **II. Figuring the Foetus: The Astronaut and the Metaphor**

To interpret the ultrasound image philosophically – rather than an object of medical analysis – necessarily involves reflecting on the question of the image in general within

philosophical practice: that is, the work of visual culture as a constituent part of philosophising itself. All thinking, Schopenhauer once argued, is done through pictures (with the exception, he adds, of mathematics); yet which pictures *become visual* and which remain obscured – that is, which images govern and order the surfaces of philosophy itself – is crucial to the sense of argument itself. In her famous treatise *The Philosophical Imaginary*, Michele Le Doeuff echoes the likes of Derrida, De Man, and Schopenhauer and Nietzsche before them, in arguing that metaphor and image is inseparable from “pure” theoretical speculations (Le Doeuff 1989, 6). Indeed, the visual can supersede, beyond words, what philosophical expression attempts to clarify and represent. As Le Doeuff suggests, if the very construction of a “discipline” entails something is repressed within it (1989, 114), then such metaphors and images can be read as a way of revealing what the philosophical text unconsciously represses. It is, in fact, the inevitable slippage between the metaphorical and the literal that provides western rationality with its foundation (1989, 2). But more than this: what constitutes the images of philosophy can no longer be thought of as stable, framed representations. The viscosity of philosophy resonates, morphs, and blurs. In that sense, its logic is premised inherently on the rhetorical power of the image.

With this in mind, the link between outer space and inner space, planetary and amniotic, is well-known within Western culture. As Rothman comments, the “fetus *in utero* has become a metaphor for ‘man’ in space, floating free, attached only by the umbilical cord to the spaceship.” (1986, 114) Subsequently, even from the earliest ultrasound images could be seen as visual representations “where the foetus is not only ‘already a baby’, but more – a ‘baby man’, an autonomous, atomized, mini-space hero.” (Petchesky 1987, 64) The problem, as Rothman goes on to note, is that this double projection is enabled precisely because women’s existence is erased. “But where is the mother in the metaphor? She has become empty space.” (Rothman 1986, 114)

It is tempting to align women as “outside” and women as “empty space” as broadly the same thing; but, as Walker



argues, “silencing does not entail a simple sense of absence” but “that is actually involves something we might more appropriately refer to as *readable absence*.” (1998, 27, my emphasis) The process of denial inherent in the construction of a discipline enacts a silencing or repressing of troubling voices. In this way, just as the foetal icon carries multiple meanings that serve to “hide” femininity through its very making visible, “so the disciplinary nature of philosophy bears testimony to its exclusive (or indeed repressive) mode of operation.” (Walker 1998, 17) As such, the *external* limits of the foetal image, and the philosophical subject, can in fact be read *internally*, through the materials of their construction.

### III. Foetal Horizons

In this context, the four dimensional scan may offer a prime illustration of Heidegger’s argument (1993a) that the essence of technology is obscured by our very relation to it. The fact that we use it implies its essence is use; but rather, Heidegger claims, technology is itself a way in which the world is revealed to us. And true enough, the greater the simulation of the self – the better the graphical representation of the foetal body, the closer the interface between viewer and object – the more the technicity of the image is simultaneously seen and unseen. The spectacle of the image is immersed in the knowledge of the technology involved in its production. Yet, the success of this technology is to draw focus on to the foetal image as an object in its own right, and obscure the “enframing” of the screen, the wires, the lube, and so on. Walker argues through Le Doeuff that this is an *active* “not seeing”. “The eye functions as a site of ambiguity, an ambiguity that is as silent as the eye itself.” (Walker 1998, 33)

This specific rendering of the visualisation of the foetus has two implications. First, as Barbara Duden argued in the 1990s, the iconic power of the foetal image is specifically related to technology’s sense of mystery. Bringing attention to the dark space surrounding the foetal image – the backdrop of the womb itself – she notes this effectively (and affectively) re-draws the limits of interpretation. “Losing a real horizon, we have lost the sense for obscurity; with immodest revelations, we have lost the

power to discriminate between the seen and the shown.” Second, this ambiguity is not rooted in the absence of technical capability; it is not the trace of an image yet to be revealed once logistics allow for it. After all, the clarity of the four-dimensional image is already a vast improvement in clarity from the two-dimensional scan. But as Walker notes, “the invisible does not lie outside the field (or terrain) of the problematic, but is rather an integral component of its internal space, its structural possibility.” (Walker 1998, 48) The ambiguity of vision when approaching the foetal image is key, ironically, to its rationality.

This can perhaps be best seen in two classic yet contrasting visualisations of the foetus: the popular images of photographer Lennart Nilsson (Duden 1993) and the anti-abortion lobby’s short film, *The Silent Scream* (Ginsburg 1989; Petchesky 1987; Newman 1996) Duden contrasts Nilsson’s photographs of 1965, displaying *The Drama of Life Before Birth*. The images, of an unborn foetus’ “development”, have been the focal point of cultural theorising of the prenatal space. It is this same image that “floats”, literally and metaphorically, in Nilsson’s photography and in through foetal discourse (Petchesky 1987, 57). The power of this representation lies in its reflection of a scientific lust for the knowledge that until the advent of powerful new visual technology remained hidden inside the pregnant woman’s body. Reflected in stories of conception, where the male sperm is described as active against the female egg’s passivity, “the moral of the achieved conception narrative emergent in contemporary Euro-American culture is, quite simply, ‘science fathers itself.’” (Franklin 1993, 543) The relatively obscure scientific evidence of Nilsson’s later photography and *The Silent Scream* is shaped by the foetal image that “is not the image of a baby at all but of a tiny man, a homunculus.” (Petchesky 1987, 61) While Nilsson’s 1990 images are abstract, coloured shapes, the metaphors are continuously astronomical (Duden 1993, 585), relating the process of conception to the exclusively male domain of exploration and conquest.

We may well be reminded of the image with which Hannah Arendt introduces her classic text *The Human*

*Condition:* a swift interrelation of the space race between the USSR and the USA, and the natal laboratory.

In 1957, an earth-born object made by man was launched into the universe... The immediate reaction, expressed on the spur of the moment, was relief about the first 'step toward escape from man's imprisonment to the earth.' And this strange statement... unwittingly echoed the extraordinary line which, more than twenty years ago, had been carved on the funeral obelisk for one of Russia's great scientists: "Mankind will not remain bound to the earth forever."

It is the same desire to escape from imprisonment to the earth that is manifest in the attempt to create a life in the test tube... and the wish to escape the human condition, I suspect, also underlies the hope to extend man's life span beyond the hundred-year limit. (1998, 1)

The foetal image does not simply carry multiple meanings, but rather projects meaning-as-potential within the structure of its visuality. The visualising of the foetus is, itself, a fixation of the foetus "outside" of the female body. "Evidence" shades into fantasy when the foetus is visualised, albeit through electronic media, as though removed from the pregnant woman's body, as though suspended in space.' (Petchesky 1987, 70) The context is quite literally removed and consequently what we are seeing stands simultaneously for the certainty of scientific innovation and complete obscurity. Nilsson's original images pertain to "dramatise life before birth", but could not exist in a literal sense without the womb's containment (Newman 1996, 11). Subsequently, without horizon the eye does not see but accepts (Duden 1993, 574); and "a picture of a dead foetus is worth a thousand words" (Petchesky 1987, 57) precisely because of its numerous, sometimes contradictory, projections of western philosophical reason that are read simultaneously due to the erasure of context. "The pervasiveness of the metaphorical interchanges between foetal and planetary imagery, and their substitutability for one another, offer an example of recontextualisation in which different orders of life itself become analogies for one another." (Franklin et al. 2000, 35)

The "screaming foetus" that fights the mechanised abortion shows up a significant relationship for the viewer between "man and machine", human life and technology. For on the one hand, the relationship of humanity to the womb/earth is

a classic narrative. While the earth, the unchanging, the natural, is inherently good, and subversion of the natural is to be resisted, the “natural good” is not immediately visible, and “seeing” it involves a spatial separation. This idea can perhaps be dated back to Plato and beyond: but the Platonic Cave myth, when seen as a metaphor for the womb, also provides us with an example of “the task” of philosophers and scientists alike. To see “true” knowledge, the prisoner must escape his shackles in the cave (his womb dependence), and escape the cave which involves the infliction of pain by walking through fire (birth). Significantly, when the philosopher has reached the outside and seen the “light” of the Good, his task, Plato is quite clear, is to re-enter the cave and free the other prisoners (*Republic* 514a-517c). If we continue our metaphor, this corresponds to the fervent intrusion of the womb by “images” constructed by the male gaze (Cartwright 1995, 8). We can only see the “good” of nature through technological and scientific narratives: hence, Nilsson’s images are constructed using the soft focus and backlit ambiance of camera, while the presenter of *The Silent Scream* necessarily dresses in the manner of a doctor. The ultrasound image of the Silent Scream implies, through the cultural use of ultrasound pictures as “snapshots” for the family album (Duden 1993, 585), a wanted child, already part of the family, already a life (Ginsburg 1989, 104). Hence the moral and the scientific meanings of the foetal image are intrinsically bound up in the tradition of western ontology (Petchesky 1987, 59-60). Consequently, the visioning of the foetus from the “God’s eye view” of the camera provides further transcendence from the situated viewpoints in “real space” that science previously offered (Newman 1996, 107).

#### **IV. Background and Backlighting**

In turn, the four-dimensional articulation of the foetus in real time provides a double movement of interpretation: both immediate access to a picture of a specific “life” – meeting “our baby” – and deferral to the non-immediate mysteries of technicity which frame this access. Exploring this interpretative movement is key to unpacking the possibilities of this four dimensional image. Traditionally, the cultural

importance of foetal representations is potentiality; not as natality, but – to paraphrase Heidegger – potentiality-towards-death. The image of the explorer astronaut carries associations of militarism, conquest and violent struggle: from the European expansion to the New World to the Cold War technology behind technological development of the space race and birth control. It is the slip between “space” in the sense of literal containment and background, and “space” in the sense of a visual image of the universe (the final frontier etc.), that is crucial to this argument.

In this sense, it is worth noting how the history of technology is concerned with “typically some kind of probe or stick” rather than a “container” such as a cup or a bowl (Sofia 2000, 187). Artefacts for containment, meanwhile, are not only read metaphorically as feminine, they are also associated with women’s traditionally domestic roles. While Sofia acknowledges that the aggressive tools and machines hold more interest than the passive containers, she uses the philosophy of Heidegger to maintain that containing is “not as simple a function as we might first think.” (Sofia 2000, 191) Heidegger claims that when we fill a jug, we pour into emptiness, and it is this emptiness that constitutes the jug as a “holding vessel”. For Heidegger, holding is ambiguously two-folded: the void actively takes and keeps. This points to an activity of background/containment that argued against the grain of the western philosophical canon (Sofia 2000, 181). Because the notion of dwelling is at the root of the German words for both “building” and “being”, it is apparent that agency is always engaged with its background/containment (Heidegger 1993b, 349). To be is to always be *within* something.

As Sofia argues, the neglect of the container in western thought is not just through anti-maternal bias, but also through the situating of the container as “background”. Heidegger argues that the essence of technology lies in the ordering of this background, what he terms as “enframing”. “Enframing is the gathering together which belongs to that setting-upon which challenges man and puts him in a position to reveal the actual, in the mode of ordering, as standing reserve.” (Heidegger 1993a, 329) The background becomes “standing-reserve”, in that its presence is constituted only through the mode of its

revealing. "Whatever stands by in the sense of standing-reserve no longer stands over against us as object." (Heidegger 1993a, 322)

For Duden, the background, or "horizon", is rather simply eliminated in the iconic foetal images. In the case of Nilsson's images, this is quite literal: the foetus' are removed from the mother's womb and subjected to backlighting and colouring. At the same time, our capacity for "seeing", argues Duden, is distrusted, and instead faith put in technological devices that see "beyond" the horizon of the physical (Duden 1993, 571). The resort to astronomical imagery is part of the move to represent the invisible, beyond the horizon. Rather, the result is "misplace concreteness", because "without the limits given by the horizon... the gaze cannot come to rest, it loses its power to generate a place." (Duden 1993, 574) Scientific vision blurs in to philosophical ideology. The foetus is presented against an "infinite cosmos", an eternal "other" (Franklin et al. 2000, 33). Man leaves the earth and the maternal womb becomes a starry night sky (Newman 1996, 18).

This conflation of space allows visual imagery to move beyond mere allegory or parallel comparison. As clear as the image itself may be, there remains a blurring of specific and universal. In Nilsson's images, the "background" of the picture, in the sense of what shapes the object we see, is the use of backlighting. Such lighting, projected on the foetal corpse almost gives the impression of a halo. This mysterious, mystical appearance is of a transcendent self: there are connotations of the baby Jesus, both man (specific) and God (universal). Likewise, Ginsburg notes the anti-abortion lobby's use of the "conversion power" of the visual foetus as the central element to *The Silent Scream*. The "seeing" of the foetus *in utero* implies a biblical "witnessing" of Truth itself (1989, 104-5). Contrary to the misguided idea of science at war with religion, this mystery feeds the scientific ontological assumptions: the immaculate conception reinforces the Aristotelian idea women as "mere" containers; in assuming the divine form, Jesus "conquers" death. The logic of the image follows a constant shifting from the specific to the total, from the metaphorical to the literal and back. As Mondzain argues, the icon "harbors the generating principle" of the transition from a "plastic" space *within* a representation to a "territory" of power (Mondzain 2000, 62).

Through these associations, the prenatal space of the maternal womb, that is “hidden” from the public gaze, is re-constructed within public discourse through metaphor and image. “The management of women’s reproductive capacity is also a management of social space” (Stormer 2000, 113); and hence, “as a critical concept, prenatal space does not refer to the womb in a strictly corporeal sense but to a layered set of practices and symbols that create a space that is at once physical and imagined.” (Stormer 2000, 136) And in this sense, whether presented in four, three or two dimensions, the representation of the foetus is always grounded on this spatial rhetoric.

### V. Spatial Rhetoric, Real Time

“When we look into the ambiguous essence of technology,” Heidegger writes, “we behold the constellation, the stellar course of the mystery.” (Heidegger 1993a, 338) But likewise, the “mystery” surrounding the conception and reproduction of the human self is central to the sacredness of the foetal image in both Nilsson’s images and *The Silent Scream*. If we follow Heidegger that, at the point of revealing that which reveals is concealed, and the “essence” of technology is obscured by man’s relation to technology, then the apparent absence of woman therefore could be figured in terms of this mystery. Indeed, it could lead us to claim that the presence of mystery *is* the very absence of women. As such, the woman *is* present in the foetal image, or rather, a representation of her absence is present. Indeed, this problematizes the notion that women are entirely “excluded”. As Le Doeuff argued, women are more often included; but under particular guises and strictures. Likewise, the “seeing” of the foetus as an icon depends upon the constant re-inscribing of arguments that remain ambiguous over the use of literal and metaphorical “space”. Just as the “free” transcendent self of western discourse is normative and dependent (ironically) on the constant shift between the metaphorical and the literal, so the exclusion of the feminine is never entirely one or the other.

How does this mode of “seeing” change in regard to the development of the four-dimensional image? This is a significant question, given that the ultrasound image of *The Silent Scream* and Nilsson’s photography both rely on the

evocation of depth from what can *only* be presented in a two dimensional form (it was more or less m" three dimensionality (Petchesky 1987, 60-1)). As a flattened two-dimensional sphere, the foetal space becomes less of a planet's nature and more of a clock-face. The idea of a "clock" inside the body – e.g. the "biological clock", the body "ticking over" – is not new by any means, but the issue of the particular imaginary of time our examples present to us is crucial. The clock implies a linear time of pregnancy, with an established origin and teleological destination. The clock as a technological device signifies a rejection of circular time – that more commonly associated with "nature" and its seasons, and also, more derogatorily, women and menstruation. The visualisation of circular time is commonly seen in the sundial: where the figures on its face are not counting, but stand in an order – first, second, third etc. This "natural order" is dependent upon the "natural light", i.e. the sun or the moon. The clock, meanwhile, is constructed within a specific history of European thinking, the enlightenment; and the clock is normalised and essentialised at a further specific point, which is industrialisation. In both historical moments, the shift in thinking regards the need to impose order on a world that at least appears to have none. Le Doeuff's analysis of Galileo's challenge to the pre-enlightenment "science", for example, focuses specifically on his re-working of time as an intelligible factor of physics. However, she notes that the "perfecting of the clock" is not a mark of technological progress, but rather its diffusion in to scientific discourse contributes "towards imposing a certain conception of time." Furthermore, the grounds on which Galileo takes mechanics in to the modern era is not rational principle but "affinity" – a principle more associated with alchemy, "which is extremely obscure." (Le Doeuff 1989, 36) If Nilsson's astrological imagery may be only an illusion of depth, the "mystery" of the stars remains a veil of wonder at the mastery of science.

The fundamental difference in the visualisation of the foetus is the idea that the technology of the clock is not "there" in the body, but needs to be imposed. As Franklin notes, "The idea that human reproduction, or more significantly, female reproductive capacity, is badly designed and in need of medical technological assistance, is not new." (Franklin 1993, 542).



Rather, what is “new” is the realisation of the technology to view the foetus, and with it, the necessity of the technological to view the “natural”. Without the context of the mother, the literal containment of the foetus is rather figured metaphorically through the imaginary of normative public rationality. The classic images of the foetus do not simply present us with an unborn foetus, but a multitude of temporal agents: the innocent unborn, the natal subject, the dead soldier, the philosophical astronaut. Furthermore, the exact relation of the prenatal to the public is continually re-figured within these arguments. The contrasted images of the dead soldiers suggest a threat to the safety of the womb: yet as a defender of the rational, the autonomy of the foetus/man requires independence from the womb. The projection of the foetus as an “innocent” in need of protection from the maternal containment itself, whilst still within that containment, is juxtaposed with the transcendent conquering astronaut of the Cold War, whose escape from the earth/womb produces a technological divinity signified in the Blue Planet images.

The older ultrasound images – both 2D and 3D – only “froze” time, in this sense; transforming the science of abnormality examination into an object which, once sighted culturally, could be juxtaposed and framed by any number of cultural narratives. The foetus in four dimensions, meanwhile, does not “freeze” time (in the sense that the photograph “captured reality” in a single scene), but rather creates a new *ordering* of temporality. It is no surprise, then that this occurs at a further specific point in our cultural history: one where the traditional categories and concepts which distinguish the technological from the human are far less use for negotiating everyday practices regarding our social networks, our communications and our pre-natal parenting. For example, Allenby and Sarewitz note how “the Enlightenment approach glorifies the rigorous definition of problems, narrows options to arrive at a solution, moves decision making into the domain of experts, and of comprehensive action to ‘solve’ problems.” (2011, 169) But, they argue, dealing with problems and solutions are, in their view, only the first “level” of conceptualising technology: simple cause and effect processes that apply solutions to clearly defined problems. But clearly, a technology such as the 4D

ultrasound is far more akin to what they describe as a third level of technology – that is, a technical *condition*, absorbed within a myriad of inchoate resonances around its key terms of reference: self, knowledge, and technical image. The frozen image can be interpreted clearly under the question of *appropriation*. The visualisation of the foetus in real-time can, in turn, only be interpreted in terms of a user interface which, while certainly not devoid of appropriation, links to the wider practices of the technicity of everyday life. As such, this new ordering of temporality within the 4D ultrasound clearly moves us beyond the more traditional philosophical critiques of visual culture. In short: while still essentially a scan for foetal abnormalities, the 4D ultrasound can only be understood in the cultural context of real-time uploads to social media and rolling news updates to mobile technologies. Within such a context, the role of the frame is utterly present, perhaps even more so than before; but likewise, there is also a more intensive obscurity stemming from the extent to which technological artefacts have sutured on to the human body itself.

But this shift in understanding the extension of the human – the much-vaunted rise of the “post-human” subject – returns to a significant point about the way in which the re-ordering of temporality is intrinsically related, not to the steady progress of time, but rather the spatialisation of interpretation. The foetal image is never “on its own”, because it’s “own-ness” is intrinsically tied to the process of its own “revealing”. Subsequently, the foetus’ appearance as autonomous and un-engaged with its background/containment is a consequence of the very manipulation of that background. In this sense, the *temporal* is re-ordered through the *spatial*. While Nilsson’s images seem to “fix” time in to one “moment”, the spatiality of the image is not fixed because of its deliberate polysemy. Rather, it is constantly adjusted and shaped. The foetus, while providing a site of normative “independent selfhood”, is never independent – the representation rests upon the use of the feminine background, the womb interior. The “void”, to use Heidegger’s term, where the woman should be, shapes the figure we see. If we can understand that behind the mystery and obscurity of the foetal image is a dependence on the spatial containment of the object, we might propose that the feminine

background is never *erased*, but manipulated. In keeping with the western philosophical canon, space remains passive: it speaks only the logic of its own dis-appearance. Temporality is only re-ordered through the medium of spatiality: the constant re-inscription of the feminine “background”.

## VI. Re-Imaging the Foundations

If this constitutes a space of interpretation, then what alternative possibilities exist for the spatiality of the foetus in time? For Duden, the lack of background or horizon is signified through the loss of “haptic” experience (1994, 585). The subsequent numbing of the senses – “a disposition to take for real only that which has mechanically displayed itself” – leaves certainty in the place of wonder. Watching a prospective mother undergoing an ultrasound scan, she notes:

The facile certainty with which Joanne’s eyes perceive sounds that lie below the range of her ear is as characteristic for our times as the curious logic which takes a diagnostic image – a scientific, technological ‘fact’ – and transforms it in to lay evidence for the presence of a supposedly meaningful abstraction. (Duden 1994, 587)

So as in science, so too in philosophy. The alienation of the self roots itself in the abstraction of meaning amid mass culture. The representation of the science of the foetus is obscured in its recourse to a certain – “everyday” – set of social relations. When it becomes clearer that the representation of the foetus is a temporal signifier of western philosophy’s basic masculinist ontological condition, the question of “what we are to do” becomes both more pressing and more negative. Duden’s analysis, for example, leaves “us” with only two alternatives for those who try to “move” their experiences “out of the shadow” of the foetal image: “appropriate or reject one’s own foetus.” (Duden 1993, 590) Duden’s appropriation, though, is ironically obscure. Despite the growing options available to women in this position Duden claims, the loss of the haptic experience of pregnancy, of the pre-visual unborn (such that it ever existed), is “below the horizon”, and “there is no way back” (1993, 593). The foetus now dominates woman: “It’s visible appearance colonized discourse, vision and... the experience of the potentially or actually pregnant woman.”

Unfortunately, Duden's argument over the obscurity of a "vision" that supersedes "sight" is lost, when the framework within which she reveals her "real-life" evidence is one of suspect suppositions and unreliable reminiscences. Explaining the use of obscurity and scientific rhetoric in making science "visible" to the "masses", we are taken to a token Harlem immigrant. It is not the custom of the Caribbean, Duden relates to us, to apply calculated risk theory: the communal pooling of a pitiful amount of collection money is rather "a celebration of secularized Providence, a joyful expression of hope among the powerless." The Past is a foreign country, indeed. Newman is surely right to argue that "the right's insistent inscription of fetus as 'baby' and feminist demands to restore the woman's body to obstetrical representations *both* display a profound humanist nostalgia for the realist image." (1996, 113)

This not an assault on Duden's stylistic assumptions merely for the sake of it. While Duden appears to follow Petchesky and others in taking "sight" as problematic for the distance and objectivity it bestows on the subject (Petchesky 1987, 68), her alternative – a metaphorical shutting of the eyes so that the "haptic" may be felt – results in a confirmation of the very discourse she aims to destabilise. The recourse to the natural, primitive, somehow pre-narrative state inscribed upon those who reject (or "can only misunderstand") the dominant foetal discourse, is in itself a "natural" part of any discussion over invasive technological development. As natural, that is, as a Hobbesian state of nature: an imagined polemic "other", outside of the literal discursive space.

Perhaps, then, the point is not to simply resist this visualisation of the foetus – embedded as it is in a site of tension between technological clarity and rhetorical obscurity – or, indeed, to counter the image with supplemental myths which, as Duden's work shows, often merely reproduce the same tensions. Rather, the task is to identify and articulate the spaces in which such myths circulate and resonate; as these are, in turn, our spaces for interpretation. The background which Duden claims to have "disappeared" from foetal image, has rather continued to be constantly re-figured and re-processed. The fundamental problem within Duden's argument her assumption that the line "between the picture that shows

resemblance and the picture which represents an abstract notion” has eroded is figured *temporally* rather than *spatially*. Duden’s insistence on the absence of woman takes the space of containment that is the foetus’ background as *literally* “space”, empty and devoid of function. But what Duden sees as a “lost past” can rather be seen as a different figuring of the spatial containment of the object. Subsequently we can question if this line between realist representation and abstract images *ever existed in the first place*, for they both involve re-figuring the spatial containment of the object in order to make it “visible”. As we view the iconic foetus as something outside of the pregnant woman – though (necessarily, for its meaning to have effect) not outside of the cultural and political “womb” – this is, I would argue, is somewhat ironically the very moment woman can re-enter and re-shape the discourse at hand. While the image is dependent on the passivity of its containment, if we follow Heidegger’s arguments, then we would find that it cannot exist without such a background. Furthermore, it is the construction and plasticity of such four-dimensional spaces that demonstrate how malleable the very foundational myths of our cultural rhetoric can be. The task then remains to figure spatiality and containment positively within that moment of visualisation; a task which involves engaging with the ways in which visualisation manifests itself not simply in our cultural practices, but our philosophical and political practices as well.

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**Tom Grimwood** is Senior Lecturer and Academic Lead, Health and Social Care Evaluations University of Cumbria, United Kingdom. His research has two interlinking strands: the first explores the intersection between professional practice and philosophy, particularly within the "continental" tradition; this builds on his current position as the Academic Lead for the Health and Social Care Evaluation unit at the University of Cumbria. The second focuses on what Groys describes as "anti-philosophy": that is, specific sites where intellectual pursuit and its material conditions are placed in tension with one another, and articulate specific concepts from out of such tensions – in particular, irony, silence and cliché.

**Address:**

Tom Grimwood  
University of Cumbria  
College North N16B  
Bowerham Road  
Lancaster LA1 3JD  
United Kingdom  
E-mail: [tom.grimwood@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:tom.grimwood@cumbria.ac.uk)

## Gadamer and the Lessons of Arithmetic in Plato's *Hippias Major*

John V. Garner  
University of West Georgia

### Abstract

In the *Hippias Major* Socrates uses a counterexample to oppose Hippias's view that parts and wholes always have a "continuous" nature. Socrates argues, for example, that even-numbered groups might be made of parts with the opposite character, i.e. odd. As Gadamer has shown, Socrates often uses such examples as a model for understanding language and definitions: numbers and definitions both draw disparate elements into a sum-whole differing from the parts. In this paper I follow Gadamer's suggestion that we should focus on the parallel between numbers and definitions in Platonic thought. However, I offer a different interpretation of the lesson implicit in Socrates's opposition to Hippias. I argue that, according to Socrates, parts and sum-wholes may share in essential attributes; yet this unity or continuity is neither necessary, as Hippias suggests, nor is it impossible, as Gadamer implies. In closing, I suggest that this seemingly minor difference in logical interpretation has important implications for how we should understand the structure of human communities in a Platonic context.

**Keywords:** Plato, Gadamer, Socrates, Hippias, Arithmetic, Parts, Wholes

While the *Hippias Major* is relatively understudied, Hans-Georg Gadamer always held the dialogue in high esteem.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Gadamer developed important aspects of his own hermeneutics through his interpretation of this dialogue and others.<sup>2</sup> Generally, in his Plato scholarship Gadamer occupied a fragile interpretive zone between readings that render the written dialogues subordinate to the unwritten doctrines and those that claim to derive Plato's views (whether doctrinal or

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otherwise) from the dialogues alone.<sup>3</sup> Gadamer focused instead on the lesson to be drawn from the dialogue format itself, i.e. on the written dialogue as reflective of real, living discourse. “[It] is vital,” he wrote, “to read Plato’s dialogues not as theoretical treatises but as *mimēsis* (imitation) of real discussions played out between the partners and drawing them all into a game in which they all have something at stake” (1978/1986, 97).<sup>4</sup> The dialogues on the whole, he thought, point back to this living community of speech from which they emerged.

Gadamer took his interpretive strategy a step further in his 1968 essay “Plato’s Unwritten Dialectic” (1968a/1980, 124-155). There he argued that in the dialogues a bond between knowledge and community appears in the form of a “structural parallel” that holds between dialogue and number. While some might argue that knowledge of number is quintessentially a private affair happening in the mind of mathematicians, Gadamer instead suggested that for Plato the very “structure” (*Struktur*) of numbers links them to the nature of a community’s dialogue. Each number, such as “the two” or “the five,” has an internally relational nature, or a one-many structure. For example, the number five is a unified multiplicity consisting of both wholeness (which allows it to serve as the unified measure defining certain groups) and internal diversity (insofar as it is itself a whole of five elements or units). This one-many structure of numbers provides a model for comprehending, by analogy, the internally relational structure of all Platonic ideas. The ideas have this structure because they reflect the structure of dialogue, where many thinkers come to share in the comprehension of an idea. Thus, in Gadamer’s reading, all ideas, as one-many structures, are expressions of the living language of a community.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper, I will examine Gadamer’s theory of number and community specifically in light of his detailed comments on one particular puzzle from the Platonic corpus, namely the puzzle presented by the arithmetical example in the *Hippias Major*.<sup>6</sup> Gadamer himself linked this puzzle to his own communal theory of *logoi* and *arithmoi*. First, I will offer an interpretation of the passage in question. Second, I will examine and explain Gadamer’s suggestion that an analogy between *arithmos* and *logos* operates in Plato’s dialogues and

that this parallel is exhibited in the *Hippias Major*. Third, I will argue that Socrates uses the arithmetical example in the *Hippias Major* for a purpose that is slightly—but importantly—different from the purpose Gadamer identifies. While Gadamer's interpretation implies that the properties of sum-wholes and the properties of their elements are necessarily different, my interpretation suggests that they may or may not have the same properties, depending on the nature of the whole-part relation in question.

This difference in our interpretations is important and interesting, as I will argue, because the lesson Gadamer draws from the *Hippias Major* passage is deeply related to the development of his own interpretation of human community. I will bracket the question of whether Gadamer developed his social philosophy from Socrates's example or imported it into his interpretation of the passage. However, I will offer two decisive claims about the significance of how one reads these passages: I will argue that a different interpretation of the passage can be offered; and I will offer evidence that Gadamer's social philosophy is significantly related to the lesson he draws from his reading of this puzzle.

## I. An Initial Interpretation of the Text

I will begin by offering a reading of the *Hippias Major* passage. This reading will then ground the encounter with Gadamer's interpretation of the same text in part II.

Before examining the arithmetical puzzle itself, we should first recall the larger progression of the *Hippias Major*. In the first half of the dialogue Socrates refutes Hippias's persistent confusion of "what the fine [*kalos*] itself is" with mere examples of "fine things." Socrates, in typical fashion, shows Hippias that, by his own eventual admission, fine things are not in truth identical to the fine itself. For example, if "a fine girl" were the genuine account of the fine itself, then we could not explain why there are contexts in which "a fine girl" is comparatively not-fine. A fine goddess, Hippias admits, comparatively outshines a fine girl in beauty, thus showing that she, as a mere example, could not be the defining account of the fine itself. The refutation suggests that all such examples, since they are not definitive of beauty, are subject to being admixed

with opposite qualities.<sup>7</sup> All of Hippias's accounts of the fine thus fall into similar problems pertaining to the relationship between defining accounts and examples.

Soon, however, Socrates—or, rather, his so-called “friend” (i.e. perhaps his alter-ego)—attempts to give a proper account of the fine. He avoids Hippias's method of merely citing examples, and instead he tries to define the fine in terms of some other attribute or set of attributes.<sup>8</sup> Socrates makes several attempts to define the fine this way: the fine is the appropriate (293e ff); or the capacity to be useful and productive (295c ff); or the capacity to be useful and productive of the good (296d ff).

None of these efforts survives Socrates's own self-criticism. For instance, if the fine were merely a “power or capacity,” then it could be the power to produce either good or evil. But the fine, all agree, never produces evil. One might try to solve this problem by redefining the fine as “the power to produce only good.” Yet, the fine might then show up separately from the good (since, all agree, producers are independent of their products); but all agree that such a separation of beauty from goodness is impossible (297b ff). Thus, Socrates's first attempts all fail the test of the elenchus he generates against these views.

Despite these initial failures, the last among Socrates's definitions is special. The fine (F), suggests Socrates, is “what is pleasant through sight [P<sub>S</sub>] and hearing [P<sub>H</sub>]” (299c1). That is, there is something in the “pair” of sight and hearing that “differentiates them from all the [other pleasures].” That differentiator, present in the pair, must be the fine itself (299e). This account leads Socrates to ponder the logical structure that concerns us in this essay: If the fine were differentiated from other things by the fact that it involves the togetherness of two (or more) things, such as P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>, then a serious dilemma arises. For, should the fine itself be defined by the togetherness of the two things ([P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>]) but not by each of those two things independently ([P<sub>S</sub>] and [P<sub>H</sub>])? Or is the fine defined by each constituent separately? What is truly responsible for the presence of the fine, if we are saying that “P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>” is the *definiens*?

This question surely arises whenever we attempt to define “what F is” by appealing to what is other than F. Yet, it

seems that anyone who wishes to account for F must make such an appeal to a set of things other than F. The alternatives are either to give a purely circular account of F in terms of itself or to return to speaking in terms of F's examples ("fine girl"), with all the attendant problems.<sup>9</sup> A dilemma thus arises for Socrates here because, while we may rightly desire to give non-circular accounts of F (by using a term or set of terms other than F), all such accounts have their own problems. Shall we refer to *each* constituent of the *definiens*, or to *all* of them, as responsible for F's being what it is?

Hippias, however, sees no problem here at all; he cannot even envision the difficulty.<sup>10</sup> His answer is to state that because both pleasures together ([P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>]) are the fine, it must for that reason be the case that each-separately ([P<sub>S</sub>] and [P<sub>H</sub>]) is also the fine. "[Never] shall you find," he says, "what is attributed to neither me nor you, but is attributed to both of us" (300d8). His answer to the puzzle of "each and both" is to deny that the puzzle can ever arise. Hippias continues,

If both of us were just, wouldn't each of us be too? Or if each of us were unjust, wouldn't both of us? Or if we were healthy, wouldn't each be? Or if each of us had some sickness or were wounded or stricken or had any other tribulation, again, wouldn't both of us have that attribute? Similarly, if we happened to be gold or silver or ivory, or, if you like, noble or wise or honored or even old or young or anything you like that goes with human beings, isn't it really necessary that each of us be that as well? (300e7-301a7)

Here, Hippias commits to the thesis that if both of a pair are fine, then each *must* be fine as well (and, further, that what each is, both must also be).<sup>11</sup> This must be so, he argues, because if one truly looks at the whole of nature, or "the entireties of things," one sees that they are "naturally continuous bodies of being [*dianekē sōmata tēs ousias pephukota*]" (301b).<sup>12</sup> As a result, parts can never exhibit an essence opposed to the whole they constitute, nor can the whole have an essence opposite its parts.

Socrates responds to Hippias's "continuity principle" by appealing to the counterexample that concerns us in this essay. Socrates introduces the example almost passingly and with an ironic reply:

But now, we have been instructed by you [Hippias] that if two is what we both are, two is what each of us must be as well; and if each is one, then both must be one as well. The continuous theory of *being* [*dianekei logo tēs ousias*], according to Hippias, does not allow it to be otherwise; but whatever both [*amphoterōi*] are, that each [*hekateron*] is as well; and whatever each is, both are. (301d3-e3)

Pretending to be persuaded by Hippias’s “continuous theory of being,” Socrates quips ironically: “Right now, I sit here persuaded by you.” Socrates then goes on the offensive: “First, however, remind me, Hippias. Are you and I one? Or are you two and I two?” Socrates’s asks this question in order to clarify what *further* attributes he and Hippias must bear, if we accept that they are each one person and both two people. If both Hippias and Socrates are together “two,” then shall we not attribute “evenness” to them both together? But, if so, then Hippias’s “continuity principle” requires that we attribute evenness to *each* of them as well (302a5-b5). For the essence of the parts of a sum must, according to Hippias, be the same as the essence of the whole.<sup>13</sup> Making just this point again, now in terms of oddness, Socrates continues at 302a1 (my emphasis):

Hippias: What do you mean, Socrates?

Socrates: Just what I say. [...] Isn’t each of us one, and *that*—being one—is attributed to him?

Hippias: Certainly.

Socrates: Then if each of us is one, wouldn’t he *also* be odd-numbered? Or don’t you consider one to be odd?<sup>14</sup>

Hippias: I do.

Socrates: Then will both of us be odd-numbered, being two?

Hippias is rather embarrassed. Socrates has brought the continuity principle into troubled waters. If “both” implies being-two, then “both” must have the *further* essential attribute of being even. But the even is necessarily different from the odd. Thus, if “each” implies being one (and also the presence of the odd), then a contradiction arises with Hippias’s “continuity principle.”

In this way, Socrates decisively shows that we cannot universally apply Hippias’s continuity principle. It fails in some mathematical cases, not to mention other cases such as strength.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Socrates ends with a summary of his own conclusion: “Then it’s not entirely *necessary* [*ouk ara pasa*

*anangkē*], as you said it was a moment ago, that whatever is true of both is true of each, and that whatever is true of each is also true of both" (302b2-3, my emphasis). Socrates's example thus decisively refutes the universality and necessity of the continuity principle, given the set of agreements (e.g. that the even cannot be odd).<sup>16</sup>

Now, Socrates, I want to suggest, is not saying that there is never continuity between the whole and the parts, even in cases of number. In some cases, both and each of a pair might share the same *further*, essential attribute (like even or odd). For example, "each" may be two and "both" may be four; they share in evenness. Hippias, by contrast, is committed dubiously to the *necessary continuity* of wholes and parts. But this fact does not imply that Socrates is committed to an unconditional, *necessary discontinuity* of wholes and parts. He is not. Hippias, however, misunderstands Socrates and assumes that Socrates thinks the fine must be some kind of essentially "discontinuous property," and Socrates must correct Hippias's misunderstanding:

Socrates: Then should we call both fine, but not call each fine?

Hippias: What's to stop us?

Socrates: This stops us, friend, in my opinion. We had things that come to belong to particular things in this way: if they come to belong to both, they do to each also; and if to each, to both—all the examples you gave. Right?

Hippias: Yes.

Socrates: But the examples I gave were not that way [...]: when both of anything are even-numbered, each may be *either odd- or possibly even-numbered* (303a2-303c1, my emphasis).<sup>17</sup>

Socrates admits here that there are cases like the one above when "both" (i.e. the sum-whole) participate in an attribute that "each" (i.e. the part) participates in as well; but he also admits cases when this relationship does not hold.<sup>18</sup> Since he admits *both* kinds of cases, he is not saying that the whole and the part cannot share in the same further attribute (like even or odd). He is saying this continuity sometimes holds but does not necessarily hold.

Socrates's point here applies to mathematical cases well beyond the cases of even and odd. Indeed, he mentions times when "each of them is inexpressible, [but] both together

may be expressible, or possibly inexpressible” (303c2).<sup>19</sup> That is, inexpressibles can in certain combinations be combined to yield expressibles, though in other cases they cannot.<sup>20</sup> Thus, again we are left with two kinds of cases: first, cases of attribute-continuity between parts and whole; and, second, cases of attribute-discontinuity.<sup>21</sup>

The larger, logical point here is, I take it, the following: The argument shows that, when we define F in terms of a set of elements—say, P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>—then we can generate examples parallel to such constructions, some of which exhibit continuity, others of which exhibit discontinuity between whole and part. Thus, with the formula “F is P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>,” we know that the mere formula, even if true in its parts, might be untrue in its whole, or the reverse. The harmony of the parts with the whole is not guaranteed by the sheer logical form, even if the account is sufficiently expressive of the beautiful at some level. Each element ([P<sub>S</sub>] and [P<sub>H</sub>]) *may or may not* be fine by itself, even when, in combination, the “emergent” character is sufficiently expressive of the fine. Or, alternatively, the whole *may or may not* be fine, even if each element could otherwise—e.g. in some other combination—be fine. Attribute continuity is in this sense a dependent possibility; it depends on the case in question.

Now, Gadamer’s interpretation will diverge from my interpretation of the lesson so far, for he will argue that Socrates’s lesson hinges simply on the necessary difference between the parts and the whole in a sum. However, before looking at the very real merits of his alternative interpretation, I would like to show how the dialogue concludes and to draw out some additional themes that will bring us back, ultimately, to a comparison with Gadamer’s reading of the example.

To continue, Socrates and Hippias eventually do agree that, were there to be a “once and for all” definition of the fine, it would guarantee that its elements will not contradict the harmony the whole attains with the *definiendum* (303c4-d1). And for this reason, they finally reject the idea that “F is P<sub>S</sub> and P<sub>H</sub>” meets *this* criterion.<sup>22</sup> However, Socrates does not say that the formula is for that reason insufficient as an account. He distances himself from the formula, I would argue, only because it does not provide a *necessarily sufficient* account, i.e., a sufficient expression that as a whole cannot be subverted by a

part, or the reverse. The preceding inquiry clearly did not discover an account *that* strong, for we are left with the puzzle that elements might conflict with the whole. Thus, the collective inquiry must continue because, for all we know, even an excellent and sufficient formula may be sufficient only for a time, e.g. for as long as an intuition of beauty secures the harmony between parts and the whole. Thus, Socrates does not simply reject the above formula. Rather, he tries to discern why and how—or in light of what—these pleasures of sight and hearing can indeed bear the fine, if they do so (303e-304a3). Hippias is, however, too annoyed to continue this discussion, and the dialogue abruptly ends.

Even so, there is a positive point in this conclusion that will ultimately bring us back to our conversation with Gadamer. Defining accounts of F always reference things other than F. For this reason a “definition” must contain a multiplicity of elements. A definition, even if it truly expresses F, may still include elements that can be contrary to the fine. Even then, the formula may reach a “moment of total sufficiency,” if it attains harmony of whole and part at once. Yet, this “at once” is very different from “once and for all.” For in a sufficient account an element may still have a power to be ugly apart from this whole while being fine as a part of this whole, or the reverse. Indeed, the possibility of this alienation is always present in any definition we might offer. All our accounts unify separable elements into a harmony, or manifest in these elements a whole expression of something that could also emerge elsewhere. This possibility to be discordant, however, does not take away from the *sufficiency* of a contingently attained harmony. Therefore, the lesson, I would argue, is that accounts are like songs to which many instruments or voices contribute. The harmonious whole is at no point *necessarily* harmonious. The harmony is continuously held in place by the individual instruments and musicians, each of whom, likewise, is guided and held in place by the way the whole expression of the piece is developing. As musicians know, this “flow” is not easy to attain. It is difficult but attainable.

Socrates is thus teaching us about the complexity and contingency of accounts (and, further, about the truths they express). Hippias's “continuity principle” by contrast would



overlook this complexity. Hippias demands that accounts be simply “continuous” because he thinks they reflect a reality that is itself a simply continuous whole. Hippias fails to see that true accounts—and realities—are more fragile and must place their hopes in a kind of “as-good-as-possible sufficiency,” i.e. a contingent but sustainable harmony of all with each. But this sustainable harmony will not destroy the possibility of opposition or alienation. If we want our definition to be *guaranteed* against subversion, we will never stop searching; we will alienate ourselves in an eternal search. If, instead, we care to learn what it is that makes contingently true accounts true, when they are true, then we are asking not about an unattainable, unsubvertible whole but about an attainable but rare, fragile, and difficult harmony.

In this way, Socrates’s lesson is insightful and helpful for an inquirer into beauty. He shows us that a constant commitment to the work of harmonizing will be required if the true account is to emerge and be sustained.<sup>23</sup> True accounts will inevitably have to be re-spoken and reformulated. Socrates, who lives this life of re-searching and re-saying—i.e. a life of inquiry—embodies the beauty of the discerning but harmonizing inquirer (as well as the beauty of the true statesman). For he expresses at once both the difficulty in accounts of the fine, due to the fragile sufficiency they can attain (“fine things are difficult” at 304e9); and yet he also maintains hope for the possibility of attaining and sustaining the sufficient account (“perhaps I may be benefitted by this inquiry” at 304e7). Hippias, however, does not fully recognize the lesson here, i.e. the lesson about inquiry itself. He simply reaffirms his Sophistical view that the fine is the ability to *appear* to be fine to the public, to win court battles, to persuade others to become allies, etc. (303a5-b4).

## II. Gadamer’s Interpretation of the Argument

Gadamer has seen, perhaps more than any recent reader of Plato, the way the problem of “defining accounts” is related to the problem of number theory in the dialogues. In this respect, he is willing to think analogically (or simply Platonically) about how a problem in arithmetic affects a different problem in

language or, by extension, community. We find a paradigm of Gadamer's breadth in "Plato's Unwritten Dialectic." Here, he argues that to express a form in language, for Plato, is to show it to be involved with other ideas. In other words, knowledge involves us necessarily in a *logos*. "[In] Plato," Gadamer argues, "the *logos* is thought of essentially as being-there-together, the being of one idea 'with' another. In that they are taken together, the two of two separate ideas constitutes the one of the state of affairs expressed" (1968a/1980, 148). Gadamer is thus greatly interested in the problem we have analyzed. His task in this essay is to elucidate this problem of the one-many and to draw out the nature of the "structural parallel" between language and number (1968a/1980, 149).

Importantly, Gadamer's interpretation of this *logos-arithmos* paradigm is linked directly to the way he reads our puzzling arithmetical example. "This puzzle [of the one and the two]," he writes, "if I view the matter correctly, is first presented in the *Hippias Major* without any positive conclusion being drawn from it" (1968a/1980, 135). Thus, in this section I will first show how Gadamer's interpretation of the *arithmos* structure is importantly linked to his reading of the *Hippias Major*. Then, I will expand on the implications he draws from his reading.

Gadamer directly engages with the *Hippias Major*'s arithmetical example in the following paragraph from "Plato's Unwritten Dialectic":

Now that which a certain number or sum of things may be said to have in common, that in which their unity consists [i.e. S-structure], is quite distinct from that which unifies the members of a genus [i.e. G-structure]. For [in an S-structure] there are remarkable attributes which may be predicated of the sums of things but precisely not of the units, the things themselves of which the number is made up. The sum number is a specific type of number, e.g. even or odd, rational or irrational, and these attributes are properties of numbers which may be predicated of the unity of a number of things but not, in contrast, of the units which constitute that number (1968a/1980, 132).

Here, Gadamer is arguing that the notion of the S-structure expressed by the *Hippias Major* passage is not the notion of a G-structure wherein everything attributed to the

genus is necessarily also attributed to the participant. (For the G-structure, Gadamer seems to have in mind something like Aristotle's account, in *Metaphysics* VII, 12-15 and VIII, 6, of how the differentiations of the genus in a proper definition are all contained necessarily in the last differentiation, as "four-footed animal" implies "footed animal" as well as "animal." The last difference in a proper definition by genus-division implicitly refers to all prior differentiations. The genera "telescope" into the species.) Instead of this G-structure, Gadamer finds in the *Hippias Major* a model of defining based on the S-structure.<sup>24</sup> That is, Socrates's arithmetical example shows that there are "properties of numbers which may be predicated of the unity of a number of things but not, in contrast, of the units [*im Unterschied zu den Einsen*] which constitute that number." Or, again: "The number consists of units each of which by itself is one, and nevertheless the number itself, according to the number of units it includes, is not many but a definite 'so many,' the unity of a multiplicity bound together [...]" (1968a/1980, 147).

Gadamer's reading of the S-structure would so far seem to accord with our initial interpretation of the passage, for it envisions Socrates's lesson as a lesson against Hippias's theory of "continuous being." Still, we should ask, what exactly does Gadamer mean when he interprets Socrates to be saying that there are properties of the whole that are not properties of the units in an S-structure? Does Gadamer interpret Socrates as saying (a) that the essential attributes predicable of the sum *can be or can not be* attributed to the constituents, as I interpreted the passage? Or, rather, does he mean (b) that they *cannot* be so attributed? In fact, in his interpretation of the S-structure, Gadamer clearly wants to suggest something approaching (b). He writes,

Anyone can see, of course, that [in the case of the G-structure] the thing which unifies a genus may also be predicated of each of the examples of that genus and to that extent the one is many. [...] But can this argument be advanced in support of the unity of an insight, that is, the unity of that which is said and meant in the *logos*? One suspects that the latter is more comparable to that other form of being in common [i.e. to the S-structure]: that it has the structure of the sum number [*der Struktur der Anzahl*] of things which precisely

as that thing which all of them have in common cannot be attributed to them individually [*die nicht als das Gemeinsame allen ihren Summanden zukommt*]. And indeed the sum of what has been counted [*Summe von Gezählten*] is not at all something which could be predicated of each of the things counted. (1968a/1980, 133)<sup>25</sup>

Gadamer has interpreted Socrates's lesson differently than I understood it above. Whereas I claimed the example serves to refute Hippias through its demonstration that the *further* attributes (e.g. even or odd) of sums *may or may not* hold for the parts as well, according to Gadamer the example refutes Hippias by showing that what is proper to the sum-number *cannot* be attributed to the constituents (units). While in the G-structure the genus and participants necessarily agree, in the S-structure, for Gadamer, they cannot agree.<sup>26</sup>

Let us examine the implications Gadamer draws from his interpretation before comparing it more closely with my reading. First, Gadamer distinguishes the two distinct kinds of ideas—we might call them the necessarily continuous (i.e. the G-structure) and the necessarily discontinuous (i.e. the S-structure)—based on the intuitive point that, in numbers, the units must be different from the sum: e.g. the sum is eight but the units are not each eight.<sup>27</sup> Second, he concludes that there is thus a necessary discontinuity between whole and part in any S-structured whole, a point which Hippias misses.<sup>28</sup>

Third, Gadamer argues that account-giving must involve this S-structure. That is, the lesson to be drawn from the example is that the “complete definition” of any F—what Gadamer calls the “complete insight” into the *definiendum*—corresponds to a grand S-structure, not to a G-structure. The whole of any essential account is, he argues, *necessarily discontinuous* with the parts. Thus, he writes:

The compatibility of all definitions in a genus with one another, or what is more, the necessity of their coexistence with the final determination common to all of them, is what constitutes the unitary nature of the thing. This means that the statement of the essence, the definitional statement, is the *collected sum number* of all the essential definitions which have been run through, and as such is has the structure of a number (1968a/1980, 149, my emphasis).

In other words, if we are trying to define F properly and completely, we will have to take the sum of the essential

accounts of F into account. But, as Gadamer understands the S-structure, for any sum the sum's essence *cannot* be found in the part. Thus, no particular account of F, but only the sum-whole of all the accounts of F, could sufficiently express F. "The very *logos* of the *eidos*, in other words, the very attempt to say what the unitary essence of any given thing is," claims Gadamer, "leads necessarily to a systematic combination of many eidetic determinations (definitions by essence) in the unity of a defining statement" (1968b/1980, 202). Many accounts must come together to give the whole account of any F.

Importantly, Gadamer extends this insight in a way that has enormous implications for his reading of Plato's forms. He writes, "Where the one *eidos* is, there must 'be' some other reality, and not only must that reality 'be' as the Many, but also it must 'be' as the determinations which are mixed into the individual phenomena. [...] [The] participation of the many particulars in the one idea converts into the participation of ideas in one another" (1968a/1980, 138).<sup>29</sup> In other words, all the Platonic forms *themselves* are interrelated in a way that parallels the interrelation involved in our S-structured accounts of the forms. "*What is*," he argues, "is as the whole of the infinite interrelationship of things, from which at any given time in discourse and insight a determinate, partial aspect is 'raised up' and placed in the light of disconcealment" (1964/1980, 120, my emphasis).<sup>30</sup> In other words, for Gadamer, an *eidos* itself is essentially relational. Language does not simply multiply otherwise singular ideas; rather, "what is" is always already multiple and relational.<sup>31</sup> This inter-relational nexus is always already logical and numerological in structure because "logic" and "number" are reflections of a living community exhibiting a dialogical existence. In short, number—interpreted as a discontinuous S-structure—is for Gadamer the logical *and* the ontological "paradigm" for Plato. It is the "prototype of *the order of Being*" (1968a/1980, 151, my emphasis).

We should examine one last feature of Gadamer's interpretation before determining the significance of our difference of interpretation. For the most important aspect of the analogy with number, Gadamer suggests, is that the whole of an S-structure is ultimately *incompletable*. That is, just as

the number-line goes on indefinitely and there can always be a greater and greater sum-of-all-numbers, so too is every S-structured account of reality (or every essential definition) in essence incompletable:

If we are indeed forbidden to seek a fixed system of deduction in Plato's doctrines and if, on the contrary, Plato's doctrine of the indeterminate Two establishes precisely the *impossibility* of completing such a system, then Plato's doctrine of ideas turns out to be a general theory of relationship from which it can be convincingly deduced that dialectic is *unending and infinite*. Underlying this theory would be the fact that the *logos* always requires that one idea be 'there' together with another. (1968a/1980, 152, my emphasis)

In other words, the complete account of any reality cannot be attained; we are left with an "endlessness" and "inconclusiveness" akin to the generation of numbers in an "endless process" (1968a/1980, 152). The very fact that the whole is bound necessarily to be this infinite, developing multiplicity confounds any attempt to arrive at the completeness of the whole. Or, said differently:

One must consider Plato's real insight to be that *there is no* collected whole of possible explications either for a single *eidos* or for the totality of *eidē*. [...] [For] if one really wanted to complete the demarcation of an *eidos* on all sides, one would have to mark it off [as different] from all other *eidē* as well, which is to say that one finds oneself in the situation [...] where only the assembled whole of all possible explications would make the full truth possible. (1968b/1980, 203, my emphasis)

Hence, a "mystery" arises for Gadamer: we can only define a single, whole idea if we can voice the whole of the idea's relationships to other ideas; but to "raise" any idea in speech or thought *at all* is to raise it only partially and in a particular way, which is insufficient to the whole (1968a/1980, 138). Thus, Gadamer concludes that Plato's entire purpose has been to show that while the idea may be "mysteriously" expressed or intended in a particular account or part, nevertheless the complete definition can *never* be sufficiently manifest in an account (1968a/1980, 153).<sup>32</sup> The wholeness of the whole cannot be encompassed in a part; it simply cannot be expressed.<sup>33</sup>

For Gadamer, we should note, this principled *inexpressibility* of the whole is not lamentable (1968a/1980, 154).<sup>34</sup>

Rather, he thinks Plato uses it to show us that a *logos* is bound to a living community engaging actively in an ever-ongoing dialogue. We have a “felicitous experience of an advancing insight, the *euporia* which the *Philebus* says (15c) happens to the person who proceeds along the proper path to the One and the Many—the way of discourse which reveals the thing being discussed” (1964/1980, 119). Plato just wants to make evident the necessity of the *conversational* model of knowledge. And because knowledge is conversational, a complete singular intuition, or so-called “private insight” into essence, must likewise be closed off. For such a completion of an insight would end the conversation. Thus, we learn instead that the “interweaving of the highest genera” leads “only to the *negative* insight that it is not possible to define an isolated idea by itself” (1964/1980, 110). Indeed: “Insight into one idea per se does not yet constitute knowledge. Only when the idea is ‘alluded’ to in respect of another does it display itself *as* something. [...] The being of the ideas [...] consists in their displaying of themselves and being present in a *logos*” (1968a/1980, 152-3).

Thus, to conclude, according to Gadamer the same rule that makes it improper for properties of “both” to be attributed to “each” (in the case of number) also applies to the case of essential definitions: the essence of the complete account is never attained by any account. Thus any singular intuition or defining account of F is necessarily insufficient vis-à-vis its target, which is a larger, impossible-to-complete whole account of F. Yes, each partial insight will have its implicit order and relation to the whole; but the depths of the whole in which it develops can never be fathomed. For Gadamer this mystery is nothing to be overcome or avoided; the puzzle itself simply bespeaks the “wondrousness of the path of this human knowing, which, as human, is always directed into the open-ended [...]” (1968a/1980, 154).<sup>35</sup>

### III. The Significance of the Difference in Interpretations

As I have argued, for Gadamer the “unwritten dialectic” implies that the *logos ousias* is ultimately unfinishable because it is grounded in a structural analogy with the “*arithmos*

paradigm" conceived as an ever-growing sum-number. But Gadamer's understanding of a sum-number is, as I have shown, deeply tied to his specific interpretation of the kind of arithmetical example Plato "first" introduced in the *Hippias Major*. As Gadamer reads this example, it would suggest that the attributes of a sum-number (modeled on the notion of the pair of "both-together") are inapplicable to each constituent of the sum. This inability—or impossibility—is essential, for it ultimately grounds Gadamer's inference that any complete truth is unattainable by a single insight or definite account.

While I have given a somewhat different reading of the lesson of the example, it is important, in my view, to see that Gadamer does draw a plausible lesson from Socrates's refutation of Hippias: the sum of an account is something necessarily different from its parts. This truth is guaranteed, he argues, by the S-structure of the *arithmos* model. This much, I do not dispute. But Gadamer takes this model and uses it to infer that the whole, ongoing process of being-together cannot be something sufficiently present at any particular stage in the ongoing process. The part cannot sufficiently express the truth of the whole; the single definition is necessarily insufficient. The knower cannot escape being communal; and yet this communality of knowledge itself guarantees that any completable account is necessarily insufficient *just because it is completable*.

Another way to say this, in Platonic terms, is to say that for Gadamer a particular can never sufficiently instantiate the form it bespeaks. For this reason, Gadamer (quite self-consistently) infers that true Platonic participation (*methexis*) is strictly "between forms" and not between particulars and forms. "The participation of the individual in the idea is not even the true participation from which the Platonic dialectic of the one and the many gains its scope. This true participation, rather, is the relationship of the ideas to one another and what Plato has in mind with the *logos*" (1999/2001, 134).<sup>36</sup> Thus, from this perspective, no emergent (*gignomenon*)—i.e. no participant in the traditional sense—can ever be, in itself, sufficient to the whole(s) that it expresses (1968a/1980, 147). Stated again in terms of epistemology, Gadamer thinks that "the particular which participates in an *eidōs* is of importance in an argument



only in regard to that in which it may be said to participate, i.e. only in regard to its eidetic content” (1973/1980, 34). And since “private insights” are themselves supposedly just momentary flashes in becoming, they—just like the so-called participants in forms—“do not belong to true reality but to becoming” (1964/1980, 103). We thus arrive at the paradoxical result that, in Gadamer’s reading of Plato, only the whole, which is itself *inexpressible*, would be a sufficient expression of the whole.

While I take Gadamer’s reading to present a truth, my interpretation of the *Hippias Major*’s arithmetical example supports a different understanding of the “*arithmos* paradigm.” If we can retain Gadamer’s valuable insight into the *logos-arithmos* parallel in general, we nevertheless might interpret differently the arithmetical example’s implications. First, on textual grounds, I have argued that the example focuses on the lesson that what characterizes “both” of a pair *can or can not* characterize “each” in a pair. Thus, even if all knowledge is bound to language, and language is a communal whole as Gadamer suggests, it should follow that accounts (since they are harmonies of multiples) sometimes do and sometimes do not sufficiently manifest that which they “speak.” Implied in the *arithmos* paradigm, then, is by no means a theory that participants cannot attain a sufficient, expressive harmony in and with a whole. We cannot infer directly from the bare fact of a necessary discontinuity between sum and part in an S-structure, to the claim that the part cannot manifest the essence of the whole. Necessary difference does not imply impossible continuity. Rather, the sum-whole’s essence should be understood to consist in its *further*, essential participation-relations (e.g. even and odd).<sup>37</sup> And because there are such further, essential relations constituting the very essence of a number, it turns out that when a number is expressed, the parts can share in essence with the whole. The parts might be in essence even, just as the whole may be (e.g. four may be parsed as two and two). If this understanding of the sum-structure is applied by analogy to account-giving, therefore, then we learn not that singular accounts and insights are necessarily insufficient to that which they “bespeak” but rather

that they *can be or can not be* sufficient. My claim is thus that particular accounts or definitions necessarily differ from the form they intend or express; but they are not thereby prevented from sharing in this essence in a way that is sufficient to yield a complete, but perhaps temporary, whole-part harmony (or unity preserving distinctions).

Thus, the *arithmos* paradigm teaches that shared participation between the whole and the part is possible and *is* sometimes “contingently-sufficiently” attained. Hence, as I have argued, it makes sense that Socrates would remain optimistic about account-giving in general in the closing lines of the dialogue: “perhaps I may be benefitted by this inquiry” (304e7). He is not optimistic because the sufficient account of the fine is an unattainable, indefinite, Sisyphean goal. He has *hope* because he glimpses that the source of the harmony we seek can also emerge for us here and now. Again, if we are seeking an account that cannot be subverted, we will never stop searching. But if, instead, we are concerned to learn what it is that makes contingently true accounts true, then we are asking not about the unattainable whole but about the attainable harmony of a contingently-sufficient account.

In closing, I take it that what Gadamer draws from his reading of the lesson is something we need to learn. We must not take our particular, contingently-sufficient account to be “once and for all” the universal, irrefutable defining account. Yet, the fact that we must re-say and re-phrase anew any account does not, in my interpretation, imply that it was not sufficient in the first place. The manifestation of beauty and harmony in a “contingently true” account is difficult for us to attain but not impossible, just as the beautiful city in the *Republic* can come to be, though it is difficult.<sup>38</sup> The *Hippias Major* thus ends with Socrates realizing that “beauty is difficult” but not “beauty is impossible.” There may be a harmony of this multiplicity, and this determination is partly up to us. For, since we are each wielders of language, we are each like the contributing musicians in the song of the whole account.

#### IV. Closing Suggestions about Community

At the heart of Gadamer's reading of the arithmetical example is his relational theory of the Platonic ideas: so-called "participants" are comprehensible only through an immanent whole of related ideas.<sup>39</sup> Gadamer's theory of the reflection of living dialogue thus implies that ideas in their relations are sufficiently accessible only to the community's reason, or to the individual qua communal, not to the individuals qua individuals. Indeed, the ideas are a communal whole and we cannot grasp them without grasping their relations. For Gadamer, this communal, linguistic whole is constitutive of the individual moments in it.<sup>40</sup> It is therefore constitutive of the human condition, both politically and individually.

I wish to suggest in closing—and the following is not intended as a rigorous conclusion but merely a suggestion—that Gadamer's vision of language, while drawn from Plato, really echoes Heraclitus above all. For, as Gadamer writes, "There is a saying of Heraclitus, the 'weeping' philosopher: The *logos* is common to all, but people behave as if each had private reason. Does this have to remain this way?" (1976/1981, 87). Gadamer's rhetorical question indicates that he shares this lament that we behave like beings with sufficient private insight when, in truth, we never have that insight. The *logos* speaks through us.

If my reading of the arithmetical example can be contrasted with Gadamer's reading—and if indeed Gadamer is right to posit an analogy between number and *logos*—then the convergences and divergences of our readings will have major implications for our respective understandings of what it is to be a *zōon logon echon*. For my reading suggests that, just as much as language speaks through us in the Heraclitean sense, so too must we remember that individuals and even private insights can play a part in actively constituting that language. Even if the *eidē* in their interrelations are never sufficiently accessible to a private individual living apart from some community or another—after all, I have argued that "contingently-sufficient" accounts do indeed harmonize parts in and with their *wholes*—it does not for that reason follow that *only* the community (or the individual qua communal) has access to the

Platonic ideas. In Plato's truly beautiful city, where the guidance of each by the idea of the whole makes possible the harmony of each with the other, the individuals' insights are also original contributions. They actively constitute the song of the whole.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The authenticity of the dialogue is still debated (see Grube 1926; Tarrant 1927; Sider 1977; Woodruff 1982; Thesleff 1982; Kahn 1985; Ledger 1989; Trivigno 2016). For the purposes of this paper's thesis, only the *relevance* of the dialogue for Platonic thought is required, not strict authenticity. Gadamer assumes its authenticity (1974/1980, 158), though his theory of the "unwritten dialectic" seems not incompatible with a more broadly Platonic origin of the dialogue. See notes 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>2</sup> See Gadamer's unpublished dissertation *Das Wesen der Lust nach den platonischen Dialogen* (with P. Natorp in 1922) and his *Habilitationschrift* on Plato's *Philebus* (with M. Heidegger in 1928). For Heidegger's effect on Gadamer's classical scholarship, see Grondin (2003, 71-127). The ancient influence was enduring. "Decades of teaching," Gadamer wrote later in life, "were devoted to elaborating and testing what I have called here the Platonic-Aristotelian unitary effect. But in the background was the continuous challenge posed for me by the path Heidegger's own thought took, and especially his interpretation of Plato as the decisive step toward 'metaphysical thought's' obliviousness to being (*Sein*). My elaboration and projection of a philosophical hermeneutics in *Warheit und Methode* bears witness to my efforts to withstand this challenge theoretically" (1978/1986, 5).

<sup>3</sup> Gadamer comments extensively on the indispensability of the written dialogues (1964/1980, 94-96). His view contrasts with readings of the dialogues as secondary in importance, given the Aristotelian and Academic testimonies (e.g. Robin 1908; Krämer 1982/1990; Reale 1984/1991; and Findlay 1974). Many remain skeptical of incorporating insights from the extra-dialogical tradition, which skepticism also contrasts with Gadamer's approach (see Cherniss 1944 and Press 2000). For an overview of a range of interpretive strategies, see Tigerstedt (1977).

<sup>4</sup> See also Gadamer (1968a/1980, 126): "I would hold that the essential core of Plato's doctrine was presented in ongoing didactic discussion which engage the participants for whole days at a time and establish a living community among them." For this reason, Gadamer does not speak of Plato's unwritten "doctrines" but rather of his unwritten "dialectic."

<sup>5</sup> Gadamer's claims are: (a) the written dialogues are expressions of a living dialogue; (b) the written dialogues manifest the structure of number; (c) but the core of the supposed "unwritten doctrines" resides in the interpretation of the forms as, or as analogous to, numbers (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I, 6). Thus, for Gadamer, (d) the core of the "unwritten doctrines" is the core of the written dialogues: number-structure and dialogue-structure are analogous.

<sup>6</sup> The example from *Hippias Major* 299e ff has loose parallels at *Republic* 476a ff; *Theaetetus* 185a-b and 201d ff; and *Parmenides* 143c-d. See also: *Topics* I, 5-6 and *Metaphysics* VII, 12-15 and VIII, 6 where Aristotle insists that definition is not attained by the mere grouping of otherwise distinct terms. All Plato quotations come from Cooper and Hutchinson (1997).

<sup>7</sup> The accounts of X formulated extensionally are subject to refutation, since, as Hippias and Socrates agree, the examples of X also manifest X's opposite to an extent. Socrates is thus working under the assumption that to account for X truly is to give an account of X that does not include what is essentially opposite X (because X itself, he assumes, is not opposite itself). See also Hyland (2008).

<sup>8</sup> Intentional or comprehensive definitions are often treated in textbooks as if the point were strictly to delimit the use of a *word*. Such a problem differs radically from those examined by both Plato and Aristotle, who were concerned with giving a true account of the form or substance (*logos ousias*). Here we find a manifestation of what Gadamer calls "the radical nominalism of the modern age" (1978/1986, 45).

<sup>9</sup> Extensional accounts, in addition to the problems raised above, raise the problem of definitional priority. See Wolfsdorf (2004).

<sup>10</sup> For an argument that this part-whole problem may relate to the historical Hippias as a mere *compiler* of others' ideas, see Sider (1992).

<sup>11</sup> Morgan is correct to note that the relation of both (i.e. the pair) to each (i.e. the unit) is, for Hippias, a subcase of a larger class of whole/part relations (Morgan 1983, 134 n. 6).

<sup>12</sup> For a thoroughgoing analysis of what Hippias means by "naturally continuous bodies of being," see Wolfsdorf (2006, 221-256) and Morgan (1983).

<sup>13</sup> For the Sophistical problems of one and many, see esp. *Philebus*, 14d and Aristotle, *Physics*, 185b25 (see also Garner 2017, 5-35). Here, Socrates frames this debate not merely at the level of one and two but at the *further* level of even and odd numbers. If Hippias thinks the even *can* be odd, then he cannot grasp that he is refuted. *Phaedo* 96e5-97b7 and 103e5-105b2 emphasize the importance of positing the two as a form *so that* we can then talk about its relations to other forms (e.g. even) in this way.

<sup>14</sup> The suggestion here that the unit is odd is controversial, since it is not usually considered an *arithmos* (see Annas 1976 and Wedberg 1955). The reference to one as odd, however, occurs also at *Laws* 818c. And *Phaedo* 105b-c, in turn, considers the unit to be the principle of oddness: if the unit is present (i.e. presumably a surplus unit, remaining "after" an even division), then oddness is present. See also Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XIII, 8, 1084a33 ff.

<sup>15</sup> The refutation of Hippias depends decisively on Hippias's agreement to treat two as even and incapable of being odd. It is tempting, but wrong, to see the full refutation as occurring simply because Hippias identifies the whole with two and the part with unit. We must also posit that the two participates in a *further* form ("the even"), which is essentially incompatible with oddness, if we are to grasp the *necessity* of the refutation. See notes 17 and 27.

<sup>16</sup> I am therefore in complete agreement with Wolfsdorf that "[the] existence of discontinuous properties precludes [Hippias's] general conception of F and Ff relation in corporeal terms" (Wolfsdorf 2006, 253). However, I think the

problem with Hippias's theory is shown to be not simply its "materialism" (McNeil 2007, 435-458). Rather, the refutation is achieved with a more complex insight: (i) it is never absolutely *necessary*, simply because a participant (e.g. a "pair") necessarily participates in something (e.g. in the even or the beautiful), that each member of the pair necessarily will have that same participation-relation (or vice versa); (ii) there are indeed cases when continuity between the pair's participation-relations and each member's participation relations holds, as well as cases when it does not hold.

<sup>17</sup> Most readers assume Socrates is committed to the thesis that "each" always refers to the bare unit, and thus that each always is associated with "odd." Line 303c1, however, shows decisively that Socrates allows "each" part of a number to be even *or* odd: six can be divided into five and one *or* two and four; etc. Thus, by "each," Socrates can refer to bare, unstructured units *or* to non-bare, structured constituents. See notes 15 and 27.

<sup>18</sup> Morgan (1983, 145-7) is right to notice that Socrates himself will maintain, in the end, a "'qualified' continuity principle" (or, we might add, a "qualified" discontinuity principle). However, Morgan is wrong, I think, to bind "discontinuous" properties to mathematical entities, and to bind "continuous" properties to forms like beauty, strength, etc. Socrates is not erecting exclusive categories of entities here, some continuous in every instance, others discontinuous in every instance. Rather, here he is simply re-listing the examples that have been employed in the discussion. Both Ross (1951, 178) and Hoerber (1964, 149) suggest the misleading, exclusive-category view. See note 27.

<sup>19</sup> I.e. inexpressible as a simple fraction, or what we call an irrational number.

<sup>20</sup> Socrates may have in mind cases such as the following:  $[n + \sqrt{2}] + [n - \sqrt{2}] = 4$ . Here, each bracket is irrational, while both together yield a rational. I have found that only Benardete (1984, xlvi) notices this possibility. By contrast, Woodruff's footnote in his translation suggests that Socrates is confused: "By 'inexpressible number' is probably meant an irrational surd (square root of a non-square number). If so, the claim is false. The sum of two such numbers is irrational" (303c1 n. 14). If my reading is correct, Woodruff overlooks the above.

<sup>21</sup> Hence, Morgan is correct here: "Socrates's way of looking at properties makes it *possible* for him to find properties in parts that are not found in their whole and properties in a whole that are not found in its parts" (Morgan 1983, 144).

<sup>22</sup> Socrates states the criterion at 303c5: "I think it's a great absurdity for both of us to be fine, but each not; or each fine, but both not, or anything else like that." Or, as Socrates amusingly puts it, if the attribute that would make *both* "both" and "each" fine is explained by the presence of a kind of *both-ness* (i.e. the *both-ness* of "both" *and* "each"), then this account would fail to account for the necessary presence of a principle of *each-ness*, which would *also* be required if the account is to attain, with necessity, a total, once and for all harmony of both and *each* (303a7). Furthermore, the line at 303d3 ("Through sight and hearing' makes both fine, but not each.") should be read, I think, to mean that that account only necessarily guarantees the *both-ness* required, but not the *each-ness* that would also be needed to make the account

*necessarily sufficient*. My paragraphs that follow are my interpretation of the significance of Socrates's quip. See also the view of Tarrant (1991, 120-123) which goes too far, I think, in finding a kind of "Socratic hedonism" in the dialogue. On the complexities of Socrates's relationship with truly good or fine pleasures, see Garner (2017).

<sup>23</sup> Gadamer agrees that Plato is making a point about the way accounts are ongoing and "always run the risk of miscarrying" (Gadamer 1968a/1980, 155). However, Gadamer eventually treats this task as infinite and impossible to achieve. Hyland is closer to Socrates, I think, when he defends not the impossibility of sufficient accounts, but the impossibility of sufficient accounts *without remainder* (see Hyland 2008, 25).

<sup>24</sup> Gadamer (1982/1991, 292) describes this as a difference between "enumerating characters" (S-structure) and "specifying characters" (G-structure).

<sup>25</sup> The *Gesammelte Werke* edition of this passage actually ends "[...] *ist sowenig etwas, das jedem der Gezählten zukäme, wie der Sinn einer Rede ihren Silben oder Buchstaben*" (1985, 136). Thus, Gadamer compares (a) the inapplicability of the sum's essence to the part with (b) the inapplicability of the meaning of a saying to its letters. I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Christopher P. Noble with the rendering of this passage and the immediately following one in the next footnote.

<sup>26</sup> This reading is confirmed in Gadamer (1982/1991, 291): "What always perplexes Socrates is that there is something universal that does not belong to the individuals that are collected." Further: "Numbers have a peculiar being. It is not the kind of being possessed by those things which are counted by them [...]. It remains mysterious how something can be produced in the numbers themselves which exerts on us a compulsion of reality" (Gadamer 1988/2000, 254-5). See also Risser (2002, 224-225). I suspect that number exerts its supposedly peculiar "mysteriousness" to Gadamer precisely *because* he believes that the sum's essence cannot be shared with its constituents. In my reading, by contrast, a number may achieve a whole-part harmony; and, furthermore, it may be the case that all wholes will exhibit the "bare difference" between whole and part that Gadamer attributes strictly to the S-structured wholes. Thus, numbers are not so much the mystery case as they are the rule, and the S-structure does not imply the impossibility of sufficient continuity between part and whole.

<sup>27</sup> Three points should be observed here. First, Gadamer considers the sum-number to be made up of bare units (following Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XIII, 1083a34). He assumes that Hippias is refuted because Hippias failed to see the difference between sum (nine) and the enumerated units (each is not nine). But, as we noted, Socrates's use of the term "each" need not refer strictly to bare units (see note 15). Second, while, contra Gadamer, Klein posits no parallel between a sum-number and a *logos*, nevertheless they agree on the "bare unit" interpretation. As Klein writes, "[Numbers] have this curious *koinon* character: every number of things belongs to these things *only* in respect to their community, while each thing taken by itself is one" (Klein 1934/1992, 81, emphasis changed). Klein's local point is of course correct: each bare unit of a group of nine units is not itself nine. However, his use of the term "only" here (as well as his subsequent interpretation), indicates broad

accord with Gadamer that the sum-number *excludes* the parts from sharing in its essentiality. (By contrast, I claim the sum-number's very essence must be understood through its *further* participation in even, or odd, or rational, or etc. If so, then we will realize that its essentiality *may or may not* be shared with its parts.) Third, Benardete also agrees with the Klein/Gadamer interpretation; but he at least notices that if this is the right reading, then it would be "unsound" to make the parallel between number and the fine (1984, xlv-v). My view is that we do not need to deny the analogy between arithmetic and beauty *if* we realize that the "bare difference" between sum and part in any number does not guarantee that the sum and part do not share their essence. Thus, the bare difference between sum and part cannot ground a categorical distinction between numbers and other forms, like beauty. See notes 15, 17, 26, and 28.

<sup>28</sup> Importantly, one can say that the whole bears *something* (e.g. nine-ness) that the parts do not each participate in, while also adding that the parts must be able to share in *some* common form that is essential to the whole and is more specific than just some generic class like "number" (e.g. specifically odd-ness or even-ness).

<sup>29</sup> At times, Gadamer is even more explicit, implying that the one is bound to the two (and thus unity is intrinsically diverse): we must grasp "how 'the two' is one" (1968a/1980, 135); and "number [...] is a unity and multiplicity simultaneously" (1978/1986, 16, 31). Interestingly, Paul Natorp had already defended a similar thesis, arguing that Plato is close in spirit to Heraclitus's *hen kai pan* (see Grondin 2003, 79-85).

<sup>30</sup> Plato does not, in my view, commit positively to such an idea of an "infinite interrelationship of all things." *Sophist* 252e9, for example, maintains that some of the "great kinds" relate to some others, and some *do not* relate to some others.

<sup>31</sup> On Plato's discussion of a "one-idea," see Garner (2017, 5-35).

<sup>32</sup> Gadamer (1982/1991, 291) describes the "indissoluble mystery [*unauflösliche Rätsel*]" of the entanglement of the general and the individual, the one and the many.

<sup>33</sup> Kidder suggests that this paradox is indicative of the way that, for Gadamer, "partial revelations are not random but ordered within an inaccessible whole. We are always within a hermeneutic circle in which the whole is out of reach but nevertheless is a real guiding force" (Kidder 1990, 158). It is unclear to me how this mysterious, inaccessible whole is supposed to be guiding the "order" of particular accounts for Gadamer. Rather, it appears to me that Gadamer merely states the puzzle or mystery but does not explain it. E.g. Gadamer writes: "It is a strange being numbers have. This leads finally to the fact that there exists something we cannot lay our hands on" (1988/2000, 255). Because of this mystery, Platonic dialectic "cannot be learned" (1988/2000, 259).

<sup>34</sup> Contrast with Hegel's disdain for the "bad infinite." See also the note on Agamben below.

<sup>35</sup> I am here reminded of Agamben's critique of hermeneutics: "According to this [hermeneutic] conception, 'every word, as the event of a moment, carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and summoning. [...]"



All human speaking is finite in such a way that there is laid up within it an infinity of meaning to be explicated and laid out' [Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 458]. This infinity of sense is what all perception of speech must be attentive to: authentic interpretation is interpretation that, in sheltering the openness of the infinite historical community of messages, situates everything said within the historical unsaid that is destined to infinite interpretation. [...] [Thus] hermeneutics transforms ideal language into the unsayable foundation that, without ever itself coming to speech, destines the infinite movement of all language." Instead of this vision of sheltering the infinite, Agamben argues, "If the interpreter looks toward the unsaid and the infinity of sense [...] the purpose of doing so is certainly *not* to preserve them but rather to put an *end* to them [...] so that it may cease pointing beyond itself in an infinite reference" (Agamben 1984/1999, 56-7, my emphasis).

<sup>36</sup> See also Gadamer's claim that all "three kinds of *methexis* [participation] are nothing but aspects of one and the same relationship [i.e. of forms to other forms]" (1978/1986, 88). Gadamer thus reduces the participant-form relation and the relations of forms to one another. In my view, these relations will be different in kind, just as, in the *Phaedo's* final argument, the two's participation in even, and the two's difference from the odd, is a difference that is *different in kind* from the difference between the even and the odd themselves.

<sup>37</sup> See note 27 above. We should note also that, based on Aristotle's testimony, Gadamer denies that Plato ultimately maintains forms for numbers (see 1982/1991, 292). Ross argues, however, that Aristotle's remarks on this matter were probably only intended to suggest that Platonists denied that there is *the* form "number" (Ross 1964, 176-215, esp. 181-2).

<sup>38</sup> Gadamer argues that the *Republic's* beautiful city "cannot be actualized" (1978/1986, 70). However, Gadamer's argument for this point is not very strong, since *Republic* 471d ff argues that the city's actualization into becoming is difficult but not impossible. Gadamer's argument is: "For a blind man would see that such a state is impossible, and precisely its impossibility is underscored by the clumsy and circuitous demonstration of its possibility" (1978/1986, 70).

<sup>39</sup> Gadamer's argument against the unequivocal "separation" of the Platonic forms has many formulations. In terms of the *Philebus*, he argues that the limit and the unlimited are originally "abstracted aspects of this third thing called the 'mixed' [class]" (1978/1986, 113). In terms of the *Sophist*, he argues for the original interrelation of *all* the genera with each other (1968a/1980, 149-50). In terms of the *Republic*, he argues that the Good is "separated out from everything that appears good and distinction from it; but [...] it is *in everything* and shines forth from it" (1978/1986, 116, my emphasis). Other thoroughly "relational" views of the forms (e.g. Robin 1954; Turnbull 1998; McCabe 1994; and Harte 2005) do not go as far as Gadamer in this direction of denying all separation.

<sup>40</sup> Gadamer's aim is to overcome the modern emphasis on the "subject" as wholly constituted *before* entering into relationships, which relationships would then be (wrongly) conceived as nothing but "inter-subjectivities," or mixings of already-completed individuals (see Vessey 2005, 65). Instead,

Gadamer argues that the relationships themselves are constitutive of the subjects as such. Gadamer refers to Aristotle here (see Brogan 2002) but also to Plato directly, who had the idea of “a constitution that rules out inner discord and binds all the members of the state together in solidary action” which thus “mirrors the human soul’s ability to master its own internal divisions [...]” (1996/1998, 111). That Gadamer’s concept of solidarity here expresses his own view of the “hermeneutic circle” is defended by Zuckert (2002, 218): “Parts become manifest and understood as such only in the context of the whole of which they are the components.” Gadamer is at times ambivalent about the terminology of part and whole (see 1988/2000, 262).

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**John V. Garner** is assistant professor of philosophy at the University of West Georgia. He is the author of *The Emerging Good in Plato's Philebus* (Northwestern University Press, 2017) and also translates francophone philosophy.

**Address:**

John V. Garner  
Department of English and Philosophy  
University of West Georgia  
1601 Maple Street  
Carrollton, GA 30118  
E-mail: [jgarner@westga.edu](mailto:jgarner@westga.edu)

## ***Erwartungshorizont: Über eine literarische Hermeneutik, die Ingarden nie schrieb***

Gerardo Argüelles-Fernández  
Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro

### **Abstract**

#### ***Horizon of Expectation: On the Literary Hermeneutics never Written by Ingarden***

In this paper I examine the subject of the intersubjective constitution of intentional objects in Ingarden, particularly in the literary work. Subsequently, I cover certain topics of Husserl's phenomenology adopted and developed further by Ingarden, which were certainly taken up in Reception Aesthetics, but were insufficiently recognized as Husserl's legacy. In doing so, I attempt to show that Ingarden's literature aesthetics, as regards its origin in Husserl's *essential-eidetic phenomenology*, provides important clues to suggest that Ingarden may not necessarily be regarded as the founder of reader-oriented hermeneutics.

**Keywords:** Literary Work of Art, Ingarden, Husserl, Phenomenology, Reader Response Criticism, Hermeneutics

Die Aufgabe unserer Untersuchung bestimmt sich somit als die Entwirrung einer Äquivokation. (Fink 1966, 1)

### **Geleitwort**

In der vorliegenden Untersuchung beschäftige ich mich mit dem Thema der intersubjektiven Konstitution des literarischen Werks bei Roman Ingarden. Dabei werde ich gewisse von ihm weiterentwickelte Inhalte der Phänomenologie Edmund Husserls näher erläutern, welche in der Rezeptionsästhetik zwar aufgegriffen wurden, aber unzureichend auf dessen Erbe verweisen. Ich versuche insgesamt zu zeigen, dass Ingardens Literaturästhetik hinsichtlich ihres Ursprungs in der *wesen-*



*seidetischen Phänomenologie* überzeugende Hinweise liefert, um ihn nicht unbedingt als Vertreter einer leser-orientierten Hermeneutik zu betrachten, wie es in der Sekundärliteratur oft angenommen wird. In diesem Zusammenhang gehe ich auf die Frage zum Problem gleichermaßen der Autorschaft und der Leser-Psychologie ein, die gewöhnlich als Hauptthemen hermeneutischen Verständnisses gelten, mit denen Ingarden sich äußerst kritisch in Hinblick auf eine literarische Hermeneutik beschäftigte. Letztlich erläutere ich den Unterschied zwischen dem von Husserl geprägten hermeneutisch-anmutenden Begriff *Konstitution* gegenüber dem von der Rezeptionsästhetik als sonst methodologisch wichtig erachteten Begriff *Konkretisation* von Ingarden, dessen genuin phänomenologischer Ursprung in der Ingarden-Forschung zu wenig hervorgehoben worden ist.

### **I. Roman Ingardens Ästhetik als Forschungsproblem**

Seit dem Ende des XX. Jahrhunderts, nach der vermeintlichen Überwindung der Methodendiskussion in der Literaturwissenschaft im deutschsprachigen Raum, ist eine nicht unbedeutende Zunahme an Neuauflagen und Erstausgaben von Einführungen zu arbeitstechnischen und theoretischen Grundlagen der Literaturwissenschaft, allen Krisen des Fachs zum Trotz, festzustellen (vgl. Matuschek 2015). Diese bibliographischen Angaben ermöglichen es, darüber nachzudenken, inwiefern sowohl Studierende als auch Dozenten tatsächlich auf diese Art von begleitenden Lehrwerken angewiesen sind. Diesbezüglich bin ich der Ansicht, dass wenn solche Überblicksdarstellungen als Begleittexte zu eigenen Seminaren zwingend empfohlen werden, ein nicht unbedeutendes Problem bei der Bewältigung der eventuell zugrundeliegenden Originalwerke entsteht: Man könnte nämlich dabei versäumen, genauer, d.h. philologisch "langsamer", *à la Nietzsche*, die Originalwerke selbst überprüfend zu lesen. Spoerhase hat neulich darüber in dieser Hinsicht von einer Art "diskontinuierlichen Lektüre" gesprochen, in deren Ausübung die Geisteswissenschaftlerinnen wahre "Spezialisten" geworden seien (2015a, 3), und somit wäre Nietzsches "kontrafaktische Illusion"<sup>1</sup> des sorgfältigen Lesens zu Gunsten einer im philologischen Sinne realistischen

Definition des Lesens revidiert (2015b), nämlich, indem man einsieht, dass “das philologische Lesen [...] ein methodengeleitetes, also über seine eigenen Verfahrensweisen aufgeklärtes, und ein hypothesengeleitetes, an spezifischen Fragestellungen orientiertes Lesen [ist]” (2015b, 639).

In dem Zusammenhang eines methoden- und hypothesengeleiteten Lesens von Originalwerken der Literaturtheorie möchte ich einige Aspekte der Ingarden-Forschung näher erläutern: Obwohl Ingarden durch seine ontologischen Untersuchungen im Bereich der Ästhetik insbesondere für die Literaturwissenschaft große Aufmerksamkeit erlangte (e.g. Strelka 1989; Lobsien 2012; Stanzel 2002), wird dies selten behandelt, es sei denn die Verfasser, wie z.B. Holub (1995, 289ss), Leiteritz (2004, 129ss), Müller (2005, 181ss) und Strasen (2008, 62ss), haben je ein Kapitel über Wolfgang Isters *Phänomenologie des Lesens* erarbeitet (1974; 1994), insbesondere im Hinblick auf dessen Begriff *Leerstelle*, der aus dem von Ingarden postulierten *Unbestimmtheitsstelle* abgeleitet wurde, mit dem Ingarden die ontologischen Grundlagen zur Einführung des Begriffs der “Konkretisation des nicht expliziten Textes” vorbereitet (Krämer 2007, 31). Und genau diese begriffliche Überarbeitung Isters ist bisher fruchtbar für erzähltheoretische Überlegungen hinsichtlich der kontraktuellen Bedingungen des fiktionalen Erzählens zwischen dem Textproduzenten und dem Leser geworden (vgl. Ackermann 2008, 40).

In der Philosophie wird er meistens in Zusammenhang mit einer entweder sehr speziellen Forschung über seine Ontologie und Erkenntnistheorie oder unter dem Aspekt der kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit Husserl, hinsichtlich dessen transzendentalen Phänomenologie besprochen (Rynkiewicz 2008). Außerhalb des deutschen akademischen Sprachraums, ohne hier auf die in polnischer Sprache veröffentlichte Forschung eingehen zu können (vgl. Gniazdowski 2010, 168), wird Ingarden z.B. mit dem Prager Strukturalismus in Auseinandersetzung insbesondere mit Mukařovský und dessen Schüler Vodička, ferner mit Červenka in engen Zusammenhang gebracht (Pozuelo 1989; Fizer 1989; Gómez 1996). Im gegenteiligen Fall haben einige Untersuchungen Ingarden

vielmehr außerhalb des tschechischen Strukturalismus einleuchtend erörtert (Holenstein 1976; Herman 1997).

Im spanischsprechenden Raum wird Ingarden auch fast ausschließlich von Iser her erläutert, der wiederum durch die spanische Übersetzung (1989) Rainer Warnings Buch über die *Rezeptionsästhetik* (1975), bzw. durch die Textsammlung mit dem gleichen Thema, herausgegeben von José Antonio Mayoral (1987), eingeführt wurde. Aus dieser Beschäftigung mit den wichtigsten Vertretern, darunter auch Ingarden, der bei Warning eine sehr wichtige Stelle innehat, werden tatsächlich neuere Hermeneutik-Konzepte zur Textanalyse suggeriert (Prado 1992; Ruiz 2006; Mendoza 2008)<sup>2</sup>. Diese Tendenz außerhalb der deutschen Neuphilologien ist bemerkenswert und besprechungsbedürftig zugleich, weil die Begriffe *Hermeneutik* und *Interpretation* bei den deutschen und englischen Übersetzungen, meistens von Ingarden selbst revidiert, gar nicht vorkommen, und wenn dies der Fall wäre, dann stehen diese Begriffe mit Sicherheit nicht im theoretischen Zusammenhang mit seinem ontologischen Projekt. Stattdessen sind bei Ingarden jene phänomenologischen Begriffe herausragend, die vielmehr die statischen bzw. passiven Leistungen der sinnstiftenden Wahrnehmung und der reproduzierenden Phantasie aus intentionalen Bewusstseinsvorgängen stammend erläutern, wie z.B. *schematisierte Ansichten*, *rein intentionaler Gegenstand*, *Konkretisation*, *Noema*, *Schichten* und *Unbestimmtheitsstellen*). Wenn man dennoch diese Begriffe frei aktualisieren möchte und sie ohne weiteres auf hermeneutisch typische Kategorien umdeuten würde, dann würde man in der Tat über einen “anachronischen” Roman Ingarden als Vertreter einer literarischen Hermeneutik sprechen müssen, jedoch mit der nicht minder problematischen Einsicht, dass er sich selbst als “Hermeneutiker” noch nicht verstanden habe.

Im Hinblick auf eine von Ingarden genuin beabsichtigte Auseinandersetzung mit der Hermeneutik als Disziplin reicht der heutige Bestand des zumindest auf Deutsch erschienenen *Oeuvre* nicht aus, und zwar weder im Sinne der philosophischen (vgl. Figal 1995; Grondin 1998) noch der textwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik (vgl. Danneberg 1995; Bühler 1998)<sup>3</sup>. Denn es ist nahe liegend, dass für Ingarden der Begriff *Interpretation*

weder als ontologische noch erkenntnistheoretische Kategorie zur Konstitution des *seinsheteronomen Gegenstandes* explizit genug und angemessen erschien, da eben in der Phänomenologie das Problem der *Auslegung des Verstandenen* ein viel zu sehr an der Oberfläche der "kulturellen" Welt befindliches Thema ist, sofern die Auslegung und Erklärung von Sozialen- wie auch Natur-Phänomenen von den Wissenschaften im Vorfeld begriffsmäßig selbstverständlich angenommen wird. Die eidetische Phänomenologie und die universalistische Ontologie, wie Ingarden sie vertritt, operieren vielmehr in tieferen heuristisch anmutenden Bewusstseins-Schichten. Und dieses Zweifeln an der Selbstverständlichkeit der tradierten philosophischen und wissenschaftlichen Begriffsbestimmungen hat er von Husserl her bewusst übernommen.

Meine kritische Stellungnahme richtet sich genau dahingehend: Die Rezeptionsästhetik, die als "Antwortreaktion des Lesers" (Krusche 1978, 9) verstanden wird, hat sich mehrfach aber leider nicht differenziert genug auf Ingardens semantische Typologie der *seinsheteronomen Gegenstände* berufen, in welcher der polnische Philosoph selbst in Bezug auf Husserls *Wesenseidetik* (Hua III/1, 13) und Schelers (Ingarden 1929) Prinzipien einer phänomenologischen Unterscheidung ontologischer Fragestellungen, die Begriffe der *Bestimmtheits-* und *Unbestimmtheitsstellen* des rein intentionalen Gegenstandes für ästhetische Fragen begründet und erklärt hat.

Für die Literaturtheorie, die sich auf Ingarden beruft, ist von Relevanz, dass ein rein intentionaler Gegenstand, wie z.B. ein literarisches Werk, einerseits sprachlich unveränderbare Zeichen und Strukturen aufweist (Text und Gestaltung), während es andererseits sehr wohl verschiedene und dennoch limitierte Bedeutungsmöglichkeiten zulässt.

Was sich hier im Rahmen eines phänomenologischen Verständnisses von Literatur herausstellt, ist der Zusammenhang zwischen einem lebensweltlichen *Erfahrungshorizont*, geprägt andererseits von Wahrheitsansprüchen fiktionaler bzw. wirklichkeitsanmutenden Sachverhalte allesamt vom Autor künstlerisch dargestellt, und dessen in Schriftform fixiertem Gebilde, intersubjektiv immer *lesbar*. Und genau hier wird das Problem bei der Beschäftigung mit Ingarden unter diesen Annahmen

deutlich: Als Leser eines literarischen Texts brauche ich nur einen einzigen Schritt über die erste Bedeutungsebene des im Werk vom Autor sehr wohl intendiertes Verständnis hinaus zu gehen, um zu merken, wie sich sofort meine “mitgebrachten” hermeneutischen Prinzipien und Erwartungen einschalten, mit denen ich gewöhnlich nach den außerliterarischen Referenzen des Verstandenen entweder kritisch frage oder widerspruchslos an deren Sinnhaftigkeit teilnehme. Dabei handelt es sich meistens um gesuchte Antworten auf Fragen, die selbst das literarische Werk gar nicht von alleine, buchstäblich, beantworten kann, es sei denn ich “hinterfrage” es geradeheraus mit Nietzsche, Marx und Freud; gegebenenfalls mit Gadammers Vorschlag der “Anwendung des Verstandenen auf uns selbst” (vgl. Gerigk 2010).

Diesbezüglich kann sich einer, als Leser, dem Verlangen nach Aktualisierung und bestenfalls Überwindung der geschichtlichen Distanz seines ebenfalls alternden Weltverständnisses natürlich nicht ganz zu entziehen, wie es oft die *werkimmanente* Theorie der Literatur fordert oder wie es ihr offensichtlich zu Unrecht nachgesagt wird (vgl. Danneberg 1996). In diesem Zusammenhang muss man zugeben, dass angesichts des Standes der Forschung um die Autorschaft (Jannidis et al. 1999; Spoerhase 2007) es nicht mehr möglich ist auf den literarischen Autor (Barthes 1994), oder wie er in den Intentionalismus-Debatten geführt wird, ohne weiteres pauschal zu verzichten. Und dennoch, wenn man mit “Phänomenologie” arbeiten möchte, scheint mir Ingardens Ausklammerung der Autoren- und Leser-Psychologie einleuchtend (Ingarden 1972, 19ss). Weil es Ingarden dadurch gelungen ist, ausgedehnte ontologische Analysen dieser besonderen vorprädikativen phänomenologischen sinnstiftenden Leistungen zu unternehmen. Gerade im Rahmen vorprädikativer Verstehens-Leistungen, bzw. konkreter vor-hermeneutischen Phase des Lesens entfaltet sich das wichtigste Untersuchungsfeld bei Ingarden, das aber genau in der Literaturwissenschaft oft verkannt wird.

Wie genau irrt man sich dabei? Für Ingarden sind diese etwa “fünf Sekunden” nach dem Ende der Lektüre relevant, wodurch dem Leser ein anschaulicher Welterkenntniszugewinn gestiftet wird. Aber dieser reproduktive, anschauliche

Horizonten-Zugewinn wird für Ingarden wichtig, nicht um etwa am interpretierenden Bewusstsein des Lesers hermeneutische, d.h. existenzielle bzw. philologisch normative Rückschlüsse zu ergründen und begründen, sondern um den vormals *kulturellen* Gegenstand (das literarische Werk) nach dem phänomenalen Akt des Lesens als *ästhetischen* Gegenstand betrachten zu können. Mit anderen Worten, es geht nämlich um einen vom Dichter konzipierten *Welt-Entwurf*, welcher sich plötzlich vor unserem *Erfahrungs-* und *Erwartungshorizont* als Bedeutungsüberschuss entfaltet. Ingarden zufolge entspringt daraus aber kein philologisch, normierender, reflexiver Interpretations-Begriff, durch den man wiederum die hermeneutische Frage nach den Möglichkeiten, Leistungen und Grenzen des Verstehens selbst untersucht, sondern es handelt sich höchstens um eine erkenntnistheoretische Kategorie ästhetischer Beschaffenheit<sup>4</sup>. Und das ist die phänomenologische Erkenntnisleistung dessen, was Ingarden schließlich *Konkretisation* genannt hat. Zudem geht es also um ein durchaus phänomenologisch analysierbares Erkenntnisphänomen, das, um mit Gerigk zu sprechen, als ein außerfiktionaler Anblick dessen aufgefasst werden kann, was in einem literarischen Gebilde bereits vom Autor als dichterischer Erfinder geleistet wurde (2002, 105)<sup>5</sup>.

In diesem Zusammenhang scheint mir die phänomenologische Ästhetik von Ingarden eben nicht ausreichend dafür zu sein, um in ihm einen noch “unerkannten” Vertreter der Hermeneutik zu sehen, weder einer existenziellen noch einer so aufgefassten textwissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik als Auslegungslehre, in welcher Spoerhase zugrunde die “Normen der Rechtfertigung der Verstehensresultate” professionelles Interpretieren von literarischen Texten beobachtet und reguliert wird (2007, 2). Obwohl Ingarden in seiner Untersuchung *vom Erkennen des literarischen Werks* (1968) diesem normativen Versuch nahekommt, bleibt sein ganzes systematisches Programm einer phänomenologischen “realistischen” Ontologie treu, was hier genau heißt, auf dem anfangs ausgeschalteten Psychologismus beim Autor und Leser weiterhin zugunsten einer ontologischen Erkenntnistheorie intersubjektiver Konstitutionsfragen von intentionalen Gegenständen, insbesondere der literarischen Kunst, zu bestehen.

## II. Rückgang auf Grundfragen der Interpretation

Obwohl in einer strengen Textwissenschaft eine im Vorfeld ausgemachte Heuristik und objektive Hypothesenbildung die Methode zur Auslegung theoretisch beherrscht, die Praxis zeigt am Ende und sehr oft, wie brüchig die beabsichtigte Isolierung der lebensweltlichen und aber auch institutionellen, d.h. wissenschaftlichen Sorgen des Interpreten ist. Aus diesem Grund möchte ich folgende Frage gelten lassen, und darauf einige Antworten vorschlagen: *Wie kann man ein literarisches Werk interpretieren, ohne auf dessen rezeptionsbedingte, fertig überlieferte Lesarten Rücksicht zu nehmen?* Mit anderen Worten, wie entgehe ich bei der Interpretation eines literarischen Textes meiner eigenen Geschichtlichkeit und Vorurteilen?

Was die ausdrücklich nach wie vor kritische Rolle des Autors und das Problem des Intentionalismus in einem heranwachsenden *cognitive turn* in den Geisteswissenschaften anbelangt (Hermann 2003, 243-267; Eibl 2004; Tepe 2007), wird ebenfalls folgende Frage relevant: Was ist zu tun mit den von den Autoren selbst in Tagebuchaufzeichnungen, Interviews und anderen Zeitdokumenten gelieferten Interpretationshinweisen, welche uns Lesern in Form von konstitutionsverpflichtenden Lesarten des Werkes zwingend empfohlen werden?

Wie bereits angedeutet, in der Rezeptionsästhetik geht man u.a. davon aus, dass jede Lektüre eines literarischen Gebildes als konstitutiver Bewusstseinsakt gilt, deren Relevanz auf die je eigene reflexive und meist historische Situation des empirischen Lesers in den Vordergrund gestellt wird. Das bedeutet anders gesagt, dass jede Lesart eines "Leiden des jungen Werther" eine gewisse Wirkung nicht nur auf den sogenannten *Erfahrungshorizonten* des Autors und *Erwartungshorizonten* des Lesers<sup>6</sup>, sondern auch auf die innere Struktur des literarischen Werks selbst ausübt. Die problematische Konsequenz aus diesem existenziellen Rückschluss ist, dass das Werk selbst bezüglich seiner ontologischen Wesensbestimmung entfremdet wird.

In dieser leserorientierten und mit Konstitutionsanspruch verbundenen Annahme wird zwar eine wichtige Lehre der Phänomenologie angedeutet, genauer die Apperzeptionslehre als Sinnstiftung, Sinnübertragung und Sinnverweisung aus den

*Logischen Untersuchungen* (Holenstein 1972, 137), aber deren Umfang und Einschränkungen nicht angemessen eingeschätzt. Warum? Weil es übersehen wird, dass sowohl Husserl als auch Ingarden die Beliebigkeit der Deutungen und ihre empirischen, immer anders ausfallenden Einsichten, schon bei der sensualistischen Apperzeptionslehre von Theodor Lipps (1902) feststellten und dagegen Kritik ausübten.

Ich darf in Erinnerung rufen, bei der oben genannten sensualistischen Apperzeptionslehre, in Anwendung auf die erforschende Lektüre eines literarischen Werkes, handelt es sich um eine Lektüre eines Textes, die mit der apperzeptiven (subjektiv-deutenden) und konkretisierenden (objektivierenden) psychologischen Wahrnehmung gleichgesetzt wird. Aus diesem Grunde bin ich der Ansicht, dass die Rezeptionsästhetik eigentlich nicht das literarische Werk mit phänomenologischen Prämissen erforscht, wie oft festgestellt wird, sondern in Form einer empirischen Lese- und Verhaltens-Psychologie, deren Methodik je eine bestimmte, im Vorfeld bereits ausgesuchte kommunikationsbedingte Lese-Intention sucht und *aber auch unbedingt findet*.

An dieser Stelle sei schon vorweggenommen, dass Ingarden zwar jene zu Ende geführte Konkretisation eines literarischen Werks als ein intersubjektiv gültiges Verfahren zur Konstitution des rein intentionalen Gegenstandes eingeräumt hat, aber die ästhetische Bestimmung des literarischen Werks anders gedacht hat, als man es ihm pauschal zurechnet. Die Wirkungsgeschichte eines literarischen Werks gilt für Ingarden in keiner Weise als symbolischer oder allegorischer Ersatz der ontologischen Stellung des literarischen Gebildes, und somit kann man durch keinerlei empirische Wirkungsgeschichten, die über ein Kunstwerk in Form von Nacherzählungen fachlicher oder nicht-fachlicher Natur obwalten, die ontologische Eigenart des Gebildes in eine andere *Seinssphäre* modifizieren oder "aufs Neue" prägen. Das ist der Rahmen innerhalb dessen, Ingarden nur schritt- und stufenweise, genau wie er das von Husserl gelernt hat, arbeitet.

Was die Antwort auf die beiden eingangs gestellten Fragen anbelangt, kann ich hier an dieser Stelle erneut mit Hilfe Gerigks (1991) hinzufügen, dass das Wesen der Dichtung,



“um ihre Wirklichkeit zu erlangen, auf Auslegung angewiesen” ist (1991, 13)<sup>7</sup>. Wenn man schließlich die Frage nach dem stellt, was sich in der Dichtung bestimmt zeigt bzw. unbestimmt bleibt und daher *ex negativo* konkretisierbar wird, müssen die theoretischen Grundlagen untersucht werden, die diese Frage überhaupt erst ermöglichen. Ich darf hier erneut in Erinnerung rufen: Es geht einerseits um die Implikation, dass jeder *seinsheteronome* Gegenstand seiner Wesenheit nach kategoriale, d.h. diskursive Bedeutungsebenen aufweist, was z.B. in der Erzählforschung bei Anz, *Textwelt* (2007, 111s), Chatman, *story-world* (1986, 193) oder Genette, *diègése* (1972) gemeint wird, während andererseits auf festen, logischen, sprachlichen Gebilden aufgebaut ist. Im lebensweltlichen Bereich ist hier die Rede von einem schlichten literarischen Werk, dessen hauptsächliche Eigenschaft zum einen in der Idee der ästhetischen, erkenntnistheoretischen Wirkung von Fiktion liegt und zum anderen in seiner intersubjektiven Erkenntnis. Und genau hier gilt es zu zeigen, weshalb weniger der Begriff Interpretation relevant ist, als der von Ingarden geprägte der Konkretisation.

### III. Der Begriff der Konkretisation als literaturtheoretische Kategorie

In diesem Abschnitt erläutere ich die Begriffe Konstitution, von Husserl einst abgeleitet, und Konkretisation, von Ingarden selbst ausformuliert, welche für die neuere Forschung und insbesondere durch die Rezeptionsästhetik zu einem Methoden-Problem geworden sind (Fieguth 1971).

In den *Studien zum Epochenwandel* hat Jauß (1989, 289), in Anlehnung an Gadamer, die Wirkung von literarischen Texten zu erklären versucht, anhand deren Vieldeutigkeit einerseits und durch die traditionsgemäße Begrifflichkeit andererseits, welche am literarischen Werk selbst Anwendung fand (Gadamer 1990, 114s)<sup>8</sup>. Jauß hat dennoch diese problematische Doppeldeutigkeit übersehen (Zima 1995, 237), denn anders als Ingarden (und Gadamer selbst), konnte Jauß die Bestimmung der so genannten *Erwartungshorizonte* des Lesers nicht theoretisch genug von den ontologisch unveränderbaren sinnbehafteten *Bestimmtheitsstellen* im

literarischen Text unterscheiden. Jauß konnte somit die Bestimmung des Kunstwerkes nicht vor den “demokratisierenden” Bestimmungen einer jeden beliebigen Lesart schützen und deswegen sind ihm jegliche hermeneutischen Sicherungen gegen den extremen Pluralismus der Ausdrucksseite entglitten, und das hat auch selbst Gadamer festgestellt (1990, 125).

In *Das literarische Kunstwerk* entwickelt Ingarden eine Begriffsbestimmung von Konkretisation, die unmissverständlich nicht mehr zu den ontologischen Untersuchungen des rein intentionalen Gegenstandes gehört, sondern von ihm auf die Seite der erkenntnistheoretischen Fragestellungen mit geistesgeschichtlichen bzw. sozialen und didaktischen Hintergründen gestellt wird, also doch flüchtig etwas hermeneutisch anmutend:

Dies ist auch aus dem Grunde notwendig, weil unsere Betrachtungen zu dem Ergebnis geführt haben, dass das rein literarische Werk ein in verschiedener Hinsicht schematisches Gebilde ist, das “Lücken”, Unbestimmtheitsstellen, schematisierte Ansichten usw. in sich enthält. Andererseits zeigen manche seiner Elemente eine gewisse Potentialität, die wir mit dem Ausdruck “Parathaltung” anzudeuten suchten. (1972, 353)

Wenn man Ingarden nur ansatzweise und nicht zu Ende liest, dann könnte hier der Eindruck entstehen, dass der Begriff der *Potentialität* eine undifferenzierte Freiheit der Auffassungen zugesteht, die zugunsten einer phänomenologischen Konstitutionslehre des literarischen Werks verwendbar wäre. Somit würde *Potentialität* auch jene in der Tat wahrgenommene Möglichkeit beinhalten, einen Leser als letzte ästhetische Instanz zu verstehen, wie das in der Rezeptionsästhetik gilt. Ingarden hat aber diesen *ontischen* Irrtum im Vorfeld entdeckt und umgehend eine entsprechende Anmerkung an dieser Stelle hinzugefügt. Damit gleicht er den Begriff der Potentialität in Bezug auf den Aufbau eines (ästhetischen) Urteils dem Begriff des *Soaussehen* der dargestellten Gegenstände an: “Dieses Soaussehen wäre [aber] erst dann wirklich vollendet, wenn die Ansichten aus ihrer bloßen Parathaltung und Schematisierung in die Aktualität und Konkretheit übergehen könnten. Aber dies ist erst bei einer Konkretisation des Werkes möglich.” (1972, 353)

Das bedeutungsfähige “hermeneutische” Potential (was bei Ingarden Parathaltung heißt) der vollzogenen, im literarischen Gebilde dargestellten Gegenstände und Ansichten, hat mit intersubjektiv-konstitutiven Fragen der Husserlschen Intentional-Analyse zu tun (Hua XIII; Beilage XLVI. Problem der Apperzeption, 359).

Wie bereits angedeutet, der Akt des Lesens als konstitutiver Bewusstseinsakt, der in apperzeptiver, d.h. deutender Wahrnehmung gründet, besagt aber nicht, dass jede zu Ende geführte Konkretisation eines literarischen Werks als eine intersubjektiv gültige Konstitution eines seinsheteronomen Gegenstandes betrachtet werden kann. Denn hier, dem allgemeinen Charakter der Intentional-Analyse zum Trotz, führt Ingarden die nächste Einschränkung bei der Bestimmung des Konkretisationsbegriffs ein, ähnlich wie Husserl es in einer Kritik der sensualistischen Apperzeptionslehre in den *Logischen Untersuchungen* getan hat (Hua XIX/1, § 14 [A 359 / B<sub>1</sub> 381]). So Ingarden:

Was haben wir im Auge, wenn wir von der “Konkretisation” eines literarischen Werkes sprechen? Statt direkt auf diese Frage zu antworten, wollen wir diese Konkretisation zunächst gegen die subjektiven Operationen, und allgemeiner, gegen die psychischen Erlebnisse, die wir während einer Lektüre haben, abgrenzen. (1972, 354)

Das Lesen eines literarischen Werks mit Rücksicht auf das persönlich-psychische und mannigfach-heterogene Erlebnis des Autors wird hier von dem Begriff der Konkretisation abge sondert, wobei hier aus der Kategorie der Konkretisation zwei wichtige Bedeutungen zu unterscheiden sind: a) Einerseits versteht man Konkretisation als eine wie auch immer in verschiedenen, wechselnden *Ansichten* vollzogene Erfassung und mit intersubjektiv geltenden Ansprüchen festlegbar (Ingarden 1972, 356), b) Konkretisation wird hier als Differenzkriterium einer ontisch aufgeklärten Beurteilung mit Rücksicht auf das Wesen des Gebildes, welche der Idee des Werkes am nächsten steht, gesehen (Ingarden 1972, 359).

Meine anfangs erwähnte Kritik setzt genau hier an: Ich bin der Meinung, dass einer der Gründe, weshalb die Rezeptionsästhetik fruchtbaren Zuspruch erfährt oder bisher

erfahren hat, genau in der Übernahme der Konkretisationsmöglichkeit (“a”) besteht. Diese erste abgeleitete Konzeption von Konkretisation, nämlich als eine wie auch immer in verschiedenen, wechselnden Ansichten vollzogene Erfassung und mit intersubjektiv geltenden Ansprüchen festlegbarer Auslegung eines literarischen Gebildes (Ingarden 1972, 356), wird jedoch von Ingarden nicht als absolute Konstitutionsentität des Gebildes wahrgenommen, denn die Konkretisation eines literarischen Werkes nach Maßgabe des psychisch bedingten Erlebnisses würde — “da jedes Erlebnis nur in der Reflexion oder im Durchleben des Aktes möglich ist” (356s) — eine ontologische *Seinsverschiebung* bedeuten, wonach das literarische Werk eine empirisch- und fremdbestimmende Wende bzw. Veränderung erfahren würde:

Indessen trifft dies weder für das literarische Werk selbst noch für beliebige Konkretisationen literarischer Werke zu. Und tatsächlich richtet sich niemand bei der Lektüre oder als Zuschauer im Theater auf eigene Bewusstseinserebnisse oder auf eigene psychische Zustände. Ein jeder würde lachen, wenn wir ihm vorschlägen, dies zu tun. Nur die theoretisierenden Literaturwissenschaftler verfallen auf den absonderlichen Gedanken, das literarische Werk “in der Seele” des Lesers zu suchen. (356s).

In diesem Sinne gelange ich zu der Auffassung, dass Ingarden den Ansatz der Konkretisation “b” als das konstitutionsmäßige und konstitutionsbildende Verfahren zur Bestimmung des literarischen Gebildes gedacht hat. Dabei lässt die Rezeptionsästhetik genau diese hier und anderorts von Ingarden belegte Unterscheidung unberücksichtigt, und zwar aufgrund eines jedoch genuinen Interesses der Rezeptionsforschung an der Sinnstiftung der Literatur und Kunst aktiv teilzuhaben, das u.a. darin bestand, die historische Selbstverständlichkeit und Selbstbestimmung des Lesers nun auch als wesensbestimmende Instanzen wahrzunehmen.

#### **IV. Was heißt: “Konkretisation durch Auffüllung der Unbestimmtheitsstellen”?**

Ich versuche nun zu zeigen, dass Ingardens Konkretisierungsbegriff durch Vervollständigung jener Unbestimmtheitsstellen

von Seiten der rezeptionsästhetisch Interessierten missverstanden wurde, weil man ihn mit Iser's *Leerstellen* undifferenziert angeglichen hat, und zwar möglicherweise durch einen allzu oberflächlichen, "diskontinuierlichen" Lese-Blick auf Kapitel 13, das über "Das Leben des Kunstwerkes" handelt (1972, 367ss) bzw. auf das gesamte Kapitel "II" *Vom Erkennen des literarischen Werkes* (1968, 147ss). Hier bringt Ingarden jene Ansätze in die Forschung ein, die später von Iser für seine *Phänomenologie des Lesens* teilweise übernommen wurden.

Das hier von mir pointierte Problem liegt freilich in der von Ingarden selbst eingeräumten Möglichkeit einer bzw. mehrerer Konkretisationen ein- und desselben Kunstwerkes (1968, 49ss). Dass es in der Weise mehrere nebeneinander existierende "Antonien Buddenbrook" eines empirischen Thomas Manns als Schriftsteller geben kann, sofern potentielle Konkretisationen vorhanden sind (soweit die Konsequenz Ingardens), heißt bei ihm mit Sicherheit aber nicht, dass jede dieser Konkretisationen einen adäquaten Rückschluss zum Verständnis des Werkes und dessen *Eigenart* (=konstitutionsbildende Merkmale) bedeutet (1968, 149s), weshalb sich die rezeptionsästhetische Berufung auf Ingarden letztendlich als unangemessen erweist. Wie ich das angedeutet hatte, diese hier im letzten Satz von Ingarden anvisierte *Phänomenologie des Lesens* mit Ausschaltung der psychologischen Untersuchung der seelischen Befindlichkeit des Lesers wurde in der Rezeptionsästhetik nicht verstanden, bestenfalls übersehen.

Wie es Gerigk bestimmend ausführte, das *Worumwillen* jeden literarischen Werkes zielt darauf hinaus, die Dichtung als bereits verstandene Welt in interpretatorischer Einstellung nachzuvollziehen (1975, 162); aber die Beliebigkeit, die im Interpretieren und seinen Werkzeugen steckt, wurde von Ingarden ausschließlich hinsichtlich der perzeptiven und apperzeptiven Vorgänge, im Sinne Husserls, untersucht und nie hinsichtlich einer rezeptionsästhetischen Theoriebildung der poetischen Wirkung.

In diesem Sinne vertrete ich die Auffassung, dass Begriffe wie *Perzeption*, *Apperzeption*, *Erfassung* und *Erkennen* in der Regel unzulässig auf historische und existenzielle *Rezeption*

reduziert werden können und dass die phänomenologischen Prämissen, die den ontologischen Untersuchungen Ingardens zugrunde liegen und für die Erkennung der im Werk dargestellten Ansichten gedacht sind, als hermeneutisch-semiologische umgedeutet wurden. Darüber hinaus ist es rund um die Ausbildung des Begriffs der Ansicht von Ingarden von wichtiger Bedeutung, dass er den Begriff *Ansicht*, unter anderen von Husserl, bzw. Waldemar Conrad geprägten Begriffen wie *Abschattung*, *Apparenz* und *Aspekt*, letztendlich als Ergebnis seiner Auseinandersetzung mit der Phänomenologie seiner Zeit gewählt hat (Ingarden 1972, 275).

Wenn man sich daran erinnert, dass hinter dem Ansatz der konstitutiven Phänomenologie "etwas bewusstseinsmäßig aufgefasst als Etwas" die modale sinnstiftende Apperzeptionslehre von Husserl steht, dann kann man den vorangegangenen Vorwurf, in Anschluss an eine Diagnose Holensteins (1976, 62) in der Tat bekräftigen, Husserl selbst habe diesen Kritikpunkt, wie bereits angesprochen, gegen die sensualistische Konzeption der Apperzeptionslehre verwendet. (Hua XIX/1, 381)<sup>9</sup>. Dass die Auffassung selbst sich nie "auf einen Zufluss neuer Empfindungen reduzieren" lässt, ist eine meiner dringendsten Warnungen an die rezeptionsästhetische Forschung, welche in der extremsten Ausprägung eine Suche nach der Wirkung von wahrgenommenen Neuheiten ist, im Sinne wie es bereits von Gerigk festgestellt wurde (1975, 182).

## V. Zum Verständnis der Hauptthesen Ingardens

Im folgenden Abschnitt zeige ich, wie der Begriff der Konkretisation von Ingarden als Überprüfungsinstanz von Konstitutionswahrnehmung und eidetischen Bestimmungsvorgängen zur Anwendung kam, und zwar an Hand folgender Stützpunkte: Erstens werde ich auf Husserls Begriff der eidetischen Variation zurückgreifen, um die phänomenologischen Implikationen zu zeigen, welche Ingarden auch seinem Begriff der Konkretisation zugrunde legt. Zweitens werde ich zeigen, dass man Ingarden auch angemessen durch eine phänomenologisch orientierte Darlegung des Begriffs der Werkimmanenz verstehen kann. Drittens stelle ich eine in meinem Sinne revidierte Sicht des Fiktions-Begriffs vor, der in

der Literaturforschung Anlass für unzulässige bzw. Ingardenfremde Bestimmungen gegeben hat.

Über den komplexen und oft weit aufgefassten Ansatz der eidetischen Variation bei Husserl im Zusammenhang mit der Frage nach dem Wesen des Kunstwerks, insbesondere des literarischen, mit der Ingarden fortwährend als Grundlage zu seinen Schriften zur Ontologie der Kunst zurückgreift, stelle ich mir folgende, natürlich von mir frei erfundene Redeweise Husserls vor:

Die Welt der Dichtung, die in originärer Weise bereits in ihrem *Wie* vollzogen und verstanden wurde, lässt beim Rückgang in natürlicher Einstellung die Erkenntnismöglichkeit zu, dass man aus dieser bereits verstandenen *Welt*, in Überprüfung unserer intersubjektiv gegebenen Kenntnis von ihr als *Personenverband*, teilweise Vergegenwärtigungen, Bilder, Dinge und Sachverhalte abrufen kann, die in aktueller natürlicher Einstellung als empirisch *daseiende* Analogien von Dingen und Sachverhalten (wieder)erkennbar werde<sup>10</sup>.

Dabei will ich genau zeigen, dass dieser hermeneutisch anmutenden “Quasi-Präsenz empirischer Vergegenwärtigungen und außerfiktionaler Fakten” in der Literaturwissenschaft große Bedeutung beigemessen wurde. Aber das Problem hier besteht darin, dass man dabei die empirisch real belegbaren Personen, Dinge und Sachverhalte, welche in der Dichtung schon vom Künstler *ausgeklammert* wurden, dennoch als weitere Zeugnisse der kommunikativen Aussage des Künstlers und seiner empirischen Umwelt “interpretiert” und deshalb ins Werk wieder *eingeklammert* hat.

Husserl ist derjenige, der in Zusammenhang seines Interesses an einer voraussetzungslosen Einsicht ins Wesentliche einer Erscheinung, eines Sachverhaltes bzw. eines Urbildes auf die Möglichkeit hinwies, dass aus frei wählbaren Vorstellungswiederholungen, Phantasien und *Entwürfen von Welten* ein *präsumptiver Seinshorizont* gewonnen werden könne. Aus diesem *Seinshorizont* zeichnet sich durch “die Mannigfaltigkeit von Nachgestaltungen letztlich eine Einheit hindurch, nämlich die des Ähnlichkeit begründenden Wesens,” was letztendlich zu einer Invarianten-Bestimmung des untersuchten Gegenstandes führen kann (Hua IX, 72ss; Hua XVII, 217ss; EU, 409ss).

Hier liegt die freie Ausübung der Variationsbildung gegenüber einem Ur-Muster vor, und zwar auf dem Weg zu

einer Wesensbegründung, welche ja in der Dichtung, weil sie bereits als ästhetischer Gegenstand konstituiert ist, nicht mehr in weiteren beliebigen Variationen "eingeklammert" werden darf. Denn wenn die *Wesensschauung* von Husserl ihren Anspruch in der Loslösung vom Faktischen auf der Suche nach dem Wesentlichen im Sinne einer transzendentalen Gegenstandsbestimmung hat (Sowa 2011, 153s), ist die Invariante in der Dichtung dieses bereits vom Dichter angeschaute und durch Kunstfertigkeiten terminierte *Urbild*, d.h. z.B. eines Entwurfs menschlicher Befindlichkeiten rund um Grundthemen unseres geistig-affektiven Umgangs mit der Welt und den Mitmenschen in Form von Liebe, Hass, Zukunftsperspektiven, usf.

In der von Jaubert vertretenen Rezeptionsästhetik wird meistens diese dichterische Invariante, d.h. *die Idee des Werks*, unter Heranziehung aller kontextuellen Interpretationsmöglichkeiten nicht nur in ihren historischen Bedingungen, sondern auch im Hinblick auf eine neue gegenwärtige Bestimmung untersucht. Dabei handelt es sich meist um ein Verfahren, das neben der Absicht, dem Vorwurf des Antirealismus der philosophischen Hermeneutik zu entgehen (vgl. Krämer 2007, 31), in der persönlichen Sorge eines Interpreten oder einer ganzen Generation von Interpreten gründet. Auf diese Weise ergibt sich bei der Untersuchung von Dichtung eine unangemessene eben nicht-phänomenologische *Wesensschauung*, die zufolge hat, dass die in der Dichtung verwobenen geschichtlichen Fakten aus der Dichtung wieder herausgelöst werden. Das ist ein Verfahren, das Husserl bestimmt nicht für die Dichtung vorgesehen hätte, denn für ihn galten diese Arten *ästhetischer Gegenständlichkeiten* bereits als ausgeklammert und lagen als Formen von produktiven, künstlerischen Invarianten bereits vor.

Es lässt sich nachweisen, dass sich Husserl z.B. in *Erfahrung und Urteil* zu diesem Thema äußerte, wobei er das Problem der Beziehung zwischen der erfahrungsbildenden Assoziation und den jeweiligen Urteilsmodifikationen im Blickfeld hatte, und Ingarden zumindest als Manuskriptform kannte:

Wir können uns, wenn es sich um Realitäten der vorgegebenen unendlichen Welt handelt, eine beliebige Anzahl weiter gebbarer Einzelheiten denken, die diese empirische Allgemeinheit als reale



Möglichkeit mit umgreift. Der Umfang ist dann ein unendlich offener, und doch ist die Einheit der empirisch gewonnenen Spezies und höheren Gattung eine "zufällige". (EU, 409).

Wenn diese phänomenologische Prämisse direkt literaturtheoretisch übertragen wird, dann könnte der Ansatz der sogenannten hermeneutischen *Horizontverschmelzung* der rezeptionsästhetischen Einstellung, welche ja auch eine positive und überaus interessante Funktion im Literaturunterricht innehat, seine Bestätigung finden<sup>11</sup>. Aber hier wird klar das Problem übersehen, dass diese einleuchtende erkenntnistheoretische Sachlage bereits in der Dichtung neutralisiert erscheint, d.h. als bereits vom Dichter so und nicht anders verstanden. Denn *eidetische Variation* in Form von Dichtung ist, um mit einem zeitgenössischen Literaturwissenschaftler wie Gerigk zu sprechen, "bereits verstandene Welt." (1991, 31) Mit Husserls Worten handelt es sich um im Vorfeld abgezeichnete, endlich *fortgesponnene* Variation von Welt als Invariante (EU, 411)<sup>12</sup>.

Mit Hilfe der von Gerigk formulierten *poetologischen Differenz* (1991) ist das Wissen um solche empirische Referenzen jedoch nicht (mehr) notwendig, denn wenn das Wesen der Dichtung darin besteht, interpretiert zu werden, und zwar nach dem, was das Kunstwerk selbst als Invariante, als ausgedrückte Idee, von sich selbst aus sagt (31), dann dürfte meine, unsere, interpretierende Lektüre des literarischen Werks, nach Gerigks Ansatz, keine eidetischen *Meta-Invarianten* eines möglichen empirisch belegbaren, im Falle z.B. "Hamlets", dänischen Königreiches nötig haben, denn unsere Erörterungsstelle in Raum und Zeit ist und bleibt das vom Verfasser des Werks letztendlich Entworfenene, eine bereits angefertigte eidetische Variation, jene notwendige "Hamlet-Invariante". D.h. die freie eidetische Variation in der Dichtung ist bereits jenes Resultat in Form eines *Seinshorizonts*, welches Husserl als Ziel der phänomenologischen *Wesenserschauung* gemeint hatte.

## VI. Ausblick

Beim Konstitutionsbegriff, von der rezeptiven Seite des Lesers aus, handelt es sich bei Ingarden also um eine erkenntnistheoretische Fragestellung einer einzunehmenden

bestimmten apperzeptiven Einstellung (1929, 165). Und genau bei dieser Formulierung “einer bestimmten apperzeptiven Einstellung” versteckt sich ein breites Forschungsfeld innerhalb einer text-wissenschaftlichen Hermeneutik, die aber nicht weiter von Ingarden verfolgt wurde. In diesem Sinne erweist sich als sinnvoll, abzuwarten was neue Untersuchungen über die Erkenntnistheorie Ingardens ergeben, welche sich nicht mehr primär aus der Iser-Forschung herausentwickelt (vgl. Steltner 2010, Sneis 2015; Chrzanowska-Kluczevska 2015).

Mein Versuch, teilweise aus dem fast unerschöpflichen Quellenmaterial Edmund Husserls, die von Ingarden soweit belegt wurden, ansatzweise eine *Entwischung von Äquivokationen*, im Sinne Eugen Finks (1966, 1), zu unternehmen, mag etwa nicht ganz gelungen sein, und dennoch, was ich als ein bestimmtes Ziel mit dieser Schrift hatte, war zu zeigen, wie hilfreich der Begriff der Konkretisation von Ingarden für literaturtheoretische Fragen ist, um weitere Analysen über Fragen der Konstitutionswahrnehmung und eidetischen Bestimmungsvorgängen des literarischen Werksbegriff anzustellen. Bleibt man daran treu, so meine Einsicht, dann könnte man die Leser-Psychologie und die bereits aufgeworfenen Ansätze der Rezeptionsästhetik mit Erfolg umgehen, der ständigen Zunahme im Buchmarkt an gegeneinander konkurrierenden literaturtheoretischen Überblicksdarstellungen zum Trotz.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> So Nietzsche in seiner Einleitung zu *Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile*: “Man ist nicht umsonst Philologe gewesen, man ist es vielleicht noch, das will sagen, ein Lehrer des langsamen Lesens: – endlich schreibt man auch langsam [...] sie selbst wird nicht so leicht irgendwomit vorsichtig, mit Hintergedanken, mit offen gelassenen Thüren, mit zarten Fingern und Augen lesen.” (1880, 17).

<sup>2</sup> Man beachte in der Hinsicht, dass Iser selbst auch nicht unbedingt als Hermeneutiker gelten kann, im Gegensatz z.B. zu Jauß, wie Hans Krämer es trefflich bemerkt, insofern “er sich der bei Collingwood und Gadamer formulierten Frage-und-Antwort-Kategorik bedient” und sich auch “gelegentlich [mit der] Konzeption der linearen Kontinuität [und Rekonstruierbarkeit des Epochenwandels im Sinne] Gadammers” beschäftigt (vgl. Jauß 1970, 185, bei Krämer 2007, 31).

<sup>3</sup> Ich bin mir der Tatsache dessen bewusst, dass heute der Begriff *Hermeneutik* nicht mehr zweidimensional betrachtet werden kann; denn

dagegen spricht die Unzahl an Neuprägungen und Tendenzen rund um das Problem des Verstehens selbst. Wie Matthias Jung feststellte, es wird wohl nicht gelingen, “eine einzige schlechthin paradigmatische Form des Verstehens zu isolieren, die dann allen anderen als Muster dienen könnte”. Daher verbiete es sich, so Jung, “die Verben 'verstehen', 'auslegen' und 'interpretieren' als Überbegriffe für eine ganze Reihe von Phänomenen zu behandeln, denen eine Familienähnlichkeit deshalb eignet, weil sie Realität als Korrelat lebensweltlicher Erfahrung aufschließen, diese also als 'sinnhaft' verständlich machen. Hermeneutik wäre dann jene Theorie, die die Vielfalt solcher lebensweltlichen Zugänge beschreibt, analysiert, ihre Wechselbeziehungen untersucht und insbesondere auch der Frage nachgeht, wie sie sich zum wissenschaftlichen Denken verhalten.” (2001, 133).

<sup>4</sup> An der Stelle sei zu bemerken, die Art und Weise wie sich Hans Krämer in seiner *Kritik der Hermeneutik* zum Begriff des Erwartungshorizonts äußert: “Man tut gut daran, das Paradigma der Erwartungshorizonte, dessen weltweiter Erfolg fraglos ist, von den antirealistischen Belastungen der Philosophischen Hermeneutik freizuhalten.” (2007, 31).

<sup>5</sup> So Gerigk: “Die Sache einer Dichtung wird von ihrem Autor gemäß der poetologischen Differenz entfaltet, d.h. durch Umsetzung einer Absicht (*Intentium*) in Charaktere und Handlung (*Designata*) veranschaulicht. Und diese Sache bietet immer auch einen ›Anblick‹, der innerfiktional nicht vorkommt, einen Anblick also, der nur für uns Leser, sichtbar ist: vom außerfiktionalen Standpunkt.” (2002, 105).

<sup>6</sup> Der Begriff *Horizont*, der sich in der Rezeptionsästhetik eingepreßt hat, stammt aus *Wahrheit und Methode* (1990, 307); und zwar als Leitbegriff zu der Annahme, es gäbe keinen konkreten Zustand menschlicher Existenz, der nicht durch seine Stellung (Situation) auf der Welt verstanden werden könnte. Und dadurch wird das sinnstiftende Bewusstsein über die Schranken der Endlichkeit einer je gegebenen Daseins-Gegenwart in Beziehung gebracht. Diesbezüglich bezeichnet Horizont den seit der Antike anschaulich-metaphorischen “Gesichtskreis, der all das umfaßt und umschließt, was von einem Punkt aus sichtbar ist.” (Gadamer 1990, 307).

<sup>7</sup> So Gerigk: “Das Wesen der Dichtung besteht darin, interpretiert zu werden. Damit diese Feststellung zutreffend bleibt, muss allerdings Interpretation als Herauslegung dessen verstanden werden, was eine Dichtung von sich aus zum Ausdruck bringt. Die Sache der Dichtung hat mit dem, was sich verrät, ohne dass es gesagt sein wollte, nichts zu tun.” (1991, 13).

<sup>8</sup> So Gadamer: “Die Idee einer allein richtigen Darstellung hat angesichts der Endlichkeit unseres geschichtlichen Daseins, wie es scheint, überhaupt etwas Widersinniges. [...] Hier dient der offenbare Sachverhalt, dass jede Darstellung richtig sein will, nur als Bestätigung dafür, dass die Nichtunterscheidung der Vermittlung von dem Werke selbst die eigentliche Erfahrung des Werkes ist. Dass das ästhetische Bewusstsein die ästhetische Unterscheidung zwischen dem Werk und seiner Vermittlung im allgemeinen nur in der Weise der Kritik, also dort, wo diese Vermittlung scheitert, zu vollziehen weiß, stimmt damit überein. Die totale Vermittlung ist ihrer Idee nach eine totale.” (1990, 114s).

<sup>9</sup> So Husserl: “Wichtiger für uns sind die Unterschiede zwischen dem Dasein des Inhalts im Sinne der bewussten, aber nicht selbst zum

Wahrnehmungsobjekt gewordenen Empfindung und des Inhalts im Sinne eben des Wahrnehmungsobjekts. [...] Ich *höre*, das kann in der Psychologie heißen, ich empfinde; in der üblichen Rede heißt es, ich nehme wahr: ich höre das Adagio des Geigers [...]. Verschiedene Akte können dasselbe wahrnehmen und doch Verschiedenes empfinden. [...] Ebenso umgekehrt: Gleiche Empfindungsinhalte 'fassen wir' einmal so und das andere Mal anders auf. Gewöhnlich legt man in der Lehre von der 'Apperzeption' vorwiegenden Nachdruck auf den Umstand, dass unter Voraussetzung gleicher Reize, der empfundene Inhalt nicht überall derselbe sei, [...] Aber mit dergleichen reicht man keineswegs aus, und vor allem kommt es phänomenologisch darauf nicht an. Wie immer die im Bewusstsein präsenten [...] Inhalte entstanden sein mögen, es ist denkbar, dass in ihm gleiche Empfindungsinhalte vorhanden und doch verschiedene Gegenstände wahrgenommen wären. Die Auffassung selbst lässt sich aber nie und nimmer auf einen Zufluss neuer Empfindungen reduzieren [...].“ (Hua XIX/1, § 14 [A 359 / B1, 380s]).

<sup>10</sup> Vgl. etwa folgenden Abschnitt: “Beilage XLV. Die phänomenologischen Ursprungsprobleme. Zur Klärung des Sinnes und der Methode der phänomenologischen Konstitution.” (Hua XIII, 350).

<sup>11</sup> Unter Horizontverschmelzung wird in der Regel “die Bedingung der Möglichkeit von Verstehen als Vollzugsform bezeichnet” und für literaturwissenschaftliche Überlegungen ist dieser Begriff wichtig geworden, so der Literaturtheoretiker, Ingo Berensmayer, weil damit in der Regel die “Überlappung [...] zwischen dem Horizont (d.h. der Summe der Erwartungen und des Vorverständnisses) des verstehenden Subjekts und dem Horizont (der historischen oder kulturellen Einbettung) des fremden Texten” adäquat veranschaulicht werden kann. (2010, 36).

<sup>12</sup> So Husserl: “Aus dem Gesagten ist bereits klar geworden, dass zur Gewinnung der reinen Begriffe oder Wesensbegriffe empirische Vergleichung nicht genügen kann, sondern dass durch besondere Vorkehrungen das im empirisch Gegebenen zunächst sich abhebende Allgemeine vor allem von seinem Charakter der Zufälligkeit befreit werden muss. Versuchen wir, von dieser Leistung einen ersten Begriff zu bekommen. Sie beruht auf der Abwandlung einer erfahrenen oder phantasierten Gegenständlichkeit zum beliebigen Exempel, das zugleich den Charakter des leitenden 'Vorbildes' erhält, des Ausgangsgliedes für die Erzeugung einer offen endlosen Mannigfaltigkeit von Varianten, also auf einer Variation. M.a.W. wir lassen uns vom Faktum als Vorbild für seine Umgestaltung in reiner Phantasie leiten. Es sollen dabei immer neue ähnliche Bilder als Nachbilder, als Phantasiebilder gewonnen werden, die sämtlich konkrete Ähnlichkeiten des Urbildes sind. Wir erzeugen so frei willkürliche Varianten, deren jene ebenso wie der ganze Prozess der Variation selbst im subjektiven Erlebnismodus des 'beliebig' auftritt. Es zeigt sich dann, dass durch diese Mannigfaltigkeit von Nachgestaltungen eine Einheit hindurchgeht, dass bei solchen freien Variationen eines Urbildes, z.B. eines Dinges, in Notwendigkeit eine Invariante erhalten bleibt als die notwendige allgemeine Form, ohne die ein derartiges wie dieses Ding, als Exempel seiner Art, überhaupt undenkbar wäre.” (EU, § 87, 411).

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**Gerardo Argüelles-Fernández** is Professor for Literature at the Autonomous University of Querétaro, Mexico. His main research interest is Roman Ingardens Aesthetics and other familiar topics related with the Theory of Literature and Hermeneutics. He recently published *Roman Ingarden. Teoría literaria entre Husserl y Gerigk.* Barcelona: Anthropos, 2016.

**Address:**

Gerardo Argüelles-Fernández  
Facultad de Lenguas y Letras. Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro  
Campus Aeropuerto.  
Anillo Vial Fray Junípero Serra s/n. C.P. 76140  
Santiago de Querétaro.  
Querétaro.  
México.  
Email: [gerardo.arguelles67@gmail.com](mailto:gerardo.arguelles67@gmail.com)

## Narrative as Motivator in Foreign Language Acquisition

Alin Cristian  
CTBC Financial Management College, Tainan

### Abstract

This paper argues that, by allowing recognizable patterns of human action to emerge through the intimidating foreignness of a linguistic medium, narrative deserves a privileged place in language education. To overcome the inhibiting effect of strangeness, and thus facilitate the adoption of a foreign language by new users, it helps if the listeners embark upon a regression toward the narrative origins of their familiarity with the world as articulated in their mother tongue. Harking back to the early childhood comfort of being held conjointly by a story-telling nurse and a linguistic substitute of the amniotic liquid, narrative acts as indispensable companion of our estrangement in general—linguistic, or otherwise. The argument brings into play the Greek notion of *paideia*, in which disciplined training and childish amusement converge, in an effort to accommodate the conclusion that the intellectual version of self-growth—including acquisition of foreign languages—benefits massively from the good old nurturing of narrative, its time-revered nurse.

**Keywords:** demotivation, linguistic estrangement, narration, passive resistance, involuntary memory, *paideia*

### 1. Introduction

Aristotle wondered when a fleeing army in disarray stops and holds its ground against an enemy in pursuit of it. Confronted with unusual sounds, intonations, graphic signs, syntactic structures, not to mention codified uses of silence, oftentimes students of a foreign language lose heart to the point of retreating helter-skelter to the familiar lap of their mother tongue. To those who think that such a panic effect appears disproportionate to the reality of the challenge, it is useful to remind that a foreign language forms a cohesive, organized

system—a “disciplined,” well-functioning cohort of alien signs—not only as support of one’s expansion into otherness, but also as stressor. The intimidating effect of this organized ensemble should not be underestimated.

Needless to point out that, developmentally speaking, seeking the protection of an already known linguistic medium remains a questionable, albeit only too understandable reflex gesture. For, although indeed offering comfort, one’s mother tongue does so at the expense of self-growth—understood here most generally, as capacity to risk for the sake of learning new games and to get a corresponding gratification from playing them passably well. Undoubtedly, monolingualism also offers possibilities of self-growth, but within a range that remains forever limited to the options available in its single system of signs. Hence, the existential question subtending the present discussion: what are the risks accompanying one’s exposure to a foreign language?

It is not excessive to claim that a foreign language tempts one toward a much deeper, more intimate estrangement than one’s mother tongue could ever create even at its most poetic. We are the language games we play and games are defined by their rules; only multilingual speakers can appreciate the superior freedom different languages offer to express the subtle nuances of what translation crudely conflates into a “same” thing. But with more freedom comes more anxiety. Although the saying goes that translation betrays the original meaning (*traditore traduttore*), it is equally, if not more, proper to acknowledge that, *in listening to one’s own heart in one language only, one drastically reduces the infinitely nuanced plurivocality of its expression through the poverty of linguistic means one is actually able to mobilize.*

In monolingualism, the monolog taking place within the subject represents merely a reduced, truncated version of a more original multilingualism that desire, this *alien* guest within ourselves, needs for expressing itself accurately. Put differently, upon acquiring foreign languages, the expression of new desires gets acknowledged by the subject; another way of looking at the world comes with another set of appetites, as different things start to look desirable through the new

linguistic lens. This alone suffices to raise suspicions about the innocence of foreign language acquisition. A host of foreign inner voices joins the ones that make use of the speaker's native tongue, with the consequence that an upward vertigo—a Babel tower of sorts—probes the mind that has been linguistically enabled beyond the glass ceiling of monolingualism.

Besides, against this murmuring background of increasing complexity, in foreign language acquisition specific anxieties crop up in the mind of students: from embarrassment at being perceived as clumsy by others to the painful self-discovery of one's own limitations, each of which, in its turn, further diversifies into shaky mastery over one's social image, various body parts involved in phonation, abstract grammatical mechanisms, or fluency in adjusting one's speech performance to the feedback received. "Many Japanese are so embarrassed by the inevitable mistakes that a non-native speaker makes that they prefer not to try at all," concludes *The Economist* before signaling the resolve of Shinzo Abe's government to turn things around and approach this foreign language game in more methodical, disciplined ways (2016). How martial a language acquisition campaign intrinsically is might in the end depend upon the levels of anxiety it triggers in the learner.

This paper focuses on the demotivating power foreign languages tend to have; it suggests that the time for a relevant change of attitude is optimally bided through narration, whereby the epos—transformation brought into words—permeates and softens the listener's manifold resistance. If a passively resisting student with basic listening skills lends his/her ear to stories in the intimidating foreign language, the reward promises to be a significant increase in his/her courage to deal with that linguistic version of the unfamiliar. Gradually, an internalization of the narrative voice has good chances to take place: from the "it says" of the story to the "I say" of monolog. This is because narrative traffics in existential positions and temporality, being capable of reaching deeply into the basic temporal structures of the receiving subjectivity and of eroding the latter's position—in this case, resistance.

The important underlying assumption of my overall argument is that, in the foreign language the listener cannot

readily cathect with, he/she already has some basic listening skills to be further expanded without much cooperation from their possessor. Conversely, it is unlikely that, exposed to narratives in a language completely beyond one's ken, the linguistic transfer of skills can actually take place; in this case, all productions in the ignored foreign language run the risk of being relegated to background noise.

## 2. The ontology of spite

The reality of foreign language learning shows that some useful associations get established not so much despite as *because of* the emotional resistance built in the process. An epic battle against what may be perceived as invasion of the subject by foreign ways of being has good chances of becoming memorable, *hence workable and reliable*, precisely thanks to the resistive mobilization it triggers. Like all significant stressors, the trying foreignness of a language can't be easily forgotten, thus doubling as efficacious mnemonic device.

The problem signaled by *The Economist* is patent especially in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, but by no means limited to them. A key point when trying to understand it is that one remembers not only what one wants, with this involuntary memory ending up as precious ally of an educational system faced with high levels of passive resistance. Analogously, one is not touched and affected only by what one chooses; experience shows that we hear more than we listen for, just as we happen to get moved when we would rather not. A fundamental asymmetry, or disparity, appears to favor giving over and above rejecting; Heidegger calls this *finitude*.

In this sense, the good news for education is that some unacknowledged learning takes place irrespective of how willing or unwilling one is to receive it—a simple, yet far-reaching observation that also shapes the basic strategy of advertising. The choice of rejecting something comes only upon, and always remains subordinated to, one's already *learning about it*; foreign languages are no exception to this rule.

Ontologically, the human being cannot help being open to whatever comes from beyond the limits of its control; sufficiently present in one's environment, messages in a foreign

language that encounters substantial passive resistance end up being understood at a certain level, especially if placed at significant decisional crossroads of everyday practice. For instance, the written words *entrance* and *exit* eventually get paired with their respective meanings upon being sighted often enough where they belong, no matter how demotivated one might be regarding the learning of English. They blend in the overall practical, equipmental intelligibility of one's environment. Obviously, this is a worst-case educational scenario, in which not even a minimal cooperation on the part of the student can be taken for granted.

Starting from this minimal learning as prerequisite for opposing something—an acquisition granted by our mere being in the world, it should be stressed—foreign language teaching can shift its focus toward expanding the implicit, unacknowledged linguistic progress without much help from the learner. Few, if any, people were explicitly taught how to negotiate a flight of stairs, and yet most of us ended up doing it well; before being anything else, a foreign language is such a sequence of unfamiliar gestures one can be 'architecturally' conduced to acquire. Again, when it comes to motivation, it is useful to remember that, fundamentally, humans are always already being moved before deciding whether or not to heed the prompt: we are pushed this or that way by tendencies that can only be given in to, or countered, but not stilled in their impersonal givenness.

So it moves all around one—in the external world as much as 'within' the subject—and narratives, while on the one hand being *about* this movement, on the other hand enact the movement itself, i.e., have effectiveness, traction—to be precise, at-traction. They literally pull one along this or that direction of environmental motion by the ears. What stories narrate—transformative action, intervention in the world, more or less effective movement—reaches the listener in the way of a surreptitious erosion of his/her standpoint. With various fortunes and before anything else, the linguistic medium of the stories engulfs the listener—a very real touch, regardless of how realistic the contents of the stories may be. *The whole of a foreign language lurks in the few words of it the listener already*



*understands*; on the narrow, frail bridge they form between the familiar and the unfamiliar, an entire foreign army of signs can silently sneak into the resistive fortress.

Notorious for trespassing tightly closed boundaries, the octopus might deserve some linguistic attention in the context of passive resistance. For, not unlike this expansive cephalopod, a language can pull its whole “body” through a very narrow passageway it finds using a most precarious grip—a handful of known words or phrases, as already mentioned. Now, when it comes to the passageway itself, the human ear is helplessly just that—a gaping opening without natural capacity to close itself. No doubt, it is highly desirable that students consciously lend an ear to the foreign language of their choice; but even if they do not, *their ear is there to take in all the outcasts of a faltering interest prior to rejecting them*. This is tantamount to claiming that the human ear has always already been lent to the world, with which it has a tenacious ontological bond: the unwritten “contract” subtending this lending act remains solidly non-negotiable.

### 3. The primacy of listening

One might readily concede that, of all four linguistic skills—listening, speaking, reading and writing—listening stands out as the most passive, and as such the least exposing for the student. Little wonder, then, that it represents the point of minimal resistance within a learner of anything, and of foreign languages in particular. Barthes specifically designates it as the level where language is at its most universal: “. . . the universality of a language—in the present state of society—is a fact of audition, and by no means of speech performance [*élocution*]” (1953, 63).

What he means by this is that a spoken or written enunciation singles out the performer, reveals his/her shortcomings, unlike listening, which grants one a relationship with language as universal as anonymousness itself. Through language production one’s possibly embarrassing nakedness transpires, whereas in silent listening one remains safely clad in secrecy. A linguistic system of signs gives itself to its listeners more equally and indiscriminately than any performative act ever

does, as the latter remains indelibly marked by the producer's individuality. Whether listened to by an expert or by a beginner, the linguistic system of signs offers itself with the same impersonal and impartial objectivity, permeating all ears equally.

Universality (Lat. *unus + versus*) suggests that a given language turns toward everyone in the world the same unbiased comprehensibility, all the differences of reception coming from the existential position of the users with respect to it. Indifferent to personality, the system of signs per se favors no one in terms of access to it, notwithstanding that obvious variations appear in the way each specific individual receives this gift. When it comes to fairness, that of any language can be said to rival the divine one; Danish, Hungarian, or Basque are just as open to potential users as Chinese, Spanish, or English.

The practical consequence of this for foreign language learning is that listening doesn't expose the listener to others' judgments, whereas spoken or written linguistic performances inevitably do—a valuable, if unsurprising, find for learners intensely preoccupied by problems of self-image and position among peers. The most welcoming because universally inclusive linguistic community is that of listeners; with linguistic performance, the primitive commune uniting an audience, to use a Marxist mytheme, starts to reveal differences in terms of skills possessed, and therefore a potential for hierarchization, or even segregation. Before being thoroughly understood, in the audible register language already promises itself as mythical realm of equality through anonymousness, where no listener gets diminished or rejected; and its promises like to be listened to, just as money is said to enjoy being counted.

Notice that this promised land of vibrating air reaches out to the listener rather than wait to be reached at the end of an arduous journey: by projecting language at a distance, it makes the impersonal system of signs seem forthcoming and solicitous, almost humanely touching.

If the universality of a language is a fact of audition, it makes sense to lure a resistive, most demotivated and defensive subjectivity outside its gated walls using an *auditive* Trojan Horse. Reading introduces an additional opacity specific to

graphic signs, the mastery of which may require specific additional efforts, depending on the script used by the learner's mother tongue. Compared to reading, which is mediated by this pre-requisite knowledge of graphic signs, listening benefits from the advantage that the human ear remains open even in a state of utter passiveness. Moreover, biologically the sound of human voice has the power to elicit attention from humans more than other categories of sounds. In an auditive medium a language is at its highest level of accessibility, whereas a graphic medium of signs has to be made permeable through preliminary efforts of familiarization. At least as far as the economy of language acquisition is concerned, listening appears to require the least effort and commitment, which recommends it for difficult beginnings.

When the main problem is motivation, one can safely claim that, structurally speaking, the human being is more movable in the auditive register than in the visual one, as the ear remains naturally exposed to otherness, whereas the eye can be turned away or closed at will. This is perhaps not the last reason why the mythical Sirens—the epitome of temptation and irresistibility to movement beyond one's limits—also favored the audible over and above the visual expression. At least from a distance, we are at our weakest and most vulnerable—here with the sense of touchable, sensitive, movable—in the medium of sounds.

This is not a trivial point in an engagement where teaching cannot afford to lose and the student's attention cannot be counted on.

#### **4. Motivation: the unmoved mover**

The movement at work in motivation is not initiated by the subject but rather comes as response to a more original appeal from beyond the boundaries of subjectivity—from the world “out there.” When motivation gets detected in a subject, the latter appears to be claimed by an ampler dynamism surpassing the limits of subjectivity. It makes no sense to talk about motivation in isolation from, and independently of, the motivating representation formed in the mind of the subject, or the sources of its interpretation.

From this phenomenological perspective, the subject's response appears as only half of a larger circle, which includes the more original appeal (Chrétien 1992). In the case of a foreign language, the student's response—a patent lack thereof remaining just another kind of response, strictly speaking—comes in the wake of a call launched both in and by a system of signs unfamiliar to the addressee.

What exactly does it mean to say that the learner feels no motivation to enter a new linguistic game? An absence of motivation does not breach the above-mentioned circularity; in fact, in it the response to the foreign call takes the form of a block, or demonstrative passiveness—a *sign of absence*, a blank, which is not tantamount to an absolute absence of response. There is always communication with the ultimate background of all actions, the only difference being in the kind of response one gives; after all, displaying boredom, disinterest, lack of involvement, fatigue with the soliciting call remain pretty self-evident messages. “The call is too foreign to me; I'm stuck in its translation” can be the subject's expedient way of procrastinating the response.

It is this most primitive language of self-evident messages—the six basic human emotions displayed—that also appears to be the most foreign, insofar as its transparency opposes the greatest resistance to an objectifying understanding. What goes *without saying* remains hardest to translate into sayable messages; more foreign than any foreign language is the simplistic lingo in which demotivation mutters its deafness to the call. To be precise, deafness gets induced by, and as such remains co-original with, the muttering which screens out the call. The excessively foreign language of self-evident, foregone conclusions blocks the call of the merely foreign language—that is, used by humans elsewhere. According to this view, *the most foreign discloses itself within the most familiar*, which means within the rapport one has with oneself.

As shown in the previous section, any language calls universally, all azimuths, indiscriminately, albeit the individual responses it receives differ greatly among themselves. Whether picked or not, its call resounds equally in all directions, the pull it conveys potentially affecting all subjects exposed to it. We

have seen in this a direct consequence of the fact that, as an impersonal system of signs, language cannot found anything like personal favoritism. Hence, *demotivated* need not mean more than responding with a block to the pulling force the call does exert. And the more irresistible the appeal sounds, the more inertial—i.e. resistive to movement—the summoned subjectivity turns. In a slippery world, where no entity is absolutely secure in its position, only a spike in inertia appears capable of resisting one's being swept away by the call: one suddenly becomes self-centered, obsessively repetitive and irresponsible, in order to prevent getting swayed. Qualifying the call as one of *change* verges on redundancy.

Again, what is it about the call of a foreign language that turns off some of its receivers? Great efforts are made at all levels of the educational system to produce the desired opening of the subject by implication, indirectly—i.e. starting from the social effects multilingualism is touted to bring along. 'It is a key that opens many doors,' or 'it is a passport granting admission into new socialscapes' are all too familiar lines, the truth and merit of which remain uncontested here. Granted the sufficient presence of such guiding signs in one's learning environment, and granted also the receptivity of the student to some calls, although not the specific one from the foreign language in case—briefly, granted the absence of depression, which drowns *all* calls from the world—why does a promising system of signs and the games it enables one to play still leave significant numbers of students unmoved?

In his semiological approach, Valsiner explains the resistance to explicit prompts in terms of other, deeper-level undetected signs of the opposite sense (blockers), that supposedly sabotage the functioning of the first set (2007, 53-72). Notwithstanding the interest of such an assumption, which sets afoot an army of specialists professing to detect the counter-signs hidden in one's social environment, the present paper favors a different, Sartrean approach, according to which it is the immeasurable freedom one gets called to that inhibits the response. Put differently, one's motivation is not sabotaged by the presence of a counter-sign, but rather by the open-ended character of the reference movement itself—the unbearable, excessive freedom resounding in the call.

What if, in the call of a foreign language, the ultimate foreignness lying beyond any individual human existence—its radical Other—can actually be detected by the fine hearing of demotivated students? A paralyzing level of anxiety, which by definition cannot be ascribed to anything present, and as such cannot be ascribed to a signifier blocking the culturally promoted movement, could mark the eruption into the present of one's future impossibility of being (death). Anxiety does not let itself be pinpointed to any specific signifier, it does not crop up around any present thing, but can be said to permeate one's familiar world through the interstices gaping between entities present intra-worldly.

### **5. Foreign, all too foreign**

This idea is magisterially illustrated by Kafka's well-known short-story "The den," in which a badger-like animal living underground and putting the final touches on its new-built subterranean warren suddenly perceives a faint whistling sound impossible to ascribe beyond doubt to any known source. What initially had promised to be the worldly guarantor of its peace—the den—unexpectedly turns into the field of an imminent battle with an approaching intruder, the noise of which keeps growing. Needless to spell out that the unidentifiable threat responsible for the creature's anxiety is a thinly veiled metaphor for death, and that, within the greatest freedom from fear granted by the animal's home, an undefinable stressor insidiously creeps. The very existence of this enemy appears hard to ascertain, stuck as it necessarily remains on the hazy horizon between objective reality and hallucination.

What matters most in the present context is that the whistling sound, albeit not linguistically articulated, evokes the intimidating voice of foreignness itself—same as the one resounding in the background of any foreign language. For the foreignness of anything present harks back to the great unknown lying beyond the limits of human existence. The sound in case cannot really be called a signifier blocking the movement toward the completion of the den; rather, it suggests a crack within any signified—one that fatefully opens all meaning to an unfathomable beyond.

*Mutatis mutandis*, within any representation that motivates the subject there lurks a constitutive fault, through which the greatest freedom awaiting a living being beyond its limits voices its irresistible call. This is to say that, when demotivated, we try to resist the irresistible—the movement toward the ultimate limit of our possibilities and the impact with the impossible.

Does a baby's cry, in its foreignness, voice the same Other of any language? Is a baby, in his/her utter fragility, in touch with that inexpugnable intruder that drills through our flesh in exactly a lifetime? Be that as it may, the earliest anxiety a baby expresses when crying finds a workable match in the nurse's storytelling voice. It may whistle "out there" in a Kafkian sense, and most unsettlingly at that, but the shrill sound the implacable intruder makes can also be somewhat drowned in a loving, familiar human voice that carries a meaningful story. The battle of songs between Orpheus and the Sirens mentioned by Apollonius of Rhodes in his *Voyage of Argo* (IV, 895-921) and fleshed out in Wagner's *Flying Dutchman* not only begins with the acquisition of one's mother tongue but is also resumed anew with the learning of every foreign language. The foreignness of the foreign cannot be beaten back once and for all.

Yet, one may wonder, is this talk about a battle of songs more than an educated baloney having little, if anything, to do with demotivation? To be sure, it is less than a thesis—a *hypothesis*—but as such on the same par with the talk about a hidden counter-sign supposedly boycotting the functioning of a culturally promoted system of prompts. To say that there is, at some level, a concealed counter-sign blocking the reference movement that other signs prompt the mind to perform appears no different from claiming that there is, within the signified, a gaping opening that inhibits the movement toward the excessive, terminal freedom it promises. The only disagreement between these two theories concerns the ontological status of the blocker—a present signifier vs. a gaping absence that no sign can signify.

Perhaps meaning was invented precisely to cover the meaningless, shrill sound breaking into human existence

through the crack in any “ultimate” motivating image, or finality worth pursuing. Like the backdrop of a stage, the meaning one’s culture of origin bestows upon the surroundings screens out their intrinsic meaninglessness. But, when learning a foreign language, an extreme, unbearable foreignness threatens to creep back in, carried by the unfamiliar sounds, voice inflections, graphic signs, syntax, and silence usages; first and foremost, the student who braves this torrent of foreignness needs courage to beat back into place the most unsettling background resounding in it.

With every new language learned, the mythical battle of songs pitching measure against the immeasurable resumes anew, just as the learner regresses toward an infantile helplessness when engulfed by the alien environment of sounds and signs. For, before actually mastering it, the measures of a foreign language remain just a matter of faith: the other’s measures can be so different from one’s own as to put into question the very feasibility of a linguistic transfer. Measures are a matter of feel, as ultimately everything is measured with one’s own standard, i.e., against one’s already acquired skills and familiar limits thereof. After all, one is the limits one believes to have. How systematic, then, is this alien system of signs called a foreign language if I cannot actually feel its systematicity as such—if its elements remain beyond my effective organizing powers? Their inertia, understood as resistance to being ordered, begets the learner’s equally inertial response, in the form of a balking at the movement of appropriating the new system.

In this sense, and following a familiar Socratic simile, a foreign language teacher can be likened to a midwife supposed to assist with the delivery of a linguistic performance bound together by an unfamiliar organization and internal coherence. No wonder, then, that this alien production acquires an inhibiting character verging on the monstrous—what from within me comes out as quite other than me. Can one easily bear to witness such a delivery of otherness from one’s own “loins,” so to say? If not, it becomes understandable why *the successful production of a linguistic performance in a foreign language might actually be more inhibiting than its failed*



*version*: the mistakes one makes function as signature marking the linguistic production as the speaker's own, thus reducing its stressful alien character.

A correct performance in a foreign language presents the inconvenience of being too alien by comparison with a flawed one; who knows what other alien productions, and especially *how alien*, might further come out of my poorly charted inner landscapes? As a student of foreign ways of being, what if I discover that, in fact, it is so easy and attractive to adopt foreign measures that, once set in motion, the estrangement will become rather unstoppable? For, if any genuine beginning is difficult, nothing guarantees that a genuine end will come more easily.

By playing on the learner's imagination, a narrative offers an efficacious buffer between the familiar and the unfamiliar: relative familiarity with the content can bridge the gap opening at the level of form, and vice-versa. Absorption in the world of the story (in its semiotic field) can alleviate anxieties about the alien medium of its delivery. Medium and what is mediated seem able to relay each other to a certain extent. At the same time, though, storytelling is nothing but a way of exposing the listener to the foreign values inherent in the story; idyllic as it may look when girded by the shiny halo of childhood recollections, its innocence remains treacherous, as deep down it functions as a trap set by foreignness.

## 6. As the story goes ...

... so does the audience. Narrative has the intrinsic capacity to dislodge us from our inertial self-identifications, tempting our subjectivity with an array of possible new roles to cast ourselves into.<sup>1</sup> This is just another rendition of the important 20th-century philosophical insight that, as medium of thinking, language and the narrative movements within it determine the subject's self-understanding.

But one needs to press the question further into this process of self-constitution, namely, in the direction of skill-acquisition: does it make sense to conceive of the subject as genuine *initiator* of the language acquisition process at will, or is rather the performative dimension of subjectivity itself some

kind of precipitate, indeed, a sediment of the narrative movements traversing various linguistic media? Better still: is our very capacity to acquire itself acquired, or does it fall, pie-like, from an almighty *linguistic sky*?

Straddling the divide between nature and culture, self-growth might be essentially a narrative that realizes itself upon being listened to, a crude version of bildungsroman, in which the drive to skill acquisition literally gets under the listener's skin after passing through the ears. At the level of *Homo sapiens*, narratives can be regarded as advertising campaigns of evolution, i.e., as intrinsically prescriptive messages that one cannot help receiving subliminally. This means that we inevitably become what we listen for in what we listen to; like a trellis, the narratives wrapping us support our development prior to being supported by it.

Granted some biological growth takes place even in the absence of language, as the famous Lucy case proves, the self's full-fledged expansion into new realms of ability depends on giving in to the implicit temptation that narratives articulate. Human existence appears essentially "sticky," insofar as it adheres to representations carried from the past into the future by the epos articulated in one's community of origin; Sartre's novel *The Nausea* provides a most eloquent description thereof.<sup>2</sup> We expand our limits insofar as we let ourselves be moved by various stories of human becoming, or to the extent to which we effectively get seduced by the exemplary action of this or that, narratively evoked personage. To grow is to grow precisely toward a narratively featured new role.

Now, when it comes to the content of narratives in general, Ortega y Gasset pointed out that it is "very difficult today to invent an adventure that can interest our superior sensibility" (cited by Blanchot 1959, 174). The number of possible basic scenarios that narratives recount appears relatively limited, different versions thereof allowing for an intuitive recognition and anticipation of a few fundamental patterns diversity envelops. The complications affecting the minimalistic "such-and-such got born, lived, and died" can be considered matters of details, *the main outlines being familiar to listeners across cultures and linguistic divides by virtue of belonging to*

*the same living world*. Rustling leafage of an ideated tree, in their diversity narratives implicitly refer to a common trunk and central branches of intersubjective possibilities, on which the understanding of another's story always hinges.<sup>3</sup>

Most significant in the present context is that, when recognized, this family kinship possessed by narratives in all languages tends to alleviate the anxiety created by linguistic estrangement. The language of a story may, indeed, be intimidatingly foreign, but what helps the listener more easily cope with this foreignness is the relatively commonsensical core of the story content—that part of it which goes without saying, and as such shapes the listener's expectations. Insofar as it can be traced back to universal possibilities of human experience by virtue of the kinship mentioned, the listener's familiarity with the content of a story told in a foreign language reduces the stressful linguistic foreignness. Older than the world, narrative counterbalances the blocking novelty of the medium carrying it.

As far as foreign language acquisition is concerned, although the object of study is foreign—a system of signs, to be precise—the messages it conveys as medium of communication can enhance or reduce this foreignness. Moreover, the *practical modality* of conveying meaning—i.e. through storytelling, dialog, reading, writing, singing along, absent-minded drill, analysis of abstract grammatical mechanisms at work, or other—also affects the emotional coloring of the student's encounter with the foreign language studied. In this respect, narrative stands out as arguably the developmentally oldest ordering structure of experience, and one that had its anxiety-reducing virtues tested against the pre-linguistic terrors of babyhood.<sup>4</sup> All the “why ... ?” questions a normal child asks early in his/her development are attempts to piece together the puzzle of the world, to gain access to the syntagmatic dimension of the perceived events, to articulate a workable narrative of reality.

So the strangeness of the new language can itself become engulfed in a two-pronged familiarity of both use and content. Military strategists call this *the pincer maneuver*; in principle, it is capable of giving the upper hand to the fleeing army of language learners who previously broke ranks in panic.<sup>5</sup> If one takes flight from the foreign language *as*

*object of study* into the foreign language *as medium of passive immersion*, one's power relation with it might in fact change dramatically. Here Deleuze's adage "*all perception is hallucinatory, as perception does not have an object*" (1988, 125, emphasis in the original) acquires its full relevance: if ultimately perception does not have an object, the perceived foreignness of a foreign language can itself be placed among hallucinatory phenomena pertaining to fear of the unknown. Thematising an unfamiliar medium of communication into an object of study also conjures up its demons (objectifies them); conversely, immersing oneself in it as simply another region of the all-encompassing communication continuum might have the virtue of "dissolving," together with the image of the object itself, the fright it inspires.

It was when the diffuse musicality of the boundless marine medium became song *of the Sirens*—when it got ascribed a source, a specific representation, and an objective process of production—that madness struck the ancient sailors, claiming them in the depths of alienation. In their case madness took on the precise form of trying to join a would-be origin of the ubiquitous call.

The wise Ulysses' response, though, was to remain open to it without the possibility of following the erratic chant toward its treacherous, illusory source."Let the medium remain medium, don't pin it down to any objective representation because such a gesture is inescapably *arbitrary*" was the gist of the managerial measures he took on the ship's deck. Well-versed in handling monstrosity and erring, indirectly the paradigmatic wanderer of western traditions offers us an effective ruse to handle the excessive foreignness resounding in foreign languages: listen without immediately responding, remain exposed but not too reactive. The safety he found in the mast of his ship can be internalized in the form of stern discipline—a measure perhaps instinctively replicated in the stiff passive resistance some students oppose to the heuristic objectifications of another language.

To cope with the irresistible call of strangeness, the small social body aboard Ulysses' ship underwent a noteworthy segregation along the fuzzy divide between perception and

action: the one who heard the call could not respond to it, and the ones able to respond could not hear it. Without this artificial interruption within the reflex arc—the stamp of culture on nature—which essentially defers the beginning of any new action inspired by the obscure powers of the unfathomable, exposure to foreignness threatens to be fateful. For the alien invites to alienation—how controllably remains yet to be seen, hence essentially uncertain. “Thou shalt not react *immediately* to the inspiring foreign call” is the commandment that saved Ulysses’ expedition; as if this suspicious-sounding appeal of otherness needed to be first taken out of context in order to get deprived of its *excessive* power, and thus somewhat tamed before getting an actual response.

Passive listeners, too, might be waiting for the opportune moment to give in to the temptations of a foreign language that otherwise threatens to carry them away just like the mythical song of the Sirens. Within the inner maze of the self, the call is supposed to turn around until its raw otherness wears down to more approachable, manageable levels.

## 7. Paideia: enveloping in order to develop

At this point, a look at the Greek term *paideia*—roughly equivalent to the English *education*, *culture*, or *disciplined upbringing*—strikes one as particularly apt to reveal the two-way movement of fearing and overcoming fear, of defensive retreat during which a new bold expansion is hatched. At the loving breast of the nurse, who for Plato sets effectively in motion the educational process (*Laws* II 653 b; *Rep.* IV 425 a), the infant gets the relevant cultural order inculcated by means of a soft firmness, if the oxymoron be permitted.<sup>6</sup> Although Winnicott’s concept of *holding* emphasizes a reassuring softness over and above firmness, it remains impossible to know exactly the effect of an embrace on an infantile psyche, i.e. whether its softness is indeed more or less appreciated than its formative firmness. Because firmness has the invaluable virtue of keeping at bay an excessive freedom possibly perceived as predatory and re-experienced as such later, upon exposure to a foreign language. On the one hand, the nurse dispels the various fears

the world inspires, while on the other she forms a social rampart resisting an undue withdrawal of the infant within his/her private world. Contact with the nurse turns out to be regenerating; it grants the anxious infant a new beginning by inflecting the movement of retreat into one of renewed self-assertion.

Little wonder that, from Plato's masculine position, this remarkable reversal fringes on magic: "In fact they [the mothers], so to say, put a spell on their babies just as the priestess does on the distracted in the Dionysiac treatment." (*Laws* VII 790 e) It is a sedative, calming, anxiolytic spell that works essentially through bodily mediated seduction. (Gurley 1999, 352) And what the mother, or nurse initiates—which one precisely depends on the social status of the baby—represents a task later to be assumed by the pedagogue. These three close assistants with the baby's social growth have in common the privileged position of responsive witnesses to the development of the latter's signifying body (Vilatte 1991, 18). The acquisition of one's mother tongue is usually steeped in pleasure-giving, anxiety-relieving bodily interactions—no trivial matter at a stage where, mired in babbling, speech production gets systematically rescued by means of benevolent and patient guesswork. The birth of speech in an infant is through and through a rebirth; although playful and affectionate, this inculcation of law and order through signs has the most serious outcome imaginable.

However, not Plato but perhaps the Aristophanes of 'The Clouds' best captures this gratifying form of intimacy typical of nursing and from which language is more or less arduously wrestled:

STREPSIADES. I brought you up, you shameless wretch, your  
lisp I understood.

If you cried *bry* I brought you drink, if *mam* I brought you food.

Before you'd finish saying *cac* I'd rush out to the yard. (1962, 138)

The key point here is that the anxiety-relieving nursing goes together not only with the telling of stories but also with a solicitous *reading into* the earliest not-quite-speech productions of the infant. Their flawed outcome does not remain the last word on the issue but gets enveloped in a non-identical

repetition that rights by echoing them. Offering comfort to a distressed baby and putting understandable language into his/her mouth are often moments of the same appropriating gesture whereby culture reduces the foreignness responsible for the baby's cry; it is too often forgotten that one always enters one's mother tongue as a clumsy foreigner. Practically, the nurse behaves *as if* she understood the babbling without much ado, as interpretative correctness is not the main issue at this formative stage. The picking up of one's inner monolog owes everything to this largely imaginary dialog that initially shapes and reinforces it.<sup>7</sup> The baby's self-growth appears dialogically entwined with a narrative of his/her growth conveyed by the proximally present meaningful adults. To guess the meaning of an infant's babbling is to project an optimistic, idealized image of linguistic ability on him/her; it all comes down to offering the fledgling speech production a well-structured, coherent linguistic "trellis" on which to unfold.

This is what narrative does while comforting the listener: it offers security in the form of reassurance upon gently screening out an excessive freedom in the listener. Analogously, in the case of beginner foreign speakers, from among a flurry of barely intelligible speech productions, the foreign language teacher extracts the meaningful whole tolerantly and playfully—almost through a stroke of magic, one could say with Plato. It is Fink, though, who stressed the role of play in maintaining human experience attuned to its unitary background: "Human play is a particularly remarkable mode in which existence relates to everything there is and in which it lets itself get permeated and animated by the whole." (1960, 228) Before being actual communication, linguistic exchanges in an insufficiently mastered foreign language unavoidably come close to a jocular guesswork—a kind of oral X-and-O game, where the anticipation of syntagmatic structures is at stake. In fact, judging by the indetermination it brings into play, it can be called, with Valsiner, a *hypergame*.<sup>8</sup>

For this latter-day "nurse," who happens to be the foreign language teacher, the main question is: how long will it take the listener to interrupt the storytelling in a bold, self-asserting gesture? Everyone is eager to see this happen as soon as possible, but an incubation time is necessary for a foreigner to

grow confident enough to break the silence of a purely passive listening *in the language of the story*. Story-telling might not be the most productive of teaching methods, but it certainly is the least intrusive one; for more defensive natures, it tends to be the path of the *least* resistance to self-growth. As basic dialectics has it, the less one pushes from outside, the less resistance builds up inside. To speak like Winnicott, the teacher's patient and understanding holding of a student listener within the embrace of the semiotic field at work in a foreign language narrative has all the more chances to convey maternal care the less explicit imperatives it carries. When self-confidence is a problem, the most trustable because least demanding version of encounter with a foreign language appears to be listening to stories; sooner or later, the unconditional welcome it offers to all will get appreciated for all that it is worth.

In the notion of *paideia*, the ideas of disciplined training and childish amusement converge, both circumscribed by the affectionate playful embrace of the nurse. Similarly, the foreign language of the narration pervades, supports and empowers the listener's monolog: the vague murmur he/she hears within him/herself gets molded after the linguistic patterns carried by the narrative. In passive listening, the actual guesswork of the nurse gets transposed on a virtual level: it becomes the interplay of expectation with perception, in which the former does the 'babbling' in mind, while the latter provides audible correctives.

The passive listener's silence need not be taken as an absolute absence of linguistic response; the fact that the reply remains just virtual does not necessarily make it less educable or valuable. In the wake of the story, "it babbles" in the listener's mind—an echo-like effect of the foreign language that continues to seek a full-fledged bodily actualization even after being denied it. And, with its inevitable repetitions and recapitulations, the narrative reinforces this virtual speech performance at its incipient stage. Even when the listener, embarrassed, self-censors the actualization of this childish "babbling," it sounds more foreign than native in his/her head: the foreign language is beginning to speak (in) the speaker, to form his/her gestures of response.



Enveloped by the story—which means, according to Deleuze, held in its soft power—the listener is underway to developing an inner monolog *in the language of the narrative*. The story is literally putting foreign words in the listener’s mind, if not quite in the mouth yet. As mentioned toward the end of the previous section, this song of otherness does get taken in, even though the actual response to it does not come on the spot. What is more, once taken in, the song starts to roam the listener’s mnemonic labyrinth, forcing new passages through it, blocking older ones, getting altered through the various gorges it permeates, while at the same time also reshaping those. It is history at work through stories—history recanting itself along new conduits after being temporarily choked.<sup>9</sup> If, as Heidegger believes, language is our dwelling, a *foreign* language offers first and foremost a virtual raw space to be more or less arduously carved and shaped through bodily engagement. Softness and firmness combined belong to its very nature. This resonant cavity allows one to experience otherness in a manageable fashion, i.e., according to measures that, although foreign, remain within human range.

## 8. Conclusion

We have seen that emotional resistance does not have the last word in language acquisition and that hearing is something one cannot help doing in the absence of special technical aids. This open channel of sensory perception keeps us attuned to ampler movements taking place in the context, from which one’s motivation derives. The Sartrean suggestion that this very openness, when perceived as excessive, triggers a block allowed us to understand passive resistance as primarily an attempt to counter the alienating call resounding in the foreignness of a foreign language.

With its absence of demands, hence of additional stressors, a passive listening to stories in a foreign language appeared to stand out among possible pedagogical approaches principally because of the promise of indiscriminate, universal acceptance it makes. Eventually, what gained ground was the view that, within a listener sufficiently exposed to narratives in a foreign language, the inner monolog need not remain faithful

to the listener's mother tongue but tends to be affected by the foreign linguistic medium approximately as a nurse reads into a baby's babbling. In the form of narrative, a foreign language nurses its listeners by primarily restoring their faltering courage.

While not recommendable in terms of educational efficiency, passive listening works better than other non-violent methods in cases of extreme demotivation, where a weak self cannot be otherwise enlisted to assist with its own growth. It is more of a last resort before the teacher him/herself gets drawn into the whirlwind of exasperation, surrendering to a defeatist resignation. For it is not rare that individual despair aspires to expand to a generalized panic, within the context of which the issue of personal responsibility can only difficultly get raised.

Of course, it is never easy to determine beyond doubt who is really desperate and who is not; as Kirkegaard points out, the one who despairs most of the time does not quite experience deep despair but merely produces noticeable signs thereof. It is not within a teacher's power to test the genuineness of a student's passive resistance and gauge how much of it is due to real and how much to simulated impairment. But, regardless of the authenticity of the symptoms displayed, and while delegating the power to pass a competent verdict to other professionals, a sure benefit for the would-be victims of utter discouragement comes from exposure to narratives in the foreign language studied.

Not only those suffering from extreme demotivation but every student of foreign languages can make progress by listening to stories in the new linguistic medium to be conquered. It is a method that, tenacious in its softness, just like a nurse, makes concessions to that least reasonable, least controllable, most spoiled and most indulging part of a learner. In the end, it is up to each particular student to decide how maturely or immaturely to go about acquiring a foreign language. The good news is that progress can only be relented or hastened, but not completely arrested, as long as the ear takes in foreign stories. The rest is just the impersonal epic of a foreign language conquering social space—its march to catch up with the ubiquity of today's advertising.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Not only narrative but art in general “has a limitless power of converting the human soul,” according to Jaeger, and this insofar as “it alone possesses the two essentials of education—universal significance and immediate appeal.” (1946, 36)

<sup>2</sup> Valsiner prefers to talk about “the affective bonding of human beings to their everyday life arrangements” (2007, 169).

<sup>3</sup> “The myth is like an organism which undergoes incessant transformation and renovation,” writes Jaeger (1947, 66 ).

<sup>4</sup> In *The Laws*, Plato actually mentions the rhythm and melody of choric arts as harbingers of order in human life (II 654 a). This may have been the case for Ancient Greece; but, given that choric art is not present in early childhood across the whole spectrum of cultures, it can be safely assumed that often enough rhythm and melody come to us *through language* prior to music and dance.

<sup>5</sup> Envelopment as essentially an exercise of power has here all its Deleuzean connotations.

<sup>6</sup> An internalized version of the nurse, the spirit of law and order “. . . waits upon them in all things and fosters their growth, and *restores and sets up again* whatever was overthrown in the other [lawless] type of state.” (*Rep.* IV 425 a, emphasis mine)

<sup>7</sup> Echoing Vygotsky, Valsiner also points out that “it is in our imagination, in continuity with play, where we build up our future development.” (2007, 69)

<sup>8</sup> According to Valsiner, “hypergames are games where the partners do not know the list of strategies of the other players (as those lists may change), not their goal orientations (and their changes) in the course of the game.” (2007, 328)

<sup>9</sup> T. S. Eliot masterfully expresses this in his poem *Gerontion*: “Think now/History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors/And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,/Guides us by vanities. Think now/She gives when our attention is distracted/And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions/That the giving famishes the craving.” To speak like Eliot, the soft power of the “supple confusions” in one’s inner monolog are made possible, and thus the monolog is enabled, through narratives in a foreign language.

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**Alin Cristian** holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from The Catholic University of Leuven and specializes in contemporary continental thought. Apart from the books *Etos românesc și sacrificiu [Romanian Ethos and Sacrifice]* (1998) and *Al treilea descălecat [The Third Dismount]* (2000) he published two volumes of poetry, one novel, a volume of short stories, as well as translations from French philosophers and various shorter essays in phenomenology, literature and cinema. He presently teaches social sciences at CTBC Financial Management College in Taiwan.

**Address:**

Alin Cristian  
CTBC Financial Management College, Tainan  
No. 600, Section 3, Taijiang Boulevard, Annan District,  
Tainan City, Taiwan 709  
E-mail: [cristianalin@hotmail.com](mailto:cristianalin@hotmail.com)

## La perversion rend-elle heureux ?\* Barthes dans les Balkans, mytheme et pharmakon

Maja Vukušić Zorica, Nenad Ivić  
Université de Zagreb

### Abstract

#### **Perversion makes happy ? – Barthes in the Balkans, mytheme and pharmakon**

Although translated, in Croatia Barthes's status is reduced to the one of sign, *mytheme* and *pharmakon*. Biti's and Solar's readings, framed by the beginnings (Aćin) and more recent ones (Rafolt), do show that the mystification of the text produces a certain fetishism of writing, a narcissism of the reader combined with a perversion that simply makes one happy. Croatian Barthes, decidedly structuralist, shows that the spatiality of the mythical language is just as crucial as its temporality.

**Keywords:** mytheme, pharmakon, mystification, text, structuralism, reading

« Car, si l'on parle d'étudier [μελέτη: étude, réflexion, discipline], cela veut dire que la connaissance se retire de nous; l'oubli c'est en effet le départ hors de nous de la connaissance, et l'étude inversement, en créant un souvenir nouveau à la place de celui qui s'en va, conserve la connaissance, de façon qu'elle semble être la même. »

Platon, *Le Banquet* 208a (trad. Robin)

« Quant au livre intérieur de signes inconnus [...], pour la lecture desquels personne ne pouvait m'aider d'aucune règle, cette lecture consistait en un acte de création où nul ne peut

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\* Barthes, R. 2002. « La déesse H. ». In *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes dans Œuvres complètes IV, Livres, textes, entretiens (1972-1976)*, Paris: Seuil, p. 643.

nous suppléer ni même collaborer avec nous. [...] Ce livre, le plus pénible de tous à déchiffrer, est aussi le seul que nous ait dicté la réalité, le seul dont 'l'impression' ait été faite en nous par la réalité même. »

Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*

« - Mon cher, dit Lousteau, la critique est une brosse qui ne peut pas s'employer sur les étoffes légères, où elle emporterait tout. »

Honoré de Balzac, *Illusions perdues*

À l'occasion du centenaire de la naissance de Barthes, l'Europe de l'Est se doit de remettre en question les héritages barthésiens, leurs usages, leurs détournements et leurs mythologies respectives.

L'histoire de Barthes en Croatie peut se réduire au constat suivant: le seul Barthes identifiable en Croatie demeure massivement structuraliste. Non seulement il n'y a pas d'études suivies de Barthes en Croatie, mais il y est même, pour la plupart, réduit au statut de *signe*, signe de la « scientificité » ou simple décor, *fioritura*. Barthes y est devenu lui-même un mytheme, instrumentalisé, conceptualisé, et donc anéanti. La délicatesse et les nuances typiquement barthésiennes s'en trouvent caricaturées ou effacées. Son œuvre y est décimée, même si les traductions des *Mythologies*, de *Critique et vérité*, du *Plaisir du texte* et des *Variations sur l'écriture*, des *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* et du *Journal de deuil*, plutôt nombreuses, pourraient témoigner d'une situation radicalement différente.

La réception de Barthes en Croatie, globalement, fait voir le superflu de tout classement, de toute grille hiérarchique, qui ne font qu'instaurer une *doxa*, porter un jugement trop net sur le livre (lu ou non lu)<sup>1</sup>.

Ainsi, en laissant tomber Barthes comme *fioritura* des textes des critiques et des scientifiques croates et yougoslaves, nous pencherons-nous sur les lectures de Barthes de deux de nos théoriciens croates de la littérature les plus réputés, Vladimir Biti et Milivoj Solar, en les accompagnant d'une étude des péritextes (préface à la traduction du *Plaisir du texte*

par Jovica Aćin) et des derniers textes critiques (un article récent sur la photographie de Leo Rafolt) de la réception de Barthes en Croatie.

## 1. Lever de rideau

En 1959, le quotidien yougoslave *Politika* commande à un certain Roland Barthes un article, dûment publié en mai sous le titre *Voies de la nouvelle critique littéraire en France* (Samoyault 2015, 327). Choix judicieux, et surprenant, au moins à première vue, favorisé par une conjoncture historique: la rencontre heureuse de la politique, de la tendance des dirigeants du pays de chercher des alliés, ou des supporters, en dehors de la ligne de parti et de la *Gleichschaltung* de Moscou, et de l'art, de la tendance des lettrés à chercher les types de critiques qui seraient, en quelque sorte, non-alignées, ni marxistes vulgaires, ni bourgeois. Pour les observateurs vigilants, compétents et bien informés de la scène critique et littéraire française (et le milieu critique et journalistique belgradois était à l'époque à prédominance francophone, imprégné de culture française) Barthes, semble-t-il, représentait un choix parfait: d'inspiration marxiste mais non allié au Parti communiste français, qui à l'époque était très stalinien, opérant une critique dévastatrice de la société bourgeoise, capable de montrer le chemin à suivre aux critiques littéraires yougoslaves qui (c'est une façon de caractériser leur visée politique et non pas leur production) essayaient de concilier les égards pour l'art avec les forces de transformation sociale. Il s'agissait, en effet, *grosso modo*, de mettre en œuvre les principes de « l'ouverture de la littérature » prônés par Miroslav Krleža (1950, 1; 1952, 10-11) depuis la fin de la guerre, et formulés en opposition avec les préceptes du socialisme réaliste, phénomène éphémère dans le renouveau culturel yougoslave d'après-guerre.

Au tout début, Barthes en Yougoslavie (et le quotidien *Politika*, de grande renommée et excellent, était lu dans tout le pays) était représenté par un texte original. Représenté, c'est-à-dire offert comme une boîte à outils ou comme un intensificateur de pensée aux lettrés yougoslaves, libres de s'en servir. Sans grand succès semble-t-il, en dehors des cercles très restreints. Il faut attendre la notoriété internationale de

Barthes pour que les traductions de ses œuvres voient le jour: *Mythologies*, bien sûr, mais aussi des choix de ses textes, et, enfin, des traductions d'œuvres particulières telles que *Le plaisir du texte*, *Sade Fourier Loyola*, *La chambre claire*, dûment préfacés et préparés, dans la plupart des cas, avec soin. Trajectoire sans originalité de la présentation d'une œuvre, qu'on retrouve, d'ailleurs, partout dans le monde.

Quatre ans après la parution d'un recueil de traductions de Barthes sous le titre *Littérature, mythologie, sémiologie* par Ivan Čolović et Miloš Stambolić (Belgrade 1971), Jovica Aćin, en offrant au public la traduction serbe du *Plaisir du texte* (impeccable mais provoquant, pour des raisons internes au pays, une dizaine d'années après, une traduction croate), éprouve le besoin de faire précéder le texte d'une longue et minutieuse préface (Barthes 1975). Il s'agissait, à l'époque, d'un texte étrange pour les professionnels de la critique littéraire. Il est difficile, je crois, de mesurer aujourd'hui le choc produit par ce texte: les professionnels, accoutumés depuis peu à un Barthes scientifique, frotté de linguistique, à la fois boîte à outils pour la confection des thèses et intensificateur de pensée pour les critiques sociaux, se sont retrouvés devant un Barthes résolument individuel, fragmentaire, refusant le système, bref inutilisable; « écrivants », ils s'attendaient à un Barthes écrivain, et ils trouvaient un Barthes écrivain. Il était facile, pour les professionnels, de s'extasier (et l'extase reste un des volets très importants de la réception de Barthes, résultant en une écriture mimétique, monnaie de singe critique) ou d'interpréter *Le plaisir du texte* comme un retour à un vague impressionnisme bel esprit (à ranger, pour eux, parmi les épouvantails tels que le scientisme marxiste et le positivisme historico-littéraire). C'est justement ce piège que Jovica Aćin veut éviter dans sa préface:

La pluralité du plaisir dans l'écriture et la lecture, la rupture avec les motifs théo-téléologiques de la signification et la perte de la position privilégiée de l'analyste, entraînera la disparition, non sans résistance, bien sûr, et de bonne grâce, de l'herméneutique classique, avec sa nature « puritaine », censoriale, close, métaphysiquement constituée, dont les buts étaient toujours idéologiques, homogénéisants, monosémiques, économiquement circonscrits et unidirectionnels. (Aćin, 1975, vii)



Cette phrase, écrite, rappelons-le, en 1975, mérite qu'on s'y arrête, malgré son apparence vieillotte, quelque peu abîmée, de lieu commun. Les lieux communs sont, on le sait, révélateurs: points de départ d'une argumentation, ils établissent des liens avec la multitude, avec ce qui est acceptable pour le public général (Perelman 1976, 58): cristallisations de la *doxa* (pour employer le vocabulaire cher à Barthes), ils agissent sur elle pour faire passer, en le domestiquant, ce qui est nouveau et étranger: dans ce cas, pour faire passer l'hétérogénéité dans l'homogénéité.

Les problèmes de ce passage correspondent, au niveau historique et politique, point par point aux problèmes rencontrés par l'introduction de l'autogestion (de la pluralité d'intérêts, de désirs et de jouissances), dans le système communiste (monosémique, homogénéisant, privilégiant une position), innovation tentée en Yougoslavie depuis les années cinquante. L'oeuvre de Barthes semble voué à jouer ici, de façon oblique, à la fois le rôle d'un intensificateur de pensée permettant d'aplanir les contradictions et d'apaiser les différends, et celui d'un dispositif stratégique en forme de passoire permettant d'affirmer certaines options politiques. Et Acín d'écrire: « Ainsi une lecture provenant du plaisir dont le destin polyvalent est décrit par Barthes devient-elle un protocole parmi d'autres, pas encore trouvés ni pratiqués, de la lecture matérialiste, qui, en totalisant la dialectique spéculative du texte, (considéré de point de vue idéaliste exclusivement comme phénomène de communication) met la lecture debout, sur ses pieds (Lénine) », les antécédents de ce nouveau protocole matérialiste étant Hegel, Lénine, Marx et « sa lecture magistrale de l'économie politique classique » (Acín, 1975, xiv).

L'enjeu de cette interprétation (qui aujourd'hui a l'air d'une rodomontade) impliquant la « vision psychosomatique du texte » (Acín, 1975, xvi) dans la tradition marxiste-léniniste, présente des analogies avec les efforts du fameux mouvement de l'école de Korčula ou de la revue *Praxis*, dont les participants, en s'insurgeant contre la tradition « puritaine » de la lecture de Marx et en lisant de nouveau les textes de la tradition marxiste, essayaient de trouver au socialisme un « visage humain ». Ce visage humain politique retrouvait, hypothétiquement, chez

Acín, son corps culturel, son οἶμα dionysiaque, dans un chassé-croisé de légitimation mutuelle.

Ce qui est encore plus intéressant, c'est que cette belle période, dont l'argumentation est construite sur une série d'oppositions binaires, nie effectivement ce qu'elle affirme: elle affirme l'hétérogène et le pluriel contre l'univoque et l'homogène et, du même coup, par cette affirmation même, détruit ce pluriel. En effet, une fois érigé en principe, ce pluriel s'avère singulier: univoque et homogène, linéaire et monosémique (comme la *political correctness* aujourd'hui, qui est une monosémie du pluriel). Ce qui est, en plus, souligné, et rendu inéluctable, par l'emploi du futur, qui tombe comme un couperet: la théo-téléologie, chassée par la porte, revient par la fenêtre.

C'est une théo-téléologie étrange, sans Dieu et sans télos, mais qui n'est pas la mort de Dieu nietzschéenne, « la nullité ou néantité du Souverain, du Narcisse, de l'Un, du Principe » (Nancy 2015, 82). On ne se prive pas facilement de ce qu'on a forgé. En effet, rien ne confirme, aujourd'hui, l'optimisme du ton apodictique d'Acín. L'expérience yougoslave de l'autogestion s'est soldée par un échec. Les intérêts particuliers ont commencé à s'autogérer avec les succès qu'on connaît: la pluralité des intérêts s'est désagrégée en petites communautés agressives et matamores, chacune pratiquant son homogénéité à soi, chacune jouissant de son corps à soi et démembrant joyeusement le corps de l'autre. De même, la critique littéraire, pirouettant dans tant de *turns*, s'est transformée en rhizome de pratiques hétérogènes (ce qui n'est pas mauvais en soi), affichant la pluralité du sens, mais pratiquant, au niveau institutionnel, la réduction en silence, l'exclusion de tout discours non traduisible immédiatement aux termes de la *doxa* scientifique du moment (c'est-à-dire l'exclusion de toute écriture; le Principe: si vous voulez faire partie de la caste professionnelle, n'écrivez surtout pas ! (Déjà Barthes était perçu comme ennuyeux par les étudiants vers la fin des années 70 – Samoyault 2015, 667). Les professionnels de l'enseignement et de la critique aujourd'hui, dans la plupart des cas, nient par leur pratique ce qu'ils affirment pompeusement et généreusement: la pluralité du sens.

## 2. Biti et Solar

Avant d'aborder le *Dictionnaire des notions de la théorie littéraire contemporaine* de Biti et le livre *Les frères et les fils d'Œdipe, Cours sur le mythe, la conscience mythique et le langage mythique* de Solar, deux ouvrages où le nom de Barthes paraît incontournable, deux ou trois mots sur ces auteurs respectifs sont nécessaires. Quoiqu'ils appartiennent à deux générations différentes de théoriciens (Solar, né en 1936, est l'aîné de Biti, né en 1952), les deux théoriciens illustrent bien la question cruciale du film *Lost in translation*, celle de Bob s'adressant au directeur japonais: « Is that all he said ? »<sup>2</sup>

Les deux théoriciens, Solar et Biti, font chorus en laissant voir les limitations du modèle structuraliste. En fait, assez précocement, Solar montre ce que la théorie française de l'époque, où le structuralisme commence à dominer la phénoménologie (et le marxisme), ne voit pas, si l'on ne compte pas ces quelques « structuralistes heureux » tel Barthes. Bien que Barthes, selon Solar, admette la valeur opérationnelle du structuralisme « méthodologique », il combine la phénoménologie et le marxisme dans sa critique du structuralisme « ontologique » et s'attire ainsi les reproches des marxistes français, tels Sartre, Garaudy, ou Lefebvre, visant son scientisme, son antihumanisme, la réduction non dialectique de l'histoire à la diachronie, de l'évolution à la statique, de l'ontologie à la gnoséologie, et le fait de négliger la *praxis*, de nier le sujet au profit des structures.

En revanche, Biti reproche au structuralisme et à la phénoménologie de toujours réduire un état humain à la position secondaire – selon lui, le structuralisme ne reconnaîtrait pas l'inconscient, ni la phénoménologie le conscient, car elle favoriserait le rapport direct, préscientifique et inconscient. Or, quant au rapport de Biti à Barthes, nous ne pouvons que déplorer le fait que le premier ne se souvienne de ses propres leçons préférées dans son livre « d'analyses, de dialogues et de discussions », *Pripitomljavanje drugog (L'Apprivoisement de l'autre)* (Biti 1989), où il postule l'existence du couple antagoniste de la « théorie domestique » – je force volontiers le trait par la traduction –, et de la « théorie sauvage ». Il s'agit à la fois de

l'attaque obligatoire du théoricien qui veut se trouver une place au sein de la théorie contemporaine, en endossant l'opposition de Peter Sloterdijk (1987) entre les partisans de la « théorie domestique » – ptoléméenne, appuyée sur le pragmatisme du bon sens, le binarisme obligatoire, le refus de la théorie et de l'histoire – et les « penseurs sauvages », qui ne se fient pas au présent, à la recherche d'un fondement perdu et de la production perceptive du réel. Car Biti ne reconnaît pas le capital « sauvage » de Barthes. Les deux, Solar et Biti, en fait, passent malheureusement à côté de la richesse, de la diversité et du raffinement des analyses barthésiennes, notamment de ses dernières années.

### **3. Le Barthes de Solar, ou le structuraliste mauvais herméneute et mauvais phénoménologue**

Avec Solar, ce qui se dégage, c'est son effort à suivre uniquement la première des trois « phases » tirées de *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, recouvrant le tome I des *Œuvres complètes (1942-1961)*, qui pose Sartre, Marx et Brecht comme socle et la mythologie sociale comme thématique de ses écrits. En fait, le Barthes de Solar va être encore un démystificateur « sérieux », et donc, d'un certain côté, toujours la promesse d'une déception.

Dans le 14<sup>e</sup> cours de son livre *Les frères et les fils d'Œdipe, Cours sur le mythique, la conscience mythique et le langage mythique* (1998), intitulé « Le Mythe aujourd'hui » de Barthes. Les raisons de la 'nostalgie du mythe'. Mythe et la critique littéraire », Solar veut faire voir l'actualité des mythes et la naissance des mythes contemporains. Il mentionne la stratégie dite barthésienne de la « découverte » du mythe, déjà foncièrement idéologique et politique, car, selon Solar, « démasquer le mythe veut dire le faire tomber, le détrôner, en mettant en lumière son intention, souvent politique » (Solar 1998, 201). Le décodage se retourne, en fait, en recyclage. Solar refuse l'idée simplificatrice selon laquelle le mythe pourrait se réduire à son intention ou à quelque chose qui serait superposé au langage, mais, en même temps, transforme Barthes en un simple « déchiffreur » quelque peu « sartrien ».

Dans ce chapitre, l'hypothèse barthésienne du mythe introduisant la monosémie dans la polysémie du langage naturel et manipulant un langage « mutilé » où « en passant du sens à la forme, l'image perd du savoir: c'est pour mieux recevoir celui du concept » (Barthes 2002, 832), est confirmée par Solar, mais pour être critiquée. Selon Solar, l'analyse barthésienne ne montre pas assez pourquoi le lecteur du mythe croit à cette illusion. Pourquoi ces mythes quotidiens (de masse) existent-ils ? Pourquoi fonctionnent-ils à merveille ?

L'illusion que donne la littérature, le royaume du « comme si »<sup>3</sup>, n'est-elle pas du même genre ? Selon Solar, la question ne peut être résolue que si l'on définit le mythe chez Barthes comme « langage », et non pas comme simple « parole ». Solar pose la question de la naissance des mythes: qu'est-ce qui donne la véracité d'une histoire ? Ce supplément n'est ni structurel, ni sociologique/psychologique. Solar déclare (1998, 204) que, dans les analyses barthésiennes, le mythe se réduit à une certaine « maladie du langage », comme l'a affirmé Max Müller, à une certaine « maladie » du système sémiotique. Solar propose un renversement de la question: non pas pourquoi croit-on au mythe, alors qu'on ne croit pas à la littérature, mais pourquoi ne croit-on pas à la littérature ? Non pas pourquoi comprend-on une histoire comme vérité, mais comment est-il possible que l'histoire mente ? Comment est-il possible que l'on ne croie pas toujours au langage, que l'on accepte un système sémiotique « décollé » de la réalité ?

Ainsi Solar introduit-il, à travers ce renversement, une dimension qu'il juge absente des analyses barthésiennes: la compréhension, qui reste implicite devant l'évidence du problème de la communication, prépondérante. Solar, en suivant la tradition herméneutique, pose la question de la compréhension, jugée plus importante que la communication, car l'homme doit tout d'abord pouvoir comprendre, pour pouvoir communiquer. Solar abandonne peu à peu le cadre barthésien pour transformer le « consommateur » du mythe (Barthes) en un « gardien » du mythe (Solar 1998, 205) tout en stipulant l'anonymat et l'intérêt existentiel des auditeurs qui « sacralisent » le bavardage (non pas dans le sens de la valorisation d'un dire, mais dans le sens heideggerien, de l'expression de l'inauthenticité du langage)

comme autant de conditions de la naissance des mythes contemporains. Leur paradoxe serait que la mythologie aboutit naturellement au dogme, qui se transforme en idéologie, qui essaie de retourner à la mythologie (Solar 1998, 220; 1988). Et finalement, Solar ne peut que constater une seule impuissance du mythe, celle de son impossibilité à contester (car il ne démontre rien non plus), à remettre en question (il n'y a pas de mythes négatifs dans le sens logique du terme)<sup>4</sup>.

Ainsi le Barthes de Solar s'avère être un penseur critique paradoxal ou peut-être insuffisant: il n'arriverait pas à exprimer ce qui demeure son grand mérite aux yeux d'Eric Marty, celui d'avoir réussi à garder, à travers la violence (et le piège de la violence), un « sens inaliénable des choses » (Merleau-Ponty 1976).

#### 4. Le Barthes de Biti ou comment sonne le glas du « vrai pianiste schumannien »

Dans le grand *Dictionnaire des notions de la théorie littéraire contemporaine* de Vladimir Biti, un livre qui fait référence en Croatie, Barthes est mentionné dans l'index quatre-vingts fois. Bien que le cadre d'un tel livre (de 479 pages au total) impose ses limites, les références de Biti sur Barthes pourraient être considérées foncièrement réductrices: elles ne mentionnent qu'une menu partie de son œuvre, du *Degré zéro de l'écriture* (1953) jusqu'à *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (1975). Il n'y a que deux mentions des œuvres ultérieures (d'ailleurs l'une ayant une fausse datation). La majorité des références concernent essentiellement un Barthes structuraliste. De plus, pour ce qui est des notions, on y trouve un petit trésor des notions clés fondamentales truffé de citations tronquées, sans mention des sources (voir la note *écriture* – Biti 1997, 272-273).

Avant de passer à quelques exemples précis, un bon nombre des références mentionnant Barthes devraient être passées en revue à nouveaux frais: la répétition de certains titres est patente à travers le manuel tout entier (« Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits », 1966). Quant aux blancs évidents, il faut dire que l'interprétation barthésienne de l'Orient n'est mentionnée qu'une seule fois, pour critiquer son « occidentalisme », aux côtés de celui d'Edward Said (note *autre*,

Biti 1997, 76), sans aucune référence. La grande absente ici, c'est la photographie, qui n'est mentionnée, au sujet de Barthes, que deux fois, et très sommairement. La première fois, dans la note intitulée *biographie* (Biti 1997, 28), où Biti mentionne l'essai *Camera Lucida (sic)*, c'est-à-dire *La Chambre claire*, juste pour illustrer l'idée que la photographie entretient le même rapport avec l'histoire que le biographème avec la biographie. La seconde et dernière fois, dans la note *miroir* (Biti 1997, 425), où est mentionné « Le message photographique », daté de 1980, alors qu'il paraît en 1961 (Barthes 1961).

En ce qui concerne les implications erronées, dans la note *œuvre* (Biti 1997, 68), en opposant Barthes à Foucault, Biti laisse croire que sa notion de « discours » vient contenir la notion barthésienne de « texte »: le discours foucauldien « évite l'absolutisation de la textualité décentralisée par la notion du discours qui sous-entend par elle-même une certaine limitation ». D'autres exemples où Biti essaie de donner une inflexion critique à son propos méritent d'être passés au peigne fin:

La note *auteur* (Biti 1997, 21) suit la ligne qui commence en 1953, avec *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*. Biti postule que la téléologie de l'auteur que Barthes « tue » en 1968 montre qu'il utilise la notion de l'auteur du XIX<sup>e</sup>, et non pas du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle; dans le même sens va la note *œuvre* (Biti 1997, 256), dans laquelle Biti reproche à Barthes d'user d'un terme pris dans son acception romantique: « l'auteur n'a pas été doté d'un tel rôle ni dans la pratique ni dans la théorie de notre siècle (New Criticism, formalisme russe, Bakhtine, L'École de Prague) » (Biti 1997, 256). Biti cite Sean Burke (1992), qui conclut: « L'auteur de Barthes est une abstraction, un type platonique, une fiction de l'absolu ». Barthes justifie la mise à mort de l'auteur par sa « téléologisation ». Le meurtre n'y est que la condition de sa résurrection (*S/Z, Le Plaisir du texte, Sade, Fourier, Loyola* et « La mort de l'auteur »). Selon Burke, « Barthes traite l'œuvre comme un intertexte simultané, comme un espace où l'on circule d'avant et en arrière sans responsabilités progressives... L'œuvre devient une arène ou une ellipse où tout est rhapsodique, et où rien n'est séquentiel, où les thèmes, les variations, les idées se tordent les uns sur les autres comme *leitmotive* ».

Une autre référence incontournable de Biti est Ann Banfield, une linguiste américaine, référence en vogue dans les années 80, mentionnée dans la note *roman* (Biti 1997, 351). Biti s'inspire de son livre *Unspeakable sentences* (1982) pour reprendre la définition de deux styles romanesques possibles, caractéristiques de penseurs français des années 1950 et 1960 (Barthes, Blanchot et Butor): le style impersonnel et le style personnel. Selon Biti, Barthes *oppose* celui-ci à la narration à la 3<sup>e</sup> personne au passé simple. Un autre livre de la même auteure est mentionné dans la note *polyphonie* (Biti 1997, 280), sans citations et avec une référence erronée, citant une œuvre introuvable (dont le titre est mal traduit ou inexistant): *La Description du non perçu* (1987)<sup>5</sup>.

Dans la note intitulée *lecture* (Biti 1997, 41), Biti établit une opposition quelque peu facile, entre le courant phénoménologique et la « sémiotique de la lecture ». Ce qui y est problématique, c'est l'opposition entre les phénoménologues « exigeants », qui demandent l'effort (en italiques chez Biti) de la conscience du lecteur, et la notion barthésienne de lecteur – « être corporel » qui, par l'échange des impulsions réciproques, *s'adonne/se livre* d'une manière espiègle, ludique, à la jouissance (« uživanje ») du texte. Biti conclut que, pour Barthes, la lecture sous-entend une soumission sensible et sensorielle au texte qui est beaucoup plus forte que la maîtrise réflexive du texte: c'est une interprétation évidemment problématique, qui fait de Barthes un théoricien de la lecture hédoniste et en quelque sorte irresponsable.

Le mérite de la note *mythe* (Biti 1997, 228) – qui mentionne la tâche du lecteur sémiotique, à savoir la déconstruction qui ne peut être faite que par l'introduction du mythe « naturel », dans les systèmes tertiaires des mythes artificiels – est d'introduire l'exemple du langage mythique de *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

La note *jouissance* – « užitak, bliss, Genuss » (Biti 1997, 42), introduit la traduction « zadovoljstvo » pour « plaisir » (*Zadovoljstvo u tekstu*), alors que le livre de 1973 a été traduit en croate comme « la jouissance du texte ». Biti tend à simplifier et émousser les thèses de Barthes sur le rapport entre le plaisir et la jouissance, tout en réduisant la portée à l'opposition entre les textes scriptibles (dont les césures donnent lieu à la



jouissance), et les textes lisibles qui, en flattant les opinions des lecteurs, produisent le plaisir. De plus, cette opposition entre les textes lisibles et scriptibles est faussement attribuée à S/Z. Plus tard, Biti relativise cette opposition dans le champ sémantique du « plaisir » traduit par « zadovoljstvo », qui inclut évidemment aussi la jouissance, ici devenue « naslada », « délices » et « luxure » orgasmiques et véhéments, effaçant l'ego (rationnel). Selon Biti, Barthes introduit l'argument (polémique) de la réception dans le corps du lecteur, en comparant ce processus avec le rapport érotique des deux (*sic*) corps. Biti conclut que Barthes laisse l'ambiguïté et la contradiction pénétrer son argument sur la différence entre le plaisir et la jouissance. Il conclut que la jouissance ne peut se soumettre à aucune « thèse » ou « doctrine »; la jouissance barthésienne, selon Biti, dans son ambiguïté intrinsèque, ne peut être que reproduite, et le livre de Barthes ne fait que cela, la reproduire dans son ambiguïté intrinsèque.

## 5. Le vacarme sourd de la théorie: l'archivation

Barthes, qui aujourd'hui ne pourrait plus être compris du grand public que comme un autre Alain de Botton de *How Proust can change your life*, devient justement ce qu'il critiquait et analysait dans les *Mythologies*: un mytheme, un mythe qui fait parler, dont « la matière est formée d'une matière déjà travaillée en vue d'une communication appropriée » (Barthes 2010, 195).

C'est-à-dire: faire parler de façon appropriée (la codification de la parole scientifique, le langage, la longueur et le ton des articles etc.) la matière Barthes déjà travaillée (la bibliographie, des textes sur Barthes, son contexte: articles, dictionnaires, biographie, bases de données, sites etc., tout ce que Bernard Stiegler appelle le *pharmaka* de la rétention tertiaire) (Stiegler, 2012, 255). Les professionnels, poursuit Stiegler, « abusent du *pharmakon* qu'est la rétention tertiaire littérale en se dispensant avec elle de *faire de la transmission du savoir le moment de sa réélaboration* » (Stiegler, 2012, 266). Ce geste aboutit à un retournement déjà inscrit dans l'ambivalence du *pharmakon*: au lieu de répondre aux questions (accidents de lecture, fortuits) suscitées par la lecture de Barthes et de les configurer en

contexte, fût-il précaire et changeant, il fige cette « écriture » qu'on admet polyvalente, dans un contexte univoque, stable et certain (la *doxa* scientifique du moment). On reste toujours dans la réponse assurée.

Nous allons retrouver, au bout de la trajectoire de la réception de Barthes en Croatie, un article tout récent, publié dans une revue scientifique de la Faculté de philosophie de Zagreb sous le titre *Sujet comme objet du discours photographique: sur les modes de l'archivage de la facticité* (Rafolt 2015). Beau titre, sérieux, présentant d'emblée ses lettres de noblesse: on sait à quoi s'en tenir, à la discipline de la théorie qui (j'explique un peu le contexte institutionnel, dans les départements d'études croates) vient suppléer, par le biais de la rétention tertiaire de prédominance américaine, à la vétusté poussiéreuse de la discipline nationale. Codification impeccable du langage, aussi bien que de la bibliographie: trois ouvrages de Barthes, *Mythologies*, bien sûr, et *L'Empire des signes*, ainsi que *La chambre claire*, cités en traduction croate, deux dictionnaires ou guides de l'anthropologie du théâtre des éditions Routledge, un Rancière cité en français (*Le spectateur émancipé*) mais évidemment pas lu, une étude de Peter Trifonas sur Barthes (*Barthes and the Empire of Signs*, en traduction croate), une sur le Japon de Darko Suvin (en anglais), le tout assaisonné de Susan Sontag et de Giorgio Agamben. On voit tout de suite la marinade: l'auteur fait parler Barthes de façon appropriée, comme matière déjà travaillée, à l'aide d'une interprétation et de deux dictionnaires, trois composants de la drogue ou *pharmakon* fabriqué par les multinationales de l'édition scientifique.

Qu'arrive-t-il à Barthes dans ce texte? Surtout pas ce que Barthes appellerait une lecture. Présentée, dès le début, comme dénonciation de l'Occident, cette interprétation de *L'Empire des signes* transforme son auteur en dénonciateur. Barthes « est parti au Japon afin d'explorer l'obsession occidentale (de l'Europe de l'Ouest) de significations ultimes, afin d'exposer, une fois pour toutes, la dépendance occidentale à l'égard des significations constantes et stables » (Rafolt 2015, 31). Geste stabilisateur (une fois pour toutes!) car la question sur la possibilité de l'archivage de la photographie, ou plutôt du fait

représenté par la photographie (Rafolt 2015, 31-32), que l'auteur pose au texte de Barthes (texte palimpseste, invisible, enfoui sous les textes superposés), préfabriquée et surcodée par le *ready-made* actuel de la théorie (dénonciation de l'herméneutique occidentale et de son discours « logocentriste »), mène à l'incompréhension du projet barthésien dans son ensemble: « Le langage, qui est le médiateur de l'imagination, ne peut jamais réussir à le faire de façon suivie, totalement, sans quelque jugement transcendantal, mythe ou idéologie, sans une herméneutique présumée ultime. À la « qu'est ce qui s'est vraiment passé? », Barthes n'a rien à répondre. Mais ce n'est pas le problème de la photographie, c'est le problème de la nature du langage ». (Rafolt 2015, 36)

Cette phrase en dit beaucoup plus sur l'élaboration du sujet que sur le sujet élaboré. Car, si la question « qu'est-ce qui s'est vraiment passé ? » ne peut recevoir de réponse qu'à travers un mythe à sens ultime, c'est un Barthes déjà travaillé qui la donne: un Barthes mythème; et non pas son texte, qui est chargé de répondre, à la manière de « j'ai découvert le mythe dans la nature duquel est inscrite la fin de tous le mythes », une fois pour toutes, bien sûr. Stupéfiant, intensificateur de parole, le mythème Barthes devient ce qui fait parler, ce qui intensifie la parole professionnelle, en la privant, par la nature de son acte, de sens: à question préfabriquée, réponse assurée. On est rejeté hors de la pensée, dans, comme disait Barthes, ce qui tient lieu de pensée dans l'univers petit bourgeois, c'est-à-dire la tautologie: « elle signifie une rupture rageuse entre l'intelligence et son objet, la menace arrogante d'un ordre où l'on ne penserait pas » (Barthes 2010, 97). Nous voilà de nouveau solidement campés dans un lieu commun, celui de la nature du langage: Racine est Racine et le langage est le langage. Ce lieu commun est, dans l'univers actuel de la critique et théorie universitaire présumées sans théo-téléologie, le Souverain, le Narcisse, l'Un, où, sous l'apparence de la réélaboration, rien n'est élaboré, ou toute nouvelle lecture est toujours déjà une lecture appropriée, univoque, à la fois indexée sur la doxa scientifique et archivée par elle, c'est-à-dire: guidée, contraignante, contrainte et forcée. À l'exact opposé des lectures pratiquées par Barthes.

## 6. Post scriptum

Barthes, mythème en Croatie, laisse voir que, pour la plupart de ses manifestations – tout en paraphrasant Hayden White (1978, 265) –, la mystification du texte conduit à un fétichisme de l'écriture, à un narcissisme du lecteur auquel s'ajoute une perversion qui, tout simplement, rend heureux. Cette stratégie ne ressemble, de nos jours, ni à l'idéologisation, ni à la poétisation (même si les traces s'en ressentent), et ne fait advenir ni ce « mythe artificiel », « reconstitué », qui serait « une véritable mythologie ». Pour « voler le mythe » et constituer ce « second mythe », il faudrait que le mythe ne joue pas si bien son rôle d'« écoulement incessant », d'« hémorragie », d'« évaporation », d'« absence sensible », et que les lecteurs (privilegiés ou pas) ne se noient joyeusement, comme des cochons, dans les « seconds textes ». L'excès même du réel contemporain facilite son évacuation, et la seule découverte possible dans les textes demeure, malheureusement, celle de soi-même. Et le pauvre Barthes, pétrifié en un structuraliste coriace (et dit par d'aucuns « poststructuraliste »), décidément idéologique, politique, montre que la spatialisation du langage mythique est tout aussi cruciale pour ses lectures que sa temporalisation.

Rappelons-nous que « dans le *Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, le mot important, générateur, ce n'est pas "idées reçues" (la bêtise), c'est le mot "dictionnaire"» (Barthes 2015, 281).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> « [...] le supplément supplée [...]. Il intervient ou s'insinue *à-la-place-de* ; s'il comble, c'est comme on comble un vide. S'il représente et fait image, c'est par le défaut antérieur d'une présence. [...] Quelque part, quelque chose ne peut se remplir *de soi-même*, ne peut s'accomplir qu'en se laissant combler par signe et procuration » (Derrida 1967, 208).

<sup>2</sup> *Lost in Translation* (2003) par Sofia Coppola (Bill Murray et Scarlett Johansson).

<sup>3</sup> « Ceci n'est qu'une fausse alternative. Le mythe ne cache rien et il n'affiche rien: il déforme; le mythe n'est ni un mensonge ni un aveu: c'est une inflexion. » (Barthes 2002, 841)

<sup>4</sup> Le mythe, et son caractère certain, ne peut être remis en question que par la suite d'histoires qui continuent, malgré toutes leurs contradictions (Solar 1998, 221).

<sup>5</sup> Peut-être s'agit-il du texte « Reflective and Non-Reflective Consciousness in the language of fiction ». *Poetics Today*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Narratology III: Narration and Perspective in Fiction), Duke University Press, 1981, pp. 61-76.

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**Maja Vukušić Zorica** est maître de conférences en littérature française moderne à l'Université de Zagreb, ancienne boursière du gouvernement français (2006/2007, 2007/2008), membre du groupe de recherche « Genèse et autobiographie » de l'ITEM-CNRS (ENS Paris). Elle a soutenu sa thèse sur le journal d'André Gide à l'Université Paris Diderot (Paris VII), sous la direction de M. Eric Marty en novembre 2011. Elle s'intéresse aux croisements de la littérature, de la théorie de la littérature, de la philosophie, de l'histoire, de la musique et de l'érotisme. Elle a écrit notamment sur Gide, le marquis de Sade, Barthes, Haendel, Chopin, Désiré Nisard, Pierre Louÿs, Jean Cocteau, Miroslav Krleža, Miodrag Bulatović, Chevillard, l'homosexualité, le sadisme, les castrats etc. Elle a publié notamment *André Gide : Les gestes d'amour – l'amour des gestes* (Paris, Orizons, 2013).

**Address:**

Maja Vukušić Zorica  
Département de langues et littératures romanes  
Faculté d'Humanités et Sciences Sociales  
Université de Zagreb  
Ivana Lucica 3  
Zagreb HR-10000, Croatia  
E-mail: [mzorica@ffzg.hr](mailto:mzorica@ffzg.hr)

**Nenad Ivić** est professeur de littérature française à la Faculté d'Humanités et Sciences Sociales (Département de langues et littératures romanes), Université de Zagreb, Croatie. Il a été boursier Fullbright à University of California Berkeley et à Princeton University et chercheur invité à l'Institut d'études classiques et médiévales, Université de Montréal. Ses domaines de recherche sont l'Antiquité tardive, l'historiographie médiévale, la littérature française. Il a publié *Naples and other imaginary places* (Zagreb, 2009) et *Textus. Investigations into Ammianus Marcellinus* (Zagreb, 2001).

**Adresse:**

Nenad Ivić  
Département de langues et littératures romanes  
Faculté d'Humanités et Sciences Sociales  
Université de Zagreb  
Ivana Lucica 3  
Zagreb HR-10000, Croatia  
E-mail: [nivic@ffzg.hr](mailto:nivic@ffzg.hr)

## Vérité, conversation et l'herméneutique de l'annihilation. Susan Haack vs. Richard Rorty

Gerard Stan  
Université "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" de Iași

### Abstract

#### Truth, Conversation and Hermeneutics of Annihilation: Susan Haack vs. Richard Rorty

In this paper I pursue two goals. Firstly, I try to evaluate how Susan Haack receives and categorically rejects Rorty's anti-epistemological message from *Philosophy and the Mirror of the Nature* and some subsequent writings. I reconstruct Haack's counterarguments and Rorty's responses to these counterarguments. Secondly, I propose to deconstruct the theoretical position from which Haack orchestrates her attack on Rorty. On the one hand I show that she assumes a series of classical metaphysical presuppositions that are difficult to accept today, which predisposes her to a lack of hermeneutical flexibility and clarity. On the other hand, at least some of Haack's arguments against Rorty (i.e. those which are about the so-called relativism or the so-called Rortyan cynicism) are erroneous. Following Michael Williams, I point out that Rorty's position in *Mirror* is not against knowledge, since it raises questions about the legitimacy of epistemology. The challenge of my approach is not to defend Rorty (he does not need defense), but rather to examine the mechanism of a charge against him in the name of a pretended philosophical correctness. I call this type of charge "hermeneutics of annihilation". Haack's hermeneutics of annihilation is a pseudo-hermeneutics, since her goal is not to understand the stake of Rorty's philosophy exposed in *Mirror*. She only understood, from the point of view of an epistemologist ideology, that this work would be a threat to Truth, Knowledge, Epistemology, Science, and Reason.

**Keywords:** epistemology, hermeneutics of annihilation, truth, knowledge, foundation of knowledge, epistemic community, metaphysical presuppositions, conversationalism, relativism, epistemic tribalism

Richard Rorty s'est fait une mauvaise réputation par défier les pratiques argumentatives, devenues canon, de la philosophie analytique, par étudier la littérature avec un intérêt philosophique



soutenu, par invoquer des perspectives et des terminologies étrangères à la philosophie de langue anglaise de la seconde moitié du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Des noms tels Heidegger, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein II, Derrida ou Dewey ont provoqué de la rumeur après la lecture des études de Rorty. De plus, Rorty a été mal vu car il avait dépisté derrière plusieurs interrogations métaphysiques fondamentales – « Qu'est-ce qui existe vraiment? » ou « Comment se connecte-t-il le langage à la réalité? » – des questions erronées. Mais, comme le soulignait Michael Williams dans son *Introduction* à l'édition anniversaire de l'ouvrage *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (2009), Rorty s'est fait une mauvaise réputation surtout par sa critique de la philosophie comme épistémologie. Surgie avec Descartes et devenue, après Kant, philosophie première, l'épistémologie avec ses deux dérivés, la philosophie du langage et la philosophie de l'esprit, a presque monopolisé l'effort des penseurs occidentaux engagés dans l'élaboration de théories philosophiques. La mise de cet effort épistémologique était, considère-t-il Rorty, l'identification de critères ou de schémas universels qui puissent subsumer tout possible contenu. Autrement dit, l'épistémologie s'est toujours vue elle-même comme le gardien de ces principes-là et critères dont l'abandon aurait équivalu à un renoncement à la raison elle-même. Si l'on avait abandonné les fondements et les critères universels du savoir, l'idée même du philosophe considéré comme le gardien de la rationalité se serait trouvé menacée. (Rorty 1979, 317) Il est probable que cette menace ait été ressentie longtemps après la mise en doute de l'épistémologie par Rorty dans son ouvrage de 1979, car Susan Haack l'éprouvait encore elle aussi lorsqu'elle rédigeait son étude *Evidence and Inquiry. Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (1993). Susan Haack, en proposant une nouvelle théorie sur la fondation épistémologique, le foundhérentisme, à savoir un nouveau schéma universel relatif à la possibilité de connaître, a senti son effort entier être mis en doute par un ouvrage, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, qui proclamait le manque de légitimité de l'épistémologie et militait pour l'abandon de ses problèmes traditionnels.

Dans cet article, je me propose, *en tout premier lieu*, d'évaluer la manière dont Susan Haack perçoit et rejette de

manière catégorique le message anti-épistémologique de Rorty; je vais analyser en détail les contestations formulées par la philosophe américaine ainsi que les réponses de Rorty à ces contestations. *En second lieu*, je me propose de démonter la position théorique sur laquelle Susan Haack se place elle-même lorsqu'elle orchestre son attaque contre Rorty, en montrant que, d'une part, elle embrasse nombre de présuppositions métaphysiques classiques, qu'à présent il serait difficile d'accepter, qui la prédisposent à une rigidité herméneutique flagrante et, d'autre part, qu'au moins quelques-uns des attaques de Haack à l'adresse de Rorty (concernant le soi-disant relativisme ou cynisme rortyen) sont injustes. Dans les traces de Michael Williams, je vais souligner que la position de Rorty en *Mirror* n'est pas une position contre la connaissance, mais une position qui met en question la légitimité de l'épistémologie. L'enjeu de ma démarche n'est pas de défendre un philosophe qui, d'ailleurs, n'a pas besoin, crois-je, d'être défendu, mais plutôt d'examiner l'anatomie d'un procès injuste intenté à Rorty au nom d'un prétendu philosophiquement correct. Je ne sais pas s'il faudrait appeler la philosophie ayant intenté un pareil procès « herméneutique de l'annihilation » ou « épistémologie vulgaire ».

### **1. Sur l'absence du droit à l'existence du « pragmatisme vulgaire »**

Susan Haack est convaincue que la science n'est pas capable de prendre soin de soi et elle se sent obligée de la défendre contre les grandes « menaces » contemporaines: le relativisme, le conventionnalisme, la sociologie de la science, le constructivisme social, le postmodernisme, la rhétorique de la science, la littérature ou la religion. Le fait que des sociologues de la science, comme par exemple Bruno Latour, se servent de concepts tels rationalité, réalité, vérité, en les mettant entre guillemets, l'inquiète profondément. De plus, elle est alarmée par cela qu'une série de philosophes, dont Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend et Richard Rorty, sont cités comme des autorités dans la question de la manière dont la science fonctionne. (Haack 2007, 180) A mon avis, Haack a raison de se sentir inquiète lorsqu'on réduit la science à une simple pratique

discursive, à un certain genre de littérature ou à une affaire cognitive locale. En outre, je crois que Haack a bien raison, également, d'être inquiétée par les réflexions de Bruno Latour et de Paul Feyerabend sur la science, mais que cela ne se justifie pas dans le cas de Thomas Kuhn ou de Richard Rorty. C'est une pratique épistémologique méritoire, que de signaler les dangers auxquels est soumise la compréhension de la signification ou de la mise de la connaissance scientifique. Au contraire, identifier de faux périls, de fausses attaques contre la science, de fausses attitudes cyniques, ce n'est pas du tout louable. Quand on arrive voir partout des ennemis de la science, on finit par attaquer ceux qui sont inoffensifs ou, pire encore, ceux qui pourraient être nos alliés; on finit ainsi par nuire à l'épistémologie, en la transformant en une chasse aux sorcières, mais aussi à la science, par lui construire une image de cité assiégée par des armées de fantômes guerriers.

Comme annoncé ci-dessus, l'enjeu de l'investigation que je propose est d'évaluer la lecture que Haack fait aux thèses rortyennes relatives à la possibilité de connaître, la recherche de la vérité et la légitimité de l'épistémologie comme discipline philosophique. J'ai choisi d'analyser cette interprétation parce qu'elle m'apparaît comme aussi violente qu'injuste. On ne rencontre que rarement dans les disputes philosophiques des attaques si agressives. Susan Haack mentionne Richard Rorty comme personnage négatif dans plusieurs de ses écrits, mais dans *Evidence and Inquiry. Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (1993) elle lui consacre presque entièrement un chapitre. Bien que Haack annonce qu'elle envisageait surtout l'ouvrage rortyen *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), ses observations concernent pourtant tous ce que Rorty avait écrit avant 1993. Le Chapitre 9 de *Evidence and Inquiry* sera republié plus tard dans *Rorty & Pragmatism: The Philosopher Respond to His Critics* (1995), édité par Herman J. Saatkamp. (Saatkamp Jr. 1995, 126-147) Cette fois-ci, le texte de Susan Haack est accompagné par une réplique que Rorty y donne. (Saatkamp Jr. 1995, 148-153) Le titre du 9<sup>e</sup> Chapitre de *Evidence and Inquiry* est plus qu'éloquent pour la tonalité et la perspective philosophique qu'adopte Susan Haack en commentant les idées de Rorty: une nouvelle espèce de pragmatisme, le « pragmatisme vulgaire ».

Je vais reconstruire et systématiser les critiques formulées par Haack contre les idées de Rorty et, en parallèle, je vais mentionner les répliques ponctuelles que Rorty lui donne, autant qu'il y en a.

*En premier lieu*, selon Haack, Rorty refuse « l'idée conformément à laquelle il faudrait évaluer les critères de la justification selon leur capacité d'indiquer la vérité. Rorty considère que l'idée n'a pas de logique. » (Haack 1993, 182) En réplique à cette remarque, Rorty allait affirmer que la vérité et la justification ne sont pas interdéfinibles, ce qui ne signifie pas pourtant qu'il reste encore quelque chose de substantiel à dire sur la vérité une fois conclue la discussion sur la justification. Bien au contraire. La différence entre la vérité et la justification existe, mais ce n'est pas parce que la vérité aurait des critères différents par rapport à la justification, mais parce qu'on ne dispose pas de critères *indépendants* à appliquer à la vérité. (Rorty 1995, 149-150) De plus, Rorty est d'accord avec Haack que, de son point de vue, une conception plus élevée relative à la justification en tant qu'indicateur de la vérité est impossible. En revanche, Rorty considère qu'il ne faudrait pas s'inquiéter si nos pratiques justificatives indiquent ou non la vérité. Il admet que *croire que p, c'est croire que p est vrai*, mais il ne comprend pas comment ce principe soutiendrait-il les affirmations que Haack à propos du cynisme. (Rorty 1995, 148) Haack est tout sûre que, si Rorty comprenait ce qu'un sujet épistémique fait lorsqu'il accepte une croyance comme étant vraie, il se rendrait compte que le processus de la justification est un indicateur de la vérité. Rorty croit que seulement s'il y avait des critères différents pour la vérité et la justification, il serait raisonnable d'affirmer que les critères de justification sont des indicateurs de la vérité; s'il n'existe pas des critères différents, dire que les critères de justification indiquent la vérité, ce n'est que dire tout simplement que nous nous en servons pour justifier nos croyances. Alors que l'on ne peut pas fournir un critère pour obtenir la vérité autre que le critère pour obtenir la justification, il est impossible, à l'avis de Rorty, de décider s'il utilise les standards justes. (Rorty 1995, 148)

*En deuxième lieu*, Haack est horripilée par la soi-disant proposition de Rorty d'accepter qu'à la base de nos convictions il

n'y aurait rien d'autre que des convictions locales et paroissiales. (Haack 1993, 183) D'après Rorty, la connaissance dériverait de la justification sociale des convictions, par conséquent, il ne serait plus nécessaire de la concevoir dans des termes de « précision de la représentation ». Les principaux résultats philosophiques sur lesquels il fonde cette thèse sont la critique de Sellars concernant la confusion entre justification et causalité et la position de Quine relative à l'impossibilité de trouver des fondements pour la connaissance *a priori*. (Haack 2007, 184) La conséquence en serait que, pour Rorty, une conviction n'est justifiée que si l'on peut la défendre contre des « objectins conversationnelles ». (Haack 2007, 184) Susan Haack conclut que, pour Rorty, les critères d'évaluation de la connaissance spécifique à des époques, des cultures ou de communautés différentes sont « incommensurables »; il n'existe pas des standards justes pour la défense des convictions. De plus, il serait inutile d'essayer de ratifier certains critères de justification en affirmant que les croyances satisfaisant ces critères-là tendent à être vraies. (Haack 2007, 184) La justification ne serait-elle donc seulement une question sociale, mais aussi une question tout conventionnelle: les pratiques de justification ne peuvent s'appuyer sur quelque chose d'extérieur à ces pratiques. Haack soulève une question qui est, à son avis, essentielle: Rorty a-t-il des arguments par lesquels démontrer l'absence d'un fondement objectif pour les critères de justification épistémique ? (Haack 2007, 185) La réponse est un Non! catégorique. L'opinion de Rorty est que les notions de « représentation exacte » et de « nature intrinsèque », les deux dérivées d'une présupposition de l'œil divin, ont produit l'idée d'une Vérité absolue et de standards atemporels de la connaissance, en créant ainsi plus de problèmes que des réponses. Ce que Rorty suggère c'est qu'il faudrait voir ce qui se passe si nous y renonçons. (Rorty 1995, 150)

*En troisième lieu*, quand elle écrit un livre sur les bases anhistoriques de la connaissance (elle développe dans *Evidence and Inquiry* la fameuse théorie de la justification épistémique, le *foundherentisme*), Haack est horripilée par la suggestion de Rorty selon laquelle il conviendrait de ne plus concevoir la philosophie comme étant centrée sur l'épistémologie, sur l'étude des fondements de la connaissance, sur des représentations

privilegiées. D'après Haack, Rorty suggère que l'abandon de l'épistémologie ne créerait aucun vide à remplir; l'épistémologue pourrait quand même assumer un rôle édificateur, à savoir de chercher des vocabulaires nouveaux. Haack commentée, plină de indignare: eh bien, non, assurément, personne ne voudrait pas perdre son temps en faisant *une pareille chose!* (Haack 2007, 184) Quelques pages plus loin Haack revient pour proclamer le fait que « Rorty ne possède pas des arguments viables contre la légitimité de l'épistémologie ». (Haack 2007, 189)

*En quatrième lieu*, Haack considère que Rorty pourrait détruire la légitimité de l'épistémologie s'il apportait des arguments pour la répudiation du FONDATIONNALISME ; et la répudiation du FONDATIONNALISME serait possible si Rorty apportait des arguments décisifs contre la possibilité d'atteindre à la vérité, mais, « puisqu'il n'a pas des arguments contre les visions pragmatiste, minimale réaliste, réaliste au sens fort ou grandiose transcendantale sur la vérité, Rorty n'a pas, *a fortiori*, aucun argument valable contre celle-ci, et alors, ni contre le FONDATIONNALISME, ni, par voie de conséquence, contre l'épistémologie. » (Haack 2007, 189-190)

Par ailleurs, Rorty confesse qu'il n'utilise qu'avec modération la notion de vérité, en essayant ainsi de suggérer qu'une croyance extrêmement justifiée ne peut pas représenter la nature intrinsèque de la réalité. (Rorty 1995, 150) De plus, selon l'opinion de Rorty, bien qu'il y ait plusieurs approches de la vérité, aucune d'entre elles n'offre pas un support à l'épistémologue qui désire évaluer la capacité des pratiques cognitives contemporaines d'indiquer la vérité. Rorty croit à propos de ses critiques qu'ils semblent trouver *plus* que lui dans la notion de vérité – représentation exacte d'une nature intrinsèque ou l'idée d'une référentialité ou d'une transcendance – mais qu'ils sont incapables de préciser en quoi consiste-t-il ce *plus*. (Rorty 1995, 150) La conclusion serait que Rorty ne peut pas apporter des arguments décisifs contre les diverses théories de la vérité parce que ces théories sont inconsistantes, elles présupposent quelque chose *de plus* qu'elles ne peuvent pas préciser. La conclusion, les philosophies organisées autour de la notion de vérité entendue comme but de la connaissance sont elles aussi inconsistantes et il faudrait les abandonner.

Dans la pratique de la connaissance, d'après Rorty, on n'a pas besoin d'un but intitulé *vérité* pour être attiré dans ce processus automatique, involontaire, d'adaptation à l'environnement, qu'on appelle connaissance (Rorty 1995, 151). En outre, Rorty considère comme trompeur l'emploi du mot *but* (en relation avec la vérité) quand on se réfère à quelque chose qui, une fois trouvé, ne serait pas reconnu, et par rapport auquel on ne sait jamais à quelle distance se trouve-t-on. (Rorty 1995, 151)

*En cinquième lieu*, Haack est d'avis que l'anti-épistémologisme de Rorty est une sorte de maladie cumulative; autrement dit, la négation de la légitimité de l'épistémologie est le résultat d'un cumul de maladies philosophiques, qu'elle n'hésite pas à exposer et à analyser. Ainsi, Rorty souffre de *conversationnalisme*, c'est-à-dire d'entendre la justification épistémologique comme « un problème qui relève de la pratique ou de la convention sociale, qui varie tant à l'intérieur des cultures que d'une culture à l'autre » (Haack 1993, 190) Qui plus est, selon Haack, la maladie du conversationnalisme est le résultat de la conjonction de trois autres maladies: *le contextualisme* (de l'explication), *le conventionnalisme* (des standards de ratification de la connaissance) et *le tribalisme* (de nos pratiques épistémiques). *Le contextualisme* est vu par Haack comme une forme de la théorie de la justification (contraire au fondationnalisme, au cohérentisme, au foundhérentisme, à savoir opposée aux théories de la justification qui vaudraient être considérées). En essence, on peut exprimer le contextualisme comme il suit: A est justifié de croire que *p* si et seulement si, « concernant la conviction que *p*, A satisfait les standards épistémiques de la communauté épistémique à laquelle A appartient. » (Haack 1993, 190) *Le conventionnalisme* vise les critères de la justification, en s'opposant à l'objectivisme épistémique, au FONDATIONNALISME: « les standards épistémiques sont complètement conventionnels, il est donc inutile de nous demander quels critères de la justification (les critères appartenant à une communauté épistémique donnée) sont justes, quels critères indiquent réellement la vérité d'une conviction ». (Haack 1993, 190) Une fois installé dans une philosophie, le conversationnalisme, vu qu'il est un cumul de

maladies philosophiques, provoquera une série d'autres maladies, bien plus graves: *le tribalisme épistémique, le relativisme et le cynisme*. Bien sûr, c'est la philosophie de Rorty qui contient toutes ces maladies.

Le tribalisme désigne une position philosophique conformément à laquelle la vérité naît de l'accord volontaire, de la solidarité des membres d'une *certaine* communauté épistémique. « Le tribalisme est complètement arbitraire et non-motivé, sauf la situation où quelqu'un considérerait les critères de sa propre communauté épistémique comme étant supérieurs par rapport aux ceux des autres communautés. » (Haack 1993, 193) Pour Haack, le conversationnalisme est profondément incohérent car « le tribalisme exige *de la solidarité avec nos pratiques épistémiques*. » (Haack 1993, 194); or, cette solidarité, qui est une conformation par rapport aux pratiques *propres*, constitue un symptôme de *cynisme* épistémique, c'est-à-dire le symptôme d'une position philosophique qui rend impossible la connaissance véritable. Le conversationnalisme est *relativiste* parce que, contextualiste aussi, il « oblige la justification de tenir compte de la communauté épistémique à laquelle le sujet appartient et (...) alors elle doit traiter de manière équitable les standards épistémiques de toute communauté épistémique. » (Haack 1993, 192) Le conversationnalisme est *cynique* car il admet que les critères épistémiques sont purement conventionnels, totalement dépourvus d'un fondement objectifs ; s'il était ainsi, considère Haack, on se verrait obligé de penser la justification épistémique comme étant, en essence, impossible. En effet, on ne pourrait jamais s'engager dans une action de justification des convictions que nous considérons comme purement conventionnelle. (Haack 1993, 192) Si l'on cherche et l'on trouve des raisons épistémiques pour *p*, alors on croit réellement que *p* est vrai, ce n'est pas une simple convention.

*En sixième lieu*, Haack n'a aucun doute que la position philosophique construite par Rorty non seulement qu'elle transforme l'épistémologie en une activité philosophique illégitime, mais elle sape aussi la possibilité de tout effort de connaître, la possibilité de la science et la possibilité de toute démarche de recherche rationnelle. Par sa préférence pour une philosophie édicatrice, Rorty désire saboter non seulement



l'épistémologie et la philosophie épistémique, mais la recherche en général. (Haack 1993, 182) Même si pour Haack la légitimité de l'épistémologie et la réalité de la connaissance semblent être assez certaines, Rorty, en dynamitant la possibilité d'identifier des critères objectifs pour la connaissance, semble vouloir éliminer l'activité de connaître de la société humaine.

*Il serait impossible d'avoir un travail intellectuel honnête dans l'utopie post-épistémologique de Rorty. S'il n'y a pas d'évidence meilleure ou pire – à savoir une évidence objective meilleure ou pire – pour accepter une proposition donnée comme étant vraie, aucun type de recherche ne pourrait exister : épistémologique (...) ou scientifique, juridique, historique, mathématique. (Haack 1993, 194)*

A croire à Haack, Rorty a intentionné d'être le fossoyeur non seulement de l'épistémologie, mais de toute démarche raisonnable de mise en concordance des convictions avec l'expérience, fondé sur des critères objectifs d'évaluation, ayant comme but la poursuite constante de la vérité.

Dans sa réplique, Rorty montre que Haack soulève sans raison la question concernant la concordance des convictions avec l'expérience. Toujours injustifiée est la réponse qu'elle donne: en faisant cela, on peut arriver à des croyances véritables. (Rorty 1995, 151) Rorty affirme qu'il ne peut pas s'imaginer que quelqu'un se poserait cette question au sérieux. Ce serait comme se demander: « Pourquoi respirer? » ou « Pourquoi manger? ». Rorty croit que la formation de nos convictions n'est pas le résultat de notre choix. Parfois, dans des circonstances culturelles heureuses, nous choisissons la communauté épistémique à laquelle appartenir et les croyances fondamentales à partager. (Rorty 1995,152) Plus encore, le philosophe américain considère qu'il n'existe pas ce que Haack appelle un choix parmi des « standards d'évidence », mais plutôt un choix entre des *considérants pertinents ou moins pertinents*. Toutes les interrogations que les épistémologues pourraient clarifier sont des questions sur ce qui devrait ou non être pertinent. En laissant de côté les interrogations sur la pertinence, Haack, affirme Rorty, légitime l'épistémologie en la vulgarisant. Les standards d'évidence ne seraient intéressants que si quelqu'un nous disait que nos croyances ne correspondent plus à nos expériences et à nos autres croyances. Mais personne

ne le fait pas. (Rorty 1995,152) En d'autres mots, l'épistémologie que Haack édifie est une philosophie qui répond à des questions sans importance, que personne ne se pose jamais.

## **2. Erreur et *justesse philosophique* dans la position de S. Haack**

Les origines de l'attaque déclenchée par Susan Haack contre la philosophie rortyenne se trouvent dans le fait qu'elle saisit la menace directe que cette philosophie représente pour la légitimité de l'épistémologie; je crois cependant que la source principale de cette attaque est représentée par cela que Haack adopte une série de présuppositions radicalement différentes par rapport à celles qu'embrasse Rorty. Sans posséder des aptitudes herméneutiques, lui manquant une perspective historique sur l'apparition et la dynamique des problèmes philosophiques, Haack hérite de façon non-critique des présuppositions de la métaphysique classique de la connaissance. Au nombre de celles-ci on compte la présupposition que le véritable sujet de la connaissance est le *Moi cartésien*, isolé, un *Moi* qui essaie en permanence d'harmoniser les convictions avec ses propres perceptions. Selon Haack, toute conviction d'un sujet épistémique à propos de choses et d'événements est justifiée dans la mesure où elle explique les expériences sensorielles de ce sujet-là. (Haack 1993, 115) Haack admet que les convictions d'un sujet épistémique liées à ce qu'il voit et à ce qu'il entend ne sont déterminés seulement par les expériences sensorielles, mais aussi par des convictions déjà enracinées (Haack 1993, 110); ces convictions enracinées sont pourtant elles aussi une composante interne du *Moi* connaissant, ainsi que les expériences sensorielles de celui-ci. Autrement dit, pour Haack le problème de la connaissance est un problème à circuit fermé, à résoudre à l'intérieur des limites du *Moi cartésien*. En essence, l'épistémologie foundhérentiste proposée par Haack est une forme contemporaine de psychologie rationnelle, formule épistémologique à l'aide de laquelle la plupart des philosophes de l'Age moderne ont tenté de solutionner les problèmes de la connaissance. La connaissance serait le produit du fonctionnement d'un milieu interne, un produit des mécanismes constitutifs au *Moi*. Haack elle-même admet qu'on pourrait intégrer ses présupposés épistémologiques,

et en particulier ceux relatifs à la perception, dans une théorie psychologique plausible qui, à son tour, résonnerait avec une approche évolutionniste. (Haack 1993, 116) Lorsqu'elle sort des limites du Moi cartésien et tente d'expliquer la possibilité du figement des convictions dans un groupe, elle affirme que l'évidence relative au jugement du groupe n'est rien d'autre que le résultat de l'extraction de l'évidence de différents membres du groupe. (Haack 1993, 89) En d'autres termes, elle n'admet pas l'existence des mécanismes de connaître autres que ceux inhérents au Moi, quand le sujet connaissant est une communauté.

Il est possible que l'adoption de la distinction de Jürgen Habermas entre *le paradigme de la conscience* (du moi cartésien) et *le paradigme de la communication* (de la communauté qui se coordonne et qui trouve son équilibre en communiquant), entre *la raison centrée sur le sujet* et *la raison communicative*, ait déterminé Haack d'identifier plusieurs mécanismes créant le savoir. (Habermas 1983, 8-42) Pour Haack, la connaissance, scientifique y compris, dérive d'une raison centrée sur le sujet ; en fait, comme Rorty l'argumente lui aussi dans la lignée d'Habermas, la connaissance scientifique, en résultat des activités argumentatives de communautés scientifiques, est un produit de la raison communicative. A l'idéal d'une connaissance absolue, issue de mécanismes transcendants ou inhérents au *Moi* on substitue, *via* Habermas, l'exigence de la coordination et du consensus au sein des communautés épistémiques. L'idéal d'atteindre à la vérité, entendue comme « représentation correcte » ou « correspondance avec la réalité » est remplacé par l'idéal du consensus raisonnablement motivé. Rorty est habermassien quand il voit dans la raison communicative, la conversation et le consensus motivé, rationnel, des mécanismes de la connaissance scientifique, tandis que Susan Haack est cartésienne, prisonnière entre les limites d'une métaphysique du Moi, lorsqu'elle critique et blâme les hérésies rortyennes relatives au manque de pertinence de la question des standards atemporels de justification ou de la possibilité de représenter correctement la réalité. La violence de l'attaque de Haack contre les idées rortyennes est décryptée, si l'on comprend que

les lunettes cognitives qu'elle porte rapportent tout à la couleur de leurs propres lentilles.

Un autre motif affectant sévèrement la consistance de la lecture que Haack donne aux idées de *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* est le fait qu'elle ne comprend pas l'idée de communauté épistémique telle que Rorty l'utilise. A mon avis, Haack est tributaire à une acception originaire de la philosophie sociale et politique, là où communauté signifie *communauté locale, communauté déterminée géographiquement, communauté culturelle* (dans le sens de l'anthropologie culturelle). Bien sûr, si l'on met en relation ce concept de communauté avec l'idée du mécanisme de connaissance par conversation et l'on affirme que la vérité, c'est l'accord entre les membres d'une communauté, on considérera comme justifiées les accusations de relativisme, tribalisme et cynisme, adressées à haute voix par Haack à Rorty. Mais, donner une pareille acception à l'idée de communauté épistémique utilisée par Rorty dérive soit de l'ignorance, soit de la mauvaise foi. Il n'existe aucun paragraphe dans les ouvrages de Rorty où l'idée de communauté épistémique soit liée à une région géographiquement définie. Par exemple, quand Rorty parle de la « communauté des intellectuels libéraux de l'Occident moderne séculaire », il ne se réfère pas à une communauté avec des frontières géographiques précises, mais à une communauté trans-géographique, composée d'individu qui comprennent qu'ils ne sont pas les représentants de quelque chose d'anhistorique, mais seulement le moment historique qu'ils vivent. (Rorty 1991, 29) L'ethnocentrisme de Rorty est loin de privilégier la connaissance d'une ethnie établie en Himalaya, dans la jungle amazonienne ou à l'ouest de l'État Alaska; l'ethnocentrisme qu'il pratique se réfère au fait qu'un sujet épistémique doit pouvoir justifier ses croyances devant ceux-là avec lesquels il possède en commun assez de croyances pour qu'il puisse engager avec eux un dialogue rationnel et fertile (Rorty 1991, 30).

Par exemple, la communauté épistémique des physiciens relativistes est formée de tous les spécialistes en relativité générale et spéciale, c'est-à-dire de ces physiciens qui peuvent s'engager dans un dialogue fertile et rationnel autour des aspects essentiels des théories formulées par Einstein et de

leurs développements ultérieurs. Vu cela, la thèse rortyenne selon laquelle la vérité surgit par l'accord volontaire des membres d'une communauté épistémique, car ce ne sont que les membres d'une telle communauté qui peuvent comprendre et sélectionner les raisons vraiment pertinentes (de nature aussi bien théorique qu'expérimentale) pour soutenir ou pour nier une hypothèse spécifique à leur domaine de recherche, n'est plus surprenante. Pour utiliser une métaphore, les spécialistes en physique relativiste forment une sorte de tribu, ils conviennent sur des critères et des pratiques épistémiques propres à leur domaine de recherche, sans pourtant que cela les positionne automatiquement dans la zone du relativisme philosophique ou du cynisme épistémique. Cela ne signifie pas que les pratiques et les critères épistémiques spécifiques, convenus au niveau de leur domaine de recherche, les condamnent à une sorte de perspective tribale, mais que, tout simplement, il n'y a pas des critères et des pratiques de connaissance anhistoriques et universels autres que ceux établis par les experts agissant dans le cadre d'un domaine de recherche. La connaissance scientifique entière est le résultat des efforts faits par les communautés des scientifiques qui ont suivi et ont soutenu des standards et des idéaux créés au sein de leurs propres communautés; et cela parce qu'il serait impossible à quelqu'un du dehors d'une communauté scientifique d'établir des contraintes et des standards raisonnables, fertiles, dans une aire de recherche qui ne lui est pas familière. Alors, Rorty croit qu'il n'y a pas de justification absolue d'une croyance, mais seulement une justification relative à un « système épistémique ». (Tartaglia 2007, 191)

Un autre aspect déformant la lecture des idées de Rorty proposée par Susan Haack dérive de la manière essentialiste dont la philosophe américaine comprend le phénomène de la connaissance. Dans *Evidence and Inquiry*, Haack a toujours l'impression qu'elle sait et qu'elle révèle les mécanismes *véritables* de la connaissance, en dénonçant les mécanismes apparents ou ceux-là qui lui apparaissent comme non-fonctionnels. Quand Rorty conteste la légitimité de la théorie de la connaissance en tant que préoccupation philosophique, il conteste avant tout la possibilité d'identifier un mécanisme

essentiel, nécessaire, universel de la connaissance. Dans le chapitre VII de *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* il montre que, derrière le désir de construire une théorie épistémologique, se cache le désir de trouver des « fondements » auxquels s'arracher, des « cadres explicatifs qu'il n'est pas permis de dépasser » ou des « représentations qu'on ne peut pas nier ». (Rorty 1979, 315) Bien sûr, il n'est ni interdit ni mal qu'un philosophe cherche des fondements de la connaissance; mais, ce qui est grave, c'est de croire qu'un pareil type d'investigation métaphysique *doit* être considéré comme le standard philosophique de se rapporter au phénomène de la connaissance. Aussi grave, c'est l'acceptation tacite, sans discernement, de l'idée que le phénomène de la connaissance possède des « fondements » ou des « mécanismes essentiels » qui *doivent* faire l'objet d'une théorie philosophique. Il y a dans le *Journal* de Wittgenstein une affirmation que je me plaise souvent citer: « Toute théorie affirmant que “*Il faut* que les choses en soient ainsi, sinon on ne pourrait pas philosopher” (...) doivent, certainement, disparaître ». (Wittgenstein 1998, 44) Les théories métaphysiques de la connaissance acceptent sans jugement que la seule manière dont on peut philosopher valablement sur la connaissance est de construire des théories relatives à la justification épistémique ou à l'essence de la vérité. Il y a eu, dans l'histoire, des approches qui prétendaient offrir des théories philosophiques fermes en vertu desquelles on pourrait tracer une limite entre la connaissance scientifique et la pseudo-connaissance, ou séparer la méthode scientifique véritable des méthodes et des pratiques de la connaissance commune. A présent, on regarde ces théories comme des tentatives échouées surtout parce qu'elles portaient d'une perspective simplificatrice et homogénéisante sur le phénomène de la connaissance. On ne peut pas être un philosophe qui se veut « sérieux » si l'on est convaincu que l'optique, la chimie analytique et la phytotechnique offrent le savoir selon la même méthode. On ne peut pas demander d'être pris au sérieux jusqu'à la fin si l'on prétend d'avoir découvert un mécanisme universel de la justification épistémique. Or, c'est précisément ce que Susan Haack soutient, depuis l'*Introduction* même de son ouvrage *Evidence and Inquiry*: « je vais offrir une explication

nouvelle de la justification épistémique, une théorie (...) “foundhérentiste”. (Haack 1993, 1) Comment être pris au sérieux quand vous reprochez aux autres philosophes de ne pas voir les essences que *vous* considérez comme réelles?

La source de l’inhabilité de Haack de se rapporter à la pensée de Haack est à trouver en cela que les deux investiguent le phénomène de la connaissance des perspectives complètement différentes. Dans un volume consacré à la philosophie de Rorty, Bilgrami apporte des arguments solides en faveur de la distinction entre la perspective à la première personne, celle du chercheur, et la perspective à la troisième personne sur la vérité entendue, ainsi, comme propriété réelle. (Bilgrami 2000, 242-261) Rorty adopte la perspective de la première personne dans les questions de la connaissance et de la vérité, la perspective d’un chercheur qui se trouve ici et maintenant, engrené dans la clarification de problèmes apparus dans une aire particulière de la connaissance, tandis que Haack adopte la perspective de la troisième personne, voire la perspective de l’œil divin, qui lui faciliterait l’accès aux « véritables mécanismes de la connaissance ». Malheureusement pour Haack, la première perspective est bien plus crédible, même si plus modeste au niveau philosophique, car elle illustre une perspective humaine.

La lecture du 9<sup>e</sup> Chapitre de *Evidence and Inquiry* nous révèle le fait qu’il conviendrait de parler non seulement de *politiquement correct*, mais aussi de *philosophiquement correct*. La xénophobie, le sexisme, le fondamentalisme, la discrimination raciale sont des pratiques intolérables et condamnables mais, malheur, souvent utilisés par les adeptes du politiquement correct afin d’imposer des « normes » de conduite sociale et pour forger des instruments de diabolisation des adversaires. Si, lors d’une dispute politique, l’adversaire est étiqueté de « fondamentaliste » ou de « raciste », son image telle que projetée aux yeux du public spectateur est celle d’un être sous-humain. Par analogie, je crois que dans la philosophie de nos jours on pratique abondamment le *philosophiquement correct*. Par exemple, on est philosophiquement correct dans l’analyse de la connaissance si l’on possède des théories valables pour répondre à des questions telles: « Comment est-elle possible la connaissance? », « Quelle est l’essence de la vérité? »,

« Quelle est la vertu épistémique la plus précieuse ? », « Quels sont les mécanismes de la justification épistémique ? » Celui qui dénonce ce jeu des grandes questions et des grandes réponses comme étant sans importance et illégitime, en refusant de le jouer, pratique, sans le savoir, le *philosophiquement incorrect*. Par conséquent, il sera considéré comme *conversationnaliste*, à savoir un individu qui croit que la vérité est le résultat d'un bavardage de café (Blackburn 2005, 164), *relativiste*, *contextualiste*, *tribaliste* et *cynique*. Haack donne l'impression d'avoir écrit le 9<sup>e</sup> chapitre de *Evidence and Inquiry* justement pour appliquer toutes ces étiquettes à Rorty, ainsi que tous les « gens de bonne foi » sachent qu'il ont à faire à un spécimen dangereux d'une espèce sous-philosophique, un infracteur des problèmes philosophiques, qu'il faut bien éviter. Enfin, l'utilisation du syntagme « pragmatisme vulgaire » pour étiqueter la pensée de Rorty est destinée non seulement d'exprimer le mépris viscéral de l'auteure pour un genre de philosophie par rapport auquel elle reste toujours étrangère, mais aussi d'exclure les idées rortyennes du circuit des idées pragmatistes à fréquenter.

La violence de l'attaque de Haack, la diabolisation et le mépris caché dans le syntagme « pragmatisme vulgaire » s'expliquent par une sorte de peur intellectuelle, la peur que l'édifice de l'épistémologie pourrait s'écrouler sous la force des coups appliqués par Rorty dans *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, ainsi que dans les écrits ultérieurs. C'est la peur de l'épistémologue de formation métaphysique confronté à la perspective que son travail solide, de compréhension des fondements de la connaissance, soit regardé comme le travail d'un enfant ayant bâti un grandiose palais de cartes de jeu. L'accusation la plus grave formulée par Haack contre Rorty est de cynisme, à savoir que sa philosophie rendrait impossible la recherche honnête et la connaissance rationnelle. Quand même, comme Michael Williams le souligne aussi, Rorty n'est pas un sceptique épistémologique, mais plutôt un sceptique en ce qui concerne l'épistémologie. (Williams 2009, xxvii) Mais, si Rorty voit dans l'épistémologie métaphysique une pratique intellectuelle illégitime et sans pertinence, ce n'est pas le cas pour la recherche scientifique concrète. Nulle part dans son œuvre, Rorty ne met en doute la possibilité de connaître.



L'inférence que fait Haack quand, à partir de l'attitude hostile de Rorty vis-à-vis de l'épistémologie, conclut que celui-ci transformerait la recherche et la connaissance en des pratiques impossibles, est évidemment invalide. L'horreur envers l'ainsi-dit cynisme de Rorty est plutôt l'horreur envers l'idée de l'illégitimité d'une théorie générale de la connaissance qui, une fois acceptée, détruirait à Haack et à d'autres épistémologues la raison de philosopher. Lorsqu'elle tente d'annihiler et de diaboliser la position de Rorty, Haack ne se préoccupe pas réellement à la situation concrète de la connaissance, mais ce qui l'intéresse vraiment c'est de sauver la légitimité de l'épistémologie. Autrement dit, c'est le sort de la tribu des épistémologues qui la préoccupe vivement, et non le sort des communautés produisant la connaissance.

C'est vrai, Haack a écrit aussi *Defending Science* (2007), un livre consistant à la défense de la science; mais là aussi, elle se dispute plutôt avec des philosophes ayant des opinions divergentes des siennes, qu'avec les possibles adversaires létaux de la science. En tout cas, *l'intention* de Haack de défendre la science est émouvante et bienvenue, mais elle n'offre aucune garantie qu'un philosophe *peut* vraiment défendre la science réelle. La science existe et elle a l'impact qu'elle a sur toutes les sphères de l'activité humaine *non* pour avoir été ou pour être bien défendue par les gardiens-philosophes. L'un des grands péchés des la philosophie de type métaphysique, c'est de surestimer les pouvoirs de ce type d'exercice spirituel: depuis la découverte des essences de la nature et de la connaissance, et jusqu'à la défense de l'intégrité de la science et de la religion, le philosophe en est capable. Par opposition à cette image d'une philosophie héroïque, Rorty a commis le sacrilège de proposer un genre de philosophie modeste, thérapeutique, destinée à guérir les communautés de la sensation d'être en contact avec une réalité surhistorique. Les individus peuvent devenir spéciaux non par connaître ou être en contact avec des essences surmondaines, mais par apprendre à devenir importants grâce à leurs propres actions. (Williams 2009, xxix). La représentation de la nature intrinsèque des choses, Rorty la remplace avec l'activité de projection et de production de soi.

### 3. Conclusions

Il n'a pas été dans l'intention de cette analyse philosophique de défendre Rorty, comme, par exemple, William C. Curtis l'a fait en écrivant *Defending Rorty* (Curtis, 2015). Je ne crois pas que Rorty ait nécessairement besoin de défenseurs; de plus, je ne suis pas un admirateur inconditionné de sa conception, et j'ai des réserves vis-à-vis de la manière dont il traité certains aspects du problème de la vérité. (Stan 2016, 200-208) La mise de ma démarche a été d'examiner l'anatomie d'un procès que Susan Haack tente à Richard Rorty au nom d'un philosophiquement correct tacite. J'ai appelé cette pratique *l'herméneutique de l'annihilation*; elle est apparentée à l'herméneutique idéologique, à la différence qu'elle est bien plus radicale. Comme je le soulignais ailleurs, l'interprétation idéologique ne tient compte ni des intentions de l'auteur, ni des intentions du texte, ni des intentions d'un lecteur idéal, qui découlent logiquement des deux premiers types d'intentions; l'interprétation idéologique est, au fond, une trahison, une déformation, une caricature déterminée par des intentions qui n'ont rien à faire avec le texte interprété. (Stan 2009, 75) L'herméneute idéologique se sert d'un texte, en le prenant comme prétexte pour affirmer son propre agenda philosophique; par ailleurs, l'herméneute philosophique nie le droit à l'existence des idées qu'il interprète, en désirant les éliminer de la sphère des idées philosophique. La raison est bien simple: ces idées-là seraient erronées, toxiques, philosophiquement incorrectes. On rencontre une pareille herméneutique chez les philosophes communistes, qui reprochaient à lui Platon, Descartes et Spinoza de n'être pas assez marxistes, d'être des philosophes bourgeois, qu'il conviendrait donc d'évacuer de la philosophie.

Au fond, l'herméneutique de l'annihilation pratiquée par Haack est une pseudo-herméneutique. Haack n'a pour un seul moment voulu comprendre l'enjeu de la philosophie rortyenne exposée dans *Mirror* à travers le prisme des intentions de l'auteur ou du texte; elle n'a fait que percevoir dans la clé d'une idéologie épistémologiste le message que cet ouvrage constituerait une menace pour la Vérité, la Connaissance, l'Épistémologie, la Science et la Raison, et elle a lancé son attaque. La mise: annihiler la menace et l'adversaire. Un adepte de la position

de Haack pourrait dire que, en fait, Rorty commet lui aussi ce péché dans *Mirror*, qu'il a voulu annihiler et évacuer l'épistémologie. Au pire, je crois qu'on pourrait regarder l'herméneutique de Rorty comme un exercice du soupçon, tel que théorisé par Paul Ricoeur (1965, 43-44) car le philosophe américain essaie de démontrer que l'épistémologie n'est pas ce qu'elle croit être, en se proposant de construire un rapport nouveau entre manifeste et latent, à savoir entre les diverses théories épistémologiques et les présuppositions métaphysiques les fondant. Mais, le résultat de ce type de démarche philosophique n'est pas annihilateur, mais thérapeutique. En lisant Rorty, on comprend l'historicité et la contingence de certaines exigences épistémologiques, comme par exemple de trouver « les fondements absolus de la connaissance » ou « la correspondance avec la vraie nature des choses », et qu'il n'est pas obligatoire de penser la philosophie dans les termes des solutions formulées il y a quatre ou cinq siècles. Rorty ne fait que quitter l'épistémologie, il ne l'annihile pas, ne lui refuse pas le droit d'exister. Son attitude est d'un pluraliste véritable: encourager les philosophes de chercher de nouveaux vocabulaire, c'est les stimuler à dresser de nouvelles possibilités philosophiques, dégrevées d'un poids métaphysique pas du tout nécessaire. Sans doute, l'univers philosophique créé par l'exercice réflexif rortyen est un univers enrichi, fertilisé, un multivers. D'autre part, le paysage philosophique qui reste après le déploiement de la pensée de Haack est celui d'une terre incendiée, vidée ; un paysage philosophique privé de l'illusion du philosophiquement correct que ne pourraient pratiquer que les « Chevaliers de la Raison et de la Vérité ».

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**Gerard Stan** est docteur en philosophie et maître de conférences à la Faculté de Philosophie de l'Université « Al. I. Cuza » de Iasi. Ses domaines de recherche et de compétence sont l'épistémologie et la philosophie de la science. Ses domaines d'intérêt sont la philosophie analytique du langage et les fondements cognitifs de la communication. Il est l'auteur des livres *L'ordre de la nature et les lois de la science* (2004) et *Connaissance et vérité* (2006).

**Address:**

Gerard Stan

Université „Al. I. Cuza” de Iasi

Faculté de Philosophie et Sciences Sociales et Politiques

Bd. Carol I, no. 11

700506 Iasi, Romania

E-mail: [gstan@uaic.ro](mailto:gstan@uaic.ro)

## Nietzsche and McDowell on The Second Nature of The Human Being

Stefano Marino  
University of Bologna

### Abstract

The concept of second nature has a long and complex history, having been widely employed by several philosophers and even scientists. In recent times, the most famous thinker who has employed the concept of second nature, and has actually grounded his philosophical program precisely on this notion, is probably John McDowell. However, it is also possible to find some occurrences of the concept of second nature, “*zweite Natur*”, in Nietzsche’s writings, both published and unpublished. In this contribution I will develop a discussion of this important topic, the (second) nature of the human being, in Nietzsche and McDowell, and attempt to establish a comparison between them on the basis of this concept. It is the guiding idea of this article that McDowell’s “Naturalism of Second Nature”, though representing one of the most original and indeed ambitious philosophical programs today, actually suffers from some problems in defining the peculiar nature of the human being, and that referring to some of Nietzsche’s ideas on this topic may be of help in order to broaden and strengthen McDowell’s own philosophical perspective. There is almost no reference to Nietzsche in McDowell’s several philosophical works, notwithstanding his great interest in, and his careful attention to, other authors belonging to the tradition of modern German philosophy (such as Kant and Hegel, in particular), and nobody has inquired yet into the potential Nietzsche/McDowell relationship. The paper will trace the development of certain philosophical-anthropological insights from 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century German thought (Nietzsche, Scheler, Gehlen, Gadamer) up to the present age (McDowell), and provide an original and relevant contribution both to the specific field of Nietzsche studies and to the more general domain of inquiries into contemporary philosophical problems. Comparing the ideas of Nietzsche/McDowell on the question concerning the (second) nature of the human being relationship is intriguing from a philosophical point of view and may lead to a better understanding of this subject and disclose new perspectives in this field. There is a lot of philosophical insight to be gained in comparing these two figures.

**Keywords:** Friedrich Nietzsche, John McDowell, Human nature, Mind, Language, Epistemology, Philosophical anthropology, Phenomenology, Hermeneutics

And I got this running monologue  
entertaining in its outrage And I've got the air  
of an animal that's been living in a cage. Ani  
DiFranco. *Life Boat*  
Why would you wanna hurt me? So frightened  
of your pain. I'd rather be... I'd rather be  
with... I'd rather be with an animal. Pearl  
Jam. *Animal*.

The concept of second nature has a long and complex history, having been widely employed by several philosophers and even scientists (see, for instance, Edelman 2006), each of whom has understood and developed it in an original way. In recent times, the most famous thinker who has employed the concept of second nature, and has actually grounded his original and indeed ambitious philosophical program (not by chance defined as “Naturalism of Second Nature”) precisely on this notion, is probably John McDowell. However, it is also possible to find some occurrences of the concept of second nature (*zweite Natur*) in Nietzsche’s writings, both published and unpublished. Beside this, it is interesting to note that there is at least another element in common between Nietzsche and McDowell, although in the form of an indirect and only mediated relationship. In fact, McDowell’s intriguing use, in his 1994 masterwork *Mind and World*, of the concepts of *world* and *environment* as respectively referred to the human and the animal ways of acting, behaving and relating to the real, actually derives from a long and complex German philosophical tradition – although neither McDowell nor his main interpreters seem to be fully aware of it. One of the main representatives of this tradition is Arnold Gehlen, whose philosophical anthropology, in turn, also makes use of the concept of *second nature* and, most of all, is explicitly inspired precisely by Nietzsche.

In this contribution I will attempt to establish a comparison between Nietzsche and McDowell on the basis of the concept of second nature. I will adopt an approach that is not merely descriptive or strictly speaking philological, as it sometimes happens in the most recent developments of the *Nietzsche-Forschung*, but rather interpretive, although very scrupulous in approaching Nietzsche’s published and unpublished

writings in order to avoid, from a methodological point of view, any risk to fall into some kind of “over-interpretation” (borrowing this concept from Umberto Eco).

There is almost no reference to Nietzsche in McDowell’s several works<sup>1</sup>, notwithstanding his great interest in, and his careful attention to, other authors belonging to the tradition of modern German philosophy, such as Kant and Hegel in particular. As far as I know, nobody has inquired yet into the potential Nietzsche/McDowell relationship<sup>2</sup>, so the present work will provide an original and relevant contribution both to the specific field of Nietzsche studies and to the more general domain of inquiries into contemporary philosophical problems (such as, for instance, comparative investigations of the relationship between analytic and continental approaches). I assume that investigating the Nietzsche/McDowell relationship is intriguing from a philosophical point of view because, as I will try to show, comparing the ideas of these two thinkers on the question concerning the (second) nature of the human being may lead to a better understanding of this subject and disclose new perspectives in this field. In my view, there is a lot of philosophical insight to be gained in comparing these two figures.

1. One of Nietzsche’s most famous sentences, taken from the aphorism 62 of *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), defines the human being as “*the still undetermined animal*” (KGW VI, II: 79 [BGE: 56])<sup>3</sup>. To be precise, this aphorism is placed in the third part of the book, entitled *The Religious Character*, and deals with the more general question concerning the use of religions “as means for breeding and education (*als Züchtungs- und Erziehungsmittel*)”, and the way “the two greatest religions”, i.e. Christianity and Buddhism, treat what Nietzsche calls the “*surplus of failures*” that according to him has characterized so far the development of the entire history of mankind (KGW VI, II: 79 [BGE: 55-6]). Nietzsche’s answer is that such religions “try to preserve, to keep everything living that can be kept in any way alive. In fact, they take sides with the failures as a matter of principle, as religions *of the suffering*. They give rights to all those who suffer life like a disease, and they want



to make every other feeling for life seem wrong and become impossible”: “in the final analysis”, he writes, “the religions that have existed so far (which have all been *sovereign*) have played a principal role in keeping the type ‘man’ on a lower level. They have preserved too much of *what should be destroyed*. [...] Doesn’t it seem as if, for eighteen centuries, Europe was dominated by the single will to turn humanity into a *sublime abortion*?” (KGW VI, II: 79-81 [BGE: 56]).

Abstracting here from Nietzsche’s ideas on morality and religion, and also leaving aside the question concerning their historical reliability and, so to speak, philosophical sustainability, what matters for the specific purposes of my discourse is simply the fact that Nietzsche, in discussing the relationship of humans “with every other type of animal”, introduces the category of (or, as it were, coins the definition of the human being as) “the still undetermined animal (*das noch nicht festgestellte Thier*)”. By the way, this same idea is already present in one of his posthumous fragments from the year 1884 that reads:

Grundsatz: das, was im Kampf mit den Thieren dem Menschen seinen Sieg errang, hat zugleich die schwierige und gefährliche krankhafte Entwicklung des Menschen mit sich gebracht. Er ist das noch nicht festgestellte Thier. (KGW VII, II: 25[428]: 121)

Now, this definition makes it possible to include also Nietzsche within a long and influential tradition that, despite all differences concerning the particular philosophical orientation of the various authors belonging to it, conceives of the human being, in general, as a creature characterized (in contrast to every other type of animal) by a lack of instinctive equipment, or more precisely by a peculiar vagueness and non-rigidity, i.e. flexibility, of its instincts<sup>4</sup>. According to this general view of the human being, such features represent the biological-anthropological basis of the human being’s malleability in the adaptation to the environment and compel the latter to achieve by cultural means (that is, by means of the culture, or “second nature”, that the human being develops by itself) the kind of selectivity and stability that other animals are naturally equipped with. In other words, according to this conception the peculiar nature of the human being, instead of allowing the

latter to simply adapt itself to a given *environment*, rather compels it to create its own *world* by itself, namely through its *intellectual* capacities and, above all, through its *practical* and *technical* behavior.

It is not possible here to linger on this topic in general or to critically discuss the presuppositions that such a general way of conceiving the human being implicitly rests upon: first of all, the idea of reducing the infinite variety of animal life to a unique and at least to some extent undifferentiated concept of “The Animal” in the singular form<sup>5</sup>, and, in turn, of reducing the various and plural forms of animal conduct to the mere concept of instinctive behavior. Rather, what is important for the specific purposes of the historical-philosophical *excursus* that I aim to offer here is basically the fact that, among those who mostly contributed during the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the retrieval, reintroduction and further development of the abovementioned idea of the “still undetermined” nature of the human being one must surely number such thinkers as Max Scheler and Arnold Gehlen. Namely, the thinkers who, together with Helmuth Plessner, are commonly considered to be the founding fathers of a very relevant tradition within contemporary German thought: philosophical anthropology.

The basic question at issue here concerns the distinction between human and non-human animals, and among the fundamental concepts employed by these authors in order to adequately account for this distinction we find the notions of “second nature” and “world *vs.* environment”. Now, it is extremely interesting to notice how this complex philosophical and also scientific question, that various authors have dealt with by basically employing the same abovementioned concepts, may be somehow used as a sort of *fil rouge* that allows one to connect to each other such different authors as Nietzsche, Scheler, Gehlen, Heidegger, Gadamer and, through the latter’s decisive mediation, in the final analysis also McDowell.

2. As has been noted, McDowell’s *Mind and World* is a “powerful and complexly argued book” (Bubner 2002, 209); a recent “milestone” on the question of “the relationship between mind and nature, [...] concepts and experience” (Di Francesco

2003, 11-12); an “enormously difficult book – as difficult as it is important” (Putnam 2002, 174). One of the book’s fundamental ideas is that human beings normally and, so to speak, naturally inhabit two different and indeed irreducible logical spaces. On the one hand, we move within what McDowell calls “the logical space of reasons” (borrowing this expression from Wilfrid Sellars, according to whom “the essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says” – Sellars 1997, 76) and defines as “the structure in which we place things when we find meaning in them” (McDowell 1996, 88). However, on the other hand, we also belong to “the logical space of nature”, which during the modern and contemporary age has been increasingly identified with the “ways in which the natural sciences [find] things intelligible” (namely, “by subsuming them under lawlike generalizations” – McDowell 2009b, 247), and which can thus be defined as “the realm of law”. McDowell describes this relationship as a real “contrast between two kinds of intelligibility” (McDowell 1996, 70), as a “distinction between two ways of finding things intelligible” (McDowell 2009b, 246), namely as a sort of dichotomy between the dimension of reasons, motivations and justifications, on the one hand, and that of natural causes, or better natural laws<sup>6</sup>, on the other hand.

In the first chapters of *Mind and World* McDowell exemplifies this basic theme by concentrating on the question concerning the relationship between concepts and intuitions. The Kantian idea of the indispensable cooperation and interdependence between understanding (or intellect) and sensibility serves as guides to this inquiry. In fact, As we read in Kant’s first *Critique* (A50-51/B74-75):

Our cognition arises from two fundamental sources in the mind, the first of which is the reception of representations (the receptivity of impressions), the second the faculty for cognizing an object by means of these representations (spontaneity of concepts); through the former an object is given to us, through the latter it is thought in relation to that representation (as a mere determination of the mind). Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in

some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition. [...] Neither of these properties is to be preferred to the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. (Kant 1998, 193-194)

What McDowell sketches is a general view of modern philosophy as trapped in an *impasse* and somehow unable to avoid falling again and again into opposite but equally unsatisfactory perspectives, such as the two basic conceptions of the human being that he calls “rampant Platonism” and “bald naturalism”. In light of this basic opposition, the various *epistemological* problems that McDowell addresses throughout his book (most noticeably, as mentioned, in the first chapters) actually appear as instantiations, so to speak, of a wider and more general *philosophical-anthropological* question: namely, the question concerning the need for us, today, to account for the particular nature of the human being in a more adequate way. Seeking “a way to dismount from the seesaw” (McDowell 1996, 9) and to overcome the fatal tendency of modern philosophy “to oscillate between a pair of unsatisfying positions” (McDowell 1996, 24), McDowell thus advances the idea of rethinking, and most of all of broadening, the basic naturalistic view that has been predominant in our culture since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In short, what he proposes is to include second nature – i.e., providing a preliminary approximation, what we may call the domain of reason, history, and culture – in our basic conception of the human nature. McDowell defines the resulting perspective as “a naturalized Platonism” or better as “a naturalism of second nature” (McDowell 1996, 91), and he maintains that such a philosophical perspective may do justice, in a way that what he calls “rampant Platonism” and “bald naturalism” are both unable to, to the inextricable intertwining of reason and perception, spontaneity and receptivity, that characterizes our world-experience and that (in the words of McDowell’s colleague Robert Brandom) is “distinctive of us as *cultural*, and not merely *natural*, creatures” (Brandom 2000, 35).

On a philosophical-anthropological level, this perspective finally makes it possible to satisfactorily account for the fact that the capacity to inhabit a linguistically- and culturally-conditioned space of reasons does not position human beings

outside the realm of biology but simply belongs to “our mode of living” (McDowell 1996, 78), to our being “animals whose natural being is permeated with rationality” (McDowell 1996: 85). “Exercises of spontaneity belong to our mode of living”, McDowell explains, and “our mode of living is our way of actualizing ourselves as animals”; but if “exercises of spontaneity belong to our way of actualizing ourselves as animals”, this removes “any need to try to see ourselves as peculiarly bifurcated, with a foothold in the animal kingdom and a mysterious separate involvement in an extra-natural world of rational connections” (McDowell 1996, 78). McDowell’s concept of second nature thus refers to “capacities of a subject that are natural but have to be instilled through education” (Thornton 2004, 248), and postulates a continuous but *not* reductive relationship between nature and culture. In this context, language is of fundamental importance for properly understanding the acquisition of second nature, a process of “being initiated into conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the logical space of reasons” (McDowell 1996, XX). As McDowell claims, human beings are distinguished indeed “from the rest of the animal kingdom” in that they are “rational animals”, “animals that occupy positions in ‘the logical space of reasons’”, and also (implicitly equating reason with the mastery of language and, in particular, with “language with which one can give expression to one’s credentials for saying things”) “language-using animals” (McDowell 2011, 9-10). In *Mind and World* he thus explains that

human infants are mere animals, distinctive only in their potential, and nothing occult happens to a human being. [...] Human beings [...] are born mere animals, and they are transformed into thinkers and intentional agents in the course of coming to maturity. This transformation risks looking mysterious. But we can take it in our stride if, in our conception of the *Bildung* that is a central element in the normal maturation of human beings, we give pride of place to the learning of language. In being initiated into a language, a human being is introduced into something that already embodies putatively rational linkages between concepts, putatively constitutive of the layout of the space of reasons, before she comes on the scene. [...] Human beings mature into being at home in the space of reasons or, what comes to the same thing, living their lives in the world; we can make sense of that by noting that the language into which a human

being is first initiated stands over against her as a prior embodiment of mindedness, of the possibility of an orientation to the world. (McDowell 1996: 123, 125)

At the end of *Mind and World* McDowell thus develops the idea that non-human animals, inasmuch as they are non-rational and non-linguistic creatures, actually live in an *environment*, while human beings alone live in a *world*. The basic distinction at issue here is that between environment and world, *Umwelt* and *Welt*: a distinction that McDowell openly admits to have borrowed from Hans-Georg Gadamer. In particular, what McDowell refers to in this specific part of *Mind and World* (McDowell 1996, 115-9) are a few particularly important pages of Gadamer's 1960 masterwork *Truth and Method* concerning the "linguisticity of the human experience of the world (*Sprachlichkeit der menschlichen Welterfahrung*)", the "human experience of the world [that] is verbal in nature" (Gadamer 2004, 444).

By doing this, McDowell thus connects the *world/environment* distinction to the more fundamental question concerning the role played by *second nature* in defining the peculiar character of the human being. Anyway, notwithstanding the great philosophical appeal of McDowell's interesting and ambitious philosophical program, it must be noticed that, from a rigorous point of view, what he calls "Gadamer's account of how a merely animal life, lived in an environment, differs from a properly human life, lived in the world" (McDowell 1996, 117), should be defined as, say, an only indirectly Gadamerian account. In fact, in claiming that he borrows "from Hans-Georg Gadamer a remarkable description of the difference between a merely animal mode of life, in an environment, and a human mode of life, in the world" (McDowell 1996, 115), McDowell does *not* seem to take notice of the fact that, just like he borrows from Gadamer the abovementioned description, Gadamer for his part borrowed it from a long and complex philosophical and even scientific tradition. In fact, in the section of *Truth and Method* that McDowell actually refers to Gadamer explicitly mentions some other authors (Jakob von Uexküll, Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen) as sources of inspiration for his reflections on

the human/animal and world/environment distinctions (see, in particular, Gadamer 2004, 448, 489).

However, this particular form of conceptual indebtedness has passed completely unnoticed until now, inasmuch as neither McDowell nor his main interpreters have paid any attention to it. Gehlen's position is especially interesting for the particular aims of my discourse here, inasmuch as he connects his famous view of the human being as a "deficient being (*Mängelwesen*)" – whose real nature is a "second nature (*zweite Natur*)", and whose context of life, so to speak, is not a natural environment (*Umwelt*), as it happens with *all* other animals, but rather a historically-, culturally- and technologically-determined world (*Welt*) – to the conception wonderfully summarized by Nietzsche in the abovementioned sentence on "the still undetermined animal". This is confirmed by the fact that in the first chapter of his 1940 masterwork entitled *Man: His Nature and Place in the World* Gehlen explicitly cites Nietzsche's statement on the human being (or "man", as both Nietzsche and Gehlen say) as "*das noch nicht festgestellte Thier*" (Gehlen 1988, 4). As Gehlen explains, while "the *environment* is an unchanging milieu to which the specialized organ structure of the animal is adapted and within which equally specific, innate, instinctive behavior is carried out", man is instead "*world-open*". In his view, the human being is

incapable of surviving in truly natural and primitive conditions because of his organic primitiveness and lack of natural means. [...] In order to survive, he must master and re-create nature, and for this reason must *experience* the world. [...] The epitome of *nature* restructured to serve his needs is called *culture* and the *culture world* is the *human world*. There are no "natural men" in a strict sense [...]. Culture is therefore the "*second nature*" – man's restructured nature, within which he can survive. [...] The cultural *world* exists for man in exactly the same way in which the *environment* exists for an animal. For this reason alone, it is wrong to speak of an *environment*, in a strictly biological sense, for man. His *world-openness* is directly related to his unspecialized structure; similarly, his lack of physical means corresponds to his self-created "*second nature*". [...] The clearly defined, biologically precise concept of the *environment* is thus not applicable to man, for what 'environment' is to animals, "the *second nature*", or *culture*, is to man; culture has its own particular problems and concept formations which cannot be explained by the

concept of *environment* but instead are only further obscured by it. (Gehlen 1988: 27, 29, 71 – my emphasis)

Of course, far from invalidating the significance and value of McDowell's adoption of the world/environment distinction and original development of this subject, the fact of not having acknowledged in *Mind and World* and elsewhere the long and complex tradition underlying the original coinage and subsequent use of those concepts may be taken as an occasion or opportunity to develop deeper and wider investigations. The fact of finally acknowledging the actual roots of a certain concept or a certain debate makes it possible indeed: (1) to inquire into this subject with a greater historical-philosophical awareness than has been done before, and (2) to broaden the field of investigation in order to include also thinkers who have not been taken into consideration yet. One of the most important and influential points of reference for all the aforementioned 20<sup>th</sup>-century German philosophers was represented by Nietzsche (although, of course, in various different ways), and this allows us to at least ask ourselves if it is possible, from the point of view of a critical history of concepts, to outline a sort of connection between Nietzsche's "affirmative naturalism"<sup>7</sup> and paradigm of the "still undetermined animal", on the one side, and McDowell's philosophical program of "Naturalism of Second Nature", on the other side.

As I said at the beginning of my paper, there is almost no reference to Nietzsche in McDowell's several collections of papers and, as far as I know, nobody has investigated yet the potential Nietzsche/McDowell connection. To be sure, it is *not* my aim to simply pull Nietzsche's concept of *zweite Natur* together to McDowell's notion of *second nature*, hurriedly assuming that they have the same content or meaning and, so to speak, go in the same direction. In fact, this would easily and obviously lead to misunderstandings rather than to a deep, rigorous and fruitful philosophical comparison, as it is my aim to do here. Furthermore, even a quick look at the history of the notion of second nature shows that what we have to do with here is a complex and plural concept that has been employed by different philosophers (such as, for example, Hegel, Lukács, Adorno) in various ways. For this reason, it is clear that such a



concept really requires to be handled with care, so to speak. In addition to this, it is not my aim to provide here a complete account of Nietzsche's general concept of nature or even of his general view of the human/animal distinction (supposing that something like a "general concept" or "general view" of these subjects actually exists in such a fragmentary, deliberately non-systematic, and in principle "allergic-to-definitions" thinker as Nietzsche), which would clearly require a book-length investigation<sup>8</sup>. My aim here is more limited, so to speak, and has basically to do with the attempt to develop an intriguing juxtaposition of different philosophical perspectives, avoiding at the same time to give rise to any thoughtless or rash comparison – as it may sometimes happen with philosophical works conceived from a comparative point of view.

3. As far as Nietzsche's concept of *second nature* is concerned, it can be easily observed that this concept occurs in different writing belonging to different phases of his thought and that he does not always use this concept in the same way. In other words, Nietzsche does not always assign exactly the same meaning to this concept and he makes use of it in somehow heterogeneous contexts. In general, Nietzsche seems to speak of second nature in two different ways, namely sometimes referring this concept to the question concerning the growth and development of the individual, and other times referring it to the more general question concerning the "dialectic" between nature and culture (or, say, life and history) that is constitutive of the human being as such. Where, by employing here the term "dialectic", I do not necessarily aim to support what we may call a dialectical interpretation of Nietzsche (anything like the famous one proposed, for example, by Horkheimer and Adorno, according to whom Nietzsche, "like few others since Hegel, [...] recognized the dialectic of enlightenment"<sup>9</sup>), but I simply want to point out that Nietzsche's frequent emphasis on the idea of a "return to nature (*zurück zur Natur*)", despite many observations that actually seem to go in that direction, should not be interpreted as a declaration of some sort of reductive naturalism. As has been noticed,

Das “Zurück zur Natur” ist aber von vornherein mit der Idee der Kulturerneuerung bei Nietzsche verbunden. In diesem Kontext bestimmt Nietzsche den “Begriff der Kultur” als einer neuen und verbesserten Physis [...]. Dies aber hat nun zur Konsequenz, daß über den Physis-Begriff die Natur nicht, wie in der Moderne, als Gegensatz der Kultur verstanden wird, sondern daß von Nietzsche Kultur wesentlich bestimmt wird als Natur [...]. Nicht mehr die angeblich “natürliche Natur” ist bei Nietzsche Identitätsgarant, sondern die natürlich gebildete Kultur. [...] Um das Verhältnis von Kultur und Natur zu verstehen, muß nach Nietzsche grundlegend berücksichtigt werden, “dass auch jene erste Natur irgend wann einmal eine zweite Natur war und dass jede siegende zweite Natur zu einer ersten wird”<sup>10</sup>.

Anyway, both the abovementioned meanings that the expression “second nature” assumes in Nietzsche (the first one, as I said, referred to the question concerning the growth and development of the individual; the second one referred to the more general question concerning the dialectic between nature and culture that is constitutive of the human being as such) are philosophically interesting and may prove to be useful for my specific purposes here. Most of all, both interpretations of this concept are apparently tied together by at least one aspect: namely, by Nietzsche’s insistence on the element of power, constraint, discipline and self-discipline, or even “inculcation” that, for him, seems to be unavoidably connected and actually inherent to the human way of acquiring a second nature (i.e., paraphrasing *Ecce homo*’s famous subtitle, our way of “becoming what we are”). In the following, I will thus focus on various writings of Nietzsche from different periods, on several passages in which Nietzsche talks about second nature. Then, after this presentation, I will attempt to analyze his position *vis-a-vis* McDowell’s own formulation of the concept.

One of the first occurrences of the concept of second nature in Nietzsche, or perhaps even the very first one, can be found in an early unpublished writing from the period Autumn 1867/Spring 1868 entitled *Rückblick auf meine zwei Leipziger Jahre. 17 Oktober 1865 – 10 August 1867*. Here, indeed, while meditating on his future that appeared to him dark and vague at the time (“Meine Zukunft liegt mir sehr im Dunkel”), and in considering the results of his own educational or cultural development (“Bildungsgang”), the young Nietzsche claims that

sometimes recent, newly acquired habits may represent an element of disturb for the spontaneous and naive expressions of one's character ("die naiven Äußerungen des Charakters"). Anyway, he also seems to add that, if one reflects more carefully on this point, this kind of impression often proves to be a mere semblance, something merely apparent ("nur scheinbar"). So, in this context, i.e. while meditating on his own nature ("meine Natur"), Nietzsche introduces the concept of second nature and writes: "Man denke an den Fußsoldaten, der zuerst fürchtet das Gehen überhaupt zu verlernen, wenn er angeleitet wird mit Bewußtsein den Fuß zu heben und dabei seine Fehler im Auge zu behalten. Es kommt nur darauf an, ihm *eine zweite Natur* anzubilden; dann geht er ebenso frei als vorher" (KGW I, IV, 506-7 [my emphasis]).

As has been noted<sup>11</sup>, this early unpublished writing can be also connected to another early autobiographical fragment of Nietzsche, dated July/August 1864, in which he deals with his school experiences in Pforta and the peculiar tendency, so characteristic of his own personality at the time, to oscillate between the spontaneous attraction for a great variety of subjects (among which, in particular, poetry, perhaps understandable as his "first nature") and the rigour and discipline of philology (see KGW I, III, 418-9). The basic concept, then, seems to be here that of the need (arguably for purposes of self-strengthening) to "inculcate" a rule, a habit, a discipline, an attitude to the subject that is comparable to a "second nature", until this new rule or habit gradually becomes something natural, spontaneous, somehow instinctive.

A few years later, in an unpublished fragment from the early 1870s, we find a similar concept expressed through the same word, namely "second nature", but applied in a broader sense to the entire domain of culture and even of life as such. As we read, indeed:

*Imitation* is the means of all culture (*Kultur*); it gradually produces instinct (*Instinkt*). *All comparing (primordial thought) is imitation*. *Species* are formed when the first specimens, who are merely similar to one another, rigorously imitate the largest, most powerful specimen. The inculcation of a *second nature* by means of imitation (*Die Anerziehung einer zweiten Natur durch Nachahmung*). Unconscious

copying (*das unbewußte Nachbilden*) is most remarkable in the case of procreation, which is the rearing of a second nature (*das Erziehen einer zweiten Natur*). Our senses imitate nature by copying it more and more. Imitation presupposes an act of apprehending and then a perpetual translation of the apprehended image into a thousand metaphors, all of which are effective (KGW III, IV, 19[226], 77-8 [UW, 70]).

And an analogous occurrence of the concept of second nature also appears, much in the same period, in the second of Nietzsche's conferences *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (1872), although the concept is rather applied here to a variety of aesthetic, educational and linguistic questions. As a matter of fact, in the context of a strong critique of what he calls the typical "Formal Education" of German schools, Nietzsche claims that "the public school has hitherto neglected its most important and most urgent duty towards the very beginning of all real culture, which is the mother-tongue", emphatically defined here as "the natural, fertile soil for all further efforts at culture" (KGW III, II, 175 [FEI]). Having said this, however, Nietzsche also warns people to be "aware of the difficulties of the language", since only by means of a strong discipline (*Zucht*) it becomes possible for young men and women, for example, to "acquire that physical loathing for the beloved and much-admired 'elegance' of style of our newspaper manufacturers and novelists, and for the 'ornate style' of our literary men" (KGW III, II, 176 [FEI]). A physical loathing that is required, for Nietzsche, in order to be able to claim that someone really has what we may perhaps define, with a very general word, as "good taste". "Let no one imagine that it is an easy matter to develop this feeling", Nietzsche adds, "to the extent necessary in order to have this physical loathing; but let no one hope to reach sound aesthetic judgments along any other road than the thorny one of language, and by this I do not mean philological research (*sprachliche Forschung*), but self-discipline in one's mother-tongue (*sprachliche Selbstzucht*)" (KGW III, II, 176 [FEI]). It is precisely at this point that Nietzsche – having explicitly introduced the decisive element of discipline and self-discipline which, as I said, is always required for him in order to "become what one is" – explains his view by means of an example that reminds us of the one of the "Fußsoldat" cited in

the abovementioned early writing *Rückblick auf meine zwei Leipziger Jahre*. And it is precisely in this context that he speaks again of “second nature”. As we read, indeed:

Everybody who is in earnest in this matter will have the same sort of experience as the recruit in the army (*Soldat*) who is compelled to learn walking after having walked almost all his life as a dilettante or empiricist. It is a hard time: one almost fears that the tendons are going to snap and one ceases to hope that the artificial and consciously acquired movements and positions of the feet will ever be carried out with ease and comfort. It is painful to see how awkwardly and heavily one foot is set before the other, and one dreads that one may not only be unable to learn the new way of walking, but that one will forget how to walk at all. Then it suddenly become noticeable that a new habit (*eine neue Gewohnheit*) and a *second nature* [my emphasis] have been born of the practised movements, and that the assurance and strength of the old manner of walking returns with a little more grace: at this point one begins to realise how difficult walking is, and one feels in a position to laugh at the untrained empiricist or the elegant dilettante. Our “elegant” writers, as their style shows, have never learnt “walking” in this sense, and in our public schools, as our other writers show, no one learns walking either. *Culture* begins, however, with the correct movement of the language: and once it has properly begun, it begets that physical sensation in the presence of “elegant” writers which is known by the name of “loathing” (KGW, III, II, 176-7 [*FEI*]).

Still focusing our attention on Nietzsche’s philosophical production from the 1870s, we can find even more weighty and philosophically interesting references to the second nature of the human being in the second piece of his *Unfashionable Observations: On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (1874). Here, more precisely in the sections 3 and 4 of this writing, while dealing with the famous question concerning the existence of three “modes of viewing the past” (namely, the monumental, the antiquarian and the critical ways of approaching history, all of which, in turn, must be “in the service of life”), Nietzsche claims that the human being, “in order to live”, must possess and sometimes employ “the strength to shatter and dissolve a past”. And, indeed, “every past is worthy of being condemned – for this is simply how it is with human affairs: human violence and weakness have always played a powerful role in them” (KGW III, I, 265 [*HL*, 106]). It is “life and life alone, that dark, driving, insatiable power that

lusts after itself”, that requires this way of dealing with the past, and “it takes great strength to be able to live and forget the extent to which living and being unjust are one and the same thing”. However, Nietzsche also adds that “at times this very life that requires forgetfulness demands the temporary suspension of this forgetfulness”, that which happens “when [the] past is viewed critically” and represents “always a dangerous process” (KGW III, I, 265-6 [HL, 106-7]).

At this point, Nietzsche observes that, with all evidence, “since we are, after all, the products of earlier generations, we are also the products of their aberrations, passions, and errors – indeed, of their crimes; it is impossible to free ourselves completely from [the] chain” from which we descend: “at best we arrive at an antagonism between our inherited, ancestral nature and our knowledge, or perhaps even at the struggle of a new, stricter discipline (*Zucht*) against what was long ago inborn and inbred. We cultivate a new habit (*eine neue Gewöhnung*)”, Nietzsche explains, “a new instinct, a second nature (*eine zweite Natur*), so that the first nature (*die erste Natur*) withers away. This is an attempt to give ourselves *a posteriori*, as it were, a new past from which we would prefer to be descended, as opposed to the past from which we actually descended”: that which, however, is “always dangerous”, “because second natures (*die zweiten Naturen*) are usually feebler than first natures (*als die ersten*)” (KGW III, I, 266 [HL, 107]). Anyway, as he adds in conclusion, “here and there a victory is nonetheless achieved, and for those [...] who make use of critical history in the service of life [...] there is one noteworthy consolation: the knowledge, namely, that even that first nature was once a second nature (*auch jene erste Natur irgend wann einmal eine zweite Natur war*), and that every victorious second nature will become a first nature (*jede siegende zweite Natur zu einer ersten wird*)” (KGW III, I, 266 [HL, 107-8]).

Just a few pages later, then, in the very next section of *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life*, Nietzsche confirms the importance of all three modes of approaching the past, inasmuch as every person, every people and every epoch actually need “a certain knowledge of the past, sometimes as

monumental, sometimes as antiquarian, and sometimes as critical history”, “but always and only” – this is the real point at issue – “for the purpose of life, and hence also always subordinate to the dominance and supreme guidance of this purpose”. This, he says, “is the natural relation (*die natürliche Beziehung*) of an age, a culture, or a people to history” (KGW III, I, 267 [HL, 108]). At this point, however, Nietzsche proposes to “take a quick look at [his] own time”, and critically observes that “all the clarity, all the naturalness and purity of that relation between life and history”, seem to have faded away or disappeared. “Today life no longer rules alone and constrains our knowledge of the past”, he says, and “as far back into the past as the process of becoming extends, as far back as infinity, all perspectives have shifted” (KGW III, I, 267-8 [HL, 108-9]). “No past generation”, Nietzsche explains,

ever witnessed an unsurveyable spectacle of the sort now being staged by the science of universal becoming, by history; but, to be sure, it is staging this spectacle with the dangerous audacity of its motto: *fiat veritas pereat vita*. [...] Historical knowledge constantly flows into him from inexhaustible sources; alien and disconnected facts crowd in upon him; his memory opens all its gates and is still not open wide enough [...]. Habituation to such a disorderly, stormy, and struggling household gradually becomes second nature (*wird allmählich zu einer zweiten Natur*), although there can be no doubt that this second nature is much weaker, much more restless, and in every way more unhealthy than the first (*diese zweite Natur viel schwächer, viel ruheloser und durch und durch ungesünder ist, als die erste*). [...] Our modern cultivation (*moderne Bildung*) is nothing living precisely because [...] it is no real cultivation (*keine wirkliche Bildung*), but rather only a kind of knowledge about cultivation (*nur eine Art Wissen um die Bildung*) (KGW III, I, 268-9 [HL, 109-10]).

Shifting now our attention from Nietzsche’s early works to his mature thought, it can be said that the concept of second nature appears in both *Dawn* (1881) and *The Gay Science* (1882). More precisely, the notion of *zweite Natur* can be found in the aphorisms 38 and 455 of *Dawn*, and seems to be generally referred here to the complex character of the relationship between instincts or drives, as well as to the (actually not simple or unambiguous) relationship between a merely apparent education and the achievement of real maturity. So, in the aphorism 455, significantly entitled *First*

*Nature*, we read: “The way we are being brought up (*erzieht*) these days we first receive a *second nature*: and we have it when the world labels us mature, of age, usable. A select few are snakes enough to shed this skin one day: at that point when under its cover their *first nature* has matured. With most people its embryo dries up” (KGW V, I, 279 [D, 232]). While the aphorism 38 of *Dawn* is entitled *Drives Transformed by Moral Judgments* and reads:

Under the influence of the reproach that custom attaches to it, the same drive (*Trieb*) may develop into either a painful feeling of *cowardice*: or, [...] into the pleasant feeling of *humility*. In other words, a good or an evil conscience is forced onto the drive! *As with every drive*, it, *per se*, has neither these nor any other moral character nor name whatsoever nor even a definite accompanying feeling of pleasure or displeasure. It acquires all this, as its second nature (*als seine zweite Natur*), only once it comes into relation to drives previously baptized as good or evil or else marked as a property of beings whom a people has already identified and evaluated as moral. – The ancient Greeks thus felt differently about envy than we do [...]. Likewise, the Greeks were different from us in their evaluation of *hope* [...]. – The Jews felt differently about *wrath* than we do and decreed it holy [...]. Measured against them, the great wrath weakers among the Europeans are, as it were, secondhand creatures (KGW V, I, 41 [D, 31-2]).

It is also possible to broaden this picture, so to speak, by adding a few references, taken from Nietzsche’s epistolary, to the abovementioned occurrences of the concept of second nature derived from his writings. Two letters, both sent from Rapallo at the beginning of December 1882, are of particular interest here. In the first one (letter n. 344), sent to Hans von Bülow, Nietzsche lingers on the changes occurred in the last six years in his way of thinking and feeling (“die veränderte Art zu denken und zu empfinden”), that he also gave expression to in his writings (“welche ich [...] auch schriftlich zum Ausdruck brachte”) and that, most of all, somehow kept him alive and gave him a decisive help in remaining healthy and reasonable (“[...] hat mich im Dasein erhalten und mich beinahe gesund gemacht”) (KSB VI, 290). Having said this, Nietzsche goes on by defining this changed or altered way of thinking and feeling as “freethinking (*Freigeisterei*)” (something which, he says, was critically judged by some of his friends as too “eccentric”), and



here he introduces the concept of second nature, as he writes to his correspondent: “Gut, es mag eine ‘zweite Natur’ sein: aber ich will schon noch beweisen, daß ich mit dieser zweiten Natur erst in den eigentlichen Besitz meiner ersten Natur getreten bin” (KSB VI, 290).

Then, in the second letter (n. 345), sent from the same place and in the very same period but this time to his friend Erwin Rohde, after having somehow generally observed that, should one not run the risk of wasting him- or herself in a multitude of things, one would have to immerse him- or herself into something unitary, entire and definite (“wir müssen uns in etwas Ganzes hineinlegen, sonst macht das Viele aus uns ein Vieles”), Nietzsche hints again at his eccentric “second nature” and writes: “Gut, ich habe eine ‘zweite Natur’, aber nicht um die erste zu vernichten, sondern um sie zu ertragen. An meiner ‘ersten Natur’ wäre ich längst zu Grunde gegangen – war ich beinahe zu Grunde gegangen. [...] Aber – wer war es doch, der sich da entschloß [*scil.* zu dem ‘excentrischen Entschluß’]? – Gewiß, liebster Freund, es war die erste Natur: sie wollte ‘leben’” (KSB VI, 291).

Finally, it is interesting to take into account in the present context the abovementioned aphorism 290 of *The Gay Science*, entitled *One Thing is Needful* and dealing with the question concerning the “great and rare art [...] to ‘give style’ to one’s character” (KGW V, II: 210 [*GS*: 163]). A question, the latter, that should not be interpreted here, however, as an aesthetic question in the strict sense (“style”) but rather in a more general, somehow philosophical-anthropological sense. In fact, Nietzsche is interested here in inquiring into the way in which the human being can, or perhaps must, rule him- or herself and shape his/her own form of life, accepting the need to undergo the hard process of coercion, constraint and self-disciplination that is required for this purpose. In this context, it is extremely interesting (perhaps even more than in the preceding, aforementioned occurrences) the introduction, by Nietzsche, of the concept of *second nature*, which acquires here a decisive synthesizing function: that is, it appears to be the most suitable concept in order to synthesize or summarize in a single word the complex process of self-shaping (or, as it were,

self-taming, self-domestication<sup>12</sup>) that I have just mentioned before. As he writes:

To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practised by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses that their nature has to offer and then fit them into an artistic plan until each appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a great mass of second nature (*eine grosse Masse zweiter Natur*) has been added; there a piece of first nature (*ein Stück erster Natur*) removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. [...] In the end, when the work is complete, it becomes clear how it was the force (*Zwang*) of a single taste that ruled and shaped (*herrschte und bildete*) everything great and small [...] It will be the strong and domineering natures who experience their most exquisite pleasure under such coercion (*Zwang*), in being bound by but also perfected under their own law; the passion of their tremendous will becomes less intense in the face of all stylized nature, all conquered and serving nature (*aller besiegt und dienenden Natur*) [...]. Conversely, it is the weak characters with no power over themselves who *hate* the constraint (*Gebundenheit*) of style: they feel that if this bitterly evil compulsion (*Zwang*) were to be imposed on them, they would have to become *commonplace* under it [...]. (KGW V, II, 210-1 [GS, 163-4])

4. At this point, the question is: Is there anything that Nietzsche’s peculiar and, as we have seen, fragmentary, non-systematic treatment of the concept of second nature can teach us today? More precisely: Is there a way in which his own treatment of this concept can be put in a fruitful and philosophically proficient mode in connection with McDowell’s “Naturalism of Second Nature”? In my opinion, definitely yes.

As we have seen, the concept of second nature, although obviously not comparable to the fundamental concepts of his overall philosophy (such as nihilism, will to power, Apollonian/Dionysian, eternal recurrence of the same, the overman, *amor fati*, etc.), plays a certain role in Nietzsche’s philosophy and must be understood, in the various writings in which it occurs, as part of a conceptual constellation that also includes the notions of rule, force, power, compulsion, instinct, “eccentricity”, expression, discipline, shaping, imitation, education, history, life, and, in particular, coercion (*Zwang*), constraint (*Gebundenheit*), discipline (*Zucht*) and self-discipline (*Selbstzucht*), domestication of impulses or drives (*Triebe*), acquisition of habits (*Gewohnheit; Gewöhnung*), inculcation (*Anerziehung*), culture or cultivation

(*Bildung*). In short, the general meaning or general idea that it is possible to derive from such a non-systematic, heterogeneous and “constellative” scheme centered on the notion of second nature has to do with the question concerning “the purpose and goal [and] the efficacy of *Bildung*” (Gentili 2001, 39). That is, it has basically to do with the relationship – which, in the case of such complex, problematic and “still undetermined” creatures as the human beings is actually delicate and never-to-be-taken-for-granted, but nevertheless unavoidable and irreducible – between immediacy or free, natural spontaneity, on the one side, and the strength and rigorous discipline that is essentially inherent to culture as such, on the other side. None of the two is less important or even less constitutive for the human being: this peculiar creature that, in Zarathustra’s famous and emphatic words, is a sort of “rope fastened between animal and overman (*zwischen Thier und Übermensch*)” (KGW VI, I, 10 [Z, 7]).

Should one want to broaden a little bit this discourse, thus proceeding in a more interpretive (but, in my view, not at all philologically and philosophically incorrect) way, then it might be said that, if it is true that culture, for Nietzsche, must not turn into a form of oppression or repression of nature, it is also true that culture, inasmuch as it is a “second nature” for the human beings (that is, it is a primary, original dimension for such “culturally-determined” rather than merely “naturally-determined” animals as those we are: hence it is something belonging to our very essence, although in a mediate and not in a simple or immediate way), emerges spontaneously from nature itself, although requiring great efforts and even constraint and pain. As has been noted, from Nietzsche’s point of view “being-against-nature actually represents” for the human being “the fundamental character of nature itself” (Gentili 1998, 183). In short, the idea is that we are cultural (or, say, “second-natural”) animals by our very (first) nature. It is natural for us to be cultural – although culture, of course, from a Nietzschean point of view must not turn then into something “unnatural”, into something “against life”. Or still, in Helmut Plessner’s words (another of the founding fathers of German philosophical anthropology), “man is ‘by nature’ artificial”<sup>13</sup>.

This may finally lead us back to McDowell, inasmuch as the latter's basic claim, with regard to his general concept of human nature, is precisely that "our nature is largely second nature", and it is the way it is

not just because of the potentialities we were born with, but also because of our upbringing, our *Bildung*. [...] Our *Bildung* actualizes some of the potentialities we are born with; we do not have to suppose it introduces a non-animal ingredient into our constitution. And although the structure of the space of reasons cannot be reconstructed out of facts about our involvement in the realm of law, it can be the framework within which meaning comes into view only because our eyes can be opened to it by *Bildung*, which is an element in the normal coming to maturity of the kind of animals we are. (McDowell 1996, 87-8)

In my view, it is precisely the formative and self-formative element which is strictly inherent to the concept of *Bildung* as such that may allow to establish a non-extrinsic relationship between Nietzsche and McDowell – although it must be said that the latter, in explicitly comparing his own concept of second nature with "what figures in German philosophy as *Bildung*" (McDowell 1996, 84), does not mention Nietzsche but rather refers to the tradition of German idealism, even arriving at interpreting *Mind and World* "as a prolegomenon to a reading of [Hegel's] *Phenomenology*" (McDowell 1996, IX). As a matter of fact, what is really at stake here, in general, is a conception of the human beings as somehow "bizarre" animals that can only be, or better become, what they are (i.e. really fulfill their nature) through the (cultural) world that they themselves create and then inhabit. Creatures that are compelled by their somehow "indeterminate" nature to build up themselves, cultivate themselves, discipline or "domesticate" themselves, shape themselves, inculcate to themselves new habits, and create by means of their own thoughts and actions a world (*Welt*) that is apt to their survival and strengthening, given the lack of a suitable and already-given environment (*Umwelt*) for such "unsuitable" or, in Gehlen's terms (influenced by Nietzsche, as I said), "deficient" beings.

Now, it might be argued that McDowell has perhaps surveyed a little bit too quickly, so to speak, this aspect as well as some other points. For example, he has perhaps conceived of

the human being's acquisition of a *second nature* as something simply obvious and innate, thus taking it for granted and not lingering on, for example, the natural history that stands behind this process and actually made it possible. According to Sabina Lovibond, McDowell's "account of the relation of humanity to the rest of animal nature" actually needs to be put in close relation to "the theme of evolutionary continuity" (Lovibond 2006, 265) more than he did in *Mind and World*. With regard to this, it is surely important to recall that the typical insistence of Nietzsche, for his part, on the peculiar, undetermined and somehow unique nature of the human being is *not* at odds with his well-known and strong emphasis on the natural-historical continuity between human and non-human animals. This is testified, for example, by his famous comparisons of the human beings to mosquitoes, frogs and still other animals, each of whom has its own particular perspective on the real just like the human being has its relative, not at all absolute or universal, perspective. On this topic, just to mention a single example, see for instance the famous aphorism 374 of *The Gay Science*, entitled *Our New "Infinite"*, that reads:

How far the perspectival character of existence (*Dasein*) extends, or indeed whether it has any other character; whether an existence without interpretation (*Auslegung*), without "sense" (*Sinn*), doesn't become "nonsense" (*Unsinn*); whether, on the other hand, all existence isn't essentially an *interpreting* existence (*ein auslegendes Dasein*) – that cannot, as would be fair, be decided even by the most industrious and extremely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis, the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these. We cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be [...]. Rather, the world has once again become infinite (*unendlich*) to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations* (*unendliche Interpretationen*) (KGW V, II, 308-9 [GS, 239-40]).

Still, it might be objected that McDowell has perhaps paid not enough attention to the way in which the conceptual and linguistic capacities that he equates with the notion of *Bildung* are "tied to the bodily structure that is peculiar of our species" and that actually constitutes "the background, the presupposition" and "the condition of possibility of our rationality"

(Mazzeo 2003, 42). In addition to this, it is finally important to underline that the process of acquiring a second nature or, as it were, “becoming human”, must be considered, of course, as a natural (or better, “second-natural”) process. Namely, as a process that progressively distances us from a condition of natural immediacy but does so because it is characteristic of our very nature to gradually become not-merely-natural, i.e. cultural animals. At the same time, however, this must *not* lead us to forget how much strength, effort, discipline, self-domestication and constraint it takes for all human beings to “become what they are”. As once observed by Horkheimer and Adorno (who were also inspired by Nietzsche, among others, in developing their concept of dialectic of enlightenment), it is hard to imagine, and indeed it cannot be known exactly, “how much violence preceded” and was actually required for “the habituation to even so simple an order” as that of the so-called “magical stage” of development of mankind (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 15). But if this holds true for the very first stages in the process of the human beings’ progressive acquisition of their “second nature”, then it will be even more valid and convincing for all subsequent (and progressively less “natural”, in the immediate sense of the word) stages of development of both individuals and, more in general, mankind.

In recent times, the question concerning the compelling need, for the human being, to discipline itself, and even “tame” or domesticate itself, in order to really become a human being (“an animal that can say: ‘I’”) has been emphasized, among others, by the Italian philosopher Felice Cimatti. According to him, “the human being is the particular animal that is able to [...] distance itself from its own animality”; the animal that is able “not only to live the life that it lives, but also and especially to distance itself from its own life”; the animal that is able “to relativize its own point of view”. “This operation”, defined by Cimatti as “the anthropogenic device” or “the process of anthropogenesis”, is actually “a violent and painful operation”. For him, “the main function” of, among others, such human capacities as rationality and language, “is that of ‘dominating’ or ‘controlling’ oneself” by means of

acquiring a sort of second nature: “The history of language” and the history of the human, linguistically-embedded rationality, “is the history of control or domination over one’s own behavior” (Cimatti 2013, 15-16, 25, 35, 47-49). It seems to me that this specific dimension of our process of becoming “second-natural animals” is quite absent from McDowell’s otherwise very fascinating and also convincing philosophical project. As has been observed, McDowell’s claim seems to be that

we have language because we benefit of a second nature, and that we benefit of a second nature because we have language. However, why can our species develop it and comprehend it, and other species not? And if conceptual capacities are so crucial that [*scil.* in McDowell’s view] they permeate all our intentional bodily actions, what protects us then from the danger of linguistic relativism? [...] How should we exactly conceive, then, the relationship between first and second nature? [...] *Pace* McDowell, simply relying on *Bildung* as such does not suffice. (Mazzeo 2003, 41-42)

In my view, it is precisely this aspect that can be variously – although not systematically, but only in a fragmentary way, and sometimes only implicitly – found both in Nietzsche’s intriguing observations on the second nature of the “still undetermined animals” that we are, and in the after-effects of his philosophy on such 20<sup>th</sup>-century currents of thought as German philosophical anthropology and hermeneutics. All elements, the latter, that should be taken into consideration and rethought today in light of such up-to-date philosophical programs as McDowell’s. All elements, the latter, that might be also potentially incorporated in, or integrated with, his “Naturalism of Second Nature”, in order to eventually help us to develop a broader, richer, more complex and, above all, more critical conception of the specific constitution of the human being.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, McDowell’s important collections *Mind, Value and Reality* (2002), *Having the World in View* (2009a) and *The Engaged Intellect* (2009b), in which, notwithstanding McDowell’s intriguing way of also relying on, and actually reinterpreting from his own perspective, insights originally provided by 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century German philosophies, Nietzsche is never mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> As an example, I remind the reader of the following relevant works on McDowell's philosophy, in which no one among his interpreters seems to even take into account the very possibility of putting him into relationship with Nietzsche, namely the possibility of comparing some of his concepts or theses to Nietzsche's: see Willaschek 2000, Thornton 2004, Macdonald 2006. Nietzsche is mentioned only twice, and also in an absolutely inessential way, so to speak merely *en passant*, in Smith 2002.

<sup>3</sup> In this contribution Nietzsche's works will be always cited both in their original German versions (with the following standard abbreviations: KGW = *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke*; KSB = *Sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Studienausgabe*) and, when available, in official English translations. Translations used are *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (= BGE); *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality* (= D); *On the Future of Our Educational Institutions* (= FEI); *The Gay Science* (= GS); *On the Utility and Liability of History for Life* (= HL); *Unpublished Writings from the Period of the "Unfashionable Observations"* (= UW); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None* (= Z).

<sup>4</sup> I owe some insights on these and other related questions concerning the "incompleteness" and "indeterminacy" of the human nature to Galimberti 2000, in particular, 87-172.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps no one in the contemporary philosophical scene has raised and expressed this kind of criticism with greater emphasis, strength and argumentative efficacy than Jacques Derrida (2008).

<sup>6</sup> McDowell indeed explains that, although "some followers of Sellars, notably Richard Rorty, put the contrast as one between the space of *reasons* and the space of *causes*", he actually thinks that "it is better to set the space of reasons not against the space of causes but against the space of subsumption under, as we say, natural law. Unlike Rorty's construal of the contrast, this version does not pre-empt the possibility that reasons might *be* causes. We need not see the idea of causal linkages as the exclusive property of natural-scientific thinking" (McDowell 2009b, 258).

<sup>7</sup> See Keith Ansell Pearson's brief but illuminating account of Nietzsche's own version of "affirmative naturalism", also compared to the versions developed by Bergson and Deleuze (Ansell Pearson 2015).

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography of recent works on Nietzsche is obviously rich in contributions on his particular variety (or even varieties) of naturalism and philosophy of nature. For a recent and very good review of some books and articles on this topic, see Vitali 2017 (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 36. As is well-known, the question concerning Nietzsche's relationship to dialectical thinking in general is a very complex and much debated one. According to such distinguished interpreters as, for instance, Gilles Deleuze (1962), Nietzsche represents the non-dialectical or even anti-dialectical philosophers *par excellence*, although it might be noticed with Günter Figal (1999: 139-40) that "[man] müsste [...] der These von Deleuze (1962), Nietzsche habe nicht dialektisch gedacht, widersprechen": "Deleuze denkt auch nur an Hegels Dialektik, nicht an diejenige Platons. [...] Bei Platon gab es für das, was Nietzsche hier [*scil.* in *Human, All Too Human*] 'Wissenschaft' nennt, einen anderen Namen: Dialektik".



<sup>10</sup> Caysa 2011, 289-90. The last quotation in inverted commas is taken from the second piece of Nietzsche's *Unfashionable Observations*: "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life" (1874).

<sup>11</sup> I follow here some insights provided by Gentili 2001, 38-9.

<sup>12</sup> I borrow this concept from Cimatti 2013, 33-41.

<sup>13</sup> Plessner 1981, 199. I owe this specific reference to Plessner's conception to Shusterman 2016, 98.

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**Stefano Marino** is postdoctoral fixed-term researcher and adjunct lecturer of Aesthetics at the University of Bologna. Main research interests: 19th- and 20th-century Philosophy, F. Nietzsche, Phenomenology and Hermeneutics (especially M. Heidegger and H.-G. Gadamer), Frankfurt critical theory (especially Th. W. Adorno), Pragmatism (in particular recent developments: R. Rorty, R. Shusterman), Philosophy of music (in particular popular music from a philosophical-sociological point of view), Aesthetics of fashion. Recent publications: *Aesthetics, Metaphysics, Language: Essays on Heidegger and Gadamer*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle 2015, 155 pp.; *Gadamer and the Limits of the Modern Techno-Scientific Civilization* (Peter Lang, 2011, 295 pp.); *Aufklärung in einer Krisenzeit: Ästhetik, Ethik und Metaphysik bei Theodor W. Adorno*, German translation by A. Foresta, Dr. Kovač Verlag, Hamburg 2015, 166 pp.; *La filosofia di Frank Zappa. Un'interpretazione adorniana*, Mimesis, Milano 2014, 152 pp.

**Address:**

Stefano Marino  
University of Bologna  
Dipartimento di Filosofia e Comunicazione  
via Zamboni 38, Bologna, Italy  
Tel.: +39 051 20 9 8340  
Email: [stefano.marino4@unibo.it](mailto:stefano.marino4@unibo.it)

## Counter-Enlightenment, Communitarianism and Postmodernism

Bogdan Constantin Mihailescu  
“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

### Abstract

Although different phenomena, having dissimilar messages and horizons, between counter-enlightenment, communitarianism and postmodernism there is a consistent common ground. It's about the critical reaction towards modernity, especially concerning its major cultural ethos, the enlightenment. Counter-enlightenment, commonly interpreted in the history of the political thought as one of the main intellectual sources of conservatism, is even more than that. Its influence constantly reverberates on the entire social reflection proper to modernity, inclusively on some important contemporary orientations, as communitarianism or postmodernism. Without giving to this counter-enlightenment influence careful consideration, the social philosophy of communitarianism or of postmodernism may be seen only as an integrant part of the contemporary political left. Nevertheless, beside the emancipatory discourse, aiming to give an equal respect to all cultures, or beside the critical, liberating view, which intends to carry on the progressive ideals, surpassing all dogmas specific to enlightenment universalist rationalism, there is, within communitarianism and postmodernism, a conservative line, which can be understood by knowing their common counter-enlightenment origins.

**Keywords:** enlightenment, counter-enlightenment, communitarianism, conservatism, language.

Although different phenomena, having dissimilar messages and horizons, between counter-enlightenment, communitarianism and postmodernism there is a consistent common ground. It's about the critical reaction towards modernity, especially concerning its major cultural ethos, the enlightenment. The claim to discover, by the help of the reason, some doubtless, universal, unhistorical and transcultural bases of the just social organization is contested by the initial counter-enlightenment,

this critique being revealed, into a very consistent manner, within communitarianism and postmodernism. Counter-enlightenment is a concept which, once entered and adopted in the social philosophy by several decades, still remains unused and unexploited at its maximum explanatory potential (Garrard 2006, 2-5). It's a term which, although leads to a plurality – sometimes difficult to compatibilize – of perspectives and critiques, it still includes an entire major cultural orientation, which has continuity and representatives till nowadays (Garrard 2006). Hereby, the study of counter-enlightenment contributes to a better knowledge of the social and political European modernity, to the understanding of those who are rejecting it, and also to the understanding of the most important existing ideological cleavages, which are going through the last two centuries (Mihailescu 2015).

As cultural movement, counter-enlightenment manifests itself, even from the XVIII-th century, in the form of a powerful critical discourse against the enlightenment social philosophy and its desiderata. The ideas of the enlightenment social philosophy are continuing the theses of humanism, containing, among their major features, rationalism, progressivism, universalism or secularism (Ball, Dagger, and O'Neill 2016, 201-202). These ideas are contested by the counter-enlightenment reaction. Universalism is considered incompatible with the human condition, and rationalism is seen as abstract and fade. Universalistic rationalism is perceived as inapplicable and even harmful for the identity binding necessary to every community. For enlightenment, the progress is the result of releasing from prejudices and from irrational approaches. But the exaggerated fight of enlightenment with the prejudices is accused of ending into a war against naturalness of different traditions, creators of sense. Counter-enlightenment, conservatism and the European political right will always insist on this aspect. The fight against traditions is accompanied by the fight for the inoculation of the new ideologies – liberalism and socialism – and also by the internal war between the two great political currents of enlightenment origin. The victory of liberalism means the victory of individualism. Communitarianism, taking up the counter-enlightenment discourse, is highlighting

the illusory and deformative dimension of total individual autonomization and of promised de-positioning. Liberal modernity is also a product of a particular culture. The force of the reason – glorified by enlightenment – of establishing the social order of the objective justice, is a myth. Liberal modernity, consider the defenders of communitarianism, not only doesn't succeed to create the right society, of proceduralism, of neutrality and of equity, but it destructures and disorientates the communities and the persons, depriving them of the necessary narrations and superindividual benchmarks (Sandel 1998, 175-183). On its turn, postmodernism confirms the counter-enlightenment message, regarding the inexistence of the social universals and of the great certainties of the reason, situated above the cultural particularities. Thus, the fight of enlightenment for freeing from traditions, for installing ideological universalism and cosmopolitanism is considered to be foredoomed to failure. The foundations of the social and institutional macro-arrangements cannot be legitimated in an absolute manner, as a consequence of the objective reason (Rorty 1989, 44-69). The cultural, political, institutional, civilizational, valorical plurality is unavoidable (Gray 2002, 131-143). So are ambiguity, imperfection, error, irrationality, unreliability, uncertainty (Bauman 1993, 32-36; 245-250). Thereby, the counter-enlightenment message related to the domination of the history over the reason, or to the illusory character of the redemptive progress promised by the enlightenment rationalism, will be renewed by postmodernism.

Counter-enlightenment is the term used by Isaiah Berlin (2013a), to describe the resistance, as old as the contested ideas, to the central premises of the enlightenment (1). Starting from the analysis made by Berlin (2013b), the major authors of the initial counter-enlightenment are Giambattista Vico, Johann Georg Hamann and Johann Gottfried Herder.

The Cartesian rationalism and the project of a *mathesis universalis* are considered erroneous by Vico, for not understanding their limits. Even if deductive reason is applicable, with best results, only to phenomena created by people, it must not be used in an exclusivist or procrustean manner, being unjustifiable both the elimination of those that cannot be explained by it, and also the deformation of the

researched aspects, in order to force them to fit in the cinches of the reason (Costelloe 2014). As Vico shows, “the human mind, because of its indefinite nature, wherever it is lost in ignorance makes itself the rule of the universe in respect of everything it does not know” (Vico 1948, 63, §181), so “man makes himself the measure of all things” (Vico 1948, 54, §120). The relativity of human appreciations, considers Vico, is consubstantial to knowledge – “it is another property of the human mind that whenever men can form no idea of distant and unknown things, they judge them by what is familiar and at hand” (Vico 1948, 54, §122). There is, emphasizes Vico, a genuine naturalness of all phenomena, and, when it disappears, things are degenerating – “things do not settle or endure out of their natural order” (Vico 1948, 56, §134). For knowing things, this naturalness has to be understood, because the truth reveals itself mainly by following the origins. “The nature of things is nothing but their coming into being (nascimento) at certain times and in certain fashions” (Vico 1948, 58, §147). Therefore, studying history, traditions and language is essentially, because these are the ones which talk about the identity and the particular naturalness of a community, while offering it durability. “Vulgar traditions must have had public grounds of truth, by virtue of which they came into being and were preserved by entire peoples over long periods of time” (Vico 1948, 58, §149), and “the vulgar tongues should be the most weighty witnesses concerning those ancient customs of the peoples that were observed at the time when the languages were being formed” (Vico 1948, 58, §151). The understanding of things in their naturalness is nothing but wisdom (Vico 1948, 84, §326), and it cannot be obtained by the mathematization dreamed by Cartesian rationalism (Berlin 2013b, 35-37). Mathematization looks for uniformity, linearity, regularity. Instead, the wisdom described by Vico leads to the understanding of the irremediably plural and relative character of the cultures, fact which flagrantly contradicts the enlightenment foundationalist, universalist and rationalistic imaginary, marked by the search of the perfect social order, corresponding to the unchangeable and perennial human nature (Berlin 2013a, 6-8). At the social level, this wisdom leads to the understanding of the fact that “governments must



conform to the nature of the men governed. This axiom shows that in the nature of human civil things the public school of princes is the morality of the peoples” (Vico 1948, 71, §246-247). Hence morality, and, in a more general sense, culture, cannot be otherwise understood than by knowing the origins and the historical evolution of a community, in its entire peculiarity and contextuality (Berlin 2013b, 72), and not by ignoring, repudiating or destroying the traditions, seen by the enlightenment philosophy as sources of prejudices, irrationality and ignorance.

By the works of Hamann, the counter-enlightenment of the XVIII-th century is radicalizing (Berlin 2013a, 8), and by those of Herder it acquires a clearer contour (Berlin 2013a, 13). Hamann (2007) is a virulent enemy of rationalistic sterility, of the abstract research philosophical methods and of the style imposed by French enlightenment (Haynes 2007, xi-xii). In an ironical manner, Hamann rejects Kantian attempts of legitimating pure reason –

but should it not be possible to derive from the concept of reason the form of its empirical intuition in the word, the form by virtue of which one of the two syllables stands *a priori* and the other *a posteriori* and the seven letters are intuited in a definite ordered relation? Here the Homer of pure reason snores as loud a Yes! as Jack and Jill at the altar, presumably because he has dreamed that the universal character of a philosophical language, hitherto sought, is already found. (Hamann 2007, 216-217)

Reason cannot desituate itself historically and linguistically, human thought being impossible in the absence of these dimensions (Hamann 2007, 215-217). Hamann underlines, in a firm way, the limits of the reason. Reason is considered incapable of providing an adequate understanding of the world, because it schematizes, impoverishes, exhausts or obnubilates different aspects of the approached phenomena, Hamann preferring sentiment and love, as more powerful instruments of knowledge (Berlin 2013a, 9). Language has an order which imposes itself, and which can be accessed by experience, and not by scientific rationality (Berlin 2013a, 13).

The critique of enlightenment is systematized by Herder. Continuing the thesis of the dependence of thought on language, and emphasizing the crucial role that language has for humanity (Spencer 2012, 26-42), Herder deepens the perspective

on the differences between human communities, considering them not only natural and irreducible, but also necessary and beneficent.

Nature has *divided* peoples through language, ethics, customs, often through mountains, seas, rivers, and deserts; it, so to speak, did everything in order that they should for a long time remain separated from each other and become rooted in themselves. ... The diversity of language, ethics, inclinations, and ways of life was destined to become a bar against the presumptuous *linking together* of the peoples, a dam against foreign inundations – for the steward of the world was concerned that for the security of the whole each people and race preserved *its* impress, *its* character; peoples should live *beside* each other, not mixed up with and top of each other oppressing each other. (Herder 2003, 384-385)

History and the distinct cultural features of a community are considered by the German philosopher to be the skeleton which sustains the existence of a nation, Herder being placed, in the history of political thought, among the most influential advocates of cultural nationalism (Berlin 2013a, 15; White 2005). Nations, in their plurality and diversity, shows Herder, are the natural framework of the historical course. Paying no respect to this fact has fatal consequences.

The most natural state is, therefore, one nation, an extended family with one national character. This it retains for ages and develops most naturally if the leaders come from the people and wholly dedicated to it. For a nation is as natural a plant as a family, only with more branches. Nothing, therefore, is more manifestly contrary to the purpose of political government than the unnatural enlargement of states, the wild mixing of various races and nationalities under one sceptre. (Herder 1969, 324)

Starting from the ideas held by Vico, Hamann or Herder, counter-enlightenment appears as a movement of rejecting the enlightenment theses, as those which: place on a secondary level the particular aspects of culture; don't pay the proper importance to the understanding of origins and of history; militate for the enthronement of reason, as the only instrument of finding and validating the answers; consider cosmopolitanism as being superior to national organization; orientate the view quasi-exclusively on the future, associating it to the ineluctable progress.

Many of the enlightenment's ideas have been developed within the romanticism, have contributed to the antipositivist reaction from the XIX-th century and to the development of philosophical hermeneutics. The romanticism of some authors as W.A. Schlegel (1965) or Fichte (2013) carries forward Herderian nationalism, giving it a more pronounced Germanocentric tint (Kohn 1950). The critique of positivism, made by Dilthey (2002) from the hermeneutics points of view, interlaces with the conservative options derived from the counter-enlightenment tradition (Bulhof 1980, 12-15). In his studies, Gadamer (1993; 2004), one of the most important representatives of postwar hermeneutics, points out the importance of authors as Vico, Hamann or Herder. Vico is seen as one of the major defenders of the humanistic rhetoric tradition against the reductionist attack of modern rationalism, tradition from which hermeneutics has consistently taken over (Gadamer 2004, 21; Gadamer 1993, 498-500). Vico is appreciated for the way he – together with Hamann and Herder – manages to offer a more profound manner of understanding the language, in contrast to the usual, instrumental one (Gadamer 1993, 432). Herderian view on the importance of history greatly influences Gadamerian conceptual construction. The concept of *consciousness of the effects of history* is centered on the idea that we, human beings, cannot obtain a radical detachment from history –

we do not detach from the historical process itself and we do not place ourselves, so to speak, in front of it. ... We are already and always in the middle of history. We ourselves are not only a link of this chain which is still unrolling, speaking in the terms of Herder, but we have every moment the possibility to reconcile to this fact which is coming to us and which is transmitted by tradition from the past. I name this fact *consciousness of the effects of history* ... on the one side ... our consciousness is determined ... by a real historical process ... on the other side ... we have to engender in us, again and again, a consciousness of this fact of being influenced. (Gadamer 1993, 142-143)

At the same time, Gadamerian critique of the way the enlightenment tried to discredit traditions and prejudices, carries a lot of counter-enlightenment and romantic tonality (Gadamer 2004, 278-285).

The critique of the universalistic, rationalistic and progressive desiderata has been taken over, even from the end of the XVIII-th century, by political conservatism. Thus, from the history of the political ideas view, the counter-enlightenment philosophical positions are seen as important part of the intellectual genesis of the European political right (Mihailescu 2015) – from its moderate hypostases to the radical ones, of fascist type (Ball, Dagger, and O’Neill 2016, 201-202; Adamson, Carlbohm and Ouis 2014). Contemporary with the French Revolution, Edmund Burke (1951) was denouncing, in 1790, the same abstract rationalism, to which Vico or Hamann had been shown its limits, and which at that moment was changing and shaking the European politics. For Burke, abstractions, even when are presented as mobilizing ideals, legitimated by universal reason, cannot have the social or the political value that the defenders of the revolutionary enlightenment claim, because, in the political sphere, important is what it can be done, and not the illusions –

what is the use of discussing a man's abstract right to food or medicine? The question is upon the method of procuring and administering them. In that deliberation I shall always advise to call in the aid of the farmer and the physician, rather than the professor of metaphysics. (Burke 1951, 58)

Circumstances are the decisive aspects in the political life, they decide the beneficent character, or not, of the actions, and not the abstract principle (Burke 1951, 6). Burke's counter-enlightenment is marked by a strong realistic discourse (Compagnon 2008, 60-64). For Burke, politics is a practical activity. Here desiderata must be prudence, wisdom, moderation, the understanding of history, of tradition, of habits and of context, and not the inflexible principles, given by a reason with claims of purity and universality, but which in reality is faded, inapplicable and a sure victim of phantasies with destructive potential (Burke 1951, 56-60). Prejudices, validated by the historical practice of the community, must not be disregarded, but, on the contrary, cultivated and respected as source of wisdom (Burke 1951, 82-84). Progress doesn't mean sacrificing, or forcing reality, in view of making it to fit with the phantasms of the blown up reason, but it is achieved

through a permanent struggle for keeping the moral standards and benchmarks, legitimated by the authority of tradition, according to which it must be tried the gradual improvement of the society (Burke 1951, 93-98; 164-167). Simultaneously, it is also constituted in the French space a powerful conservative, counter-enlightenment movement, which sets, in the center of its message, the contestation of the Revolution (Compagnon 2008, 32-35; 54-60). At the end of the XVIII-th century, Joseph de Maistre was emphasizing the destructive character of the Revolution, the major errors and the abominable crimes committed in the name of the reason, the delusive aspect of the universals proposed by the enlightenment political thought, the gap between the abstractions of rationalistic type, included in the revolutionary political constitutions, and the particular realities or traditions (de Maistre 1994). Furthermore, this reticence towards the rationalistic type approaches will remain, till now, one of the most important feature of conservative political philosophy (Oakeshott 1991).

Rationalism, enlightenment and the ideologies inspired by them are definable elements of modern European politics. The classical liberal speech, of enlightenment inspiration – centered on the guarantee and protection of the natural individual rights, through the rule of law and the constitutional order (Sartori 1987, 380), on the promise of instituting a minimal state, valorically neutral, where citizens, free and equal in rights and dignity, choose their own way in life and their preferred cultural practices – comes to identify itself with political normality. In the current political theory, this liberalism is retaken, reinvigorated and absolutized by libertarianism, critically radiographed and contested by communitarianism. Within communitarianism, the counter-enlightenment rhetoric is visible, and the influence of authors as Vico or Herder is recognized (MacIntyre 1998, 223; 268; Taylor 1995, 79-99; Taylor 2003, 28-29).

Within the communitarian approach, on the one side, the claims of liberalism, of identifying a right, culturally neutral society, capable of integrating the whole humanity, or those of fully autonomizing the individual, are considered only some deforming illusions, and, on the other side, maintaining

and defending the cultural traditions of the communities is seen as vital, because the particular culture and history of a community are defining elements for the values, the goals and the becoming of a person (Bell 2016). These ideas frame in the tradition of criticizing and rejecting the enlightenment modernity, they becoming, through the agency of the works of authors as MacIntyre or Taylor, central parts of the communitarian message (Bell 2016).

As Vico, MacIntyre considers that without the knowledge of the exemplary narrative imaginary, specific to a community tradition, we cannot understand neither the society, nor the behaviour or the decisions of people, and without registration into a horizon of traditions and narrations, practicing the virtues and finding a sense of the existence are becoming impossible (MacIntyre 1998, 223). Vico, believes MacIntyre (1998) is the first who understood

that at least the objects of moral philosophy – the evaluative and normative concepts, the maxims, arguments and judgments handled by moral philosophy – don't appear otherwise than embodied in the historical lives of some particular social groups, and acquire this way the distinctive characteristics of historical existence ... A morality which is not the morality of a particular society doesn't exist. (MacIntyre 1998, 268)

Because of discrediting and despising tradition's narrations, the only cultural dimensions giver of sense, in the modern societies the understanding of morality has been lost (MacIntyre 1998, 30). Through enlightenment, the morals and the tradition of virtue have got the hardest shocks, so that today emotivism reached to dominate – the conviction that moral appreciations are questions which depend on our subjective preferences, being undecidable and impossible to be legitimated in a widely accepted manner (MacIntyre 1998, 34-49). Human typologies as The Esthete, The Therapist and The Manager – central characters of contemporary society, a society which inherits the failures of the enlightenment project – are incapable of connecting to super-individual narrations of tradition and are obligated to build manipulative social relations, instrumentalizing persons and promoting an emotivist ego, lacked of critical limits, of ultimate goals and of *telos* (MacIntyre 1998, 50-61).

Within the enlightenment, there was a strong and constant attempt of rationally legitimating morals, in a publically accepted and shared manner, but this attempt didn't succeed (MacIntyre 1998, 74-75). It had no chances to succeed, because the enlightenment view, thinks MacIntyre (1998) is fundamentally wrong; it makes no reference to a major sense of life, that a certain particular, narrative cultural tradition could validate and transmit further, along generations (76-86). Without this reference to a history of traditions, to a specific cultural context and to a super-individual narration about goal, no moral norms set can be convincing, and no correlation of principles to human nature can be consistent and durable (MacIntyre 1998, 77-80). Thereby, enlightenment doesn't autonomizes morals, but destructures it, making it anomic, while the consequences of enlightenment on the individual don't belong to the sphere of liberation and emancipation, but to the one of loss, disorientation and uprootedness (MacIntyre 1998, 85).

Valorical neutrality of the social and political engineering, of rational-objective origin, dreamt by the descendants of enlightenment is an illusion, being replaced by valorical confusion, abandonment of virtues and search of the manipulatory power (MacIntyre 1998, 109). MacIntyre considers that “if there is no *telos* meant to transcend the limited goods of practice and to represent the asset of an entire human life, on the one hand, moral life will be invaded by a certain subversive arbitrariness and, on the other hand, we will not be able to specify adequately the context of certain virtues” (1998, 211). Due to the fact that enlightenment philosophy made so that people cannot perceive anymore as a vital need the connection to a set of identitary, unifiable traditions, “a modern liberal political society appears as a confused mixture of citizens from nowhere, who meddled to feel protected. They attained, in the best case, that inner form of friendship based on mutual advantage” (MacIntyre 1998, 170). The politics of enlightenment modernity, shows MacIntyre, must be rejected, because it evolves as a permanent “civil war contended with other means” (1998, 258). Being outside the tradition of virtue, this kind of politics cannot aim at obtaining any moral consensus; it can only propose a kind of rational-bureaucratic construction, which weakens the

dimension of responsibility, of virtue and of moral duty (MacIntyre 1998, 258-259). Moreover, the image of the self, dominating nowadays in the entire society, is that of individualistic-emotivist type. According to this view, there are not constituent elements of what you are, which you receive from the community, and that you cannot filter, accept or reject (MacIntyre 1998, 227). But this attitude is distorting the self image and the way of relating to the others. The history of the particular life is interwoven with that of the community, that which truly gives identity and provides the reference data, those data from which anybody can start in his searches, but which cannot ignore (MacIntyre 1998, 227-228). Thus, for MacIntyre, "I am in essence what I inherit, namely a specific past which is, to some extent, present in my present. I consider that I am part from a history, that is to say I am, generally speaking, the bearer of a tradition, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not" (1998, 228). Tradition of virtue has been seriously affected by modernity of enlightenment kind, so that MacIntyre reaches the conclusion that "we have reached for some time past at a turning moment. At this stage is important to build local forms of community, inside which civility, moral life and the intellectual one can be maintained in the darkened times which fell upon us" (1998, 266).

Charles Taylor (1995), another representative of communitarian political philosophy, underlines the importance of Herder, considering that his merits are not fully acknowledged. For example, shows Taylor, Herder – before Hegel – has exposed and has opened the way which ended in constituting the doctrine of philosophical expressivism (Taylor 1995, 79) – theory according to which there is an interdependence and an interrelationship between word and thing, language and existence, human being and world, between normativity and particular social practices (Buchwalter 1994, 163). Herder's influence on Taylor can be observed in many of the ideas and theories that the Canadian philosopher assumes, including by the fact that he himself develops an expressivist approach, pointing out how the word or the thought, expressing themselves, presuppose a framework where they are situated, interacting with it (Smith 2010, 150). Our situation in the world, into a



particular context, is decisively influencing us, we cannot manifest ourselves otherwise than by this encapsulation, and by the act of expressing we are making known both to ourselves and to the others the meanings of our reflections. According to Taylorian expressivism,

our original condition is not that of minds with private thoughts and feelings which are subsequently communicated in speech (though this is an ability we later acquire as a refinement of our capacity for linguistic expression). Rather, the thoughts and feelings we recognize in ourselves and others come to be as we recognize them through the way we express and articulate those thoughts and feelings. (Smith 2010, 150)

The primary function of the language is not the descriptive one, but an expressive-creative one (Smith 2010, 151). By expression, there are opening worlds which otherwise couldn't get contour, as in the cases when, by expressing a feeling, there are emerging new horizons of social relations, when, by expressing the proper words, there are emerging new emotions, or the experiences are clarified, or when, by expression, we are influenced by certain moral benchmarks, whereas we, on our turn, are influencing through them (Smith 2010, 151). Taylor considers that, through the agency of Herder and of the expressivist tradition opened by him, we can understand completely different the role of language than in the classical, representationalistic manner (1995, 80). Herder, shows Taylor, “constantly stresses that we have to understand human reason and language as an integral part of our life form. They cannot be seen as forming a separate faculty which is simply added on to our animal nature” (1995, 91). Comprehending the influence of language and of expression on the world also determines another way of relating to cultural-linguistic particularity of communities, a way which largely defines the identitary and situational frame of the manner in which we think and feel. All these aspects are neglected by rationalist and universalist enlightenment. Opposed to it, political philosophy of communitarianism affirms that ignoring the role that cultural, linguistical and national traditions have, is negatively affecting the development of a person. Taylor, analyzing what he calls the maladies of modernity (2003, 2-10), highlights

*individualism*, that which drives to a weakening of morality, *instrumental reason*, by which the superior finalities of life are threatened, and *civic withdrawal*, by which liberty is threatened (2003, 10). Enlightenment philosophy of de-situating of reason, the quest for the neutral self, undisturbed by cultural particularities, or the attempt of finding a supposed individual authentic nature, non-connected to any preexistent order of the community, are as many elements of individualistic outlook, which weaken the morals (Taylor 2006). Individualism, shows Taylor, is affecting the capacity of being strong moral evaluators, power which presupposes “discriminations of right or wrong, better or worse, higher or lower, which are not rendered valid by our own desires, inclinations, or choices, but rather stand independent of these and offer standards by which they can be judged” (2006, 4). The particular cultural frame of a community is decisive for a functional moral and for a solid identity construction, while the recognition of its value is a vital request (Taylor 1994).

Through the importance granted to communitarian identity, by the critique made on the address of liberal individualism, or of civic isolation, communitarianism has been associated to multiculturalism (Song 2106), to the theories of egalitarianism and civic coworking (Avnon and De-Shalit 2005, 144), or to democratic participationism (Sargent 2009, 145). On this interpretative line, communitarianism is considered as part of the contemporary political left (Avnon and De-Shalit 2005, 144-147). But, as we've already seen, communitarianism has a strong source of counter-enlightenment inspiration. This source sends communitarianism to conservatism (Epstein 2016, 13-23) and to the political right, orientations with which it shares the valorization of traditions, of historical memory and of the superior cultural benchmarks, the only ones supposed to be capable of giving sense to individual life.

The counter-enlightenment discourse may also be identified within social philosophy specific to postmodernism (Wolin 2004, 3-9). This kind of philosophy is hardly classifiable from the political orientation point of view, being assumed by heterogeneous perspectives, which are extending on the entire political axis, from left to right (Rosenau 1992, 155-166).

Thus, postmodernism is either criticized from the positions of the political left (Rosenau 1992, 158-160), being seen as a form of the globalized consumerist capitalism ideology (Jamerson 1991, Eagleton 1996), or presented as promoting a liberating discourse (Lyotard 1984), integrable into a progressionist-pragmatical view of a post-enlightenment left (Rorty 1991; Rosenau 1992, 160-163). In the same time, postmodernist speech is also criticized for preferring the corrosive and destructive ideology of the left (Gross and Levitt 1994). Due to the fact that, within postmodernism, there are anti-etatist points of view, or which encourage a much larger deregulation and personal liberty, some political orientations of the right find affinities within this philosophy, or are upheld by it (Rosenau 1992, 165).

But, for understanding the nearness between conservatism, political right and postmodernism, first of all it must be emphasized the influence of counter-enlightenment legacy. Although post-enlightenment of postmodernism can be also comprehended as a form of neo-modernity, which doesn't follow the anti-liberal and anti-democratic way of some sort of conservatism (Zafirovski 2011, 306-307), the rejection of enlightenment project remains a common place of postmodernism and counter-enlightenment (Garrard 2006, 95-108). Some of those faithful to postmodernist spirit, as Richard Rorty (2001), try to separate the philosophical project of enlightenment from the political one, for succeeding in getting rid of the former, and in continuing the latter (Garrard 2006, 104-108). Others, as John Gray (2002), consider that the entire enlightenment project is downfallen (Garrard 2006, 117-121).

We live today amid the dim ruins of the Enlightenment project, which was the ruling project of the modern period. If, as I believe, the Enlightenment project has proved to be self-destroying, then that fact signals the close of the modern period, of which we are in the heirs. (Gray 2002, 145)

Albeit he criticizes postmodernism, especially the rortyan one (Gray 2002, 146-147; 169-178), for all that, by the acerbic critique of modernity, doubled by his attachment to post-enlightenment, pluralistic, relativistic and agonistic outlooks, Gray can be included in the main trend of postmodernist

social philosophy (Adams 2001, 41). Gray considers that the communitarian rejection of enlightenment is correct, especially the one made by MacIntyre. “With MacIntyre, I think that the Enlightenment project was the defining modern project and that the failure of the Enlightenment project, arising as it did from incoherences in its central commitments and beliefs, was inevitable” (Gray 2002, 150). This is a radical rejection of enlightenment, considered self-destructive, both at philosophical level and at the political one (Gray 2002, 151). But for Gray, unlike MacIntyre, the consequences of the enlightenment collapse are different. By this major event we are witnessing the end of modernity, fact which doesn't mean retaking the links with the world of pre-modernity – all the attempts made in this sense were absolute disasters – but the possible emergence of a truly post-enlightenment age, where cultural incommensurability and plurality, the diversity of political regimes, practices and institutions come to be considered a naturalness of human condition and of history (Gray 2002, 153-157).

The rejection of universalism, of foundationalism or of enlightenment rationalism, on which this postmodern pluralism of the incommensurable and agonistic values is based, finds its origins in counter-enlightenment. Gray (2002) sees in counter-enlightenment a reaction which, by its radicalness, is also of modern kind, not being capable of surpassing enlightenment, but only to permanently relating to it, with the aim of rejecting it (154; 164-165). Nevertheless, Gray admits the fact that his political philosophy borrowed considerably from the counter-enlightenment thinkers (2002, 64). For example, “the idea of a universal history was unavoidable (...) until Herder and his followers advanced an alternative conception of human history as an exfoliation of incommensurable cultures. This idea (...) struck at the roots of the Enlightenment philosophy of history” (Gray 2002, 165).

But not only non-universalism is of herderian inspiration. At the rejection of instrumentalist manner of understanding the language, points out Gray, have also fully contributed Hamann and Herder (2002, 177). Starting from underlining the decisive role that language has on people, we can better understand the

naturalness of cultural diversity and the incommensurability of the values. The pluralism of the values, inclusively legal pluralism proposed by Gray's postmodern political philosophy, was, on its turn, influenced by Herder.

Legal pluralism is justifiable ... on the Herderian ground that it allows even people who are commingled in the same territories or human settlements to recognize their cultural identities in the legal orders to which they are subject. Such legal pluralism is, in fact, the institutional embodiment of the human need for strong forms of common life in circumstances of substantial cultural diversity. (Gray 2002, 136)

Although underlining the cultural relativity, the pluralist social philosophy, theorized by Gray in a post-enlightenment manner, insists not only on the irreducible cultural and political diversity, but also on the major role that the community culture has on the ways of life and on the political options (Gray 2002, 136-143). Thus, orientating or placing these pluralist postmodern perspectives into an area close to conservatism and to political right are becoming more obvious. We cannot understand our own position, or know other different communities with which we may peacefully cohabit, otherwise than through the agency of cultural matrices. This idea, equally common to counter-enlightenment, to communitarianism and to postmodernism, leads to a constant preoccupation for history, cultural traditions, customs, particularity, context. Inspired by counter-enlightenment philosophy, the thesis of cultural pluralism – which is similar to the doctrine of communitarian multiculturalism – together with emphasizing the role of the culture and of the group, or with the abandonment of rationalist and universalist tracks, brings postmodernism closer to the standings of conservatism and of contestable political right, the last ones being centered on defending the cultural origins and the historical memory (Adamson, Carlbon and Ouis 2014, 33; 37-38).

Thus, counter-enlightenment, commonly interpreted in the history of the political thought as one of the main intellectual sources of conservatism, is even more than that. Its influence constantly reverberates on the entire social reflection proper to modernity, inclusively on some important contemporary orientations, as communitarianism or postmodernism. Without giving to this counter-enlightenment influence careful consideration,

the social philosophy of communitarianism or of postmodernism may be seen only as an integrant part of the contemporary political left. Nevertheless, beside the emancipatory discourse, aiming to give an equal respect to all cultures, or beside the critical, liberating view, which intends to carry on the progressive ideals, surpassing all dogmas specific to enlightenment universalist rationalism, there is, within communitarianism and postmodernism, a conservative line, which can be understood by knowing their common counter-enlightenment origins.

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**Bogdan Constantin Mihailescu** – Ph.D. in Political Science, with a theme about the history of liberal thought, the contemporary ideological changes and the postmodernist approaches – is lecturer at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University-Iasi, Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences. His research interests as well as his published studies and articles are from fields as political philosophy, the history of political thought, political ideologies, theories of democracy and political epistemology. His recent works include book chapters and articles as *Enlightenment, Counter-Enlightenment, Post-Enlightenment – a framework of understanding the differences between left and right*, (ISPRI, 2015); *Democrație și limite decizionale*, (Anale UAIC SP, v. X); *Decisionism, Postmodernism and International Relations*, (ROJIRES, v. 2); *Ideology and progress*, (JSE v. III/nr.1).

**Address:**

Bogdan Constantin Mihailescu  
Department of Political Science, International Relations and European Studies  
Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi  
Bd. Carol I, 11  
700506 Iasi, Romania  
E-mail: [bogdanmihailescu2002@yahoo.com](mailto:bogdanmihailescu2002@yahoo.com)

## **Axiology, Leadership and Management Ethics**

Sandu Frunzã  
Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca

### **Abstract**

The Nietzschean principle of all values' reevaluation turns fertile in postmodernity on the grounds of axiological pluralism. It works as a catalyst to solve the crises experienced by postmodern humans. Denouncing hierarchies of absolute values (may they be metaphysical or religious) opens the way to asserting a particular ethics generally meant for business environment and organizations. In this context, philosophy is bestowed the essential role to create and impart the necessary instruments for an axiological and ethical reconstruction. Philosophers have to create and impart such instruments. In using them, companies become the cores coagulating individual and community values according to ethical responsibility. Developing leadership qualities in managers contributes in a decisive way to the built of an organization with an ethical culture aimed to increase efficiency and quality of life in various public categories.

**Keywords:** values, management ethics, leadership, axiology, sacred, ethical counseling, philosophical expertise, Nietzsche

### **1. The need to revalorize all values**

Increasingly winning ground is the idea that our time is one of value crisis, of relativization and disappearance of any value hierarchy. Widely spread is also the idea that humanity is at crossroads. We live in a time of erosion in religious faith and trust, of ethics repudiation, traditional value collapse, tradition dilution, and of one's separation from oneself. We live a sense of loss that cannot be well delineated or yet identified more adequately than as a generalized crisis. Against the background of such generalization, there is a strong aspiration to restore values, to recover authenticity and rediscover the human being's self.

However, nothing is taking us unaware. We seem to live in a time of needed renewal similar to the one in which Friedrich Nietzsche lived with passion and hope when he claimed it was necessary to rediscuss and renew all values. For the postmodern perspective, Nietzsche remains always up-to-date, even if not for the content of his work but rather for his thinking, interpretation and representation patterns. Although there had been prior endeavors in the philosophy of values – and here the list is very long, from the way Plato understood Good to Brentano’s axiological reflections – nobody expressed with more prophetic conviction the fact that “all sciences must, from now on, prepare the way for the future work of the philosopher: this work being understood to mean that the philosopher has to solve the problem of values and that he has to decide on the rank order of values” (Nietzsche 2006, 34). Without diminishing the importance of philosophy as an academic subject and practice, I think it is important to note that not only is the need for a new philosophy of life asserted but also for applied philosophy, making possible a philosophical practice, in the sense of philosophy as a way of life. There are thinkers who submit that we have experienced such ways of philosophizing in the history of the subject (Hadot 1995; Iftode 2010). Now more than never, we sense this need for a philosophical practice to develop as a trend for those with a philosophical training adequate in philosophical counseling (Lobonț 2010) and first of all in ethical counseling, from a lot of perspectives.

This request may be explained in the context of an ascending industry of personal development, management ethics and leadership-related qualities. Unfortunately, professionals in the philosophy field in Romania do not participate consistently to the development and practice of individuals’ legitimate aspirations. They have not learnt enough yet the importance of practical philosophy and of practicing philosophy, even if they have all the competence to respond to present needs on the market using at least instruments such as: reality interpretation, ethical expertise, philosophical counseling, existential counseling, social responsibility counseling, ethical coding or the axiological

shaping of the managerial function practice. Philosophy is a source of meaning, action strategies and institutional construction.

A philosophical perspective like Nietzsche's is important today not only for the influence it held upon thinkers of various outlooks, such as Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Albert Camus or Jean-Paul Sartre, but also for his effort to reconstruct values, his refusal to accept traditional ways of understanding and explaining values' transcendence. Quite significant is Nietzsche's endeavor to turn the world of values into a pattern of our world's reinterpretation. He shows that our world may be better understood if conceived either as a part of an axiological universe or as identical – meaning coextensive – with the world of values. It is the daily life that sets and showcases values. The philosopher says that "When we speak of values, we speak under the inspiration, under the optics of life: life itself is forcing us to posit values, life itself is valuing by means of us, when we posit values" (Nietzsche 1994, 28). From this standpoint, not only value emergence is important but also the decision to have a vision regarding values, to set an action strategy in the spirit of values and their application in the morality field. Therefore, "we need a critique of moral values, the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined" (Nietzsche 2006, 7). We shall not detail now the way in which Nietzsche interrogates the European civilization's system of values, nor the critique of values created by the European Christian civilization. It is important to note that although he rejects Christian values, Nietzsche opines that "the whole of morality is a brave and lengthy falsification that makes it possible to look at the soul with anything like pleasure" (Nietzsche 2002, 173).

At a stage in which various vulnerabilities experienced by postmodern man are largely connected to communication, authenticity and pluralism of interpretations, perhaps it is a good reminder that Nietzsche's man is one of total crisis, living in a world with no saviour capable to act. Not even man can save himself except by overcoming his own condition through an anthropological leap made possible by an upturn and rethinking of the value system. The philosopher feels justified

to urge us in a joint effort to find the resources for the human being to find itself and redress. In this respect, I find relevant George Bondor's position according to which "Nietzsche investigates man's dependence, the patterns limiting and predetermining man, the totality in which man enrolls and throws others. Man is subject to the tyranny of crowd and species, of states and society, of culture and history, of reason and values" (Bondor 2015). In the spirit of liberation from the tyranny of such authorities, the philosopher calls for relativizing all traditional values and for establishing some values to be set to motion by life itself. The freedom from the pressure of any limitation means to escape from the uniqueness of absolute authority and to join the world full of plural values of existence as such. A refusal of "slave morality" does not imply only negation of tradition, hierarchies and community limitations. It also implies a freeing gesture by which the wise man understands that he may write his own life story, that in shaping his own evolution there is no other force than the inner one, and that happiness is one step away in the immanence order inadvertently releasing a joy for living. We should keep in mind, among other things, that the philosopher is given the important task of writing this scenario in which the red tape of action revolves around all values' reevaluation.

## **2. Religion after religion**

Keeping close to Nietzsche's reflections, we cannot but note that few thinkers have his explosive force to claim the need for change, self-overcoming and human renewal. Beyond the elements he projects on the superman, he proposes man's emancipation from his mode of understanding the world, as related to himself, to nature, to love religion, by setting in motion the very values concerning man, life and eros. Starting from this, his up-to-date thinking may be relevant for personal development, leadership and even for management ethics, as "Nietzsche wanted to assert the dignity of human life against the impotence of modern man" (Arendt 1997, 30-31). We should not be prevented by the image of the superman from accepting that the need for man's restoration, the aspiration to find and

overcome oneself, the will to rediscover the zest of living in the light of life values are useful tools that the philosopher may propose in personal development and leadership. Man's higher dignity is in this case an intrinsic value. In Hannah Arendt's view, value devaluation is for Nietzsche a process negating the traditional substratum at the foundation of Western modernity. On the other hand, he is aware of the power and charge of the term "value" and critiques the traditional socializing of values that he finds lacking in any sense of transcendence to beneficially influence human life. Also, the philosopher states he discovered a new science of values, which implies a call for action to valorize "power and life and man's love of his earthly existence" (Arendt 1997, 35). It is true that to Arendt the force-life-love triad contradicts Nietzsche's whole deconstruction initiative and establishes a structure similar to the tradition instituting values by transcendent elements, which he criticized. But who may be surprised at the presence of such possible contradiction in Nietzsche's approach, as his work is so full of paradoxes in thinking, living and evaluating.

Such a paradox seems to be the presence in an arduous critic of religion of an alternative view that instead of rationalizing the world, emptying it of transcendence (in the sense of a disenchantment) does nothing but make it ferment in sacredness (in the sense of a re-enchantment of the whole existence).

Valorizing the tradition in interpretation already enunciated in the 20th century, Aurel Codoban submits that to the German philosopher, the Abrahamic monotheist religion is removed from the morality sphere with the sole purpose of setting a new way of understanding the world under the sacred. Nietzsche's return to sacredness, typical of the classical age prior to Christianity, is indicative of the move to a mundane form of transcendence in which life sacredness influences man and brings to life the new man (Codoban 2000). The new sacredness type corresponds to a form of polytheism found in experiences of the sacred often associated, in the spirit of traditional religion, to idolatry (Codoban 2000; Klossowski 2004).

What we should keep in mind is that sacredness is intrinsic to mundane values. It is attached to man's daily

action, it is part of life as such, of the inhabited world, including the world of things. We see today how the world of things is attributed dimensions that, before postmodernity, were reserved for human beings. They may be even included in a mythology of pleasure in which sacredness is manifested in the mechanisms of desire, seduction and quest for authenticity (Baudrillard 1998).

We notice that values' dynamics is similar to Mircea Eliade's dialectic of the sacred and the profane. Values metamorphose, camouflage, may be forgotten, but they may always be brought back to the present life by the one interested in positing them at the core of one's existence.

Although a great part of Nietzsche's exegetes are generally in agreement on the idea of human life resacralization, the views on the significance of such a world reconstruction mode are widely diverse. To understand the genealogy of the Nietzschean criticism we deal with here, we should know that the entire criticism starts from two significant views: the attitude toward traditional metaphysics and the rapport to the moral God in Christian tradition (Sabău 2016). Indeed, Nietzsche highlights the features that are typical to the way of thinking in a certain Christian form of expression. His Christianity is the Western one. Perhaps his attitude would have been nuanced had he had in view the Eastern Christianity too, with its mystic dimension and the option for living under a cosmic liturgy.

However, in what is left from Nietzsche, his critique of the Christian religion and his anti-Christianity are not important. Significant is his pattern of reality interpretation resulting from this negation of Christianity. If we stop to his anti-Christianity, all his move for an apology of the death of God is in vain. Anyhow, this critique of Christianity led to an upturn of the sacred that we can see both at the limit of philosophy and ideology (Frunză et al. 2009), and at the junction of religion with ideology (Tismăneanu 1995; Stoica 2017), with negative consequences rendering the phenomenon meaningless in terms of the democratic society construction.

We are at a moment in history when it is too late to be concerned with things that do not make sense for our times. To be stuck in defining Nietzsche as anti-Christian is like holding



on to this Amos Oz anecdote: “I will tell you an anecdote: I was in Paris during student movements. On the wall facing my hotel someone wrote: ‘God is dead. Signed: Nietzsche’. The next day, a writing had appeared underneath: ‘Nietzsche is dead. Signed: God’” (Oz 2004, 17). This fits so well the philosopher’s ludic spirit. But, to come out of this captivity, we need to understand that the interpretation of his critique of the traditional values at the base of Western civilization may no longer be done in atheism and anti-Christianity keys. What is important, in fact, is the escape from religion to exalt the values of life and the happiness of being alive, to have access to life resources and consume the joy of living to the end. This is the meaning of nihilism that we can recover today from Nietzsche’s thinking. George Bondor showcased very well this mode of reading when he said that to Nietzsche, the death of God “is the most important event of modern times, with important consequences on our way of being. It brings with it the complete nihilism, experimented by man as total absence of all meaning that was already formed. Thus, it opens up a space free of already fixed meanings and prejudices, a space in which new experiences become possible. For this reason, nihilism must not be seen as a negative occurrence. On the contrary, according to Nietzsche, it brings with itself a new and scarcely describable kind of light, happiness, relief, exhilaration, encouragement, dawn” (Bondor 2007, 131). His critical attitude should be read today in terms of positive thinking, of action for personal achievement, of ethical vocation and inclination to assume the values meant to secure the authenticity of our daily existence. I do not expect to see Nietzsche’s portrait hung in multinational companies’ halls, but his nihilism may be recovered in line of a rethinking of values, in view of the work we perform upon ourselves, encouraged by the organizational spirit in which we operate.

In the contemporary philosophical consciousness it is clear that nihilism represents only a transitory stage from the forms consecrated by tradition or by trends in fashion in the past to a renewal of structures making possible private life or public life. Our philosophic optimism always reminds us that postmodernity cannot remain in nihilism (Weischedel 1999,

234), even if it was part of the essential creativity mechanisms of this cultural stage in Western man's existence.

What we should keep in mind for the contemporary man is the lesson of values' pluralism within which man and the world may always start afresh. The axiological pluralism is an inexhaustible resource of creativity for contemporary man, including value revalorization or value creation.

### **3. Values as an interpretation grid of organizational reality and as instruments for management action**

Nietzsche went so far in his wish to establish value pluralism, free from any authority of a unique transcendence that he got to declare that God had died. Today we no longer need the argument of such a terrifying moment in the history and evolution of revelation. Actually, as we said, Nietzsche's thinking patterns are more useful to us than the actual content of his work. After total nihilism, there could only be the new stage in which negation of the great diversity of existence significances can no longer be eluded. In this way, values' pluralism is no longer subject to any major ordeal.

Postmodern sacredness may bring about the most diverse combinations of religion, ethics and science (Frunză et al. 2010; Vlăduțescu 2014). Secularization influences morality and the individual's rapport to values (Inglehart et al. 2004). We cannot establish a direct conditioning relationship between religion and morality. But we can accept a series of conclusions based on previous research of religion and values in Europe, such as the ones proposed by Ingrid Storm. She shows that the more we have a cultural space in which a high level of religious practice can be measured, the more are moral practices a part of community life. At the same time, a value impregnated environment reveals correlations that may be established between religion and the low economic, social and political development. A close relationship between the religious context and the morality-religion rapport denote firstly the extent to which the religious type of moral authority may be perceived as an alternative to state authority, and secondly it shows that secularization caused autonomy of values and legitimacy manifesting inclusively under the form of a separation of ethics

from religion (Storm 2016, 111-138). This desacralization does not impact at all the presence of the religious and does not imply a diminution of the spiritual life. It may mean investing the relationship with the sacred in other forms but the ones pertaining to the religious tradition. Or it may be placed under the sign of action in response to different exigencies in the public and private spheres. Likewise, it may mean a call on competing or alternative forms under the sign of axiological pluralism.

One of the most important ideas to note is that with postmodernity, we see a process that we can call values' relativization. This does not mean falling into relativism, but rather asserting the inadequacy of any absolute system of values' hierarchy. It is values' relativization that allows us to state the existence of multiple hierarchies or to even state that we may create new value hierarchies according to the needs for individual, organizational or community shaping.

Significant in this respect is the idea of minimal ethics based on the personal assertion of ethical values. It supposes a reconstruction of individual and community ethics starting from the individual, from the individual's needs and wish to build a better world for himself/herself and for the community he/she is part of (Adorno 1999; Pleșu 1994). It is about, among others, the possibility for the moral subject to delineate values in their sphere and based on them to build action strategies, interventions in organizations and moral ideals. Minimal ethics is not the dream that man may live since the end of postmodernity. It springs from the very logic of our times in the quest for the human subject. Under the threat that "man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea" (Foucault 1996, 422), we are seeking solutions to retrace the lines of man's image in sand, drawn at the edge of the sea and fallen prey to waves hitting it to erase in calm violence.

Of extreme importance in this context it seems to be the action of those having a philosophical, professionalized background (or other experts with good training in applied ethics or deontology) in the public space through various consulting forms they may provide: from existential and ethical

consulting to the consulting on value based image construction. Such an intervention might lead to diminishing violence in society and to setting a dialogue atmosphere, starting from a pluralist vision of life, of public action and of a quest for authenticity at the personal level.

A proper space to develop axiological pluralism is organizational life. Under pressure from business ethics brought over by multinational companies, there is a practical assertion of the minimal ethics as a mechanism to institute and participate in the values of the organization. Minimal ethics is a beneficial support to institute a deontological code as an instrument to exercise the axiological principles of the organization. In this framework it becomes quite evident that an ethical conduct is first of all a conduct based on values. The organization is no longer the place in which the individual carries out the obligatory work schedule. It becomes the place in which a part of employees' development and personal achievement occurs. For this very reason, the managerial function, in addition to management activities, should show openness and assume leadership qualities. Companies bring the need for developing managers as leaders practicing ethical management modes. John Mackey and Raj Sisodia distinguish between the manager and the leader starting from the premise that managers are in charge with decision making and efficient application of decision, while leaders leave their mark on the system through the managerial intelligence and management art (Mackey & Sisodia 2013).

In this respect, the new management philosophy should propose not only the general frameworks of theorizing and practice of the organization's management, but also a managerial leadership mode. Institutionalized leadership through the managerial function – without ignoring the importance of informal leadership – has a special value in stimulating both personal and institutional development.

In such a context, managerial responsibility is a key issue. Its model is one's responsibility to one's own personal development, as compared to the others, to the environment, to divinity, etc. The importance of an ethical leadership is overwhelming. Christian Voegtlin provides some starting points

for a relevant analysis in this sense as he explores the practical dimensions of responsibility. This study is significant as regards the extension of corporate social responsibility to the social responsibility of organizations in general and further on to the social responsibility of every individual involved in the organization life. This way, a responsible leader should multiply his/her ethical model to various decision levels in the organization up to the level of individual appropriation of leadership principles by the organization's members. A responsible leader is concerned with the issues of the work environment, of the organizational life's impact upon various public categories and upon the community. Also, a responsible leader pays attention to ethical rules and norms, to the way responsibilities are shared and carried out, to critical investigations, evaluations, and value judgments, to encouraging participation in decision making and finding solutions to all organization's members (Voegtlin, 2016; Dima et al. 2014).

The leader should act in an ethical manner, irrespective of the activity place, whether in a restricted work group, at the level of the economic organization he/she is part of, or of the community or society in which he/she is a leader. This supposes an improvement of work relationships and of implies the permanent presence of another person, of the other as a beneficiary of the ethical action and as an ethical evaluation instance. It is respect that shifts the weight from simple action for higher profit to a more complex finality, including profit, work satisfaction, institutional development, personal fulfillment and development, ethical and efficient communication, etc. (Grad 2015; Kwak 2016). An organization in which managerial activity is based on values, stimulates the "transformational leadership behavior – which translates into encouraging employees to go put in extra effort for increased performance, by inspiring them through high levels of passion and commitment towards the common goals and by being open and encouraging experimentation" (Hințea 2015, 120). Considering the potential for change that an organization's leader has, when the organization is in full image reconstruction, a good starting point may be an ethical evaluation of the way the manager chooses among various value types (Sandu 2017).

Besides the capacity to make things work, the manager with leader qualities also has the ability for good change both in the business and in the persons and the community. Managers should be aware that, in addition to their mission to administrate the organization's activity, they have the power get involved in developing an ethical culture, beneficial to the organization. When Donald C. Menzel speaks about an *ethical illiteracy* in managers, he means that sometimes, there is a lack of attraction to ethics and to the complexity of ethics accompanying the act of ruling or the managerial activity (Menzel 2010, 4). Ethical responsibility, both as an internal communication method and as an external communication way, is first of all a manager's responsibility. This is why, assuming the manager's leadership quality supposes providing a strong support for an ethical climate, based on law and ethical regulations' observance (Lewis & Gilman 2005, 114; Frunză 2017, 3). In an organization, one should always encourage various manifestations of informal leadership. However, the manager should be the institutional leader. The manager should guard the implementation of the organization's value system. At the same time, the manager should permanently care for the correlation between these values and the values of the community, of the society in which the organization operates, including the social responsibility to his/her own employees and to various interacting public categories (McFarland 1982, 183).

#### **4. Instead of conclusions: the role of value reevaluation in the life of organizations**

Following Nietzsche's footsteps and legacy, we note that in his personal life and in the organizational life, values have the power to guide action and to be a good resource to change situations and de facto states for the good. In a world in crisis, the tendency to reevaluate values is beneficial, especially as regards their position at the foundation of various types of organizations' values, in which individuals are recruited more or less accidentally. Of the various types of values that postmodern man may appropriate, the ones with the highest potential to be applied in the daily activity are the values

governing ethical conducts, may it be individuals or organizations. An important role in the creation of an ethical culture of organizations belongs to managers who cultivate their leadership quality. Considering that in existing analyses in the organizational ethics, some talk about a lack of attraction in managers to cultivate values and to institutionalize ethics, it is important for specialized persons, having a philosophical background, to take initiative and provide ethical counseling as well as counseling on the construction of an institutionalized culture based on values. Managerial leadership supposes not only implementing values, especially on business ethics grounds, but also, an opening to ethical leadership construction strategies.

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**Sandu Frunză** is professor Ph.D., Habil. at the Department of Communication, PR and Advertising, Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj. His fields of interest are religious fundamentalism, bioethics and biopolitics, post-holocaust philosophy, ethics of communication, religious imagery in advertising, ethical counselling, philosophy of communication, personal development and social responsibility. In 2005 he received the prestigious Prize of the Romanian Academy, and in 2010 he received the distinction of Professor Bologna. He performs philosophical (existential) counselling. See his personal blog at <https://frunzasandu.wordpress.com/>.

**Address:**

Sandu Frunză  
Department of Communication, PR and Advertising  
Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca  
str. M. Kogalniceanu, 1  
400084 Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
E-mail: [sfrunza@yahoo.com](mailto:sfrunza@yahoo.com)

## Identity as the Difference of Power and the Differing from Being

Uljana Akca  
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg

### Abstract

From where does the frequently explored connection between identity, difference and power stem? One thinker influencing contemporary discussions on this theme is Judith Butler. To her, the primary difference constituting identity is the difference between the subject and the historical power constructing it. Although they belong together, power can still be said to subjugate the subject. However, within this system, the origin of power cannot be accounted for. I will therefore attempt to examine this origin on the basis of Martin Heidegger's *The History of Being* (*Die Geschichte des Seyns* (hereafter *GS*), written 1938-1940). According to him, power is something intrinsically dependent on subject metaphysics. The latter stems from what he calls the oblivion of being, which can also be expressed as the forgetting of the difference between beings and being. The abiding in this difference opens the way into that which Heidegger calls *enowning* (*Ereignis*), in which the human being can reach identity in a qualified respect, as a nearness to his own being. Only on this way can the regime of power, permeating identity construction, be overcome.

**Keywords:** Heidegger, Butler, identity, difference, ontological difference, power, *enowning*, being-historical

When the question of identity and difference is addressed in contemporary philosophical and political discussions, it is often implicated that social identity involves power, and that this involves difference in one or the other way – either as its foundation, or as its consequence.

The locus of this constitution of identity is the human subject. According to two thinkers strongly associated with this trope, namely Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the subject is not only considered to be externally affected by power, as if

being intact prior to it, but is regarded to be created and shaped by the same. Following Butler's account, an identity in a qualified sense, as abiding in one's most own, is accomplished or reached when power coincides with the subject itself; when it loses its character of foreignness and is appropriated as own (Butler 1997, 12). The word "power structure" in Butler's and Foucault's thinking in itself connotes the ambiguity of foreignness and ownness: power is coming from a distance from the subject, but is at the same time only sustained by and operative through it. The difference between subject and power could thus be said to be the opaque knot around which identity formation revolves.

But what is the origin of this difference? Is it ontological or historico-political? What is the source of this creative-subjugating power, and how is it related to the subject? Could there be a way to overcome or reconcile with this difference, and would this change the very conception of identity? Those are the questions that I will pose in this paper.

I will begin this essay with a survey of how Butler has formulated this issue influenced by Foucault, on the basis of her *Subjects of Desire* (hereafter *SD*) and *The Psychich Life of Power* (hereafter *PLP*). The first work renders the background of the conception of power and subjectivity that she employs throughout her production. It shows how this conception originally is an appropriation of Foucault's rereading of the Hegelian subject. The second book is her main work on the theme of power and deals with the aspect of this theme that she considers Foucault to be leaving out, namely the *ambiguity* of the power mechanisms shaping the subject as such, forming any of its identities (Butler 1997, 2). I will concentrate on the dense introduction to this work, where her standpoint in this matter is most articulate. Taken together, it is the early Butler that will be the focus of this paper.

I will thereafter proceed to Martin Heidegger, who is acknowledged as a radical critic of subject metaphysics and the idea of the human being as a stable, isolated entity unaffected by its world and history. In the first part of his *GS* we find a condensed account of power, showing that it is a manner in which being manifests itself in subject metaphysics. Therefore,

I will argue, the difference-creating regime of discursive power is neither an a-historical, nor a political or historical matter (historical in the meaning of *Historie*, that is, chronological history). It is a being-historical situation, a way in which we historically enact our relationship to being. According to him, this situation can only be confronted through a new experience and understanding of both the human being and being, with regard to the constituting difference between them; the so called ontological difference.

From this claim, I will go on showing how the appropriation of the ontological difference entails an experience of the *Ereignis* between being and the human being, and how this changes the very concept of identity, the latter treated in Heidegger's *Identity and Difference (Identität und Differenz)* (hereafter *ID*). The German word *Ereignis* can be translated as "bringing something into its "own", its "proper"; often it is rendered as "enowning". What is brought into its own is, I will argue, both being and the human being, as they cannot be what they are without each other. This brings us to an identity as a belonging-together of both, an identity beyond the ambiguity of power.

### **1. The Difference of Power, the Power of Difference: Judith Butler**

Butler's investigation of the constitution of the subject through power is grounded in the legacy of several thinkers, but perhaps most importantly Hegel and Foucault. Her understanding of the subject is to a large extent formed in the joint between these two philosophers. It stands in the tension between an open, "ek-static" subject struggling for identity through the recognition of the other subject (Butler 2004, 150-151), and a subject for which identity is impossible due to history's character of power. The subject strives for an identity, and because it exists historically and intersubjectively, this identity will depend on historical structures which the subject has not itself created. It is through these that other subjects can recognize it as having a specific identity. But these structures do also *limit* its identity. As they are already there, they decide what can be regarded as a recognizable identity, and what

cannot. The subject, then, does not own its identity, but is disintegrated through and by it. In this respect, history is power (Butler 1997, 84-85).

The background to this stance is found in *SD*, where she renders Foucault's re-shaping of the Hegelian subject through the former's theory of power. Through Foucault, she writes, the criticism of the Hegelian, self-legislative subject was strengthened, but so, too, were the modern grounds of Hegel's account of historical alteration. The outcome was a dialectic "unmoored from both the subject and its teleological conclusion". (Butler 1999, 222) Through this, and on the basis of an appropriation of Nietzsche's theory of the will to power, Foucault creates the theory of "discursive *power*, historically constituted", a power the presupposition of which is modern wars and the collapse of monarchies (Butler 1999, 219-220). This kind of power was not to be understood according to the binary form of either oppression or liberation, but as multiple, productive and creative (Butler 1999, 219). It had no original meaning or unity, it did not belong to an agent, but as Foucault himself says in a lecture from 1976, "must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain" (Foucault 1980, 98). Because the discursive nexuses of power do not rest upon a unitary system – "they are indications of the incessant dispersal of the subject" – and the impracticability of a recovery of a pre-given unity behind dialectics. The subject involved in the movement of oppositions cannot reach enlightenment or lucidity. So, while the Hegelian subject confronts the oppositions through a relocation of the definition and borders of identity, Foucault's subject becomes aware of its increased loss of agency (Butler 1999, 224).

Butler both appropriates and criticizes this Foucauldian stance throughout her works. Here, I will emphasize one of her leading philosophical questions inspired from this account of him. In *PLP*, she states the following:

Subjection signifies the process of becoming subordinated by power as well as the process of becoming a subject. Whether by interpellation, in Althusser's sense, or by discursive productivity, in Foucault's, the subject is initiated through a primary submission to power. Although Foucault identifies the ambivalence in this formulation, he does not elaborate on the specific mechanisms of how the subject is formed in submission. (Butler 1997, 2)

With these lines, Butler acknowledges her concern for the dynamics behind the circumstance that historical, discursive power not only is a form of domination, “subjecting” an already existing subject, but what creates and forms this subject, brings it into being and gives it an identity in the first place, in and through the belonging to norms or discourses. Accordingly, Foucault writes in “The Subject and Power”: “Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. (...) Slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains” (Foucault 1982, 790). Therefore, a certain ambivalence pertains to subject formation. There is no subjectivity, and thus no agency or freedom, without the subordination of subjectivity (Butler 1997, 7). It is a paradox consisting of the fact that the “I” that is weakened by power, also is conditioned by the latter in its very existence (Butler 1997, 2).

In this conception of power, the decisive concern is the reversal through which the power confronting the subject changes to a power which constitutes the agency of this subject; the process through which power becomes the subject's “own” (Butler 1997, 12). It is on the basis of this “turn” from the subjugating external character of power, to its identity-constituting quality, that the subject obtains an unclear ontological status, making it impossible to say whether power or subject comes first (Butler 1997, 3-4).

Following Butler, the identity of the subject can thus be said to be conditioned by difference, as the difference between the subject and the power constituting it. Power is not “one's own”, it does not coincide immediately with the subject (Butler 1997, 9, 16, 28). This difference is also the essence of the divergence between the subject and the other, and the differences within the subject, as it is through power structures that the subject is exposed to the presence and (historical) influence of others, in the form of norms and structures (Butler 1997, 19). However, it is, as we shall see, by no means clear what the precise relationship between the own subject, the other, and power is.

As shown, for Butler, as for Foucault, the effect of power is a de-centering of the subject. After Foucault and

the re-figuration of the Hegelian self, this self can no longer be understood as rational, substantial and self-legislating. Rather, it obtains its subjectivity from the power of an already existing world and history, opaque to it. In this respect, we could call the main characteristic of power in Butler *remoteness*; Although used by the subject, it is never equal to it, never primarily brought forth by it.

The paradox of Butler's theory is that power involved in identity constitution at the same time appears to be a force which blends into, or is something equivalent to the *will* of the subject, and so after all bares a trace of *closeness*. In other words, the difference between the subject and power is ambiguous, as it also suggests the possibility of grasping the relationship between them as a configuration where the subject's agency *produces* power, as something it wields and effects (Butler 1997, 13). In this respect, the subject would be the root of power, rather than the opposite. The expression "a subject *of* power", Butler holds, suggests "both 'belonging to' and 'wielding' power" (Butler 1997, 14).

But what is the root of this paradox? Following Butler's suggestion that subjection, something implying a problematic, political relationship to other subjects, is an original condition, this question is, I argue, the most important one that we could ask this account. The task for Butler is not merely to theorize about power, but to form an opposition to it (Butler 1997, 17), to its "abuses" (Butler 1997, 20). The project undertaken is to resist and invert dominating norms.

Yet how could this be possible, and what would be the "measure" deciding which form of power that would be abusive and which not, if this situation is a "primary submission" which cannot be overcome? For with "primary", Butler suggests not merely a psychological origin, as in the readings of Freud, but an *ontological*. Accordingly, in *Undoing Gender* Butler argues that the self in this respect is defined by an "ontological ek-stasis", an expression created on the basis of her critical reading of Hegel and his dialectical, historical subject (Butler 2004, 150-151). At the same time though, the notion of power in Butler is in itself something refusing ontology, since it in a Foucauldian way carries with the dissolving of all kinds of



essences or grounds. It is something so interwoven with a particular, historical context, that it can only be challenged and reworked marginally and concretely, in view of this context. Although not referring to sovereign state power, it is doubtlessly a political matter to her.

However, if it can only be dealt with politically, what would the status of this politics be? Since power does not belong to a spatiotemporal agent, “political” according to this definition implies an alteration in thought and language, rather than law and constitution. It is not to be found in the interests of concrete groups of subjects, which could thus be challenged *as* particular groups or subjects. Power is not in their hands exactly because power is not owned by the subject.

But what cannot be changed within this political sphere, is the very character of everything as power: “Emancipation cannot consist in ascending to a power-free discourse because, for Foucault, power and discourse have become coextensive. If there is to be an emancipatory potential in discourse, it must consist of the transformation rather than the transcendence of power” (Butler 1999, 219). Resistance, once again, is an “effect” of power, its “self-subversion”, thus leaving the power-burdened character of everything untouched (Butler 1997, 93). She keeps this important standpoint throughout her whole production. *Because* primary, Butler does not localize a historic-political origin of power. Accordingly, Robert Strozier argues that for Butler, there is “no difference between the ontological and the historical real” (Strozier 2002, 103). The denial of a historical origin, Strozier writes, makes it impossible for her to show the arising of the connection between patriarchy, gender and heterosexuality (Strozier 2002, 102). The “political”, then, refers to the ontological. This is particularly clear in *PLP*, where she merges accounts of the psychic dimensions of subjectivity with sociopolitical dimensions, thereby, as David R. Howarth remarks, creating a tension between historicizing and universalizing analyses (Howarth 2013, 171-172).

Yet, the very call for alteration on this point necessarily suggests an underlying view of power “as such” as a historical occurrence, foreclosing precisely the openness and multiplicity of identity that political resistance in her view aims at

enabling. This call, I argue, ultimately proposes a historical otherness to power, a historical challenge of power as a whole.

Power therefore seems to hide its own origin and location. The only thing we can say about it within this model, is that it is characterized by a difference and distance, however a distance which is “already here” as a closeness when we identify ourselves as subjects. Its origin is and cannot be one's own subject, as the subject is not responsible for the creation of its own, historical world. Would the origin therefore be other subjects, ultimately expressing themselves as the historical voices grounding our world? Occasionally, Butler formulates the condition of the constitution of the subject as a “passionate attachment to those by whom she or he is subordinated” (Butler 1997, 7). This suggests that power is exercised *by* subjects. But would their voices, again, be an overlapping of even previous voices? This question is not answered clearly by Butler or Foucault, and so the ambiguity of their accounts remains. Power in this respect does not belong to any causal executor at all, as it seems to be something transcending human agency altogether. The fact that both Butler and Foucault say that power only is to be understood as concrete “relations” is ultimately only another formulation of the paradox of power, rather than its explanation (Foucault 1980, 198; Butler 1987, 225).

What interests me here is exactly the unclear merging of the universal and the historic-political aspect, implying the need to question both the supposedly universal, as well as the historical mechanisms of power. But within this framework, power seems to be locked away from itself. In other words, the question of the “power of power” is unavailable to the subject.

How should we understand this? My argument is that the answer could be found if we look more closely at both the essence of power and of subjectivity. Seemingly, this would be a contradiction: does Butler not refuse the notion of essence? While this is indeed the case, the view on power in terms of omnipresence and permanence necessitates this specific question. In fact, there is no way to speak of a phenomenon without interrogating what is *essential* to it. What must be interrogated are the roots of the tension of the difference of

power within identity formation today. What would the opposite of power be, only inconsistently and implicitly suggested as a possibility in Butler's understanding of politics?

## 2. Heidegger on Power and Subjectivity

On this issue, I turn to Heidegger. He was an inspiration to both Butler and Foucault in their critique of the Cartesian, substantial subject and its mind-body-dualism, and in their situating of the human being in history and the world. The human is to be understood as a being-in-the-world, and as the relation to this very ontological situation, rather than a static entity subsequently confronting this fact. The subject is however not merely contextualized and opened up, but replaced with the notion of *Dasein*, in the quest for a neutral definition of this self-relating location. Is this conceptual transformation of importance here? This question will be investigated on the basis of the question of power in Heidegger.

The most extended account of power in Heidegger is found in *GS*, and particularly part VI of the first part of the work<sup>1</sup>. The greatest important deviation between this account, and Butler's or Foucault's, is that it is written in the context of the second world war, and is an implicit and explicit critical reflection on the destructive power of the Nazi regime, but also the totalitarianism of communism. In many ways, his analysis of power stays within this context, for instance by claiming that the consequence of the essence of power would be the struggle of "life and death", (thus referring to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) (Heidegger 1998, 71).

At the same time though, Heidegger seems to prepare for the discursive power that Foucault and Butler account for, which is not tied to an agent in any self-evident way. This interpretation is contended by Krzysytof Ziarek, who stresses that Heidegger, with the texts of *Besinnung* and *Die Geschichte* "anticipates and, in some aspects, even goes beyond Foucault's later formulation of power in *Discipline and Punish* and *History of Sexuality*." (Ziarek 2002, 177) Ziarek acknowledges that power in these volumes is analyzed as something having the character of not only negative, but *positive* and creative freedom: "Die Macht ist als Übermächtigung stets vorausbauend –

(»konstruktiv«) (Heidegger 1998, 64). On this, Ziarek comments: “Rather than being external to other relations, power flows through all relations and, in fact, determines the very shape, modality, and valency of relating; in other words, power unfolds tunes (*stimmt*) and determines (*bestimmt*)” and yet operates “in terms of calculability” (Ziarek 2002, 177).

Power in this respect, Heidegger holds, is something other than the exercise of force, and something more essential than violence. It will ultimately reign through permeating all that is in being, also spheres and aspects which are usually not thought to be affected by it, and the difference between having power, and powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*) will become relative (Heidegger 1998, 66-67). What Heidegger tries to articulate, is how power becomes a name for being. Power is the mode in which being yields itself in modernity (Heidegger 1998, 64). With these words, we are approaching a view on power that neither is historical in the usual respect, as an outcome of the actions of subjects, but also not metaphysical in the sense of an eternally ontological “fact”, unavailable to transformation on the part of the human being. For this reason, I believe that Heidegger's comprehension of power can explain the base of the tension of Butler's account.

If power is a way in which being reigns, then power will not be in need of somebody to bear it, he continues. When we see power in the hands of an individual or a group, it is not power that is been carried, but *power carrying* those individuals, forcing them. Power can never be owned by us, but we are the ones being owned by *it* (Heidegger 1998, 63-64). Drawing on this, it could therefore be characterized as a turn against the human being, its defiance of him. Only as a consequence is power then something that a person can exercise over a person not in possession of power. So far, Heidegger's depiction is still similar to Butler's.

But thought in this way, as an appearance of being, Heidegger continues, power must be “brought out of the frame of political observations and standpoints and parties” and be understood as a metaphysical matter (Heidegger 1998, 66). It is so essentially belonging to modernity that the world wars

cannot be regarded as its condition, and neither would their end bring forth its demise. Power is nothing that can be altered by political means. It must rather be thought on the basis of a more thoroughgoing turn in being, characterized by its turning against itself through the human being. Somehow, power is being “bending” of itself, bending back on itself, visible as and in the subjection of the human being. This status of being refuses humanity to “come to itself” (Heidegger 1998, 71). It is a refusal of a dwelling of the human being, in the sense of a presence in time and space on the basis of which it is allowed to reach into its own being. Thus, it is a denial of identity in the more specific, enhanced sense of belonging to something, and in this belonging belong to oneself. This condition is called metaphysical because it is a manifestation of a metaphysical conception of and relationship to being, a relationship that involves the human being.

Therefore, we can ask: what is the mode of being of the human being in the epoch of power? The answer is found in the following quote: “Power can never be captured (be possessed), because we can only be possessed by it, since it is *unconditioned subjectivity*” (Heidegger 1998, 63-64). The quote, which is also a reference to Ernst Jünger, is more enigmatic than it first appears. In the mode of unconditioned subjectivity, we are told to be possessed by power. Power, then, *is an expression of the regime of total subjectivity*, if subjectivity is understood not as a “metaphysical determination of the I, but of the whole essence of the human being in its relation to beings *and* itself” (Heidegger 1998, 63-64). When the I is grasped and lived as a subject, it is understood and enacted metaphysically. Heidegger's conception of power on this point departs from Butler's, as she regards the prevalence of power as synonymous with the *dissolution* of the subject. Ziarek similarly argues that the decisive difference between Foucault and Heidegger is that Foucault holds his re-invention of the notion of power to be an overcoming of metaphysics, because power no longer is what can be owned or yielded. But although a similar analysis is carried out by Heidegger, for him, “power in terms of fluid, often productive relations among forces does not amount to a non- or post-metaphysical perspective; it only allows us to see

the operation of the still ‘metaphysical’ disposition of being as power” (Ziarek 2002, 178). Thus, Ziarek continues, “It is the occurring of being into and as power that constitutes history as metaphysical; or, to put it differently, as long as being occurs in terms of power, there is metaphysics” (Ziarek 2002, 178). Heidegger’s understanding of power should in other words not only be viewed as a parallel account to Butler’s, but as an illumination of the latter, explaining the origin of an ambiguity characterizing our time. Power is a sign that the human being has completed the position of subject.

With subjectivity, however, Heidegger does not have the arbitrary perspective of a private subject in mind, as subjectivism opposed to a reality of objectivity. Rather, what we call objectivity is merely the other pole of subjectivity, the dichotomy as such rooted in the realm of subject metaphysics. Subjectivity is to grasp reality in the form of objects and objectivity, and assume the role of the one who decides what is objective. The word subject is a translation of the Greek word *Hypokeimenon*, meaning “that which underlies”. The distinction between subjective and objective is therefore “relative and shifting” (Inwood 1999, 204). The insight that everything objective also is subjective, is an occurrence *within* this paradigm. To Heidegger, this insight pertains to the end of metaphysics, where being is thought as the reason or capacity of the human being. When the subject and its force are all that is, the thought and experience of being itself is left unacknowledged, and ultimately made unavailable. When being is obscured in this respect, it will turn itself against the subject, in the form of power.

The epoch of power is therefore to be understood on the basis of the history of being (Heidegger 1998, 73)<sup>2</sup>. It is a way in which being yields itself historically, the manner in which it discloses and encloses itself at the same time. History is for Heidegger not something preceding being, within which being subsequently appears, but the epochal character of history *is* a way in which being reveals itself. In the being-historical epoch of power, being will be experienced as “haunting” man from an oblique distance, and thus as possible to respond to only with a more or less provisional strengthening of the subject – exactly

because this is experienced as the *target* of the threat<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, this logic cannot be grasped by the same subject itself. The source of power will be understood as the echo of the distance of history, history in turn understood as the indirect property of other subjects – that is, for the most part not a defined group of subjects, but the necessary otherness coming from the fact that human beings are individuated and spatiotemporally different from one another. Identity today is thus constituted, transcended and lost on the basis of this difference.

### 3. Heidegger on the Ontological Difference

How, then, could being give itself as something other than power? According to Heidegger, the task for the human being in modernity is to experience that power never was the property of the subject, not grounded in it, but something showing itself on the basis of a certain human relationship to being, a relationship that Heidegger names subjectivity. Obscured in this mode of being is with another terminology the *difference between being and beings*, the so-called ontological difference – the distinction between the entities which are, and the enigmatic fact *that* they are. Following Heidegger, the ontological difference remains foreclosed throughout the whole of metaphysics, but it is in the epoch of subject metaphysics that this forgetfulness assumes the character of power directed against the subject, exactly as being is understood to be the power of the subject. Therefore, it is this difference that man must take responsibility for if he is to regard being as something other than power, as “that in no need of power” (“Macht-unbedürftigte”) (Heidegger 1998, 70). In *GS*, it is thus said that “decisive the differentiation between being and beings” (“Entscheidend die Unterscheidung von Sein und Seiendem”) (Heidegger 1998, 57). With “decisive” Heidegger is most likely referring to the concept of resolution or resoluteness in *Being and Time/Sein und Zeit*, meaning the comportment or mode in which the human being actively opens himself up to being. What is now emphasized, is that this decision leads into the differentiation between the human being and being, as the experience of being’s radical otherness. The decision must be

understood as the act of letting being come forward in its foreignness, to let it appear as something other than *a* being: to let it appear as a facticity that beings must uphold. In the upsurge of the facticity of existence, this existence manifests itself as something of non-human origin; as something which the human cannot own, yet nevertheless must bear.

In *Contributions*, Heidegger explicates that this differentiation demands that the human being assumes the mode of Dasein. In comparison to *BT*, Dasein here obtains a new, qualified sense, and no longer refers to the existence of every man. Rather, it denotes a *possibility* for every existence, the possibility to address being, rather than the own self. The *Da* in the word – “there” – is to be understood as the clearing of being, and Dasein thus as a “middle” (*Zwischen*) between being and beings (Heidegger 1999/1989, 211/299). Being can only reach and illuminate other beings anew through the openness of this middle. To be Dasein is therefore the opposite of the status of being a subject – in fact, it is to “overcome all subjectivity” (Heidegger 1999/1989, 178/252).

Heidegger holds that this should not be pictured as a bridge between beings and being – it cannot be pictured at all. It is only available as a transformation of both into their respective essence (Heidegger 1999/1989, 11/14). This transformation is the enactment of both the human and being, not because being is thereby “humanized” anew, but because it can only assume its independent essence through the human being. This enigmatic occurrence is what Heidegger names the enowning.

To be able to approach the enowning and not merely envisage it as a harmonious ending of strife in human life, however, we must remain by the ontological difference, enduring it as a differing. We cannot approach it as a rational challenge or question, but only through living it ourselves, in carrying the weight of existence as an *inner* polemic or strife. Dasein must become aware of its being as a matter that defines it, and yet is a fundamentally unfamiliar burden. The mode of Dasein reveals the fact that the human is not just a being, but *in* being, that its existence is a force which at the same time carries and reigns over the individual, bringing forth the fact that its “is” as more important than *what* it is.



This must be understood as a leap (*Sprung*), rather than a seamless, gradual and organic joint (Heidegger 1999/1989, 11/14). It is in this respect that it is a matter of decision, something dependent on a certain strength and conscious enactment on the part of the human being. With strength however, it is not meant power, but rather the strength *not* to act in power. It is the strength not to resist the burden of being, but to let oneself be overwhelmed by it.

But is the case, then, the opposite: is being its own power over man? Can it simply be thought as an inverse? Occasionally, in *Contributions* Heidegger speaks of being as a kind of pure power (Cf. Heidegger 1999/1989, 15/21, 16/22, 55/79). In a work such as *Mindfulness* though, he is eager to understand it as “The *powerless – beyond power and lack of power*” (*Das Machtlose, jenseits von Macht und Unmacht*), in order not to let it be confused with the power of the human being (Heidegger 1997, 166/187). In any case, we cannot obtain an access to being through power. Rather, the variations in the naming of Being indicates Heidegger's struggle to name that which in truth cannot be named, exactly because it is not the property of the human being, but altogether what differs from it.

#### 4. Identity as Belonging-together and as Being in History

With the appropriation of the ontological difference, the meaning of the phenomenon of identity must change. The word enowning means “bringing something into its own”. What is brought into its own, is the human being, but only insofar as it is the simultaneous enowning of being, bringing *itself* into its own. It is the event where both reach into their respective essence. In *ID*, this is also called the belonging-together as such (Heidegger 2002/2006, 28-29/37-38).

Heidegger shows in this work that an identity demands a relating of something to something, if the word should not remain an empty tautology. Identity entails some kind of belonging. Although Heidegger only once in this work refers to the belonging-together as identity, and this only to contrast it with logical and metaphysical identity, it is nevertheless the origin of identity that is meant by this occurrence. It means a

belonging so original that it refers to nothing less than the human being's abiding in being, as an abiding in himself. In other words, it is only in and through the non-human that the human can be itself. The human and being belong together, at the same time as they differ.

With this approach, Heidegger attempts to understand this relationship as non-metaphysical: neither the human, nor being appear as independent entities, which can be brought together in retrospect, as an intertwining. None is more original than the other: "Be-ing needs man in order to hold sway; and man belongs to be-ing so that he can accomplish his utmost destiny as Da-sein" ("Das Sein braucht den Menschen, damit es wese, und der Mensch gehört dem Seyn, auf dass er seine äusserste Bestimmung als Da-sein vollbringe") (Heidegger 1999/1989, 177/251). As shown, the relationship is not a matter of indifference, but of enduring the difference, bearing it as a hardship.

Heidegger's lack of an anthropological perspective is thus not a sign that the question of the human being is left out. On the contrary, it is a re-figuration of what it means to have a human identity at all, of what the most own of the human being is. It is not something that it owns, but rather something that it is being owned by. Identity is in other words no longer understood as the one or the other thing that the human being can be, but as the belonging to the very "is" of such statements of identity, binding the human being to the world and to itself.

But as being no longer is appropriated as the property of man, the understanding of one's historicity must change as well. On the basis of the difference between the subject and power, history is understood as belonging to man as a subject, and its essence, consequently, to be the strife of power between particular subjects. It is in this epoch, in this relation to being, that every interaction, and every identity will be marked by power. But identity as enowning is a presence where the very phenomenon of history changes. The "mediating" role of Dasein, as the middle between being and beings, was not to be understood as a link between the two. Rather, enowning means "simultaneously transforming be-ing and beings in their simultaneity" ("das Seyn und das Seiende zugleich in ihre

Gleichzeitigkeit verwandelt”) (Heidegger 1999/1989, 11/14). Enowning is thus given a temporal dimension, which is perhaps made more clear in the German expression *Gleichzeitigkeit*. In other sections, Heidegger repeats that Dasein is not merely located in a determined space-time, but that it is the *grounding* of the time-space itself (Heidegger 1999/1989, 13/17). The same is said in *GS*: “being as 'that within which' is not 'ours', the being of man, but the enowning of the between as the origin of time-space” (“Das Sein als “Worinnen” ist nicht 'unser', der Menschen 'Sein', sondern das Ereignis des Inzwischen als Ursprung des Zeit-Raumes”) (Heidegger 1998, 55). The occurrence in which being yields itself as enowning is a historical event, dependent on the spatiotemporality of Dasein. Being can only clear itself in an existence located in a particular time and space. On the other hand, Dasein is endowed with a history, as the realm in which it exists as temporal and spatial, only because it can be appropriated by being. History in an original sense, as the opening up of a specific realm in which human beings reside and interact according to a shared horizon of meaning, happens as a response to the self-giving temporality of being. In this, the spatiotemporality of the individual Dasein becomes a locus for the event of being, thereby inaugurating original history. With the word simultaneity, Heidegger seeks a way to express the reciprocity of the particular moment – (*Augenblick*) (Heidegger 1999/1989, 15/20) – in which being's remoteness approaches, reveals itself in the human temporality, and gives it a present tied to the past and pregnant with a future. To win a historical identity in which the human can reconcile with history itself, to win a present which is not cut off from and haunted by the past and the future, but instead is the locality where both are gathered, the human must withdraw as the subject of history.

Neither is history therefore an “objective” matter which Dasein finds somewhere outside of itself. In the *Augenblick*, Dasein first *opens up* the historicity of the voices of other Daseins, previous and present, and responds to these. History reveals itself as a phenomenon which is only to be found in this response. Hence, history does not manifest the distant voices of other subjects defying us and our present, but is a simultaneous

disclosing-revealing of being, in and through which other human beings act and address us.

It is therefore through standing in the ontological difference that the present and the distance of history can reconcile. This historicity, to Heidegger, is never to be sighted as regular history in the sense of historical knowing (*Historie*) (Heidegger 1999/1989, 13/17) but can only be reached and perceived in the collision between the contingency of the own temporality, and the incontingency of being's.

## 5. Conclusion

This conception of difference and identity in Heidegger casts new light on our contemporary predicament of identity. The situation of discursive power, yielding a problematic difference in the identity of the subject, is being-historical, a certain way in which the relationship between the human being and being establishes itself in time and space. When man defines his identity on the basis of subjectivity, he will find an obstacle in discursive power. In contrast to Butler's claim, the prevailing of power according to Heidegger indicates completed subjectivity.

In Butler, power is implicitly regarded as the *indirect* approach of *other* subjects, through the phenomenon of history. Power is deferred in time and space, as a "there", ultimately stemming from others. But at the same time, it can be "there" only because it is already "here", in the subject, creating its identity. Reading Heidegger, this situation stems not from ontic subjects, not from another location in history, and not originally from the human being as such, but from the way the human being interprets and acts out himself as the ground of being, as the entity that being stems from. Butler herself declares that the subject cannot be equal to "the person" or "the individual", but rather is a "linguistic category, a placeholder, a structure in formation". At the same time though, she insists on the impossibility of existing as an individual if not referred to as a subject (Butler 1997, 11). Butler thus problematizes the subject status of the human being, but does not consider the origin of its necessity, and with this its possible alternative.

The ontological difference in Heidegger is the experience of the impossibility of taking control over being, or positively expressed: being's overwhelming and sheltering supremacy over man. It is a supremacy which is also a dependency, calling for a responsibility of the human. In this dependency, the identity of the human is exhibited as Dasein; only here is proper selfhood to be found. As Dasein, the finite human learns to be defined by incontinent being, as the opposite of being burdened by power.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Of course, Heidegger has devoted many texts to the Nietzschean concept of “the will to power”. But although Heidegger sees power as an outcome of the metaphysics of the will to power, there is a vast difference between the two. While the will to power for Heidegger constitutes the last attempt to denote the manifest openness of Being within the metaphysical paradigm, power is a manifestation of the complete withdrawal of this openness. For this reason, Nietzsche's concept will not be elaborated on here.

<sup>2</sup> In “Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault” Hubert L. Dreyfus carries out a comparative survey of the concept of being in Heidegger and the concept of power in Foucault, suggesting that the history of being in the former corresponds to the analysis of the regimes of power in the latter (Dreyfus 1996, 3). While Heidegger strives towards an overcoming of being's specific manifestation as technicity, Dreyfus argues, Foucault strives towards an overcoming of disciplinary bio-power (Dreyfus 1996, 7-12). The difference between them is found in the fact that Foucault ultimately cannot account for the necessity of this overcoming (Dreyfus 1996, 14). It is exactly on this point, I add, that the essence of the ambiguity of this account of power is exposed: for Foucault, everything is power, yet at the same time, disciplinary power and bio-power constitute a problematic epoch in history. What lacks in Foucault is a being-historical interpretation of power. Thus, Heidegger and Foucault cannot be compared in this respect; the very notion of power would for Heidegger in itself represent a certain respect in which the human being approaches and understands being.

<sup>3</sup> In “The question Concerning Technology” (“Die Frage nach der Technik”, 2000) Heidegger holds that in the epoch of enframing both subjects and objects seemingly will disappear, and thereby this very relation. Instead, they will both become “standing-reserves”. (26-27/27-28). This is discussed by Federico José Lagdameo (2014, 15-17, Michel Haar (2002, 158) and Samuel Ijseeling (1992, 386). But in what way do they disappear? In “Science and Reflection” (“Wissenschaft and Besinnung”), published the same year, Heidegger makes it clear that the subject-object relation hereby does not end, but reaches into its essence, its “most extreme dominance”. (173/55). Exactly here, in this ambiguity, is the concept of power of importance.

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**Uljana Akca** is PhD student at the Department of Philosophy, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg. Research interests: Identity and Difference, Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, German idealism, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, G.W.F. Hegel.

## Ontologies du conflit

Cristiana Asavoai  
Université Alexandru Ioan Cuza de Iasi  
Anna Bonalume  
Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris  
Arnaud François  
Université de Poitiers  
Diana Margarit  
Université Alexandru Ioan Cuza de Iasi  
Oriane Petteni  
Université de Liège  
Petr Prášek  
Université Charles de Prague  
Ovidiu Stanciu  
Sciences Po, Paris

### Abstract Ontologies of conflict

This article embodies the result of a collective work that seeks to understand the manner in which the notion of conflict is transformed by the attempt to apply it to reality, according to the doctrines hereby comprise as “ontologies of conflict” (from Heraclitus to Hegel, from Nietzsche to Schmitt). It seems that there are three resulting “logics of conflict” which may receive the following qualifications: logic of contradiction, logic of contrariety and logic of difference.

**Keywords:** logic, ontology, conflict, contradiction, contrariety, difference

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« *Polémos pater pantôn* », « la guerre, ou le conflit, est le père de toutes choses »: c'est sous le signe de ce célèbre fragment d'Héraclite, numéroté 53 par Diels et Kranz, que viennent se placer, selon des modalités pourtant différentes, toutes les « ontologies du conflit » que l'on peut dénombrer dans l'histoire de la philosophie. D'Héraclite à Nietzsche en effet, en passant par Schopenhauer, on voit se tracer toute une ligne de penseurs qui, tantôt dans une visée pleinement ontologique, tantôt en limitant leur réflexion au champ propre de la politique, considèrent le conflit non pas comme l'exception passagère par rapport à un état normal qui serait la constance et l'apaisement, mais bien comme la règle ou l'état le plus fréquent, de sorte que la paix, à l'inverse, apparaît comme le cas particulier, le transitoire, et donc comme cela même qui requiert une explication. À la formule célèbre de Clausewitz selon laquelle la guerre est la politique continuée par d'autres moyens, Nietzsche préfère ainsi la vision selon laquelle la politique, au contraire, est un certain type bien précis de guerre, vision qu'il rattache à Héraclite (Nietzsche 1982, § 92) et dont on suit les traces jusque dans la conférence « La notion de politique », donnée au cours de l'été 1932 par Carl Schmitt. Il y a ici politique dès lors qu'il y a inimitié entre des entités, et ce type très particulier de combat dans lequel consiste la politique trouve, pour ainsi dire comme à sa limite, la guerre.

Mais comment penser ce conflit, dont on nous affirme qu'il constitue l'essence même de la réalité et de la politique ? L'application du schème conflictuel à ces ensembles ne rejaillit-elle pas, comme en retour, sur la nature même de ce que désigne le mot « conflit », et sur la compréhension de la notion qui lui correspond ? Hegel s'est explicitement réclamé d'une philosophie selon laquelle le conflit, avec toute la dimension de souffrance et de « tragique » qui peut lui être rattachée, constitue le procès même du réel. Jamais peut-être autant qu'avec Hegel, on n'a affirmé que l'affrontement, la douleur et la mort – l'ensemble de ce qu'il appelle le « négatif » – forment la condition à laquelle s'effectue le déploiement achevé de la réalité, et sans laquelle plus rien ne tient. On peut se demander cependant, et beaucoup l'ont fait (avec les moyens de la philosophie, mais aussi de la littérature ou de l'art), si le sens

qu'il donne au conflit, à savoir, précisément, celui d'une étape indispensable à l'accession du réel à une figure plus élevée de la totalité qu'il compose, permet de donner au conflit et à la souffrance qu'il comporte toute leur mesure de tragique et de négativité. Si le conflit est destiné à être résolu, à être dialectisé, alors il a beau être ubiquitaire, il n'en est pas moins pensé sous l'angle du passager, du provisoire. Tandis que la notion même de conflit, et *a fortiori* ses effectuations concrètes dans les affaires humaines, semblent exiger qu'on le conçoive comme l'in-dialectisable, c'est-à-dire comme opposition réelle de forces ou de tendances dont rien ne permet de dire, en droit, qu'elle prendra fin, de sorte que la survenue d'un conflit implique toujours, au moins dans l'analyse de son concept, la destruction possible de ses protagonistes. C'est toute la conception de l'histoire qui est en jeu ici, puisqu'un Nietzsche peut, paradoxalement, reprocher à Hegel d'avoir, en inscrivant le conflit dialectique au cœur même du devenir des hommes, entériné une conception finaliste et, en dernier ressort, optimiste de ce devenir. Alors que l'histoire pourrait tout aussi bien, en définitive, piétiner, ou même recommencer éternellement, ce qui précisément lui interdirait d'être, au sens englobant, une « histoire ».

C'est donc bien un problème de *logique* qui est posé par les conflits, dès lors qu'on croise nos deux questions, « le conflit nomme-t-il tout le réel, ou seulement une de ses parties ? » et « le conflit est-il, ou non, essentiellement résoluble ? ». Problème de logique, puisqu'on peut distinguer entre une description du conflit en termes de *contradiction* (les parties d'un conflit ne sauraient exister simultanément, un peu comme deux propositions contradictoires ne sauraient être vraies simultanément ou fausses simultanément), et une description en termes de *contrariété*, où les forces opposées peuvent (un peu à la manière des énoncés « Aucun homme n'est mortel » et « Quelque homme est immortel ») subsister en même temps, mais, précisément pour cette raison, prolonger indéfiniment leur affrontement violent. On dira donc qu'il existe une « logique de la contradiction » et une « logique de la contrariété », incompatibles l'une avec l'autre, mais concurrentes pour apporter les outils conceptuels indispensables à saisir adéquatement le

conflit. Mais on peut aller plus loin, et faire observer que, si la contradiction et la contrariété s'opposent entre elles, elles font face l'une et l'autre au même troisième terme, puisque l'*identité* demeure vraisemblablement l'antithèse de la contrariété, au sens où il n'y a d'oppositions réelles qu'entre des termes demeurant, à tout le moins, identiques à eux-mêmes. C'est donc vers la *différence* pure, différence définie notamment par le fait qu'elle ne se compare plus à l'identité mais à la répétition, qu'il faudra se tourner pour forger une *troisième* logique du conflit, que l'on désignera ainsi comme « logique de la différence », à charge pour nous alors de se demander si cette notion, telle qu'un Deleuze l'a élaborée au cours de son œuvre, conserve bien en elle quelque chose du conflit, et, pour le cas où il en irait ainsi, de quel sens du « conflit » il peut s'agir alors.

### I. Logique de la contradiction

Hegel, dans *Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*, écrit à propos de la dialectique du maître et de l'esclave :

Puisqu'il est nécessaire que chacune des deux consciences de soi, qui s'opposent l'une à l'autre, s'efforce de se manifester et de s'affirmer, devant l'autre et pour l'autre, comme un être-pour-soi absolu, par là même celle qui a *préféré la vie à la liberté* et qui se révèle impuissante à faire, par elle-même et pour assurer son indépendance, abstraction de sa réalité sensible présente, entre ainsi dans le rapport de *servitude*. (Hegel 1963, 2<sup>e</sup> cours, 1<sup>re</sup> subdivision, 2<sup>e</sup> degré)

Il fait donc de l'opposition de deux consciences le ressort du mouvement dialectique qui permet d'accéder au pour-soi afin de dépasser la position première et immédiate de l'en-soi. D'accéder donc progressivement à un degré supérieur de la réalité grâce à la logique de la contradiction. Il s'agit de dépasser l'immédiateté par le mouvement dialectique. Celui-ci, dans le cas de la conscience, est déclenché par l'opposition, c'est-à-dire par le fait qu'une autre conscience s'oppose à la mienne et demande à être reconnue comme conscience. Dans la dialectique du maître et de l'esclave, c'est la conscience qui parviendra à risquer sa vie, donc à dépasser l'instinct de conservation de la vie, de l'ordre de l'immédiateté, qui deviendra maître et existera pour soi. C'est donc la conscience qui dépasse l'ordre du pur besoin qui accède à la maîtrise et

réduit l'autre à l'état de servitude. Quiconque donc vit sur le mode de l'immédiateté et poursuit uniquement le règne des besoins se trouve en état de servitude. Cependant, et c'est là tout la complexité de la dialectique, le maître, parce qu'il possède l'esclave, arrête le mouvement de lutte constitutif de la vie et essentiel à l'accession au pour-soi, afin de jouir, de manière immédiate, des produits du travail de l'esclave. Il en devient donc dépendant et l'esclave se retrouve le maître, puisqu'en travaillant, il a dépassé le mode de l'immédiateté et a accédé à la conscience de soi. Nous voyons donc bien que c'est la lutte, le conflit avec la réalité (*Realität*) qui en permet la transformation et l'accession à la *Wirklichkeit*. Le maître ne peut rester maître qu'en tant qu'il ne s'enfonce pas dans la jouissance mais remet en jeu sa vie, par un mouvement dialectique de lutte permanente avec l'immédiateté.

Il nous semble cependant, si l'on suit *a contrario* ce qu'écrit Doubrovsky dans sa thèse *Corneille ou la dialectique du héros*, qu'il s'agit là d'une conception aristocratique du conflit, qui oppose deux instances déterminées, deux héros qui luttent pour la reconnaissance. Achille contre Hector dans le chant XXII de l'*Iliade*. Doubrovsky écrit ainsi que « la dialectique hégélienne adhère étroitement à l'héroïsme cornélien » (Doubrovsky 1982, 90). Il s'agit en effet d'un théâtre de la « maîtrise », qui tente de ressusciter l'ancien idéal aristocratique, dans une société oisive, où la fonction guerrière des nobles n'est plus réellement sollicitée, ce qui grippe la machine de reconnaissance. Il y aurait donc bien ici un lien entre l'héroïsme, la lutte pour la reconnaissance hégélienne et la place majeure occupée dans la société. La lutte pour la reconnaissance est donc pour Hegel le fait de deux instances qui accèdent à leur pour-soi dans le processus même de la lutte. Dans ce cas, quiconque est incapable de mener cette lutte, ne pourra ni accéder à la reconnaissance de soi face à l'autre, ni à la connaissance de soi en tant que pour-soi, qui est le degré supérieur de l'existence. Il s'agit des consciences malheureuses, qui ne parviennent pas à vivre sur un autre mode que celui de l'immédiateté et qui de fait, s'exposent à conduire leur vie sous le règne de l'aliénation. Tout cela, on s'en doute, a de fortes implications politiques, tout à la fois dans la théorie hégélienne de l'État moderne (qu'on

trouve principalement dans *Principes de la philosophie du droit*) et chez ses héritiers tels que Carl Schmitt.

Celui-ci est cité par Derrida dans *Politiques de l'amitié*, un texte qui s'interroge sur les schèmes constitutifs des communautés politiques et plus particulièrement celui de l'amitié, modèle proposé pour penser le lien entre citoyens. La déclaration de Schmitt qui intéresse Derrida est la suivante:

« [Hegel] a donné une définition de l'ennemi, ce que les philosophes modernes évitent habituellement: il est la différence *éthique*, dans la perspective de la vie absolue, dans l'être éternel du peuple, comme Étranger à nier dans sa totalité vivante [...] cet ennemi ne peut être, du point de vue éthique, qu'un ennemi du peuple et être lui-même un peuple. Du moment que l'individualité y apparaît, c'est pour le peuple que l'individu s'expose au danger de la mort ». (Derrida 1994, 161)

Le dernier mouvement de la phrase insiste sur le fait que dans une perspective politique l'individu doit se faire métonymie du peuple. La dialectique du maître et de l'esclave est donc transposée de la lutte entre consciences à la lutte entre peuples. L'individu n'existe ainsi pleinement, politiquement, qu'en tant qu'il fait partie de l'État et se reconnaît comme faisant partie de l'État. Il doit pour cela dépasser le système des besoins qui règle la société civile, dépasser son statut de bourgeois pour atteindre celui de citoyen qui trouve sa liberté et sa fin dans l'État. *Quid* donc de ceux, consciences malheureuses en état de servitude, sont incapables de dépasser, par la lutte pour la reconnaissance, leur individualité, afin d'accéder à l'existence citoyenne ? Ceux-là risquent fort bien de rester dans un état de servitude et de non-reconnaissance de leur droit, qui les condamne à une existence misérable, à la marge de l'État, dans les sous-sols de la scène publique hégélienne, scène de théâtre exposée à la lumière dans laquelle se joue la lutte pour la reconnaissance.

La nouvelle de Kafka *Der Bau (Le terrier)* nous offre, à notre avis, l'exemple d'une telle conscience malheureuse. Le narrateur kafkaïen en effet nous offre l'exemple d'une étrange conscience, enfermée dans l'obscurité de son Terrier, qu'elle construit comme bouclier afin se prémunir contre un ou des ennemis, qui se trouvent à l'extérieur et sont invisibles et inconnus du narrateur. Tout le Terrier est construit dans le but d'éviter cette fameuse lutte à mort et est sans cesse ré-agencé

en fonction de la position supposée de l'ennemi, afin d'éviter le conflit final. La nouvelle, inachevée, s'arrête lorsque les bruits signalant l'arrivée d'un ennemi extérieur s'intensifient. Le narrateur kafkaïen, inquiet et fébrile, ne désire que sa propre sécurité, afin de pouvoir consommer ses vivres. Il désire donc vivre dans l'en-soi de son Terrier sans jamais accéder au pour-soi. Symboliquement donc, rester dans son terrier obscur, sans jamais atteindre l'extérieur éclairé du pour-soi.

Cette nouvelle a également intéressé Deleuze et Guattari dans leur ouvrage sur Kafka, et ils la présentent comme paradigmatique de l'auteur mineur. Celui-ci se différencie de l'auteur majeur, qui occupe une place majeure dans la société, en tant qu'il en possède les signifiants, mais en tant également, à notre avis, qu'il peut s'avancer sur le devant de la scène publique, tel un héros cornélien, et lutter pour la reconnaissance. L'auteur mineur en revanche se trouve en marge de la société, caché dans un Terrier par exemple, apeuré à l'idée de risquer sa vie et de se détacher pour un instant du système des besoins. Il ne peut alors pas prendre part à la lutte pour la reconnaissance qui opère de manière frontale. Il est donc condamné, en régime hégélien, à suivre les contours retors de son Terrier, à lutter dans l'obscurité et de biais, dans des tentatives dérisoires sans cesse menacées d'échec.

Nous pourrions donc dire que la conscience de l'autre, à laquelle ma conscience s'oppose, menace mon identité chez Hegel, ce qui explique qu'elle peut prendre la figure de l'ennemi chez certains héritiers du hégélianisme, et notamment chez C. Schmitt, qui fait de ce concept la figure de définition du politique. L'ennemi, figure de la contradiction, est constitutif en somme de l'identité de la communauté. Il maintient la communauté à laquelle il s'oppose dans une nécessité permanente de cohésion, en cas d'arrivée d'un événement exceptionnel, mais possible et virtuellement toujours réel, la guerre. Pour cela, il faut que la distinction conceptuelle entre l'ami et l'ennemi soit nette, claire, pure. Elle doit être « purifiée » de toute dimension non politique. La question est alors de savoir comment opérer cette distinction. Comment peut-on repérer l'ennemi, le circonscrire nettement ? Qui est l'ami, qui est l'ennemi ? L'ennemi, nous l'avons dit, n'est pas

forcément celui que je hais. Je peux aimer mon ennemi comme mon prochain, d'un point de vue privé. L'ennemi c'est seulement celui qui est hostile. Schmitt écrit ainsi que « dans la lutte millénaire entre le christianisme et l'Islam, il ne serait venu à l'idée d'aucun chrétien qu'il fallait, par amour pour les Sarrasins ou pour les Turcs, livrer l'Europe à l'Islam au lieu de la défendre » (Schmitt 2009, 109). Voilà déjà, dans le choix de l'exemple, un indice de ce qui oriente la compréhension de l'ennemi schmittien. Il semble s'agir dans un premier temps de l'autre envisagé comme inassimilable, l'autre avec lequel nous n'aurions aucun lien de parenté et qui ne fait pas partie de notre *Sittlichkeit* (de nos coutumes), concept clé dans la fondation du droit chez Hegel. L'autre qui viendrait donc menacer la constitution de l'État, fondée sur l'interprétation de l'esprit du peuple (*Volksgeist*). Celui qui vient menacer l'identité de la communauté. C'est donc sur l'importance du concept d'identité dans la définition de la logique du conflit (comme logique de la contradiction) qu'il nous faudra insister de manière critique, ce que nous ferons plus loin, dans la troisième partie, avec Deleuze. Mais l'hésitation entre une conception hégélienne du conflit comme condition de l'émergence du sens, et sa conception comme pure survenue non synthétisable, se fait sentir d'une manière particulièrement nette chez Patočka, et dans sa compréhension de la guerre<sup>1</sup>.

Les réflexions que Jan Patočka développe autour de la question du conflit répondent à une double tâche: d'abord celle de cerner les contours de cette expérience particulière à laquelle la Première guerre mondiale, « l'événement décisif du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle », a donné lieu; ensuite, celle de mettre en évidence la charge de sens et la portée historique que recèle le fragment héraclitéen cité en commençant. Pourtant, ces deux orientations – un regard porté sur les sentences obscures d'un penseur lointain et une tentative de cartographier les lignes de force du présent – s'avèrent situées dans une proximité essentielle: à suivre Patočka, tout se passe donc comme si l'expérience du front propre au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle éclairait d'un jour nouveau les propos d'Héraclite, qui à leur tour permettraient à cette expérience de retrouver une parole digne d'elle<sup>2</sup> (Benjamin 2011).

Aussi surprenant que cela puisse paraître, cette thématique émerge dans le contexte d'une réflexion sur la question de la crise des sciences et sur leur rapport ambigu à la technique. Ainsi, c'est en prenant position dans le champ de la philosophie contemporaine, plus précisément en s'attaquant aux thèses défendues par Heidegger, que Jan Patočka est amené à accorder une place centrale à la question du *polémos*. La fonction qui lui revient dans ce cadre est de contester le dispositif théorique mis en place par Heidegger pour penser l'âge technique. Si le penseur tchèque accepte la caractérisation heidéggerienne de cette époque comme un âge de la commutabilité universelle, où tout étant est converti en une ressource prête à être utilisée et ne vaut que par la force qu'il est à même d'emmagasiner, si Patočka adhère donc entièrement à l'idée selon laquelle l'événement central de l'âge technique est la constitution d'un plan unidimensionnel, qui se traduit dans un nivellement fondamental de tous les modes d'être, il n'en demeure pas moins qu'il rejette le principe avancé par Heidegger pour envisager la sortie du règne de la technique. Le rejet vise deux points: d'abord une forme d'abstraction, qui assigne à la pensée seule, éventuellement assistée par la *poiésis*, l'accomplissement de cette tâche. Ensuite, une forme de passivité, pour autant que cette sortie relève d'une possibilité future, encore inaccessible, dont il nous faudra attendre l'avènement. La stratégie patočkienne est contraire: ce n'est pas l'attente d'une possibilité incertaine, mais bien l'attention qui se porte aux brèches déjà accomplies dans le règne de la technique, qui peut fonctionner comme un indicateur pour la pensée. Il faudra donc relever les phénomènes qui attestent une rupture de niveau, qui marquent l'échec de la convertibilité universelle. C'est sur ce point précis que Patočka fait intervenir les vertus positives du *polémos* à travers la thématique du sacrifice: le sacrifice, qui est, comme le dit Patočka, toujours, c'est-à-dire même dans ses formes les moins radicales, un sacrifice de la vie, consiste à prendre à contre-pied la logique de l'échange propre au monde technique: on donne quelque chose, voire on donne tout, sans savoir ou précisément tout en sachant, qu'on ne va rien recevoir en échange.



Fidèle à un style d'enquête développé dans le sillage de la phénoménologie, Patočka ne se contentera pas de mettre en avant les vertus explicatives de ce concept, mais tentera également de relever des attestations de cette logique paradoxale et d'abord sur le plan d'une philosophie de l'histoire. Ceci l'amène à proposer, dans le sillage d'Ernst Jünger et de Teilhard de Chardin, et dans une proximité qui nous semble mériter un examen plus approfondi avec la pensée de Walter Benjamin, une interprétation originale de la signification de la Première guerre mondiale (Patočka 1981)<sup>3</sup>. Celle-ci apparaît comme une des expériences déterminantes du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle en tant qu'elle représente le phénomène paroxystique du règne de la technique, car elle conduit jusqu'à son terme le mouvement de « mobilisation totale » que la technique déclenche. En s'appuyant sur de nombreux récits de guerre, Patočka tente de rendre compte des phénomènes paradoxaux auxquels l'expérience du front a donné lieu: non seulement du maintien d'un « pouvoir se sacrifier » alors que toute justification idéologique disparaît dans l'horreur d'une confrontation quotidienne, mais également de cette inexplicable fraternité qui unit les combattants au-delà du conflit qui les oppose et que Patočka saisira à travers le terme de « solidarité des ébranlés ». C'est à travers ce concept que le philosophe tchèque se propose de penser une communauté véritablement universelle, à même de dépasser tout clivage idéologique: même si elle s'édifie dans « la persécution et l'incertitude », « la solidarité des ébranlés peut se permettre de dire “non” aux mesures qui éternisent l'état de guerre. [...] Elle doit et elle peut créer une autorité spirituelle capable de pousser le monde en guerre à accepter certaines restrictions » (Patočka 1981, 214).

C'est dans les conditions extrêmes d'un conflit total, d'un conflit issu d'une mobilisation globale qu'une rupture de niveau, qu'un saut est à même de se produire: il semble donc qu'en dépit des distances qu'il prend par rapport à Hegel, Patočka réitère sa conception du conflit: la négativité radicale, totale, désespérée est le lieu d'émergence d'une richesse inouïe de sens, d'une positivité autrement inaccessible. Pourtant, Patočka ne semble suivre le schéma hégélien que jusqu'à mi-chemin: le sens que l'expérience privative occasionne ne peut être

simplement converti en une nouvelle positivité dont la destinée serait d'être reprise dans un nouveau cycle de positions et de négations. Le positif ainsi obtenu est lui-même d'une certaine façon contaminée par le négatif, car « la communauté des ébranlés » « n'établira pas de programmes positifs; son langage sera celui du démon de Socrate: tout en avertissements et interdits » (Patočka 1981, 214).

## II. Logique de la contrariété

Que signifie « être en conflit » ? Le conflit est un concept clé dans la philosophie de Nietzsche. L'expression de l'*agôn* qui apparaît dans le texte sur la joute homérique (Nietzsche 1975) est la première formulation du conflit chez Nietzsche. À quel propos en parle-t-il et quelles sont les caractéristiques de ce concept homérique ?

Le conflit entre Hector et Achille, auquel nous avons fait référence plus haut, est de la nature de l'*agôn*, c'est-à-dire de la compétition, l'exhibition de la force dans la lutte<sup>4</sup>. Dans cette dispute, le plus puissant, celui qui est en mesure d'imposer sa force sur l'autre, remporte une victoire dont le prix est la vie. Achille est « tel qu'un lion excité par sa grande force et par sa rage, qui se jette sur les troupeaux des hommes pour les dévorer » (Homère 1866, 433). « Le vrai héros, le vrai sujet, le centre de l'*Iliade*, c'est la force » (Weil 1999, 529), affirme Simone Weil<sup>5</sup>. Dans la première oeuvre littéraire de la culture occidentale la force est la protagoniste, capable de tout détruire sans exception<sup>6</sup>.

Dans un texte de 1870, « Socrate et la tragédie », l'idée de la « bonne Éris » (Éris est, rappelons-le, la déesse de la discorde) apparaît pour la première fois. Elle sera reprise et développée deux ans plus tard dans « La joute chez Homère », et elle reviendra ensuite dans la caractérisation de la cosmodicée nietzschéenne comme constellation de forces antagonistes, expressions multiples de la volonté de puissance<sup>7</sup>.

Qu'est-ce qui se cache aux racines de l'apparat si lumineux, et aux apparences si parfaites, de la beauté grecque (Nietzsche 1975, 193)<sup>8</sup> ? Chez Homère l'élégance du style épique rend possible une parfaite traduction poétique des images les

plus brutales, la « fantasie habituée à des choses horribles » du monde pré-homérique est sublimée dans la beauté du chant.

Les racines de la culture grecque sont dominées par le monde des affects, cet embrouillement de « désirs nocturnes » dont Achille est le représentant. Nietzsche considère les inclinations brutales à la base de la sérénité olympique comme un terrain fertile, le lieu de naissance de toute humanité (Nietzsche 1975, 193)<sup>9</sup>. Toute expression humaine présente un trait de cruauté, une passion qui doit être apprivoisée.

Dans *La naissance de la tragédie*, le fondement atroce du monde grec est évoqué à travers l'intuition dionysiaque de la douleur métaphysique; dans « La joute chez Homère », il l'est grâce à l'image de la « mauvaise Éris ».

Nietzsche commente une phrase du poème d'Hésiode *Les travaux et les jours*: « sur la terre il y a deux déesses appelées Éris » (Nietzsche 1975, 194-195)<sup>10</sup>. La première est la discorde cruelle, l'irrationalité insensée, l'atrocité de l'action, l'autre est la bonne Éris, qui stimule le travail et l'action des hommes, encouragés à agir par des instincts de concurrence, de compétition.

Dans la *discorde* le monde grec établit son harmonie: « le combat est le salut, la délivrance; pour cette existence, la cruauté propre à la victoire est le comble de la jubilation » (Nietzsche 1975, 194). *Éris* est l'instrument du salut, l'aspect constructif et formateur de l'agonisme grec, qui anime toute vie humaine, dans les formes quotidiennes de l'antagonisme et de l'envie.

La tension assurée par la joute est une tension créative, productrice, fertile, qui sublime l'agressivité de l'homme en une compétition générative.

Les Grecs ont inventé les olympiades, la dialectique, l'éristique (qui prend son nom d'Éris): il s'agit des champs où la mauvaise Éris est sublimée dans la bonne Éris, capable d'imiter la lutte réelle et de transformer la destruction de l'autre dans une *représentation symbolique*. La joute permet au Grec de se sauver de la mort par le moyen de la compétition, ce qui constitue une incitation à la production de formes, à la dynamique des arts et de la culture, en produisant des traces de la beauté lyrique et littéraire par l'art de la sublimation.

Nietzsche écrit dans *Crépuscule des idoles*: « ne jamais rendre égal ce qui est inégal » (Nietzsche 2005, § 48). Le mythe de l'égalité et de la parité est, selon lui, un poids qui écrase et qui déprime le rythme de l'action humaine. Elle serait « la fin de la justice », au sens d'Héraclite, la *dikè* de la querelle éternelle.

Dans la guerre entre forces opposées, entre forces différentes, tout *devenir* jaillit, et les qualités apparemment durables, fixes qui résultent de la guerre, ne montrent que la domination temporaire d'un des combattants, tandis que la guerre continue pour l'éternité. Tout arrive selon la dispute, et par la dispute la justice éternelle se dévoile.

L'*agôn* est nécessaire pour la santé de la cité: pour les anciens, le but de l'éducation agonistique était d'assurer le bien-être de la société politique, de la collectivité. Le vrai équilibre se trouve dans une situation de constant déséquilibre.

Par l'interprétation de l'esprit hellénique à travers le concept d'*agôn*, Nietzsche nous conduit vers la pensée originare d'un cosmos en opposition interne, où le point de vue de la morale est dévalué. La volonté de puissance, qui est notamment un outil critique de la notion métaphysique de volonté transcendante, est le nom de la relation entre des forces en opposition réciproque. La justice d'Éris, la justice héraclitéenne, est le point de départ pour dé-responsabiliser le conflit, le restituer dans son innocence, et ainsi en faire un élément nécessaire, fondamental de la vie en tant que puissance.

Nietzsche revient constamment aux thèmes de l'agonisme, du combat, de la force. S'il y a une dualité chez Nietzsche, elle est celle qui subsiste au sein de toute hiérarchie, elle est la tension, toujours en action, produite en vertu d'attractions, de répulsions, de commandements, d'obéissances, lesquels sont imposés par la domination et par la sélection. La vie impose une hiérarchie au sein du chaos, elle s'affirme sous la forme d'interprétations: la cosmodicée de Nietzsche se laisse modéliser selon les idées de force et de lutte, qui décriraient l'homme archaïque occidental, et qui ont été reproduites par Homère dans ses vers.

La relation entre les forces est toujours un conflit, une lutte pour la puissance. Même, « l'organisme [...] est un

complexe luttant pour la croissance de sentiments de puissance » (Nietzsche 1977, 174). Chaque force, qu'elle soit active ou réactive, aspire à la puissance et chaque configuration de forces, chaque volonté, qu'elle soit forte ou faible, aspire à accroître sa quantité de force. En conséquence, la volonté de puissance elle-même a un caractère conflictuel.

Ce conflit est, en fait, une lutte pour subjuguier. La volonté de puissance est une relation de commandement et d'obéissance, ce qui implique, comme nous l'avons déjà fait observer, une opposition hiérarchique entre les forces. On ne parle pas d'une hiérarchie préétablie, ni d'une hiérarchie instituée par une instance suprême (une telle instance est complètement exclue de la philosophie nietzschéenne), mais d'une hiérarchie passagère, qui change toujours, et qui se constitue, dira-t-on, spontanément, ce qui est une conséquence naturelle de l'ontologie de la volonté de puissance: « tout ce qui arrive dans le monde organique est un *assujettissement*, une *domination* » (Nietzsche 2002, II, § 12). Mais que veut-on dire par « commandement » ? Chez Nietzsche, le conflit est décrit comme une lutte pour imposer sa propre perspective, pour donner un sens. Ainsi on comprend également qu'il n'y ait jamais de sens en soi, mais que chaque signification, chaque but, soient, en fait, violemment assignés par une volonté de puissance, laquelle défait une interprétation antérieure: « tout assujettissement, toute domination est une réinterprétation, un réajustement, qui font nécessairement que le “sens” et la “fin” sont obscurcis ou complètement effacés » (Nietzsche 2002, II, § 12).

Mais la relation de commandement et d'obéissance, chez Nietzsche, est-elle une dialectique, similaire à celle qui existe entre maître et esclave dans la philosophie hégélienne ? Même s'il y a ici des aspects communs, les points de vue de Hegel et de Nietzsche sont tout à fait différents.

Nietzsche lui-même objecte à la démarche hégélienne qu'elle souffre d'un manque de perspective critique: au lieu d'adopter un point de vue situé en dehors de la morale, Hegel essaie de démontrer la suprématie de la morale dans le cours de l'histoire: en décrivant le progrès de l'humanité par sa conception de la « guerre » et des « grandes individualités », il conçoit « un *panthéisme* dans lequel le mal, l'erreur et la

souffrance ne sont *pas* ressentis comme des arguments contre le divin » (Nietzsche 1978, 106). D'un point de vue superficiel, on peut remarquer que les deux approches adoptent un positionnement similaire: la hiérarchie se constitue après une lutte, et non pas selon un principe transcendant – le maître devient supérieur parce qu'il vainc la conscience plus faible. La supériorité est renforcée par le fait que le maître arrive à se situer au-dessus de l'instinct biologique, de l'auto-conservation; il vainc donc, simultanément, la nature. Celui qui devient esclave, cependant, travaillera, nous l'avons vu, pour transformer les conditions naturelles afin qu'elles correspondent aux besoins de son maître. En même temps, il va essayer de justifier sa condition et de se libérer au moyen de représentations telles que les idéologies religieuses. Mais contrairement à Nietzsche, Hegel croit que le faible peut effectivement acquérir sa liberté par ce moyen idéologique.

Car le caractère pluriel de la pensée nietzschéenne est, en fait, anti-dialectique. Si, chez Hegel, la conscience la plus forte refuse d'admettre l'indépendance de celle qui obéit, mais reconnaît son existence dans le but d'être elle-même reconnue, chez Nietzsche, une volonté forte, dominatrice, n'a pas besoin d'en nier une autre, ne se définit pas en rejetant ce qui n'est pas identique à elle-même, mais en imposant son interprétation. Le rejet, la dénégation ne lui sont pas nécessaires, elle sont une suite immédiate de son existence. La dénégation est « l'agressivité nécessairement liée à une existence active, l'agressivité d'une affirmation » (Deleuze 2003, 10).

Fondée sur la contradiction et non pas sur l'affirmation de puissance, la dialectique est elle-même une force réactive<sup>11</sup>: dans le contexte de cette façon de penser, la dénégation est un élément essentiel. Ce qui s'oppose est rejeté et ce rejet précisément est l'essence de la dialectique. C'est pourquoi on ne peut pas caractériser la relation entre maître et esclave, telle qu'analysée par Nietzsche, comme une relation dialectique. Cette erreur survient seulement si on comprend mal la puissance comme représentation de la supériorité et non pas comme volonté de puissance (Nietzsche 2003, 10-11).

Quand la conscience poursuit la reconnaissance d'une autre conscience, quand elle veut être représentée comme

conscience de soi, la puissance est l'objet d'une « représentation » (Nietzsche 2003, 11), d'une « recognition » (Nietzsche 2003, 11), qui implique, pratiquement, une comparaison entre les consciences. Et en effet, « L'esclave [...] cherche à *amener par la séduction* à de bonnes opinions de soi: de même, c'est l'esclave qui ensuite se prosterne d'emblée devant ces opinions, comme s'il ne les avait pas suscitées. » (Nietzsche 2000, 261) On voit, alors, que le maître de Hegel est, en fait, un esclave. Pour Nietzsche, le maître n'a pas besoin de reconnaissance, il sait qu'il est supérieur et qu'il se distingue de l'autre simplement en s'imposant, grâce au *pathos* de la distance qui le caractérise, non pas en identifiant l'autre comme opposé et en lui déniait d'être un soi. Il ne lutte pas contre un autre, mais simplement pour montrer sa puissance, pour imposer sa perspective, pour donner un sens au monde. L'esclave est, en fait, celui-là même qui lutte contre un autre. La relation a un caractère conflictuel de son point de vue, parce qu'il se définit en se rapportant à un autre qui lui est supérieur, en l'enviant, en le haïssant, en essayant de le subjuguier à son tour dans le filet de ses interprétations réactives.

Si l'on considère le point de vue du maître, la relation de commandement et d'obéissance chez Nietzsche ne s'inscrit donc pas dans une logique de la contradiction, dans la mesure où le conflit n'est pas une simple opposition entre deux entités, mais la manière, pour une perspective, de s'imposer. Or, une telle logique de la contrariété semble, d'une manière surprenante, avoir été anticipée, à bien des égards, par Clausewitz, dans sa théorie de la guerre.

Le mérite de Clausewitz consiste à construire une théorie où la guerre est une espèce de l'état de conflit, ayant ses propres moyens et objectifs. À la différence d'autres auteurs qui, avant lui, avaient rédigé des manuels concernant les moyens et les stratégies utilisés dans la guerre, Clausewitz comprend que la pratique de la guerre ne peut être prise en compte en dehors d'une théorie de la guerre qui délimite l'espace des relations, des forces et des puissances qui interagissent.

La force, en tant que force physique exprimée par l'État, est le moyen de la guerre. En même temps, l'objet de la guerre

consiste à imposer sa propre volonté à l'ennemi. La guerre est ainsi « un acte de violence dont l'objectif est de contraindre l'adversaire à exécuter notre volonté » (Clausewitz 1955, 51). L'objectif de la guerre consiste à désarmer l'ennemi, c'est-à-dire à le laisser complètement sans défense ou à le mettre dans une situation tendant à lui faire perdre ses défenses. Les moyens utilisés afin de vaincre l'ennemi et de le désarmer consistent à détruire ses forces armées, à occuper son pays et à miner sa volonté. En même temps, une véritable guerre suppose que les acteurs étatiques adverses opposent une résistance. Par-là, elle devient une collision entre deux forces vivantes. Afin de construire sa théorie de la guerre, Clausewitz s'appuie sur la troisième loi newtonienne, le principe d'action et de réaction. Plus précisément, il reprend la loi physique pour mettre en évidence le fait que la guerre est toujours une interaction, qu'elle implique une relation de réciprocité entre les belligérants.

De plus, il observe qu'il y a trois cas d'interaction qui mènent vers trois situations extrêmes:

1. La guerre comme acte de force n'a pas de limites du point de vue de sa mise en pratique.
2. La victoire n'est jamais définitive car un ennemi qui n'est pas vaincu peut dans l'avenir devenir le vainqueur.
3. L'effort dépensé par un État pour vaincre l'ennemi est directement proportionnel à la capacité de l'ennemi à résister (à ses forces et à sa volonté).

Toutefois, Clausewitz saisit que la théorie de la guerre n'est jamais identique à la pratique de la guerre parce que la guerre se déroule toujours dans un contexte donné et que son évolution reste placée sous le signe de l'imprévisibilité. En dépit de tout savoir-faire militaire, stratégique et politique, elle reste une action, une interaction dont les résultats sont indéterminés. La guerre peut apparaître d'une manière subite et se répandre d'elle-même. En même temps, elle suppose un déploiement de forces selon les ressources nécessaires, qui sont: les forces combattantes, le pays (le territoire et la population) et les alliés.

Sans l'affirmer d'une manière explicite, Clausewitz inscrit sa compréhension de la guerre dans la tradition moderne de l'interprétation des relations internationales, c'est-à-dire dans le paradigme westphalien de l'équilibre des puissances



(pour lequel la puissance d'un État ne doit jamais dépasser la somme des puissances des autres). Ainsi, son intention consiste à souligner le fait que l'évolution de la guerre n'est pas seulement le résultat de la volonté d'un État d'en attaquer un autre, mais aussi de l'ensemble des conditions qui la favorisent (les conditions étatiques et le soutien des autres États). La coopération avec les autres États s'avère fondamentale, car elle influence d'une manière décisive l'évolution de la guerre.

La logique de la contrariété se retrouve ainsi dans ce qui se dévoile en tant qu'interaction des États, interaction qui est le plus visible pendant les guerres. Pour Clausewitz et d'ailleurs pour toute la pensée politique moderne, les États belligérants ne se trouvent jamais en relation d'opposition, mais en relation de contrariété parce que leurs intérêts restent contraires (tout ce qui dérive de la souveraineté), ce qui ne les empêche pas, de temps à autre, de décider de coopérer sur la scène internationale. D'ailleurs, l'enjeu de la guerre consiste à veiller sur l'équilibre des puissances ou à le rétablir. Pour ces raisons, une guerre moderne n'est jamais la dernière, les résultats ne sont jamais définitifs. Par conséquent, un État attaqué comprendra sa situation comme un mal toujours transitoire: cette idée se retrouvera, on l'a vu, au premier plan de la pensée nietzschéenne.

La guerre est en effet une pulsation de violence, variable dans son expression (manifestation) et, par suite, variable dans la vitesse avec laquelle elle explose et elle décharge son énergie, sa naissance et son évolution résidant quant à elles dans la volonté politique. Autrement dit, la guerre a toujours des raisons politiques (Clausewitz, 1955, 66-67). D'où l'affirmation qui a rendu Clausewitz célèbre, la guerre est la continuation de la politique par « d'autres moyens » (Clausewitz 1955, 67). Cela signifie que la guerre est un véritable instrument politique, et que, selon la célèbre dichotomie kantienne, elle est un moyen et jamais une fin en tant que telle. Même si la guerre influence ou déplace les objectifs, les buts politiques, elle peut seulement les modifier. Puisqu'elle dépend de raisons politiques, la guerre n'est jamais identique à une autre guerre. Les guerres diffèrent les unes des autres selon leur nature, leurs raisons et les contextes qui les provoquent.

En tant que phénomène, la guerre suppose le mélange de trois types d'éléments qui forment une trinité paradoxale. Il

s'agit d'une violence primordiale, de la haine et de l'inimitié, lesquelles dérivent d'une force naturelle aveugle. En cela, Clausewitz semble assumer la tradition politique moderne des théories de l'état de nature. Pour Hobbes, Locke et Rousseau, dans l'état de nature, tout individu peut exercer sa force à son gré sans se soucier de la sécurité des autres, ou plus précisément, en menaçant la sécurité des autres. L'état de guerre reste placé sous le signe d'une sociabilité négative (rivalité, défiance, hostilité), où la guerre, comme situation de conflit, est toujours imminente. La solution destinée à assurer la protection des individus consiste dans la mise en commun des volontés et des intérêts, c'est-à-dire dans la création de l'État. Par suite, l'État devient l'expression de la sécurité, la garantie de la sécurité. Pourtant, l'État n'élimine pas complètement la guerre de la vie des individus (il subsiste les guerres civiles, les guerres interétatiques, etc.), mais du moins il diminue la possibilité de sa manifestation. Fondamentalement, le potentiel du conflit demeure dans la nature humaine. C'est à cause de cela que la guerre ne pourra jamais être éliminée d'une manière définitive ou perpétuelle. Mais ce qui est valable pour l'État et l'exercice de la souveraineté, ne coïncide pas avec la manière dont fonctionnent, quant à elles, les relations internationales. En effet, les États se comportent les uns envers les autres comme les individus dans l'état de nature. L'hostilité imminente, le potentiel guerrier des interactions étatiques reproduisent les relations des individus au sein de l'état de nature. Dès lors, chaque guerre présuppose un degré considérable de chance et de probabilité qui permet à l'esprit créateur de se révéler. La guerre est caractérisée par la subordination de tous les intérêts particuliers à la politique et aux intérêts de l'État.

De tout cela résulte que la guerre est un phénomène exerçant, d'une manière complexe, des influences de nature civile, militaire et politique sur les États impliqués. La guerre n'est pas faite exclusivement par l'armée (qui se confronte au combat avec l'armée adverse), mais aussi par les citoyens et le gouvernement. La guerre devient ainsi un des moyens politiques où tous les éléments dérivant des rapports de souveraineté (le gouvernement, les citoyens aux noms desquels s'exerce la souveraineté et l'armée qui assure la protection

extérieure) s'engagent d'une manière totale. D'où, chez Clausewitz, une vision englobante de la guerre, vision qui, si elle n'est pas donnée chez lui au départ (puisque la guerre n'est qu'un moyen de la politique), se déploie cependant à l'arrivée, et cadre assez bien avec la perspective ouverte par une « ontologie du conflit ».

### III. Logique de la différence

Sur le troisième plan où l'on puisse traiter du conflit, la notion de différence entre en jeu. Gilles Deleuze appelle sa philosophie de la différence « empirisme transcendantal ». Dans *Différence et répétition* et *Logique du sens*, il essaie de prendre l'empirisme comme point de départ pour montrer qu'on est directement et nécessairement conduit, par cet empirisme, vers un domaine transcendantal: « précisément il n'y a que l'empirisme qui sache dépasser les dimensions expérimentales du visible sans tomber dans les Idées, et traquer, invoquer, peut-être produire un fantôme à la limite d'une expérience allongée, dépliée » (Deleuze 1969, 32). C'est justement par cette méthode qu'il découvre un nouveau champ transcendantal, la totalité virtuelle des singularités-événements qui constituent la condition nécessaire de tous les objets de notre expérience. Et c'est aussi par cette méthode qu'il introduit la notion de différence comme langage alternatif de tous les conflits. Deleuze dit que la tâche aujourd'hui est de produire le sens (Deleuze 1969, 90-91), et il nous donne à cet égard un très bel exemple, qui concerne justement le conflit ou la guerre. On ne peut libérer le sens éternel que « par la volonté qu'elle [la bataille] inspire elle-même à l'anonyme, volonté qu'il faut bien appeler "d'indifférence" dans un soldat mortel blessé qui n'est plus ni brave ni lâche et ne peut plus être vainqueur ni vaincu, tellement au-delà, se tenant là où se tient l'Événement, participant ainsi de sa terrible impassibilité (Deleuze 1969, 122) ».

Le soldat faisant face à la mort n'a pas d'ennemis. Dans la bataille, il a perdu – ainsi que les autres – son identité, et le philosophe discerne ici un domaine où l'identité et la contradiction sont remplacées par la différence et la répétition. Mais pourquoi parle-t-on de « différence » s'il y a – dans l'événement de la bataille – quelque chose qui rapproche notre soldat de ses adversaires ? Parce que l'événement de la bataille

en tant que « thème complexe » (Deleuze 1993, 202), à savoir le sens de la scène contenant le soldat blessé et ses adversaires, est « le double différenciant des significations d'une part et des états de choses d'autre part » (Zourabichvili 2003, 38). Ce primat de l'événement chez Deleuze découle de la méthode mentionnée plus haut. L'empirisme comme point de départ signifie qu'il faut penser notre expérience « réelle », c'est-à-dire l'expérience dans sa singularité. Puisque toutes les choses font partie d'un « devenir-fou qui ne s'arrête jamais » (Deleuze 1969, 9), la philosophie doit créer sans cesse ses concepts, doit correspondre à des événements. Ses notions transcendantales ne sont pas plus larges que le conditionné. Pour qu'on puisse suffisamment expliquer des objets de notre expérience, toutes les différences les plus subtiles de l'expérience – à savoir, en l'occurrence, la scène singulière avec un soldat blessé dans une bataille –, il faut entrer dans le lieu de la métaphysique deleuzienne, dans le champ virtuel des singularités qui constituent des configurations toujours spécifiques derrière notre expérience. Ce qui se répète, ce qui est toujours derrière notre expérience réelle, c'est la différence, ses configurations différentes:

*La différence n'est pas le divers. Le divers est donné. Mais la différence, c'est ce par quoi le donné est donné. C'est ce par quoi le donné est donné comme divers. La différence n'est pas le phénomène, mais le plus proche noumène du phénomène. [...] Toute diversité, tout changement renvoient à une différence qui en est la raison suffisante. Tout ce qui se passe et qui apparaît est corrélatif d'ordres de différences: différence de niveau, de température, de pression, de tension, de potentiel, différence d'intensité [nous soulignons]. (Deleuze 1968, 286)*

Pourtant, le conflit n'a pas disparu: la différence deleuzienne ne constitue qu'un principe dernier d'explication du donné qui est donné comme divers, de sorte qu'un conflit de  $n$  entités est toujours actuel. De temps en temps, il nous faut réellement combattre pour protéger notre façon de vivre, comme le rappelait Schmitt. Deleuze et Guattari – d'un point de vue général – mettent cette manière d'exister de chaque vivant en relief dans *Mille plateaux*. Ils soulignent le fait que l'homme est exposé (plus que l'animal) aux situations catastrophiques, qu'il est toujours menacé et qu'il reconstruit son rapport au

monde en alternant les processus de déterritorialisation et de reterritorialisation (Deleuze et Guattari 1980, 381-433). Néanmoins, il ne nous faut pas combattre pour nous définir. Notre identité prend sa source dans un sens inconscient compris comme « thème complexe », qui nous rapproche au contraire de nos adversaires: « les conflits sont la résultante de mécanismes différentiels autrement subtils (déplacements et déguisements). Et si les *forces* entrent naturellement dans des rapports d'opposition, c'est à partir d'éléments différentiels exprimant une instance plus profonde. » (Deleuze 1993, 140) Dès lors, si le conflit suppose, en arrière ou en amont de lui, une « instance plus profonde », c'est le mouvement de celle-ci, comme différence non plus donnée, mais à faire, qui demande à être ressaisi par la « logique du conflit ».

#### IV. Conclusion

L'ambition philosophique d'appliquer à l'ensemble de la réalité l'extension de la notion de conflit, c'est-à-dire, proprement, de forger une ontologie du conflit, peut donc prendre trois directions bien distinctes, entre lesquelles il importe de décider, et qui composent les trois « logiques du conflit » que nous avons décrites.

De la première, l'acquis positif semble être, d'une manière incontestable, l'idée que la pensée, en tant que telle, contient des termes inconciliables, sans pour autant cesser d'être la pensée, de sorte qu'une certaine conflictualité est inhérente à l'essence de celle-ci, et qu'il y a, comme Kant l'avait pressenti avant Hegel, opposition foncière entre des thèses que, pourtant, la raison ne peut pas ne pas soutenir en suivant le mouvement même de son exercice. De la deuxième logique, il résulte la conclusion d'après laquelle l'histoire des hommes est, non pas un procès unifié se développant dans une direction unique, mais une série ou un ensemble, intotalisable, d'affrontements entre groupements de puissance rivaux, tantôt inédits, tantôt similaires entre eux, visant à se subordonner les uns aux autres, c'est-à-dire à se donner, les uns aux autres, le sens d'une fonction (interprétation). Et le conflit n'est pas essentiellement tourné vers sa résolution, d'où il résulte qu'il n'est pas nécessairement lutte à mort, puisque ce qui est visé par les

parties, c'est avant tout l'inféodation des unes aux autres, pour une durée indéfinie (les forces subsistent, même si les édifices pulsionnels qu'elles composent sont transitoires). Mais surtout, la logique de la différence nous enseigne que le conflit ne contient pas nécessairement deux termes, ni un nombre assignable de termes, mais peut contenir  $n$  termes, et que les termes entrant en conflit ne sont plus pourvus, chacun pour son compte, d'une identité (deux conséquences qu'on pouvait déjà tirer, jusqu'à un certain point, de la logique de la contrariété, et dont les implications politiques sont aussi peu intuitives que fascinantes). Qui plus est, puisque la différence en question n'est pas différence entre des termes (fussent-ils en relation, fussent-ils même subordonnés, comme c'est le cas chez Nietzsche, à la relation), mais différence à *faire*, c'est-à-dire *acte* ou *processus* de différenciation, alors le conflit lui-même, d'une manière tout à fait inattendue et surprenante, cesse d'être un certain type de *mise en rapport*, pour devenir, au contraire, une production de rapports, dont le modèle ou la figure première serait moins à chercher dans les guerres que dans la création d'institutions, si du moins toute création institutionnelle est, du fait de sa nature toujours différentielle, contestation d'institutions déjà présentes.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Les précédentes analyses constituent une première version, plus ancienne et plus ramassée, d'un article écrit par Oriane Petteni, « Le Narrateur kafkaïen ou la conscience malheureuse en régime hégélien » (Petteni 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Sur le mutisme que l'expérience de la Première guerre mondiale a occasionné, voir Walter Benjamin, *Expérience et pauvreté* (1933), in *Expérience et pauvreté, suivi de Le conteur et La tâche du traducteur*.

<sup>3</sup> Voir notamment « Les guerres du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle et le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle comme guerre », in *Essais hérétiques sur la philosophie de l'histoire*.

<sup>4</sup> Pour une clarification du rapport entre l'*agôn* nietzschéen et le monde grec, on renverra au texte de Rossella Fabbrichesi « Agone nietzscheano », in (Fabbrichesi 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Weil, Simone (sous le pseudonyme d'Émile Novis), « L'*Illiade* ou le poème de la force », in *Les Cahiers du Sud*, Marseille, décembre 1940-janvier 1941, repris in Weil (1999, 529).

<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche connaissait bien la figure du lion, et bien l'*Illiade* elle-même. En 1869 il a donné une conférence à l'Université de Bâle sous le titre « Homère et la philologie classique ».

<sup>7</sup> Dans le texte de 1870, Nietzsche distingue entre « bonne et mauvaise Éris ». La bonne Éris est présente dans la tragédie avant Euripide, et dans le drame musical ancien. La mauvaise Éris est la transformation de la lutte des forces dionysiaques en dialogue, en dialectique, en dispute verbale.

<sup>8</sup> « Mais qu'y a-t-il *derrière* le monde homérique et qui soit la matrice de tout ce qui est grec ? »

<sup>9</sup> « Le sol fécond d'où seul peut surgir une quelconque humanité ».

<sup>10</sup> « "Il y a sur terre *deux* déesses Éris." C'est l'une des pensées grecques les plus remarquables et digne déjà d'être inscrite, à l'intention du visiteur, au fronton de l'éthique grecque. "La première Éris, l'homme sensé devrait la louer, autant qu'il devrait blâmer la seconde, car ces deux déesses ont des tournures d'âme tout à fait opposées. L'une fomente male Guerre et Dissension, la cruelle ! Nul mortel n'aime à la subir, mais c'est sous le joug de la nécessité qu'on honore l'Éris au lourd fardeau, suivant le décret des Immortels. C'est elle la plus ancienne qui mit au monde la noire Nuit. Mais l'autre, Zeus, le tout-puissant, l'a placée aux racines de la terre et parmi les hommes car elle est bien meilleure. C'est elle qui pousse au travail même l'homme malhabile; ainsi, celui qui ne possède rien fixe-t-il ses regards sur celui qui est riche et se hâte-t-il, en l'imitant, de semer, de planter et de bien tenir sa maison; le voisin rivalise avec le voisin qui aspire au bien-être. Cette Éris est bonne pour les hommes ».

<sup>11</sup> Au sujet de la dialectique socratique: « L'ironie de Socrate est-elle une expression de révolte ? du *ressentiment* [en français dans le texte] de la plèbe ? [...] Le dialecticien abandonne à son adversaire la charge de prouver qu'il n'est pas un idiot: il le fait entrer en fureur, et il le laisse en même temps désemparé. [...] La dialectique n'est-elle chez Socrate qu'une forme de *vengeance* ? » (Nietzsche 2005, §7)

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**Cristiana Asavoai** est doctorante en philosophie à l'Université « Alexandru Ioan Cuza » de Iasi. E-mail: [cristiana\\_asv@yahoo.com](mailto:cristiana_asv@yahoo.com).

**Anna Bonalume** est doctorante en philosophie à l'École Normale Supérieure de Paris. E-mail: [anna.bnl63@gmail.com](mailto:anna.bnl63@gmail.com).

**Arnaud François** est docteur en philosophie et actuellement professeur à l'Université de Poitiers, Département de Philosophie. E-mail: [arnaud.francois01@univ-poitiers.fr](mailto:arnaud.francois01@univ-poitiers.fr).

**Diana Margarit** a un doctorat en sciences politiques et, en ce moment, elle est chargée de cours à l'Université « Alexandru Ioan Cuza », département de sciences politiques, relations internationales et études européennes. E-mail: [margaritdiana@yahoo.fr](mailto:margaritdiana@yahoo.fr).

**Oriane Petteni** est doctorante en philosophie à l'Université de Liège. E-mail: [opetteni@ulg.ac.be](mailto:opetteni@ulg.ac.be).

**Petr Prášek** est doctorant en philosophie (co-tutelle) à l'Université Charles de Prague et l'Université Panthéon-Sorbonne. E-mail: [petrprasek@email.cz](mailto:petrprasek@email.cz).

**Ovidiu Stanciu** est docteur en philosophie de l'Université de Bourgogne et de l'Université de Wuppertal. Il organise actuellement des séminaires de théorie politique à Sciences Po, Paris. E-mail : [ovidstanciu@gmail.com](mailto:ovidstanciu@gmail.com).

# **Book Reviews**

***Fait et fiction* ou comment souscrire à un  
différentialisme modéré au nom de l'amour  
désintéressé pour la fiction**

Alina Silvana Felea  
Transylvania University of Brasov

Françoise Lavocat, *Fait et fiction. Pour une frontière*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2016

**Keywords:** fact and fiction, possible worlds, hybridization, ontological borders of fiction

Françoise Lavocat, professeur de littérature comparée à l'Université Paris 3-Sorbonne nouvelle, est non seulement un spécialiste en théories de la fiction mais aussi une voix claire, aux tonalités parfois dissidentes (comme l'auteur lui-même le reconnaît) qui s'est fait entendre au fil du temps dans ce domaine qui n'est pas du tout commode. Fascinant oui, mais aussi un champ épineux par ses discontinuités, ses contradictions théoriques et, de plus, confronté à une massive intrusion de la culture populaire qui semble la confisquer à son gré. On dit aussi que la vie elle-même se baigne dans la fiction... Alors, parler de la fiction est toujours une mission difficile. On pense s'adresser aux spécialistes, aux nostalgiques d'une culture traditionnelle du livre qui, disant fiction, disent en fait roman, aux internautes avides des jeux vidéo, aux spectateurs de *Matrix* ou de séries télévisées ? On ne peut oublier personne, puisque la fiction fait partie de leur vie, de notre vie. La fiction est essentiellement hétérogène, a un public hétérogène, par conséquent réfléchir sur le sujet de la fiction implique aussi réunir des éléments hétérogènes. C'est une dimension visible

du livre de Françoise Lavocat qui adopte courageusement des enjeux poétiques, historiques, culturels, anthropologiques, psychologiques et cognitifs, mais aussi politiques et légaux sur la fiction.

Structuré en trois parties, *Monismes contre dualismes, Cultures et croyances* et *D'un monde l'autre*, l'ouvrage *Fait et fiction* nous offre une image très complète du paysage tourmenté de la fiction vue en pratique et en théorie, en diachronie et en synchronie, « d'un point de vue aussi bien interne qu'externe ». Mais ce livre ne nous apparaît pas comme un autre ouvrage sur le sujet général de la fiction; il s'agit plus précisément des frontières de la fiction qui ont besoin « d'une apologie » et qui doivent être repensées; des critères de distinction entre factuel et fictionnel aussi, puisqu'ils ne sont plus « totalement opérants » (p.18). Pour cette raison, Françoise Lavocat se propose de « redessiner les contours de la fictionnalité » (p.19) en montrant « l'existence et la nécessité cognitive, conceptuelle et politique des frontières de la fiction » (p.12). Elle veut démontrer que ces frontières n'ont pas disparu ! Lavocat souligne en même temps les tentations des franchissements de ces frontières, une réalité que personne ne peut ignorer d'autant plus qu'une bonne partie du plaisir de la consommation des fictions réside justement dans la transgression des frontières. Ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'on n'est plus ou qu'on ne doit plus être conscient de l'existence de ceux-ci. La dissolution du factuel dans le fictionnel et du fictionnel dans le factuel est dangereuse tant pour l'existence de la fiction que pour la réalité même.

La proposition terminologique de l'auteur, pour désigner, d'une part, la perspective qui accepte la différence entre fait et fiction (il s'agit du point de vue qui se constitue comme la thèse du livre) et, d'autre part, la perspective qui, au contraire, ne reconnaît pas cette différence ou la nie est: « différentialisme » vs. « monisme ». La paire conceptuelle vient remplacer celle proposée en 1988 par Thomas Pavel, « ségrégationnisme » vs « intégrationnisme ».

La première partie qui oppose monismes aux dualismes, examine la notion de *storytelling* (qui semble concurrencer sérieusement aujourd'hui celle de fiction) et mettent face à face

et parfois dos à dos des théoriciens et des théories qui ont offert des points de vue célèbres, connus et cités par chaque spécialiste en théories de la fiction. Françoise Lavocat regarde ces théories « de haute volée » (p.522) sans inhibition et sans être accablée par l'argument de l'autorité. La proposition logico-linguistique de Käte Hamburger, par exemple, mérite toute son attention. Lavocat démonte quelques-unes des critiques contre la théorie des indices internes de la fictionnalité, même si elle observe la « monodisciplinarité anachronique » des thèses différentialistes inspirées de Hamburger (p.44). Pourtant elle trouve totalement injuste la « victoire de la perspective pragmatique » de John Searle et de Gérard Genette sur la perspective textuelle de Hamburger et déclare qu'il est étonnant ce large accord avec la « contre-vérité » searlienne concernant l'absence « de tout critère interne de fictionnalité » (p.40). Lavocat ne rejette pas le point de vue pragmatique, mais elle voit comme absolument nécessaire la mise en équilibre de toute perspective externe, soit-elle pragmatique, culturelle ou d'autre nature avec une perspective interne qui prend en considération les indices internes de fictionnalité, surtout d'un point de vue diachronique et comparatif.

L'histoire, d'autre part, est l'un des « faits » et le contrepoint de la fiction établi et imposé par la *Poétique* d'Aristote dans l'histoire culturelle occidentale. Mais entre les années 1960 et 1980 la célèbre distinction fiction-histoire était contestée de toute force par Roland Barthes, Hayden White, Paul Ricœur, Paul Veyne. L'hypothèse de Lavocat est que « l'articulation de ces deux idées – l'historicité de la notion de fiction et la fictionnalité de l'histoire – advenue dans les années 1970 dans le contexte plus général du *linguistic turn*, a été l'opérateur principal de la mise en question intellectuelle de la frontière entre fait et fiction » (pp.523-524). C'est la thèse que soutient aujourd'hui Françoise Lavocat et qui était à l'époque combattue mais non sans surprises. White, par exemple, plaidait pour l'indistinction entre fait et fiction « sans cesser de la réaffirmer dans les termes les plus traditionnels » (p.60). De plus, il confondait fictionnalité et littérarité et « abusait » du concept forme-sens. Les thèses de Ricœur et White sont comparées et Lavocat trouve les idées de Ricœur plus attractives et

l'argument cognitif de Ricoeur « plus efficace » que celui de White. Il ne s'agit pas pourtant d'un parti pris, l'auteur de *Fait et fiction* remarquant par exemple que le corpus romanesque sur lequel travaille Ricoeur est assez modeste et nous nous demandons alors si les conclusions du philosophe ont une base assez large pour être prises à la lettre. Mais L'avocat nous rassure, au-delà du corpus choisi par Ricoeur, que bien d'autres œuvres vérifient ses thèses. Plus originale encore est la comparaison de White avec La Mothe Le Vayer pour constater « l'ambiguïté définitive des mots de « fable » et de « fiction » très opératoire au XVII-ème siècle comme au XX-ème siècle » (p.107). Les lecteurs du livre de Lavocat peuvent ainsi bénéficier de son expertise en littérature du XVIIème siècle ainsi que de ses connaissances approfondies en théories de la fiction. « Les parallèles défamiliarisants » qu'elle nous promettait dans l'introduction se retrouvent tout au long de son livre en nous offrant des perspectives inédites sur le sujet. Quant à la proximité longuement discutée et débattue de la fiction à l'histoire, Lavocat a une autre opinion que celle canonique: on ne doit pas être convaincu par la subordination de la fiction à l'histoire mais, au contraire, il s'agit de « l'annexion, sous diverses formes, de l'histoire par la fiction » (p.109). En tout cas, « la confusion sereine de l'histoire et de la fiction est un âge d'or déjà révolu » (p.110), remarque Françoise Lavocat.

Une autre source de confusion concernant à la distinction entre le réel et la fiction, la pensée lacanienne, est traitée avec prudence par l'auteur de *Fait et fiction*. Françoise Lavocat observe que Bentham a inspiré Lacan et Lacan, à son tour, a influencé la théorie littéraire. C'était un processus générant « de fortes distorsions » (p.120), puisqu'on est arrivé à l'idée « de l'impossibilité du réel » (le titre du troisième chapitre de cette première partie du livre). Mais en général Lacan ne fait pas l'objet d'une critique très poussée, ce sont plutôt les théories de la simulation dans le cadre de la perspective cognitive qui suit à la psychanalyse lacanienne. Ces théories effacent purement et simplement l'opposition entre fait et fiction, une idée avec laquelle Lavocat ne peut pas être d'accord. La pluralité des points de vue sur la fiction d'une perspective cognitive créent d'autres confusions, d'autant plus que ces

points de vue se trouvent en divergence. Pourtant, Lavocat a trouvé, parmi ces approches de type cognitiviste, des arguments puissants pour soutenir sa thèse différentialiste: « nous possédons un équipement cognitif pour distinguer le réel et l'imaginaire, même s'il est imparfait » (p.155).

La deuxième partie du livre présentent les fictions du point de vue culturel, répondant par des arguments solides offerts à la question si la culture occidentale a assuré le règne de la fiction surtout au XIX-ème et au XX-ème siècle. Peut-on donc parler d'un âge d'or de la fictionnalité, situable très précisément dans une période et dans un lieu ? C'est le moment aussi pour Françoise Lavocat de parler d'autres « bornes » que les croyances, les lois civiles, la culture cybernétique, « l'humanisation du personnage » ont établi et continuent d'établir délibérément ou pas à la fiction. En utilisant un exemple très intéressant et exotique pour les lecteurs peu familiers aux cultures non occidentales, plus précisément le célèbre roman japonais de l'an mille *Dit du Genji*, Françoise Lavocat ne veut pas prouver que la conscience de la fictionnalité est universelle. Tout au contraire ! La perspective anthropologique (ici l'auteur recourt aux ouvrages des anthropologues célèbres tels que Jack Goody et Carlo Severi pour trouver ses arguments) nous montre qu'il y a des contextes culturels où on ne fait pas à vrai dire des distinctions entre ce que nous appelons « réalité » ou « fiction ». La culture Aranda est un exemple. Pour les cultures rituelles donc, « la narrativité est presque absente » (p.212) et on ne peut pas parler de la fiction. Mais le roman le *Dit du Genji* est un exemple utile à soutenir une autre idée, celle de « la possibilité, dans des conditions sociales, religieuses et culturelles particulières, de l'expression d'une intelligence exceptionnelle de la fictionnalité » (p.200). Loin d'être une invention de la modernité occidentale, la fiction a une longue histoire que l'auteur ne se propose pas de retracer. Françoise L'avocat reconnaît que si elle avait eu choisi une autre aire culturelle, l'histoire aurait probablement été différente. Pourtant, les observations générales mais vérifiables conduisent à l'idée que la fiction a une histoire « polyculturelle », diverse, accidentée, où cohabitent « selon des arrangements divers,

plusieurs formes de monismes et de différentialismes. Il n'y a jamais eu de culture de la fictionnalité homogène » (p.202).

Une des « bornes » de la fiction serait la croyance, compte tenu du fait que la fiction a toujours eu une relation problématique avec la foi religieuse. Françoise Lavocat souligne un aspect important: dans les cultures très religieuses il n'y a pas un intérêt visible, évident pour les fictions. L'attraction exercée par les fictions dans les cultures non religieuses ou peu religieuses dénote-t-elle le besoin de suppléer un manque ? S'agit-il de « notre propension atavique à la crédulité ? » ou, au contraire, les fictions apparaissent comme « des anticorps » contre les doctrines et les croyances ? (p.223). L'hypothèse de Françoise Lavocat est d'autre nature et réussit à mettre en relation (même s'il s'agit d'une relation « épineuse ») fiction et foi religieuse: « les fictions opèrent une « mise en jeu » des croyances » (p.224). L'idée originale de Lavocat est que les cultures de la fictionnalité ne déterminent pas une suspension de l'incrédulité, ou de la croyance, conformément à la célèbre formule de Coleridge, maintes fois reprise, mais « de notre impulsion à l'action » (p.527). La question de l'action engagée ou pas par la fiction est l'une des plus problématiques dans l'ouvrage *Fait et fiction*. L'auteur accepte l'idée d'une capacité modélisatrice de la fiction – idée « minorée » par les théoriciens de la fiction (p.172) – efficacité par laquelle la fiction peut ainsi influencer « notre appréhension du monde et notre façon d'y être » (p.526) mais non la possibilité réelle d'agir ou de « bouleverser de façon radicale nos systèmes de valeurs » (p.527). « Le jeu de la fiction – disait d'autre part Lavocat – implique sur le plan cognitif une inhibition et même une frustration de l'action » (p.53). Sans réfuter les effets de la fiction sur le monde, l'auteur se pose ou plutôt pose la question rhétorique si « l'idée même de fictionnalité ne s'évanouit-elle pas lorsque l'intérêt tout entier est aimanté par la vie, l'expérience, la réalité, le politique et l'histoire ? » (p.185). Décidément, pour Françoise Lavocat « action et fiction sont incompatibles » (p.217) ! Mais ne peut-on pas se poser le problème si les effets de la fiction et sa capacité modélisatrice ne représentent pas des formes de l'action ?! Ou peut-être un type de réaction qui s'oppose à la passivité représentant



l'antipode de l'action ? On peut quand même comprendre le refus de Lavocat d'accorder à la fiction le privilège d'une action quelconque sur le monde: indirectement un tel compromis représenterait l'acceptation d'une thèse contraire à celle qu'elle soutient, c'est à dire la thèse du brouillage des frontières, du mélange de la fiction à la réalité.

Françoise Lavocat nous révèle, toujours dans la deuxième partie de son livre, des affinités entre la trilogie de Wachowski, *Matrix* et la littérature du XVII-ème siècle. Elle observe des ressemblances en ce qui concerne une certaine utilisation de l'allégorie, de la mythologie gréco-latine ou de l'histoire chrétienne. Au-delà de l'inédit de ce parallèle qui met face à face une production cinématographique de succès de nos jours et la culture littéraire occidentale du XVII-ème siècle, Lavocat n'accepte pas sans discussions la canonisation de ce film dans le milieu académique. Elle souligne non seulement les contradictions de *Matrix* qui, à vrai dire, n'ont pas échappé aux commentateurs qui les ont considérées « inessentielles », mais aussi le fait important que toutes ces analyses « mettent entre parenthèses » justement la fictionnalité (p.240).

Un autre sujet d'actualité est aussi la question du blasphème par laquelle la loi ou les conceptions morales cherchent à imposer des frontières à la fiction. Qu'on ne doute pas, « loin d'être une « zone de non-droit » (p.276), la fiction est le lieu d'une négociation constante » entre la protection de la vie privée et la liberté d'expression.

Et bien sûr les références à l'univers virtuel ne pouvaient pas manquer dans ce bilan très scrupuleux de l'état de la fiction d'aujourd'hui, d'autant plus qu'on se demande s'il s'agit-il de « pure fiction » ou d'activité « interférant avec le réel ? » (p.297). Pour répondre à la question si les réalités virtuelles représentent une autre « dimension ontologique », Françoise Lavocat reprend les distinctions établies par Roger Caillois entre les différentes catégories de jeux. Sa conclusion est qu'on ne peut pas confondre la fiction et le jeu. Si on doit accepter le fait que les jeux vidéo sont des fictions, on doit aussi accepter l'évidence qu'il s'agit des fictions « de façon fondamentalement différentes des fictions littéraires, cinématographiques et théâtrales » (p.336).

Enfin, de cette énumération des « bornes » de la fictionnalité, il ne pouvait pas manquer le personnage, cette « forme élémentaire », « cette molécule de la fiction susceptible de contaminer le réel par le vertu un peu trouble de l'identification » (p. 353). Une analyse des concepts d'identification et d'empathie (qu'on doit se garder de ne pas confondre) et de leur opérativité est considérée nécessaire pour « une appréhension renouvelée du personnage fictionnel » (p.348).

La troisième partie de l'ouvrage, *D'un monde l'autre*, est celle où Françoise Lavocat nous présente sa propre perspective qui est, on peut déjà le supposer, à contre-courant. Parce que l'ontologie « n'a pas bonne presse » aujourd'hui, même si tout indique qu'il s'agit du point de vue « qui coïncide le mieux avec le moment historique dans lequel nous nous trouvons » (p.374), elle ne refuse pas « l'héritage aristotélien » et ne renie ni la perspective pragmatique ni celle cognitive. Toutefois ce qu'elle affirme avec conviction n'est pas le truisme que tout l'Occident soutient. Il est du domaine de l'évidence que la fiction est un monde ! « Mais on oublie souvent – dit Lavocat – que ce sont ses limites qui constituent un monde » (p.373). Difficile à naviguer dans ces eaux troubles contemporaines, entre « un panfictionnalisme néosceptique » et « un panfactualisme diffus ». Les arguments de Françoise Lavocat en faveur de l'existence d'une frontière entre fait et fiction sont sélectionnés des aires et des époques culturelles diverses, des supports médiatiques différents. Et on ne peut pas oublier les théories des mondes possibles de Saul Kripke, Nicholas Rescher, Alvin Plantinga et aussi les théories de la signification de Hilary Putnam, Keith Donnellan et le même Saul Kripke, invoquées également à l'appui de sa thèse. La contribution originale de Françoise Lavocat est sa proposition théorique concernant la façon de référer pour une fiction – puisque on ne peut pas parler des mondes possibles sans inclure dans la discussion la question de la référence. Il s'agit de trois façons: « la référence extrafictionnelle (la dénotation), la référence inter-fictionnelle (par la citation, la transfictionnalité, l'intertextualité) et la référence intra-fictionnelle » (p.390). La position qu'elle défend « ne fait pas l'unanimité ». A l'exception de Terence Parsons, Thomas Pavel et Richard Saint-Gelais « rares sont – dit Françoise Lavocat –

les chercheurs qui admettent la thèse de l'hétérogénéité référentielle de la fiction » (p.410). Nécessaire est aussi l'élucidation de la thèse de la fiction comme monde actuel, tout comme la question philosophique du possible. Finalement, il n'est pas sans importance que les réflexions du dernier chapitre concernent la métalepse. Parce que la problématique des frontières de la fiction est en directe relation avec la présence de la métalepse dans le discours critique. L'observation que l'auteur fait: « si l'hybridation du fictionnel et du factuel dissipe indéniablement le choc de la métalepse, la perception de l'hétérogénéité ontologique ne disparaît pas » (p.493) ne concerne seulement la métalepse mais la fiction elle-même.

Selon le propre aveu que Françoise Lavocat fait dans les conclusions du livre, c'étaient un amour désintéressé et son « goût pour la fiction » qui l'ont engagée « à défendre ses frontières » (p.521). Une déclaration surprenante si on reste dans le cadre étroit et traditionnel d'une conception de l'amour épidermique, refusant toute possibilité d'explication, un amour qui se vit seulement, sans distance critique. D'autre part, c'est parfaitement plausible de voir en palimpseste l'image d'un théoricien lucide et en même temps participant avec affectivité à cette construction de l'intellect. Il s'agit, probablement, d'une des meilleures modalités de combattre cette « anthropologie sceptique » de nos jours qui relativise jusqu'à la négation les distinctions entre artéfacts factuels et artéfacts fictionnels. *Fait et fiction* nous offre un voyage passionnant non pas dans le monde de la fiction, mais dans le monde de ses frontières entre la littérature, le cinéma, les jeux vidéo, grâce à un regard comparatif et croisé sur les périodes pré- et post-modernes.

**Address:**

Alina-Silvana Felea  
Université « Transilvania » de Brasov  
Bd. Eroilor no. 29  
500030 Brasov, Roumanie  
E-mail: [afelea@yahoo.com](mailto:afelea@yahoo.com)

## La philosophie comme *topos* des questions

Petru Bejan  
Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi

Liviu Petcu, *Les fenêtres de la pensée philosophique et théologique contemporaine*. Iași: Editura Fundației Academice Axis, 2015

**Keywords:** philosophy as topos, reading, writing, reception

Les herméneutiques récentes nous suggèrent presque de manière stéréotypée que les problèmes du lecteur sont liées soit à la compréhension, soit à l'interprétation, les deux possibilités étant mobilisées pour « révéler » un sens camouflé dans la « trame » discursive indiquée par l'auteur. L'aventure de la recherche du sens peut être expliquée par association avec les mécanismes de la digestion. Il est important qu'on aime un texte, qu'il suscite l'intérêt ou la curiosité, pour l'effriter, le mâcher, l'ingérer et l'assimiler ultérieurement. Par une alchimie miraculeuse, sa substance noétique – si elle existe – subit une transformation dans le dispositif réceptif du lecteur, tout en l'enrichissant.

On peut déduire de ce qui précède que l'exercice de la performance textuelle est une affaire de... l'estomac. Une « physiologie » prolongée de la lecture faut-il à tout hasard accorder de l'attention égale aux poumons, aux organes de la respiration? On ne dit pas souvent qu'un texte captivant se lit « à bout de souffle »? Ou qu'un autre est ... aéré et plaisant? Ou que beaucoup d'autres – disgracieux stylistiquement, obscurcis sous la pression de sa propre densité, inintelligibles en contenu – semblent « suffoquer » le lecteur, impression traduite, typiquement, en termes de

malaise aigu. Nous sommes suffoqués par le surplus d'information, par la précarité de la logique de l'argumentation, par la fragilité de la construction narrative, par la préciosité du vocabulaire ou, par contre, par son platitude ou par sa vulgarité. Nous prétendons, en contrepartie, aux textes d'être « parfumés » stylistiquement, agréables et accessibles, favorables à la compréhension immédiate, mais aussi à la bonne humeur intellectuelle.

« Le fond » de l'acte de philosopher entre ainsi en désaccord évident avec même sa forme. Le siècle qui vient de passer nous offre de nombreux exemples. Dans sa *Condition postmoderne*, Jean-François Lyotard annonçait l'abandon des « grands narrations », des systèmes philosophiques, des constructions théoriques imposantes et rigides. Le temps des traités surdimensionnés, conçus « géométriquement », conformément aux canons de la logique impeccable, semble avoir été dépassé. Le texte lui-même est reconsidéré, pas autant en ce qui concerne la consistance conceptuelle, comme le vêtement qu'il pourrait porter. D'où le soin pour le style ou la tentation de diversifier les manières d'écrire et de philosopher.

Existe-t-il une forme optimale de l'écriture philosophique et laquelle? Le traité, l'essai, le texte ample, solidement argumenté, le fragment minimaliste – comme on l'a cru à une certaine époque? Si on regardait rétrospectivement, on constaterait que la postmodernité n'a rien inventé à propos des modèles discursifs utilisés. Les présocratiques, par exemple, philosophaient en vers; Platon préférait des duels dialogiques, et le Stagirite agréait plutôt la sobriété et l'austérité des concepts. Les « Modernes » (Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Hume, Locke, Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte...) procédaient « méthodiquement », en systématisant leur idées selon des critères considérés comme « rationnels ». Augustin, l'évêque d'Hippone, a écrit des traités théologiques et philosophiques, des *Soliloques* (des conversations avec soi-même) et aussi des proses autobiographiques en forme confessive. Descartes, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot préféreraient parfois la manière épistolaire de communiquer et compatible avec la

distance. Des *Confessions* a laissé Jean-Jacques Rousseau, des journaux – Kierkegaard et Sartre, des aphorismes et conversations philosophiques – Schopenhauer, des essais - Nietzsche, des lettres – Heidegger, Rorty – des articles de journal, des romans – Jostein Gaardner.

La « littéaturisation » du discours est une tendance dans la philosophie roumaine, les écritures de Mircea Eliade, Lucian Blaga, Camil Petrescu le prouvent. En restant dans le registre spéculatif, le voudrais rappeler Mihail Şora – l’auteur des « dialogues » intérieurs, Constantin Noica - celui qui a écrit *Des histoires sur l’homme* et *Des lettres sur la logique d’Hermès*, Cioran – composant des essais, aphorismes et lettres, Gabriel Liiceanu – l’auteur du *Jurnal de Păltiniş* et de *l’Épistolaire*, Andrei Pleşu – disséminant avec générosité des articles avec de la teinte philosophique dans les journaux locaux. On passe déjà de la philosophie comme « genre littéraire » (Aurel Codoban), à la philosophie comme « genre journalistique », destiné surtout aux publications encourageant les opinions et les attitudes civiques, formulées dans un langage simple, accessible, non-sophistiqué.

La presse culturelle est, d’ailleurs, le *topos* privilégié des dialogues philosophiques. Le pari des conversations thématiques ou d’interrogations libres a été assumé par la majorité des philosophes contemporains (je rappelle en passant seulement Deleuze, Ricoeur, Derrida, Foucault, Habermas, Schusterman...). L’idée de la philosophie comme « un exercice interrogatif » est légitimée en particulier par les textes de Heidegger. L’auteur de *Sein und Zeit* pense que, pour le véritable métaphysicien, les questions seraient plus importantes que les réponses. Aucune question de facture philosophique ne se rabat nécessairement sur la complexité du domaine entier.

On peut parler d’une « science » ou d’une « art » de poser la question ? Évidemment... Elle consiste, d’une part, dans l’accord de repérer l’axe problématique d’intérêt général, en conduisant l’interlocuteur dans la direction souhaitée, pour obtenir l’effet attendu et, d’autre part, à assumer avec discrétion un rôle « secondaire », destiné à

mettre en valeur les opinions et les arguments de la personne interrogée. Habilement formulées, les questions peuvent surprendre la dynamique réflexive de quelqu'un avec plus de fidélité. Quelles sont les atouts d'une interview réussie ? Il s'agit de la mobilité spéculative, de la spontanéité, de la clarté, du caractère naturel, de la sincérité et, pourquoi pas, du style. J'ai retrouvé ces qualités (et bien d'autres encore), dans *Les fenêtres de la pensée philosophique et théologique contemporaine*, le livre d'interviews porté à l'attention par Tudor Petcu.

Licencié de la Faculté de Philosophie de Bucarest, Tudor Petcu se révèle être l'un des plus prolifiques publicistes du moment, ses articles apparaissant dans des nombreuses revues culturelles - autochtones et étrangères -. Entre ses livres déjà parus, deux retiennent l'attention: un livre de discussions sur le thème de l'Holocauste (*Tudor Petcu en dialogue avec Matei Gall. Témoignages sur les camps de la mort*, 2009) et un autre, réunissant des aphorismes (*Quelques balivernes métaphysiques*, 2012). Au présent, il est rédacteur d'une revue d'analyse culturelle et religieuse (*Oglindanet.ro*). Les articles de ces dernières années le montrent comme étant préoccupé par la compréhension du rôle que la technologie et la philosophie peuvent jouer, compte tenu de l'aggravation « des crises » (économiques, politiques, morales et spirituelles) ressenties par le monde contemporain.

*Les fenêtres de la pensée philosophique et théologique contemporaine* contient des interviews avec certains des philosophes français les plus importants de nos jours (Jean Greisch, Jean-Claude Polet, Jean-Daniel Causse, Philippe Chapelle-Dumont, François Boespflug, Bernard Pudal, Gérard Bensussan, Christophe Perrin). En procédant de manière socratique, l'auteur s'informe, tâtonne, pose des questions, explore avec discernement les compétences spéculatives des interlocuteurs. La somme des questions et des réponses offre une bonne radiographie sur « l'état de santé » du monde dans lequel nous vivons.

Quelles sont les problèmes investiguées par l'auteur ? Je glane seulement quelques-unes: Existe-t-il des place

vulnérables dans l'horizon des cultures? Comment peut-on définir la conscience philosophique? Est-elle nécessaire? On peut parler d'un rôle privilégié de la philosophie, ou de sa singularité dans le champ de connaissance? Mais dans l'ordre pragmatique du monde? La philosophie et la théologie peuvent-elles dialoguer? Quelles sont les particularités des relations entre la philosophie et la théologie? Existe-t-il une vocation « philosophique » de la théologie? Mais une vocation « théologique » de la philosophie? Peut-on faire confiance à l'exemplarité morale du christianisme? Est-ce qu'il existe une manière chrétienne de vivre? Peut-on parler d'une « conscience chrétienne » capable d'assainir une partie des défauts du présent? Que signifie être orthodoxe aujourd'hui? Peut-on identifier une dimension de la spiritualité orthodoxe capable de devenir la source d'une possible anthropologie chrétienne adéquate à la modernité? Quelles sont les bases juives de la philosophie? De quelle manière la mystique juive est liée à la théologie chrétienne? Comment répond le judaïsme aux défis du monde contemporain? Quelles sont les bases philosophiques de la psychanalyse? Peut-on évaluer les chances de la philosophie pragmatiste de reconfigurer le nouvel ordre moral du monde? Quel est (encore) le rôle de l'icône dans la spiritualité catholique? Ou bien dans celle orthodoxe? Une iconographie religieuse comme celle chrétienne peut-elle s'opposer aux effets du désordre artistique actuel? Peut-on reconfigurer les dispositions œcuméniques actuelles autour d'une théologie de l'icône? Qu'est-ce que le communisme signifie aujourd'hui? Existe-t-il un caractère spécifique du communisme français? On le reconnaît comme attelé encore à la figure imposante de Marx?

Intelligentes et pertinentes, les répliques des philosophes interviewés cherchent à éclaircir quelques-uns des thèmes prétendument « litigieuses » remises en question. Les zigzags dialogiques sont agiles et élégants en termes de style, même lorsque les auteurs s'envolent dans des réflexions érudites. Le préjugé de l'obscurité immanente au discours spéculatif est donc contredit, tout comme le préjugé de l'incompatibilité avec le langage commun.



Dans *Les fenêtres de la pensée philosophique et théologique contemporaine*, Tudor Petcu fait lieu à un air frais, sain, favorable aussi bien à la lecture qu'à la compréhension. On dirait que l'auteur renverse la thèse heideggérienne relative à la priorité et la suffisance du questionnement.

Même en philosophie, les réponses sont, parfois, importantes. Autrement, quelle justification trouverait la question?

**Address:**

Petru Bejan  
Department of Philosophy  
Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi  
Bd. Carol I, 11  
700506 Iasi, Romania  
E-mail: [pbejan@gmail.com](mailto:pbejan@gmail.com)

## Cassirer heute

Ioan Alexandru Tofan  
Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi

Tobias Endres, Pellegrino Favuzzi, Timo Klattenhoff (Hrsg.),  
*Philosophie der Kultur- und Wissensformen. Ernst Cassirer neu lesen*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2016

**Keywords:** Cassirer, philosophy of culture, phenomenology, anthropology, transcendental philosophy

Die gegenwärtige Neubewertung eines “Klassikers” wie Ernst Cassirer ist keine leichte Aufgabe. Erstens scheint der Kontext der gegenwärtigen Philosophie eher an Dekonstruktion und Experiment ausgerichtet zu sein als an Neulektüren der Tradition oder an der Wiederbelebung großer Autoren der Vergangenheit. Zweitens scheint es bei einer erste Lektüre unmöglich, Cassirer “erneut zu lesen”: die klaren Unterscheidungen die er macht, die Aufmerksamkeit und Rigorosität seines Diskurses und der umfangreiche Kreis seiner Wirkung (das im Meiner Verlag erschienene Gesamtwerk umfasst 26 Bände, die posthume Ausgabe bislang 18) schüchtern seine Leser zuweilen ein. Sie müssen es sich gründlich überlegen, ob sie es sich zutrauen, Cassirers Konzepte durch die Formulierung neuer Fragen, die sich von den ursprünglichen systematisch unterscheiden, tatsächlich auf die Probe stellen wollen.

Gerade vor dem Hintergrund dieser Herausforderung darf das von Tobias Endres, Pellegrino Favuzzi und Timo Klattenhoff herausgegebene Buch als ein Erfolg bezeichnet werden. Ich möchte diese Einschätzung im Folgenden erläutern. Die Autoren, die zum Band beitragen, sind vor allem eines nicht: hastige Leser. Sie sind Mitglieder oder Assoziierte der an

der Technische Universität Berlin gegründeten Ernst Cassirer-Arbeitsgruppe und zum Großteil Doktoranden zum Werk Cassirers. Sie gehen davon aus, dass die Konzepte des Autors durch eine sorgfältige Lektüre den Keim einer ständigen Neubewertung freigeben. Zudem lösen Cassirers Konzepte eine interdisziplinäre Neubewertung aus, die die starren Grenzl意思 der Fachbereiche überschreitet und derart Chancen der Loslösung von der Stringenz spezifischer phänomenologischer Analysen bietet: "So bewegt sich die Philosophie Cassirers programmatisch in einer Zwischensphäre, in einem infinitesimalen Raum zwischen den vielfältigen Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten des menschlichen Geistes: Sie zeichnet sich insofern durch einen ausgeprägt transdisziplinären Charakter aus, als dass sie die Wissensfelder nicht als vorgefertigte Gebiete annimmt, sondern sie integrativ anspricht, um Vernetzung und Interaktion zu fördern und dadurch die Schaffung neuer Erkenntnis zu ermöglichen." (S. 13). Die Cassirersche 'Philosophie der symbolischen Formen' ist vor allem ein offenes transzendentes Vorgehen, das einer ständigen Neubewertung unterworfen ist und entspricht gerade keinem geschlossenen konzeptionellen Aufbau.

Der Beitrag von Christian Möckel (*Symbolische Formen als Wissensformen?*, der erste von insgesamt 13 Beiträgen) schildert in diesem Sinne die Bildsamkeit der Begriffe der Philosophie Cassirers und die Leichtigkeit, mit der sie in einen phänomenologischen oder einen anthropologischen Kontext überführt werden können. Interessant ist diesbezüglich auch die Debatte hinsichtlich der Art, auf die Cassirer wichtige Momente der philosophischen Tradition neu interpretiert (zu denken ist etwa an die *Hegelsche Dialektik*, mit der sich Sevilay Karaduman in ihrem Beitrag auseinandersetzt) – gleiches gilt für aktuelle Probleme von Handlungstheorien (ein Thema, dem sich, unter besonderer Einbeziehung des amerikanischen Pragmatismus, Joel-Philipp Krohn widmet). Anders gesagt, identifiziert die "erneute" Lektüre des Werks des deutschen Philosophen eine Serie von Mustern gerade in Cassirers Vorgehensweise, wenn er – durch Dialog und kritische Einstellung – seine eigene Denkweise und seine eigene, Weltansicht' sowohl zeigt als auch gestaltet.

Eine 'bloß' kompetente Lektüre der Arbeiten Cassirers reicht allerdings nicht aus. Notwendig ist auch die angemessene

Positionierung des Lesers im Verhältnis zu den rezipierten Konzepten. Die Gegenwärtigkeit einer Philosophie kann unterschiedlich verstanden werden, wobei das Beharren auf sie durchaus zu ihrer Verfälschung und zu ihrer Umwandlung in einen Fetisch der Geisteswissenschaften führen kann. Die Autoren des Bandes weisen jedoch auf eine wichtige Tatsache hin, die sie außerhalb der unreflektierten Suche nach Neuheit platziert: und zwar darauf, dass der Moment der *Cassirer-Renaissance* der 90er Jahre im Grunde eine *Internationalisierung* (die Herausgeber sprechen von einer “Globalisierung” der Cassirer-Forschung) seines Werkes darstellt. Wie es mit dem Inhalt des hier behandelten Bandes aufgezeigt wird, beschäftigen sich praktisch alle akademische Bereiche der Welt mit der “neuen” Lektüre der Philosophie der symbolischen Formen. Demzufolge bedeutet “neu” im Rahmen der Rezeption nicht unbedingt “kürzlich erfolgt”, sondern eher “unterschiedlich”, und das heißt auch: entlang der vielfältigen kulturellen und sozialen Gegebenheiten.

Die Fragen, auf die die Beiträge des Bandes Antwort suchen, lauten ganz konkret etwa: Wie können mehrere aus der Synthese der abendländischen Reflexion entstandenen Konzepte außerhalb seines traditionellen Objektenbereiches “angewendet” werden? Auf welche Art können die “neuen” Welten, wie die virtuelle Welt (so im Text von Rafael Garcia) oder die des gegenwärtigen Films (die Peter Remmers in seinem Beitrag anspricht), der von Cassirer gestalteten Analyse der kulturellen Formen unterworfen werden? Die Herangehensweisen, die “klassische” Beispiele der symbolischen Formen (die Malerei in der von Yosuke Hamada durchgeführten Analyse der ästhetischen Intuition sowie der Versuch Timo Klattenhoff, vermittels einer parallelen Lektüre Cassirers und Simmels das *Geld* als ein eben solches zu etablieren) berücksichtigen, werden somit durch die Hervorhebung eines praktisch unendlichen Universums der komplexen symbolischen Formen vervollständigt, die historische Entwicklungen vollziehen.

Ein zweites “gegenwärtiges” Leseinteresse, dessen Wurzeln in die Beschäftigungen Cassirers selbst tief eingreifen, das jedoch zur unendlichen Neuformulierung fähig ist, bezieht sich auf die Politik in dem weiten Sinne der symbolischen

Konstruktion menschlicher Realität. Pellegrino Favuzzi stellt sich diesbezüglich die Frage nach der Möglichkeit, die Vernünftigkeit und die Emotionalität in die Formel eines "Vernunftpathos" des *zoon politikón* zu integrieren, während Gisela Starke die mythologische Struktur des Nationalsozialismus analysiert, um seine totalitären Mechanismen zu entschlüsseln. Die "Neuheit", die der Bezug auf Cassirers Arbeiten in diesem Zusammenhang bringt, besteht in einem systematischen Plädoyer für Pluralität und Toleranz durch die Kritik der "verdinglichten" Formen der Kultur und die der Reflexion darüber. Durch die Positionierung der Werke des deutschen Philosophen innerhalb der *Historismus-Debatte* problematisiert wiederum Servanne Jollivet den Dualismus Relativismus/Dogmatismus, der die Diskussion bezüglich der historischen Situation des Menschen beherrscht; sie entwickelt so die Idee einer dynamischen Einheit mit sofortigen Auswirkungen auf die Art und Weise, wie man *den Anderen* wahrnimmt und anspricht.

Die Probleme in Bezug auf die Neubewertung einiger Grundlagen der Vorstellung Cassirers (wie die Beziehung zwischen der 'Philosophie der symbolischen Formen' und einer integrativen Theorie der Wahrnehmung im Text von Tobias Endres, die im Text von Claudio Bonaldi gestellte Frage, ob die Philosophie selbst als symbolische Form betrachtet werden kann oder die kritische Diskussion hinsichtlich des Anti-Naturalismus Cassirers im Text von Felix Schwarz) ergänzen die oben aufgezählten spezifischen Probleme. Damit kann die Schlussfolgerung gezogen werden, dass sich die gegenwärtige Neubewertung Cassirers nicht nur darauf beschränkt, die Relevanz seiner Konzepte in verschiedenen aktuellen theoretischen Auseinandersetzungen hervorzuheben, sondern eine Anstrengung voraussetzt, um ihn tiefgreifend zu lesen und dynamisch in den grundlegenden Annahmen seines Diskurses zu verstehen. Eine "organische", integrative Perspektive auf die Methode und auf den Horizont, in dem Cassirer die Kultur, die Politik oder den Einsatz und die Formen der Erkenntnis problematisiert, gewährt der Neulektüre Konsistenz und Kohärenz. "Ernst Cassirer neu lesen" wird so zu "Ernst Cassirer neu begegnen und zusprechen".

Der Erfolg des Vorgehens in dem hier behandelten Buch ist nicht zuletzt durch die Tatsache zu erklären, dass das Buch – wie man während der Lektüre leicht spüren kann – aus dem lebendigen Dialog zwischen den Autoren und Autorinnen entstanden ist. Prof. Dr. Martina Plümacher und Prof. Dr. Christian Möckel sind diejenigen, die die bereits erwähnte Ernst Cassirer-Arbeitsgruppe im Rahmen des Innovationszentrums Wissensforschung der Technischen Universität Berlin gegründet und im Laufe der Jahren nicht nur geleitet, sondern auch fortentwickelt haben. Die Diskussionen und Debatten dieses Forschungskreises ermöglichten das Zustandekommen eines Bandes, der als das Ergebnis einer lebendigen Gegenüberstellung von aus den unterschiedlichsten, dabei stets an Cassirer und der Aktualität seiner Philosophie interessierten Untersuchungen hervorgehenden Fragen gelten kann. Diese Fragen schneiden sich durch das Bild Cassirers, der von den Akzenten und der Licht “erneuert” wird, die seine heutigen Leser auf ihn werfen.

**Address:**

Ioan Alexandru Tofan  
Department of Philosophy  
Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences  
Al. I. Cuza University of Iasi  
Bd. Carol I, 11  
700506 Iasi, Romania  
E-mail: atofanro@yahoo.com

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Center for Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy

Faculty of Philosophy and Social and Political Sciences

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi

Bd. Carol I, no. 11

700506, Iasi, Romania

Tel.: (+) 40 232 201284; Fax: (+) 40 232 201154

Email: editors[at]metajournal.org

Contact person: Dr. Cristian Moisuc

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